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Ybor City Oral History Project
Oral History Program
Florida Studies Center
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: Y10-00067
Interviewee: Estelle Garcia
Interviewer: Kyle Burton
Interview date: November 28, 2000
Interview location: Ybor City Museum, Tampa, Florida
Transcribed by: Chelsea Tanner
Transcription date: May 4, 2007
Audit Edit by: Cyrana Wyker
Audit Edit date: May 25, 2007
Final edit by: Maria Kreiser
Final edit date: March 25, 2009

Kyle Burton: We are going to be doing an oral history interview with Estelle Garcia. It's going to be in conjunction with the Ybor City Museum and the Oral History Department at USF. We're conducting the interview at the Ybor City State Museum at about 10:25 in the morning on the twenty-eighth [of November 2000]. First and foremost, I need for you to give your consent. Do you give your consent to be interviewed for this project?

Estelle Garcia: Yes, I do.

KB: We're going to start off with just some basic background information. When were you born?

EG: I was born on April 21, 1925, about a few blocks from here, about ten blocks from here.

KB: What was your father's name?

EG: John (inaudible).

KB: What was your mother's name?

EG: Manuella Menendez.

KB: And her maiden name?

EG: That was her maiden name.

KB: Okay. Where were your parents born?

EG: My father was born in Brooklyn—his parents came from London—and my mother was born in Cuba. Her parents came from Spain. And my mother came here at the age of eight.

KB: Do you know when your father came?

EG: My father came when he was about twenty-five.

KB: Where did your father work?

EG: My father worked in a cigar factory in New York, and my mother worked in a cigar factory here. And they merged, so the cigar factory came down and some of the employees came with them, and my father was one of them. So, then they were all together. My mother used to tell me that the minute she saw him, she fell in love with him, because he had blond hair and blue eyes. (laughs)

KB: Did your mother work also for the same company?

EG: Yes, by that time she was sixteen, and she was working in the cigar factory. Yes, that's how they met. And then my uncles invited him to the house for dinner, and one thing led to another. My mother didn't know how to speak English and my father did not know how to speak Spanish. But they only dated—they didn't date. He just came to the house for about six months.

KB: Right.

EG: And then they were married.

KB: What—we had talked a little bit before about their jobs in the factories. What exactly did he do?

EG: He did the final things to the cigar, you know, the outside wrapper. And she did the other part, the bunching. And then, I think, after she'd done that for a while, then she went (inaudible).

KB: Where did they go to school?

EG: My mother went to Catholic school in Cuba. When she came here she went to Catholic school, too, but I guess she didn't go too long because she was working in the factory at sixteen. And my father graduated from high school in New York.

KB: Whenever you were young—were you raised around here, close to here?

EG: Yes, where I was born, I lived there ten years. We lived across the street from the cigar factory that my parents worked at. So, they used to have a lot of people from the factory come and visit. My father, by that time, had learned to speak Spanish, because he

was surrounded by Spanish people and he didn't want my mother to speak—she wanted to learn English, but he told her, “Well, when I learn Spanish, then I'll teach you English.” He never did, because he never wanted to lose the Spanish. We learned to speak Spanish before we learned to speak English.

KB: Right, right.

EG: And it was a real good life, you know. Like I said, we didn't have much, but we thought we had—you know, the kids all felt like (inaudible). They rented the house to the people next door that owned all these houses, and their daughters and I used to play together and we had the same things and everything.

KB: What type of chores would you be expected to do?

EG: Well, I had to wash dishes. They wouldn't let me scrub the floor. I was dying to scrub the floor, and they wouldn't let me; my sisters would do it. My sisters were ten and twelve years older than me. I used to have asthma, and they wouldn't let me do that. And the first time that they finally let me, I got a blister on the knees.

KB: Right.

EG: Because we used to scrub the wooden floors; everybody had pretty wooden floors.

KB: So how many brothers and sisters do you have?

EG: I just have two sisters.

KB: Just two sisters, a family of three girls. It's like my wife.

EG: They were like mothers to me, because they were so much older than me. Like, when they went to school, they didn't know how to speak English and (inaudible). But when I went to school, I knew because they taught me, my sisters taught me. They taught me a lot of stuff by the time I got to school, you know, I would understand everything.

KB: (coughs) Excuse me. What did you do during the holidays?

EG: Well, on Nochebuena, we used to eat at twelve o'clock at night. We'd get together with my cousins, go to my cousins' house, and eat pork and black beans and rice. And then, after that, we used to open some gifts and then go home and wait for Santa Claus.

KB: Where did you go to school?

EG: I went to school at Robert E. Lee School for, I think, for six years, and then I went to George Washington Junior High, middle school, and then Hillsborough High School.

KB: Were you married?

EG: I got married in 1951.

KB: What was your husband's name?

EG: Manuel Garcia.

KB: Do you have any children?

EG: Three children, two girls and a boy. And six grandchildren, can't leave them out.

KB: (laughs) Wow. Do they live here locally?

EG: Yes, except my oldest granddaughter goes to Auburn this year.

KB: So, your granddaughter's a student. What exactly do they do here in the community?

EG: Well, when she was here, she participated in her church. They used to go out to the Children's Home and different places.

KB: All right, that's some of the background information. We'll go ahead and talk about Ybor City, some more specific questions.

EG: Sounds great.

KB: How did the three separate cultures, black, white, and Hispanic, get along in cigar factories and outside of the factories?

EG: Okay, like I said, when I was living where I was born, I lived there ten years. I remember going to Ybor City. We used to walk all over the place, on Saturday night especially. It was like a big party, you see how it is—have you been here?

KB: Yes.

EG: Okay. Well, we didn't have the bars. Everybody used to come there. It was like a big party, and like I said, walking all over the place, even at night. And then—the only black people that I remember at that time was a black man. We used to call him “Mr. Howdy Doody,” and he had a wooden leg. And he used to come at night singing “How do you do everybody?” and I was scared of him. All the kids used to run after him and I wouldn't, because I was scared of him, until one day my mother took me walking with him and all that. And they'd come around and we'd give them candy and stuff. That was about the only black person that I remember from that time.

And then we moved to right behind the Centro Asturiano club. We moved there, and our street had five houses, and then there was an alley. And then all those houses facing Eighth Street—Eighth Avenue, rather—were all black people. We made friends with all

of them. One of them used to iron my mother's clothes; she used to do that for a living. And whenever my mother got sick, she used to come and help my mother; and when she got sick, my mother would go and help her. And we used to walk to Ybor City through the alley, through that alley. So, we knew them all, you know. And then the kids used to come and play on our block, because our block didn't have that much traffic. We used to play together and nobody was mad at anybody. (laughs) I used to—you know, it was great. Nobody felt any prejudice that I can remember, but then the clubs were segregated.

KB: Right.

EG: At that time, I started going to the Centro Asturiano. Like I say, I was ten and they had a juvenile club. And we all used to go there. These two older men used to put on a show, and we used to take part in the play and then in the musical part. But like I said, they were segregated.

KB: This kind of leads into the next question. What were the forms of social entertainment available, and who would participate?

EG: Well, like I said, the clubs had dances and they had picnics. At first, they had the picnics out in the country. Then they started to have the picnics in the building. In summer they had summer picnic and then in the fall they had the fall *verbena*, which they just had. Here where Ybor Center is, Centro Ybor, that club had a matinee every Sunday from four to eight. By that time, I was a teenager. We used to come there, no dates or anything; the boys used to come by themselves. And then everybody (inaudible) or whatever, no liquor.

KB: Right, right.

EG: And then after the dance, we used to go to the restaurant next door and get a sandwich and (inaudible). But, like I said, they were segregated. The club Martí [Sociedad la Union Martí-Maceo], I think, had the same thing with the black Cuban people. They had their own thing. Then the Italian Club here, close to here, down the street, the Italian people used to be very (inaudible). But on New Year's, I remember we used to go the dance at the club next to my house and then walk to this club, Centro Ybor Club, walking in the middle of the night. And then we walked to the Italian clubs. So, we used to go to all the clubs in the middle of the night, everybody walking around. (laughs)

KB: The good old days. I wish it was still that way.

EG: Yeah, me, too.

KB: You mentioned the other clubs. How did people in the community that were a member of certain clubs, how did they feel about members of other clubs?

EG: I think—see, I wasn't a member of any of the clubs. But I never heard anybody say anything bad about any of them. They each had their group, like their queen. Each club

had a queen and then they had a Gasparilla parade. Each club had a float with a queen. And I never, you know—I don't know if it's because I wasn't a member of any club, but I knew a lot of the people that were. I never heard them say anything derogatory about anybody else.

KB: Okay.

EG: I think everybody got along well.

KB: Okay. I don't know if you know anything about this, but through our research, we found out that the El Circulo Cubano met at 10:30 AM on Sundays, would you know why?

EG: I don't know why. That's another club we used to go to (inaudible). I don't know. I didn't even know that. I think maybe it would've been because the people worked, you know, and that way most people could participate.

KB: We had theorized it was maybe an earlier or later mass that they would have gone to.

EG: Maybe, maybe, could be because like the OLPH [Our Lady of Perpetual Help] a lot of people went there. I used to go there when I was young. Most of the people were Catholic in this area, until the war in Spain, the civil war; then a lot of the people pulled their children out of the Catholic school because the pope was sort of fascist and a lot of the people here were not, were against Franco. So, they took their kids out of the Catholic schools. But then, after the war and all that, they put them back.

KB: So, my next question is, how important was religion to the social clubs?

EG: Well, I'll tell you. I used to go to church on Sundays, and that's about it. And they had dances there, too. But I don't recall it being any part of the social clubs. I never went to anything that they had a priest there or anything. Now, they may have had, in some of their functions, but I didn't participate in that.

KB: What did your parents do when the cigar industry kind of dried up in the mid-thirties [1930s]? Did they keep on working at the factories?

EG: My mother got sick. She got TB [tuberculosis]. So the doctor told her not to work in the cigar factory anymore, and she never went back. But my father stayed in the cigar factory till he was sixty-five—no, they fired him. They fired him before that. When the WPA [Works Progress Association] came on—you know, the Depression—a lot of the cigar factories fired a lot of the older people. I remember my father didn't have a job, and he couldn't get a job in WPA.

My mother had a neighbor, an Anglo, little old lady, little old Anglo, and she said, "Why don't you write a letter to President Roosevelt?" And my mother said, "What do you mean?" And she said, "I'll write the letter for you and you sign it." My mother went ahead and signed it. She didn't tell my father anything. And she wrote that my father was

born in this country and he couldn't get a job in the WPA, and a lot of people that were not born in this country were working there and blah, blah, blah. And we got a letter back—I have the letter from the State Department—and pretty soon my father got called. I don't know if it had anything to do with it. The letter said, "The president—" blah, blah, blah. And my father didn't know about that letter until many, many, many, many years later. He said, "I wouldn't have let her do that."

KB: (laughs) So, what did he do; what was his job?

EG: Well, that's—poor thing. He got the job. He was water boy when they were building Dale Mabry [Highway] into MacDill [Air Force Base], all of that. He was water boy.

KB: Wow.

EG: He used to carry those buckets of water. Then, after that, I think he did something else in WPA, but it wasn't that. And then, when he was sixty-two or sixty-five, he didn't work anymore. By that time I was working, and my sisters used to help, too, but they were married already so they couldn't help that much.

KB: Did you mother, did she just stay home, then?

EG: Yes, she stayed home. Then when she got well—yes, the doctor told her not to go to the TB hospital, because she would get worse there, at the hospital. The TB hospital was real bad at that time. So she just stayed home. My uncle used to come and cook for her. And they sent me to live with this lady that used to babysit for me. I lived with them for about two years. I used to come and see my mother once a week. And this other lady was real good. I used to call her Mama, too. Then my mother started selling products to kill bugs; my aunt used to sell perfumes and stuff around the houses, like Avon. And then the man also had some bug killers and stuff, so he said, "If you want to sell this, you can do the same thing your sister is doing." And she did and that's what she did, walked around Ybor City and made a little bit of money. Then, when I started working, I told her not to do that anymore.

KB: Things here in Ybor don't look the same as some of the pictures I've seen from the thirties [1930s], the forties [1940s] and the fifties [1950s], and even into the sixties [1960s]. What do you—?

EG: My house still looks the same, except that it's green. They moved it from one corner of the block to the other corner. It's painted, you know, not dark green but light green. It used to be yellow and white. I've been meaning to knock on the door to see if they'll let me go in and see it.

KB: Right, right.

EG: But I don't know who lives there.

KB: What—

EG: The blocks are so dilapidated. They're trying to fix everything, but the actual neighborhoods are bad here in Ybor City.

KB: Right.

EG: I don't know, I guess they don't have enough money to fix everything, to help the people fix their houses. That's what they're going to have to do, I think.

KB: To kind of jump here, did you ever hear anything about the clubs or how your father or your mother felt about Fidel Castro?

EG: I don't know, but we didn't like him.

KB: Yeah. (laughs)

EG: We still don't. I imagine the clubs are the same.

KB: Right. Do you think that anything will change here after Castro is gone?

EG: Change in Ybor City?

KB: Yeah.

EG: I don't think it'll have any effect on it at all, because most of the people that came didn't like him either; that's why they came. I don't know of anybody that approves of him.

KB: Some people have gotten some information that people plan on going back.

EG: Yeah, well, I doubt if they'll go back, because they're doing so well here. It's a big gamble. You have to be very, very patriotic to go back and start all over again. And the people that are there probably won't like it if they go.

KB: (laughs) What is your favorite story about the clubs, or your favorite memory?

EG: Well, like I say, the club that I belonged to when I was ten years old, we used to have a lot of fun and we put on all these shows. Then, when the WPA started with their shows, they put them on four days a week. I used to go see them every night. I lived right next door, so my mother used to let me go every night and give out the programs. I used to know the piano player. He used to give me the programs, and then he'd buy me an ice cream. At that time, an ice cream was a big deal. Then, when I started to go to the matinees—in fact, we were there on December 7 [1941] when MacDill sent all the trucks downstairs. And they announced that all the soldiers had to leave—

KB: Really?

EG: Everybody was crying. It was a very emotional time.

KB: We've read a lot about the fact that the social clubs provided health care benefits.

EG: Oh, yes. Now, I didn't belong to the clubs, but I belonged to this clinic owned by this doctor. We only paid twenty-five cents a week. And we had prescription, surgery, and we used to go anytime we wanted. And that's how the clubs were.

KB: So, if you got sick, you would just go—?

EG: Call the doctor and he'd come to the house.

KB: Oh, he'd come to the house? (laughs)

EG: They'd come to my house a lot, because like I said, I had asthma. So, they'd come and see me a lot. And then my mother used to bring me, because they wanted to give me shots, because shots were good for the asthma. I used to be there almost every day.

KB: Wow. We've done research that said that whenever they were trying to really get into managed health care and such, they really looked at the models that were set up here and how they worked and everything.

EG: So, this doctor owned the clinic and he did the surgery there. He had everything there. He had other doctors helping, too.

KB: Right.

EG: But he was the main surgeon.

KB: Did each individual club have different doctors, or was it—?

EG: Some of the doctors went to several clubs. I think he just went to his. He just handled his people. Now, there's another clinic that's here across the street from Ybor Square—it's a restaurant now—and that doctor had everything there, and he used to operate there. Then the Centro Asturiano had the hospital for its members. The people would go there whenever they wanted to. Even at that time, I think they had like—because they didn't have any place else to stay, there was a section for the older people who'd lived there. Men, not women. The Circulo Cubano didn't have a hospital and the Centro Español had a hospital on the Bayshore. Then they sold it, sold the property. They built another one in West Tampa. And the Italian Club didn't have a hospital, but they would make arrangements with the other clubs and the other hospitals.

KB: As far as the social clubs, did they offer—along with the medical, did they have any education type programs that you were aware of?

EG: Not that I know of.

KB: Like language classes or anything?

EG: No, that started in the schools, the regular Hillsborough County Schools. They had schools for people, older people that wanted to learn English. They had those classes there, many years later. But the kids that came from other countries, they used to put them—even if they were fourteen or fifteen they used to put them in the first grade, and they'd learn there. No bilingual stuff, they had to learn what they were teaching us. Then, as they learned more and more, they'd put them ahead, you know.

KB: Right, right.

EG: They didn't have special classes for them.

KB: Right, right. Someone had said that they had offered like piano lessons and things like that.

EG: Well, the WPA had that. They offered piano lessons and dancing lessons. I never went, but (inaudible). It was all covered through the state, I think, or the federal government.

KB: Were the social clubs—did they really affect a lot of the ways people dealt with Ybor? Was it involved in a lot of aspects in people's lives?

EG: I would think so, because the members were very active at that time. They used to be there all the time. When I started dancing, I didn't have to have my mother come with me. But when my sister started dancing, the mothers used to all go and sit around. Most of them were members. The culture was—everybody had their own club, but, I mean, everybody (inaudible) together. I think everybody knew more or less what was acceptable without having to be told how to act in groups.

KB: Right, right. Once again, the good old days. (laughs) So, how do you feel about the city and county governments and their dealings with the social clubs? Did you have any information about that? Or was there ever anything that the city's doing this, or they want to do this with one of the clubs?

EG: Well, when urban renewal started, they tore down a lot of houses here. This was during the first term of Mayor [Dick] Greco. He was the mayor a long, long time ago.¹

KB: Really?

¹ Dick Greco was mayor of Tampa from 1967 to 1974, when he resigned. He was later reelected in 1995, and served until 2003.

EG: And they had urban renewal. They tore down a lot of houses that they shouldn't have torn down. Then all of the businesses dried up, because there was nobody to go to them.

KB: Right.

EG: So, uh—

KB: When you say the houses, were they—?

EG: Nice houses?

KB: They were houses that the people who worked in the factory had lived in and everything else?

EG: Yeah. Some were better than others, but they tore down blocks and blocks of houses. The clubs always tried to stick together, but then people didn't want to come, because—see, once you do that, then a lot of the black people came. And the black people that came were different from the ones that I was telling you about.

KB: Right, right.

EG: So, nobody wanted to come to Ybor City, because they were afraid. There was a lot of pickpockets and crime and stuff.

KB: So, was there—?

EG: But then, the city started to get involved and started helping. What they do now is they get grants to help them refurbish the buildings and all that. In fact, Derrie's husband is very active in helping getting the grants.

KB: So, there was a feeling of difference between the black Hispanics and the African—?

EG: They were different from the black Hispanics. The Cuban Hispanics were different from the ones born here. They were like a better class, and they're educated, and they didn't like each other.

KB: Right, okay.

EG: Because we didn't have good schools for the blacks. That's the main reason they're like they are, or they were like they were at the time, because the schools were not up to par.

KB: Right.

EG: It wasn't their fault.

KB: Right.

EG: But that's been—they've tried to remedy a lot of that now, you know, after integration and all that.

KB: So, is it your opinion that there was a different—was there a separate high school that people from Ybor went to, and was there a—

EG: No, at first Hillsborough High School. Everybody from Ybor that wanted to go to high school went to Hillsborough High School. My sisters went there, and so did I. Then they built Jefferson High School. It was a middle school, and they made it a high school. So, then, a lot of the Latin people went to Jefferson and a lot of people still went to Hillsborough. I remember people from West Tampa used to go to Jefferson. That's—

KB: We've got a lot of displays that have to deal with the numbers and the various gambling things they had here in Ybor. Was there a lot? Was there always—?

EG: It was like *bolita*. They had—all these bars that you see, well, they had (inaudible). And usually, that's where the *bolita* things usually went on. It was huge, very huge. What it was, they used to fight with each other, but they didn't bother the people. They had a lot of killings here, but it was the gangsters killed each other. You know what I mean?

KB: Right.

EG: And that went on for years, and nobody said anything about it. Like they said, "Don't go to Ybor City," because there was a lot of crime. What crime? Those guys were bad, anyway. (laughs)

KB: (laughs) Right. So, were they associated with the numbers rackets and the *bolita* and all that?

EG: Yeah. I never heard anything about drugs at that time, never, never.

KB: What affect did Prohibition have on Ybor City and its social clubs?

EG: Well, my father liked beer. He used to make home brew. And he used to have his friends come over, a lot of German friends. And when my mother got sick, we had to pay for this (inaudible). So, he used to sell three bottles for a quarter. And the policeman used to go there to drink beer. (both laugh) We had about three or four policemen that used to come there all the time. And I used to drink it, too. I was little, and every time he opened a bottle, he would give me a little bit. Most of it was the foam, you know.

KB: Right. You mentioned that you had German friends. We had heard that the Germans here had done the [cigar] boxes.

EG: Yes, the labels, yes. I forget the name of the German American club on Nebraska. It's a beautiful club. I've never been in it, but the outside is real pretty. They were very active there. Of course, most of businesses were Jewish people that had them. There were a lot of Jewish people. Yeah, my father had not only the Germans that worked in the factory, but besides them, there was a lot of Anglos working in the factory. They used to come over and drink beer. They'd eat raw meat, you know, and those bottles of that pickle stuff.

KB: So, if you were German, you didn't have to work in the lithograph? You could work in the factories? I didn't—

EG: You could work in the (inaudible) and the storage unit and the sales. My sisters worked at the (inaudible).

KB: Did people really stick together around the clubs or neighborhoods as far as helping each other out? You've already said that, by writing the letter and everything else, that everybody was trying to help each other out. Was that—

EG: Everybody knew everybody, because we didn't have TV or anything; everybody was always sitting on the porch or walking around, and you know, the kids were playing. Everybody used to know everybody. And you'd help out if somebody died. People would cook for you. Things like that.

KB: Did you consider Ybor City here to be home?

EG: Oh, yeah. I work here now, on Fridays. I work in (inaudible). I go back to my roots on Fridays.

KB: (laughs) How about your father? Did he consider this home?

EG: Yes. Like I said, he learned to speak Spanish. He would not speak English, even when my nephew was born. I used to tell him, "Daddy, speak to him in English and let Mama speak to him in Spanish, and that way he learns both." And he'd tell me, "When you come from work, you speak to him like you want to, and I'll speak to him like I want to."

KB: Did your mother consider Ybor home?

EG: Yes. She said she didn't feel anything for Cuba. She didn't hardly remember, Cuba because she was eight years old, you know.

KB: The people that had come from Cuba that had been there a little bit longer, did—was there a lot of cultural ties back to Cuba?

EG: Yes, because it didn't cost too much to go to Cuba. So, they'd accumulate a little bit of money and go to Cuba to see the family. Consequently, they didn't buy a house like the

Italian people and the Spanish people. It was so much more expensive to go to Europe that they went ahead and they all—not all, but I mean most of them had their own homes.

KB: Right. Did your mother—did she have family still in Cuba?

EG: She didn't have any family over there, because my grandmother came. She and her brothers came. My grandfather died over there. So, she didn't have anybody. Most of her family came at the same time.

KB: What are your sentiments, or what were your parents' sentiments, towards the American government?

EG: Oh, very patriotic.

KB: Yes.

EG: My father used to say, "Well, we're not perfect, but we're more perfect than other people." And my mother, she learned to speak English the hard way. She had a neighbor that didn't speak Spanish. She'd go over there and they'd make friends. She used to speak broken English, and she—

KB: Did they vote at every election and everything?

EG: Yes, yes. In fact, I got (inaudible) these neighbors that we had, the one that ironed for my mother. To me, her name was Miss Jean. When I was in middle school I was going to make a book report, and I read this book that said—this black man said, "Once in his life before he died, he would like someone to call him Mister." And I told my father, "What does this mean? People don't call him Mister?" And he says, "Up north they do, but not here." "Well, I call Miss Jean, Miss Jean." "Well," he said, "some people are prejudiced and they won't do it." And you see, when I went to high school it was during the war, and chocolate candy like Hershey bars and stuff like that were very scarce. Some of my friends would say, "They don't sell them to us because we're Latin." And I would tell them, "Well, I'm going to go over there and buy them for you because I'm (inaudible)." (both laugh)

But you see, when the Latins, my Latin friends, used to say things that I didn't like about American people, I'd get into an argument. Then I used to hear my American friends say—and my father told me, "Look, when I came here, I want to learn Spanish so badly. The people that I knew said, 'No, the Spanish people are this and that.' When I learned to speak Spanish, I learned that the Spanish people, some of them don't like American people, and American people, they don't like Spanish people. So, you got to take one person and judge them on their merits, not their nationalities, good and bad and everything."

KB: As far as the racial makeup of Ybor, whenever you are talking about urban renewal, they had gone through and it had torn down some neighborhoods. Were there certain blocks that were of an ethnic group?

EG: Yes, all of the section where I was born. Most of the houses that were there when I was born are still there, but like I said, they're still dilapidated. Then they went ahead and tore down some of the (inaudible), which I don't understand why. See, now they're hoping to bring these people back to Ybor City. I hope it works.

KB: How do you feel about the big center that was just built? Do you think that's gonna —?

EG: I came the first day. I had an invitation. I came and it was real nice. I sure hope it works. Because I think that once these places are rented, then the old section will improve, but right now (inaudible). There's nobody there shopping or anything and those shops can't survive.

KB: Right.

EG: Hopefully, they will. You know all of these got burned, you know. Do you remember the fire?

KB: Right, right. Is this where the fire was in?

EG: Yes, they didn't put firewalls in. Now, the second time they're doing it, they're putting firewalls.

KB: They should just have a fire truck parked over here just waiting for something.

EG: Yeah. You know they had to take things out of the museum because (inaudible) so close and they're afraid the wind will blow the fire over here.

KB: That's what they had said, that it was right on top of the museum.

EG: Right. We're protected by that building there, but I don't know if that's block or if that's wood; can you tell?

KB: It looks like it's block.

EG: I don't know what that is. It must be some kind of warehouse, a cigar warehouse or something. I know it used to be a cigar factory, but I think it's just a warehouse.

KB: You had mentioned before that your mother had gotten TB in the factory. Was there a lot of disease in the factory? We had read that that was the most common thing that would occur in the factories.

EG: TB?

KB: Yes.

EG: Yeah, because everybody was so close together and the ventilation wasn't that great. They couldn't have fans because of the tobacco and all that. But I don't know how many people. I know that TB was one that I used to hear about. Now you don't hear about anybody getting TB. She got well. She stayed at home. She went from about 115 pounds to almost 200 pounds. Then she had to lose weight, because she was too heavy. But she had everything, all the dishes; her dishes were separate.

KB: Is there anything you'd like to add, ask, say; anything you'd like to talk about that we haven't covered? Think about the museum, or if there's something that maybe your kids or your grandkids or your great-grandkids might want to hear?

EG: Well, I wish that more people would come here to the museum, because I think it's unique. And I think that once these houses, these apartments, get filled, Ybor City hopefully will be like it used to be. I hope my grandchildren will come. They've come to the museum, but I hope that they come more often and participate in some of the functions that they have in the clubs.

KB: Yeah, this is a really interesting place. I'm a Navy brat myself; my father was—

EG: Oh, yes?

KB: I was born in Key West. I've moved all around. I went to high school in Orlando. My wife and I, we just moved here from Wisconsin about two years ago. I had no idea this place even existed, and it's been a really fun education.

EG: Has your wife been here?

KB: No, she has been here. She's a teacher over in St. Pete. She's always looking for me to scout out new places where she can bring her classes and stuff.

EG: A lot of classes come here; you saw that class. We usually have a class every day, at least, coming through.

KB: Most of my focus, as an anthropology student, is focusing a lot on how social clubs acted as ways of taking different ethnic groups and sort of plugging them into mainstream American culture. Because there were people here that, you know, had been here for a while; but if you didn't speak the language, how did you learn the language? If you got sick, what would you do if you didn't have a real support group?

EG: You see, when the factories came, the manufacturers built all these little houses like that. And they built blocks and blocks and blocks of those, and they rented them to their employees. If they wanted to buy them, they would take the money out every week in the

salary. Now, as far as if they got sick or anything like that, I don't know. But I don't know if the clubs were already established, but they were when I remember. I know they had clinics, that I know. They had those two clinics, and those doctors used to—like I said, they used to go to the houses. I never heard of any homeless. We didn't have homeless people; everybody lived in a house. And as far as the food goes, I don't ever remember people needing food. Maybe I was—

KB: From what we've seen and from who I've talked to, the system worked very, very well, because most of the people that were here are gone. I mean, if you look for a lot of folks to talk to, a lot of them have moved on. I mean, they kind of—they're living wherever—

EG: Or they're dead.

KB: Right, exactly, or their kids are off living their lives and everything else. So, it's an interesting little microcosm to look at, like I was saying, to see how people started here not knowing the language and everything else, to where one generation later their children are college professors and everything else.

Thank you very much for your time. If you'd like a copy, I can get you a copy of the tape and my final indexing. I can drop it off here, and I'll relay this information right.

EG: Okay. Do you want to go see the—?

KB: Yes. (laughs)

End of interview