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Ana Varela-Lago: This is an interview with Mr. Andrew Espolita. And Mr. Espolita, I would like to start by talking a little bit about your family. How did your family first come to Tampa, and what did they do here?

Andrew Espolita: Well, we came to Tampa in the year 1913. My father came from Spain to Cuba. Like most of the Spaniards that have come to America, a majority of them come not to go to serve the King in the Moroccan war, which was a war to make militaries. According to the little knowledge about it, what I got of Spain. I have two brothers. My brother Manuel was born in Cuba. My brother Palmiro was born in Cuba. I was not born in Cuba by two months. My father was asked to come to be foreman of El—Cigar in Key West. I was born in Key West. My brother Nick was born in Key West. My sister Jenny was born in Key West. That was in the year 1908, when my father came to Key West. And then we moved to Tampa in 1913. My father came to work here in the cigar factory. Then he was foreman of the Regensburg cigar factory—in the back where they made the Havana Cigars. And then he moved to Perfecto-García cigar factory.

AV: Also as a foreman?

AE: Until the 1920s. When the strike came my father left the job. He was offered to be foreman again during the strike and he refused. And then, when the strike finished my father was boycotted for about—they put him to work in about six different factories and every weekend he'd get one job, the weekend they'd fire him. And then for a long time he couldn't find a job until the Escalantes, on Palmetto Beach, that knew him from Cuba, Corina Cigar put him to work.

AV: Why was he having trouble finding a job after the strike?

AE: Because *huelga, eso es como*, that's like they say about Siberia in Russia. Out here they don't give you a job and it amounts to the same thing.

AV: So that was the manufacturers, he was having trouble with?

AE: Yes, yes, manufacturers. The Escalante, well, after that he didn't have no more trouble anyway, until he died in 1944.

AV: What was your father's name? Could you tell me?

AE: José Espolita.

AV: José Espolita.

AE: My mother was born in Cuba. I think her family came from the Canary Islands. And she had three brothers that fought for the Cuban revolution. My father was arrested the night Cuba surrender, for about three hours, because he had recently married, and they rented a room from a Spanish lady and she put, in the house, she put all black cloths around it. And after they investigated my father, they let him go.

AV: I see.

AE: As a little boy, I lived in the neighborhood of the Regensburg cigar factory. I remember the streets, even some of the streets. I think Columbus Drive and 12th Avenue and 7th Avenue were only paved at the time. All the other streets were sand streets. I remember the buggies, the fellows come and bring vegetables and charcoal and everything on the wagons. Horse and wagons. As a kid, I did like to play ball, and we had the Trujillo Ball Field out there, which is where the Wolfe Settlement is located, at 17th Avenue. And I saw all the teams from Tampa come and play there. I went to the Catholic school. Then I went to Robert E. Lee [school]. One time the kids told me not to play, talk Spanish in the yard in the school ground. I remember that they told me the principal was gonna hit me if I talked Spanish. And I was talking Spanish and she hit me a couple of times in the arm with a branch. I don't think—

AV: So you never spoke Spanish anymore?

AE: —I don't think she did it in anything bad; because she tried to help me, I guess. I remember when I was in the Army we had a fellow from Tampa named Fernando. He was born here but he died, his father died on the way to Spain because he had TB. And he was in Spain all the time, but at manhood he came here and learned how to be a packer in the cigar factory. And one time we talked to the Captain that he couldn't talk English after basic training, to let him come to our camp and the Captain said, "No, we'll put him in C Company, so he'll learn English." And that's what I think that principal thought about me.

AV: So you started to speak English when you went to school? Before, you used to—

AE: I never talked English until I went to school. And I believe the majority of the people that were in West Tampa and Ybor City were in the same boat as I was.

AV: Your parents spoke Spanish all the time?

AE: If you came to Ybor City with anything you'd need an interpreter. Because there was everything you needed in Ybor City and you didn't have to go—we did business with Joseph Kasriel. He talked Spanish to us, you know, on 7th Avenue. He had a store next to the first post office, there was our neighbor drug store on 16th Street and 7th Avenue. He was next to it. Then they had the barber there, Toledo and them guys had a barber shop there. And as a kid we always talked Spanish unless we went—I was never mistreated—I played ball all around the state. I played teams from all around the state—baseball—and we always got a fair deal in St. Petersburg and Sebring. But if I had two strikes, I don't let the umpire strike me out; I swing at it. I was never mistreated that way, in any form.

AV: How about the clubs? Did your family belong to any of the clubs here in Tampa?

AE: Well, we belonged to the Centro Asturiano club. We belonged to Centro Asturiano and I was in the Porvenir Society; that if you'd get TB, they'd send you to Naranco, Spain. I don't know where Naranco was.

AV: So you could be a member of both societies? There wasn't any problem?

AE: Well, my brother, my big brother Manuel, was a member of the Cuban Club too. Yes, you could belong to any of them. The societies were all good. The Italian was a good society. They used to bring their patients to Centro Asturiano. The Cuban Club brought their patients to Centro, too. And the societies were all good and the people went there to dance and have picnics and play dominoes, and talk.

AV: Do you remember any of the picnics? You showed me photographs before of one of the picnics at Nistal Park.

AE: Well, yes, I went to the picnics. The picnic I went there that I showed you the pictures was at Nistal Park. It was by the Porvenir, but I went there for Centro Asturiano too. And I'd been in picnics in Centro Asturiano, the Cuban Club too. Depend, because people sent you tickets. They even sent me tickets one time to go see the opera.

AV: Did you use to go to the theater also? You were involved in the theater?

AE: Well, I worked in the theater; I was not a good actor, but I worked during the WPA [Works Progress Administration] as a nighttime assistant timekeeper. And I remember when Lazaro sang at the Centro Asturiano. He was a tenor from Spain. You could hear him out on the street. I have seen the guy that came from Argentina, *¿cómo le llamaban al chiquito ese?* He was a little kid from Argentina.

AV: Oh, José, Pepín something?

AE: *Era Argentino*. He worked at the Cuban Club. I've seen Libertad Lamarque there. I've seen plays from Vienna [?] at the Centro Asturiano. I saw Fernando Rey, Fernando Fernández at the Cuban Club. *¿Cómo se llamaba? Que Raúl Paula le dió un grito*. Raúl Paula had to do the part of a woman, and he got mad at the Spanish casino. He was from Argentina. I've seen Carlos Paventa from Argentina. And I saw a lot of pictures of Spanish actors, too. I saw Cantinflas at the Centro Español. I saw Arrellano, I saw him too; he was a Mexican actor. I saw a few now that I can't remember their names. I remember when I was maneuvering in the desert with the 7th Armored Division that the first time I saw Cantinflas advertised in Los Angeles, in *The Corinthian Leader*, *¿cómo se llama?* The guy that advertised *The Corinthian Leader*, I can't remember his name now. They were working in L.A. in the movies, Spanish movies.

AV: So what are the strongest memories you have of your childhood?

AE: Well, in my childhood we didn't have much money, it was during the Depression. We did eat all the time, even when the strike of the seven months because a grocery store there, Tomas, gave credit for us and he'd collect after that. My father had about ten cows and he gave milk away, because for about five months, he couldn't pay for what the cows eat, and he sold the cows to pay Pietro Martino. And then after the war—the strike—he gave Tomás the money. We always get something to play—baseball, different games. We were always occupied. It's a different life from what it's today, Ana.

AV: Did your mother also work in the cigar industry?

AE: My mother worked at the Regensburg cigar factory.

AV: Did you work in the cigar industry when you grew up?

AE: I worked. I did work in the factory; I worked from up until about the year '37, around that. I worked different times. Sometime I worked, played baseball summer. One year I went to Georgia to play ball. We were always occupied. It was different than it is now. We didn't take nothing away from nobody. We might have picked an orange at Cuscaden grove, but we didn't steal from the people.

AV: So what do you remember of their strikes? You mentioned before some of their strikes—do you have—?

AE: Well, I was not here when they had the seven month strike, but I was here when the ten month strike, and it was mostly—I don't know why it lasted so long. But it was a matter of my father went out to work in the mines.

AV: Where?

AE: In a place called Tiger Bay, back here some place. There was one explosion there,

killed a man's brother at one of the mines. And another fellow from West Tampa, I only knew him by the name of Alligator. *Caimán le decían. Caimán.* I don't know. I actually don't know, because I guess the cigar maker didn't want to give in and the cigar manufacturer either. So I guess that's why it lasted so long. I kind of, I think we went back the same way we came out. Talk about big strikes, when I worked in the factory, I worked two in West Tampa and Ybor City when they had the baseball league—I played for three different teams there. And every team I left, well, I left because some other team took some of the players. They just went out of the league. I played for Morgan. I played for Cuesta-Rey, and then I played for Regensburg. And you had to work in the factory to work there, to play.

AV: I see. So, were there a lot of teams in the factory? Do you think every factory had its own team, or not?

AE: Well, not every factory, but there was about fourteen or fifteen. Even Tuero, who pitched in the big league, pitched in the cigar league, Oscar Tuero. He was Cuban. He played for the St. Louis Browns in 1927.

AV: Do you like to start—?

AE: I played baseball in the Inter-Social League too.

AV: What was the social league? Was that the clubs' league?

AV: Well, they had one in West Tampa, the first one, when I used to go up there and see them play. I used to get the streetcar on 7th Avenue, 14th Street. I'd go to MacFarlane Park to see them play; that was in the early twenties. And then, I don't know when that one quit, but then they started it here in 1938. And it run a few years. In 1942, I was drafted in the Army. I was sent to Camp Blanding and sent to then Camp Polk, Louisiana, today Fort Polk. And there I took basic with the 3rd Armored Division. And then they transferred me to the 7th [Armored Division] and I stayed all my time through the 7th

We fought in four fronts. First, we fought from the beaches to Metz. That was under General [George S.] Patton. The breakthrough was at Metz. Then I went to Holland with the First Army and a few days later I was transferred to the Second British Army. British Army under General Miles Dancy? [Sir Miles Dempsey, British Second Army] And we stayed there until the sixteenth of December where we left for the Battle of the Bulge. The 9th Armored Division went to Bastogne, and the 3rd Armored Division went to St. Vith, in the vicinity of St. Vith. And when we went there, the outfits that were there had been completely collapsed and it was very hard for a week there. A lot of snow. And when it cleared and the aviation could fly, then they hit them and I think it stopped everything.

And then our tanks fought out there, were (inaudible). I was around Malmedy, Stavelot, and St. Vith. That was in [the harder part], although Bastogne got all the credit. I was

then under General Simpson, which I think did a great job up north. It was tough for awhile but then we got control of it. But I think the aviation have to get a lot of credit for that, although we were out there on the snow, which was pretty bad. I said for a while that I wouldn't have minded to team baseball in Nicaragua. The National Team.

AV: So then you stayed in Nicaragua for a few years? Or, a few months—?

AE: Well, I stayed there about twenty months.

AV: Twenty months? So you were training the National Team in Nicaragua?

AE: Yes, yes. I played Cuba. I was hard-luck with Cuba. Because the last two times I played Cuba I lost twelve innings games. One in Buenos Aires in the Pan-American game. Oh, in Buenos Aires, I saw the Pink House, *la Avenida de las Flores*, which is the widest street in the world. And I saw Eva and Perón a couple of times. One time in Luna Park, and the other time the day of the inauguration.

AV: So when did you return to Tampa?

AE: I returned to Tampa—I had a legal license from the city, and I came back in '52, the beginning of '52. And I could have gone back but, I don't know, I'd been out of the country too long. Like the last general I had, Haksbrook [Major-General Robert Wilson Hasbrouck], he talked to us in Belgium after the Battle of the Bulge and he said, "Let's finish the war, because I've been four years out of my country." He'd served two years in the first war and two years now.

AV: I wanted to talk, Mr. Espolita, about your memories of the Spanish Civil War?

AR: Well. The first thing I remember about the Spanish Civil War, going to the meetings out at the Labor Temple. I was a young man.

AV: How old were you at that time?

AE: Well, at that time—

AV: You were born in 1908, you told me?

AE: Yes. I would have been near—I was born in November—I would have been near thirty years. November the 30th, I was born. It was 1908, only—for me. The first thing I remember is when Fernando de los Ríos, the meetings I went to, and the people talking. My sister was on the March with Mrs. Prado, her husband was one of the leaders. And they'd collect money around there, they'd collect money in the factory. That was around 1938 or '39, no?

AV: Yes, the war started in '36 and ended in '39.

AE: Thirty-nine? Well, in '36 and '37 I worked in the factory; they used to collect money there. Then I was a part time actor, I was in the WPA with the acting company. I remember going to meetings, I remember Vázquez as a kid in the OLPH [Our Lady of Perpetual Help] school?

AV: Vázquez was one of the people from Tampa who then fought for the Republic?

AE: Yes, the Revolution.

AV: Paco Vázquez.

AE: I know Raúl Paula and Mario. I was raised with them in the neighborhood of the Regensburg cigar factory. I lived on 17th Avenue and they lived on 15th Avenue.

AV: And these were also brothers who fought in Spain?

AE: Yes. Raul played ball with me. He went up north and he played for the All Cubans, because they were the Cuban stars, too. And Mario, I knew him. Mario, he worked in a printing place, and I don't know if he worked for the newspaper too. Mario Paula. I remember the two that went were the young ones. The oldest, José Manuel, was the head of the recreation department at the Cuban Club. He was promoter during the time of the fight. And we had a bullfight there, too!

AV: Really?

AE: At the Cuban Club. The bulls, they couldn't parade, but we had a good bullfight. And the lady that was the main lady, I don't know how the Spanish put that, the main lady was Carmen Ramírez. She was a very nice inspiration to the Spanish people. She was a lovely lady.

AV: She was an actress, here in Tampa? Yes, for a long time.

AE: Yes, she was an actress. And we had one of the greatest bullfighters of Spain. His brother, in his time anyway, his brother was considered one of the best bullfighters of Spain. Joselito. Joselito Gómez. And this was his brother. He was one of the bullfighters and a fellow, Paco Rivera. Dr. Paniello was the head man of the—

AV: When was this bullfighting, do you remember?

AE: It was during the, it must have been around the early '30s or so.

AV: I see.

AE: Maybe a little later, but—

AV: Was that the only bullfighting?

AE: That was the only bullfighting. I saw a good bullfight in Mexico City, years later. I saw a fellow named Jose Maria Martorell, like Dr. Martorell. But those bad bulls they have over there, they would knock slivers out of the barricades out there. The ones in the Cuban Club, they didn't move.

AV: Going back to the war in Spain. Did you participate in any way in supporting the Republic? What do you remember doing?

AE: Well. The Latin people in Ybor City and West Tampa—and not only the Spanish—they supported that war, the idea. And then after the meetings and things, my sister used to collect money with Mrs. Prado, like I said before. And she went to the commerce, too, to get money. And everybody, I think the Latins in majority all participated helping that war.

AV: Do you remember what people who supported [Francisco] Franco did in Tampa?

AE: Well, I don't think I remember many that supported Franco. I got it one time, a fellow got mad at me because he said, "Uzcudun was a fascist," the prize fighter¹. And I said, "Uzcudun had a tough time getting the money he got." In a way you couldn't blame him, if they were gonna give away everything. My idea, I have always been a liberal, maybe because I don't have no money. Maybe if I was on the other foot I'd be different. I have always voted. I got a record here in my house. Cabana? I think, the old lady before Pam Iorio, sent me that I have forty three, forty six straight years and they wanted to fix something about my, I don't know what was wrong with my, and she sent me a letter that I voted forty-six years, and that being since she was in office been about six or eight months. I have voted—even in the last fifty years. I might have not voted right, but I vote all the time. And I did vote for Clinton.

AV: You didn't?

AE: I did. I did.

AV: Oh, you did. I see.

AR: I did, because the only thing I got, I don't think the Republicans help the working people. And it's no doubt that we need a change. That's my idea. I don't think that—none of the two parties is worth anything. But I think, in my opinion, the Democrats are the less evil.

AV: And you think at the time of the war in Spain a lot of people were for the Republic?

AE: Well, I don't know about the rich people. I don't know about the rich people that got money here, but the working people were.

¹ Paulino Uzcudun Eizmendi (1899-1985) was a champion boxer during the 1920s and 1930s.

AV: Why do you think that was the case?

AE: What?

AV: Why do you think they did that? Why do you think the people here supported—?

AE: Well, lately, even now, I think the main thing that the Cubans—even the Cubans that are here now—they all vote Republican. And I think that the older people that were here before, that worked in the cigar factory, I always think they all vote Democratic. I don't think it's the best; I hope we get something better.

AV: You mentioned before that not only the people from Spain, but all the Latin community was very united?

AE: Yes, I think that, as a whole, they helped us, and gave money. By that I mean Cubans and Italians, too.

AV: So you don't remember any conflicts between the different communities?

AE: No, I don't remember. I think—it was Tampa, I think—there was a fellow that came here that said—have you heard something about this?—that he said he was something, an officer in the Army there, and collected money and took it?

AV: Oh, yes. I heard that.

AE: That's the only thing that I heard, this report. I don't know much about it because, West Tampa, I love the people of West Tampa. When they had the play-off between LaRusa and Piniella, I had coached LaRusa and taken him to Cuba to play ball, but I'd known the Piniella family first—not only Piniella, I knew the Magadán family before, Pepe Magadán—they have always been close to me. The only living relatives, my mother's grandmother's sister was the mother of the Murgados in West Tampa. So I couldn't hate the people in West Tampa when the only relatives I got were from West Tampa. And that's the only thing I heard. They might have had conflict of interest but it's not been as bad as now with Fidel.

AV: How about the Americans, the Anglos? Do you think they were—?

AE: Well, I don't think the Anglos took one thing, I think they always had the doubt that that thing was coming. That's when Fernando de los Ríos came here, and I guess the man—I don't think they bring the man two cars and tell him a choice—he took the red car because that's the only car they brought him.

AV: What's the story? Tell me the story again. The ambassador came here to Tampa to speak at the Centro Asturiano—?

AE: Yes, yes. He came here and then they gave him a dinner at the Novedades, not the

Novedades, El Pasaje.

AV: El Pasaje.

AE: The Cherokee Club.

AV: Right. That's the people from the Frente Popular, they invited him—?

AE: Yes, that was the Spanish. But the Centro Obrero was always finished when they have meetings full of people. They'd march, most of the people march in that march where the women marched out to Tampa.

AV: Yes, the demonstration?

AE: Yes, the Labor Temple to the Court House, I think it was.

AV: Were you also in that demonstration? Did you participate in that?

AE: Well, I was on 7th Avenue, but I saw it pass. My sister marched in it with Rosa Prado, like I tell you. And she used to go help Rosa Prado collect money.

AV: Now, you were telling me before—I want to have that on tape—when Fernando de los Ríos came, that then they took him to El Pasaje for a dinner—?

AE: Yes, they had a dinner for him.

AV: So then they offered him a car, to drive him around the town?

AE: No, that was when they went to the Union Station.

AV: I see, just when he was leaving?

AE: And that's what I say about the paper hinting that he rode in the red car.

AV: Okay. So the car happened to be red?

AE: I really don't know if he had a choice, but that's what they—had brought him two cars and tell him to pick.

AV: Exactly. I see.

AE: Like I say, I've been a Democrat all my life. I put three years, eight months, one day, and about four hours and thirty minutes in the Army, but I was a good soldier. And I fought with an outfit that fought in Belgium, Holland, Germany and France. France, all the Belgium and Germany, in that respect. I'm a Latin, but I always have loved my country. I am proud of being, I have the pride of being a Latin. I have always talked

Spanish everywhere. Oh, I was an interpreter for about three weeks for the Italian prisoners of war in Fort Benning that they used to bring them out there to work in the guest house. And I have tried—the other day, there is a Cuban there in the Eckerd drug store, and every time I went I have tried to help everybody with my Spanish and English. And when this guy finished he said, "How come you learned English so fast?" And I said "I was born here!" A Cuban fellow. He thought I got here—he said, "How come you learned English so fast?" Because, if I find somebody I try to help them.

AV: Was it hard for the Latins here, do you think, way back, to get integrated with the Americans, do you think?

AE: Well, after the Second World War, everything moved fast.

AV: But before that, how do you think it was?

AE: Before that, I myself I never had trouble. I played ball with young kids, and the guy in sports never sees the difference.

AV: Right.

AE: But, I think at the beginning—and true, I never—there were some guys here that just went to Sulphur Springs to fight. But I never liked to pick a fight, so I never went. I believe the guys, the Cuban guys, someone like that were guys that they were looking for the fight. I never went to their dance, *había los* cracker-dance, when you went there they'd fight, for sure. Why should I go get a fight? I didn't even get in a fight in the Cuban Club for money.

AV: Going back again to the war. Do you remember what was the response of the Catholic Church here in Ybor City? In Spain they were supporting General Franco very strongly.

AE: Well, I remember that priest I told you that, I believe he talked in the Centro Asturiano. He was a Protestant, he said.

AV: And he came from Spain?

AE: From Spain.

AV: He was a Protestant.

AE: And he was doing propaganda for the revolution. He said, "Now, we are all together." And he said, "The man that was one day glory for my country. The man that was once glory for Spain," he said. "He robbed everything that he did for our country when he threw the first bomb in Spain. General [Ramon] Franco, who had flown the Atlantic Ocean." He didn't have much people in that meeting, but he talked and he said they were all together. He said before the war it was hard for him to have church in

Spain. And that at some time he had to run through the woods for his life. But he said, "Now we are all together." I don't remember about the Catholic Church here. I don't think they did much propaganda one way or the other.

AV: And the community here being so pro-Republic, do you think there were conflicts between the Catholic Church and the Frente Popular, who supported—?

AE: The Frente Popular were different people. We, you know, we are Catholic, but we—I myself forget the Church, even during the war. Neville MacLeod was our chaplain. And one day he came and picked me up and two or three fellows, that were Latin from Ybor City, one Saturday to go fix his church. And when we got there he'd say, "Espolita, don't be afraid that the roof is gonna cave on you." I saw Neville a couple of times after the war; he was in Lakeland. He was Sheriff MacLeod's brother. He was our chaplain. I don't know, a lot of the Spanish fellows, they have never left the Catholic religion, but it's hard for them to go to church. Which is true, I mean. My father, personally he didn't like the King because if you have to leave the country—*Mi padre* used to say he was a *chulo*.

AV: A *chulo*? What is that, what does that mean?

AE: *Chulo* means, like, they never work. You'll see the comedians criticizing the English. But if one of them say, "I wish you'd seen Charlie driving a big rig," or something like that, for a day's work. I don't think that's right, but I can't fix the world.

AV: Your father came from Asturias, that region?

AE: My father came from Asturias. He was from a town called *la provincia de Oviedo*.

AV: Oviedo.

AE: And his town they used to call it *La Saulanosa*.

AV: *La Saulanosa*?

AE: Yes. And it had a nickname, "the black well," *el pozo negro*.

AV: Oh, *el pozo negro*. So what did your family do there in Asturias? Were they farmers?

AE: I think they were, that's where the mining section.

AV: Oh, I see, so they were miners originally?

AE: Although my father's father was a baker. He came to Cuba a few times to make money and buy the house and go to Spain, and in the last trip he drowned. The boat sank. My father was sent to Cuba with no family.

AV: Alone?

AE: Alone.

AV: When he was twelve years old, something like that?

AE: Yes. The guy that brought my father brought Casares's father, Fernando—*el padre de Chulería y esa gente*—he was the one that brought my father from Spain. In Cuba my father worked in the cigar factory. At the beginning I don't know—he said one day he put a little, I imagine, bombs (inaudible) up them. They fired him and he went to work in the sugar mills. My father's brother told me, when I was in Cuba with him, I stayed with him, that my father got to the *ingenio*, the sugar mill, and he said a man told him, "What can you do?" He said he understood the guy said, "*alsar*," *alsar* means "lift." But he thought it means "*asar*," "bake."

AV: I see, I see. Right.

AE: He thought the man was saying bake, baking the cane. And he said "Yes, I can bake." But then they took him to dig the cane. And he said there was a colored fellow, an old man, that worked the sugar machinery. And he said he got pity on my father, and put him, but my father thought he was gonna bake cane, instead of lift cane. It sounds alike, actually.

AV: Yes, "*alsar*" y "*asar*." Yes.

AE: But then he went back to the cigar factory. In his time he was one of the best, good cigar makers that was in Cuba here. And I had a cousin that was a very good cigar maker here.

AV: And he never returned to Spain? He never thought of going back?

AE: My father never returned to Spain; it's not like now. I remember when he got the news that his mother died, he can't—and then, he got seven kids.

AV: So it wasn't easy, really.

AE: Seven kids. We never lived rich but we ate all the time. Even with the ten month strike. Thanks to Tomás Alonso.

AV: Tomás Alonso. That was the grocery man.

AE: He was Hispanic. A lot of people helped.

Side A ends; side B begins

AE: — [talking about his father] he gave milk for five months and he didn't collect, and

he had to pay Pietro Martino the money. There's no way you can get out without paying him. I don't know, I think we—I say ho!—we didn't have as much as the kids have today but we had a good life. We did what we liked. We couldn't go some time to places. I don't know, I've always been of the opinion that the more language you could talk, the better it is for you. I wish I could talk Chinese and Russian.

AV: Yes? More opportunities there.

AE: Or whatever.

AV: Let me ask you one more question related to the war. How did people here in Tampa get news of what was going on in Spain?

AE: About what happened in Spain?

AV: Yes, do you remember?

AE: Well. As soon as the revolution [started], I think the cigar makers started that, because the majority of those guys in that committee worked in the cigar factory. I think they started that. The Cubans and Spanish have always been very—they have left their mother country, but their mother country has not left them. That's my opinion. They love it!

AV: So were there a lot of Spanish newspapers here that people could read and know what was going on there?

AE: Well, at the time was *La Gaceta*, *La Traducción*, that was run by Montoto; *La Gaceta* was run by [Roland M.] Manteiga.

AV: How about the radio? Did people here use to listen to the radio to learn about the war?

AE: Well, my father used to listen to the radio all the time. They always thought about Spain. I would hear it whenever a Cuban—when they had the baseball here, the Cubans and the Tampa Smokers—if it had been a war we would have been sabotaged. Because all the old Cubans were from Cuba and the ones who were born here were rooting for here. And I still believe that, I guess it might be all the European people are the same. The Latin people always love our country.

AV: How about the families who had these sons fighting in Spain, like the Paula family, did people help them in any way?

AE: Well, I guess they suffered, like all, I guess. Paula, they lost him. I don't know—Vázquez, I remember his sister, he had a sister here anyway.

AV: Who was the one Paula who died? Eladio or Aurelio?

AE: I think he was. I knew one of them, I think the one they used to call Mimi.

AV: He died in Spain?

AE: He was a juvenile actor at the Cuban Club. He worked there with Chicharito, that's another old newspaper man, but I think when the revolution he was gone. He was in *La Gaceta* at one time. And the collections they did voluntarily. They had the meetings.

AV: Yes. How would the meetings go? Were those every day or every week, how often?

AE: Well, at different times. I don't think it took too long for some of them, but it was not every day I think.

AV: What would people do in a meeting? Would they be informed of things?

AE: Well, they'd talk about and inform.

AV: Were they well attended? How many people do you think would be in a meeting?

AE: Yes, yes. About the Spanish Revolution, they were well-attended. And I attended one meeting—the Cubans—where Prío Socarrás talked.

AV: Really? Tell me about that.

AE: He was on the platform with Dr. Trelles. They wanted him to declare war to go to fight Batista. And he said no, the human cost, he didn't think the idea was good to give the word to go. That meeting was held at the Loyal Knights.

AV: How were the people here in Tampa feeling when Franco was winning the war progressively?

AE: Well, everybody would feel bad that he was winning. We wanted to win the war. I don't know if Franco was a good dictator. I don't like dictators either from the right or the wrong, although I worked for one of them. I didn't know he was a dictator when I went, but I didn't have nothing to do, I just worked with the ball players.

AV: You're talking about Nicaragua?

AE: Yes. But I don't like no dictator from the right or the left. I think they got to rule. I remember General Somoza saying one time that the guy that rule don't beg, and the guy that beg don't rule.

AV: That's true.

AE: And I remember one time that some Cuban, those two generals, I told you out there,

those two officers I talked to you, that Nicaragua was not enough. One of them claimed that Prío Socarrás took the troops and the guy said come and kill him. And that guy said what would he do if he gave his arm? They'd kill him. You gotta kill. So, you gotta look at both sides.

AV: What did people here in Tampa think about the United States' policy? They decided to be neutral and not to support the Republic. Do you remember what the feelings were here in Tampa?

AE: Well, I don't think the Latin people liked that, but I guess the majority of the people here, the Anglo-Saxons, were with it.

AV: Right.

AE: Because I don't see how one dictator could be thirty-two years in office and they now worry about the new guy doing something bad, when they didn't worry what he did before. And I don't think nobody from right or left can rule thirty-two years, without — there's no way.

AV: So when Franco finally won the war, what was the feeling here in Tampa?

AE: Well, the Latin people felt bad. Especially the Spanish. And the Cubans too. The Italians, maybe a little less, but I imagine there were some that felt bad about it. You see, I'm gonna tell you an example. [Benito] Mussolini, everybody thought he was a good dictator. He did a lot of good things for Italy and that, but then he joined the Germans and that changed the thing. No way you could be good for the Germans. You couldn't sympathize with what the Germans did.

AV: Did people here in Tampa keep helping Spain in the same way that they were doing through the Frente Popular and collecting money?

AE: No, I don't think.

AV: —what happened after Franco won?

AE: After that I don't think they continued that. Because they figured if they'd send it, the guy would own the thing. Like Franco, people, I may like him—at that time I thought about his brother: something flying the ocean, like the two Spaniards that flew to Cuba and got lost going to Mexico and through the Gran Poder *era el nombre del avión*.

AV: Jesús del Gran Poder. Right.

AE: They felt, I felt bad. I don't think they sent anything more because they were afraid of Franco getting—but now, people are today complaining in Spain, too, that since the dictatorship, it happened in Russia too. When there's more, that people steal, they kill, they—that changes the picture. I don't know, I was pretty old when they drafted me, I

was going on thirty-four years. Let me see, it was 19—

AV: Forty-two.

AE: Thirty-two.

AV: Forty-two. No? When you were drafted?

AE: Forty-two. *Si, si.*

AV: Forty-two, right. Yes, so you were almost thirty-four.

AE: I was thirty-two years, going on thirty-three. And I fought all this time, thirty-five. And I saw my first snow. Because I trained in all the south. They never noticed that in the Army that I was a Floridian. They sent me from here to Louisiana, it never snowed. It never snowed in the desert, in California. I came to Fort Benning, and we got the damn things, the—what you call them? Like the popsicles in the tree in the winter. I trained all the south. I never saw snow in Florida until a few years back in October when it fell. All my snow was in France. I remember when the snow, we had come into an orchard of little apples—they said they get them to make champagne—you bite one of them, they sour. I remember that we got that night, we put up tents out there and we got to see Russia, we got hay from some barn out there. And put it in and it was the first, my first snow. We were riding in the truck when it started snowing. The convoy.

AV: You have told me, Andres, when we spoke on the phone, that when you entered France you saw some of the Spaniards who had fought with the Republic, do you remember that?

AE: Oh! I forgot about that! That's very important! I saw two Spanish fellows after we left St. Lou, and we started fighting for Melon and them thing. A Spanish fellow came up there and he talked to me, and I gave him some chocolate—two chocolate bars—and he said he was gonna get me some eggs. And he left in the morning. When he came at night, he came with about two dozen eggs, and he gave me back a chocolate; I gave it back to him, and I said, "Why didn't you give it to the people?" He said, "Oh, that's enough, because they've never seen chocolate for five years." And that Spaniard wanted to continue with us. He was a young fellow.

And he told me that when the Germans came into France, they had him in a concentration camp, which I knew that before, because my father had two cousins in the concentration camp and one of them had lost a leg and they said they stole his leg in the concentration camp. And my father sent him money. I don't know how he knew my father was an American, or my father's address. And then, one or two days he stayed around there with us and he told me he wanted to continue going with us. And I couldn't tell him one thing or another, so I called the Lieutenant Pearson, he was a First Lieutenant in charge of the ambulance—and he was my Lieutenant then; I say, "Lieutenant Pearson, this man wanna go with us; he want to continue."

And at the beginning everybody was afraid even at night to sleep, to get up, to do anything. It was a problem because they said they sure were crazy shooting. And although we were medics, we had arms but we had them hid. We were not supposed to have them. And Lieutenant Pearson talked to him in French, because—he was a schoolteacher—and he told him, no, that he couldn't go with us.

Years later when we get to Holland, we got a doctor that he belongs in our, we'd gotten out like a company from the 7th Armored Division and he belongs there and he was a doctor. He joined us and he went with us. And then there was another Spanish, that he brought me bread and things—dark bread and things like that, too—and he was an old man too. And they both told me that, they told him when Germany invaded France and then they wanted to defend France, and they all took to the woods and were living in the woods. But they did not fight, because they said they were not treated well in the concentration camps. But I imagine every concentration camp is bad. Because I saw a camp we made after we crossed the Ems River, where the Germans were giving up and it's not nice to be behind wire. It's not nice to be—I think, I don't know that war—to me, there should be no wars.

Today I am against sending anybody out of this country to fight. A dead American, to me, is worse than to go fight for something else. But I don't make the rules. Maybe it's bad what I think, but that's my opinion. I don't think, a dead American is worse to go out and fight. I don't blame nobody for trying to get out of the Army, or whatever, because nobody wants killed. Might be that they have brain enough— Oh, and the people of Tampa, we had a lot of, it did help me in the Army that we had a lot of fellows from Ybor City and West Tampa at Camp Polk, [they] were together with me at the beginning.

AV: How did that help you?

AE: Well. they helped me because we'd always get together, we'd talk, we had an Ybor City out there. There were all good soldiers. Yes, from West Tampa and Ybor with the 3rd Armored Division we had, we used to say we should have a Camp Polk—I got some pictures around there; maybe I'll show them to you. Alonso, the one from La Norma Coffee, was a captain there when I went.

AV: I see.

AE: I didn't see many people from Tampa; in L.A. [Los Angeles] I saw Mike Di Bona, he was softball, handball champion of Tampa. I wanted to get, tried to get a hotel in L.A. and he was living there and he came up. I saw Half-Pint in New York City, Tony Lopez, the fighter, and I spent one night; I saw Raúl and Eva in the Havana-Madrid and they were very nice to us. We stayed the whole night, in the cabaret that night. And when we went to pay, they said Raúl and Eva have taken care of it. And then they took us to breakfast. And wanted us to come back. So the Latin people are nice all over the world. I saw Al Lopez catch in Brooklyn, too.

AV: That's the famous baseball player. Before concluding this interview, Andres, I would like to ask you, is there anything else you would like to include in the tape, related to your life, or you memories of the war?

AE: Well, I have tried to help people today. After the war, I didn't want to go back to the cigar factory because they were finished anyway. And I hadn't done cigar. I tried to help people. I worked at Cuscaden Park. Maybe I got the job because I guess they needed a Latin fellow out there. I always tried to help. I had connection with—the only thing I'm sorry is that I produced more judges than ball players. Dany Alvarez was with me, Castillo, Fuentes, Angelo Ferlita. I produce a lot of lawyers, more than ball players. And I, during my life, working with kids, I don't know if I would do it today—how the things have changed. But I had a nice bunch of boys out there. Castillo was with me too; he's a lawyer.

AV: Okay, this concludes the interview with Mr. Andrew Espolita, and I want to thank you very much, Mr. Espolita for allowing me to interview you, and—

AE: I don't know if I helped; some people might not think right with my views. But I think it'd be a better world if we did not have armies and we didn't have to fight. I don't see one man killed in that dictator I can't see how we were worried because somebody took Mobutu's place. When he was there thirty-two years. And worry about him doing something bad. You can't stay no place, thirty years, thirty-two years, without killing people. I love the people of Tampa. I love the people that served in the Army with me. And that's another thing you won't believe: a fellow dies in Mississippi, that was in the Army with me, I'm in the store on Saturday morning, and my wife tells me, "Zeigler's wife called you from Jackson." And I called back and they said George Zeigler have died. The guy I never knew, I never knew his sister, we stayed three years and eight months together. And that's something that I remember. I got about, at least I still get about twenty postcards at Christmas from the guys that served with me in the Army. So I like the people I worked with too; I love the people I worked with in recreation. Like I said, maybe if I had money I had different ideas.

AV: Yes, different life, too. Well, I'm glad you had this life you had.

AE: In a way I got to be with the working people. There's no other way, like my father was. He was a great man. He was a good man—everybody loved him—although he was a foreman. He was friend—

AV: Because foremen weren't very popular with workers, were they?

AE: No, no. You could ask Prado, or, well, they're all dead now, they were all good friends of my father. Now my father from foreman, he was in the Arbitration Board after that. That was a Board for the cigar makers. He was a man—I see my father taking some gangster or something like that; my father had as big a funeral as anybody in Tampa.

AV: Because everybody liked him so much.

AE: Yes, people liked him; he was well-liked. He was a good man. He was not a dictator when he was a foreman. He tried to help people all his life. He had helped more people than—my big brother was the same way; Manuel. My brother Manuel, he took Spanish in Key West when he was interpreting some of the cases in the jail. And when the cigar makers went to Washington he went there with José Martínez, representing the labor; he went there as an interpreter.

AV: When was that, that the cigar makers went to Washington?

AE: That was around '32, or something, I guess. They had to go on account of the unions and those things. Because they belonged to the American Federation of Labor.

AV: Labor. I see. Was your brother one of the officers, or he was going just as a translator?

AE: Well, he was secretary of one of the unions. (inaudible) union. But he went up there as an interpreter. He was in a case here when there was a guy selling avocados and they killed him. They got three guys from there; one of them was Zárate's half brother, he survived. One was a fellow, the brother of the Patent Leather Kid *que tuvo un hotel en Nueva York y eso, ¿cómo era? Tony López, y cogieron a otro más que fue el que entregó, they went in the house, a robar y mataron al hombre. Y mi hermano fue cuando—*

AV: Who was the man who was killed? Did you know him? Was he from Ybor City?

AE: *Bueno, dos de ellos cumplieron, Zárate, pero el que lo mató no cumplió. Porque ese lo cogieron en Nueva York y fue cuando mi hermano fue al caso. Uno de ellos se declaró culpable, a ese ni lo metieron en la cárcel. El hermano de Zárate cumplió. Y Tony López cuando lo prendieron dicen, "Tú no oíste que hacía como cuatro o cinco años que estaban buscándote." "Si, yo lo oi pero no puse atención porque yo no lo hice." Y salió bien. El hermano de Zárate, medio-hermano de Zárate, cumplió. Era hijo de Zárate pero de diferente madre. Zárate fue uno de los grandes del juego aquí. Y mi hermano fue intérprete ahí. Mi hermano era buena persona. Trabajaba después con los perros y los caballos. Fue un buen tabaquero también. Yo no fui buen tabaquero.*

AV: No?

AE: I didn't like it, so.

AV: You worked as a cigar maker, making the cigar?

AE: *Si, yo hice el tabaco.*

AV: What didn't you like about working in the cigar factory?

AE: I didn't like it. *Hombre, era mucho fun porque los tabaqueros son muy ocurrentes.*

AV: What factory did you work in? Regensburg?

AE: *Bueno, yo trabajé en varias fábricas. Y después cuando la pelota fui para Morgan, y en Morgan tenía la chance de ganar, y estaba en un juego detrás de Corral y ganar el juego, nos llevaron a Pollinín, que se llamaba Juan González, era español e italiano. Era buena gente pero muy loco. Era un muchacho, era más viejo que yo como cuatro o cinco años. El pollo. Una vez se iba a fajar conmigo, y yo me alegro que no me fajé con él, porque lo vi fajarse con la gente del Tampa Eléctrico, y repartía trompones como un loco. Era de West Tampa, cuando se paraba ante mi yo, quítate de ahí—*

[The tape includes several more minutes, in Spanish, where Mr. Espolita talks about his experiences as a baseball coach and tells anecdotes of some of the people he has known.]

End of Interview