JO: This is José [Ortega] I’m interviewing Gloria Ramirez and Delfina Garcia, on April 29th, 2014. This interview is taking place at CSU-Pueblo Archives, in Pueblo, Colorado. The interview is sponsored by CSU-Pueblo University Archives and Special Collections and is part of the Southern Colorado Ethnic Heritage and Diversity Archives Project. I want to confirm that Mrs. Gloria and Delfina understand that this interview is being recorded and that this recording will be preserved at the CSU-Pueblo Archives? Thank you guys! And so, like I said, I don’t have any questions prepared, because of how quick this happened. So, you know, how did you guys come to live in Salt Creek?

DG: When I got married. My in-laws lived there, so we moved in there, in Salt Creek. That was in ’50, ’52. We got married and we moved into Salt Creek in ’53, 1953)—my husband and I, but they’d lived there for years.

PR: His parents’ names…

MO: What were his [Louie Garcia] parents’ names?

GR: Juan Garcia and Margarita Garcia--my grandparents.

DG: Those were my in-laws and her grandparents.

JO: Okay. And when did you start in with the contamination of the CF&I [Colorado Fuel & Iron Company]?

DG: We started the farm work first. We got involved and then they talked us into joining La Raza Unida and then from there—my husband was a fighter all the time. He wanted to get rid of
everything there and all, and he started the clean-up and fighting against the contaminated water, because they had made a well right next to the black water and everybody was coming to him and telling him, “help us, because you’re younger that we are.” Gloria Luisa Flores and her [pointing toward Matrina Ortega then José Ortega]—your grandpo Nunez, Lafida and a lot of other older people, because they couldn’t do it no more. And they came to him and told him and that was like giving him a candy. He went for it boy and he started picketing and going to the county commissioners and everything else—for that well, to remove it. We finally got the Mesa water put into Salt Creek.

GR: The people, the elderly, were dying left and right, in the area at this time. They were bringing samples of water from their bath tubs where there was rust forming, red rust, and they would bring the water and show it to them where the water had settled. Then other people would bring water where it looked like oil at the bottom of the jars. They would bring it to them and show ‘em. And you know they were tired of this and they--like she [Delfina], he [Louie] started going around arousing people and a lot of the people supported it and you know for it. They wanted different water and a different well. Then you had a lot of people there that were involved with the county commissioners—friends—that--they had cisterns. They had water brought in—

DG: And wells.

GR: And wells, and they didn’t care. They said, “leave it the way it is. The water’s good!” They had a meeting at the recreation hall there. They had the senior citizens and everybody involved. When the county commissioners showed up, they showed ‘em the water and explained to them that what was going on and they said, “there’s nothing wrong with the water.” And at that time my dad did tell them, “well, if there’s nothing wrong with the water and it’s safe then drink it!” And they refused to drink this water and a lot of the elderly got upset with this and that’s when the big battle started.

DG: Those are the jars that you’s [pointing to interviewers] have, with that rust. That was the water and throughout the years it just turned into a rust. But that’s the water they were drinking. We didn’t--because we had a well. But then they forced us to close the wells down. So the only ones who didn’t close them down were the politicians that had the wells in their basements, but the rest, they wanted to keep it there and he fought it. He fought it and we got the Mesa water in and then we started to get the roads paved. We didn’t have paved roads, it was all dirt. It was all dirt, yeah—and no lights. It was like a city that was left without nobody to care for, but we had a lot of help when we started that there--including your grandpo, he was a pusher too—a fighter—
GR: Juan Nuñez! He would tell my dad, “don’t give up!” “Hang in there,” he says! And Juan Nuñez was also a fighter. He wouldn’t give up. He was the one who worked at the railroad and he is the one who started the first strike there. And they [pointing to Delfina] started the sewing club there at Lafida Nuñez, your grandparents’ house there, and my mother’s the one who was able to get all the sewing machines and stuff there that they had. And they had a lot of women involved in that there.

DG: The girls--the young girls were learning to sew and all.

GR: It just wasn’t one project that they were involved in, it was—

DG: It was all kinds!

GR: And my dad would have loved to be here to see this day that all his work got recognition! [Visibly emotional]

DG: And he wasn’t afraid of the county commissioners, he’d face ‘em! He’d come face to face with them and they’d tell him to be quiet, because it wasn’t the place and he’d say, “no, I won’t shut up until you listen to me, or I’ll go to the newspaper!” He’d always threaten with the newspaper, so they’d listen, but we went through a lot. You wouldn’t believe all the things that we had to fight for and everything else. And then a lot of the people--we didn’t have a bus--a lot of the people didn’t have rides to go to the doctor. So, I volunteered to take ‘em or take them to the store if I had to. So, it was a project that was benefiting Salt Creek in the long run. And then from there we went to the RESLA with Cesar Chavez and the rest, so we joined that strike and everything else.

GR: --the march to Denver from here [Pueblo, CO]—because they only permitted so many people to march to Denver from here, because of the traffic and they were afraid of what would happen. We had state patrols that would go along. She [Delfina] would drive a 1952--what was it--pickup truck, with a port-a-potty that everybody could use when the stopped to rest on the area. [laughing] And at the same time she’d have to come back to Pueblo to set up the strike here for the farm strike and then she’d go back again to take everybody food to eat--she’d cook and take everybody something. And while we were on the march it was something you’d never forget. Upon reaching our destination to Denver--this was involving the farm strike and all different causes there—we reached our goal there to the capital. They were expecting just the people that were going here from the march and when we reached Denver, you couldn’t see where the people stopped coming in. It was so many people, it made you feel so good—you cried just to see this—but the bad news was when we entered the capital, you had all the police on top with rifles, pointing them at people. I guess they were expecting a big ’ol riot. You had all your anti-protesters sitting on the lawn, with signs--with “Go home!” You know just cutting
us down and when they’d seen all us, they got up and left. But, it was so—it gave you a feeling—I’m proud. I’m proud to be who I am, what we accomplished and fought for, and for my parents for doing what they’ve done all these years.

DG: And then on the farms they didn’t have a—all the kids in Salt Creek were going to the farms to work after school and they didn’t have water, they didn’t have toilets, nothing like that. So, when we went on strike with the farm workers that’s when they started putting the water for them—the bathrooms and the wages went up a little, because we were getting 5 cents-a-dozen to bunch and now they’re paying a dollar some, but the pay—can you imagine the kids? They would have to—the whole family would have to bunch in order to make enough to pay whatever they were going to do, their tuition, clothing, or— But they were with us in Salt Creek too—they were—there was a lot of kids involved.

PR: And the places they sprayed, while they were working!

DG: Yeah! [both nodding in affirmation] And Al Gurulé helped us out a lot there and when Marty Serna came back from Vietnam—or where was it—he really pushed and that’s when things really went ahead, because Al had left for college. And so Marty came and he kept it going and we had people from all over. We’d go to Alamosa and all over—

BA: I saw pictures of Corky Gonzales, when he came down.

GR: In Salt Creek we had our clean ups. When they started cleaning up Salt Creek we got a lot of help. My dad pushed the county commissioners to bring their dump truck, their tractors and they did come down and they tore the houses down—


GR: The army—yeah, the ordinance did too, they started tearing it up—

DG: And Corky [Gonzales] came down and sent us a boxing ring and boxing equipment, baseball equipment, to Salt Creek—to the barrio—Salão Improvement Association, that’s what we named it. My husband was president and I was kind of a secretary and vice, but we had other people involved in it. So, we had all that there and we opened the backyard to Patsy’s house—where she lives now—the backyard. We opened it up to the kids, so all the kids would be there playing after school and boxing with Patsy—she was our boxer there. But they’d all be there after school and sometimes they’d go after school without eating, so I’d make burritos or something for them and I’d tell them, “give them some, because I know they haven’t ate!” And that’s the way it just went on on, until we couldn’t no more—
GR: It kept the children and the kids—everybody off the street, from getting into trouble—gave them something to do. And like she said, she’s—they called her mom and I used to say, “she’s not your mom!” [laughing]

DG: But Corky and his wife and family came down to a meeting where she lives [pointing to Patsy] and it was nice, because in the back there was a pond—a big pond—and there was—we had seats and all, where they had that play area, that recreation area. And they’d come down from Denver and we’d hold meetings there. Corky came down a few times with his wife and his daughters, and some of the other people who were involved with the Crusade [Crusade for Justice], or we’d go to Denver. But we were always on the go, there was no rest for us.

GR: Thanks to my dad, my mom, Lafida and Juan Nunez, Jesse Martinez—who’s gone—Gloria Luisa Flores, the Cruz’s—from Salt Creek also—the Montezs’, there were a lot of people there that—and a lot of them that are gone, but they fought!

DG: But they all lived in Salt Creek, so they all helped with it—

JO: So, you guys said that there was fights prior to your husband being involved. What were those? What were they doing, who were the people, you know, what exactly where they fighting against?

DG: When we started?

JO: Yeah—well prior to when you guys got involved. What were they noticing or what was happening then?

DG: There was nothing. The people were complaining and they wouldn’t pay attention to them. Some of our senior citizens would go and complain to Enrique Reyes was the county commissioner then—

GR: About the street lights, they were fighting, trying to get into there. You’d go into Salt Creek back then and it was pitch black. You couldn’t go out at night. If you did you’d have to be careful not to stumble on the dirt roads. The water—we didn’t have no water back then—a water well. The people who had wells were lucky, but during the winter the well would kinda dry out and there was a spring on El Paso St. going down—

DG: The ojito [little one] they used to call it.

GR: The people would have to get the water from here and they just—things like this—they wanted a water well. They wanted lights in there, but only certain streets were paved, for the
ones who were involved with the politics, but anybody else—the other streets they forgot about them. It was really hard and you’d go to school and if it were known that you were from Salt Creek, you’d get harassed, so even in the schools we’d have battles. That’s when the parents formed this club and went into the school and they used to fight for us.

**DG:** Luis was like the voice of the area—he got a lot of stuff done.

**GR:** He helped the elderly, the ones who complained that weren’t listened to by the county commissioners. These were the fights and the battles going on in that area. And then at that time there was also, when they got involved with the La Raza Unida, there was a lot of trouble with the police department, what they were doing with people, beating them up. There was one man—I don’t remember what his name was—he had come back from the service and they beat him up so bad he landed up crippled. This is where—

**JO:** Possibly Chucky Salazar, maybe?

**GR:** No, I don’t remember what his name was, but that’s when my dad finally got involved with La Raza Unida. He said, “I’m gonna join, because what they’re doing isn’t right either!” And I could see that—so much that was happening that you were afraid.

**DG:** She worked for the sheriff’s department [pointing to Gloria] That’s where they put her in after she came from Denver. She went and got a--she went to college up there and when she came back they were going to give her a job at the airport—

**GR:** At the unemployment office.

**DG:** --but at the airport, they were going to send you out there.

**GR:** But they found out I guess and I got stuck at the sheriff’s department for 16 years.

**JO:** What did they find out?

**GR:** Well, my dad, that he was involved with the movement and all this—

**DG:** That he was a Brown Beret!

**GR:** I worked there and the army would come down from Ft. Carson in to my office, where I worked for 16 years--some detectives—and they’d bring pictures, showing me pictures of my dad, Eddie Montour, all the people that were involved with the movement, the Brown Berets. You know this person, do you know that person? Nope, I don’t work for you. I work for the
sheriff’s department. And when I told my boss about this--back then he was pretty good—he’d tell them, “she doesn’t work for you, she works for us! If you want to find out who these people are, investigate it on your own time!” But I got harassed there too! Wherever I’d go they’d give me a hard time. With the army coming down—why they would come down? [indicating “I don’t know” with her posture] That’s why I say I was placed there for a reason. [laughing]

**JO:** Alright! So, when did you husband get involved with the Brown Berets? When did that initially start?

**DG:** It was what, about ’68, about ‘68.

**GR:** About 1968.

**DG:** Maybe even sooner than that. I can’t remember the exact date, but—

**JO:** And was this prior to—you know—him being involved in the Salt Creek clean-up and all that kind of stuff?

**DG:** Yeah, because we were involved with the—we were pushing with Cesar Chavez’s Grape and Lettuce Strike here.

**GR:** It was before. Then they came into Salt Creek and started to help also with the clean-up and to help with whatever they needed there, too, support and give them support.

**PR:** It kinda helped being involved with all different—the farm strikes to La Raza Unida, and everything, because it all worked in place—it all kinda gave them help to get everything done that they were trying to get done.

**DG:** They knocked houses, old houses that were already falling down, and they knocked them down and cleaned it and threw everything. And now there’s a lot more, but nobody’s pushing to get--like across from where she lives, that house has to be torn down. Maybe if somebody buys it and tears it down, it’ll start, because there’s a lot of new houses going up there.

**GR:** A lot of improvements since way back. If you’d seen a lot of those—well, you’ve seen a lot of the pictures there. It’s something that you never would have believed—the roads, the lights, the water, joining up with Mesa, the city buses going through there now. It’s just something! People used to walk to work, back then—no buses and if they didn’t have a vehicle—And the water--pulling it from the water spring, like they say. And all the elderly—they got to live a little bit longer after that well came in, because the ash in the water was from CF&I—and they’re still—not too long ago I guess they tested the dirt there and—in Salt Creek—
for contamination from the CF&I and so many people were paid so much for the contamination on all their properties. And who knows? And we—the property that I own, belonged to my parents—on El Paso St.—we bought it from them and before that it was my grandparents’ house—when they moved here from Rifle, Colorado and my sister Pat lives there now. So when I moved I said, “younger generation, take it over!” [all laughing] Then give that to Katerina then—[laughing]

JO: What were they—are they dumping the slag in the water? What exactly was going into the water that was contaminating it?

DG: They’d wash the steel—

JO: Okay!

DG: at the mill and that water would run back into the black water. So that’s why it was called the black water, because it ran black—the water was dark.

PR: It’s still down there.

GR: Right before night, in the moonlight of night, when they would pour the slag down, we’d go out in the backyard and you could see the slag being poured and the water would run when it rained, all that would wash into that little river there.

DG: But it was a long—I look back now and I think, it couldn’t have been that long—everything we traveled and everything we’ve done. We even had time to put up a restaurant, one time after the Rock Wool* closed down, because my husband worked there for 16 years…at Rock Wool. And his boss would let him go—if he had to go at 10 till something—the boss would let him go. Then he worked for Don Demus’ car lot and he was good with him too, when he worked there. He’d let him go—if he had to go attend to something he’d go and he’d let him go. Now it seems like a dream. I can’t even remember some of the stuff until they’re bringing it out.

GR: He quit school in the third grade and he—to work with his parents, they traveled a lot to work in the different fields—the farms. He didn’t have that much education, workin’ the junk yards, because of that, but he finally got tired.

DG: Then we had an organization called P.U.R.E., Parents United for Reformed Education and it was women/mothers. They threw a kid out of school, like in county—they’d throw the kids out of school and they didn’t want them back and we fought for that. We’d go in there and

*Rock Wool was a wool insulation plant in Pueblo, CO, now a cleaned up Superfund site.
they didn’t want to see us. The lady that was the head of it, the president, was Gladys Vigil. She’d go in and tell them, “you either talk to us or we’ll get the newspaper in here!” Boy, they’d open those doors for us and we’d get the kids back in school. So, there was a lot of things, different organizations that we were in that—

PR: And at that time a lot of the kids were harassed, because they were into the movement and into a lot of stuff, trying to push—and they were actually harassed by teachers and by law and everything else. They were marked. They were just marked.

BA: I’ve heard various versions of the story, but how did your husband get the name “Luggs?” [all laughing]

DG: It’s a long story. They say—they used to tell him that he could lift up a car, from the front or from the back. And they seen him one time—I don’t know who fell in a ditch—and he went and helped them and pulled the car up. So, they named him “Luggs” and from there on, we were the “Luggs Family!” [all laughing] I was “Mrs. Luggs” and “Little Luggs” [pointing to Patsy]—

PR: And then when he was—we were out in the fields one time and he was driving down and this lady was coming and she went right towards him and he swerved off to not hit her and he rolled the truck into a ditch. And he jumped out and he just pushed it back over and all the kids that were there were—“wow, look what he’s doing!” So, all little kids went out there to try to help him and they pushed the truck back over. And he stood with the name--his strength I guess, I don’t know.

DG: So, that’s how we got the name. [all laughing]

JO: So, during the movement when you were going to battles with these people, you would always use the newspaper as a tactic?

DG: Yeah—yeah!

JO: So, what other things would you utilize as tactics to—you know—get change?

DG: It was mostly the paper and then Al [Gurulé] would go to our—because he was educated and all.

GR: The Brown Berets would also provide security, help to secure, make sure that none of the people during the marches or whatever—demonstrations—picketed the farms—that nobody
would get hurt. They’d always be on the alert and tell people to move. So, it was those two that we always had with us—

DG: And Pat Gomez—

GR: --and Pat Gomez! She was from the East side. She was always there and she wasn’t afraid either, she would speak up! There was one time we were out in the farms, picketing and there was one farmer that actually put up a plow—the one that turns the dirt over—on my dad—

DG: On all of us—we’re on the road, because we would never go in to a property. And so we would always be on the road—

PR: And everybody jumped back on the ditch and the one that got ran over—well he actually ran over the toes of Filbert—

GR: Baca—

PR: --yeah, Baca, and good thing he had steel-toe boots, because it went right over his steel-toe boot. And there was another farmer who went out there with a shotgun—

DG: A lot of people, farmworkers and their families, were out there picketing, because they wanted better wages, because that’s how they lived.

GR: They used the “Black Hand Mafia”* sign on a paper in the back windows of all the vehicles, threatening and warning, but we weren’t afraid! We knew what we were getting involved in, what was going to happen. We knew we were going to have people, pro and for us, against us, and it didn’t matter. That was accomplished—they accomplished what they went for, what we went for, and I’m glad now that a lot of people are enjoying this, even the ones that were against us, but there’s a lot of people to remember—that were involved.

JO: Like?

GR: Like I told you: Gloria Luisa Flores, Martin Serna, The Cruz’s, Juan Nuñez, Lafida Nuñez—

DG: Jesse Martinez.

GR: --Jesse Martinez. Who else were the people down there? Fred and Bella Montez, they

*Black Hand Mafia – organized crime organization in the Rocky Mountain region
lived there on San Juan. Oh I can’t remember them all. There was—

DG: Who was the Benavidez?

GR: Oh, the one on Laguna?

DG: The young one, the one that was in college. He was always there for our meetings and all.

GR: Furman Benavidez or Robert Benavidez?

DG: No, no!

GR: Or Gerald?

DG: No, he wasn’t from Gerald or Robert. He was from the ones that lived behind the—by the dollar store—by that section.

PR: By the turn—

DG: The ones we’d seen in church.

PR: We have to write all these names down.

GR: In all these years we forgot, we’re getting outside more! [all laughing]

DG: Especially me, already! And when I think we slowed down was when I had to have a heart surgery. They put a valve in my heart and I started getting tired. So, he [Louie] started slowing down too, and he was the one who took care of the house, because I couldn’t do it anymore and even now—now I’m just waiting.

GR: My dad got cancer and—

DG: He got cancer and that’s what he died of.

PR: There is a lot of people from Salt Creek that got cancer—young, young.

GR: During that time, the water that we had--you had so many people dying of cancer, heart attacks, and you still have [people] dying of cancer that lived down there. So many people that have died of cancer down there. Mariano Gomez died of a heart attack. And he had cancer too, didn’t he?
**PR:** His daughter died of cancer, at a young age.

**DG:** There’s a lot of people that are gone and me, I’m 81. I don’t know how I reached there! I thought I was going to go before my husband, because he was always so strong and all, but that cancer got to him and he just started going. He died at home, six years ago, that’s when. But he had picked up all that stuff and he kept putting it in a box and putting it there—and I’d tell him, “get rid of it, what are you going to do with it!” [He says] “you leave that there. Someday it will come in handy!” And it did, it came in handy.

**GR:** And his goal also was to—he always told us younger generation—even if you weren’t a relative—he’d tell them, “go to school, go to college, be somebody, don’t go through what I did, with no education—the job I had working in junk yards for years!” He says, “This is why we’re fighting, for you’s!”

**DG:** Yeah, he pushed education. We all did! We wanted everyone to have an education.

**PR:** Back then, the younger generation couldn’t even get a job at McDonald’s. I mean, it was so bad we never got help. It was so bad no one had a chance to get a job. It wasn’t until all this happened that they were actually—and now their running McDonald’s. Now they’re running all these places. Which you couldn’t even get a job at McDonald’s—you couldn’t get a job nowhere. You were the last one to get hired.

**DG:** Just the farmworkers—

**PR:** And it wasn’t until they—you saw the big turn—you just saw a huge turn. Even you saw when she [Gloria] got on with the sheriff’s department, you’d have never had seen that before.

**GR:** I go to the employment office after I graduated for a job and it’s true they wouldn’t hire. “Here, go to this employment office on Santa Fe—the farms, that's all we were good for—or dishwashers, but they wouldn't even hire us as dishwashers. We had a hard time.

**DG:** And my other daughter, the one that follows her, graduated from here with two degrees. She's got three degrees now, but she graduated from here. So, that's why we're so familiar with this. After we pushed that she graduated—she joined--came into the college here and so—

**PR:** So, everything that our parents done for us, helped our generation to make it into college, to get better jobs, into the law to help us move on. It was their strength and their kids’ brains and studying for the colleges to make it to where we are today, pretty much.
**GR:** And a lot of younger people that up to this day say also that, "if it wasn't for him (Louie) and my mother we wouldn't be where we're at now." They took care of us and 54 foster kids in their lifetime. They didn't have enough with six of us, they adopted one. [laughing] Having 54 kids, we used to ask them, "why are you doing this?"

**DG:** In nine years we had 52 foster kids, so—

**PR:** And everybody through all the younger generations that still—the ones that are alive and all-the younger generation at that time still come back and see the house of the "Luggs." This is the house where you could come in and feel at home. There was always food, there was always huge gatherings of people there, always laughing, joking. It was more like a family thing—not even just—it was just a thing they just felt so welcome. To this day they still come from far away and come to look for mom--come to visit 'em. They made quite a bit of difference in a lot of peoples’ lives that don't even realize, if it wasn't for our parents’ generation, our grandparents’ generation, we wouldn't even be here today.

**JO:** So, when they began to start fight against the CF&I and city council, what was the CF&I's response to you guys when you guys were telling them about the contamination?

**DG:** The CF&I didn't respond to us. It had to be the county commissioners that pushed, because they weren't—well, they make money, they weren't gonna shut down for us. So, we started with the county commissioners, but the well is what we fought, because Father Murry had collected the money and he made that well right there. From the—I don't know if you remember Father Murry, from the St. Joseph church?*

**PR:** Back in the 50s or 60s--back in the 60s, wasn't it?

**DG:** Yeah, and oh, he'd—from way before, because he was at Mt. Carmel and then they put him at St. Joseph. And all the money that they collected for that well—

**GR:** The county commissioners were responsible and approved that.

**DG:** And that's where we started, because the CF&I wasn't pushing. So, they started—

**GR:** They were going to deny it all.

**DG:** And they started fining them and doing different things for them to cut that thing into the

*St. Joseph Catholic Church in Salt Creek*
water, but by that time we had the Mesa water, so it didn't really matter to us anymore, because we were drinking better water and to this day I still like the Mesa water. [all laughing]

**JO:** So—okay, after you got the well, so then what happened after that? What did you guys focus on after that, because you got that accomplished, so what was next?

**DG:** The roads and the lights.

**JO:** Okay, so that's when you got into that. Okay! So—okay we talked about the newspapers, but what other kind of protest marches or rallies did he either lead, get together—you know—where did these things happen, when?

**DG:** It was out of town most of the time, he would go as a Beret to patrol the people and all, but we were all over to Alamosa, La Junta, Denver, Greeley—where—

**GR:** Police Department in Pueblo, schools—

**DG:** Where's Otero? To San Luis—for that mountain—I don't know if you've heard about that mountain—

**MO:** Yeah, Fight for the Mountain.*

**DG:** Okay, we were there to help them fight.

**PR:** So, it wasn't just here. It was everywhere they needed help and it was all connected and I think that's what made them stronger, because they wouldn't just sit still. It wouldn't be just one person; they would let word of mouth and it was like everybody was there. They'd find a way, no matter how, they would pile up in cars, but they would find a way to get there and it was just a thing—the amount of people that would show up. It would be so amazing, just because people were together—they united and—

**DG:** And I couldn't march—like up the Taylor farm—up the mountain. I'd stay and help the ladies in the kitchen and Luis would go up with the rest.

**GR:** Up in Denver where they had the English Only law that they passed—

*Ongoing land rights struggle over access to lands in the San Luis Valley*
DG: Oh yeah, that was another one—

GR: That was a big fight—

DG: They wanted to take off from us talking Spanish—they didn't want us—

GR: There to each other—

DG: --they had threatened us. So, one time at—where the Sears used to be in—

GR: Denver—

DG: --on 6th Street. There was a newspaper was there and they asked him "what are you going to do?" We were going to Colorado Springs and Denver to boycott that English Only law and they wanted to take it and make it English Only. If they would have caught you talking at work in Spanish, you would have got fined or fired. So, we went on a strike on that, boy. It was a bunch of us that took cars and buses up. And they told me, "what happens if they jail you?" I told the guy—the ones that were there—"you're gonna have to make a lot of jails, because we're not going to give it up. That's our heritage. That's where we were born."

PR: You can't lock us all up!

DG: Yeah, so they finally dropped it, because even in Denver they were boycotting that. So, that was another of the things that we accomplished.

GR: Even when my dad was alive—“Luggs” they called him—he even went to the—where was it, San Diego, when they had the meeting with Cesar Chavez? They had a boycott going on down there at that time—where they were dumping the grapes and stuff. And my dad was down there at that time. He went with Mr. Robert Aragon, who was the president of the farm strike and then Carmen Flores, she was secretary for them. She was all over; she would travel with them. She was efficient in keeping the records and all. And then my dad went with him—

DG: And then Mr. Aragon went to Texas for a meeting. He was fine, but then when he came back over there he got sick. His tongue just blew up and everything—we say he got poisoned—

JO & PR: Yeah! [in unison]

DG: --he got poisoned.
PR: His wife said that they—she actually thought they gave him acid in the plane, because he was eaten up like acid inside, when he died.

DG: And his tongue just blew up and everything and by the time he came back, he died. And so, his wife took over being president of the farm strikers and Luis was vice-president of that too. So, it was—

GR: He was involved with a lot of things all over. It wasn't just in the ones in Pueblo; it was wherever they needed him, he was there and—

PR: And there was somebody that died, because through everything that they were involved in—well, you've seen that [Richard] Falcón, that Falcón that got killed in Texas and Los Seis, Luis Martinez in Denver—

DG: Like Luis Martinez too, we were involved with the La Raza Unida at that time when he got killed. We used to go to the Crusade [for Justice] all the time—and that's when he got killed. It was horrible to think—he was such a talented person, boy. He was the one that was teaching them dancing and everything else. For him to die like that was bad, because—

JO: And that was St. Patrick's Day, right?

DG: Yeah!

JO: Okay, the shoot-out with the cops then? Okay, so, you said that you guys were threatened during this time. Did anything happen—you know, did anybody act upon those threats, or you know, to you personally or anybody else?

DG: Just one time when I was coming from the farm. It was already kinda late and I had Emma Cruz with me and I had—I don't remember which of the kids and this one. A car kept trying to throw us into the Bessemer ditch. And they'd drive up and they'd kind of—I kept going back and you know slowing down and I was driving home from Lamar to Salt Creek. And we got the license number and we turned it into the cops and it was from that Victory Outreach that was in the West side. It was the guy from the—the two ladies—it was a black lady and a white lady and they were the ones who were trying to push us off. But they didn't do anything about it, cause we seen the car afterwards and we called the sheriff's department and told them, "that's the car that was trying to push out." But they didn't do anything about it so, he (Luis) said, "let it go, if it happens again then we'll see what we do." But it was scary, because I had the kids with—if I hadn't had the kids—but they were trying to throw us into the Bessemer ditch right there where Salt Creek has that bridge to go into Lombard across—right there is where they were trying to
push us in. That's the only time that we felt threatened, because the other times we had all the Berets and everything guarding us and all so, yeah.

PR: So, they were pretty much protected—they were loved shall we say. So many people protected them.

DG: And the Berets from the huelga—from the farm strike were Red Berets and the ones from the La Raza Unida were Brown Berets. But it helped, because they respected—they knew that they wouldn't play around with them so, yeah.

GR: There was—wasn't there the—what were they, the Angels or—the Berets from California too, that came down.

PR: There was even Black Panthers that came down that united with us, at that time.

DG: Yeah, there was all kinds of people joining—they used to come from California, Texas. We had—what was the name of the one from Texas? And then Luis Tejerina, he was involved. I can't remember which others, but I know we had one—they used to call him Tiger. What was his name?

GR: They were all nick names, we really didn't get to know a lot of people by name

DG: But he became a lawyer

GR: --his name was Tigre.

DG: --and his wife, she became a lawyer. So—and then Marty [Serna] had got his—his law degree—he was going to get that, when they found him dead. We still say that he didn't kill himself.

PR: We don't believe he killed himself.

DG: Because he used to tell the kids, "never take your life, that's the coward’s way out." And when they found him—Carmen [Arteaga] was in Pueblo, and he had some neighbors in the back—there was no ally—he had some neighbors in the back that had been—

GR: Some police officers.

DG: Yeah, and so we think that they might have gave him something and put him in the car and turned the gas on.
PR: Because he had just got his bar degree and he was such a smart man—I mean he could talk.

DG: And he got attacked going to Boulder, because that's where he got his degree, but he was going to Boulder when they attacked him too, so that's why we say he was killed also.

PR: But those who knew him know that he didn't kill himself. He used to preach to the kids, "don't you ever do that, ever—when God’s ready to take you he'll take you." So, we know he didn't kill himself, he was too smart. There was no other way they could get to him. I truly believe that in my heart.

DG: Yeah!

JO: Okay, can you tell me more about—I know we kind of already touched on the Brown Beret stuff, but—and he's been all over. But locally—you know—what did he do? Was he an organizer? Did he just—you know—follow [Eddie] Montour?

DG: No, he didn't follow Montour, he followed Marty.

JO: Oh, okay.

DG: Al [Gurule] and Marty, Yeah! And he's the one that—he got involved with them and he loved it, because even for the Cinco de Mayo and all that, they'd always take care of the marchers and all. So—but that's the reason that he joined—Marty was like a son to him. He loved Marty and Marty loved him. He's the one that was always, "come on Luggs, let's go." And Luis would tell him, "I'll be right there." But he would have gave—

GR: The farm strikes—he was an organizer there. He—

DG: For the farm strike, yeah.

GR: --tell everybody. And for Salt Creek, he was an organizer there. He'd tell people what to do and, "I need you's here." What you could do—and people would come and help him. We were involved with the Movement—he'd tell us, "you's in the kitchen—you's make the food for the workers." And we were all in there making tortillas or whatever and he'd get a lot of help. And then when they'd go to the—like they say, when he'd go to the county commissioners he'd be the one there to speak up, because he wasn't afraid.

DG: To talk, because he wasn't afraid to talk.

PR: And when things would get—
GR: Andy Carrillo and everybody—

DG: Andy Carrillo, that's who I was thinking of, he used to be a good person.

GR: --he used to tell my dad, “have a set.” And he'd refuse—he'd say, "no, you're gonna listen." And they'd tell him to leave and Andy Carrillo—and everybody that was there from Salt Creek—the elderly’s would say, "no, you're gonna listen to him and if not, you're gonna have to throw us all out."

DG: I can't think of anything else.

MO: Was the meeting you had mentioned about our Grandpo Juan with the cane—who was that for?

GR: When her Grandpo threatened someone with a cane.

DG: At the recreation hall with the water—they came in there telling us that the water was good and all and—

PR: Oh yeah.

DG: And your Grandpa Juan got up and he told him, "Luis, tell them that water is no good—tell them to drink it." And that's when he told Enrique Reyes—and Enrique Reyes kept mouthing off, so your Grandpa got up with his cane and he was gonna smack him. If they wouldn't have stopped him, he would have hit him, boy! He was so mad! But then your grandpa goes way back too, when he used to work on the railroad, they had—that they walked out on it too and he was gonna hit one of the foremen or something. I don't remember how they used to say, but he had a pick that they were digging the ties out or something and he was gonna hit him and they walked out on that—on the railroad. So, I guess later on they gave them higher wages—I don't know what. I don't remember too good, but I know that—

GR: He started the first strike.

MO: At the railroad?

GR: Uh huh.

DG: And Luis worked on the railroad at 16, at 16 years he was up in Kansas. He’d go up from here to Kansas pulling out the ties. They didn't have things to pull them out, so he goes way
back, because he didn't have an education—he only went to the third grade. And then he went back to the college to get mechanic—his mechanics and they let him in. So, he got his certificate for mechanics and he'd tell everybody—even my sons-in-law, they'd tell him "help me fix this." And "no, I won't help you, you learn—I'll tell you how but you do it." So, they would go ahead and they learned. Her husband says, “that if it wouldn't have been for my father-in-law, I wouldn't know what I know today.” So, it goes way back, but those years just passed, like a dream I guess. I can't remember much—I mean to really think that we were there and everything, it's like I'm dreaming it. I see pictures—we've got pictures of the march. We've got pictures of different stuff—well she does anyway—and I see him and it's like—I don't know—I just don't seem to—when my son died is when I lost all feeling. He died eight years ago—one of the twins. And since then, it like I'm existing, but not really feeling. And so I tell 'em, “well it's your turn now—the rest of you's.” And I'm glad Maria is involved—she's trying her best. Maria's my granddaughter. She's named after me, so yeah.

GR: At least somebody will continue the fight.

DG: Yeah! And then—

MO: She also lived in the family home with you—Maria?

DG: Maria? Well she lived in the—well she was born in Salt Lake and then she moved to Pueblo.

PR: And she's heard everything we talked about through the years, so she's pretty much has heard a lot.

DG: And she's followed—and she's even trying to play the guitar, because my husband played the guitar.

MO: Well our Tío Esteban—José Ortega used to teach her how to play the guitar.

DG: Yeah. Him and Freddie Montez, the one who used to play with Esteban. And my brothers now, when they come down. But their already in their 70s, so they don't get to here that often. But she's good—I tell her “learn it—learn it even if it's for your own pleasure.” She's got one of the guitars that her dad left—that her grandpo not dad.

JO: So the Salt Creek—you know, how much was put out into the newspapers and how was it portrayed?
GR: A lot of the—when the cleanup started in Salt Creek the tearing of houses, the well water was also put in there mentioned—what was going on with the water from that little stream of water next to it—the river. The CF&I made it all, but the CF&I never made a comment about it. They were denying it and the county commissioners were the ones that were supposed to be the ones in charge of this well water and approved it and they were also denying it. And a lot of this was put in the paper, but then the paper would also fight not to give some of this news. And when Juan Espinosa—

DG: Espinosa!

GR: --got involved. That’s when more came out in the paper.

DG: He was the one that publishing everything. Even if they didn't like it he used to publish everything. So, Juan Espinosa was a great help to us too.

BA: In La Cucaracha?

DG: In the La Cucaracha, yeah.

GR: La Cucaracha and there was a couple of other papers.

PR: Ya Basta was very—what else was there?

GR: They would put stuff like this, about what was going on with the cleanup and they would show—it came out in the newspaper too, when they were cleaning up in Salt Creek that uh [Laughing] that they asked—when he went to a meeting with the county commissioners it was put in there where he says, "even the rats in Salt Creek have more recreation then what the kids did."

DG: Yeah, they play ball.

PR: That they played baseball down there! [laughing]

GR: And some people got mad that lived in the better section of Salt Creek and said, “that’s not true, that’s disgracing us down here, making us a shame to be living here.” And my dad said, "well, it's true where we live,” he says, “and other houses that are abandoned, there are rats, not mice." And it was true and this is when we finally got the PAD, the Pueblo Army Depot, to donate their trucks and tractors for the cleanup.

JO: So, the better section of Salt Creek—you know—were they against you guys fighting this?
GR: Yes!

JO: So, what section is that actually?

DG: San Juan—the street San Juan. Those had better houses and all—and then El Paso was nothing but old houses and wee old houses. And then Santa Rosa—that's where the Carrillo’s lived—it had some houses that were good.

GR: The old high school where that was at—the recreation hall—was paved, because people—well anyway—

DG: That's another thing.

JO: Say what you feel! [laughing]

GR: The people that ran the center were involved with the political puppets that ran the county. The county commissioners, you have Dave Chavez. I might get in trouble for this, but I don't care. There was Dave Chavez—he didn't believe in—you know, just his streets would get paved and every year he would make sure that if it wasn't cracked or a little bit of asphalt they'd pave the roads. They had cisterns and well water, so they didn't care about the people down the hill on Laguna, El Paso. What was that other street—Tampico was it?

DG: Tampico

GR: There was quite a few areas where we were just forgotten. We were living there—we existed, but that's all we did.

DG: And then at Fulton Heights—when they put the school there—that they had dictionaries that they got from the other schools and they were thrown in a closet. They weren't even in shelves. So, Mrs.—what's her name—one of the Zenos—she was teaching there and she called us, because she knew we were involved. She called us and told us, "come down here so you can see what's happening." So, we went and boy, we were disgusted to see all those books. The kids had to dig out—to get the dictionaries from there boy. That's when we really went to the paper and all and before you knew it, they had shelves, they had new dictionaries, and different stuff. But thanks to Mrs.—I don't remember her last name, but she was one of the Zenos. And she was the one that called us in for that and the kids. All our kids were going there when they were small and then later we put them at St. Josephs. But they were going to Fulton Heights, because it was closer.
Gr: Teachers would just pass you just to get you out. You really weren't learning anything there—I'm sorry to say that.

Pr: The books were outdated.

Gr: And people didn't care. They were like—they had the ones who were in the well-off areas there, like I told you—Dave Chavez, Ted Lopez. Uhmm—who else was there? There was a little group there.

Dg: What is the name of the one who lives next to Viola? Her brother was county commissioner or something.

Pr: The one who fought with dad before he died.

Gr: Villanueva?

Dg: I don't know what. Oh, there were the Villanueva's, but oh that’s another one that helped us out—the one who lived by the Ojito—Villanueva. Nasadio?

Gr & Pr: Nasadio! [simultaneously]

Dg: Nasadio, yeah he was like your grandpa Juan. They were about the same age and they were backing up Luis all the way. But that school was really bad—and then we fought for the lunches, because they were taking lunches to Fulton Heights that were cold. They would take them on a truck and feed the kids and they didn't bother to warm 'em or anything, so we went—that's another—

Pr: Nava?

Dg: What?

Pr: Was it Nava you were talking about?

Dg: Mr. Nava too. But we had ‘em taking ovens and stuff to warm up the food for the kids and we even went to the school where they were. I think they were cooking it at Centennial—I'm not too sure—at Central and we walked into the kitchen and seen the way it was being put into—they were like leftovers that they were taking to Fulton Heights. So, that was another thing that we got accomplished there. But—

Gr: And the good water. That was the main thing.
DG: Yeah, the water.

GR: Streets came later and now you have your city bus running through there. You have curbs—[laughing]—when I first came back from Utah and I seen this I said, "wow, I can't believe this," I said, “if my dad would have been—to see the bus and that.”

DG: And all the new houses going up—that's neat. It would be nice if they would make more.

BA: So, did they stop the CF&I from dumping in the—?

GR: They closed that section of the CF&I.

DG: I think they closed it, yeah. That was the open hearth.

GR: Yeah, it was the open hearth and they used to pour that slag down. We used to call it our moonlight. [laughing]

PR: Who was the one that live up there in the back of St. Josephs, who was working there at the rec to get the center going again, cause they didn’t have balls or nothing to play with for baseball. Remember with the red truck—and she had a daughter.

DG: Marquez?

GR: When they put the sewer line in Salt Creek also—we didn't have sewer lines also. The ones that did were the ones that lived up on Roselawn and that, the good section, but the rest had outhouses outside or you had cesspools for that in there. And real good after the sewer lines were put in. Ted Lopez was one of your—he still works—I don't know if he retired now—but he worked for the county commissioners. He got paid to go out and collect. If you were late on your payment—because the sewer line was separate—I guess—from the water bill or I don't know how they put that—when the first well was put in. And if you were late like even a couple of days he would come out to your house and tell you, "you have to pay your sewer line—you’re due, you’re late." And you'd look at him and this would irritate you and you wanted to do something about it—you know. “Why, why you worried about this”—you know. “I know my sewer line’s due. I know I have to put it in—you know pay your bill on that. If it wasn't for other people that put that sewer line in you wouldn't have your job.”

But, these were all part of that group that my dad used to call them all political puppets. They didn't care and they'd fight and they'd argue with him and my dad would say, "you's guys got a problem, take it outside—let's go!" And that's where it would end. [laughing] But a lot of
accomplishments and thanks to all the people. I tell you, that Maria Luisa Flores, she was the one—

DG: She was the one who called it to our attention, because she used to put little sacks tied to—or a piece of cloth to her bath tub and by the time she took it out the next day it was yellow. It was like rust, the rust that was coming through the pipes. So, she went and she told us, "what could I do about this?" And he took it up from there. That's all he needed was for somebody to waken him—

PR: But as they turned their sinks on, it actually looked like dirty water coming out—that dark and they wanted people to drink that.

GR: We had a well, where we used to pull water with a bucket from it and they'd have to go down every so often and clean that—take the sand out and throw it out until it finally got clear. Then they—it would fill up again—they made everybody close up their wells. We couldn't keep our wells anymore. We had to cover 'em up.

PR: And that water was actually was the best tasting water there was—

DG: Yeah, cold, cold!

PR: You know when the water was running on the ojito? That water would—even the kids when they would go walking in the daytime when they were so thirsty, everybody would stop there and drink the water—it was so good. Compare the water even now, it was just good tasting—the well water. You can't find it like this—pipe line water's just—

GR: It's just barely just a little stream coming out. Is it still there?

PR: No, they sealed it

DG: They sealed it—Butcharelli sealed it.

JO: So, that was after the main water line came in—you guys had to close all the well and—

JG, GR & PR: Yeah!

JO: and that was a city ordinance or?

DG: The County.
JO: Oh, okay.

GR: In other words paybacks—you wanted water, you got it now, close your well.

PR: The one that was pretty much doing now—recently that was doing a lot that I knew was Nadine. She was doing a lot for the—for Salt Creek again. She was the one who got started with the base—everything they need for the baseball kids.

DG: Yeah, I met her.

PR: Yeah, she was wonderful people—she was hitting it hard. I was going to the meeting all the time, but when my kids got sick I just broke away completely. I had to take care of my kids—they were pretty sick. But she was one heck of a woman. I mean she was going full speed and— Of course when you’re doing good you’re going to have somebody that going to be there trying to tear you down.