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Ana M. Varela-Lago: This is an interview with Mrs. Aida González. Aida, I would like to start by talking a little bit about your family. Could you tell me a little bit—where do they come from, why did they come to Tampa originally?

Aida P. Gonzalez: My father was born in Coya, Asturias. And he came to Tampa and he bought El Pasaje Restaurant, with Jose Alvarez, was his partner. And in 1919 when he married my mother, he sold it to his partner because of Prohibition. And he went back to Spain.

AV: What was your father's name?

AG: Lino Prida.

AV: Lino Prida. And when did he come to Tampa originally. Do you know?

AG: I'm not sure.

AV: Approximately, at the beginning of the century?

AG: I can't, I can't begin, I can't—I couldn't tell you because he might have bought the restaurant maybe around 1906 or something like that—I'm not sure.

AV: Right.

AG: Yes.

AV: Did he spend time in Cuba before coming to Tampa?

AG: That I know of, no. No. And he was—you know, he had another restaurant in Infiesto, Asturias.

AV: Oh, really?

AG: Yes. He had a hotel, and a restaurant over there, and his brother and sister were running it. And that's where I was born.

AV: I see.

AG: Yes. And my mother was born in this country. Her name was Blanca Llosa. And she was—

AV: She was born here in Tampa?

AG: She was born here. All her brothers were born here. And my grandmother and my grandfather came from Villaviciosa. From, really it was Ñabla.

AV: I see.

AG: Ñabla.

AV: Ñabla.

AG: Yes. Villaviciosa, Asturias.

AV: How did your parents meet?

AG: I really don't know how they met. But my mother used to work for the Centro Asturiano and the Centro Español, you know, in the shows that they had.

AV: Oh, yes, she was an actress?

AG: No, you know, like, you know, everybody did it—

AV: Did she use to work on plays?

AG: —it was like a—del Patio.

AV: Del Patio. Right.

AG: You know, they work and she played with all these people, like—with him, and all. And I imagine he must have met her there. And they married, May 19, 1919. And that was during the World War II [World War I]. So after my father sold the restaurant over here, he went to Spain.

AV: Because of Prohibition he decided to leave.

AG: Prohibition—well, he didn't want to, you know, you couldn't sell liquor or anything like that, so he sold his part to his partner.

AV: And decided to go back to Spain?

AG: Yes.

AV: And his idea was to remain in Spain?

AG: He remained in Spain. Yes. He became the first mayor of the city.

AV: Oh, really?

AG: When the Republic came in in 1932.

AV: Of the City of Infiesto?

AG: Infiesto, yes. I mean, he wasn't even running; they just picked him. You know how they do in little towns. Yeah, and he was the—and, as a matter of fact, before he became, because he was used to being in the United States, he was a Democrat, you know. So democratic and different than their way of thinking. That all the people that were Republicans in Spain, they were put in jail, before the monarchy was brought down by the Republic.

AV: Right.

AG: So they were in jail. It was kind of a farce to put them in jail because, I mean, everybody went over there, it was like a party, to see them. I remember going to see him and feeling so bad about my daddy being in jail, you know.

AV: Yes.

AG: It was all political. And then, of course, in 1934, we had, I went to the—I mean, you know, during my childhood I went, I was raised by the nuns. You know, I went to the convent all the time. And that was my school. And then, in 1934, there was the revolution in Asturias.

AV: What do you remember of that?

AG: I remember, you know, just people, just shooting each other and the house becoming like a hospital. The hotel becoming like a hospital. And everybody coming over there because my father was Republican. And, you know, usually in Spain if you have, you know, if you're well-to-do, you're not, you're just a fascist, or—

AV: Conservative.

AG: Yes. Yes. You're not a Republican at all. But my father was, you know. He had the ideas of the United States, and that's what he wanted. He wanted a democratic government in Spain. But, you know, he never really messed with anybody like that. He was well liked by everybody, until the war came. In the revolution, we just, it wasn't so bad. I mean, you know, it was shooting, of course, and killings and all, but it was only in Asturias. And then, in 1936, the war broke out.

AV: Did your father belong to any political party, or was he just—?

AG: No, he was a Republican. He was a Republican. And, you know, he just—

AV: You mean he belonged to this Partido Republicano?

AG: Partido Republicano.

AV: Okay. Um-hm.

AG: Yes.

AV: He was elected mayor without ever having to run, or—?

AG: Yes, they just wanted him to become mayor. And he did, he was very well liked. I mean by everyone. Because he was very kind. My father was very kind. He was very kind when he was here. Everybody told me when I came from Spain that my father was very well liked. And, you know, he used to read the paper to everybody and—they used to come over to the—of course, we had a coffee shop. And we had, like, a grocery. And we had the liquors and the tavern, and we had the whole thing, you know how they have over there! And we had the restaurant and the hotel.

AV: What was the name of the hotel?

AG: La Gran Via.

AV: La Gran Via.

AG: And it was right across the street from the railroad station. Yes. As a matter of fact, during the war the bombs destroyed it, and somebody else built another La Gran Via over there. But it's not the same one.

AV: I see. So you were born in Infiesto?

AG: I was born in Infiesto. My sister was born in Infiesto. Yes. She's five years older than I am.

AV: I see. Do you remember him telling you about Tampa at all?

AG: Well, my mother talked more about Tampa. And it was very hard on her because when she came, when she went to Spain, you know, and they would wash—you know how they would wash their clothes? And my mother wore pink. And it was just white. You know, for the women over there, and everybody was kind of in shock that she would have pink underwear like slips and all that stuff. You know. That was in 1919. Yes. And then in 1920 my sister was born. And then, in 1925, I was born. And I went to school, and then during the war, of course, you know, while we were in Infiesto it wasn't so bad—you know, we helped, and my mother would go to the Red Cross and make bandages, and help at the hospital, *el hospitalillo*, in Infiesto. And my father, you know, everybody helped. And we had a lot of the *milicianos* in our hotel, you know, free and feeding them and all.

But then after, you know, when the things started getting pretty bad, we knew we had to get out of there. So my father was gonna stay, in Infiesto, and his sister lived with us, my Aunt Candida. She lived with them. And my sister had a boyfriend. So, she wanted to stay until they would leave. And my mother and I went on to Gijón. And we were boarding the ship. It was like a cargo. It was an English cargo ship. And, I don't know if you know anything about the Cervera? Which was a Franco ship. And, you know, they would come and bomb the ships and all. And they threw 15 bombs in the ship. But they didn't hit it at all. They probably felt pretty bad because they didn't hit it.

But anyway, we went in there, and it took us five days to get to France. And we were in the, you know, where they—like I tell you, it was a cargo ship. And we were, all of us, about 400 people, in that, in the place where they put all the, whatever they take in cargo. We were down there. And, when we went to, when we got to France, my mother thought that, you know, being that we had brought money and all that stuff, that we had sent the money to France, that we could just get off of that ship, from the cargo ship, and go on into France; into Paris, and claim—my father and my sister and my aunt would go to France too—to meet us over there. But they didn't let us.

AV: Who didn't—?

AG: No, because they said we were Spanish refugees. And the French people didn't want us at all. Because they, you know, we were all treated as refugees. And they—

AV: What year was that? I mean, what date, do you remember?

AG: This was 19—36?—1937.

AV: 1937. Um-hm.

AG: 1937. It was around maybe June of '37 or so.

AV: Um-hm. At the border they told you that?

AG: At the border, no. When we, on the ship. When we were getting out of the ship.

AV: Oh, right there on the—

AG: Right there. They had gendarmes.

AV: I see.

AG: I mean, you know, guarding. That we would not get out of this line. And we went into this building. And over there, there were doctors giving us all kinds of shots. Because they were afraid that we would bring diseases from the war. I mean, you know, from Asturias. So what they did, they gave us all these shots. And they took us into a train that was parked there; that was just standing there, at the station. And they closed all the doors on the train. And they put gendarmes all around the train. All around all the coaches. And they didn't let us get out of there. We stayed over there for about a week. Eight days.

AV: Eight days.

AG: They would bring us a loaf of bread, loaf of French bread every morning, and a can of foie gras. And that's what we had all day to eat. Yes. The people on the train. That's all we had. That. And we had to divide it.

AV: Bread and a can of foie gras per day?

AG: Yes, yes. The French people did that. And we had to drink the water out of the lavatory in the train. We could not wash, we couldn't do anything because, you know, the water wasn't, it was kind of rationed. So, we were there for eight days. And then the train took off and took us back to Spain.

AV: Really?

AG: But, in the meantime, Franco took possession of Asturias. So we went to, they took us to Puigcerdá, in Barcelona. In Cataluña. And from there, they just let us free. And we went to a hotel, and we took a bath, and then we ate. And then we went to. They put us in another ship. And this one was, you know, it was just like a big ship. It didn't have any cargo or anything in there. We were all on top, you know?

AV: Right.

AG: And we were there for, I think it was three days or so. We didn't eat, we didn't have anything, to eat or anything like that. And we went to Valencia. They sent us to Valencia. And—

AV: Now, this is the Republican government, now?

AG: Yes.

AV: Of Spain?

AG: Yes.

AV: Because you are already in Spain.

AG: Yes, yes, that is the Republican government. They sent us back to Spain. And they put us in a refugee camp.

AV: Right.

AG: You know, *un refugio*? And we stayed over there, and it was really—it was really dirty. I got cooties and everything—lice and everything, you know? And then, they let us get out. Out of the camp. They didn't want us, they didn't want anybody; there were too many people over there. And there was Valencia, and they weren't that friendly to the Asturianos. And, when we got out of there, we started walking the streets. My mother and I. Because we were alone. I mean, you know, we couldn't get in touch with my father. And there was no way to get in touch with us. At all. So my mother wrote her mother and her brother in Tampa. And they would, we would communicate with them. They would write to Spain. And they would write to us, and we would know how everybody was through that. We used to—

AV: How long did it take for—?

AG: Well, you know, the first day that we got out of the refugee camp, I mean that same day, my mother and I went on the streets to find some place to stay! And we were—because she had a little money. But all the money was in France, so. We left it. So we were over there and we found, we got lost in Chinatown. And there was this little lady over there that—we were crying—so she took us up into her house and she gave us some tea. Chamomile tea, or something. And then, of course, we had to leave.

And the following day—no, we stayed over there that night with her—the following day we had to leave. And, when we were walking down the street in a place where they made chocolate and churros, you know, *chocolateria*? we found some friends from Asturias. So they took us to this motel. To this hotel. That they were staying. There was a lot of refugees over there. And looking back now, I mean look—not now, but when, after I came to the United States—my mother told me what kind of a motel, a hotel it was. It was a—like a, you know.

And they were over there, the ladies—you know, but there were a lot of children. Because there were a lot of people from Andalucía. And a lot of people from, you know, from Asturias, over there. Most of them were refugees, and of course there were just

some ladies there too. Those ladies were very nice to us. And we stayed over there and my mother got sick. She was crying so much, her eyes, she got an infection in her eyes.

And I was, then I was just twelve. And I didn't know what to do, you know. I was the one that had to take care of my mother because she was so sick. And she was in bed, and I would go and maybe buy something—ask a druggist to give me something, put something in her eyes and finally, you know, the infection subsided and she got better. And then we just lived there. And down in the cellar they had an academy of Spanish flamenco. And I learned how to do flamenco because my mother says, "Learn how to play the castanets and sing and dance flamenco because your daddy loves it. And when you see him, you can do it for him." So—he never saw me.

AV: Oh.

AG: And then we, you know, we stayed over there for a long time. For several months. And the other people left, because they could get in touch with their husbands or their husbands could get out. And then I'll tell you about my father, why he didn't get out. And they could go off some other place. But my mother and I stayed over there with these people from Andalucía. And then we found out that we had, our lawyer and his family from Asturias were staying in Murcia. So we went to Murcia. And we got this—

AV: Was it easy to travel in that area?

AG: Well, we went in a truck. I don't remember how this was because I can't remember that. But I remember getting into a truck. And somebody taking us from, to Alicante, and then to Murcia, to where they were staying. They were staying in Totana. And he was, I guess, a judge over there or something. And we stayed a couple of months in Totana with them. And then we moved into Murcia with them. And we stayed about four months in Murcia with them. And, you know, Totana wasn't so bad, because it was a little town; we could eat something! But in Murcia we had to walk miles and miles to go get an eggplant. For eight people. And it was, it was very, very bad. And then—I'm giving you the highlights! I can't tell, you know, everything that we went through, the bombing and all that stuff—and Murcia was no bombing.

AV: No?

AG: No, there wasn't anything like that. In Valencia we had a lot of it. And then after, after that, when we were in Murcia, in '38, my father, June the 3rd, my father died. But, really, he. My sister was put in jail when she was 17. And they were gonna kill her. And somebody said, "He's not gonna tell me what to do," you know sometimes how people get? From the military, "and I'm not gonna do—'cause he's not from the military; he's just a civilian from Infiesto who wants to kill her, and I'm not gonna kill her if I don't want to." So then she met her husband. I mean, she met. He was a First Lieutenant in Franco's army. And he saved her.

AV: But at that point, they didn't know each other?

AG: No, they didn't know each other when he met her. But then he married her. I guess he fell in love with her. She was a very pretty girl—he fell in love with her. He was about 14 years older than she was. And she married him! Out of gratitude or whatever, she married him. And then after that, my father was, when they threw all the bombs on our hotel, he was in Coya. And he went down to Infiesto to look at it, because he had to leave Infiesto—

AV: Was he still the mayor of Infiesto at that point?

AG: No, no. This was in '32. Then after that, they had a lot of people elected, you know. He was just there like an honorary mayor for the first time. He was there for a little while, and then, you know, the Republic started all the problems again. So. But, when we were in Murcia, they wrote us from Tampa saying that my father was, had died, on the 3rd of June. What I learned later on is that my father, when he went to see that, the hotel that was destroyed, and my father was talking to somebody, the fascists came and beat him up. And left him just about dead.

AV: Oh.

AG: Yes. And then, then, of course, he died! And, my sister then, three years later she married her husband and she took care of my aunt and that. In the meantime, you know, when we were in Valencia, we just had all this, the bombings every day, every day, you know. You went on the street, and you had to run to get into *un refugio*, to get out of it. You know. And we were—my mother then, my mother and I, we stayed over there sometimes five, seven hours while they were bombing. And my father—I mean my mother and I, we just, we wouldn't go anywhere. We stayed at the hotel. And we just prayed and hug each other, and let it come down. Because it was a mess, you know. People over there crying and screaming and fainting and everything. It just, you were scared to death! so we just—my mother said, "Let's you and I stay in the hotel." And, with the night watchman—he was downstairs, he had to stay. And we were up in our room and we just stayed there, just hugging each other and crying and praying.

And this went on every day. Because the bombing was terrible. And, you know, you go down the street, you see a head over here rolling, and everything. It's. You see? Because sometimes, by the time the sirens let you know that they were going to bomb, they were already bombing. Because the Republicans didn't have any way of defending themselves. Because the Russians sent some planes and stuff like that, but they didn't fight themselves. The Russians don't fight. They send you stuff but they don't fight themselves. And Mussolini and Hitler sent a lot of stuff to the fascists, so—it was the trying ground for World War Two. That's what Spain was. And after, when we went to, when we were over there and, after we found that out, we had to go, that my father had passed away, my mother—

AV: And you learned that through Tampa, then?

AG: Yes. Through Tampa.

AV: So when did you learn that? More or less, I mean—

AG: Well, we learned it around, must have been around the fall. When my father died. They didn't tell us. Because they didn't want to tell us that he had died. But then, for us to be able to come here—

AV: Right.

AG: —our coming here had to be by my mother regaining her citizenship. Because she married in 1919. And she lost her citizenship.

AV: Because she had married a foreigner?

AG: Right.

AV: Right. And your father never became a citizen?

AG: Never.

AV: I see.

AG: Now, but in 1920, there was a new law that passed that said that if you married a foreigner, you still remained with your native citizenship. But, until then, no. So my mother had lost it. So my uncle found that out. He used to work at the First National Bank, and he found it out. So, they had to tell us.

AV: That was your mother's brother?

AG: Brother. He had to tell them.

AV: Was he Salvador Llosa?

AG: Salvador Llosa.

AV: I see.

AG: Why, you knew?

AV: Yes.

AG: Did you know Salvador Llosa?

AV: Yes.

(recorder paused)

AG: My uncle, Salvador, he wrote us and said that we had to go to Valencia and we had to start talking to the consul.

AV: Right.

AG: And trying to fix it.

AV: Had you tried to do that before? In all this—

AG: Well, you couldn't do anything. There was nothing you could do. The only thing they did for us, one time, was when my mother went over there, in Murcia. They gave her some food.

AV: The consul?

AG: The consul, they gave her some food.

AV: The American consul?

AG: Yes. And of course we took it to where we, you know, to where, we were eight people! And, to eat something, you know. And then, we stayed too at San Pedro del Pinatar. In a little castle, too. For a couple of months too, in Murcia. And then when we went back to—with another lady from Asturias, Consuelo. And then we went to Asturias—I mean we went to Valencia from Murcia. We went to Valencia, and my mother started, you know, working with the Consul and everything to do, the Consul or somebody in their office or whatever. I'm not sure of it, you know, who it was? Because you know, at that time I was young and I don't remember how they did these things. So, into the, finally, you know, it took some time. It took some time to get it all fixed up.

And there was a—*¿cómo se llamaba?* There was a senator in Valencia, from Asturias. Veneranda Manzano? And, she was from Venancio? And she was over there, and she helped us a lot. She helped my mother a lot. And then we went with her. When we left Valencia, we traveled with her, in her car. Because otherwise we wouldn't have been able to do it. We traveled in her car and went to—oh, my gosh! We went to Barcelona, and then from Barcelona we went to France, to the frontier. And then we went in, and there was little restaurant, right there. And she took us in, and they brought us a basket of bread. Before the lady could come back we had eaten all the bread, because we were so hungry. I mean we were really hungry! All through the war. It was really bad. I can give you the details later on if you want to—

AV: Yes.

AG: —but, anyway, when we were there, then we went to Perpignan, in France. And there, she left. And she had a son over there that took us to the consulate over there. And

we went—because they had already paid, from Tampa, they had, they already had, my uncle had it all arranged for us to get on the Normandy. On the ship, the Normandy? To come to the United States. So when we were going to leave—we went by train—to Le Havre. And when we were over there, you know, they really examine you, because you were a refugee. And the French didn't want us at all in there. So, but when we went to get the ship, they told us that we were refugees and there, if we came to the United States we would be, like, like, the government would have to take care of us. And that they couldn't do that. So, and my mother told them that we had family over here. But they wouldn't hear of it. So they didn't let us go into the ship.

AV: She didn't get any papers from the consul saying that, you know, she was an American citizen?

AG: Well. She couldn't become an American citizen yet.

AV: Right.

AG: She just had the—

AV: But she didn't have like any letters or anything?

AG: No, no. She just, she could just come and go into—just be able to embark, to come to the United States. She had the passport and that—that was all right, but she hadn't become a citizen yet.

AV: Right.

AG: So, when she came—when we got over there—they told us we couldn't get into the ship. So they left her, the ships left and we were there. On the harbor. It was just my mother and I and—we'd just cry. We spent our time crying! Just like Mary Magdalene. I mean, just crying all the time. And when we were there, this Frenchman came. I mean, he was real, nicely dressed, and he asked somebody in French—I mean, we found out—that he must have asked what happened. They must have told him that we were refugees from Spain—we figured that, because the man gave us a hundred francs, and left. We never saw him again, but I always pray for that man. He was, you know, and he gave us a hundred francs.

So we went to a hotel. And we were there and took a bath. And we dressed. And I had worn the same, what do they call them, culottes? And the same jersey, the same sweater, for a whole year. Because we didn't have anything to wear during the war, over there, a year and a half. That's all we wore. And that's what I had on. So my mother—and my mother the same—so we went the following day and we bought a dress. Each one bought a dress and a pair of shoes. A hundred francs went a long ways at that time.

And then my mother called that senator's son on the phone. And he came over, and he took us to the, some place where the, the ship line, or whatever. And he took us over

there to see what was wrong. And of course he was translating French to Spanish, French to Spanish. So my mother, she was pretty smart. And she kept quiet all the time you know, just taking it. And then she asked him, "Does anybody speak English over here?" And he asked, and they said, Yes. So my mother really gave them the one-two-three! And they really, when they saw that she was speaking English, they didn't know what to do.

And when she explained what they had done to her—you know, see, because at the ship we couldn't talk. Because everything was French and we didn't speak French. I took French, but nobody could understand a word I said. So, then when we were over there, he said that, somebody over there said, "Okay, we're gonna fix it up, don't worry about it, we're gonna fix it up." So it kind of calmed her down. And they took us to a hotel while—they gave us, they took us to a hotel. And we were there, about a week, a little over a week at this hotel. They gave us food and shelter, you know, food and the bed and the room and everything. And we stayed over there, we stayed a week in — just walking around Paris.

AV: Where did you go?

AG: —we had gone to Paris—

AV: —right away?

AG: Yes, because from Le Havre we went to Paris.

AV: Oh, I see.

AG: Yes. And then, from Paris, after that week was over—which was very pretty, because by that time it was Christmas—it was just before Christmas. And they had beautiful, you know, decorations and all. Then from there we went to Cherbourg. In Cherbourg we got the *Normandie*. Which was the third largest ship. *Normandie* was the second. And the third one was the other one. And then we went to [telephone rings, recorder off]—and then we left from Cherbourg. And we came to New York. But you know, we had the biggest storm that they had had in 30 years!

AV: Really?

AG: And we were soaked—

AV: During the trip—?

AG: —all the time; we used to—we were supposed to have taken three days, and it took, wait a minute, it took five days, to get to New York from —

AV: So that was the beginning of '39, when you were leaving?

AG: That was, that was—

AV: Christmas — ?

AG: —we came to this country, we got in this country the 19th of December, 1938.

AV: Oh, I see.

AG: So we left just a few days before, and I guess we were in France one week and a couple of days before—I mean, in Paris one week—so we probably got to France the first week or second week of December.

AV: I see.

AG: Yes.

AV: So you get to New York. Is there anybody waiting for you there?

AG: Got to New York, there was my mother's first cousin, Carolina Franco. And she was from Galicia—I mean, her parents were from Galicia. I mean, her mother was from Asturias but her father was from Galicia. And her husband was from Galicia. Yeah. But she was born in this country. She was born in New York too. And she went after us, and a lot of people from the Frente Popular over there: Primitivo Coto and Anita Medio, and another lady, I forgot her name. They used to call her Chucha, and *otra*, Josefa. And we stayed at their house for three days.

AV: So they knew you were coming? They were really waiting for you there?

AG: Right, yes.

AV: Were there a lot of other people from Spain in, I mean, in the same situation that you were, do you think, or—?

AG: In Spain? In Valencia? Nobody—

AV: No, on this trip to New York—

AG: On this trip to New York? Nobody.

AV: —on the *Normandie*.

AG: We were the only ones. Yes. No, Ana. On the trip over here it was the *Bremen*.

AV: Oh, the *Bremen*.

AG: The first time was the *Normandie*.

AV: I see.

AG: And we couldn't go, and then, which was the second largest ship, and the *Bremen* was the third one, that was sunk¹. It sunk. But, yeah we found, we had a real hard time coming. And that's why I'm so afraid of ships because I went, you know, with the bombs and the weather and all. And, now, if you want me to—I gave you the highlights and all that—when I came over here it was very, very difficult because I didn't know any English.

AV: Tell me about those days in New York. How long did you stay there, in New York?

AG: In New York, we just stayed a few days. I don't think we stayed over five days or so.

AV: And you were staying with these people from the Popular Front?

AG: Oh, they used to come over and visit us and talk about the Spanish Civil War, and everything. You know, and they wanted to know.

AV: Did they tell you what they had been doing?

AG: Yes.

AV: What kinds of things did they do?

AG: They were very active in New York. Very, very active—probably they were more active than anybody else. Probably—because, you know, they had so many people from Spain there too. And they had probably more money. And they could get things better than they could over here. Because over here, you know, they were just—

AV: Yes. What kind of things did they do in New York? Do you remember? You said they were very active. Do you remember anything they did?

AG: No, I didn't, no, I didn't. To tell you the honest truth, I'm gonna be very frank with you. I concentrated on the food. Because I was so hungry!

AV: It makes sense.

AG: And even though I don't show it, I'm a big eater. And I was just, and you know, my mother talked more to them about it, and that—I wish my mother was here, she could have told you that. But I can tell you that, you know, during the war, that it was very hard. Because there was nothing to eat. Nothing to eat at all. And you just couldn't get it. Even if you wanted to, you just could not get anything. And you had to, especially in Murcia, you had to walk to the *las huertas murcianas*, you know. You had to walk all the way over there to the country. And just walk. I mean, and come back and, just to get an

¹ The ship that sank was the *Normandie*, after catching fire in 1942. The *Bremen* also caught fire in 1941, but did not sink.

eggplant. And divide it among everybody. And if we could get beans we were very lucky. And, you know, you were in fear all the time. And of course you were so afraid that, and you know when we went from Valencia, when we went to Barcelona after—before we went to Paris we went to Barcelona—we were there two weeks, with some friends from Asturias. And one time we stayed at their apartment and they were bombing Barcelona. And we stayed, looking through the *galleria*. And you could see the, *los cazas*, you know, the fighter planes?

AV: Yes.

AG: Fighting. The reflector lights and all that. They were just right on them, and you could just see them fighting with, it was just—and, you know, you're so alone! Because you really, sometimes you will meet people that you knew, but most of the time, you were alone. Just my mother and I. Because, see, my father couldn't get to Asturias because of what they did to France. Because what they did to us, they sent us back and of course they couldn't go over there, so when they stayed, all that happened to them: my sister put in jail and my father, and then, you know, my sister got married and we could never communicate with them, except for the people from Tampa. And then when we came here, that's what it was—and, you know, how we used to write the letters on? You know how you have the paper bags? We would cut them like this?

AV: Yes?

AG: And we would write them and then fold them, and glue them. Because we didn't have writing paper.

AV: I see.

AG: We didn't have dentists. We didn't have doctors. We didn't have anything. And it was a time of my life that I will never forget because it was really, really rough. And not only that, it's just that I really lost my family. Because then, I never saw my sister until, because then later on, you know, I got married, and we had the children and, you know, how you have your children, and you have to work for them, send them to college—my husband got into this business and, the automobile—the jeep? The automobile business with the Nash and all. He was a, when he came from the service he was going to Tampa Business College and he took a college course in bookkeeping. And then he became a bookkeeper at Lado & Schulstad. And then later on when Mr. Lado sold out, he became a partner. And of course, you know, you have to work. Because you don't have anything. And he didn't have anything. He was from Spanish parents too. And he had been through a war.

AV: Tell me about that. You come to New York and then you come to Tampa—

AG: Yes.

AV: —to meet your family.

AG: Right.

AV: Who was here; your aunts and uncles. And your grandmother.

AG: Yes. My uncle was married, you know, my aunt—by law.

AV: I see.

AG: And my grandmother. And I had three cousins.

AV: Okay. And you'd never been in the United States before?

AG: Never.

AV: But you knew a little bit about Tampa?

AG: Yes, a little bit. But not too much. I didn't know too much about it.

(phone rings)

Recording stops

AV: We were talking about you arrived in Tampa. So, how was it like, just to be here in Tampa?

AG: It was very hard on me because, in the first place, you know, to me the United States is like a lover that you really love. But your mother country's there, all the time. You know, you feel it here, in your heart and your soul. And you feel it, and I really missed it and I didn't know any English. And at the time that I came—I don't know if you want to put this or not—but at the time that I came it was, they think that they have it hard now! It wasn't hard. I mean, because now you have help. We didn't have any help. My mother. We had lost everything that we had. And my mother had to go to work in a sewing factory and she made six dollars a week. And, gosh, you know, it wasn't very much, you know. And we just, I didn't know English, and people would make fun of my Spanish.

AV: Really?

AG: I had to learn Spanglish. Because if I said, "*vosotros*" they would think, you know, they used to think that something was wrong with me. And it was, and I shed many tears. Because I had to learn Spanish the hard way. By myself. There was this young girl that, Emilia Gonzalez, she's Harper now, and she had a book. And sometimes in the summer during vacation I would go over there and she would help me with it. But when you got to school, you know—you never lose your accent—you never lose it. And, when I would take, I would do my homework, and it was fine, but if I had to speak, or say something, or read, they would critique you, you know. They would criticize you.

And I had this girl that, I think she's something big now in the school system—I don't know if you know her. Marion? She used to be Marion Simmons. I don't know what she is now. Well, she would say that I didn't pronounce the words right, and, you know, then the teacher would give me a lower grade. And I knew it, so one day I decided to go and talk to the teacher and tell her, says, “You know I don't—” This was when I was in high school already.

AV: What high school were you attending?

AG: I went to Hillsborough. And I told her, I says, "You know," I said, "I came from Spain, Miss Barnes, and I can't pronounce like you do." I said, "I have a very hard time pronouncing English." And I said, "And if you keep on grading me on my pronunciation, I'll never make it." Because I used to make good grades in the test and everything, but I just couldn't hack it the other way. So, then she was so funny, she says, "I never realized that." So then after that, then I started doing well. And you know. But it was at the time where they would say, No dogs or Latins allowed.

AV: Yes.

AG: It was, I think it was, it was worse than what they have now. They say the Hispanics. I don't know. And I don't know why they are called Hispanics—to tell you the honest truth. Hispanics are, it's not a race. It's just a nationality, not a race.

AV: Were you living in Ybor City when you came back?

AG: When I came, I came to Ybor City. And was living on, at my grandmother's house. And my uncle and my three cousins and my aunt lived there. And I was, my mother and I lived there too. I had a big house.

Side A ends; side B begins

AV: Aida, we were talking about you living in Ybor City with your family.

AG: Yes.

AV: Was that an easy process—just coming to live in Ybor City? I mean, the whole school experience wasn't that good—

AG: No.

AV: —but how about the social experience of living within the immigrant community here? Was that, did that make it easier for you to forget a little bit about the war?

AG: Well yes. But, you see, I didn't, I really, it was nice because it was family oriented. The only problem with it was that I didn't, you know, I didn't have anybody to help me.

You know. Like when I came home to do the homework, I mean, my mother was working, and my grandmother didn't know any English. And my three cousins had their work to do in school. And I had to do it the hard way. And I shed many tears learning English. And I wouldn't speak English for anything. I was so embarrassed all the time. And then, you know, it was difficult. It was difficult getting used to this way of life too. And of course, you know, all the time I was missing my father and my sister and my aunt.

AV: Yes.

AG: And it was, it was completely different, you know. I mean, my father was very rich. And, you know, we had maids to take our books to school. And then you find one day that you have nothing to eat during the war. That's why I always say, you know, "Don't place, you know, so much importance in people with money—you look at the person." Because that's why I help these ladies. Because I know what it is to go through that.

AV: Yes.

AG: But, you know, you just find that you have nothing. And no one. And it's very, very hard.

AV: Did people here in Tampa explain to you how they were supporting the Republic—?

AG: Yes, yes. Most of them, but let me tell you, since I had learned to dance and play the castanets and sing flamenco, I would do it to help.

AV: Um-hm?

AG: Yes. The war was over, but they were still having all those things to help the Centro Asturiano and the Centro Español to raise money for them. And I would play in those things, in *las variedades* and stuff like that. I would do that.

AV: Do you have any sense like when the war ended if people here in Tampa were still supporting Spanish refugees, or—?

AG: Yes, they were supposed to be helping. Because a lot of times they would tell me, you know—I had a couple of months there that Frente Popular, you know—that I played before the war ended. And I did. And the people supported, they were very supportive of that. And what that means that the other day at the meeting, that the people pulled their kids out of Catholic school, they did. They really did. I'm very religious! I don't know whether it's because I was with the nuns, or what, but I believe in God. Very, very much. I feel like without Him I'm nothing, and He has helped me all through my life. But there's certain things that I see that religion shouldn't mess with politics.

AV: Do you think that the Catholic Church was in the wrong?

AG: In Spain, yes. In Spain they were.

AV: In supporting Franco?

AG: I think so. Because I happen to know that one of the priests in my town used to go and dress like a civilian style, *se quitaba la sotana* [taking off his cassock]. And he would go and fight, and *les pegaba a los presos*.

AV: Was your father religious?

AG: Eh?

AV: Was your father religious person?

AG: My father, I used to ask him: "*¿Papa, tú crees en Dios?*"

AV: Um-hm.

AG: You don't have that [the tape recorder] on, do you?

AV: Yes, I do.

AG: Oh, you do—oh, no, that's okay. I used to ask him, you know, because he never went to church. And I used to ask him, "Daddy, do you believe in God?" And he says, "Yes, I do. I believe in God. But I don't believe in the preachers. Or priests. Or whatever you want to call it." Says, "I don't believe in them but I do believe in God."

AV: Yes.

AG: Yes. My father was a very good man—he was very giving, and very nice. And everybody in Tampa used to speak very well of him, when I came from Spain. And it makes me very proud to know that—

AV: Because you didn't know how people thought of him here?

AG: Right, right—

AV: What kinds of things did they tell you?

AG: Yes. And, you know, there was a lot of people that had worked for him at that time. And over here, this boy that bought the Pasaje, that has Cafe Creole. And, you know, he has a little bit of the story of El Pasaje. I wanna show you a menu that I have. And he came here about three or four times already. And he asked me for some pictures of my mother and my father. And in the menu of the Cafe Creole, in the back of it, at the bottom, there's a picture of my mother and my daddy. And also, next to them is a picture of their, of his associate and his wife. Yeah. There were really—Tampa, when I came

from Spain, everybody was very good to us because they had open arms for us, I mean they just received us with open arms and everybody that was from Spain—my mother knew a lot of people. Some of them, they had been traveling over there and they always stayed at the house, like they were the family.

So my mother had a lot of friends and of course she, since she had been born here, a lot of these—her girlfriends were still here. And they were very good to her. And others, others that owed money to my daddy, well, those, you didn't see at all! Yeah. But I mean, you know, when you, you know that you really need money because it's a luxury to get sick and all that, but I look back and I say, you know, "Money isn't that important, it's just more, what the person is."

AV: Did you ever think of going back to Spain? Did you go over there?

AG: Well, I always wanted to, but to be real honest with you, since my husband and I, when we met, he had just—

AV: How did you meet?

AG: Well, I was sponsor at a dance at the Loyal Knights. And a friend of mine, he told me, he says, "I'm gonna bring you somebody to meet." He says, "I'm gonna bring you a friend that just came from the service." And my husband was a major in the, he was a navigator. And at that time he was a lieutenant. And he had just been wounded. And he—I'll show you something in the den. And when he came back, you know, this was around, it was the 6th of October in 1945. It was the dance—

AV: You remember.

AG: —that I remember! He was everything to me. And we went to the dance. And he, when he came in—he was real cute, you know, he wasn't very tall but he was real cute—and I said, "Unh-uh, he's one of those that thinks he's it," you know?

AV: Um-hm.

AG: You know how they look, sometimes when they come in? And he was shy. He was shy, I didn't know it. But that night he wasn't shy because he got drunk. And he asked to be introduced to me. And when they introduced him to me, he said— [recorder off]

When she introduced me to, they introduced us, he, you know, we danced. And he wasn't a very good dancer. He stepped all over my feet. And I'll never forget the first dance that we danced; it was called *Para que sufras*. And all the time I was dancing with him, I would say, "*Estoy sufriendo*," because, he's killing me, he's stepping all over my feet! And then we talked outside for a little while. And he asked me for my telephone. And I gave it to him. And it took him—do you wanna listen to this?

AV: Sure, yes. If you don't mind?

AG: Yes. He took me. He said, "Okay, and I'll call you." And this was the 6th of October. And he called me around the 30th of October. To go out. So I told him I was busy. Which I wasn't. But I told him I was busy. And he says, "You're going out?" And I says, "Yes," and he says, "By yourself?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Okay, how about tomorrow?" So I said, "Call me and see." So he called me the following day, and he made a date with me, and we went to a Halloween dance. And then he left, because he had to leave. He was over here 30 days only. And that was the 30 days that he—messed around and not called me! You know!? And then, when he came back, it was around, just before Christmas—a week before Christmas—and he dated me all that time. And then he had to leave again to get his, the papers to get out of the service. And in February when he came back, and then we just went out, and we got engaged Easter Sunday. The 21st of April, 1946. And then we married the 17th of November, 1946.

AV: And he was also from a Spanish family, you mentioned?

AG: Yes. His father was *el gaitero*.

AV: *Ordieres*? Really?

AG: *El gaitero*.

AV: Oh.

AG: He was over here. He used to go at the Centro Asturiano to the picnics and play *la gaita*. Yes. He was very good.

AV: So what was your husband's name?

AG: My husband was Frank González.

AV: Frank? Um-hm.

AG: Yes, Francisco González. And he was, his mother was Enriqueta. And married—

AV: And they were from Asturias?

AG: From Asturias. They were from, oh, my goodness, I can't think of the name right now! I'm getting senile. Let me see, let me see—let me see what, I can't think of it, you know I write to them all the time over there, because I write to the whole family.

AV: Is that Pravia, or—?

AG: It's in Pravia. In Pravia. But it's a—I'm confusing them with these people that were from Marrones. It's—I keep thinking, close to Grado. It'll come to me or I'll look it up.

AV: Yes, don't worry.

AG: Yes.

AV: So the father used to play the *gaita* in these picnics?

AG: The *gaita*, in the picnics. And people used to sing, you know, *al par de la gaita*. And he made—my father-in-law was a carpenter. And there's a silo, going to Brandon. And he was the one that made it. It's the only silo left. And he made it. I don't know whether it's on—I don't know—you know, you can go to Brandon through 7th Avenue, through Adamo Drive? I don't know if it's an Adamo Drive, or another street. That he was, that he made it. But the silo is over there. My father-in-law made it. They used to call him "Pepe."

AV: Pepe.

AG: Jose González, yes. They called him Pepe. Pepe la Vega. They used to call him Pepe la Vega. Because he—

AV: Was that like a nickname, la Vega—?

AG: I think because it was la Vega, right next to where my mother-in-law was. I just can't believe that I can't remember the name.

AV: The playing of the *gaita* was more like a hobby?

AG: Yes.

AV: So, he wasn't a professional musician, but he did that like—

AG: Well, he did it, I mean, I don't know whether they paid him or not at that time, because I didn't know him then. I never met my father-in-law. He died of cancer before I met him. As a matter of fact, Frank was only 19 and he had to come from the Service to the funeral. And I didn't know Frank, I met Frank when Frank was 22. Yeah. And he was, most of all these old timers remember him.

AV: Yes.

AG: Yes.

AV: You were telling me before, you never went back to Spain.

AG: Well, the problem was that, you see, he was working as a bookkeeper. And then he became a part owner. But we didn't have the money, you know, we were just making ends meet. And I had our son—Frankie—in 1948. And then we had our daughter—Roxanne—in 1953. And then that same year, my sister had a daughter. She had it in

1940, wait a minute, 1941. She had a daughter. But she and her husband, when the girl was seven, they were separated. He was a widower.

AV: Oh.

AG: With a five-year-old son, when he married my sister. The one that took her out of jail? And they were separated. They never got a divorce. Then, later on, he died and she became a widow. But he die—I mean—the little girl wanted to come over to the United States to see us. And she sent her over. And when she met us, she didn't want to go back. She became more American than the American flag.

AV: How old was she when she came?

AG: She was 12 when they brought her. Frankie was five, Roxanne was five months, and Blanca-Lina was 12. And, see, we had three kids, then.

AV: Oh, so she stayed?

AG: Well, she didn't want to go back! So what we did, we had to have a special act of Congress. That Eisenhower and Nixon to this Kramer, who was a representative, he was the one that did it for us. He was a Republican, and he was the one that had it passed for us. That was his first bill. Passed. And she has it. The bill. That was passed specially for her, because from Spain, you can only have—I think it was two people?—a year, or—

AV: Because of the quota—

AG: —or one person. Two people, or one person. And we had to go to lawyers and everything, and that cost a lot of money, which we didn't have, really. Because we were just starting in the business. And she stayed with us, and it cost us a lot of money to have her down here. My mother paid half, and we paid half. And then, of course, we took over, when, we had to adopt her, for her to become an American citizen. So we adopted her.

AV: And she became a citizen?

AG: Yes. Because, you see, when I came to this country, I was a Spaniard. So my mother became an American. So, when I was just fourteen years old. I had been here about six, seven months. It was the 21st of August. Oh—then, they gave me two extra months to stay. And then I had to leave the country. And they put me, they took me to Miami. And they put me in a hydroplane. And they sent me to Cuba.

AV: Alone?

AG: Yes, alone. At fourteen—

AV: Because you had to leave the country?

AG: —yes. But a fourteen—

AV: Because you weren't a citizen?

AG: —and my mother had to be here. To claim me. So they put me on a plane. That's why I can't see people complaining and all this bilingual. Because, you know, they put me on a plane. And I had to go to Cuba, and stay there, they said, a week. I stayed two months. I didn't come back until October the 21st.

AV: So what happened? I mean, your—

AG: What happened over there—I didn't know anybody!

AV: —your mother claimed you?

AG: Yes, she had to claim me. But it took two months for her to fix the papers for me to come back to this country.

AV: Right, and did you have to become a citizen then right away?

AG: Well, I was seventeen when they let me become a citizen.

AV: Oh. So you couldn't become a citizen earlier?

AG: No, they didn't give it to me, no. They'd let me stay in the country. But at 17 I became a citizen. But at that time, I was only fourteen years old when they put me in a plane. That was the first time I had been in a plane. They put me in a plane, by myself. They sent me to Cuba. And somebody said, a friend of my mother's said that there was a dentist and his wife, Alfredo y Anita Kholy, and they told me to send me over there to their house. But they were moving from Miramar to El Vedado. To a condo.

So, they put me—in one of those, you know, old homes—beautiful homes in El Vedado, that became a guest house, an inn, you know. And I stayed over there, so—they didn't have any room for me. So there was, they had a chapel. You remember those beautiful homes had chapels in the house, okay? So they had a little room where the priest used to dress, you know. And there was a Swedish girl that slept there. And then there was the chapel. And in the chapel they put a cot for me. And they had swinging doors, you know, to go in and out. There was no lock. And that's where I slept. By myself.

AV: For the two months you stayed there?

AG: The two months. Once in awhile I would go and sleep at their house, Mr. and Mrs. Kholy, but I would have to sleep in her room. Because they had separate rooms. There were only three bedrooms, and they had the maid's room and the room for her husband. And the room for her. So, sometimes I would sleep in the sofa in her room. She used to believe in ghosts. And the lady had died, in the apartment, had died. And they had a

Jamaican maid. And she believed in ghosts too, and she said that the ghosts would come every night. Out. So one night when I was sleeping over there, I woke up. And I see this white thing standing next to me. And I started screaming and screaming and screaming, and you know what it was? They had those armoires, you know? With a mirror? And the moon was hitting the armoire and it was white—

AV: Reflecting the light.

AG: —it was the reflection, but I saw the ghost!

AV: The ghost—oh, my God.

AG: You know, you're talking fourteen. I'd just come from a war, you know. And I was there all by myself. It was still when I was staying at the chapel. You know, I was in that second story, the girl locked her door in the little bedroom. And I was there with those swinging doors, and no lock. Because it was a chapel. And I was scared to death. I had my share of fright.

AV: What a story. It's unreal.

AG: Yes. And, you know. So when—coming back to my niece—we adopted her. And she stayed in this country. But she had a special act of Congress and she never left. So then we had three children. And it was very expensive. So, we could never go to Spain. And then, later on, when we, you know—we sent them to college. And then there was a lot of expense. And then, one time, American Motors had a trip to Lisbon, and the Canary Islands. So, it was just for a few days. So Frank and I went to the Canary Islands and we went to Lisbon. And we stayed a weekend in Spain and that's all. And we went to see my sister in Madrid. That's the only time I've been to Spain since then. I always wanted to go, and my husband did too. Then later on, my mother was sick. And I couldn't go. After we could afford it—and I couldn't go. And then, after my mother—after she died, a few months later, the little one was born, and I've been babysitting for her ever since, because her parents work.

So, and then, since my son got married, he's a bone medical engineer and he did research of the lungs at USC? And we would go there. You know, *la sangre llama*. So instead of going to Spain, we would go to see them. And then our oldest grandson—I mean, was born there—of course I feel my oldest grandson, too, is my niece's. Because, you know, she's my girl too. But then, from my son, his oldest [grand]son was born in California. And then they moved to Seattle. And he did research of the heart over there, at the University of Seattle [Seattle University or University of Washington?]. So he was there three years. So we went there, and then when he went to Wisconsin, to the University of Wisconsin, then the other son was born and the little girl. So, you know. You go to see them, because that's who you want to see. And you forget about your country—I mean, I don't forget it, but I mean, you forget about traveling over there, and especially—my sister came in 1990.

AV: To visit?

AG: To visit. She stayed here six weeks.

AV: How did she—?

AG: But she didn't like it.

AV: Didn't like it.

AG: Too many years have been away.

AV: And she now lives in Madrid.

AG: She lives in Madrid.

AV: So you don't have anybody living in Infiesto—

AG: In Asturias? No, but I correspond with my girlfriends.

AV: I see.

AG: I never lose a friend. Because you have to cultivate them. So I cultivate my friends and I write to them. And one that went to Mexico, I write to her too. And I write to the ones that are still living, and they write to me. So, I'm always in touch with them, and I'm in touch with all the—the name is Llamero!

AV: Llamero. Okay. That's the place where your husband's family comes from.

AG: Family, yes. My father-in-law—

AV: And that's in Pravia?

AG: Yes. Yes. And there were, you know, Gonzalez Vega, so they used to call him Pepe la Vega. Because, I guess, you know how they call the little town, someplace, *una vega*?

AV: Right.

AG: And I guess he was living in *la vega*, that's what it was.

AV: I see.

AG: I knew it would come to me sooner or later. It's just senility. But, you know, I don't know what you want me to tell you; I mean, you know, it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. Because, I mean, you know, every day you fought for—do you want more coffee?

AV: No.

AG: Sure?

AV: Um-hm.

AG: You know, every day you just, you just had to go out and, and find food.

AV: Now when you were growing up, I mean you were very young, but do you remember what, were people expecting something like that to happen? I mean, like, things were getting so bad—

AG: Oh, that, I remember.

AV: Yeah, that people were thinking, Well, it's gonna be something—

AG: I remember, yes.

AV: —or, did this come as a big surprise, like, suddenly, there is a war. What do you remember of that?

AG: Well, you mean about the Civil War or the revolution?

AV: Yes, both, yes.

AG: I remember the revolution—you know, people talking—

AV: That's the revolution in '34, you're talking about?

AG: In '34.

AV: Okay.

AG: Yes. I remember people talking about the revolution and stuff like that, and you could see that something was coming. Yes. Because people—I don't know why they weren't content—with the Republic, but then, you know, the Republic didn't last too long, you know, because—and of course, and then of course during the war, you know, nobody could stand the people from Asturias because they were the ones that—they were the fighters all the time, you know, they weren't, you know, catering to whatever—it was, they were always against it. There was a lot of communism, a lot of anarchists too. And socialists. It wasn't the Republicans, really. It was just more of that than anything else. Because I remember the signs. You know. And we were little, and we'd do the signs, whatever, you know the anarchists, the socialists and the communists, you know? They were all different. And they were, you could tell. I mean, now that I look back, I can see it more. Just like, when the Civil War broke out, and I mean that was just Franco taking over. He was just taking—and it took quite a bit!

AV: What do you think now, looking back, of what happened to Spain? Do you have any opinion on that? I mean, after the war and after all these years—

AG: The only thing that I can say, even though I think there was a lot of crime on both sides. And, you know, there's a lot of people that were still living out there in the mountains for a very long time, coming down at night to see their family, you know, during the war and all. But I think, even though I didn't like Franco, I realized that Franco was good to Spain afterwards. I don't like *el Valle de los Caídos*². I don't like the way it was built. But I feel I have to give the devil his dues. And I think he was good for Spain.

AV: In what ways? Why do you think he was good?

AG: Because I feel that he kind of controlled Spain in such a way where there was no crime. Of course, you know, they came at night and they—the thing that I didn't like, even with Franco, was that if I didn't like you, I would go and tell him that you were a communist. And they wouldn't find out whether or not you were. They would come at night, and they'd give you *el paseo*, the walk. And you never came back. They killed you. And a lot of people did that—not—it was just, personal vendettas. That's what I would call it. Because I didn't like you. And it wasn't anything—you had nothing to do at all with politics. But they would do that. It was just like my father, my father never did any harm to anybody. As a matter of fact, the man that nearly killed him, he was one of the people that owed him the most money.

AV: So it was just that.

AG: He just. And, you know, he was a fascist. And my father wasn't. But my father wasn't a communist or a socialist, he was just Republican. He had the ideas of a democratic government, like they have over here. He had been exposed to this, and he liked it. And that's what he wanted; a democracy. And he figured the Republic, the Republicans were the ones to give it. Because, you know, with the monarchy it's completely different. The monarchy—and, you know, the Church in Spain ruled a lot. They really did. Even though my mother, you see, like I tell you, my mother was the one that would get, we could get food or something like that, she was the one that helped the nuns. And look what they did. I mean, how they paid my father later on.

AV: Yes.

AG: She helped them, you know, nobody messed with the nuns. They only made them—when the Republic came they made them dress like, you know, like in dresses instead of the habits. But that's what they did to her. I mean, you know, she went over there, and she would take them food and stuff. And they were very grateful to her. But when the war came, I mean, with the war, when Franco came, I mean, you know, my father was killed.

² [Transcriber's Note: Monument which Franco had built in memory of those who died during the Spanish Civil War. It was constructed using political prisoners from the Republican side as labor, which may be what Mrs. Gonzales is referring to.]

And, you know it's, you think of the way he died, and it's really bad. But I feel that Franco was good to Spain on account that he wasn't greedy, that he was content with having Spain only. And he did a lot for it. I mean, he straightened out the Spanish people.

And sometimes I think we need a dictator over here too, to straighten out all this crime. You know, my husband used to get upset with me when I used to say it, but I said, "Frank, we really need it." I said, "This is really bad. I mean, people are doing whatever they want to; they break the law, nothing is done." And that's what they did over there. He, you know, he straightened out the—and the minute that he died, Spain went back. Because my sister says she can't even get out on the street. She says they have the Chinese mafia, and it's really bad. And they rape people in front of their parents. And they steal, you know. You could leave anything in Spain and nobody would touch it. So I don't know, it just.

And now I don't really have that desire of going to Spain because, since my husband passed away, I don't—I'd like to see my friends and I'd like to see my country again, but without him I think it would be a lot different, because I would be real sad thinking about him all the time not being there. Instead of our going together.

AV: Okay. I'm going to conclude this interview. I want to thank you, Aida, very much, for sharing your experience with me. And I hope we get an opportunity to talk more about your life in the future. Thank you very much.

AG: Thank you.

Recorder paused

AV: Aida, you wanted to add some information about your stepfather?

AG: Yes.

AV: Tell us a little bit about him.

AG: When I was around 18 years old—because my daddy died when I was 13—my mother went with these friends to the Spanish Park Restaurant and he was working there—she met this, her first boyfriend, was over there; he was from Cartavio, Luarca? And she met him over there, and she recognized him, and he came over to her and they started going out together. And he became—

AV: What was his name?

AG: Delfin Mendez.

AV: Delfin Mendez.

AG: Yes. His uncle had a factory or something, cigar factory or something, Francisco

Mendez. And then they, he became my step-daddy when I was around 18 years old. And he was a wonderful person. And I don't want to forget it, because he was a wonderful second father. And he was a great-grandfather too. I mean, just, he was just great as a grandfather to my children.

AV: We wanted to include that in your tape.

AG: Yes, I did. I didn't want to leave him out because he was a very important part of my life.

AV: Is there anything else you would like to add?

AG: You know, you remember so many things, and then you forget when you—

AV: Okay, well, keep adding. If something comes to mind we'll make sure that it's included, if you want to.

AG: Yes.

AV: Thank you again, Aida.

End of interview