

## MEXICAN-AMERICAN ARCHIVES

Interviewee: Mrs. Lydia Estevez  
Date: January 30, 1978  
Interviewer: Irene Ruiz

Tape 20A

# 210293

- 004-018 Mrs. Estevez was born in Broadwater, Nebraska on November 7, 1919. Her parents were Maria Delgado Rocha and Elpidio Rocha. Her family came to Kansas City.
- 019-034 The first place she remembers is the Kansas City, Missouri West Side. Their home on Holly Street has been in the family for 50 years. Her father worked for Cudahy's and Swift's packing plants.
- 044-055 She attended Adams School, grades 1-6. Then she went to West High at 19th and Summit for 2 years and finished at Manual High. Many Mexican girls went to Jane Hayes Gates; boys to Lathrop, for vocational training.
- 056-063 She attended Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. A majority of neighbors belonged there. There also was a Baptist and a Christian church in the neighborhood.
- 064-091 She belonged to Girl Scouts and a local girl's social club. The Guadalupe Center was active, but her parents didn't feel it was necessary to attend because the family was large enough to entertain themselves. She enjoyed swimming, rollerskating, and reading.
- 092-117 She swam at West High and occasionally at the Penn Valley public pool. Mexicans were allowed to swim at Penn Valley only on the day before the pool was cleaned. She recalls going to the Swope Park pool with a friend and being told they could not come in. She and the friend stood in line and would not let others get in until they finally were admitted. Afterwards, Mexicans were allowed to swim there.
- 118-140 A disturbing aspect of childhood was the school. The building was old and in such bad repair that the upstairs could not be used. Pupils were mostly Spanish. They were punished for using Spanish.
- 141- Her parents spoke Spanish at home, her mother never learned English. Her father attended night school to learn.
- 149-180 She was active in junior and senior high with team sports. She saw no prejudice then, but later recognized some teacher's poor attitudes toward minorities. The teachers were poorly qualified to teach. The majority of students at West were Anglos and there were very few Blacks. In later years the school became more equally divided because of a housing project.

- 181-216 The school had no counselors and the teachers did not encourage students to continue schooling, but the parents did. Most of her girlfriends went on to Manual or Redemptorist.
- 217-226 Mrs. Estevez remembers no exceptionally hard home chores. Homework had to be done first. Her father was the sole supporter of the family.
- 227-247 She left home around 1943 when she was married. She was not in Kansas City during WWII or the flood of 1951.
- 248-272 She graduated from high school during the Depression. Her father lost his job so he, a brother, and Mrs. Estevez went to work in the beet fields for 3 summers. The next oldest daughter, Ester, stayed in Kansas City to help care for younger siblings.
- 273-295 She took classes in wiring, riveting, and blue print reading in order to get a job during WWII at North American Aviation. She worked there 1½ years until she married.
- 296-319 She went to Florida because her husband was stationed there. She returned to Kansas City. Her husband attended St. Benedict's and Kansas City Junior colleges and then transferred to Georgetown University in Washington, DC. They lived there 6 years. Her first son was born in Kansas City and a second one in Washington. Her husband entered the foreign service and was sent to Germany for 1½ years. Her daughter was born there.
- 320-340 She returned to Kansas City again. Her husband got a job at City Hall as an administrator. They lived in an apartment on the West Side. She cared for her ill mother until she died. Her daughter was 2 years old.
- 341-363 She worked for the Kansas City Public Library at West High for 8 years, then worked at the main library for 3 years. She left because she felt discrimination existed there, although it was subtle.
- 364-395 When she left the library, she began working at the Institute for Community Services as an interviewer and secretary. She attended junior college part-time at night. To avoid the problems she had endured in public schools, she placed her children in Catholic schools. The job at ISC was unstable because it depended upon federal funding. She needed a good job to help pay the children's education so she left after 2-3 years.
- 396-428 She began working at Penn Valley Community College as a secretary. She has progressed to an assistant in the Community Services office. She helps schedule classes and encourages the community to make use of college facilities.
- 429-474 She was divorced when the children were almost grown. Her daughter graduated from Loretto and her sons from Rockhurst High School. Her son, Richard, is now principal of Douglas Elementary School. Her second son, Ronald, completed 2 years at Kansas Ctat and intends to

go to Berkeley (California). Her daughter has a master's degree in special education from Kansas University and teaches in Topeka.

475-487 Mrs. Estevez feels pride in her job promotions.

481-538 She still attends classes at Penn Valley. After her retirement, she would like to volunteer in the elementary grades helping Mexican-American students.

539-556 She credits her parents with giving her the drive to continue school. Of 8 children still living from her family, 6 have professional degrees.

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