

Mrs. Mary Lou Hernandez

tape 53a

Oct. 26, 1978

005- ⁰¹⁰ teacher's aide in the bilingual program at West high school

011- ⁰¹⁹ B. in kcmo west side Apr. 14, 1944. Parents
8 sisters, 3 brothers

Moved to several houses on w. side.

020- ²⁸ more houses then, always many people, more activities,

29- ³⁷ Parents Josephine Peregrina, and step father was Louis peregrina. Both
born in Mexico. Spoke spanish at home, learned English at Guadalupe school.

38- ⁴⁴ Attended Guada. k-6. Then attended St. Catherines in Emporia, Ks.
stayed with an aunt there. Finished grade school there, 1 year.

45- ⁴⁸ mother a homemaker, father laborer with packing houses, rr.

49- ⁶⁷ recalls her family as being one of the poorest of the poor on the west side.
maternal grandmother died very young, mother's younger brothers were left with
her. plus all children. Very bad memories of school years. Felt that children
there who were not affiliated with the church got left out of many activities,
etc.

68- ⁷⁴ returned to KC and attended West Jr. went for 9th and 10th. Quit in
the middle of 10th grade.

returned recently

75- ⁸⁰ Attended church and confession every week but parents were not active in the
other church functions.

81- ¹¹² she and friends active in guada center only thing she can remember. Nuns,
were good to them. formed clubs there. predominately ma there. Liked
cooking, putting on plays with other kids for mothers.

113- ¹³⁵ flood. recalls it as being fun, despite the family losing everything.
Everyone had chickens. Caught loose pigs and brooded them in the back yard.
lots of activity

136- ¹⁴² No one who exerted a great influence on her.

143- ¹⁵⁵ Happy in the 9th grade, despite fights between blacks and mex. Students
got along fairly well. By 10th grade she was feeling pressure from home
because she was the oldest. Mother had many younger children, took no interest
in school.

156- ¹⁶⁹ Was very shy, inexperienced, had difficulty finding a job. Finally
went to work at a candle factory on SW BLVD. Mother knew the supervisor there.

Supervisor told the mother she could work answering phones. Instead, she was put to work cleaning toilets. Still feels great resentment toward the woman.

¹⁸⁰
170- stayed about 3 days, then found a job at St. Marys Hospital as a dietary aide. Took trays to the patients, etc. Stayed a couple of months. Tired of working, wanted to get out of the house. Tired of turning over her pay check to mother, wanted to get married. Marriage was something to do. Married

¹⁹⁸
181- Got married at age 18. Husband was only 16. Rented an apartment, husband worked for about a year. returned to night school but didnt finish. Pregnant when she got married, felt her parents would be very upset. Did not return to her parents home for a long time after she had the child.

²⁰⁵
199- Now has two children, son and daughter. Daughter attends St. Pios Son in our lady for the Americas. (Guada)

²¹²
206- Became active in community much later. Busy with children
213- She and husband became active in model cities program near its end at the encouragement of a friend. Lived in government projects at the time,

²⁶⁶
She had returned to work at Jones store, husband was getting machinist training from manpower, Teachers at Penn Valley, where husband was attending night school, kept encouraging him to go days. Finally she got full time job and they made application to live in the projects so he could return. Felt like she was really doing something, contributing. Did not mind going to work. Felt it was something they were doing together. When Pecina found out husband was attending college, he encouraged them to get into model cities, which they finally did.

³¹¹
2267- Got involved in a culture group which went over to Leavenworth prison to help Mex. prisoners. Mrs. Hernandez became in charge of taking the group every Saturday to Leavenworth. Husband was head of the group to start with but when he got too many meetings she volunteered to take over. Husband protested, said she would not be accepted there because she was a woman. He agreed to let her try it. Likes working with Mex people.

³⁵⁷
312- Got another woman friend to come along, and just recently a third woman has joined. Began getting hassles from newer prisoners, phone bills became enormous because prisoners would call her collect. Decided it was time to move on. Had involved others who now have taken it over. About 400-500 Mex. prisoners there all the time.

⁴⁹
Prisoners have to realize that most people don't care about them.

³⁷⁸
358- Looking for a job, was hired for teachers aide bilingual.

⁴²⁹
379- Does not like school, does not want to return. Has great difficulty reading. Anxious for children to grow up and get out of the home. Tired of having to worry about the children all the time, would like to just have some time with her husband. Would like to travel, live in the mountains. Kids are strong, she does not fear for them. Wants them to go to college.

October 26, 1978

Interviewer: Irene Ruiz

Interviewee: Mrs. Mary Lou Hernandez

Tape 53A

- 005-010 Mrs. Hernandez is a teachers aide in the bilingual program at West High School.
- 011-019 Born April 14, 1944 on the West Side. Had 8 sisters, 3 brothers. Family lived in several houses in neighborhood.
- 020-028 Recalls more houses, more people and activities in the neighborhood when she was young.
- 029-037 Parents were Josephine Peregrina and stepfather Louis Peregrina. Both from Mexico. Spoke Spanish at home.
- 038-044 Attended Our Lady Of Guadalupe until the last year of grammar school. Attended St. Catherine's in Emporia, Kansas, for 1 year.
- 045-048 Mother was a homemaker, father a laborer in packing houses and with railroad.
- 049-067 Recalls family as being extremely poor. Grandmother died young, leaving mother to care for younger brothers as well as her own children. Very bad memories of early school years.
- 068-074 Attended West Junior High. Quit school mid-year in 10th grade.
- 075-080 Attended church and confession weekly but parents were not active in other church functions.
- 081-112 Active with friends at Guadalupe Center. Formed clubs. Friends predominately Mexican-American.
- 113-135 Recalls flood of 1951 as a fun time because of all the activity, other children to play with.
- 136-142 Can't recall anyone who exerted a great influence on her.
- 143-155 Happy in 9th grade, despite racial tensions between Black and Mexican students. By 10th grade she felt pressure to quit and help support the family because she was oldest.
- 156-169 Was shy, inexperienced, had difficulty find a job. Mother eventually found a job for her at a candle factory on Southwest Blvd. Manager promised her a job answering the phone and instead made her clean toilets.
- 170-180 Quit job after 3 days, found another carrying food trays to patients at St. Mary's Hospital. Tired of working and turning over her paycheck to mother. Wanted to marry as an escape.
- 181-198 Married at age 18; husband 16. Pregnant when married. Husband quit school, later returned to night school. Life was very difficult.

- 199-205 Had one other child. Both attend Catholic schools.
- 206- Was busy with children and apathetic towards the community for many years. Returned to work full-time and moved into a government housing project so husband could attend college. Friend and community activist Don Pecina talked husband into getting involved with Model Cities.
- 267-311 Husband headed a culture group which visited Mexican-American prisoners in Leavenworth on Saturdays. She took the group over when husband became too busy. Husband was hesitant at first to allow her to do it. Feared a woman would not be accepted.
- 312-357 Got other women involved, resigned when she felt she could accomplish no more. Some 400-500 Mexican-American prisoners at Leavenworth.
- 358-378 Hired for bilingual program.
- 379-429 Wishes she could like school, but reading problems make studying difficult. Tired of hassles with the children, wants more time alone with husband. Anxious for children to leave home.
- 430-449 Believes politics have made her want more privacy. Reflects on difficulties being in politics.
- 450-468 Husband has served on city council for 4 years. Has grown, learned much from husband and political experiences.