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Jimenez, Dolores interview

Mary Cusick

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

JIMENEZ, Dolores (Spanish)

June 23, 1980

Interviewed by Mary Cusick

Transcribed by Robert Siess

[Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape.]

DOLORES JIMENEZ: Yeah. Why my parents came.

MARY CUSICK: First of all, you can't remember too much about living in Hawaii, like you said.

JIMENEZ: No. No.

CUSICK: So yeah, if you could give us the reasons why they decided to come over?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, why they left the country, yeah. You have that on already? Is it taping?

CUSICK: Yeah. You're on tape. That's fine. What year did your parents come over?

JIMENEZ: My parents left Spain in 1913, in November, right after they were married. They were newlyweds. In Spain, the people got married after the harvest. So November was the wedding month, after the harvest was all in and they had money to be able to get married with. Then

they decided to go to Argentina. Buenos Aires, Argentina. So they left their home town, which they lived in La Brujia de Carthedes, Partido de Oyos Siguerros[?]. The historic region of Extremadura, if you've studied anything about Spain. And they got to the Straits of Gibraltar, and they were to leave for Argentina. Well, after they got there, there was a lot of people there waiting to leave to Argentina. Well, they found out there was a ship coming from America from a sugar company that needed workers in the sugar plantation. And they were gonna pay a dollar a day in gold, where they were just making maybe ten cents a week. In fact they were starving there because they were very, very poor. My mother, many a time she told me how her mother used to tell her to go visit so-and-so, some relative, see if she could give her a little piece of bread so they could feed their brother. And when they went out to eat their lunch when they worked in the fields, all they took was a little chunk of bread. Because they made bread at home. That was their lunch. They were very, very poor. So a dollar in gold was big money, and they weren't about to leave for Argentina, so they decided to come to America. She said she was coming to the United States, but it was Hawaii. They misunderstood. So then it took 52 days traveling by water. They came around the Horn, and then they landed in Hawaii in the island of Maui. Punanimari was the address in sugar plantation number one for Spreckel. Spreckelville Plantation is what they called it. They lived there five years, and while they were living there, the only expense they had was their household. They had free rent, free transportation, medical, everything was free. So they were able to save money to come to America, which they had to pay their own way to get over here. So after five years, they decided to leave Hawaii and come to California, because some of the other people that were there had prior come to California and was writing to an uncle of mine. Because my mother came with her mother, father, and her two sisters and a brother. And he said, "Well, you want to come to Oakley because it's a place where there's plenty of work and there's plenty of water, and you could make a living here." And he says, "You should come and settle over here." So naturally, not knowing any other place to go, that's where they came, to Oakley, in 1918. And that's where they lived all their life. And when they arrived, they worked in the asparagus field in different islands. Sherman Island in Orwood. And they also worked in the hops up north. I think she called it Weemer or something like that. They worked up there in the hops, and they lived in camp. They only went up there one year. And then after that, why, they just continued working in the fields. My mother worked in the field. And when I started school, naturally I didn't know any English at all, because 2/3 of the people in Oakley were all Spanish. And there were some Portuguese and a few Italians and very few Americans that were... Lived here for generations, you know. They were pioneer people that came from way back, and actually they considered themselves Americans. So it was kind of hard when I started school, although I never do remember really finding it difficult except when I was in the second grade. I had problems with my arithmetic, and I stayed back that year. And it hurt me so bad. I think it's an instinct of wanting to learn because you didn't have no pressure at home, because my mother

never was educated, so how could she tell you, "Well, learn all you can?" She didn't. So it hurt me so bad to stay back that I just said to myself, "I'm not staying back anymore. I'm not gonna stay back anymore." And after that, I never missed a grade. I got along with the rest. I worked so hard, and that was my best subject was arithmetic, because the following year I wanted to be sure I didn't get set back again. So I went through and I graduated when I was 14 years of age, and I went to high school til I was 16, because during that time you didn't have to go to school anymore when you were 16. If it was the middle of the term, well, that was it. You just quit. And we never had any racial problem at all that I recall, because we were a mixture of nationalities.

CUSICK: Which nationalities?

JIMENEZ: Spanish. We're Spanish. And there was Portuguese, and there was Italian girls from Portuguese ancestry that their grandparents had come from Portugal, and then there was a few Americans. And about in 1929, we had the first Mexican family that migrated from Colusa, California. I had never seen Mexicans until then, because naturally when you're in school studying history and geography and all these things, you're learning the language. At the same time, you have to learn what the book tells you, and you don't absorb everything. So nationality was nothing to me, you know. I wasn't concentrating whether I had seen a Mexican or Italian. I knew Italians were there and all I knew was the ones that were there. And then these Mexicans came, and it was new to use because had never seen tortillas or anything like that. And so we learned to eat their food, some of it. Not very much. The tortillas is what we learned to eat from them.

CUSICK: What kind of food did you have that was of Spanish background? You said that your family was very Spanish-oriented.

JIMENEZ: Oh yes, yes. My mother cooked everything that they cook in Spain. Garganzos, which is garbanzo beans, puchero, and rice and different vegetables. And Spanish people all butchered in the wintertime. They would butcher a hog, and that was a big thing for us kids. It was like a big party. When we hear that pig scream, we'd run to see who was killing the pig that day. And we'd all stand around and watch, and then when they took the bladder out of the pig, we'd blow it up and make a football out of it. We call it la fambomba. That was a big deal for us because we didn't have toys to play with. Toys were very scarce. We made things to play with. Like we would play games that didn't require toys.

CUSICK: What kind of games did you play?

JIMENEZ: We used to play hide and seek and ring around the rosie, and pussy in the corner. Then we used to play kick the can.

CUSICK: Would these be all the neighborhood kids?

JIMENEZ: Yeah. We would all gather in a corner and we would play jump rope a lot, and hop scotch. And then when my mother was working, I used to play marbles with the boys. We used to play fish. We'd make a fish on the ground, and then you put your marbles there and you had a starting line, and then you'd shoot and get 'em out of the fish. And we'd also make holes in the ground and play that way too. But we didn't have toys. I only had two toys all the time that I was growing up, was the little piano my mother bought and a doll. That's all I had.

CUSICK: Where was your mother working at the time?

JIMENEZ: She used to work in the fields every summer. And as we were growing up, we used to work in a dry yard every year. A dry yard is where they cut fruit, and they'd put 'em in trays and dry them. And then they were shipped to different countries and different stores. We worked for Balfour Guthrie, and they used to ship a lot overseas, the dried fruit. We used to cut every year apricots. We never knew what it was to have a fun summer. Our fun was out working in the dry yard, yes.

CUSICK: Ah, they'd hire teenagers or any younger kids?

JIMENEZ: We all went to work. Even when my youngest brother was born in 1923. He was born in October, and the following year in June is when the apricots start in Oakley. He was only about seven or eight months old. My mother, we'd take him in a buggy, and we were cutting close to where we lived. We didn't have to go on the horse and buggy, we could walk. And she used to put him in a lug, one of those LA lugs? And put him under the tray. And we'd cut fruit, and she'd take care of him that way. So I grew up cutting fruit all my life til I was about 21 I think.

CUSICK: Was this common for...

JIMENEZ: Everybody, yes.

CUSICK: All the families were who were involved in the farming, the picking.

JIMENEZ: Well, most of the people that went to cut fruit in Oakley were the Spanish people. The Portuguese, there wasn't that many Portuguese, and they didn't go out to the dry yards. Very few of 'em did. But mostly – well, they used to call it the Little Spanish Town from what I understand. Of course, I've just heard this. Yeah, because there was so many Spanish people living in Oakley. And we all went to the dry yards to work. We cut apricots, peaches, and pears. Nectarines. So we worked all summer. Every Fourth of July I'd be working. I says, "Gee, I hope someday when the Fourth of July comes, I won't be working." Because when radio came along, we'd hear about the fireworks and all these things that you thought you'd like to see some day.

CUSICK: You didn't have a holiday?

JIMENEZ: The only time it was a holiday, if it rained or the fruit was green. And then sometimes it used to get quite cold, and we used to take boxes and built like a little house 'cause it was so cold in the dry yards. And take our little pan of fruit and cut there. And my grandfather, the poor old thing. I was about seven I guess when he was still living, 'cause he died in 1927 and I was born in 1916. And I used to love to play jacks and talk and laugh. And he used to get so mad at me. I couldn't even reach the tray. I had to put an LA lug to reach the tray so I could put the apricots on the tray, and they're not really that high, but I was just a little kid, you know. And he used to get so mad at me because he said all I did was laugh. And then I had some jacks, and I had them in a bull derm bag. And I used to tell my mother I had to go to the bathroom. They had an outside toilet, and it was in an area where you couldn't see from the dry yard where the outside toilet was. So I'd say, "Well, I have to go to the bathroom." And I'd go and I had my jacks hid somewhere between the dry yard and the toilet. And instead of going to the toilet, I was out there playing jacks. I wanted to play jacks. I'd get tired of cutting fruit, but they wouldn't let you go, you know. [laughing] So they used to come looking for me, and one day I went to find my jacks and they were gone. Somebody in the family had taken them and ditched 'em so I couldn't play jacks anymore. Then we worked in another dry yard and there was a little creek running by, and there was little tadpoles. So a lot of us kids there, we'd go to the bathroom one by one, and we'd be down in the ditch with a can catching tadpoles, and then our parents would come yelling for us. Of course, we were just little kids, you know. But we had to let out some steam somehow. And you got tired of cutting fruits, you know. You're not that old and you start at 8 o'clock in the morning til 5 o'clock at night. You only stop just long enough to eat, and then you're back again with that knife, just whacking away at those apricots and the peaches and the pears. We cut fruit all the time. But my parents worked in the field. That's the type of work they did. They worked in the fields. And naturally, being so poor in the old country, they were very conservative. And as they grew older and they retired, why, they were able financially to take care of themselves, which it's always made me feel good. I know I tell my granddaughter that when I worked in the cannery later on, I used to give my mother my paycheck, and in the packing sheds. I kind of outgrew the dry yard. And she says, "Oh my gosh, you gave your mother your check?" I says, "Yes." And I never begrudge it, because my parents were able to live comfortable when they got old, and they had enough money to live on and take care of themselves like you would want them to, without anybody's help. So then I got married and moved here.

CUSICK: Did your parents stay there in Oakley?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, they stayed there in Oakley. Uh huh.

CUSICK: Did they own land? They worked on the land.

JIMENEZ: Yes.

CUSICK: And you said you remember all the camps you used to go to.

JIMENEZ: Yeah.

CUSICK: Is this different fields that you would work at?

JIMENEZ: Yes. And Sherman Island was one of the first ones they went to. That's by Antioch, by the Antioch Bridge. You cross the Antioch Bridge, and that was under water here not too many years ago. The river busted in. It was the year we had a lot of rains, and the banks broke and Sherman Island was all under water. Yes, I remember very well the house and the willow...

CUSICK: You say you moved from each place to place or that you traveled with them?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, well yes we did. We had a house rented in town, and then we would go to work, like we went to Sherman Island just that one time. And we went to Orwood two times, but we were in different camps. My brother was born in 1918 or 1919, and he was born in Orwood in the asparagus camp. I remember a big ditch on one side and these great big rats running around, and there was a ditch alongside the house and a big river in front. Must have been the San Joaquin River. And then the other camp that we went to, that was when the boat used to come and bring the goodies. We all was waiting for that whistle to blow and then we knew the boat was coming.

CUSICK: The kids would get together and wait for all the supplies?

JIMENEZ: Right. Uh huh. See we weren't in school yet. This was before I was old enough to go to school. And then when we lived up in Weemer I think is what she called the town, up north where they worked in the hops. See, this was all before I started school. I can remember everything. I can remember the hops. Of course, my mother told me they were hops. But I remember these tall poles and these strings and these wagon coming through the field with water, and all these people working, and she told me they were hops. Of course I wouldn't have known if she hadn't told me. Because I'd ask her, "Well, when we were in this place..." and I'd describe it to her. I said, "What was it?" And then she would tell me. And then she took me to school. I think I was only in school when we went to school. Because I stayed back – no, she must have taken me to school when I was five, because I stayed back one year, and I still graduated from the 8th grade when I was 14 like you're supposed to. And she said when she took me to school the first time, there were older girls there that, you see, the older children that came from Hawaii during that immigration – they call it the Immigration of 1913. They were sent to school as soon as they came to Hawaii. The sugar company made them go to school so they would learn English. So when they came to California, a lot of them already knew

a little about the language. So when my mother sent me to school, she would ask them to interpret a little bit. Of course, they were learning too. And these great big kids were in the first grade. They were 10, 12 years old and in the first, second, third grade, because we have pictures you know. They were big kids. And my mother says when she took me to school that the teacher would write on the board, and of course me not knowing what they were saying, she said I would trace their work. I says, "Well, at least I had sense enough to do that." To figure that out!

CUSICK: Yeah! You didn't take any English at all til you were in the first grade?

JIMENEZ: No. Nothing.

CUSICK: And your parents were learning English at the same time?

JIMENEZ: My parents never did learn English. My father, when he passed away, all he could say is good morning and how are you, and that's about it.

CUSICK: So they didn't really need it when they worked in the fields.

JIMENEZ: No. They seemed to be able to communicate with their boss whatever they had to do.

CUSICK: And you said a lot of Spanish-speaking people worked in the same place.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, and there were some that had learned the language, and that helped. But this is what she always told me. That they had told her that I was tracing what the teacher was putting on the board. And I was supposed to try to do it on my own, but instead I was tracing her things. And the teacher told my mother to keep me home another year and then send me back. And that's what whoever was there told her, because she didn't understand English at all. So then the next year I went to the first grade.

CUSICK: Well if you didn't speak English at home, did you learn it just in school? Just picking it up?

JIMENEZ: All the English that I learned until I was 22 years old when I got married, I had to do it on my own, because if you didn't pick it up in school, that was it. Because when you came home, you were around other friends that were in the same situation that you were. And you don't learn it on your own. And you can't learn a thing from your parents. Like now the children learn their vocabulary from their parents. They hear their parents. And so they're able to learn a lot of things from their parents. But we had to learn everything in school, and once you came home, that was it.

CUSICK: How did you feel when you were going to school, trying to learn English, and thinking in your native language, and then coming home and speaking to your family and your...

JIMENEZ: It didn't bother me. It didn't bother me at all. I mean, it just didn't bother me a bit.

CUSICK: Did most of your friends speak Spanish?

JIMENEZ: Yes, but then after we got to be teenagers, then we used the English language more, but actually we couldn't help each other because we were at the same level. Unless you had a friend, like I had a friend, her husband had the druggist there in town, I used to babysit for her. And I'd go over there once in a while, and when I'd hear her talk, maybe I'd pick up a little something from her. But you had to pick it up from somebody else, not from your friends, because they were in the same situation that you were in. They didn't know any more than you did, because a lot of them didn't even get past the 8th grade. Some didn't even graduate.

CUSICK: Most of your friends, were they in the same situation as far as coming from Hawaii?

JIMENEZ: Right. Yes.

CUSICK: There was a large group then that came.

JIMENEZ: Oh yes, there was hundreds of them that came. They're all settled up and down the coast of California. You go to Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, San Jose, Hayward, San Leandro, San Francisco. Though there was different immigrations. I've been told that there was one in 1911 or 12. My mother came in 1913, but there was one or two prior to the one that she came in. But the people that I've met, most of them are from, they call it the Immigration of 1913.

CUSICK: So you stayed together as a group, all the ones that came over?

JIMENEZ: No, they scattered all over.

CUSICK: The ones that your parents came with. Did they come with any relatives of yours and all settle down in the same area?

JIMENEZ: Well, my grandfather and my grandmother, and my mother's two sisters and her brother. And then there was another family that came from the same village that she came from, which even today, they're the only two that have ever left their village that are in the United States. They all settled in the same town. But then Antioch, there was quite a few Spanish in Antioch that had settled. They just kind of scattered around, you know. They had made friends on the islands and they were writing to one another, and they'd say, "Well, come here," and the other ones "Come there."

CUSICK: So they tried to draw them, their relatives, the people they knew. And they'd settle that way.

JIMENEZ: Right, yeah. That's what they did, you know. And it was awfully hard for them when they got to Hawaii, because that language barrier was something that I give them a lot of courage for coming, because they never did learn the English language. They had to do everything with motions. Until we grew big enough to learn a little bit of English, we were the interpreters. And so naturally, as we got older, we were able to interpret so much more that really, they didn't have to learn the language. They were too busy working. A lot of people, you know, it upsets me. I shouldn't say mad. It upsets me because people say, "Well, you've been here 40 years, you should learn the language." Well, when you come here and you raise your family here, and in those days where it was so hard you know. You didn't have a good job. It was all field work, and it was during Depression. Jobs weren't that plentiful either, and you had to work real hard. And they were so busy working, they didn't have time to be learning a language and raising a family and getting accustomed to new ideas, to a new world. Everything was different, because the houses in Spain are not like the houses here at all. There's no comparison. Over there they went barefooted. Their homes were very small. And they had such a hard life that when they came here, it was a struggled. Everything was different. It was just like a new world. I know because I've been to Spain. I know.

CUSICK: Did your parents talk a lot about it to your sisters and you?

JIMENEZ: Well, I tell you, my mother talked about Spain I think every day of my life that I lived at home. Yes.

CUSICK: How did she feel about leaving her country, and then going to Hawaii, and then coming to California, and struggling with the language and the different customs and everything different?

JIMENEZ: It didn't seem to bother her. The only thing I've ever heard her say, that the torture... [laughs] I don't want to explain to you what they went through. I'll tell you, we laugh about it because my mother used to think it was a big joke in our own family. But she says what she went through when she left Spain until she got to Hawaii, that if she'da known it ahead of time, perhaps she woulda never left her country. Because they had to be A-1 shape. And the things that they made them do was really more than they could comprehend. And they couldn't... Well, I don't want to explain all the stuff they said, because some of it isn't so sweet. But anyway, it was really hard for them, because it wasn't just like getting on the boat and coming. No. No.

CUSICK: They were struggling for their existence.

JIMENEZ: Oh, you don't know what they went through before they got to the islands. And before they left, they were also examined. I guess they were examined partly before they left. You had to be an A-1 specimen before you left. If you even had pink eyes... My mother's cousin

had pink eyes, and so she went to Brazil. She couldn't come to America. You had to be just A-1 specimen.

CUSICK: Did they feel fortunate to be able to come to the United States?

JIMENEZ: Yes, they were. They felt real fortunate that they were here, and my father always said he didn't care to go back. He said he never left nothing over there. But he did. He left his mother, and she died shortly after he left. She was heartbroken. And he left all his family. My father left all his family there. But my mother always, I think there wasn't a day that went by that she didn't say something. And her and the neighbor, they were the only two families from the same village, so they had all this in common. They used to sit under a tree in the afternoon and just talk. When I went to Spain, I felt like I had been there already, really, truly. Because I had heard so much about it, I knew the name of this and the name of that.

CUSICK: You went to the exact place where your mother grew up?

JIMENEZ: Yes. Yes. Uh huh. And I slept in the house where my father was born and raised. But my mother's home, the people that own it were in France, and so I wasn't able to go inside. But my cousin owns the house was born and raised, cause her father was my father's brother, and they kept the house after the parents died. And so I was able to live in the house.

CUSICK: That's fantastic. And you had heard so much about it that you just felt familiar with it?

JIMENEZ: Right. Yeah, yeah. I felt like I was in a town that I had maybe grown up in. Yes, really.

CUSICK: Did all the customs that your parents had in your family coincide exactly with what they did in Spain pretty much?

JIMENEZ: Well, they've changed some, because I think all countries have, through the years you know, changed ways. Yeah, they changed. But still... Well, they're living over there like we were here in the '30s. That far back. But they are progressing. But a lot of the food, and a lot of the customs, and oh yes. And they still butcher their hogs and everything.

CUSICK: Did you feel like your parents had been very Americanized when they came here? What did they expect when they came to the United States besides the employment?

JIMENEZ: Well I tell you, I don't think they were thinking about what they expected. I don't think they had anything like that in mind. All they knew was that there was a lot of hunger in Spain and they were tired of the poor life and not being able to have anything. And when they heard of the opportunity to make a little more, why they took it. In fact, when I was growing up, you know, my parents were very conservative, and that was one of their main object was to be able to save. And they would deprive themselves of luxury – although some of them didn't.

Some of the people didn't. Then when depression came, then some of the people were a little bit envious if you had bread on your table, like they say, and they didn't have it. And my mother used to say, "Well, you had the same opportunity as I did." A lot of them were people that didn't know how to save, although they had been raised the same as my mother. But you know, everybody's not the same. But the majority, they all saved their money and bought their homes and progressed, and you didn't find any of them on welfare, very many. Unless they've lived to a certain age where inflation has eaten up what they saved. Because you know, some of them are still living and they're quite old, and so naturally you can't expect that they're going to have money saved to live til you're 80 or 90 years of age, you know.

CUSICK: Did your parents try to express that same concern about saving and working hard to progress?

JIMENEZ: Oh yes. Yes. We always worked hard . When we took a job, whether it turned out good or bad, we stayed with it til it finished. Like we'd go work in a dry yard and all the apricots would be so small and lousy. [laughs] And it was so hard to cut a box. You know, we were getting about 15 cents a box for apricots and 5 cents a box for a box of peaches. But when we asked for the job, I was the interpreter. My oldest brother, he was too shy. My other brothers were younger and they wouldn't talk. And so I had to be the interpreter. I had to ask for jobs and everything.

CUSICK: Were you the only girl in your family?

JIMENEZ: Well my mother had four girls. One died in Hawaii about a month after she was born. I don't know what was wrong with her. Because in those days they didn't know too much about different diseases and everything. And then when she came here in 1918, my little sister died. They had that big epidemic of the flu here right after the First World War. And she died. She was four. And then there was another sister born after my brother that was born here. She was born in 1920, and she was a year old. She died of pneumonia because they didn't know how to cure pneumonia. And my grandmother died of pneumonia too, I think they were two days apart. My little sister died on her birthday. She was born May the 29th, she died exactly a year after she was born. And my grandmother died then too. She was buried just a day or so from my sister. But so I was the only one left, the only girl, so I had to do all the interpreting.

CUSICK: So you were working just as hard as your brothers.

JIMENEZ: Oh yes. And in the winter time we used to saw wood for the wood stove. And I used to help my brothers chop wood and saw wood and go pick grapes. My dad used to make wine and we used to go to the fields, and after the harvest, we'd go and pick grapes, you know those little cheaper... After the harvest, they call it the third crop. The first crop is the big bunches of grapes and then these little ones are the ones that are kind of green, and then after you harvest

the first crop, these little bunches are left later. And of course they give em to you a lot cheaper because they have no use for them. So we used to go pick second crop, and my father used make wine. Then I moved here to Stockton and had six children, raised em here. And I did influence them with the Spanish atmosphere and the house, you know. I let them know that we were Spanish, and some of the things you know, some of the customs and the music.

CUSICK: What kind of customs and music? And did you marry someone of Spanish descent?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, he's Spanish. His mother came on the same boat my mother did.

CUSICK: Did your families know each other from []?

JIMENEZ: No. My mother and father met his family when they were on the boat. And then they lived in Hawaii across the tracks from one another.

CUSICK: What year did you come to Stockton?

JIMENEZ: I came here in 1938. But I cooked a lot of the Spanish foods, and then I've always had Spanish music at home. And the dances.

CUSICK: What kind of foods?

JIMENEZ: Well one of the combinations that my children love is called pachero. And some people call it la oya, but it's the same thing. It's garbanzo beans, and then I put soup bone in it and a little salt and pepper. And then I cut potatoes and you could put spaghetti with it after the garbanzo bean is cooked. And then when it's all cooked, just before it's finished, I put a couple sprigs of mint in it, and my children just love it. My son one day asked me here a few years ago, wanted to know when I was gonna cook pachero for him, and I said, "Oh, one of these days I will." So I called him over on Sunday, him and his wife, and I says, "Well I've got it cooked. You can come and eat it!" [laughs] And then we make tortilla. But it's not the Mexican tortilla. It's made with potatoes. You fry potatoes and onions if you like, put a little ham. You could doctor it however you want. My mother made it very plain. And then you beat your eggs, and then you take your potatoes out of a pan and you put it in a bowl with your eggs and mix it up real good, and then you put a little oil back in the pan, and then you put your potatoes with your eggs in the pan, and then you pat it down and cook it on one side. And then when you think it's about ready, then you put a lid on it and flip the frying pan upside down, and then it falls on the lid. And then you slip it back into the frying pan to cook the other side. Yeah. And then rice with chicken is another thing, arroz con pollo yeah, that we ate a lot of. And then my mother made tortillas with different things. With asparagus, with bell peppers. That's what we called them, la tortilla. And she baked bread at home. She had a brick oven outside, like an

igloo, you know? Rounded like this? And my grandfather built it... Well, my grandmother died in 1921, and I remember we already had that oven.

CUSICK: Did he live with you when you first came?

JIMENEZ: No, they had their own home, but in the same town. My grandfather built it. In fact, it's still standing. It's kind of getting lopsided, but the oven is still there. I told my brother, "Oh, don't tear it down!" And then they had a big paddle, like a big paddle with a long handle, yes. And we used to take the bread outside in a tray that had four handles on it. We used to grab the handles and take it and she had a table there. We set the tray on the table, and then she would get the paddle and pick up the bread, and first she'd burn a lot of wood in the oven outside, and then she had a mop made out of old rags. And she'd scrape all the coals out first, and then she'd take this mop and mop all the floor of the oven inside so the bread wouldn't get dirty. And she would put the bread on the paddle and get it in the oven there, and then she'd give it a little jerk and set them all in there so they wouldn't touch. The art of cooking bread in Spain is so the bread doesn't touch one another. You're not a good baker if your bread is stuck together. So that's their way. My great-grandmother was a baker. She had a brick oven, and she used to bake bread for the people in the town. And they used to pay her or give her something in trade. I had a skirt, it's made out of... I don't know what kind of material it is. It's quite heavy. It's like a blanket. And it's real gathered. And my mother said that some lady couldn't pay my great-grandmother for baking the bread, so she gave her that skirt, and my grandmother wore it as a young girl, my mother wore it, and I still have it. But see, in Spain, the houses are all close together. You couldn't build a brick oven outside like my mother had, because in Oakley almost everybody had a brick oven outside to bake their bread.

CUSICK: What was your house like in Oakley?

JIMENEZ: Well it was just a wooden house. It was made all wood inside with that groove-in-tongue wood. It's so wide, and then it's got a groove in the center.

CUSICK: Oh. They just all fit together?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, they just kind of fit together. And everybody had a brick oven outside to cook their stove, and everybody had a cistern. And you gathered the water from the roof of the house, and then because the water was awfully salty and was real hard water, so everybody had a cistern. And you know what a cistern is?

CUSICK: Not exactly.

JIMENEZ: Well, the well-digger comes and he digs the hole in the ground, and they line it all with brick. And it was, I think it was about 15 feet deep. And then it's all lined with brick. And

then on the top, you have an opening, and then you have it covered with wood, and you have a door that you open up. And then there's a pipe, a governor's pipe that connects to the house. But see, all around the house, you have these gutters, and then the first rains, they would let the water go into the ground to wash the roof off, so the water would come out clean. Then after that, they would hook it up to the cistern, and then as the rain fell on the roof, all that water would go into the cistern.

CUSICK: In the ground.

JIMENEZ: Yes, right. It's real nice, soft water. And we had a bucket and we'd drop the bucket in there, give it a little jerk, and then pull the bucket up, and we drank out of that.

CUSICK: Was this a neighborhood mainly of Spanish people?

JIMENEZ: Yeah. The majority were Spanish, yes.

CUSICK: You all kind of settled around each other.

JIMENEZ: Yes, uh huh.

CUSICK: But like you say, when you were in school there were a lot of Portuguese and Italian.

JIMENEZ: Not too many. There was a few. Yeah, they were more Spanish than they were anything else.

CUSICK: Did you have any friends in other ethnic groups?

JIMENEZ: Yes, yes, I did.

CUSICK: Did you bring them home very often?

JIMENEZ: Well, we played in the streets. We just didn't bring kids home. We didn't know what birthday parties were or anything. The first birthday party I went to, I was quite big. And the Spanish children, they didn't have birthday parties. Their parents weren't used to that. And we didn't seem to care, it didn't bother us, but we didn't have birthday parties.

CUSICK: What kind of holidays did you celebrate?

JIMENEZ: Once a year my mother used to light candles. She used to take a bucket, a tub, and set candles in there and light them. I don't know what it was. It was some religious day I guess. And then Christmas was quite celebrated, Christmas Eve especially. My folks weren't much for going out and doing a lot of activity. You know, some people are more quiet. My parents were more reserved. They didn't care about going out, singing, and making a lot of noises. Where I did. I was the only one in the family that liked all of that. So they let me go, and the Spanish

people would all get together, the ones that would want to. They'd get a couple of lids, and then they would bang the lids, and if someone knew how to play the guitar, they would play the guitar. And they'd get spoons and make noise. We'd go down the streets at night, Christmas. Christmas Eve. We'd start after it got dark, and they'd sing Christmas carols and things. They would stop in front of a house and sing, and then they'd let you in, give you cookies and whatever, anything they had around to eat, and a glass of wine to the men, you know. And then they'd chat. Then we'd leave and go to another house, and we were just making the rounds.

CUSICK: What was that called when they did that?

JIMENEZ: La parranda.

CUSICK: And what did you do on Christmas Day?

JIMENEZ: Then on Christmas Day, you stayed home with your family, but Christmas Eve was the main thing. We used to go down the main highway, and they'd all dress up just in anything to make it look real colorful. And they'd sing all the old Spanish songs and Christmas songs, and they just sang everything. And like I say, we'd stop, only at the Spanish houses, and sing. And it was something really to look forward to.

CUSICK: You enjoyed it a lot?

JIMENEZ: Oh yeah. Because you see, when you live in a small town, the people were so busy working... See, in Spain, they have a lot of fiestas, where they don't here. And although they did start going to the church, but they got away from the church because they couldn't understand anything. And then after the Second World War, a lot of the Spanish, the majority, went back to church again. They found the need because their sons or son-in-laws or somebody was going to war, and they found the need of religion. So I was surprised how many went back to the church and are very active in the church today. But during that gap there, they didn't go. And they were so busy working that the only time that we used to have a festival or something, if somebody butchered a hog, then everybody'd be over there, drinking wine, talking, and just having a gay time. It was a feast. Or if once in a great while, some of the older girls would have a party in their home. Like this friend of ours that came with my mother from Spain, they used to have dances in their home. And a Spanish fella used to play the guitar. So you didn't have to be invited, they would just pass the round around, you know, so-and-so's gonna have a dance tonight. [laughing] So we were kids and we didn't dance, but we wanted to hear the commotion. And they'd have a dance in the house, then they'd serve... I don't remember what they used to serve, but it seems to me like they had a cake or something. And this fellow would play the guitar and sing, and everybody would get up and dance, and it was quite a thing. But it didn't happen very often. It seemed like in weddings. The weddings too. People didn't give gifts when they had their weddings. I remember they used to have the weddings at home, and rice

was the dessert. They didn't have no cake. That's rice pudding with a lot of cinnamon on top. That's what they gave you. That was part of the wedding. You had to have rice pudding. And then they used to dance in the home, and every time you danced with the bride, you had to pay her. So you didn't send any gifts. And you danced with her, and then you wouldn't give her the money; you'd just throw it. And the thing was, she had to get out and pick it. Even during the Depression, a hundred dollars sometimes they used to get. That was quite a bit.

CUSICK: Was it customary for any of the Spanish people to have a say in who their kids married?

JIMENEZ: Yes. Some of the people did, yes. They tried to match the people because that was their custom was to match.

CUSICK: Did your parents do this?

JIMENEZ: No, my parents never did. But there was a woman in the neighborhood that was trying to match me with her son and... [laughs] You know, if you're not interested, you're not interested. But then my uncle married my husband's aunt, and his grandmother. I used to go every year up to stay with my uncle during the holidays after I got through working.

CUSICK: Which holidays?

JIMENEZ: Christmas holidays when I was done working through the summer and the spring. There was no work in the winter time. So I used to go up and stay with my aunt and uncle, which was my husband's aunt also, and uncle. And his grandmother, this one trip I made up there, she says to me, "I have a grandson that I think could make you a nice husband." I was already 21. And I wasn't interested, so she'd bring the picture, and she says, "Look, this is my grandson." [laughing] And I'd turn my head the other way! And so about two days later, we were going up the hill. I was going with his cousins up the hill. And they start yelling that their cousins were coming from Stockton. I thought to myself, "No." I didn't know they were coming. So we went back to Grandma's house, and the minute we got in the door, starts poking me. She says, "There he is!"

CUSICK: [laughing] How'd you feel? A little embarrassed?

JIMENEZ: Oh! I wouldn't even look. I felt so embarrassed, you know. Anyway, I went down to my aunt's house and my husband and his sister and brother-in-law came over, wanted to know if I wanted to go to show with them. So I went to the show with them. And then after that, about two months later, he came down to see me, and we started going together and got married.

CUSICK: Aww!

JIMENEZ: No one would've ever told me it was gonna happen! Because I just felt I wanted to marry someone of my choice. But I didn't do it because they wanted it; it just happened that that's the way it happened. But yeah, the people were used to in the old country... Of course, they didn't always marry who their parents wanted to.

CUSICK: They liked to try to arrange things.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. They tried to arrange it. And it's the same when I was growing up. Sometimes the parents didn't like the boy and they would work something out so they would split up, you know.

CUSICK: Did you have a very traditional wedding?

JIMENEZ: No. I just got married in a church.

CUSICK: Well, by this time did you feel very Americanized, or were you still very involved in the Spanish customs that your parents had in your family?

JIMENEZ: I have always felt, I have never really forgotten my Spanish ancestry, to the point where I've always felt that although I was proud to be an American and I lived here and I was proud of my country, but I also felt very Spanish. I've never really forgotten. Which I've heard some people say, "They won't even speak Spanish." Or they'll be where if somebody is having a problem with the English language or they can't speak English at all and they're talking Spanish and there's nobody there to interpret, they won't bother to help anybody out. They don't want people to know that they are of another ancestry. I don't know if they're ashamed or what it is, but I have never felt ashamed of my ancestry or the fact that I am Spanish blood. I was born here, but I'm still Spanish.

CUSICK: In fact, you were born in Hawaii, huh?

JIMENEZ: But it doesn't change your ancestry. You're still of Spanish ancestry, and you're the same mixture the Spaniards are in Spain.

CUSICK: You just live in another country.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, I'm a citizen of the United States, and like I say, I wouldn't trade it for anything else, but I still don't forget that I am Spanish.

CUSICK: Was your husband's family very Spanish-oriented also?

JIMENEZ: Yes. But I also heard my father-in-law, when he was living, say how they lived the little things when they came here. They were always observing to see what the American people were doing.

CUSICK: Do you mean like in food and clothes?

JIMENEZ: Yes, and try to live up to their standards. Try to improve. And my parents did too, but it took them a long time for this to happen, because when they first got here, they were so busy getting used to the country and being able to shop and being made understood that they didn't have time to upbring their standards. They just lived like they did in the Old Country. Because see since 1913, that's a long time.

CUSICK: Did your husband have to learn English the same way you did?

JIMENEZ: Same way. He never got to high school, because his father and mother had a farm, and he worked in the farm before he went to school. So it's like he says, when he went to school, he went to play. So really schooling didn't mean that much to him. Not that he wasn't bright, but they played. Which I could see. I didn't have to work before I went to school. I worked through the summer, but while I was in school, I hated to miss school. I used to cry when my mother would keep me home. I remember one time I was really sick and I had a real bad cold, and I looked up, I saw the youngsters play... [cut off]

[End of Tape]

[Tape 1, Side B]
[Begin Tape.]

JIMENEZ: The youngsters in the schoolyard. And so I couldn't tell time, so I couldn't have been very big, and I told my mother, "Oh, I gotta get ready to go to school." She said, "Oh, you're not going." "Oh yes, I'm going to school." So she got me all dressed and gave me a little chunk of bread, and she says, "Now when you start coughing, you take a little bite of bread and that'll help you from coughing." So I hurried up and got in the schoolyard, and when I got there, I found out it was recess. It was 10 o'clock. The kids were having recess, but I went to school anyway. She couldn't keep me home for nothing. I just wouldn't stay home.

CUSICK: Did she like your enthusiasm for school?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, she did, but you see when I was in high school, I was telling my daughter, I wanted to enter this typing contest in Martinez that they had every year, and I was one of the top typists and most accurate typists in my class, and I was chosen to go and another girl. She was just below me. I had more stars than she did, and my birthday was in March in Easter time, and the contest was the first part of April. So I didn't get to go, because when I turned 16, I went to pick asparagus. And my daughter says, "Well, did you tell Grandma that..." I says, "No, I

just knew that's what I had to do. I didn't fight it. I knew that was my obligation, that I had to go pick asparagus." So that's what I did. But I just wasn't one to rebel. I felt that whatever my parents wanted, I had to do.

CUSICK: Do you expect that of your children too?

JIMENEZ: No. I've tried to give my children the best education possible as far as they wanted to go in school. Of course, if they didn't want to go, you can't make them go.

CUSICK: Are there certain standards you expect them to meet, as far as...

JIMENEZ: Yeah, I try to encourage 'em, and I always was real active in the PTA because I wanted to know what was going on in the school. And I took part in all the activities, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, and the PTA. That's what we had.

CUSICK: Was your husband the same way?

JIMENEZ: No. No.

CUSICK: He's not as involved?

JIMENEZ: No, he felt that I had enough children without having the Girl Scouts over here or the Boy Scouts. [laughs] Because I had six, and he wanted to know why I wanted any more kids around. But I told him, "I enjoy it. I feel like I'm doing something for these youngsters." And to me, it was all knew, because when I was growing up, there was no Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts. I didn't know anything about that til my youngsters went to school. I never knew what a Girl Scout was until they got involved. And like I say, my vocabulary, I was learning something every day. Perhaps when I was 22 years old, I didn't have a vocabulary any bigger than a 2nd or 3rd grader did. Because you see, you had to learn it in school, and if you didn't catch it while you were in school, goodbye, that's it. You didn't have a dictionary. Well how could you look when you didn't know what you were looking for?

CUSICK: So you were learning from your children even.

JIMENEZ: Right. Yeah.

CUSICK: And the experiences that they were going through were teaching you more things about the community here. This is in Stockton at the time. They all grew up in Stockton.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. Yeah. They were all born and raised here in Stockton. In fact, when we bought this house, I had the two girls, the two older girls, and then the other four were all born here.

CUSICK: Were you living in Oakley before?

JIMENEZ: No. I was living out at the Hammer ranch on Hammer Lane. I was still here in Stockton. And so like I say, all these things were new to me, and I enjoyed it because I was just excited to do the things that they did. Because I felt like it was something I had missed when I was growing up. Well, they didn't have anything like that in a small town. Nothing like that. I never heard of anything like scouting. You didn't have a newspaper to read. The only time the newspapers came around when I was growing up was when there was a big disaster of some kind. They'd come around yelling through the streets. They'd say, "Read all about it." The big disaster or whatever it was. And they'd go through the streets selling newspapers.

CUSICK: Were you able to get involved in any kinds of groups in school? You didn't have the Girl Scouts, but did they have other... You said you were really excelling in typing. Was there a club or some group that you were involved in?

JIMENEZ: No. We didn't have clubs in school at all. The only thing was, when I quit high school, and I was a little older, I joined the Junior Women's Club. Because it just seemed like I was the only Spanish girl in all the youngsters I grew around with that would mingle with the other races.

CUSICK: Most of them just stayed with their own ethnic group?

JIMENEZ: Yeah. Yes. When I went to high school, there wasn't any other Spanish girl in high school, and the following year there was another girl that went to high school, and then I joined the Junior Women's Club, and I was the only Spanish girl in the Junior Women's Club until I got married.

CUSICK: What did the club do?

JIMENEZ: It was a nonprofit organization, and they used to have card parties, and what else? They had card parties and then parties of their own. I really couldn't tell you what the Junior Women's Club stands for, because like I say, I was only going to when I got married, and I've never been involved in it anymore, so I really don't know. But I know they had card parties and rummage sales and all different things. There's a Women's Club and then the Junior Women's Club, which is all affiliated. And I don't know what they did with their money. I never did hear and never inquired. See, if it was now I'd know, but then I didn't. But I was the only girl that did that. And then we did have a ball team that we were different nationalities involved in that. Spaniards and everything. We played softball. The girls did. We had a team, an Oakley team. We used to go play the Antioch girls or the ones in Brentwood. But other than that, we didn't have anything else.

CUSICK: So when you're still involved with your children's activities, what they get involved with at school, do you see this as something that your husband and you divide? I mean this is kind of something you get into, and he's not as much involved in that.

JIMENEZ: No. No. No. In fact, if I go to the PTA meeting, he couldn't understand why I had to go to a PTA meeting, why I had to be involved in the Girl Scouts or the Boy Scouts. If I had really listened to him, I wouldn't have done any of it.

CUSICK: So you do differ on some views.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. I'm a type of person that I don't like to be told what to do. [laughing] I guess that's why sometimes I get in trouble with him! But I have a mind of my own, and if I know I'm doing the right thing, I'm going the right direction, and I know that I'm not doing anything harmful, I don't want anybody telling me I can't do it. And I've always been that way.

CUSICK: You stood up for yourself.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. I do. Well if I hadn't, really I wouldn't have gotten as far in society as I have if I had listened to him. I wouldn't have. Because now I've organized a Spanish club, and nobody knows parliamentary procedure, and I'm the only one that knows it. And hadn't I been involved in all these things, there would be no way that I could've organized a club, because you've got to know what you're doing.

CUSICK: What's this club you've organized?

JIMENEZ: For people of Spanish ancestry.

CUSICK: What's it called?

JIMENEZ: El Circulo Espaol de Stockton.

CUSICK: And you meet yearly?

JIMENEZ: We meet once a month from September to June, and then after that, we have two months that we don't meet. But we're gonna have a picnic in August.

CUSICK: Great. What does your group do?

JIMENEZ: Well, we're a nonprofit organization. We have our meetings and we donate wherever we can. We gave a scholarship this year, and we donated to the children's home, and then naturally we expect to be able to do a little bit more in the community. And then after the meetings, they play bingo, which is real good for these people, because about 2/3 of them are retired people. They're older. And they just love it. They think more of the bingo, they don't pay

attention to the meeting. All they want is play bingo. So we play bingo and we have refreshments, and everybody takes turns in bringing refreshments. Every month, we read the names of five or six people, and then it's their turn to bring refreshments. So about once a year you bring refreshments. And then at Christmas time, we have a big party, and we had a Santa Claus and a lot of Spanish records that we danced to. And then we had a potluck. And they enjoy that. This organization has really brought together a lot of the Spaniards that were living here in the north area, where my father-in-law settled when he came over here, because they were the ones that pioneered it. And they haven't seen each other for years. A whole bunch of them that went to the Elkhorn School. So this has brought them all together. They talk about old times. They bring pictures and what have you. And it's brought some of the families that were very distant together now with the club. They've become a little closer because some of them don't live here and they sort of just visit their family here in Stockton once every now and then. Where now they come often and they're closer. It's really done something for some of them.

CUSICK: Is your family involved in it too? They go to meetings?

JIMENEZ: Yes. My children belong to it, and my husband.

CUSICK: Were they supportive of you when you wanted to start the organization?

JIMENEZ: Well yeah. My son – the way it started was, at Micke Grove they had a spring festival about three years ago. They've had it for a good many years, but three years ago, four years ago, my daughter-in-law said to me, "I went to the spring festival and every country's represented but Spain." She's Mexican. And she's married to my son. And she says, "How come?" and I says, "Well, there's no Spanish club. You can't just go over there and represent a country without nothing. What are you going to represent, yourself? You can't go over there and put a booth all by yourself." She says, "Well next year, Spain's going to be represented. We're gonna have a booth and we're gonna be represented." I says, "Well, I don't know where you're gonna get the people to represent us. There's only you and I and my son." And I said, "Ooh, we don't even have a club," so I forgot all about it. So the next year came time for the spring festival, she says, "Well my aunt says she has a booth over there for you." "A booth for what?" She says, "For the spring festival!" I said, "Oh my gosh, the spring festival! We don't have a club!" And she says, "Oh come on, I'll help you, and we'll get something together and we'll have a booth." I said, "Okay" and went along with her. I was retiring then and I felt I had a little time. So I got another friend of mine to bake some goodies, and then I went to the sausage company in Santa Clara and I bought some Spanish sausage, and we sold that. And then I made what I call them Spanish doughnuts, but their correct name is curros. I have my pot there and I'm cooking them all day long. And those go over real well, because you don't see

them around. They don't sell them around here. In very, very few places. I think in San Francisco they sell them.

CUSICK: That's another very typical Spanish food?

JIMENEZ: Yes. Churros. And so anyway, we got ready for the booth and she calls me up and this was the first part of the meek and then maybe perhaps about the middle of the week, she says, "You gotta have a queen to represent Spain." I said, "A queen! [laughing] And where do you think I'm gonna get a queen at?" I said, "Oh my God Virgie, you sure put me in a spot." I said, "Where am I gonna get a queen? All the Spanish people I know are older people, and they don't have any children. Yours are too little and we're not gonna get a queen." "Oh," she says, "if you look around, you'll find one." I says, "Oh my gosh, I can't find a queen!" So then, oh, I was beside myself. How am I gonna do this in about four days? And so then I said to my husband, "I don't know. How about Sam Hernandez? His children, how old are they?" See, he used to work with my husband out in the islands, and I asked him how old are his children. And he said, "Well, there's one that would be old enough to be a queen. In fact there's two of them." I said, "Well, let me call them up and find out if they'll be our queen to represent us, because they're half Spanish." So I called them up and the mother says, "Well, I'll have to talk to the girls." So the older girl didn't want to be. The younger one said okay. I said, "Well, she's a little too young. She should be already 14 years of age," but I said, "Well, just tell them you're 14 already." Because this was in May and I think her birthday was in the summer. It was just a matter of months. I said, "Well just don't tell them. Tell 'em you're 14 already so we can have you." So anyway, this friend of mine had a Spanish comb and a mantilla, so we got her all dressed up and her mother made her a gown. And so then one of the fellas that's in charge of the spring festival and the committee said to me, "Well you'll have to crown the queen." I says, "Me crown the queen? I don't know anything about it." So they put me in a spot. Well anyway, I had to do it, and we made it. So between that time and the next year, before the spring festival came again, my son said to me that winter, "You better get a Spanish club together, because if the Spring festival finds out you really don't have a club, you're gonna get in trouble." He says, "You're supposed to have a club when you participate!" [giggling] Of course we gave our money to a boy that needed it real bad, so we really didn't keep it for ourselves. We gave it for a scholarship. And I said, "Well Michael, I don't know where you think I'm gonna get enough Spanish people to make a club." I said, "I just know a handful of people and they're all old people and I don't see how I can have a club." So anyway, as time went on, he kept bugging me again. "Well when are you gonna get your club together?" he said. "You better get busy with it!" So anyway, finally I told him, "Alright, shut up, I'll see what I can do." So I started calling a few people around. I told them, "If you know anyone that's interested, you have them contact me or go to the meeting place." Well in the meantime, where do we meet? By that time, I had about 19 or 20 that I had contacted. I said, "Well now where do we meet?"

CUSICK:: Well there was enough support in the community to get some place together. So what were you gonna meet about? That's another thing.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. So then I had to check with different places to see where we could find a meeting hall. So Pacific Bowl, the fellow that's in charge there, Mr. Reynolds, says, "Well, I'll let you meet here the first meeting free to get you started." Because his wife is part-Spanish. And he said, "Then after that, when you get on your feet, then we will charge you rent." So then it took me a couple months to organize all this because I had to contact the different people and talk to them and explain to them why we wanted this club and everything. So anyway, I made a bunch of cookies and I got my coffee pot, and I made an agenda to elect the officers and all that stuff.

CUSICK: So you were a full-fledged organization now.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. I knew because I had worked in PTA, and I knew what a club consists of, and I knew what I had to do. So we went, and 30 of them turned up. I was really surprised. We had 30 charter members. Some of them, I didn't know who they were. They were just invited by other people. So anyway, we elected our officers and I had to explain to them how to make motions, and this is something after two years some of them still don't know very well what they're doing, but anyway. [laughs]

CUSICK: It's still young!

JIMENEZ: They'll learn! So anyway, we got our officers elected, and we start meeting the second Sunday of the month, and then we go dark for two months in the summer. So then the following year, then it wasn't hard to get a queen. We got our queen, which was the girl that we had asked the first time. But she saw how nice it was. You got a beautiful plaque and a beautiful bouquet of roses and your picture in the paper and everything, and it was really nice. So she was the queen last year, and this year we had another girl, and we've been able to progress since. We've had booths in different activities, like at Lincoln Village we have a booth, and at UOP we had one at Senior Citizens' Awareness Day. We had one at Venetian Gardens, and then we're gonna have our picnic, you know. So we've been doing fairly well.

CUSICK: Good success story.

JIMENEZ: And now we have T-shirts with our names on the back. I'll show you one.

CUSICK: Oh wow, that's great.

JIMENEZ: And hopefully we'll just keep progressing. That's what our aim is, is to maintain our Spanish culture is what it's for. It's our Circulo Espanol de Stockton. This year one of the

members thought it was nice to put that, so we put that in here, and then here's a map of Spain, which we represent. And of course our Spanish colors.

CUSICK: Red and gold?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, red and yellow. So last year we had the vice-consul came from San Francisco to crown our queen. And then this year we had a representative from the Spanish travel agent in San Francisco came to crown the queen. We have pictures of them.

CUSICK: So look how far you've come in just a few years! That's fantastic.

JIMENEZ: Yes, uh huh. And they were so impressed with Micke's Grove last year, the vice-consul, and he couldn't get over the pot luck. He's a young fellow and I don't think he's been here too many years, and he was amazed at the things that we do that are so different from their country. But our club is doing real well, and it's really brought us a lot closer together. I've met a lot of Spanish people which I never would have met.

CUSICK: Do you think it represents a lot of the Spanish community, or just part of it in Stockton? You're getting a lot of people involved with it, bringing a lot of you together.

JIMENEZ: Well, Stockton is not a town for a lot of Spanish. There's quite a few Basque. We have some Basque in our club. But a lot of them live on the outside of Stockton. They live up toward Lockeford and up in the hills.

CUSICK: They're Spanish Basque?

JIMENEZ: Oh yeah. They're Spanish Basque. They're sheep herders, you know. We have some that are Spanish Basque, and they're Basque – I mean, they're Spanish just like we are, except they come from the Basque Country. And they have a language also of their own besides the Castilian Spanish, where we don't. We just have the one language. But it has brought us a lot closer together, and we've got to meet people which we never would have met. And then like I say, when we're together, we talk Spanish.

CUSICK: Yeah. That's a good one for all of you to get together.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. We speak in Spanish. See, Stockton is not a – there's a lot of Mexicans, but there's not very many Spanish.

CUSICK: A lot of Spanish speaking, but not a lot of Spanish, you're saying.

JIMENEZ: Right. Yes. Like I joined the Toastmasters Club for Spanish speaking, you know, to learn to speak Spanish better, the grammar. And we had a feller, I don't know what his position is with the Toastmasters in Sacramento, and he was talking, and he says, "Well, there's a lot of

Spanish people in Stockton.” And as soon as I got a chance, I told him, I say, “Excuse me. There’s a lot of Spanish-speaking people in Stockton, but there are not a lot of Spanish people in Stockton.

CUSICK: There’s distinction.

JIMENEZ: I says, “There is a difference.” See, everybody thinks you’re Mexican. I’ve been fighting that since 1930, when I was my first year in high school. There was a Mexican girl there, and she got up in the Spanish class and said the Spanish and the Mexicans were the same. Don’t ever tell that to a Spaniard, because they want to be identified as what they are, which is not that we’re prejudiced, but you don’t want to be called another nationality when you’re not. Why should we be something else when we’re not? Why should we keep quiet when we’re not? You know. It’s like if they called you English, “Oh, why she’s English.” You’d say, “No. I’m not English, I’m American.” Well, and I’ve been fighting that – I thought that after all these years, with everybody’s, and you’d be surprised how many people are so well educated, and they still say a Mexican and Spanish is all the same. They class you the same. You’re not. Just because they have some of our culture doesn’t mean that we’re the same. Our food is altogether different. And the music, I can tell. All I have to hear is the Mexican music and I can tell you if it’s Mexican or Spanish. If I hear Spanish music, I know the difference. I don’t even have to look at the name or the record or nothing. And I can hear them when they’re talking, I can tell you if they’re Mexican or Spanish.

CUSICK: That’s right. You can tell even if they’re from Central or South America.

JIMENEZ: Any place. And the Cubans, oh my, you can tell the Cubans right now, because they have a real...

CUSICK: You can tell the different accents, can’t you?

JIMENEZ: Yes, you can tell. Yeah. Well not exactly from all the countries, but you know they’re not from Spain. You hear them. Like I have cousins that live in Florida, and I didn’t know they lived there til I went to Spain, and I talked to her one day on the phone. And I had never inquired as to how they got to Florida or anything, because I was there for a short time and you don’t even think. I didn’t even think of asking my mother’s cousin how come they were in Florida. So I called her one day and I listened to her talk, and I said to her, “I wanna ask you something. Have you been living in Cuba?” And she says, “Yeah.” She says, “That’s where we came from.” Because see, in writing to her, I never asked her where she’d been living, but as soon as I heard her talk, I says, “You must have been living in Cuba. Is that where you came from?” And she says, “Yeah. I was born in Cuba.”

CUSICK: That’s amazing.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, her mother and father – of course, her mother is my mother’s first cousin. She was born in Spain, so was her father. But I don’t know if they met there or they married and moved to Cuba. I never have asked her. But she was born and raised in Cuba. So now she calls me her Cuban cousin, la cubana. I told her as soon as I heard her talk, “You must be from Cuba. You sound like the Cubans.” And she says, “Yeah.” You can tell.

CUSICK: What kinds of things are different do you think? You must be able to think of a lot of things that are different from your growing up, and then the childhood of your children.

JIMENEZ: Well, everything is different. Like they never had to work through the summers like I did. My boys worked out in the ranch, but they never had to....

CUSICK: They didn’t even have to have jobs you mean?

JIMENEZ: No.

CUSICK: Did you make them work around the house?

JIMENEZ: Well they did some, but you know how it is. One will say, “Well, the other one’s not doing it, so I’m not gonna do it.” So then you figure, “Well I’ll do it and keep them quiet,” you know. All that fighting. Well no, their life is entirely different than when I was growing up. They went out to work with their father in the fields and my husband always paid them, and when they got married they had their bank accounts and everything. See, I didn’t have anything of that. I don’t begrudge it because I was just happy to know that my parents were able to live comfortable when they got old. And they did have a struggle getting over here and working, and it’s nice to know that they didn’t have to into welfare. At that time there wasn’t much of anything. I don’t even know if you could go into welfare or not. I don’t know. They had some kind of relief. I know they did. But I don’t know what they called it. I don’t know if they called it welfare or not, but I know they did. I heard my mother say that they did give something. But I felt they did the best they could to their knowledge and the way they were raised. How could they live different? They weren’t brought up any other way. And you just don’t learn it overnight.

CUSICK: Then your children again had so many different experiences because things had changed so much from when you came to Stockton.

JIMENEZ: Yes.

CUSICK: Do you hope when your children are older, they’ll look up to you and your husband and feel the same way, as in they want the best for you, they know you worked a lot in your lifetime?

JIMENEZ: Yeah. Yeah, well, they do. They always tell us, "Well, whatever money you have if you've saved, whatever we have, to spend it. Don't leave us anything. We can work for ours. You have a good time. Enjoy your money." Because years ago, that was one of the things that so many of the parents used to do was save and then leave it to their kids so their kids could have something. And that's not only in the Spanish people, but all the Europeans. Not the ones here in this country, but your European people always felt that way. They wanted to leave something to their children so that they could get ahead, so they wouldn't have to struggle. That was the object is to save some for their children. Even my husband. We bought a ranch and he says, "Well, for my kids." That's the first thing he said. "For my kids."

CUSICK: They held over from even his parents.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And you were raised with it, and you feel like you want to leave something to your children. But they tell us, "Well, we're able to work, and we don't want you to save anything for us. You enjoy what you have." Myself, my husband, he never got involved with it, but I always tried to get the children to get a good education. And he did too. He tried to tell them to go to school and go to college if they wanted to. We never deprived any of them from going to school and educating themselves, even if perhaps maybe we didn't have much. But we were willing to use what we had, to see that they got educated. And I went to beauty school when my youngest son was six years old, and once I seen a paper that he had written... It was something to do with his class I guess. I don't remember what the class was. Something to do with parenthood or something. I don't know. I can't remember because too many years back. But anyway, all I can remember is seeing that piece of paper. "My mother's always worked as far as I can remember. "Because he was only six years old, so he never knew what it was for me to be home. And I just retired two years ago.

CUSICK: What were you working at?

JIMENEZ: I was a beautician. I went to beauty school when he was six, and I worked for 20 years. So I worked during all the time they were in school.

CUSICK: How did your husband feel about that?

JIMENEZ: Well, he didn't care for me to work, but I wanted my children to get an education, and I felt that with what he was doing – he was the type that would work today in the job, and then if he wasn't happy, he'd leave it and go to another one. And I just felt so insecure that I wanted to work so the children could go to school and take advantage of getting a good education, because you could if you wanted to. When I was growing up, it was different. But now, if you want an education, there's no reason why you can't have it, if your parents help you. And then there's other ways too that you can secure an education. But I felt that I wanted

to work because I wanted to be able to have enough money so that if they wanted to go to school that I could help them.

CUSICK: One of your sons is married, you said, to a Mexican woman?

JIMENEZ: Yeah.

CUSICK: Are any of your other children married?

JIMENEZ: Well, I have four daughters, and only one isn't married. And then I have two boys and they're both married. Michael's married to a Mexican girl and my daughter Lucille's married to a Mexican boy, and then my oldest girl is married to... He's German and English and I don't know what else. And then the other one was married to, he was a mixture of everything, just American-born. And then my oldest boy, he was married to a girl that was part Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish. She was a mixture. And then they got divorced. Now he's married to a girl that's part Italian and her father is just American-born. But her mother is Italian. She comes from parents that are full-blooded Italians. Then I have the one girl that's not married. I have five married.

CUSICK: And did you have any concern about who they might marry? Did you hope they might marry somebody of Spanish background?

JIMENEZ: Well, yes, I was hoping that one of them would, but I felt that, well, this town, there isn't that many Spanish people. You know, it would be almost impossible to really come across anybody that was Spanish. If you lived in a town where there was more Spanish people, perhaps this could have happened, but since we live in a town where there isn't, it's kind of difficult.

CUSICK: Do you think your children keep the same customs that they had when they were growing up? The ones that you showed them. The way they celebrate some holidays or some cooking or some phrases, or just any bit of background from the Old Country. Do they keep that in their family?

JIMENEZ: To a certain extent, like their morals, they have good moral standards. And they know how I feel, so therefore they try to live up to the standards that we have set up for them.

CUSICK: You mean they try to live up to your standards and please you?

JIMENEZ: Yeah. Because I know my son Michael, when he got out of the service, we had quite a debate. Him and the girl that's single was here. And he said getting married was just a piece of paper. So we had debated this a number of time about getting married was just a piece of paper. So this one day, he started that conversation again, and he said to me, "Well, Mother, in

your days, people would have done it, but they were afraid to.” And I always believe in miracles and that there is something above that has more power than you have. And just out of the clear blue sky, without even thinking, I says, “You know Michael, I think you’re right. Because I’ve been married to your father for over 30 years, and I’ve never slept with another man. And you know what, I feel I’ve been cheated.” And I says, “If it comes a day that I have to live by myself and that something happens to your father, I’m gonna have a gay old time. I’m gonna have a new one every night. I’m just gonna have a lot of fun, you know.” And he was sitting in a green chair we had here, and my other daughter was sitting on the hasack, and he looked up at me, and his mouth dropped open. He says, “This generation’s corrupted.” His mother doing it was a different story! Oh yeah, was fine when everybody else is doing it, but not his mother. I told him. “I feel like I’ve been cheated. You know, I’ve been cheated.” He didn’t like that! [laughing] Oh yes, and then he began to feel what it was to be on the other side of the fence, and oh, then he didn’t like that. It was fine for the generation now doing it, but not my parents, you know. So when he got married, he came to tell us that he was getting married, and he says, “I don’t have to get married and I am getting married!” He wanted me to make sure that, yeah. And I know his wife, she said, Kinley[?], one time she told him, “Oh, why don’t we just live together?” And he said, “Oh , no. No.” He says, “We’re getting married.” And I think they have pretty good standards. They know how I feel. I just, you know, that is something that I was raised that way, and you just don’t erase it.

CUSICK: Yeah. And you keep it strong in your household.

JIMENEZ: Right. And I’ve always felt that if you want to live with somebody, if you feel that comfortable around them, why are they so afraid to get married? They call it just a piece of paper. Besides, it’s the law of the land for one thing, and besides, what are they so afraid of it?

CUSICK: The commitment. Maybe that’s the corruption of the standards.

JIMENEZ: They have children, and then they rush to get married because they have a child. And I think that’s worse, because it looks like they’re doing it because they’re pressured into it.

CUSICK: Do any of them have children?

JIMENEZ: Yeah, I have ten grandchildren. Ten or eleven, I can’t count them. [laughs] I have two on the way now. My son’s wife is having a baby, my daughter’s having a baby.

CUSICK: Oh wow. That’s great.

JIMENEZ: But their standards are pretty good. They’re pretty well-behaved. So anyway, I just hope my grandchildren when they come along, the ones that are growing up, I hope they behave. So I can wish, but you haven’t raised them, so there’s nothing you can do.

CUSICK: You feel like you brought your children up. The rest will you care[?] they're do the same. Did your children speak Spanish in the home?

JIMENEZ: Well, Eleanor, the oldest one, she spoke Spanish. In fact, when we moved here, that was all she spoke was Spanish. And then they other ones, they'd know a little bit. Like the girl that's not married, we sent her to Mexico. To Guadalajara. There's a college there... Let's see, Washington state college. I forgot what town in Washington it was. Seattle? They had an extension course in Mexico. Not the University of Guadalajara, but there was a college there where they could go, and it was real reasonable, so we gave her that for her graduation when she got her master's degree.

CUSICK: Oh wow. That's neat.

JIMENEZ: But my children, like I say, even if they're not married to Spanish people, they feel that Spanish influence. They all do.

CUSICK: That's something you were proud of them and you wanted them to keep up.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, like when you talk about going to Spain, they'd all go tomorrow if you gave them the ticket to go. [laughs] Even my grandchildren.

CUSICK: What was your biggest concern as a mother?

JIMENEZ: Hoping that my daughters wouldn't get married and then my boys wouldn't get in trouble. [laughing] That was one of my biggest concerns...

CUSICK: That your daughters wouldn't get married?

JIMENEZ: No, that my daughters wouldn't get pregnant and then be left with a child. You know how you used to see different ones, girls get pregnant, the boys didn't wanna marry them, or maybe they felt like they had to get married and it didn't work. I was really concerned about the boys getting in trouble. And then of course, the younger ones, then the dope came along and I was real concerned about them not getting into the dope rings and getting in trouble with the pot and all that stuff that they're smoking today. That worried me a lot. Because you know, kids can be influenced.

CUSICK: Did you share these concerns and fears with your husband? Did he feel the same way?

JIMENEZ: Oh yeah, yeah. And I never went to bed. I'd go to bed and the minute they came in that door I was up to see if they'd walking in straight or crooked or were in good shape. My son, he says, "My gosh, Mother, you must not sleep. The minute I walk in the door, you're here!" And now I have my granddaughter living with me because my daughter's divorced. Her husband was a heavy drinker and she put up with it for quite a few years, and it was kind of sad. But it is

hard to put up with somebody that drinks a lot. It's a rough life. Anyway, she lives with me, and I don't go to bed until she comes in, and she knows it. I tell her, "I don't go to sleep." If she comes in that door, I'm up. If I lay down for a few minutes, I come up, or otherwise I'm sitting here waiting for her to come.

CUSICK: She's at that age.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, she's 17. I told her, "Well I hope the day you walk out that door, I hope your morals are good and that you can hold your head up high. I hope you don't walk with your head hanging down. I wanna see you walk out there proud."

CUSICK: How were your childrearing practices different from your mother? Because you have kept a lot of the things intact.

JIMENEZ: They were a little bit more lenient with their children than we were.

CUSICK: Your children are more lenient with their children than you and your husband?

JIMENEZ: With their children, yes, yes.

CUSICK: And how's it compare with the way you were brought up, with your family?

JIMENEZ: Well, a lot different, yeah. They whave more privileges, and of course there's more money to buy, and they're able to do more things than we did. We lived a very primitive life I guess you would say.

CUSICK: You're describing when you were bringing up your children?

JIMENEZ: When I was growing up. My privileges when I was growing up. They didn't have as much as they have today either. There's more things today, because things were different. The country changes as the generations come along. Everything's different. The town is larger. There's more activity. When my children were growing up, the town was smaller. If they went skating or to the show, the movies, that's all there was to do. Where now the children have a lot more activities and there's a lot more things going on that you can do.

CUSICK: Did you try to get them involved in the community when they were growing up? Would you like to see them get into a lot of the groups in high school?

JIMENEZ: Oh yes, they did. They were in drama and Michael played football and they took part in whatever they felt that they fitted into.

CUSICK: Have there been any main events in Stockton that affected you or your family?

JIMENEZ: No, I don't think so.

CUSICK: Probably your Circulo.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, that's been one of the things that we really are proud of.

CUSICK: That's quite an accomplishment.

JIMENEZ: And like I say, if nothing else, we want the people to identify us as Spaniards. We're from Spain. We're not from Mexico. As I told one lady when I went to the stew[?], she said that somebody told her I got up and said we had the only Mexican club in town. I said, "What do you mean? I didn't say that." And she was laughing. She says some of the women, when I did get up and say that ours was the only Spanish club in town, these women were criticizing the fact that I had made that statement. I said, "Well, all I can tell you is that Spain is still in Europe. It hasn't moved South of the border. So I don't know how I could be from Mexico. [laughing] How I could be Mexican and Spain is still in Europe! I can't understand. And you get people that are educated and they still class you as Mexican the wrong way.

CUSICK: Well it's that big influx of Mexican Americans.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, but if you go to school, you know the difference. I mean, after all, Columbus discovered America for Spain. I don't know what more and more clear people have that – everybody knows that. That's a common thing. Everybody knows that happened. So why do they still class us... I don't understand it.

CUSICK: Because the same language is spoken. Maybe that's a lot of it. But then you're right because there's such a different background. They really are. I mean, that's Indian and you're European.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, right. Yeah. I still, I can't understand why people forget that Spain is still in the map. I've thought that ever since, like I say, when I went to high school, I never knew what it was to argue with anybody and tell them I was Spanish because everybody in our town knew we were until I got to high school, where it was a community high school. Where children came from all different areas. And then here in Stockton, there isn't a year that doesn't go by that I have to tell somebody I'm not Mexican, I'm Spanish. And I don't understand why. You tell them you're Spanish and then they relate you to the Mexican people. Really, I can't understand it.

CUSICK: Maybe it's fortunate that that's one frustration rather than being discriminated against because of your background.

JIMENEZ: Well you are, because if they think you're Mexican, a lot of people discriminate the Mexican people, you know.

CUSICK: Ah, yes, that's a point.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, because I remember when we first moved over here, my sister-in-law went to look at a lot that she wanted to buy, and they thought she was Mexican because she had a Spanish surname, and at that time it was hard for you to buy any land if you were of Mexican descent. Here in Stockton, you could only buy in certain areas. I remember that. And they told her no. She told them, why, she wasn't Mexican. She said she was Spanish.

CUSICK: And what happened then?

JIMENEZ: Well, she didn't buy it. She went to look at it, but they didn't even want to talk to her because they thought she was Mexican.

CUSICK: Have you felt any other kind of discrimination in Stockton? Besides being confused as a Mexican?

JIMENEZ: I haven't been discriminated from myself, no, because I've worked with different groups and everything and nobody has ever... I just let them know. I don't waste any time letting them know. Like when I went to beauty school, they said, "Oh! You don't look Spanish!" I said, "Well what are we supposed to look like? My people are from Spain. I'm not from Mexico. I'm Spanish." I'll tell you, I thought I would come to a day when I wouldn't have to go around explaining to people what I am. But you still have to preach the same thing over and over again. Even my daughter, when she was going with her husband. She went to Edison High School, and of course her husband had never seen a Spaniard because there's not that many here. They were the only Spanish in school. And he called her *la mexicana*, because he referred to her as a Mexican. And she told him, "No, I'm Spanish." He didn't believe it. Well, he'd never seen any Spanish people until he met up with her and he thought she was Mexican. And she said, "No I'm not. I'm Spanish."

CUSICK: So they stand up for themselves just as much. Proud of their heritage.

JIMENEZ: Yeah. So my daughter told him, "No. Don't call me that because I'm not Mexican. I'm Spanish!" [laughing] So my little granddaughter, she's half Spanish, so I tell her, "Now you're half and half. Your father's Spanish, your mother's Mexican. That's Mexico and this is Spain." So when she was quite a little tyke, one day I said to her, "Rafaelita, what are you?" She said, "My father is from Spain," and her mother was from France. I don't know where she got the French! But she said her father was from Spain. She meant to say he was Spanish. She couldn't remember because she was only about three years old. And instead of saying, "My father's Spanish," she says, "My father's from Spain." So they know. They know because I explained to them, and I keep reminding them that they're what they are. I says, "You're half and half. Don't forget. You're not one." Of course, they say you take your father's nationality.

CUSICK: Oh, if you had to claim it, you would say that?

JIMENEZ: Yes. Like my son's children are really supposed to be Spanish. You're supposed to say you're Spanish. And my daughter's children, they're Mexicans, even if the mother is Spanish. Legally, if you want to claim your nationality, you claim your father's nationality, or the country in which you were born. You can't claim your mother's.

CUSICK: Yeah. But both you and your husband are full Spanish.

JIMENEZ: Yeah, we're both Spanish. Our parents are from the old country. But really, I can't understand. Like we put up our booth, they want to know if we have tamales, tacos, enchiladas, and we still have to go back and tell them, "No, we don't. We're not Mexicans. We're Spanish. We don't have that food. It's not ours." So that's why we're so happy with our club, because people are beginning to recognize. From time and again that they see us with our booth here year after year, they will begin to relate us with Spain instead of Mexico. That we are not Mexican. That we're Spanish. But it's so funny that you have to keep doing it all that time. That's something, you know.

CUSICK: Well, I think we're just about out of time here.

[End of Tape]