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Ana M. Varela-Lago: This is an interview with Mrs. Amelia Menendez. And, Amelia, first I would like to start by talking a little bit about your family. Could you tell me, when did they come to Tampa, why they came here, what did they do in Tampa?

Amelia B. Menendez: My father came to Tampa many, many years ago. Oh, gosh. I know my mother was here since about 1915. And my father had come before that time. My father had an uncle that lived in Tampa and, his uncle and godfather who lived in Tampa, and my father came to his uncle's house and established himself here. Later on he went back to Spain. He was going to stay. His parents were still living. And then he met my mother in Spain. And they fell in love. My mother went to Cuba to stay with her sister for awhile, while my father came back to Tampa, and since he was going to stay in Spain, but then when he met my mother he decided to come back here because he felt that he could make a better life, a better married life in this country. So he came back to Tampa, and established himself and then sent for my mother. In fact they were married by proxy.

Yes, my mother, well, my mother was born in Madrid, but she went to stay with her sister who was living in Havana. And she was there for two years while my father established himself in Tampa again. And they married by proxy and came to Tampa, approximately, I guess, like, 1915 that my mother came to Tampa. And they stayed here, they made their life here. And then my sister was born in 1919. And, then I was born in 1928.

AV: Where was your father from?

AM: My father was from Galicia. Spain.

AV: You know where in Galicia?

AM: Yes, from Puentes de Garcia Rodriguez. Part of La Coruña. What is, the province of La Coruña?

AV: Yes, the province. Do you know why did he decide to leave Spain? Did he ever tell you? How come he left Galicia and came to—Cuba?

AM: My grandfather had been in Tampa. In fact, when my father said that he wanted to come to Tampa, my grandfather couldn't understand why he wanted to come to Tampa because when my grandfather had been in Tampa many years ago, he said that the alligators used to come up to 7th Avenue. There was a boardwalk on 7th Avenue at the time, and he said, "What in the world are you going to look for over there when the alligators come right up to you"?

AV: So when was your grandfather here, then?

AM: I don't know, I don't know. I never knew my grandfather, he was already dead when I was born. My grandfather had been to Cuba, and then to Tampa. Many, many years ago he made his money in Tampa and in Cuba and went back to Spain and built at a crossroads, he built a, like a—what today would be a bed and breakfast, I guess.

AV: I see.

AM: And, my grandfather was mayor of his little town there in the country. And he would take my father to Coruña on business. My father was the youngest of three children. And my father never liked living in the country. Even though, well my grandfather was also a blacksmith and that's, my father had learned to be a blacksmith from his father. And he did several jobs when he came to this part of the world, and then—finally, my father was a well driller, here in Tampa. But he also did blacksmith work. And he worked at the shipyard during the war. He had worked in Charleston, South Carolina. In the shipyards in Charleston, South Carolina during the First World War.

So he always did, he was a good, angle-iron work, always did blacksmith work, worked with iron, in the shipyards. And he, in fact throughout his life he did that as a second job. He was a well driller for many, many years. And, in fact, about 30 years ago, like in 19—gosh—it's after Cuco and I were married. Like, in 1965 or 1966, they had formed some sort of well drillers' association or something. A branch of it here in Tampa. And I remember they met at the Leisure Building of the Tampa Electric [Company]. The Tampa Electric that was located at the time on Kennedy [Boulevard] and Dale Mabry [Highway]. They had a meeting there and this, the owner of Buck's Plumbing came up to my father to take him over there to the meeting—because he was, at the time, he was the oldest well driller left in Tampa—one of the original ones, I guess.

But I don't have any pictures or anything. I don't have any literature or anything on that.

But I remember his taking my father over there and my father asking, "What do you want to take me there for?" He says, "Because you're the oldest well driller left in Tampa." And at the time my father was in his 80s. In his middle eighties.

AV: So he had decided to go back to Galicia at some point. And then he met your mother?

AM: Yes.

AV: Was your mother in Galicia, or did they meet some other—because she was born in Madrid?

AM: Yes. My, well, it happens that my father, my mother's sister, who lived in Havana, her husband was my father's cousin.

AV: Oh, I see.

AM: So that's how my mother met my father. My grandmother had just passed away and my aunt had gone from Cuba to Spain because her mother was so sick. And she went to Spain, she stayed there for about two years. When my grandmother was so ill. And when my grandmother died, my mother, my mother's aunt had asked my mother if she wanted to go ahead and go to America for awhile. So she went with her sister. In the meantime they went to see my aunt's in-laws. Who turned out to be my father—my mother's in-laws, also. She went to visit Galicia and they stayed there for awhile. And that's when my father, it happened that my father went back to Spain at that same time and that's where they met. They met in Galicia. And that's when they decided to get married. And so that's when he told my mother to go to Havana with my aunt and stay there while he came back to Tampa, to establish himself. And then he'd send for her. That's how they met and that's, and then my father, well, they went back to Spain again when my sister was four years old. And they were there for another two years.

AV: Oh. They stayed in Las Puentes—?

AM: No—

AV: Madrid?

AM: —well, they went to visit in Galicia. But my mother stayed in Madrid, because my mother had, my mother was getting over the influenza.

AV: Oh, I see.

AM: She had had influenza, and was very sick. My mother was very sick, had gone to several specialists here and, in fact as a result of the influenza my mother was always hard of hearing. And they had told her that it would be better if, if she had a change of climate. And that's the reason why she went back to Spain. Took my sister with her. And

stayed there, saw different doctors there; got better. And when she got better, and then my, because in the meantime my father had come back here; he had to work to support her over there. And support himself over here. And then when my mother got better he sent for her and they came back here. And a year after that I was born. And they stayed here. He never went back until 1958, that they went to visit again. And then he was able to go back and, well, they went to Madrid and to Galicia. And he was able to renew acquaintances, and see what little of his family was left. And enjoyed their visit very much. They went back but they came back; they went on vacation.

AV: Yes. Did he speak Galician? Do you remember your father speaking Gallego? Galician?

AM: Yes, my mother had learned to speak it.

AV: Oh, really?

AM: And when I, I used to understand a lot of it—because when I was little and my sister, well, there was an eight year difference between my sister and me, but when my mother and father wanted to speak and didn't want us to find out what they were saying, they would speak Gallego.

AV: Gallego, I see.

AM: But my sister and I both picked it up! And we knew what they were talking about.

AV: That's interesting. Where did they settle? Where did they live? In West Tampa, in Ybor City?

AM: They lived in Ybor City. They built a home on 26th Avenue. At the time when I was little, that was out, practically out in the country. Because it was in the outskirts at the time.

AV: Tell me your memories of your childhood in Ybor City. What do you remember?

AM: Oh, gosh. I remember, that we, all our neighbors, we all knew each other. We all played on the street. We used to, there was a car that would go by every so often. And, I remember we used to play in the middle of the street there on 26th Avenue. And, we'd have to pick up everything and go to the curb whenever a car came by; there weren't that many cars going by. Although 26th Avenue was a through street from Nebraska [Avenue] all the way out to, past the cemeteries. And a lot of the funeral processions would go down 26th Avenue. And we used to just sit on the curbstone and watch the cars go by and count them. And, oh, we had very, we used to, that's when everybody could sleep well at night without locking doors or anything like that.

And, I remember there was, most everyone worked in the cigar factories. My parents didn't. But my mother was one of the few that was a housewife that stayed at home. And

there was, there were maybe a couple of other people that stayed home, and most of the kids would gather at one of the houses and we'd play all sorts of games on the porch. And, we just, I remember this one lady that we all used to call *abuelita*. She wasn't our grandmother, but she was the only grandmother in the neighborhood. She was home all day, so she was everybody's *abuelita*, everybody's grandmother. And she taught us to crochet and to knit. And we just entertained ourselves with anything. And we just, at that time kids didn't get in trouble. I mean, you know, the only trouble was mischief. But not the kind of trouble that there is today. And, we just—when they, we used to go to Cuscaden Park. I learned to swim at Cuscaden Park. And we used, there used to be baseball games at night. And it seems that everybody would just gather there. Everyone knew everyone.

And of course 7th Avenue on Saturday night, everybody went to 7th Avenue on Saturday night. And walked up and down the street, and up and down the Avenue. And we'd go every Saturday. My father would always go early, park the car in a nice spot, and then we would take the bus. My mother, my sister, and I would take the bus, maybe around seven o'clock at night. And we'd go on to 7th Avenue, got our shopping done. And then we'd sit in the car and watch the people go by. And a lot of people would just visit. We'd stop at some other car where my mother's friend would be sitting there waiting for the husband, also. My father would go to the Centro Español and he'd play his dominoes, or his cards, whatever. Then they used to close at about 10:30. From there we'd always go to Las Novedades, and have, I would have ice cream. My parents would have coffee and a sandwich, maybe. And then we'd come home. And—

AV: Where did you go to school?

AM: I went to Orange Grove [Elementary School]. Up to the sixth grade. Orange Grove was one of the few schools that had what they called the "baby class."

AV: Oh, meaning—?

AM: We went in there, because most of us didn't speak English. So, we went to the baby class and we were there for one semester. It was equivalent to what today is a kindergarten. And then we went on to the first grade. By the time we got to the first grade we all knew what the teacher was talking about. And then from there I went to Jefferson, which was out of my district. My sister had to go with me; we had to go to the [Hillsborough County] School Board to get a special permit to go to Jefferson. Because all the rest of my, most of the people in my neighborhood had gone to Jefferson.

And then, at that time was when Jefferson was starting its high school. So, my sister had to sign a paper that I would not transfer to Hillsborough—my district would have been to Hillsborough High School. So, I stayed at Jefferson. A lot of people think how dumb I was that I was at Jefferson for six years. But it's because I went to junior high and senior high at Jefferson. And, that was it. I did not go to college. Then I went to work. I went to work at Fernandez and Garcia, during the summer of my high school. Fernandez—in 1944, in August of 1944, Fernandez and Garcia opened the big store. The big department

store. And I worked there. And—

AV: Was that on 7th Avenue?

AM: On 7th Avenue and 15th Street. It later was sold to Belk Lindsey [Department Store]. Or Belk Lindsey bought it. I went to work there. And then my boss asked if I would sign up for the DCT program, when school started again because I would be starting my 12th year, and he wanted me to work full-time. Well, I couldn't work full-time because I was going to finish school. Definitely. So, and two of the other girls that were working there had enrolled with the DCT program. To just take three subjects; so I told my boss that I had to go and check in the office and see if I had enough credits that I could take, that I could participate in the DCT program. So when school started I did, I had enough credits that I could graduate at the proper time. And I was able to enroll in the DCT program. I went to school for my first three subjects and then got off and went to work at one o'clock. From 1:00 until 5:30 when the store closed. And Saturdays it was all day, and—then I graduated in '45; I graduated at the time I was supposed to.

And I worked there for almost two years, and then—what I really wanted was an office job. So I found an office job downtown. I went to work for Tampa Abstract and Title Insurance Company, and I worked there for seven and a half years. And, then I didn't, during that time I got married. And I didn't work for a number of years. And then I went back, I went back to work in, like in 1960—'61. And I went to, at that time I went to work for Arthur Anderson and Company. And as a secretary. And I worked there. And then I, and then I've been a housewife ever since. Well, a housewife—we've had, I was my husband's secretary for a number of years. Because his work was conducted from the—his office was—all of the office work was conducted from the house.

And then we had a hardware for awhile. So I went to work at the hardware. I was in charge of, oh dear, I was in charge of accounts receivable. Until, and that was for twelve years while we had the hardware, for twelve years. So that was fulltime. That and taking my daughter to school and picking her up and going crazy doing all these things that you do, that you don't realize how, how many ways you can divide yourself. And, until we sold the hardware. And then I've been home full-time.

AV: What do you remember of the Great Depression, here in Tampa? Do you have any memories of that?

AV: I was very little at the time. But I remember, what I remember about that time is that, since we used to go to 7th Avenue every Saturday, I remember sometimes that my mother used to tell us, "Well, today we're gonna buy shoes for your sister. So don't ask for anything because we can't afford anything but to buy your sister shoes today. Next week will be your shoes." And, but we always had new clothes for Christmas, for Easter. My mother made all our clothes. And, in fact my mother made the curtains; my mother always kept a very nice house. My mother, we managed. We always managed. My father always managed. When he wasn't drilling wells, he was going around to the different shipyards, or the different places that had anything to do with ironwork.

And I remember as a little girl going with my father and sitting in the car—which today, they probably would have turned him in—sitting in the car waiting for my father while he went inside and he'd find out if they had any piecework that he could do. And he'd go and do piecework. And I would sit in the car sometimes two or three hours. Nobody ever bothered me. I always had a magazine—something—to entertain myself with, and I just sat in that car. And waited for my father to come out. And, when my father would come out he would have done a few hours of piecework. Or maybe an hour. Or so. And, he had some money to take home. And, but we always managed.

And then when my father was, another thing I remember also is my father drilling wells maybe for a grocer. Or for a milkman. There were a lot of dairies in Tampa at the time. Or my father going to fix the pump. Or something, whenever the pump would leak. Or something of that sort. And many times they couldn't afford to pay him. So we took it out in trade. If it was a grocer, sometimes we got groceries for a number of weeks. In payment for my father's work. And, the same thing with the dairies. Many times—we were always changing dairies. Because, every once in a while, we'd have one dairy delivering milk when they used to deliver milk twice a day? And then, I remember asking my mother, “Why do we have, why are we changing?” And she'd tell us, “Because daddy did work for this dairy this time. And they couldn't afford to pay us so we're getting paid in milk.” And the same thing happened with the bread, and with—but anyway, we always managed. And, well that's—

AV: Did you belong to the clubs? Do you remember—?

AM: Yes, we used to go to the Loyal Knights. I remember going there as, in fact, La Castañeda. Well, she was my sister's age. I think she was part of what they call La Estudiantina. And I remember—my sister used to play the piano. Now, I don't know if she—I remember going over there mostly with my sister, because my sister would—since I was the little one, and they sent my, when my sister went, I had to tag along. Many times I didn't want to, but my mother made her take me. My parents made her take me. And, so you know I was always the little sister that used to tag along. And, I remember later on—well, she used to belong to something there. I don't remember exactly but it probably had something to do with the Estudiantina.

And then when I was a little older, they used to organized plays, Carmen Ramírez, and some of these older people that, that were, well she had been a professional actress. But there were some that were amateurs. There were a lot of amateurs. At the time, and they would all get together, and we would take part in the chorus. Or maybe have a small part in the play. And we used to go there. And then they used to always have little parties and things for the younger ones. And they would have, sometimes they'd organize some little bingo games. Not bingo, *bunco*. It was usually *bunco* games. And, it was all nice, innocent get-togethers. It was a nice place that you could go, that they would (sirens in background, dog barks)

Recording paused

AV: I would like to talk now a little bit about the Spanish Civil War.

AM: Um-hm.

AV: You know, when it starts in 1939, and ended in 1939.

AM: You mean '36.

AV: Thirty-six—I'm sorry. What do you remember about the war? Right away, what's the memory that sticks in your mind?

AM: Well, I remember going to all the meetings—this is another thing. We had no family here. It was just my mother, my father, my sister and myself. Because by this time the older, my father's relatives had already, either they had died, or, it was one of the times when my father and his uncle weren't speaking. Because of differences of opinion in the, belonging to opposing parties.

AV: Tell me about that. How come they were—always debating—?

AM: My father's uncle belonged to the opposing party. He was with the fascist party.

AV: He supported General [Francisco] Franco?

AM: Supported General Francisco Franco, yes. And, my father supported the Loyalists. And so they would always get into arguments. And, so but anyway I remember going to the meetings at the Centro Obrero—the Labor Temple, going with my mother all the time. My mother was very active. And, my mother was very active with the group—mainly from the, sewing and mending of clothes that had been donated to send to Spain. And, all this through the Labor Temple, all this went to the Loyalists. Well, it went to Spain. But mainly the, I imagine, the Loyalists.

And, we had, gosh, at my house, my house had turned into a warehouse. Because they had, you know, everything was separated; children's clothes, women's clothes, men's clothes, and so on. And a lot of people would come over; my mother couldn't do it all of course. Encarnación Rosete had most, in fact it was when her house overflowed that my house became a warehouse. And people would go over there to pick up items of clothing to mend. The part that were, the clothes that needed mending. And also, if any of the clothes were soiled or anything—they were all made presentable. And they were fixed at both of their houses. The people would take them and fix them, maybe wash them, iron them, bring them back all folded and nice to be able to pack and send away.

AV: How did you collect the clothing? Did you go out, and—?

AM: I, they used to, well, there used to be, the Frente Popular was at the Labor Temple. And I think most people would take their things over there. That's how these, how they started, I imagine, going to Encarnación's house and to our house. I imagine, there were

probably other houses that they may have gone too, but I only remember Encarnación and my mother. And then they were taken back to the Labor Temple. When they were all ready, they were taken back over there to be packed and sent. And—

AV: And this was going on all through the war?

AM: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

AV: How about after the war? Do you remember?

AM: No, I think after the war it disbanded. I imagine. And, I know that they all, they worked hard. And then there were the times when these dignitaries would come in, and they had banquets for them.

AV: Do you remember any of them?

AM: Well, I remember General Philemore coming; I remember that. There were several others that came that I can't recall but I remember when Don Fernando de los Ríos came.

AV: The ambassador?

AM: Uh-huh. And I remember sitting there and listening to all those speeches and everything. And a lot of us that were younger—the children—would pile together around the front seats and would maybe not be paying too much attention to all the speeches and everything that was going on because it was going on over our heads, you know. But I remember, well, I just remember their, always trying to organize things to get, to help the Loyalists. Always—I don't know what else can I say—

AV: Did you go to any of the picnics?

AM: Yes. Yes, all the picnics—

AV: Did you sing the songs—?

AM: Yes, yes.

AV: Do you remember any of those songs?

AM: Well, the lyric that I saw there, I remember that song.

AV: Do you remember how it went?

AM: [paper shuffling] No, this one I don't remember.

AV: How about this one? "*No Pasarán*"?

AM: "*No Pasarán*," yes, I remember that very well. I remember singing that.

AV: So children were usually the ones who would sing these songs at these events?

AM: Well, I think—if I'm not mistaken, I think there were times when the whole gathering would sing the songs. But a lot of times we would hear them on the radio also.

AV: Did you listen to the radio often?

AM: Oh, yes—

AV: To get news from Spain?

AM: —oh, that's another thing. Oh, my mother got the news from Spain every night. And there were, several of the neighbors that would come every night, and sit in the living room because, at the time there was a short wave in the, you would get the news, I guess—I don't know whether the news was coming from New York, or if it was coming directly from Spain—but I remember, some of our neighbors who couldn't get it on their radio. They would come in the evenings, and we would all sit in the living room and listen to them. To the news, and of course then all the commentary that went on afterwards.

And—I remember, it seems, in my mind that I remember a battle in Teruel. I remember that name, and I remember hearing of *La Pasionaria*. And I remember when they said no, they would never get to Madrid, and they would never get to Madrid. But they did. And that's about it. And the picnics that they used to have was always to try to raise money. To be able to, well, like the ambulances that you showed me the pictures of, I remember when they were raising money to be able to buy those ambulances. And I remember over here also that they used to, there was a group that got together, and they used to make, bake *churros*. They used to fry them. Uh-huh, the *churros*, on Saturdays. And some of the women would then package them and some of the women would sell them. And they, and it seems that they could never made enough *churros* to sell. And those were all little money-making affairs.

AV: That's interesting. How about your father? Was your father also involved in the Frente Popular?

AM: My father was, not too much, my father, the biggest involvement that my father had was when they needed someone to transport anything like, maybe go and pick up some clothes somewhere or go and deliver clothes or, if someone came in and they needed another car or something. And then my sister learned to drive. This is about the time that my sister had learned to drive. And my sister, we would use our car. Either my sister would drive—I don't remember exactly what they were used for, but I remember that the car was necessary at times to pick up—I don't know whether people, or what. But my father did some driving, and my sister did some driving also.

AV: Do you remember any of the people from Tampa, the men from Tampa, who volunteered to go to Spain to fight, do you remember anything about that?

AM: I remember seeing the men, I remember this particular man who came back and had been injured. I remember the top of the ear being missing, from a bullet I guess and I think he also had an arm wound. I think he couldn't move one arm very well. And I know he had been to the war in Spain.

AV: That's the only one—

AM: I know that there were several others, but this is the one I, I don't remember his name. But it seems that I can remember his face so clearly.

AV: Did he use to talk about the war at all, do you remember him talking about it?

AM: No, I remember seeing him. And, see, usually when they got together at the Labor Temple there, many times the whole auditorium was full. When they had those meetings, the whole auditorium was full. And, many times people standing in the back, they couldn't get a seat. And, but this is usually when a dignitary came in, or something like that. And then, of course, they'd speak about their experiences and whatever was the item of the day at the time.

AV: How about the other communities in Tampa? How did they respond to the war in Spain, the Italians and Cubans for instance?

AM: Well, there were a lot of Italian people that helped; a lot of Cuban people that were part of the group. Again, I can't remember names, but I think the whole community came together. Very much so. Mainly through word of mouth, through the cigar factories. And also at the time there used to be these loudspeakers. There were these trucks. These panel trucks at the time with the loud speakers. This was very prominent. They'd go all up and down the neighborhoods. With the loudspeakers, maybe announcing a meeting that was coming, or announcing whatever. Whatever the item of the day was. And that was one way of getting word to the people. That there would be a meeting or there would be a social function of some kind. There would be, maybe, because a lot of the, I think a lot of the plays and things and variety shows that were given, and those were mostly shown at the Centro Asturiano. In the theater there at the Centro Asturiano. And the people would just line up. Anytime—every time there was anything like this going on, any function of this type, it would always fill the theaters. Whatever theater it was.

AV: How about the Americans? Would they also come, or was this—?

AM: I know that there were some. There were very few that I can remember. Maybe, possibly there may have been more people contributing that I didn't even know about, you know? But, if they were enthusiastic, if they were interested, they would come. If they knew about it.

AV: Were some, did some events take place downtown, for instance—do you remember things happening, apart from the Centro Asturiano? Events that would take place—

AM: It seems to me that maybe once or twice there was something held at the Municipal Auditorium. If it was something like an important dignitary like the ambassador coming, or something like that, I think I remember once or twice having gone—because wherever my parents went there we went; there was no such thing as a babysitter. We had no, my parents had no family to leave us with, so we tagged along for everything. Wherever they went, we went. And there were some dances given. But the dances that were given were given at one of the clubs. Usually either the Centro Español or the Centro Asturiano; that would be where the dances would be held.

The Loyal Knights also used to have a picnic. They used to have two picnics a year; those were the ones usually held at Columna Park. And, yeah those, those and—I don't know, I imagine the Frente Popular probably had a picnic or two. But see, right now I can't remember if that was from the Loyal Knights, or from the Frente Popular. But those were always a lot of fun too. Those were all day affairs and, the yellow rice and chicken and—and *entremés*, the yellow rice and chicken, and then the ice cream; I remember the little—(dog barks)—Lindy, shhh.

AV: How about those people within the community who didn't support the Republic? Was there a lot of discussions, a lot of debates?

AM: Yes, there were some. They weren't too popular, because the majority of the people supported the Loyalists. I know that there was division among the residents. Because that also caused a little, hard feelings. And there were some fist fights and things that would take place now and then. Because they'd get into a heated argument. And then, would kind of lose their heads, at times. That wasn't too, it wasn't too prevalent.

AV: How about the Catholic Church? Do you remember any problem with the Catholic Church in Ybor City?

AM: Well, for one thing—my husband's family—all four of them went to—all four of them started in Catholic school and when the Civil War came along they were withdrawn from the Catholic school. A lot of people withdrew their children from the Catholic School. Because—

AV: Why was that?

AM: Because—as I remember, since Franco was a great Catholic, and the Catholic Church supported the Franco forces (phone rings)—well, since the Catholic church supported Franco, naturally that turned a lot of the people against the Catholic Church. My father for one was, but then my father's history goes back further. Because my father always wanted to be an attorney when he was little, and my grandfather would not pay for an education because he wanted my father to be a priest. And my father always blamed the Catholic Church—which had nothing to do with my grandfather's wishes.

But anyway, my grandfather had said if he couldn't, if he wasn't going to be a priest, he wouldn't pay for an education. My father—like I said—always wanted to be an attorney. And he spent hours and hours here, when he had idle time, he'd go and sit in on cases and watch them. Oh, yeah, he loved it. And, but anyway, that, my father wouldn't let us go to church on that account either. I mean, when the Civil War came along.

AV: But before, you had been going to church—?

AM: Not too much. Because my father always had this little thing against the church.

AV: How about your mother, was she religious—?

AM: My mother was religious. My mother was religious. But then, for one thing we lived a little further; we weren't that close to the Catholic Church, or to the church. And, but, my mother would go and light candles every so often, she'd go into the church every once in a while. And, of course we were both baptized, I mean, you know—we did all the things we were supposed to do.

Side A ends; side B begins

AV: Now, as far as you know, Amelia, was the Catholic Church in Ybor City supporting Franco in any way?

AM: I don't know. I really don't know because we were not that active. Now, my husband lived near the church. But, do you know if the Catholic Church supported, you know, you were close to OLPH [Our Lady of Perpetual Help]; you were in the next block. You lived in the next block. Do you know if the Catholic Church, in Ybor City for instance, openly supported Franco?

Cuco Menendez: No, I don't remember.

AM: I don't—

CM: I went to Catholic school from the sixth grade to the—

AM: No, from the first.

CM: Age six—

AM: From the first.

CM: From the first to the fourth grade.

AM: Uh-huh.

CM: I would have been, what, ten? Ten years old. That would have been 1930, or before. Then I went to V. M. Ybor School. In other words—

AM: Well, I was telling her that they pulled you four out, your parents pulled you four out of the Catholic Church during the Spanish Civil War?

CM: Right. Yes, because they couldn't afford the Catholic school.

AM: Uh-huh, it was both things. The fact that they couldn't afford the quarter or fifty cents a week that it used to cost at the time. But a quarter or fifty cents a week was a lot of money at that time.

AV: Now, Amelia, why do you think that people in Tampa were so supportive of the Republic? So overwhelmingly supportive—

AM: Because everybody was a worker. Because they were all—most everyone, you know the industry here was, the cigar industry was very big. In fact, I would venture to think that one of the reasons that the Depression—well, the Depression was bad, naturally, for everybody—but since the cigar industry was the industry of Tampa. It was in Ybor City and West Tampa, and most everyone—every family, most every family—had someone working in the cigar factory. So everyone had a job; it wasn't like so many people that were out of work at the time.

And then, too, the mutual societies helped. If there were families that couldn't make it, these mutual, we had mutual aid, they had, the Centro Español, the Centro Asturiano had their own hospitals. So did the *El Bien Público*. I think that was individually owned, but that worked, I think, in connection with the Cuban Club. I think most of the Cuban Club members used the *Bien Público*. And, we always had doctors—you paid, it was a small amount that they paid weekly. But you had access to a doctor, you had access to medicine. And you had access to the hospital. Surgery or anything like that, most of the Latin people did not have to rely on welfare of any kind. Were not ever on welfare rolls because of our mutual societies.

And, so, well, I think, the fact that the clubs would get together every so often; they had their functions. They had their social functions, along with the mutual aid that they had. That, and the fact that the people worked in the cigar factory and so on, it was word of mouth. That everyone was helping the little man. And that was what the Loyalists were concerned, they were always the, I would say, the Democratic Party. And the—well, we're not gonna say that the fascists were the Republican Party, but they were the capitalists. They were the capitalists. They were the people that were oppressing the working man. And most everyone gave support to the working man.

AV: I see. How did your parents feel about the role of the United States in the war? They decided to be neutral, and not sell arms to the Republic, for example; do you—

AM: Well, everybody was (dog barks), shhh! Everybody was so thankful—remember the

Spanish Civil War came about because the monarchy had been finished. Spain had set up a republic. Like a democratic republic, by the people, and they wanted to set up a democracy. But then the Civil War came because Franco's forces came in; they wanted to reestablish the monarchy—which he did. Later on, when he came in. He's been very good for Spain afterwards. But, he didn't, it didn't start out that way. It turned out to be the best thing that really happened to Spain afterwards. Way after Franco. No, no [to dog].

Recording paused

AV: Yes, we were talking before about the United States, that they didn't help. How did the Tampa community react to that? Did they have any feelings about that?

AM: Well, I don't think they were very pleased with the part that the United States played, because, eventually, they threw in with the Franco forces, which in turn was the beginning of what happened—the beginning of World War II. Where then, it was Germany, and Hitler tried out a lot of his new equipment on the Spanish Civil War. A lot of good people died as a result of his trying out his new fighting equipment, which later he turned on the American people. So, maybe the world may have taken another turn if instead of throwing in with the fascists they would have thrown in with the Republicans. With the Republic, the people of the Republic.

But I don't think that the people were too pleased at the time, but then we had our own things happening here at home. Because since that was the very beginning, it was very preliminary, but it was shortly after that—it, it ended what, in 1938? '39? '39. And then the draft started up in this country. Because you could see the way things were going. And then Japan declared war. Or we declared war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the whole turmoil of the world took place.

AV: So what happened when General Franco won the war in Spain, I mean, what were the feelings here—?

AM: I don't remember exactly. I don't remember exactly. I know that, for awhile there, people, of course everyone had family in Spain. And then they complained that people were disappearing; sometimes people would disappear in the night. In Spain. And for a while there it was bad for the families and the people that were on the Loyalist side. And they couldn't talk. They were afraid to talk. Because of consequences that might happen over there.

Now eventually things straightened out in Spain. But for awhile there in the beginning, we all knew that our people were, our families—because I know my family, I had a cousin that was in the war, fighting with the Loyalists—and my other cousin who was four years older than me, he used to run and try to join the forces and they would always send him home because he was too little; too young. And he tried to join his brother and all that, but he was too young; they'd always send him home. But I know that they were afraid to talk. At that time, they just kept quiet because they were afraid of what might happen to their lives. Because they might be one of the ones that would disappear during

the night. Because you know, that took place in a lot of cases until things finally leveled off in Spain.

And eventually since, well, I guess since we were just taken up with our own happening here in the United States, they started drafting the young men, the sons, and some husbands of the people who had been active with the Frente Popular and all that, I think people kind of forgot about it because we had our own problems. We had our own war.

And then, after the war was over—after World War II was over—and of course there was a little more prosperity; people had saved their money and so on, and people started visiting Spain, and that, although people never forgot that, a sort of calm came over people. And people just accepted what had happened in Spain; you had to accept it. And people here, a lot of people didn't want to go. Their families wanted to go and visit in Spain and a lot of people didn't want to go because Franco was in power. For instance, my own family, my own family didn't go until 1958. Because Franco was in power. But then it was like cutting off your nose to spite your face. Because if you didn't go you wouldn't see your family and everybody was getting old. So they still wanted to see their families.

And I think people just got over it and then accepted the fact that Spain did prosper after that. So really, it came about through a bad Civil War but it did improve Spain a lot. I guess Spain came up with the times, like everything else. Like every other part of the world did.

AV: Do you remember when Franco died, in 1975? Was there any reaction here, or—?

AM: No. I don't think there was any reaction here because by that time most everyone that had been so active was too old to really care that much. And the fact that he did do good things for Spain afterwards, I think they kind of forgave him. Maybe that's the term to use. I think, I think after years, and then the way that things had, the way that—events had turned in the world, the way world events happened, it turned out that a lot of people that were backing the Republic of Spain, after many, many years you found that they were communists. And a lot of these people, went to Russia. A lot of them never went back to Spain. And I think, I don't know, world, world, the way that the world—evolutionized or whatever you would call it, the way the world events turned out—I don't know, everybody just forgave. And everything, everything seemed to level off.

AV: You mentioned a lot of communist support. Were there a lot of communists in the Frente Popular, I mean was that like, an issue?

AM: After the war, I worked with a precinct. I was asked to help with one of the voting precincts. And a lot of these same people, I had not seen for many, many years, were in the same precinct that I happened to be working in. And a lot of these people found when they came to vote that they couldn't vote. Because they had changed from the democratic party to the, I forget what party it was—a lot of these same people that I remembered having been some of the leaders, here—

AV: Of the Frente Popular?

AM: —of the Frente Popular, turned out to be in this other party. And they had all changed over to this independent party, I forget what party it was. And you know, the way Florida used to be, you could only vote in the primaries if, they were always just Democratic primaries. If you belonged to any other party you could not vote. And then when they would come out to try to vote and we would tell them they couldn't vote because they were not Democrats, they were all going to, what's the word I'm looking for, they were all going to go to protest. As to why their vote was being denied. And then these people all turned out to be communists.

AV: But was, your mother, your mother for instance, was she involved in any political party? Although she obviously had a very important role—

AM: No, no my mother, no my mother was just one of the workers of the, she just happened, she and Encarnación happened to, have their own say-so about the way the clothes were being distributed and so on. But, really they never had, they never held an office in the Frente Popular or anything like that. They were just probably the heavy workers.

AV: I see.

AM: Or the leaders of the heavy workers, you know? Not the leaders of the political end of it—

AV: Was there a lot of political activity also going on?

AM: Not really.

AV: At the same time, strikes, or demonstrations, or—?

AM: I don't think so. I don't think so.

AV: —things like that?

AM: No, I don't remember any—I remember marching downtown sometime—I don't remember what we were marching downtown for. But I remember, as a young girl—in the beginning—I remember a couple of times marching, with all these women and all these men, all these people. Marching—and the march started at the Frente Popular, at the Labor Temple. And marching all the way downtown—we all wore white clothes. But that's all I remember. I don't remember what it was for. I guess I was too young. That must have been in the beginning. I had to be ten years old. No, ten years old when it finished. I had to be about seven, six or seven years old when all this was going on.

I don't know how I can remember, except that I've always been real nosy. Even though I,

well, I think the fact that there were no babysitters; I was always right there in the middle—if my mother, if there was anybody coming to the house or whatever, we'd all have to sit there, you know. Because, I remember my mother used to say you sit there and you don't say anything. You just listen. So I used to listen. I mean, you know, it used to be that way. When I was little, the children were not sent to a room to play. We all took place in everything that was happening.

AV: I see. I wanted to ask you this next-to-last question. Looking back from today, what would you say was the impact of the war on your life?

AM: What was the impact of what?

AM: Of the Spanish Civil War on your life. All these events. Did it change your life in any way, would you say?

AM: I don't know, other than, that I remember so many things about it. So many things of, everything that was going on, like I say, because we were right there with, I was right there with my mother! And my sister—especially with my mother because my father didn't really take that much interest in it. But, I don't know, I always remember all the people that my mother worked with. And I remember the people that, most of the people that were up there making the speeches. And the rest of them that were sitting down. And there's always, the same thing that happens everywhere, a lot of these people that are up on the stage making all the speeches and all are not the ones that are down here working. And, those, you know, talked a lot.

And, I remember one thing, one kind of impact that it did make in my life was that a lot of people talk a lot and don't do. And then it's the ones that do, that don't really take place in all the talking a lot. And, that's, I don't know, other than that, I don't know, it taught me a little about parliamentary procedure and, at a very early age that I didn't realize, I think a lot of my, the way I've led my life and a lot of ways I conduct my life, rather, I think came back from those experiences.

AV: In what way?

AM: Well, I don't know, in knowing that there's, again, we go to bossy people and, you know, leaders and followers. And some that, that just followed, didn't really know what they were following and others that knew what they were doing and what they were following. I don't know exactly how to express myself but, I don't know, that's about it. After you leave I will remember a lot of things that I should have told you, that I can't think about right now.

AV: You have a very good memory, Amelia. To conclude this interview, is there anything else that you would like to add, or a question, maybe I forgot to ask you that you think should be dealt with, that should be included in your interview?

AM: No, like I said right now, I'll probably think about a lot of things after you're gone.

But right now, I really can't think of anything else.

AV: Okay, then this concludes the interview with Mrs. Amelia Menendez, and I would like to thank you very much for participating in this project, and allowing me to interview you.

AM: Oh, it's been my pleasure. I think you are a very nice person.

AV: Thank you.

AM: And I enjoyed the interview.

AV: Thank you.

End of interview