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Alfredo Naranjo: Alfredo Naranjo.

Andrew Huse: Okay. And where were you born?

AN: In Cuba.

AH: Where in Cuba?

AN: A small town called Aguada de Pasajeros.

AH: I see. What area of Cuba is that in?

AN: It's in the center of the island. It's the—where was the invasion—

AH: The Bay of Pigs?

AN: That is my town.

AH: I see. Right nearby.

AN: It's a town like—most of the part of my town there is like the Everglades [National Park, Florida].

AH: Okay.

AN: It's on the water, and is no people.

AH: Swampy?

AN: Yes. That is where—that part of the island.

AH: So, what was childhood like for you growing up? What year were you born, by the way?

AN: Nineteen thirty-two.

AH: Okay. And what was your childhood like?

AN: What was my—?

AH: Your childhood? Growing up as a boy?

AN: I went to the primary school only. And then I—I am a self educated person. I studied myself, and then I went to the—around the university to get a degree in public administration. And later on with that degree I passed an exam on the court. And they gave me another degree. They call it *procurador*.

AH: What is it?

AN: Like a lawyer for a small claim.

AH: Okay.

AN: I have—I represent people on—to certain amount of money, or certain cases where—in the criminal—the judge (inaudible) you more than a hundred eighty days, I can't represent you. And it's like that—they call it small court. But here, that does not exist.

AH: I see.

AN: Yes, it's only lawyers.

AH: So what was life like in Cuba in those days? Growing up in the forties [1940s] and the fifties [1950s]?

AN: I never think even slightly to travel anywhere, to move to any other country. I consider my small town as a good place to live. Nice life, everything was good for me. Even if we don't—me, I'm not planning to travel even as a tourist. I feel good over there. I don't see nothing; no sense to go nowhere.

AH: I see. And what did your parents do?

AN: My father had the same occupation as me. And my mother is in—mostly women in that time, they didn't work. They are housewife.

AH: How many siblings did you have?

AN: I had two. They are here. My son and my daughter, two.

AH: Oh, I mean brothers and sisters.

AN: Only one sister.

AH: Okay. Was that considered a small family where you were living?

AN: Yeah. I have only me and my sister; she already passed. And I'm the only one survived now.

AH: I see.

AN: Me and my father.

AH: So how long did you practice law?

AN: From twenty-one years old to twenty-nine.

AH: Okay.

AN: I mean like nine years or ten years.

AH: Did you enjoy it?

AN: Yeah. But here, was no chance to do the same job, because I have to pass all the examinations, like start from the (inaudible). And I had no, no plan.

AH: I see.

AN: I never think of that.

AH: Okay.

AN: I like business anyway. Some people became—they have a degree on law or whatever, and later on they convert into a business person, because business is maybe better than I get as a lawyer or a doctor or engineer or something like that.

AH: So if you—

AN: Business is not bad.

AH: If you stayed in Cuba, what do you think you'd be doing right now? Like, what were your plans? You were just going to keep practicing the way you were practicing?

AN: If I come back to Cuba, you mean? Or if I—

AH: I mean—let's say you never left. Like when you were twenty-eight, twenty-nine years old, what do you—what were your plans?

AN: I quit, because there was no sense to practice law over there to do what I did. First thing they do is they cut my (inaudible)—my ability to make money or to live was cut by the common system.

AH: I see.

AN: They don't like—they don't want to pay the lawyers of the people that—they create their own personality, their own people. They don't want to—they don't want me over there.

AH: Yeah.

AN: They offer me job in development. But no, no, because there was my training of—because they want to use everybody. Especially if you have any education or—they may use you for their purposes.

AH: Yeah, with your background in public administration, you may have been used for—

AN: Yes, that was good for them. I even could be a minister or something big. But I had no idea. I don't like it. The first time they—when they made the first law, was the—they called it *reforma agraria*.

AH: Land reform?

AN: Land reform. As soon as I take a look, I knew they [were] communists. I knew.

AH: Yeah. So before that, when [Fidel] Castro was first coming to power—

AN: I was against it then too.

AH: You were against it before you even knew he was communist?

AN: Against that because I—I know communists in my town. They like Castro, and I don't. That's the only—I'm not—I know politician as a part of the [Fulgencio] Batista system, and I was against him too.

AH: Yeah.

AN: But I was not in favor of Castro.

AH: Yeah, so you were stuck between a rock and hard place then.

AN: No, I don't like none of them. Because both of them are dictators. And I don't—I don't go for that.

AH: Did you experience any repression under Batista? You or your family?

AN: Yes.

AH: Yes? What kind of things would happen?

AN: Okay, one day I was in my house and a group of people come with a piece of paper they call *manifiesto de la bana*. They wanted me [to] sign the paper. And I said, “No, I don't sign that because I know that (inaudible) what they said over there.”

AH: What does it say?

AN: They're talking about our approval of [what] the government do, stay with the system, and things like that. And I wasn't—I had—

AH: This is under Batista, right?

AN: Under Castro.

AH: Oh, okay, under Castro.

AN: And they even came with—like the army. And it was common people. I said, “No, I don't sign no paper (inaudible). I sign when I vote.” If I vote I sign, but that's the only time. I don't have to sign no paper. That cost me—across the street, one of the people who is on the city—they call him *comisionado*, the commissioner. They know me, and they heard on the city hall [that] I say that. And they sent me a little note that tell me, “Alfredo, you better go, or stay away for a while, because they come to you, to put you in jail.” Then, I left the house up to today.

AH: I see.

AN: Then, I went to Havana. I lived there for a year—a year or something. Then I came to the United States.

AH: Let's go back a little while, back when Batista was still in power. What kind of—did you experience anything like that under Batista? Any kind of repression?

AN: Batista—Batista government, we were worse than—my father particularly was in the opposition part to Batista. Now Batista—we have a politician that said one time, “Batista government was a malformation of democracy.” But, it still was a democracy.

AH: You said it's a malformation?

AN: He said it's a malformation of a democracy.

AH: I see.

AN: And I agree with that, that guy who say that. Because there you have liberty to do any kind of business, you have liberty to move to anywhere. You can change jobs; you can have money in the bank. The only thing is Batista want to stay in power, because that [was] the way he is. Anytime he got the chance to take the power to govern the people, he did it. More than one time. And then we don't—I don't like that one. I like [to] vote.

AH: Yeah.

AN: I like the republican system like in here. But he keep the House, the House of Representatives, he kept the Senate. But it's only—all that who agree with him. And eventually, he may change to democracy, because he did it one time. But I don't feel no repression under Batista either.

AH: I see.

AN: The repression was for the people who act—to act non-politically, just by force. They want to use the same force that Batista used to go into power. And then if anybody tried to force Batista to move down, they put them in jail.

But I was not in that particular position. I just want to— He make election, and we can talk about it. We can say, “Okay! I won [the] election, I won the vote! You have to move! I won the vote!” You can say whatever you want. But you can't say, “You don't make the election, I kill you.” Things like that you can't say. It's a kind of—I don't know. I don't like Batista because of what he did.

But all the things—people say he did good things for the people. He was (inaudible) government. They make a school, they have—they make a school, they keep the university open. The educational system was excellent. The economic system was excellent too. Everything was good, except we can't vote properly. But on the—any other thing was good. The repression—even he condoned the life of a pastor.

Now, Castro kill everybody. Everybody who opposite, really—in the real opposition—he put them in on the (inaudible)—you know, on the wall. And kill him. But Batista don't do that. Batista put them in jail for a while. It [was] different times, different things.

AH: So it went from bad to worse.

AN: Yeah.

AH: And so you left your small town and lived in Havana for one year.

AN: Yes, until—I worked from (inaudible) the way to come to Spain.

AH: Okay, you wanted to go to Spain?

AN: I planned to travel to Spain. And I got some dollars to pay for the ticket on a boat, in a big boat. And the day I went to buy a ticket—Che Guevara was at that time the minister of—minster of *hacienda*—

AH: Of economics?

AN: Minister of the—who kept the account of the whole expense of the government.

AH: Yes—

AN: *Hacienda*, we call it.

AH: Economics of the interior? The House? I understand.

AN: Treasure.

AH: What's that?

AN: Treasure.

AH: Minister of the treasure.

Unidentified Man: Treasury.

AH: Treasury. Okay, treasury. Gotcha.

AN: And then he suspended pay of the ticket for travel abroad with the dollar.

AH: Oh, okay.

AN: And then I was at (inaudible) in Havana. There was no chance to come. Then my father about that time was in the United States, because he exile in an embassy.

AH: Oh, he went to the United States embassy?

AN: No, he is—*cómo se dice se asilo*? He exiled on the Uruguay embassy with my brother in law. And then he found a way to get me a visa from here for the United States.

AH: Okay.

AN: And then I go. And there was a plan, too. When you have children like me—I have my passport, and I find a way to put the visa from the United States to travel to the United States. And this government allowed to do that. And then I got the visa on my passport for me and my two kids. And we came with that visa, too.

AH: Okay.

AN: It was made by the United States to protect the—to reunite the family.

AH: Yes.

AN: This government help you up to the—forever. This—I don't see no difference between Cuba and the United States, too. I don't see no difference.

AH: No difference between Cuba and the United States?

AN: When I came here, I don't see no difference.

AH: What do you mean?

AN: This is a country, same as my Cuba before. But better.

AH: I see. So you mean it's your home?

AN: It's my home too.

AH: Yeah.

AN: We are Cuban for that—from that time, we are very Americanized.

AH: Yes.

AN: Very, very, very. We use the English language; many words we use from the English language. And we look at Americans as a good person. We don't hate. We don't—we never hear nothing bad about American people, or about American government. Like kids, we have no political ideas against [the] United States at all.

AH: So how do you explain the rise of Castro then?

AN: Because Cubans are rebel people.

AH: Yes, rebellious.

AN: You impose something to a Cuban, they don't except it. If you explain it, and convince them, they take it. But from—we fight against the Spain domination [for] two wars. And then, we don't want get dominated by a dictator. All people are not like that. I don't think nobody like to repress, you know. As many things—I understand many things now that I don't think before.

AH: Yeah. So you did you feel lucky to get out of Cuba when you did?

AN: I was one of the lucky.

AH: What year was that? Fifty-nine [1959]? Sixty [1960]?

AN: Nineteen sixty-two.

AH: Sixty-two [1962].

AN: June—13 June, 1962.

AH: So you lived under the Castro regime for a while, then.

AN: Three years.

AH: Yeah. So you knew enough about it to know you wanted to leave.

AN: No—the first year, I don't even think of that.

AH: Okay.

AN: Because I didn't expect what he did.

AH: Okay.

AN: But when he said, “If you live here, you have to be a revolutionary. If you are not here and you are not a revolutionary, you better go.”

AH: I see.

AN: And I say—

AH: So that convinced you.

AN: —“Okay, I’m going. I’m going out of this state.” But it's more than that; it's more than that because you—the person that have the smallest idea, of freedom, the person that has this small idea of what is freedom, they don't stay under communists. They don't like it—no matter if they live there. It's like they said, “No, now he make like an election over there, everybody have to sign. We want the common system to stay here.” He said that 99

percent of the people signed on, 90 percent. That is not true. It's like that paper they wanted me to sign. Probably nobody signed it. Why? I don't sign paper that said I agree with you. (door opens)

AN: [to someone else] “Hello!”

Unidentified Man #2: Hello, my friend, how you doing?

AN: Fine.

AH: So when you got to the United States, where did you end up first?

AN: First I go straight to Elizabeth, New Jersey.

AH: Okay, why New Jersey?

AN: Elizabeth, New Jersey.

AH: Yeah, but why? Your father was there?

AN: Because my father—my brother in law, they was there already.

AH: Okay

AN: And then I started working in a factory for two or three years.

AH: What kind of factory?

AN: All kind of factory. Because we moved from the worst to the little better, and then to the base.

AH: So what was the worst? What was the worst job you had?

AN: The worst was that I started as a (inaudible)—as a cleaner of the factory.

AH: A cleaner?

AN: ¿*Cómo se dice?* A janitor.

AH: Janitor.

AN: It was not bad, but it—you (inaudible). Sweeping the floor, clean the bathroom, taking up all the garbage. But I stay there like two or three months.

AH: Okay.

AN: Then, New Jersey's a place [where] you can work many places. You—there's open jobs everywhere. But even I don't think to work in a restaurant like I work here now. Because there is no—I can't go over there, I don't speak English.

Then the worst and the one I stayed for more longer was—they call it refinery of copper.

AH: Copper?

AN: Copper, gold, silver. But I stayed there three—I worked there three years.

AH: What did you do there?

AN: I started as a cheap labor. But later I go up because there is a union. And you sign—

AH: Okay.

AN: —and you go up, up—at the last time I was— We wait, all the materials came to the plane. The material come in or material come out. Was big. Three thousand people worked in the factory. They call it copper work. But it's a big plant. And after that I quit that job. And that was the best job (inaudible). But [it] was better to start with; then I grow up to a better position. Eventually I do almost nothing. Because it was the—work on a big scale, the material coming in and out. But I quit that job to move to Puerto Rico. And I lived in Puerto Rico for a year.

AH: Okay.

AN: I'm doing business over there, selling clothes.

AH: Okay.

AN: For women. But after the year past, I come to [the] United States again. I like it here better.

AH: I see. So in Puerto Rico you sold clothes? Was this on the street? Was it in a store?

AN: No, I have a wagon. I merchandise and I sell it to the store on the island.

AH: Okay. So you're like a—

AN: It was good, it was good.

AH: —a wholesaler, kind of.

AN: Yes. It was good, it was good. And I represent people who sold clothes for their store too. I was a good talker. I like to sell, and [it] was easy for me. But eventually I went in and my kids bring it to the United States. Here it's better opportunity for that.

AH: Okay. So you came for the opportunities for your children?

AN: I don't see [a] good life like here for them from Puerto Rico. Then I quit.

AH: Yes.

AN: Then is when I start as an ice cream maker.

AH: Okay. So you went back to New Jersey?

AN: [nods yes].

AH: Okay.

AN: And over there, I have no money! I can't clean. And I rent an ice cream truck.

AH: Okay.

AN: One of them, Mr. Softy. And there's where I start my life as an ice cream man.

AH: Okay, so you weren't making ice cream, you were just selling it, right?

AN: At that time.

AH: Okay.

AN: I buy the ice cream in the truck—it's like a soft ice cream.

AH: Yes, soft-serve.

AN: And then I sell soft-serve, Italian ices, novelties. After a year I buy the truck.

AH: Okay.

AN: And later on, I buy two more trucks. And later on, I open the ice cream store.

AH: So you hired other people to drive these trucks, or did you have relatives, or—?

AN: No, I had—

AH: You hired—

AN: —my son driving one, one time. But when he get—my son in law. And other people. And by that time, I had—I open an ice cream store. When I drive the truck, like for five or six or seven years, I open the store.

AH: What year did you come back to New Jersey and sell ice cream?

AN: It was in nineteen sixty—like in 1967. I don't remember exactly.

AH: Okay.

AN: And then I start as an ice cream man in a truck.

AH: Okay. And then you started making ice cream. You got your own store, you said? After you get three trucks?

AN: When I got two or three trucks, I opened the store.

AH: Okay.

AN: The first one I opened, I closed in three months.

AH: Why?

AN: Because no business.

AH: No business?

AN: Wrong location.

AH: I see.

AN: I have a partner at that time. I tell the partner, “Keep it. I don't want this store.”

AH: (laughs)

AN: And then I open a few blocks down.

AH: Okay.

AN: Where it was a success.

AH: It was better.

AN: Better than good, better than this.

AH: Okay. Were you making your own ice cream then?

AN: Then I start making my own ice cream.

AH: So how did you get interested in making your own ice cream? I mean, you're obviously very good at it.

AN: Because I buy my ices, my ice cream from the regular manufacturer. And they don't have all [the] flavors I want. They don't have tropical flavors. And the ices—the Italian ice in particular, it's a big seller over there. And they sell me a lot.

AH: I see.

AN: And I find a way—if I make it myself, the process is almost nothing, it's ridiculous. They sell you four or five dollars a gallon, when you can make a gallon with a fifty cents or something like that. And then I start making the—I started with Italian ices. Grape, lemon, orange, piña colada—

AH: I'm from Chicago; there's a lot of Italian ice there.

AN: Blue, blue—and all the flavors. Cherry.

AH: Yes, lemon.

AN: But the good thing with education, that's what I tell my kids—you have a base, foundational knowledge [of] how to look into the books, then you can do whatever you want. And I don't ask questions to nobody. I go through the book. The first time I made my ice cream I went to the library. I look into the ice cream. Probably nobody know more than me.

AH: Yeah.

AN: Because I learned up to the end of the ice cream industry. I could stay talking about that for a whole day.

AH: Yeah.

AN: I know how they make everything! Because I make it. What I can do, I do. And I don't—I have no stuff. I don't make anything on the ice cream. I make my own toppings, my own shell, my own chocolate, my own ice cream, my own ice. I don't make no (inaudible) like lollipops—I don't make nothing like that.

AH: Yeah.

AN: But I pack in quarts, half a gallon, all the sizes. And I don't go into big because there's no way. Actually, for years I'd go over there to—you can't sell wholesale from any retail place. It's illegal.

AH: I see.

AN: They need—you need like a daily plan. They said no human touch on the product you make. It had to be automatic.

AH: A machine.

AN: Made by a machine. If you go into an ice cream factory, it's more clean and more regulation than in the hospital. You don't see it, you don't believe it. And I've already seen it. Already seen it. You see, you have to be a very, very, very millionaire to open up an ice cream factory. There's no legal things.

AH: There's probably more regulations in ice cream than for meats.

AN: A lot more.

AH: Yeah.

AN: Why it's more? Because the ice cream is only cold processed. And the meat, the meat is cooked after they get it. And then when they—the people, by the cook, they kill the bacteria. But on the ice cream, not. The ice cream, the product go direct to your stomach. And then if it's contaminated, your loss. It's something that's a lot different. But the (inaudible) from the history of the industry, very regulated. It's not only the ice cream.

AH: So how long did it take you to learn these things? Did you pick up things gradually? Did it take several years?

AN: No.

AH: No? Just read up on it and started doing it?

AN: Yes, yes. In the life, doesn't give you any chance to study. Because the way I grew up, there's no school. Then, I study book to go into the university, as myself. And that's a big task. And I accomplished. You think making ice cream has to be a big task for a person to have a find all the time for—to go here. I find all the time, against my surroundings. I got no chance. But my chance is my own decision, my own pushing. I push, I go. I don't push, I stay where I am. That's the only division in life. Whatever you want to do, you do. But you have to have the intention, the drive

AH: Determination, yes.

AN: Exactly.

AH: Yes. So, you're in New Jersey, you learn how to make your own ice cream, what next? You—

AN: Over there I stay—

AH: —you got a new store?

AN: I was in that state fifteen years.

AH: Fifteen years?

AN: But one day, I had the two stores. This one and that one. I left my son over there, and I travel back and forth because that was very, very busy time.

AH: All right, so you came down here to Tampa?

AN: Because my neighbor across the street, he called me there and tell me this place was for sale.

AH: Okay.

AN: Then he called me at eight in the morning.

AH: How did you know this man? You knew him from Cuba?

AN: He's from my town.

AH: Okay.

AN: I tell him if any chance that place was for sale, let me know, I [would] come to buy. And he called me at eight in the morning. He told me what—the price, and what I have to do. Six o'clock. The store is mine.

AH: What, you flew down by six o'clock?

AN: It was in the morning. I take a plane; the plane is just a minute from wherever. I take the plane, I bring the money—the down payment, whatever. And I came here and I signed the paper the same day at six o'clock.

AH: What year was this? This was 19—?

AN: Twenty-three years ago.

AH: Okay. So 198—

AN: I open here in June—in June 1981, I think.

AH: Eighty-one [1981], okay.

AN: And then I let the people stay here for fifteen more days. On June first, I opened. There was nothing here. Nothing. I pay for—

AH: It was empty?

AN: No, it was something, but not good.

AH: Yeah.

AN: I can't use it—it doesn't work. But I paid for the position—the location.

AH: I see.

AN: And over there, when I moved to here, the landlord over there raised my rent three times in one shot.

AH: You mean, by three times?

AN: No, no—one shop, my rent was three times higher. And I said, “Keep it!”

AH: And how many years went by that you had both places?

AN: One year and the second year when I tried to start it, I went there to—because over there we worked only six months.

AH: Oh, okay.

AN: The store is open six months.

AH: During the summer or the winter?

AN: Only in the summer. And then there is no money there.

AH: Yeah.

AN: No money. And then, when I go over there in February to set up the place for opening the first of March, he said, “You have to pay three times the rent.” And I said, “Okay, keep it!”

AH: Yeah.

AN: I tried to sell to the other person who wanted to open the store over there, but what I have over there, he don't want to buy nothing.

AH: Did you serve other food in New Jersey?

AN: Over there I sell hamburgers and fries, little things.

AH: Yeah. So you had made other food. Was there any kind of Cuban specialties you served? I saw—

AN: Over there was—

AH: —deviled crab—

AN: Over there, I don't—it's different than us. Totally.

AH: Yeah.

AN: The states—from a state to state, people think it is the same, it's not. The food over there, I sell—one summer I sell over there a hundred hamburger a day. Here I sell three. Over there I sell not many hamburgers. Here they buy more hamburgers. I don't sell many Cuban sandwiches there; here I sell a lot of Cuban sandwiches. And sausage is one. You don't sell sausage in a store over there—you know, Italian sausage or (inaudible) sausage. They use a different (inaudible).

And my story, I have a lunch wagon truck for three years too.

AH: What happened?

AN: A lunch truck.

AH: Oh, a lunch truck.

AN: Because in the winter I have nothing to do.

AH: I see.

AN: Then I buy a truck, with a kitchen inside. Big truck! And I sell food, like in the restaurant. It's a restaurant on wheels.

AH: You went to work sites?

AN: I went to the port, Port of New York.

AH: Okay.

AN: Port New (inaudible)—it's the same port. They call it Port of New York.

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

AH: —just moved down here, they raise your rent, you say goodbye to New Jersey. You're in Tampa to stay.

AN: I bring my son first. I don't bring my son; my son was that time to when he leaves. He have a tremendous job over there. He worked for the Exxon Refinery.

AH: Okay.

AN: He has a degree on (inaudible). And he used that degree, or that diploma, to get the job over there. But he can't resist to stay there without a mother and father. He quit and come and live here. And he became a policeman.

AH: Here in Tampa?

AN: He's already twenty years in the police department.

AH: Wow.

AN: He finished the police, then twenty—on the twentieth of this month, he had the right to retire.

pause in recording

AN: He chose to stay. He chose to stay for seven more years. He's a detective on the (inaudible). Same name as me. And my daughter is—eventually my daughter came to be here, my only daughter. And she work as the—on the shipping company for twenty-four years.

AH: What company?

AN: Navieras of Puerto Rico.

AH: Okay.

AN: But the Navieras now, was bankrupt. And put her out of a job.

AH: What kind of company was this? What did they do?

Unidentified Voice #1: Shipping.

AH: Shipping?

Unidentified Voice #1: She worked in computers.

AH: Okay.

AN: Sylvia?

Unidentified Voice #1: *Si*.

AN: No, she was secretary of the president.

Unidentified Voice #1: Oh, you said something about shipping.

AN: Shipping, shipping. Shipping.

AH: Shipping. Moving—yeah.

AN: Yeah. Shipping on the boat.

Unidentified Voice #1: (inaudible) computer.

AH: Yeah.

AN: And then I see her, she's out of [a] job after twenty-four years of working there, because the company was bankrupt.

Unidentified Voice #1: Yeah, the company went bad.

AN: But now she work for the Lykes Brother.

AH: Lykes?

AN: Lykes.

AH: Yes.

AN: In the same job. But she get less money. But eventually she'll go into more money.

AH: Yeah. So what were some of the challenges you faced when you first came here? What was difficult?

AN: What challenged me?

AH: Yeah, I guess, I guess—either New Jersey or here. What were the difficult things about starting your own restaurant, your own ice cream place?

AN: Like I said, I see no difference. The only difference is over there is the population is bigger. And because the population is bigger, you have to change the plan. Over there the trucks, you sell ice cream on the truck and you need a few blocks to do your business.

Down here because the population is extended, you need more, more—more. More time driving. Then the ice cream truck here is no business.

AH: No.

AN: But same thing with the store. Over there I sell—I use—a batch is a count of 250. Here I use it a hundred. Then, how you bring the people to your place to make more money—you are (inaudible). You sell only one item, you can make it. But I sell anything. I sell Cuban food, American food, ice cream for the American, ice cream for the Puerto Rican, ice cream for the Colombian, ice cream for the Indian people, ice cream for everybody. Plus, you are the only one in town who sells shoes. Everybody when they meet you, they have to go to you.

AH: To sell what?

AN: Shoes.

AH: Juice.

Unidentified Voice #1: Shoes.

AN: Shoes.

AH: Oh, shoes, okay.

AN: If there's only one person who fix your shoes or sell shoes, you have to go there. And here it's—okay. Because I know what to do, I said, “Okay, I make ice cream for everybody.”

AH: There was an Indian gentleman here when I first came. He says he ordered one hundred buckets for a party once. Yeah.

AN: In India, they don't buy the ice cream here for their parties, they have no ice cream.

AH: Yeah.

AN: They have no ice cream.

AH: So you mentioned Colombians, Puerto Ricans—

AN: Colombian, Puerto Rican—

AH: Indians, what other kind of people?

AN: Cubans—

AH: Cubans.

AN: Cubans, Mexicans.

AH: Mexican? What kind of the flavor do the Mexicans like?

AN: The Mexican people, they like incredible strawberry.

AH: Strawberry.

AN: And they like mamey too, the tropical. But they more inclined to strawberry.

AH: And with Indians it's mango and it's the saffron?

AN: Mango, and they have calling cashew raisins.

AH: Yes, cashew and raisins.

AN: And they like the tropical fruit too, like (inaudible); they call it (inaudible). Another called—

Unidentified Voice #1: Kesar pista.

AN: No, the kesar pista, I mentioned that. Kesar pista is saffron with pistachios. And they like another calling—

Unidentified Voice #1: Chiku?

AN: Chiku [sapodilla] is another tropical fruit we call *nispero*. They like it.

Unidentified Voice #1: Lychee.

AN: Lychee. That is a red little fruit from China. Lychee. They like it. But they're very inclined to one flavor. They like kesar pista most.

Unidentified Voice #1: (inaudible) *grande fiesta de los Indian*.

AN: Oh, I went a few years to the Indian festival here in Tampa.

AH: Oh, and you sell your ice cream there?

AN: Yeah. But the last year I went there, they bring another Indian people, Indian guy, to sell ice cream.

AH: Oh.

AN: And when they call me the next year, I get a stop here with them. A bunch (inaudible), that red ice cream nobody wants. And the next year I said, “If you give me the exclusive to sell ice cream to your people, I’ll go. You don’t do that, I quit.” I don’t go no more.

AH: Yeah.

AN: And I (inaudible), to the Indian. It’s coming. Ten thousand, I don’t know.

Unidentified Voice #1: It’s really big.

AN: And they’re done there.

AH: Yeah, over at USF?

AN: Yeah.

AH: Lots. Yeah.

AN: I went there like for three or four years. I sell a lot.

AH: I’m sure.

AN: It was good.

AH: Yeah.

AN: But one day, when I get stuck with the ice cream and I had no way to sell it, I say, “Okay, stay with your own people.”

AH: What other kinds of— So, Puerto Ricans, what do they like most?

AN: Coconut.

AH: Coconut. What about the Cubans? Obviously, some mamey.

AN: Coconut. And mamey.

AH: What about Col—

AN: Colombian, they like *guanábana*.

AH: Oh.

AN: They call it soursop. But all the Spanish people from the Caribbean area—they eat all tropical flavors.

AH: Yeah. Papaya.

AN: More or less. Papaya is a good seller, but only small amounts.

AH: I see.

AN: It's no big thing. Most flavor I have for—because I don't like to say, "I don't have these, I don't have that." I like to say, "I have." And then sometimes I have to even throw [them] away, because they get old in the freezer and I have to. But I don't like to say no.

AH: Yeah.

AN: And I just made it.

AH: What other big items do you have that you sell a lot of? You got the ice cream—

AN: Of the Cuban food, I have one item that nobody else makes it here in town, is called the *frito cubano*. It's like a hamburger. But it's spicy. Not spicy-hot; it's with a condiment. They have Spanish sauce in the compound, they have roast pork, ground beef, and then we add garlic, onions, saffron—no saffron—*si*, (inaudible).

AH: Oregano?

AN: No, the red powder.

AH: Chili powder?

AN: No. It's from Spain. Okay, never mind.

AH: Cayenne?

AN: No. It's a—

AH: Red powder.

AN: Something I forgot the name of.

AH: Oh, paprika?

AN: Paprika. From Spain. And salt, eggs—real eggs with the white part—and then I bread it, with bread powder to make a dough. And we make little patties of three ounces. Very tasty.

AH: Sounds good.

AN: And we sell a lot. Every time I make, I make like four or five hundred at a time. But I have to do it myself.

AH: Yeah.

AN: I don't trust nobody.

AH: (laughs)

AN: People help me. They—maybe a few onions, bring me this, bring me that. But I—

AH: Yeah.

AN: —I'm the magician. It's me. (laughs)

AH: Yeah, that's right.

AN: I made the concoction all the time. I don't trust nobody.

AH: Well, it said—where was it?—it says you, you know, you try to—your son destroyed every flavor. You tried to show him how to do it.

AN: And not only him. I use him as—he's mad, he's mad with me because I say that.

AH: But it was an example.

AN: Yeah, but everybody's the same. If you teaching somebody to do things, they have to have real interest. And learn with a purpose. If I—he teach me what to do later on, I can do it. Then they learn well. But if they don't want to do it after leaving or to prove something, nobody like. Because they forgot.

I tell—you tell them, “This is required amount of citric acid.”

And then the next day they ask you, “How much citric acid I have to put in the compound?”

“Man, it's an ounce!”

“Oh. Oh, yeah.”

But on my case, you tell me one ounce, I don't forget. Because I know it's an ounce. Like salt, salt is little bit only. Majority of people, they don't know what to do with the salt. In one batch of coconut ice cream, I used to put three little spoons—in ten gallons—of salt. Teaspoon! They don't want to learn that.

AH: Yeah.

AN: They don't want to go into details. But if you put four spoons [of salt], the people feel it salty.

AH: Oh, you taste the difference.

AN: And then it's—if you don't put no salt, then it's bad. It's empty. And it's like that. All the (inaudible) requires salt. The ice cream place or the food is all with the salt, mainly from the salt on the ice cream is sugar. On the cooking and the kitchen is mainly—the main ingredient is salt. The way to accommodate it is to salt it, the food.

AH: So let's say that—

AN: Other things are good here [that] I sell is roast pork.

AH: Roast pork?

AN: That I roast here, I cook in here. We make another thing they call (inaudible). That is the (inaudible). We make ox tail. We made ground beef. The ground beef we cook in here is different than any other one. Because in England they call it like a sloppy joe.

AH: I see.

AN: But it's a lot different. They cooking with olives. Green olives, with—

AH: Like picadillo?

AN: Yeah, we put some of them—raisins, black raisins. And then we season it different. It's not a Cuban food like many people think.

AH: I see.

AN: The Cuban food is a Spanish food. Spanish, from Spain. And we are more Spanish inclined than other nationalities in America. Our food is like a Spanish food. We don't cook nothing if we don't make sofrito first.

AH: Yes.

AN: And then we put that into the meat or rice or whatever. And it's of course more tasty.

AH: Yes.

AN: More tasty.

AH: So if someone went back into time, when you were young—a young man, say

twenty years old. And they said to you, “You are going to spend the last half of your life making ice cream—”

AN: I don't believe it.

AH: You wouldn't believe it. No?

AN: No. That is only— That's my son.

AH: How you doing?

AN: He [Andy] is writing a book for—(inaudible)?

AH: Sure. Well, you—so you wouldn't have believed that you would have gotten an ice cream business?

AN: I no believe.

AH: Yeah, so you can—in a strange way, you can thank—

AN: (inaudible)

AH: So in a strange way, you can thank Fidel Castro for getting you into the ice cream business.

AN: No.

AH: No?

AN: No.

AH: Yeah.

AN: No, I don't—I have nothing to say thank you to Castro. I don't want to live here. I live here because [of] the dictator in Cuba.

AH: Yeah.

AN: I like my country, I want to go back to my country, and I think everything of my country. And I hate what he did to my country. And I suffer internally for the disgrace he cause to my people. I'm very political about it.

AH: Yes.

AN: You can't be talking good about Castro—I am not talking to you.

AH: No, I wouldn't do that.

AN: I'm very political on that.

AH: Yes.

AN: Very, very sensitive.

AH: I understand.

AN: Very, very. No, I don't—

AH: Yeah.

AN: When I see my kids grow up here, my dream was not that—my dream was they grow up in my country.

AH: In Cuba.

AN: Not here. I told you, I don't see no difference between my Cuba in my times, and the United States of this time. I don't see no difference.

AH: Yeah.

AN: We—I think Cubans are great people, smart people, people that push for the one and I—even the Cubans that came from there, we saw that (inaudible), good too. They bad if they bad. If they good, they exile people.

AH: So what's your favorite thing about running this business? Besides the singing, of course.

AN: The freedom.

AH: The freedom?

AN: The freedom. I was accustomed to—it's a funny story. I work on the court up to twenty-one years old. And I get my degree from the court—the same court gave me the title.

AH: Okay.

AN: The day I get twenty-one years old—that is majority of age, like here it is eighteen. Was twenty-one. The next day I have an office across the street from the court, where I start work as a *procurador*.

AH: As a what?

AN: *Procurador*.

AH: *Procurador*?

AN: *Procurador*.

AH: Okay.

AN: It's like a lawyer.

AH: Okay.

AN: Like a lawyer for the small claims.

AH: Yes.

AN: Small claim degree. Let's put it that way.

AH: Okay.

AN: And the first day, imagine—I'm [an] independent person. I'm a professional. I don't want to work for nobody. I want to work for myself.

AH: Yes.

AN: I had a boss mind. I don't want to work for nobody. And that's what it is. If I came here now—see—now I sit down, the guy that work over there, that's what I want.

AH: Yeah, you're still the boss. Yeah.

AN: And I really like—I am the boss.

AH: What's that?

AN: You born as a boss.

AH: Yeah.

AN: Some people cannot act as a boss, because they have no attitude. First thing, you have to know what you're doing. You are boss, and you don't know how? What kind of boss you are? You don't know how—

One example—the other day, yesterday, I have things to—you have to be a little plumber, a little electrician, a little roofing man. You have to know everything! If a fire happened over there, you have to know what to do.

AH: You have to be a fireman.

AN: You have to be a fireman, too. But that is not all in me; the only people think that—my son sometimes tell me, “You are a—” how you call it? They think I am too much talking about me. I say no. Everybody is the same. Why everybody is not the same is because they don't push or they don't go for what they want. But when they got something in hand, they act the same as me. Same.

AH: Yeah.

AN: It's not because I'm like that—no, no. Like I said, I tell— I give you example. I don't like the people who steal from me. I get mad. I have a dime in my pocket. You try to take that dime from my pocket. It's only a dime. I fight for that dime, because it's mine. It's not the amount of the money. And here is the same. They throw away something that cost me money, I get mad.

AH: Yeah

AN: They have to watch me because I look at everything, because it's my interest. It's a penny—a ketchup—two pennies. Hey, I tell them, “Give it to me.” They can get fired, get mad.

AH: Yeah.

AN: And they think I don't see it, I see it.

AH: Yeah.

AN: And that is different between a boss, the owner, or somebody that does not know how to do—has no attitude. You have no attitude to own a business? They'll give away everything you got.

AH: Yeah.

AN: They don't care.

AH: So what else do you enjoy about the business? You like the freedom, what else? Anything else you want to—?

AN: The business is creative.

AH: What's that? Creative?

AN: Creative.

AH: Yeah.

AN: You are—a constant challenge to do things better. And it's a satisfaction when you do something and the people tell you, “I like this today. The ice cream is good! These stews taste good. I come here because I like it.” What make you happy in the business is the repetition.

AH: The repetition?

AN: The customer come today, but he come back. And they come back. And that's what make you feel good.

AH: Yeah.

AN: The other people don't realize that. The same customers every day make you feel, “I win the case.”

AH: Yeah.

AN: I win the case.

AH: Yeah.

AN: I had case in the court too. And I had that emotion too. You go into—even the judge, I tell you, “No. You say no, but I say yes.” You fight for them.

AH: Yeah.

AN: Eventually, you are like—and that's a good feeling.

AH: Yeah, definitely.

AN: Success.

AH: Yes.

AN: Success is a feeling—is a good feeling.

AH: Well, I'd say that you're a success here, sir.

AN: I don't know, but I feel happy. And a happy person is stay. I stay.

AH: You're a happy person?

AN: [Nods yes].

AH: Yeah.

AN: No matter what happens, I get naturally (inaudible) for why—but I come up with the happiness all the time.

AH: Yeah. Anything else you want to add?

AN: No. You want to ask me any other thing?

AH: I think we've about covered it. Yeah, I just—I really wanted to just find out how you got to where you are today, what you like about it, what's—

AN: Another thing is a (inaudible), a part of me. Many young kids or young people, or other person, they think—they measure success with the amount of money you got in the bank.

AH: Yes.

AN: And I don't measure that way. I measure like I measure—like I say, I feel happy here. My family is accommodated to—I call them all day and they says, they don't—what they want I can pay for. And that's enough for me. That's—I don't want no more. I want more—

AH: Yeah.

AN: But what I got is enough. That is what I want to pass to the other people. That they know—to my kids, to my son. When you got it, when you feel happy with what you got, that's plenty. Don't suffer for what you don't got or what the other people have. What we have is enough? Good.

AH: Yeah, I understand.

end of interview