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Ana M. Varela-Lago: This is an interview with Mr. Joe Maldonado. Joe, I would like to start by talking a little bit about your family.

Joe C. Maldonado: All right.

AV: Could you tell me how they came to Tampa, why did they come to Tampa, what did they do here?

JM: Primero vino mi madre [my mother came first].

AV: (whispers) In English.

JM: Oh, I'm sorry. First my mother and my grandmother came. They were like two pioneers, two women. My mother was eleven years old. And they came to Havana. And I remember my mother expressing her shock at seeing the first black person speaking Spanish. She couldn't figure out how a black person could speak Spanish. But they didn't stay in Havana. They went on to, they came on to Tampa. In Tampa, my grandmother worked wherever she could. For the first few years. And my mother learned to—back in Spain her profession was a seamstress. She could look at a dress and cut it out without a pattern. And she took in sewing and made a living that way.

And then two years, three years later, they sent for my aunt. My aunt was nine years old. And my uncle was ten. And they came alone also, and they followed the same route. From Spain to Havana. While on board, my aunt met the first officer of the ship, and they became engaged and they got married.

So, then my mother, as the years went by, became a cigar maker. She worked in the cigar

factories. And she worked there for many years. And, basically the reason they left Spain was because in Asturias, in the village they were in, if they didn't attend certain masses, their family was fined; they had to pay a fine. So, my grandmother decided that she just wanted to migrate back—out to the New World. And that's one of the reasons they left.

As a matter of fact, they were so upset with the Catholic religion, back then, that when they came to Tampa they never set foot in a Catholic church. However, they believed in God and they prayed at home, and did all the things that they normally would have done in church. The only time they decided, they went to church was either for a wedding, funeral, and outside of that they never set foot in the Catholic church—except the day that [President John F.] Kennedy was assassinated. I was in Sarasota, and they called me there and they asked me if I would take them to church when I got back. And that was the first time they went to Catholic church for Mass.

AV: And never again?

JM: And never again. And even their—when they passed on, they did not do a Catholic service at all. But they did believe in God. They raised us, they raised all of us that way—to believe in God—and pray and all that. My mother was of the belief that to believe in God you don't have to necessarily attend church. You can pray in the corner of your house. In the closet. And that's what—their philosophy, and that's what they believed in.

AV: Could you tell me your mother's name?

JM: Yes. Digna del Llano.

AV: Del Llano. And she came from where in Asturias?

JM: She came from Gijón.

AV: Gijón? A small village within Gijón or Gijón, the city of Gijón?

JM: No, Gijón. She came right from Gijón. My grandmother lived in a small village they called Lastres.

AV: Lastres.

JM: So they spent a lot of their time in Lastres, which is a very small—it's a very quaint, beautiful village—

AV: Is that near Gijón, or is it in another—?

JM: Yes. And a lot of artists from France come down there to paint because it's so picturesque. It's beautiful, beautiful place.

AV: What was your grandmother's name?

JM: Casimira Suarez.

AV: I see. So when they came to Tampa, they didn't have anybody here.

JM: They knew no one.

AV: They didn't know anybody.

JM: They just came, because they wanted to start a new life, and they immediately—of course, people that came on the ship with them, befriended them and they were friends. Like the family Corral and all that. But outside of that, they knew no one; they didn't even know where they were gonna live in Tampa. So they settled in West Tampa.

AV: What year was that? Do you know? Was that—?

JM: (whispers) Golly, I don't know!

AV: —the beginning of the century—?

JM: Yes.

AV: —later than that?

JM: Yes, yes. It had to be at the beginning of the century, 18, the late 1800s.

AV: I see.

JM: Yes. Because my mother's—yeah, it was 50 years they were here. Before I took them back to Spain.

AV: I see. And that was—?

JM: And that was, so if it was 50 years that they were here, living here. That meant that it was—and they came at age eleven—that's 61 years ago. So. And that was 50 years in 1968. I can't.

AV: So that would be 1918, they came?

JM: Yes, it was right before the First World War.

AV: Okay.

JM: Right, because they remembered, I remember them telling me that if they would have waited a little longer they wouldn't have been able to leave Spain because of the war.

AV: Oh, I see.

JM: So, it was right before that. Yes.

AV: I see. Okay, so they settled in West Tampa?

JM: They settled in West Tampa. And then—

AV: What did they do?

JM: —of course, my mother got married, and my aunt got married. And they always lived together; two families, like they normally do in Spain. They followed pretty much the same customs as far as food. We ate with wine every, all our meals, we had yellow rice and chicken every Sunday, or paella. They pretty well followed their own habits, until later years they mixed it up with Americanism, American way of cooking and so forth. So, and then of course they became—my mother particularly—became very active in forming el Centro Español, and el Centro Asturiano Hospital. And, where they had their own doctors, the socialized medicine and so forth. They belonged to that. Doctor Win—

AV: Winton?

JM: —Winton. And all that—and then they built the Centro Español in Ybor City, built the Centro Español in West Tampa, and then the Centro Asturiano here, in Nebraska Avenue. The one in West Tampa had a movie theater, of which I used to take my mother and my aunt every week to see Spanish films. Some were Spanish, some were Mexican, some were from Argentina. But it was a very nice little theater. Like the Casino was in Ybor City. And it's a shame that they haven't done something about restoring them. At least show art films there or foreign films, which is good, you know.

AV: Did they speak Spanish at home when you were growing up?

JM: Spanish and, unfortunately, they could tell you off in English. That's about all they could do. But they did not—because they had to work so hard and so long, they did not have time to learn English. However, that really wasn't an excuse. They should have learned to speak English. I remember when they became American citizens, my mother didn't want to study anything. She did know something about the [U.S.] Constitution and so forth. But when World War II broke out, two of her sons were sent to war, so she went before the judge and she told the judge, "I'm an American. My two sons have gone to war." So the judge thought that was very cute, so he passed her right away to get her citizenship.

Now, my aunt was a little more difficult. I used to come from school every afternoon and spend hours teaching her the Constitution and every, all those things. And it was very difficult for her to grasp it, but finally after the third try she did become an American

citizen.

AV: That was also during World War II, or about that time?

JM: Um-hm.

AV: I see. How about your father, was he also from Spain?

JM: Yes.

AV: Also from the same area, Asturias?

JM: Yes, from Infiesto, Asturias. And my uncle was from Barcelona.

AV: So did the family work in the cigar industry, pretty much?

JM: My mother worked in the cigar industry and then my grandmother, of course, became elderly and she didn't work. But my mother worked in the cigar industry and then she sewed, as a seamstress, for people so therefore she didn't have much time. Because she had to—and then, my father worked in the cigar industry also, cigar factories. And my uncle was always traveling on ships, in the Merchant Marines, and so forth.

AV: I see.

JM: I could write a book about him.

AV: What was his name?

JM: José Maldonado.

AV: José Maldonado. And your father's name?

JM: Capitán José Maldonado. That's a history—a movie—you can make on his life. He should have never been married. Because he just wanted to be a womanizer and traveling all the time.

AV: What was your father's name?

JM: His father's name, Aparicio Maldonado. Aparicio Maldonado. He left Barcelona on board a ship at age ten. So, he was at sea all his life. So that's one of the things that. Then he, during World War II, he bought a ship with this other captain, and this Spanish lady—very wealthy lady from Costa Rica—offered the ship to him, and said, "We'll give you 60 percent of the trade," because he was trading between Central America, Colombia and Venezuela. Trading back and forth. Then when it got so good, real good, she turned around and she says, "No, we'll renew the contract, but we'll do it 35 percent you," and her the rest. So he was very hardheaded. So he blew the ship up in port, in San Jose—

AV: San Jose de Costa Rica?

JM: San Jose de Costa Rica. Because the lady even made a dredge so the ships could go out to sea from there. But he got so annoyed with her, he blew the ship up. And then when I was there in Costa Rica, this half-brother said, "You wanna go see where he blew the ship up?" And the ship is still halfway sunk there. But wouldn't let me in, because they had a warrant for his arrest.

AV: Oh, really?

JM: And all that's out there. So my half-brother had to go in and explain to them—because there was the same name. Had to go in and explain, "No, no, that's not him," and, you know. It's a story in itself and you could make a movie of it. You can make a movie out of it. Yes.

AV: We better go back to our interview.

JM: Yes, yes.

AV: That should be another tape.

JM: Yes. You should erase it on that tape. Yes. I forget I'm being recorded.

AV: No, don't worry.

JM: That's just an interesting by-side.

AV: Tell me some of your memories of growing up here in Tampa, your childhood.

JM: Some of my memories of growing up were, made quite an impression on you. Especially when you're young. When I went to grammar school the only language I knew was Spanish. I hadn't, I knew, I had no knowledge of English. And of course they dressed us like all the kids in Europe, with little short pants up to here. And I remember all the kids had long pants, and I was kind of being laughed at because I had always short pants, like in Europe. And I always wanted long pants and my mother said, "No, you don't get long pants until later on in years." So that's what happened.

So, English was a very difficult language for me to learn. Because I had no one, really, to come home to and say, "Can you help me with this in English? Can you help me with that?" So, I learned English very, very difficult for me, but I did finally grasp it. And I did—I feel my English, my Spanish helped my English tremendously. And proof of that is, when I was in high school, I never had to take an exam. My English—my Spanish was—my English was always A's, straight A's. Never took an exam because I didn't have to. But yet when I took Spanish, I almost failed Spanish. Because they would teach me a lot of pronunciations from South America, which didn't exist in Spain. And we were

brought up to speak proper Spanish. So, I remember one day at the table—I forget now what word I said—and I got a slap on my face. And said, "If you're gonna speak Spanish, you speak correct Spanish." So I didn't, I wasn't that enthused about learning Spanish because, since, first since I knew it, and second, since I was being confused with the way they were teaching me, I almost failed Spanish. I did two D's and an E. And then a D in my exam. But even with that I still was able to graduate with honors, so.

My Spanish helped my English tremendously. And a lot of the Anglo-Saxons would say, "How can you do so well in English?" I'd say, "Well, because I know Spanish." You know. So that's one of the things that, in my growing up when I was a kid. The next thing I learned was the racism and discrimination that was happening in Tampa. If black people thought they had it bad—which they did; they had it very bad—all the Latins, the Italians, the Cubans, they were very badly discriminated on in Tampa.

AV: In what ways? Could you give me an example?

JM: Discriminated in jobs. They would not promote them if they were Latin. Like, I worked part-time—I started working part-time in Maas Brothers [Department Store] at the age of twelve. I always looked more mature for my age, so, I worked after school. And so forth. And they, if you had a Latin name, they wouldn't promote you. And they didn't do that for many years. They were real bad about that. And as I mentioned to you earlier, I worked there and I was selling luggage and cameras and they'd be having buyers every—sometimes twice, two a year—and then they would call me and ask me to train them. But they wouldn't promote me because the president at that time, who was Waterman, told me, "You have a Latin name." So he came right out and told me. That's why I wasn't being promoted.

The *Tampa Tribune* was another one that was a very bigot newspaper. They, even in their hiring practices, even in their reporting, if it had a Latin name or something, they wouldn't do anything about it. If something bad happened, and it happened to be a person with a Latin name, they'd blow it up like it was World War III. And that's the type of discrimination that Tampa had. Even in the beaches, where they would post signs that'd say, "No Blacks, Latins, or dogs allowed." I mean, that was right out discrimination.

So, those people that haven't gone through discrimination, you don't know, realize it until you actually experience it. And when they finally gave me a break, based on my performance, it was done by another president of the company. And that's when I moved up in the company. But they always said, they always kept saying, they have to have minority employed. Because the law said you had to have a minority. But not because they wanted to.

So it was a difficult period that I'll always remember. And even today, I think that, while that discrimination does not exist as bad as it did when I was growing up, even today there's still a lot of discrimination around. Even in the way they report the news and different things. You see it, but not as prominently as you did when I was a kid growing up.

AV: How did the community deal with that discrimination?

JM: There was nothing they could actually do, the community. The community, unfortunately, when immigrants would come to this country, they would cluster together in groups. The Italians lived someplace, Spanish people lived someplace else, and so forth. So, they had really no power. They were at the mercy of those people that were committing all this discrimination in the area. They didn't—yes, they could complain. What good did it do? They didn't have any say-so. Only until it became a voting bloc did they become important. Just like in California, in Texas, and in Florida today. Same thing. But the community reacted by having their own clubs. They formed the Centro Español, Centro Asturiano, the Italian Club, the Cuban Club. So they formed their own clubs where they could gather. Because if they would go to some other clubs, like the yacht clubs or something like that, with a Latin name, forget it, you couldn't get in anyway. So, and even today it still exists in some ways. But not nearly as evident as it was back then when we were growing up.

So, my recollection of that era growing up was actually, the Centro Asturiano, where they had shows, where they would bring in speakers and, like they brought in la zarzuela and different things. That's my recollection of how we, the community, kept together—by the language. It's unfortunate that they couldn't become a melting pot. And that's mostly because they weren't given the opportunity to become a melting pot. There was too much discrimination going around.

AV: I see. What do you remember—when were you born?

JM: I was born in 1929.

AV: Do you have any memories of the Depression at that point? You were probably very young.

JM: We did have it, I remember we had it very tough, because we grew a lot of vegetables. We planted a lot of things like that. We had cows, we had pigs, and we kind of tried to make us self-sufficient in that respect. Because it was, everything was very expensive. And, I remember that my mother worked very hard to keep us from having to wear jeans or overalls, like we called them back then. Because to send a boy to school in overalls, or jeans, meant that you were very, very, very poor, and it was looked down upon. Today they're looked on as fashion. But my mother worked very hard to keep us in nice clothes. And of course since she was a seamstress; she made a lot of the shirts and dresses for my sisters, and pants and so forth. So we were always, we were fortunate that we were always well dressed, and well fed. Although it was a very difficult time for my mother, because she worked many nights until twelve and one o' clock after working in the cigar factory—sewing—to supplement income and so forth.

So that's my recollection of, that was my chores; having to water the plants and all that and we always, of course, the two families would always pool their money, so they would

always move out, outside the city to what they call the woods, the sticks. Because we always wanted a lot, you know, enough land to plant and raise pigs and so forth. Yes. And my mother and aunt made wonderful morcillas, and chorizos. They were great! If we would have had some money, she should have opened a factory for them, because every time we'd make some, people would—friends—would just come over and get some and so forth. But, we never had the capital to do that. But they made very good morcillas—of course we had pigs, and we had cows. So we had everything fresh from that. I remember helping them stuff the chorizos in the machine, con la tripa, and stuffing them and all that. It was, and then smoking them in a smoke shed outside. One day it caught fire when I was going to school so I had to call the fire department.

AV: How did you eat those chorizos, like in the cocido?

JM: Yes. Chorizos, they used in the cocidos, y mucha fabada, si. Yes. They gave most of it away to friends that would come. And they, I must say they were excellent. They wanted to, they should have opened a factory on it; if they would have had money I would have, but we just made enough for, to really survive ourselves, more than anything else. But when you had to kill the pig, I remember all that distinctly. My mother would come out there with a pail with an onion stuck in the end of a stick. And when they, after they killed the pig, they stabbed him, so they would get the blood. And she'd have to keep stirring it with the onion stick so that the blood won't clot. And it kept the blood loose all the time.

AV: Who would kill the pig? Your mother would do that?

JM: No, my father and my brothers and all that. Yeah.

AV: So, they still followed the tradition from Asturias, the way is done there?

JM: They did, they followed that. I never could figure out how—I asked her one time, "Why do you get a stick with an onion?" you know, peeled onion on that, "Oh. That's so that the blood doesn't clog up and become hard." And that's what they used to make morcillas. They used that. They made excellent morcillas.

AV: Did you do that in the winter? Because the weather here wouldn't be that good for that.

JM: They did it mostly in the winter months. It was cooler and all that. Then we would use this shack that we had outside, would bring this green leaves, de roble—I forget how you say it in English, but anyway—

AV: Oak?

JM: Oak. Yes. Oak to smother and smoke it like that for about three or four days. Just the same traditions they had back there. But then, as the years went by, they became very Americanized, which is natural. The conveniences of things they liked. But most of the

time, they were too busy sewing. And my aunt took up embroidering in school in Spain, so she did beautiful embroideries.

AV: So at this time you were living away from Ybor City, West Tampa proper?

JM: We never lived—

AV: You were kind of, like, in a farm—?

JM: We lived in what they call, the area where the Stadium is now. Which is Dale Mabry [Boulevard] and Tampa Bay Boulevard.

AV: I see.

JM: That was all woods. There was nothing there. So we had a lot of land there. And of course, the name they used to give it around in the community, "Oh, he lives in Palo duro."

AV: Palo duro?

JM: Yes.

AV: Why?

JM: Because it was woods. There was nothing. Dirt roads and palo duro, or los cien.

AV: Los Cien, right.

JM: Los Cien too. Either one. We did that purposely and always lived where we would be close to, walking distance to, a grammar school. And there was one grammar school which stands there today, Tampa Bay Boulevard Grammar School, where I went to, was only three blocks away from where my own homestead is now. Same place. But I don't live there anymore.

AV: I see.

JM: Very, very interesting the community, how they really, they stuck together, because they were forced to stick together. They had to, to survive. The Italian clubs, they had to have places of recreation, because they weren't looked upon very nicely going to other places that weren't of Latin origin and so forth. Yeah. It was very interesting times.

AV: Were your parents active in the clubs? Did they belong—?

JM: At the beginning yes, they were. They were active in the formation of it, and contributions for the buildings and so forth. Yes, they were active, as much as they could possibly be. The only, the time they really became very active—especially my mother—

was during the Spanish Civil War. My mother became very active in that.

AV: Yes, what are your memories of that time, the war in Spain? How did you learn about the war? Do you remember how?

JM: From my mother.

AV: What did she tell you? How did she explain to you what was going on?

JM: My mother explained that—of course this was the second Republic. The first Republic was a failure. And then the king, what was it? He, not abdicated, he left the country. They had elections, and they voted for a Republic.

AV: Right.

JM: So the king went to exile in, I think it was Portugal or Italy. One of the two, I don't remember. Then, she said, "Well, now maybe we'll get some freedom in Spain. Maybe the government will not be governed by the Catholic religion as much as it's been for all these years." And that's how she explained it to me. So when the war broke out, she felt it was a horrible injustice committed to the Spanish people because, the government was just voted on as a Republic. And she couldn't understand why they would want to destroy a Republic like that, and bring in a dictatorship. So that's why she was so adamant against [Francisco] Franco. And, of course that same feeling, being at an impressionable age, you know, it stayed with me all these years.

And I remember when the war started I used to get by the radio every evening to hear the Spanish news. Short wave. Where they would talk about that. Then they would play the Spanish National Anthem and so forth. And it went on like that, well for weeks. And then they thought—of course Franco thought—that the war would end in a couple of months, three months. But it took three years, and a lot of suffering, and the poor Spanish people; that's just a terrible part of their history. But I imagine every country has that. We've had our civil war too. But, in our situation, we didn't have any one—in our civil war—we didn't have any foreign power come in on either side to help the South or the North. What happened was that France sent in this, I forget, Carlotta or whatever her name was, to set up a kingdom in New Orleans. That was the extent of any interference. In our Spanish [American] Civil War there was none.

But in the Spanish Civil War, it wasn't that way at all. I mean, you had Hitler sending aids and planes in there, you had Italians coming in with troops. It truly became a rehearsal for World War II. That's what happened. Germany tested all the latest equipment—army equipment—on Spain and the Spanish people. Italy did the same thing. Now what a coincidence, The Spanish Civil War ended in '39, and right after that, Hitler marched into Poland. So they used Spain as a practice battleground. And it's unfortunate the world stood still and didn't do anything about it. The only country that came to the Republic's help was really Russia. And because they did, they were all classified as Communists. They were Socialists, yes, and I'm sure there were some Communists too.

But why did the world turn their back on a duly elected Republic? They took—England ignored it. France, the same. The United States put an embargo on. That's what that march from the Labor Temple was to City Hall, in protest to have Roosevelt lift the embargo so at least those people could defend themselves. What they were doing is they were defending their Republic—they were defending the government.

Like my cousin, who was drafted by the Spanish government. Drafted to go to war. Well, that's no different than in the States here, drafting boys to go to war. And then, he didn't even get to see any active duty but, because he was a soldier, he was imprisoned for four years, by Franco. I mean, why? So, there was a lot of injustices done that the world turned their back and ignored it.

But the world paid for it afterwards, because they had World War II to contend with. And then there you have Franco wanting to see Hitler, and to see Mussolini. And what Franco was doing, he wasn't a dumb guy, he was playing up to both of them, playing up to both of them. And Hitler, Hitler considered Franco a joke. He wasn't gonna do anything, he told him, and he knew that. But Franco felt that, well, he's on the winning side, because Franco believed that Germany was gonna win the war, as well as Mussolini did. So he wanted to butter them up. And that's why Spain became, was neutral during that period. But little did Franco know that Juan Carlos the King was gonna turn out to be such a democratic person, which he is. When he came in he wanted a Republic, he wanted a democracy in Spain, and Spain is prospering very well now on account of that.

AV: What are some of the events you remember? You mentioned this demonstration.

JM: I remember marching in this demonstration—

AV: How did the demonstration get organized? I mean, what do you remember of that?

JM: The only thing I remember was the cigar workers, where my mother was one of them, in Garcia & Vega, and some of them, they got together, and they formed a committee. And they said, "Let's have a march to protest and ask Roosevelt to lift the embargo, and to help the poor children that are suffering so much in Spain." And it organized in the Labor Temple in Ybor City, and we marched from there down to City Hall. And I remember participating in that march.

AV: How big it was, would you say?

JM: Oh, the [*Tampa*] *Tribune* said that there were about ten thousand people, but in my opinion there were more than that.

AV: Really?

JM: Yes. But the *Tribune* always, they downplayed it. They were that way.

AV: And what happened during the demonstration. Do you remember anything—?

JM: I remember some people getting sick, and throwing up, because they had the flu, they had a virus. But they still kept marching, they still kept going. And they were holding hands, going with posters and so forth. It was a very impressive demonstration. And went to the City Hall and, I don't recall who spoke, but they did speak there. And they asked the Mayor and others to send a telegram to Roosevelt, to please lift the embargo, so those people could at least have arms to defend themselves. And after that I don't much recall anything else that happened except, when I was—we were collecting a lot of clothes. I myself and my mother, we sent a lot of boxes that we would take to the post office and mail to Spain. And we collected clothes and—

AV: How did you collect the clothes? I mean, you went door to door, or—?

JM: From neighbors. Just go door to door, ask for old clothes. Then we also got cigarettes. The foil where cigarettes came in; we used to, I used to go to trash bins and pick up any of that and we'd get all the foil to send also to Spain. So we participated in all that. By then, of course, I was twelve, thirteen years, or fourteen, about that.

AV: Do you remember any other public events in terms of demonstrations?

JM: I remember—

AV: Picnics, or—

JM: — Oh, yes, they had a lot of, every year they would have two or three picnics for the children of Spain to collect money to send over there and so forth. And those were annual events that they had.

AV: What kind of things did they do at the picnic? How would a picnic go?

JM: They used to have picnics out towards, in los Cien, where we used to live. Past the—

AV: Is La Columna?

JM: La Columna. They used to call it La Columna. And there was dirt roads and everything, but they used to have a lot of food and everything, and dancing. It was quite a thing, because to get there, you had to go through a dirt road from Dale Mabry [Highway]. Of course, you wouldn't know it now, but after that, then that became Drew Field, a military base. And they used to had annual meetings like that, every year. And then of course, I think towards the end my mother became disillusioned and she said, "There's no need to wage any more fight. The world is not gonna do anything about what they're doing to the poor Spanish people. But the world is gonna pay for it one day." Which they did, in World War II. And she then became more passive, and just accepted the things, and my mother always said, "This man will die there. Nobody will take him down." Which is what happened. That's history.

AV: How about the Republican speakers who came to Tampa?

JM: The Republicans, yes. I remember some, like for example Marcelino Domingo, I remember that. I remember these little red, yellow, and purple—

AV: Ribbons?

JM: —ribbons. Only this one seems upside down. Red top, yellow, and then purple on bottom.

AV: Yes. I think that's the way.

JM: Yes, yes. I remember him and I remember hearing about other speakers, I can't recall their names. But any time any speakers would come, they usually would come to Cuba, from Cuba hop down to—believe it or not—Tampa, more than Miami. Because Tampa was more the hub of, where things were happening. So most of these speakers would come over here. We remember hearing speakers like La Pasionaria [Dolores Ibárruri] and all that, who were wonderful speakers, regardless of what their ideology is. They spoke very well. And then I remember functions like, benefits for the Spanish children, collecting money to send to Spain. I remember that. That they had shows here for that.

AV: I see. And do you remember the ambassador, for instance?

JM: I really don't. No.

AV: How about the people who volunteered to fight in Spain? Do you have any memory of that?

JM: I didn't know. Of course I was, what, ten, eleven years old. I don't remember any of those. But I remember reading about the Lincoln Brigade and people that went over there. But—

AV: But you didn't know any of the families here in Tampa, or anything about that?

JM: —I didn't know, no. I didn't. If I would have been of age, I would have gone, but.

AV: Yes? You think you would have gone?

JM: Yes. I know I would have. Yes. But, I remember things like, [Victoriano] Manteiga was a very strong supporter of the Republic and he was always very involved in the community activity like that, for Spain and so forth. I remember that very well.

### ***Side B***

AV: How about the other communities in Tampa, the Italians, the Cubans? What do you remember about their involvement?

JM: The Italians, I think, they did participate an awful lot. They really came together with the Spanish during that time. And so did the Cubans. They all did, they all kind of joined together, yes. Even though Mussolini was there, was in Italy. But Italians realized what was happening. Like most of the people did, they realized what was going on in the world. So, they united and they also had dinners, and they had functions, also to help like that. Yes, I remember that.

AV: And how about the Americans, or the Anglo-Saxons? Did they participate in—did some of the events take place downtown?

JM: I don't recall many Anglo-Saxons participating. Simply because I don't think they knew what was happening. I don't think they realized the problems that were in front of them, and they just didn't, they just ignored it like it's unimportant. And I've never seen—however, I know that some did participate in the Lincoln Brigade, Anglo-Saxons, and some, participated—but as far as functions, it was rare that you would see Anglo-Saxons in any activity, even in this club [Centro Asturiano]. The only time I used to see some Anglo-Saxons here were when they had la zarzuela here. Or when they had some Spanish dancers like Imperio Argentina when she came, and all those people. But by and large, they really stayed away from it.

AV: And how about the American press? Do you have any memories of, you know, their reporting—?

JM: Yes. Do you have a lot of time? I'll tell you about the American press. The freedom of the press exists only for a few privileged. Only what they want you to know, you have freedom of the press. But living in Spain now for the last ten years, like I do, and traveling in all the different countries, like I do, I realize that our freedom of the press is very limited.

AV: Here?

JM: Here in this country. It's not, quote, "freedom" in the sense that we might think. Because, we're not told and we're not informed at all as to what's happening to our neighbors. Our neighbors to the south, which are important to us. Our neighbors to the north. We very seldom hear of anything that's happening in Central or South America. Why? But we hear stupid stories that they blow up in the newspaper that are right down silly. Yet you have problems in Central America we don't know nothing about. We have problems in Peru, Colombia and all of them. We very seldom hear anything about South America. That's the extent of the freedom of the press. Yet, you go to Europe, you know more about what's, they report more about what's happening in South America—and even in the United States—than the American press does. With all its glory of freedom and so forth.

The only thing that's turned things around a little more now is the communications of television. CNN [News Broadcast] does report more extensively some of the things that

are happening around the world. But yet, when I watch CNN in Spain, it's not the same CNN I get here. Because over there, they talk to me about Africa, they talk to me about Middle East, they talk to me about Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong—all those things—which I don't hear here. They don't say anything. So why don't they mix the communications here to reflect more the freedom, and know what's happening in your hemisphere?

My God! We only have two languages to learn in this hemisphere. With Spanish and English you have everything. Europe has eight, ten languages? And yet they make an effort to learn each other's language. Here, we don't even make an effort to learn the most important language to our south, which is Spanish. They should teach that in grammar school up. Like they do in Europe. They teach England [English]—the Scandinavian countries, they teach, they require English from grammar school until you get to high school. Over here, they don't. We're literally a very uneducated society. We are very uneducated. And yet we think we're very educated; we're not. We're far from it. You know. And you see more of that as you travel more and more outside the country.

That doesn't mean that I don't love my country. I dearly love my country. I'll fight for my country and all that. But I have to recognize that there are, we have a lot of faults here. And we have to overcome those faults. And one of the things is communications. The most important communication is language. And we have only one to the south, and that's Spanish. Now why don't we learn it? You know?

AV: Yes. So, do you think at that time, in the 1930s, when the war in Spain was going on, was there any issue in terms of the American press reporting on the war, or was that something that the Latin community didn't real—?

JM: They didn't report it very well. No. No, it didn't really bother them too much. They didn't report it that much. They really didn't. I remember Walter Winchell used to mention that in his commentaries and so forth. But, by and large, they considered it small potatoes. They considered it unimportant. But that unimportant attitude that they considered it at that time turned out to be a major historical problem for the world. And we can't continue to make the same mistakes over and over again. And we're headed in the same direction again. We ignore, we try to prejudge, we try to just censor the news. Although we say we have freedom of the press, we don't.

AV: How about the people within the Spanish community, or the immigrant community in general, who were supporters of General Franco. What kind of things—?

JM: I really didn't have much contact with them, really. Because I was so anti-Franco, number one. Because of what he did, and the manner in which he did it, turning brother against brother, families against families and so forth. I mean, you don't have to resort to bullets to establish your point of view, that can be done at the ballot box. And any country that today ignores the ballot box and wants to use force to remove it, I think it's obsolete; it's becoming more and more of a past issue. That used to be the thing in South America. Every time you turned around, they didn't like the government—boom—we'll

start overthrowing it. That's one of the bad habits they got from Spain, their mother country. But now it's becoming evident that you don't have to resort to that to establish your point of view. You can do it in the ballot box. And that's the only way it should be done. Why should they go to war and kill each other like that. You know.

AV: But, do you think—going back to those years, when you think about it—that there was some significant support for Franco here? Maybe not as big as—

JM: There might have been, but—

AV: Were there any kind of conflicts — ?

JM: I never heard of any.

AV: —in the clubs, or in the cigar factories?

JM: I never heard of any. I'm sure, I know there were some that were pro-Franco, because my mother used to have a lot of verbal fights with them about it, in the cigar factories and so forth. I'm sure there were. But, to the extent of the other way, no, I never experienced or saw any of that. It was more the other way. They were wanting to support a duly elected government, which was done at the ballot box. And the Franco—I know, right now, I do have some tenants that were born in Tampa, and they were from the famous Arango & Arango cigar factory. And the father moved them when they were child to Havana, and they were one of the last ones that he let out, even though they were American citizens. And they belonged to the Falange. They were Franco. And, they even went to Spain to a meeting or two, because evidently the father was pretty well off.

But that's the only extent of my knowledge of knowing anyone who was, you know pro-Franco, or Falange, or belonged, a card-carrying Falange member. I don't know of any. I would hear more of the opposite side than I would—which would, in my case, since I already had a formulated opinion, I wouldn't attend any functions if they had any. I don't think they had many functions because they were looked down upon. So, if they did, they might have done it in secret or in private homes and so forth. You know.

AV: How about at the end of the war? Did these people feel more—?

JM: I think at the end of the war everyone just became resolved as to what happened. And there were many people here that were saying "Oh, he's not gonna last a year." And, I, in my opinion, I always said "No, he's gonna be there quite a few years. He's gonna be there a long time." Because I remember he was still there when I was there. And I remember when I went to Spain, that first trip of mine, that I wrote my mother a letter and I told her, I said, "This country is 50 years behind the rest of the world, in sanitation, in housing, and in conveniences." So that, I told my mother, "That's the legacy Franco left to his people, keeping them backward for 50 years."

Now, you couldn't say that now. However, on the plus side, Franco did bring stability to

Spain. Franco did keep Spain out of the war, out of World War II. And he did establish a certain amount of continuity economically. However, not to the benefit of the people. And he did still maintain the Catholic church as being the sole power—having the veto power—of ignoring this law or passing this law, or doing something. Which is something that should have been the first thing that they should have done; separate the church and the state. Which is what's been done now. To the extent now, Spain is very much like America. They're very, the church and the state—the church doesn't dictate to the government what it can and cannot do. And that's the way it should be!

AV: How about the Catholic church here in Tampa? How did they relate to the Latin community?

JM: I don't—Ana, I wish I could tell you something about it. But, since I never went to a Catholic church—although I believe in God and I pray—I don't know what the Catholic church did in Spain, I mean, in Tampa. I think the Catholic church here, by and large, from things I would hear, were more pro-Franco than they were anti-Franco. And they were pro-Franco because they heard about all these atrocities that the so-called communists did in burning churches—which they did, which was wrong. But, however, they also, the other side of it, Franco also put a lot of military soldiers in the cathedrals and churches, thinking that they wouldn't be destroyed or burned. And they killed a lot of militia too, so. I think by and large, the Catholic church in the States—in the whole country—was, I would have to say they were pretty pro-Franco. Many archbishops and all that, they spoke pro-Franco; they must stop communism. Everything was the bad word of communism. If you wanted to destroy someone, if you wanted to destroy a country, just call them a communist.

That's an era the United States went through with McCarthy, Senator McCarthy. When he got up there in Congress and started calling everyone a communist. And if you're against some freedom or some—you're a communist. They labeled everyone; everyone had a label. And anyone running for public office during that time, if they were given a label of communist, they would be defeated, because of the ignorance that people had towards that. Now, they've passed that era; they realized how horrible it was. Because one thing is to go from communism, and another is to go to fascism, which is just as bad. The two ends don't make a right. And it's just as bad to be all the way right-wing as it is to be all the way left-wing. You have to have a middle, which is what the people really stand for.

And that's what I think has happened, as you will see there. All this McCarthy era was a horrible black history—I mean all these writers in Hollywood, the actors and everything, they were all being branded communist. And they didn't have any proof that they were—and they weren't. Henry Fonda—I was a kid during the Spanish Civil War. He made a film called *Blockade*. And that stayed in my mind all these years, *Blockade*. Well, McCarthy branded him communist. That's how ignorant this thing got; it just got completely out of whack. But that movie, I don't know whether you've ever seen it or heard of it—

AV: Yes, I've heard of it. What do you remember of the movie? What memories do you

have?

JM: I remember the bombings. I remember the destruction, and the children sitting there, by these buildings, crying—without a home. Because, let's not forget that it was the first time in the history of the world that bombs were dropped from planes. That was the first time that Hitler used his war machinery as practice ground in Spain. And that's what I remember. And Blockade was pretty much telling that story of all this suffering in Barcelona and all that that occurred.

AV: Did you see that movie in the '30s when it came out, or later on?

JM: Oh, yes. No, right when it came out. Henry Fonda.

AV: Where did you see it?

JM: I saw it in Tampa.

AV: In Tampa, where? Here? Do you remember?

JM: I saw it in the Tampa Theater. Yeah. And then I took my mother and my aunt to see it again. Because that was the first movie that dealt, really, with the Spanish Civil War. And then, *For Whom the Bells Toll* also dealt with the Spanish Civil War, from the point of view from the mountains in the north, and so forth, which was excellent, too. That was very good. And recently in Spain I saw a movie, also on the Spanish Civil War—made now, recently—and I don't even remember the name of it. But it was a very, very good film, like a documentary on the Spanish Civil War. It was very good. And, you know, you always hear people, well, if you defend the Republic and all that, you're a communist. Come on! I don't think people even know what the meaning "communism" is. They don't know.

AV: When you say—right—who would be saying that?

JM: Well, people that would be extreme right-wingers. That's the first thing they would say. You know. Or people that didn't know anything about what was happening; but hearsay they hear, "Oh, I hear he's a communist." On what grounds? What is communism? I asked one person last year, I said, "Tell me what is communism, and then what is socialism?" They couldn't tell you. I don't want any form of either one of them. I don't want them for my country, because there are pros and there are cons in both. Socialism and communism. idealistically, on paper, is good, but it'll never work in real life. It can never be!

So it's just a way of life that can never be accomplished. And proof of that is what happened to Russia. You just can't—it can't be—it's a utopia that won't exist. It won't fly. And that's why I say, neither communism nor socialism are really the answer. But there's good in both, and there's bad in both. Same way. And if people would only educate themselves as to what did they mean when McCarthy was calling everyone around the

county a communist—because he disagreed with what his beliefs are? Or when Senator Helms makes out a speech and calls everyone, again, he used to call everyone a communist when the Cold War was going on. The senator from North Carolina said, "Oh, he's a communist!"

Now that the Cold War is over with, they can't use that argument anymore, against communism, to win. So they find other avenues. So what does he resort to? "Oh, he's in love with homosexual groups or lesbian groups." So they go from one extreme to the other, just preying on the ignorance of the people. And that's sad, it really is.

AV: So, do you think that the Latin community kind of experienced that kind of ignorance? That people were feeling they were just a bunch of communists supporting this Republic?

JM: Yes. Because, they very much go by hearsay. They would go, Well, I hear this and I hear that. And, you know, you hear this, and next week you hear it this long. You know. It's just—

AV: But were there actually communist sympathizers or leaders who would participate in these events too?

JM: I imagine there were, Ana. I imagine there were. Just like there were a lot of right-wingers participating also.

AV: Right.

JM: I imagine there were. Like, a lot of Italians that participated in it too. I'm sure there were communists within—nothing is ever pure in any sense. They were, there are some communists, there were some socialists. But that's the mix of the country. And you have to take the mix as to what it is. It's just like today in Germany, what happened in Germany. The same situation; now you have the Nazi party becoming active again and saying that the Holocaust didn't happen. That it's just manufactured by the left-wing. See? And that's how ignorant a lot of people still are. They don't want to educate themselves. And it's gonna be generations before all that gets wiped out. And it's sad because, when I was in Russia, I was in Russia right, the week before the Berlin Wall fell—because I was there and then I went on to Moscow—and it was pathetic. And I made a comment to some Russian there, to our guide, I said, "And this you call communism? You're starving, you don't have a single thing in the shelves to sell." I was walking down the streets in Moscow; they asked me for my shoes! I said, "And this you think is a better way of life?" So, how can anyone accuse a person of being communist and wanting that kind of life? It's not possible. They don't know what's going on.

But, I think there were communists participating in the marches. I think there were left-wingers. I think there were right-wingers and I think there were moderates. I think there were a lot of moderates. I think, I give more credence to the moderates than I do to any extreme either way. I think the moderates see it right. They see what's just, they see

what's right, and they see what's wrong. I mean, some of these people, all they want to do is go around and dis-unite the country, tear it apart. Dis-unite this group against that group. Like Senator Helms is doing in California with the immigration laws and so forth. What are they doing—they're not trying to unite the country. They're trying to split it up, and that's dangerous. It really is dangerous.

AV: So, how do you explain this overwhelming support from the Tampa community?

JM: Overwhelming support for what?

AV: For the Spanish Republic?

JM: For the Republic? Well, I think the overwhelming support was primarily because of what I said earlier. It was a duly elected government in the ballot—by the ballots—in Spain. It was a legitimate government. And here you have an individual who wanted to prove himself that he didn't want to accept the status quo; he wanted to go back to another dictatorship, and he came and overthrew the government. That's why the overwhelming support—I think the people realized here, they were the underdogs. And people always go for the underdogs. And they saw that. here's Germany and Italy supplying him with all these arms and military goods. And yet the Spanish Republicans had nothing, and nobody came to their aid. So that's why there was that overwhelming support, in my opinion for them. They saw an injustice being committed. And that's what it was, an injustice.

AV: So, once the war was over, did the committee get dismantled, and, I mean, what happened with the—?

JM: Yes, I think everyone kind of arrived at accepting the fact of what happened. Many, like I said, were hoping it would only be a year. But it really turned out to be three years.

JM: But, I mean the war. But, when it ended they felt, Well, it can be—it'll be over in another year. I didn't think so. I always thought he would be in there for a lifetime. However, the injustice he did to Spain, because Spain could have been today a powerful nation. Spain could have been recapturing its prominence in the world society that it once had. And what's happened, he kept it 50 years behind. Because when I went, and I saw those things that I would see, I said, "This can't be!" I mean you keep an ignorant—you know? It's like everything else. If you keep a kid ignorant of what's happening in the world, or around you, they don't know. What you don't know, or what you don't have, you never missed.

And that's what happened. I mean, you'd go into stores and they didn't have washing machines and it was—I couldn't believe it! I said, "50 years behind." And now, within the little time they've had the democracy back in Spain, I've never seen a country jump in everything like it has. In Benidorm I get products from all over the world. I can buy anything. I can buy the latest equipment, televisions, and stuff—which you couldn't get back then. You just couldn't.

So, in a way, dictatorships—the only way they remain in power is through ignorance, and uneducated people. Don't educate the people, because if you do, you're in trouble. Keep them ignorant because if they don't know, if they don't have what they didn't, they'll never miss what they didn't have. And that's their philosophy. That's why dictatorships all over the world are a thing of the past. South America doesn't have any dictatorships anymore, except Cuba. And his [Fidel Castro] numbers, he'll die there, and I said that all along, they're not gonna take him out. He'll die in power. But, once he's gone, I mean, people aren't gonna resort to a form of government that's gonna keep them backward. You know.

AV: Before the war started, do you remember—you were probably very young for this, but maybe your parents would talk to you about this—do you remember people having the sense that a war is gonna come? Do you know what I mean? Was this, like, a big surprise for people here in Tampa, in 1936? Or were things getting, you know, to the point that people were kind of—

JM: Well—

AV: —anticipating something would happen, or—

JM: —when people—

AV: —how close were they to the events in Spain during the Republic, you know, during those five years?

JM: I think they were pretty—Yes. They were very close there, because when you had the first president who, I don't recall his name—he didn't last long—but then the other one, who's the other one that came on? Manuel—

AV: Azaña?

JM: Azaña and all that. They remembered him. And then they remembered—when they started getting a little concerned—was when Franco went to Morocco, and came in with a group of soldiers from Spanish Morocco. And that's where he formed, really, an alliance with Hitler and Mussolini that they would help him, and all that. That's when they started becoming a little concerned here. But nobody else—nor the ambassadors—nobody else said anything about it. England, you had Chamberlain, just, a horrible man there too which was from World War I. They didn't care less. They didn't care what was happening to Spain! And it's a crime, because Spain could be a dominant country today. And it's coming that way. It will become a powerful country, economically. And their stature in the world will be much better, too. I think it's coming to that.

But back then, they were very concerned with Franco's movements. They were concerned with his meeting the representatives of Hitler and Mussolini in Morocco, and they discussed that. They were concerned when Franco then came and invaded Spain. That's

when they realized there was trouble. And that's when they started sending—I know that my mother sent letters to the ambassador in Washington and a letter to Roosevelt and everything when all that was happening—to wake up, because this is gonna happen. But they were immune to it. They thought that that was just an isolated thing, in a normally agricultural country. They didn't consider Spain with really the importance it has. And they were wrong. History proved that. They were wrong. Because right after that, Poland came, and then Czechoslovakia, and all the other countries just fell by the wayside the same way. Now, proof of what I'm saying there about the democracy and the dictatorships was when they attempted that coup d'état in the Parliament in Spain.

AV: '81?

JM: In '81? That was a, that was proof of the mentality, that they wanted to maintain a dictatorship. And good thing the King, the King kept that country in check. He really did. And I have a great admiration for the King, and even more so for the Queen. Because I consider the Queen more Spanish than a Spaniard, even though she's Greek.

AV: She's Greek, yes. Okay. Joe, I would like to ask you, looking back from today, what would you say was the impact of the Spanish Civil War on your life? How did it change your life?

JM: The impact, it made me look at history with a greater emphasis and determination of checking into events as they occur. Because a small—what people consider a small event—turned out to be a disastrous situation in the world. And I look at things with that attitude in mind. I said, "This is happening in Zaire. Boy! we better make note of that, because that's gonna explode and the whole continent will go with it. We better pay attention to it. We shouldn't ignore it." And this is the biggest fault democracies have—of ignoring situations until they get completely out of hand. And then it's too late. And that's the way I look at things.

When I read things, statements that people make, some senators and all that, I get so angry and so upset that I want to sit down and write them—which I do many times—write them a letter or send a letter to the Tribune. Because how can they be so ignorant in this day and age? And we do have a lot of ignorance in this country, an awful lot. Politically, we're one of the most ignorant nations in the world. Although the most powerful, we're still the most ignorant politically. We just don't see things happening. That's the impact it's had on me. It's had an impact of looking at things deeper than what normally people would look at. I see an event like in Guatemala, Honduras, or Chiapas, in Mexico City? I see a problem. I see a problem that should be attended to, and if it's not attended to, it's gonna explode. And that's—of course I'm only one person, I can't do anything. I can't control the world, but that's the impact it's had on me. I just look at things that way.

AV: I also heard that you wrote a paper in high school, on the Spanish Civil War?

JM: Oh, yes.

AV: What moved you to choose that topic?

JM: The reason why—because, like I said, from nine years old, I was embedded with—I would read everything about the Spanish Civil War I could grab my hands on. I wanted to know more about it. I wanted to know what motivated it, what happened, what was going on. And because of that, and because I felt that the American people were aloof and ignorant as to what was really happening in Spain, I said, "I'm gonna do a report on Spain, on the Spanish Civil War." Which I did. And I did a lot of research. And I expressed the way I looked at it. The way I saw the Spanish Civil War; a prelude to World War II.

AV: When did you write that paper, do you remember, more or less?

JM: I was seventeen years old. I was in high school when I wrote it. And then I, because I like writing, I took journalism and I was very involved. I set up the Pan-American Club in Hillsborough High School. I was one that established Pan-American Club. Because I always felt that we Americans don't know what's happening in our own hemisphere, and it's a crime we don't. So I was president for two years of that club. Then I was president of the—

AV: Young Democrats?

JM: Yes, the Young Democrats in Hillsborough County. And then, as I got out into the work world, I kind of—you know, you're an idealist when you're in high school and when you're real young. I'm still an idealist, but not as much as I used to be. You've been, you take a lot of disillusion, you're disillusioned in life a lot. You learn a lot of bad things that happen, of which you have no control over. And in many ways I accept that as a fact of life. And you learn from that. But I still get very angry when I see something I don't agree with. I let them know about it. Because in this country, it's very sad, but you hear too much of minorities speaking out and not enough of the majority speaking out. A lot of these minorities are very vocal and very strong. But when it gets right down to it, they're not the majority of the people.

So, I like to speak—when I hear anybody downing a race, or calling someone horrible names that they have for Latins and so forth, I don't keep quiet anymore. I speak up. And I shut them in their tracks. Because those people are minorities, and they're vocal. And the majorities have to learn to speak up, more of that. They see discrimination? Stop it, right then and there. Speak up. Attack it. Don't just say, "Yeah, yeah," or keep quiet, because if you keep quiet, you're condoning it. You're accepting it. And that's not good.

AV: Okay, just to conclude this interview, I would like to ask you, is there anything else you would like to add to the interview? Something that we haven't discussed that you think should be included?

JM: No, Ana, I think I've bored you enough with all this.

AV: No. It was very interesting.

JM: I think I tried to tell you everything that I possibly knew at that time, and my own personal events as to what happened and so forth. I know that the first year I went to Spain after, well that was still during Franco's regime, that I visited my aunt in León, which my cousin was a prisoner for four years. My aunt worked very hard, fighting to get him free, because like she said, it wasn't that he volunteered to do that, he was called by the service, by a legitimate recognized government, and why should he be in prison? So he served four years. Then, when I went to Barcelona and visited my uncle there, my uncle told me horror stories of the bombings that occurred in Barcelona. The children that were just killed. They just threw bombs in non-military areas; nothing to do with military, but strictly to kill the people. And he told me that they had to keep quiet and wouldn't say anything because, at times, they would send policemen to follow him—and they would ask him, "Did you see those bombs? Did you recognize them as being Communist from Russia?" Because they wanted the people to think they were—when in essence, they were German planes. And that came out in history after the war, see?

But all the things that happened in Barcelona, the bombings. Blockade, part of it was the bombings of Barcelona and Madrid. It was a crime what they did to those poor people and children. Just killed, throwing bombs in residential areas. That was a crime! That was enough to turn anyone against him! Because you don't do that. Military yes, go ahead, bomb soldiers, but not civilian places like he did! But that's the way that most of these dictators come into power. It's the way they come into power in South America too. But then they learned that from the Spanish, too, the mother country. Which is a bad habit, but they're getting away from it, like in Spain.

AV: Let's hope so.

JM: Yes, I do too.

AV: Okay.

JM: Did I bore you enough?

AV: Joe, no. I want to thank you for participating in this project—

JM: Yes.

AV: —It has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to—

JM: Good. I hope I didn't bore you.

AV: No. Thank you very much—

JM: As you can see—

AV: —this concludes the interview with Joe Maldonado.

*End of interview*