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Gutierrez, Leida Interview

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

GUTIERREZ, Leida (Spanish/Cuban)

No date

Interviewed by Beth Robinson

Transcribed by Robert Siess

[Note: Tape originally marked "Leida, Ana" and marked as Spanish. No notes included.]

[TAPE 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape.]

BETH ROBINSON: Okay, did you and your classmates have the same ethnic background?

UNIDENTIFIED GUTIERREZ: No.

ROBINSON: No. [laughter]

U. GUTIERREZ: It's embarrassing.

ROBINSON: It's okay. They're never gonna hear this, so you don't have to worry about it. Just me, and I'll have so much fun back there.

U. GUTIERREZ: I can pretend like you're back at school with me.

ROBINSON: Okay, so they didn't. And did you – you went to school in English, right?

U. GUTIERREZ: Mmhmm.

ROBINSON: You spoke English at school, but what was your first language?

U. GUTIERREZ: Well, I spoke Spanish, but when I started school, it's not like they put you in this little class, but everybody's pretty much learning at the same time, so I had pretty much had to pick up, but it's not like – I mean, it was kind of like I wasn't an outcast, but still, there was a lot of little things that I did that were different and stuff, you know.

ROBINSON: Oh, I see, okay. So how old were you when you came here?

U. GUTIERREZ: I was two. It was about '58... Yeah, probably two.

ROBINSON: Okay, and so you had already started speaking in Spanish though.

U. GUTIERREZ: Right. Well, see, even before I started school – see, I didn't start school till I was like four. So up to when I was four that's all I spoke was Spanish. Then I started school and I started learning English. It's not like the little kids I played with were American and we spoke English. We didn't. It wasn't like you just got there and went, "Oh, no, now I have to speak English."

ROBINSON: Right. Do you remember how the teachers when you first started handled language differences among the kids? Or do you remember any differences?

U. GUTIERREZ: See, I don't think we really dealt with – you know, they have like kids coming in third and fourth grade like from Vietnam or something like that, and they don't even know that another language exists, but with me, you know how all the little kids, they all learn to write their ABCs in kindergarten. So it wasn't really a problem. It wasn't like I was in fifth grade and I couldn't go to class and learn things because I couldn't speak the language.

ROBINSON: And so you probably just learned as much as you could and there was never any special problems or anything like that.

U. GUTIERREZ: Not really.

ROBINSON: Alright. Do you recall any funny incidents while in school?

U. GUTIERREZ: I'm sure! Why, let me tell you, I'm in college and all. But no, not really. What do you mean, like funny things that... Oh, I remember – this is stupid, but I don't know why I just thought about this. I remember it used to drive me crazy because they [nun/nanny] used to hit people on the head, and I used to never get hit on the head because I was such a good little girl, you know, I never did anything wrong. One time she hit me on the head and I got so mad.
[laughs]

ROBINSON: I can just see you going, "Why'd you hit me?"

U. GUTIERREZ: I don't know why that [?] she used to hit people on the head, and I got so mad because I remember coming home and I go, "God, I think that's bad for your health when you get hit in the head like that." And it probably wasn't very good.

ROBINSON: You know I'm gonna hit you, right?

U. GUTIERREZ: The recorder's on. You better get out of here. This is my part! I am the star so far!

ROBINSON: No, your mom's still the star, but you're a starlet.

U. GUTIERREZ: I'm always the star!

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: I'm ready whenever you want this!

ROBINSON: Okay, thank you! God, I love this. Okay, did your parents ever hit you at all? Is that part of the reason...

U. GUTIERREZ: No. No. Uh-uh. No.

ROBINSON: Because I know I almost never got hit when I was five. If anybody ever hit me or anything...

U. GUTIERREZ: Well, I just think it's stupid for a nun to go around hitting you on the head. I mean that's pretty...

ROBINSON: That's pretty dumb.

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

ROBINSON: Okay, what was your family's attitude toward school?

U. GUTIERREZ: School? Well, that goes to the attitude that my mom's parents were both educated, my mom was a pharmacist, my dad was an accountant, and school was the most important thing. And that had a really, really high priority.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: I'm ready. Do you wanna tur...

ROBINSON: Okay, so both your parents and all your family was educated, right?

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, but just school, I don't know if it's a thing of the family priority or if it's just a difference in nationalities, but education really placed high. That's a really important, um...

ROBINSON: Now, did you feel that same way too?

U. GUTIERREZ: Mmhmm.

ROBINSON: Okay.

U. GUTIERREZ: I feel it now more than I – I mean, you know, it was really where when I was in high school, I always, always wanted to be a pharmacist. You know, I was, oh I always wanted to be a pharmacist and think like that. I didn't realize how much college was involved, how much work it was. I never realized it but once I got in it and I really realized how rewarding and stuff it is, I'm really enjoying it. I really can't value my education a lot.

ROBINSON: That's good, yeah. Okay, did your parents try to help you with problems at school? Or did your mom help you with problems at school? What was your attitude, like if you got in trouble at school or if something was going wrong, was it like, you solve it, or did she help or?

U. GUTIERREZ: Well, see it's kind of weird. You know how people tend to think they know just a little bit more about what's ahead, and you know people go through slumps in college where I just can't do it anymore. This is ridiculous, I'm not gonna make it, why am I wasting my time? And I was always extremely encouraged to make it a first goal, but I think almost sometimes I didn't get enough support, because it was always "I know you can do it. You don't need my support." You know?

ROBINSON: Uh huh. It was like they just expected it of you.

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. It was more understood that I could easily do it just anybody else can. I sometimes felt that I couldn't do it really.

ROBINSON: Did anyone else help you? Like maybe your sister or grandpa?

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, I think she's a big encouragement, but I think my definite encouragement in how far I've gotten has been my mom, just because she is so much like me in so many ways. I mean, she doesn't consider herself really bright, or she made it through college. She made it through college, through pharmacy school and stuff with Cs, and I see her now and she's bright, you know. And I figure that someday I could be that way. And she just keeps me going because I know she's like me, and I figure if she could do it, I could, you know?

ROBINSON: Okay, now you have one sister or two?

U. GUTIERREZ: One sister.

ROBINSON: One sister and no brothers, right?

U. GUTIERREZ: Right.

ROBINSON: Now she went through pharmacy school.

U. GUTIERREZ: My mom?

ROBINSON: Your sister.

U. GUTIERREZ: My sister is an engineer.

ROBINSON: She's an engineer. Oh, okay. Now how long did she go to school?

U. GUTIERREZ: You mean college-wise?

ROBINSON: College-wise.

U. GUTIERREZ: About four years of college, but she's gonna go back to school.

ROBINSON: You think so?

U. GUTIERREZ: She did get her degree. She wants to go back to school now and get her management degree.

ROBINSON: So your mom expected about the same from both of you guys, right? Because it says on here, "What did your parents expect you to learn in school?" And how about your other sisters?

U. GUTIERREZ: Well, everyone always said, "Oh yeah, the reason you're going to school is because your mom was a pharmacist and your grandma was a pharmacist," but it's not really really true. It's just education, and I really liked it and she really liked engineering and stuff. But yeah, she's very goal- and education-oriented. You can talk to her. You should hear her. She's geat. She believes – she was talking to Tony about this when Tony came over – and now really I'm just the too career family type and she's just really...

ROBINSON: She looks like she is.

U. GUTIERREZ: Oh yeah.

ROBINSON: Okay, now your grandmother was a pharmacist too? What about your grandpa?

U. GUTIERREZ: He owned a chain of pharmacies.

ROBINSON: Okay, so your mom's a pharmacist too, and your dad was an accountant. And what about his parents? Do you remember at all?

U. GUTIERREZ: You know, I don't really know. Gosh, you know, that's a really weird question. The reason why I really don't know is the grandfather had died before I was even born. The grandmother was living in Cuba and she didn't even come out here til way after we were out here. By the time she got here, she was like 89, you know? And you never even thought to ask – I mean, she was always in Cuba. I never even knew her, you know? I left when I was 2, and when she came out here, I was like 14 or whatever, and this lady was not a stranger, but I mean, you can't go back there. You can't really do anything. So I never really, yeah.

ROBINSON: Yeah, that's true. Did you participate in school activities?

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

ROBINSON: What did you do?

U. GUTIERREZ: Like in grammar school and stuff like that?

ROBINSON: Yeah.

U. GUTIERREZ: I always ran for student government and I was always student representative and things. When I got to high school, I was class secretary, and then I always did the cheerleader song girl type stuff.

ROBINSON: Were you a song girl more than one year?

U. GUTIERREZ: I was a cheerleader for the first year and I was a song girl for my last two years. But the year I wasn't a cheerleader or song girl, that was the year I ran for office and I was class secretary and stuff like that.

ROBINSON: Is that important to you?

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

ROBINSON: Like, was it more important than the school itself?

U. GUTIERREZ: Well, school was always important, but I don't think in high school, school was important. I went to private high school, and in private high school as compared to public, I used to watch people go to public school. They barely took classes, they went to class when they wanted to. We couldn't ditch from school or anything like that. We went to school. We came home. We did homework. I mean, I took hard type classes – the chemistries and you know, classes not everybody had to take, but I don't think school was very important to me

then. I mean, I wouldn't give up a football game or anything to stay home to study. Where now I might have to, but then I wouldn't.

ROBINSON: Okay, did you participate in church activities or neighborhood activities at all?

U. GUTIERREZ: No, not really. Like a community-type group? I mean, I went to Catholic school all my life. That was – your friends were that kind of thing. So I don't really...

ROBINSON: So you didn't really need to spend extra time with activities?

U. GUTIERREZ: Right.

ROBINSON: And how far did you go in school?

U. GUTIERREZ: I am now in my first year of graduate school.

ROBINSON: Oh wow. That's right, I forgot you graduated.

U. GUTIERREZ: We go through four years and then two years of what they call graduate school, which is pharmacy grad. So I've made it to my – well, yeah.

ROBINSON: Let's see. During your years in high school...

U. GUTIERREZ: You know what cracks me up, I just thought about this. Robin Seward. I don't know if I should've taken this as a compliment or an insult, but I used to really, this last semester was kind of like senior year for me. And with the house and everything.

ROBINSON: But you're gonna go do the senior dinner and stuff, right? Or senior breakfast.

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, I'm going through all that kind of stuff, but she said – this was when I was going through [] little sister rush and I was doing all these crazy things – and I said gosh, I never thought school could get like this. And she goes, school? What school? And I go, oh, I'm supposed to be in my senior year. This is my graduate school. And she goes, "Graduate school? You just don't seem like the type." I just thought, Robin, I don't know if I should take that as an insult.

ROBINSON: Well, you know, she's almost ready to graduate and she's only nineteen. And she doesn't seem like the type at all. I'm sorry.

U. GUTIERREZ: When she said that to me, I got, "Oh, excuse me." I don't know, I don't wear glasses[?].

ROBINSON: Okay, during your years in high school, did your family give you some independence in certain ways? Like was it hard? Were there arguments about your coming in and that kind of stuff?

U. GUTIERREZ: Oh, yeah yeah yeah. But see, I was the person where, you know, I was a freshman in high school. And all the other little socialites' groups. Like I was into the social scene and stuff like that, but after football games, everyone would always go to bobs or some place like that. After the football game, Mom was there to pick me up. I never went to any parties or anything when I was a freshman or a sophomore. And then junior year, that's kind of when you started to drive, and I kind of started going to parties. But see, you know how all the people always drink and stuff freshman and sophomore and junior year. I never even knew what alcohol was till I was a senior, and I never even went to any parties when I was a senior. It was basically because it was so structured. I mean, I wouldn't even think of coming home... you know... I don't know. It was strict, I'd say.

ROBINSON: And how did you feel about your family because of that during these years? Were you happy that they were doing it or do you appreciate it now, but then?

U. GUTIERREZ: I'm sure I appreciate it more now, but then, at times, I thought it was very ridiculous. And it goes back to the thing where you can't go out on a date til you're 16. I think that's ridiculous. You know, what makes a 15 ½ or a 16 ½, I don't think there's any difference. I think when I'm ready to go out and I think I'm ready to go out, you know, there's just a lot of weird things, but you know...

ROBINSON: It was more like a tradition they were used to or something.

U. GUTIERREZ: Right. In their culture, they didn't even go out alone on a date until they were married. I mean that coming out to here, of course there's a lot of adjustments, but still.

ROBINSON: Now, did your mom speak English before she came, or did she learn when she came over here?

U. GUTIERREZ: You wanna hear a story? And I'm sure you can get this from my mom and she'll scrap you up. My grandfather was pretty wealthy, you know? They traveled through the United States when her and her brother and stuff they traveled through the United States and so she picked up English and stuff like that and when she went back to Cuba, she went to school and she said all the kids used to not make fun of her, but it was just weird because she spoke English and they only spoke Spanish. She's so embarrassed that she didn't want anybody to know she could speak English. So then she started picking up Spanish, but when she came down here of course she had a definite...

ROBINSON: Advantage.

U. GUTIERREZ: Well she knew the language, but there was a lot to pick up. And of course she's still got an accent and things like that, but she could do pretty well.

ROBINSON: Was it ever difficult for you when your friends were present in your home? Like were you embarrassed to bring anybody home when she was younger or anything like that? Or did any of them – not good friends, certainly, but did they ever make fun or anything like that?

U. GUTIERREZ: No. See, there are so many things that were really different. Like when I was in grammar school and I was in eighth grade, we were living out here and I was going to school in LA. So my mom would have to drive me like kind of down there. And she would go to like my little – like, I was an eighth-grade cheerleader, and she'd go to little games and she'd drive me there and she'd do that. And even when I was in high school, she always kind of got into it. Like my sister, senior year, was a fly girl and I was a song girl. My mom would go to the football games. I mean, that's pretty bizarre, but it doesn't seem my mom, but she just adjusts really well to things. You know, she's really into it.

ROBINSON: Okay. Did you have any special hopes or ambitions when you were in school? Like becoming a pharmacist?

U. GUTIERREZ: When I was younger? Yeah. I always wanted to be a pharmacist.

ROBINSON: Did the school help you at that point to achieve them?

U. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. I had definite advantages, because when I got to City College there was a lot of classes that I needed, you know, prerequisites. And I had most if not all of my prerequisites done from high school, so when I got to college I could take all my classes that I needed and graduate on time. So I was pretty prepared.

ROBINSON: Well that's good. Okay, you were probably really young, but did school help you understand life in the United States, or did you just always grow up thinking this is just the way it is?

U. GUTIERREZ: Well, see, I grew up here. So I never knew anything besides this.

ROBINSON: Do you ever remember anything confusing about what you learned about the United States in school? Like did anything sound kind of strange to you, or did you ever come home and tell your mom something and she thought that seems really weird?

U. GUTIERREZ: No. The only thing that was really weird I think goes back to that they were raised in a very, very, I mean so much more strict type of home-centered things, where I'm not saying anything against the way the Americans live, but a lot of them tend to be more let their

kids do what they want and maybe he'll grow up right. Where they're so much more family, so much more strict type, you know. They're very strict.

ROBINSON: Thank you.

ROBINSON: And basically we're just gonna talk about your life and stuff if that's okay. And that dinner was really good, by the way. Thank you.

LEIDA GUTIERREZ: Okay, Leida, L-E-I-D-A. And put Gutierrez. G-U-T-I-E-Double-R-E-Z.

ROBINSON: Okay. And just can you tell me about your early life and before your came to this country, like where were you born?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay. I was born in Havana, Cuba. I spent 28 years of my life in Cuba. I arrived to the United States and my 29th birthday was the following month. I arrived January the 4th, 1962, and February was my 29th birthday, so I was 28 years when I arrived in the United States.

ROBINSON: Now Havana, that's city right?

L. GUTIERREZ: That's a city, yeah. City of Havana.

ROBINSON: Okay now when you came to the United States, did you go through any other countries coming through?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, we came through direct from Havana to Miami.

ROBINSON: Okay, and how many brothers and sisters do you have?

L. GUTIERREZ: I just have one brother, and he is 10 years and 9 months younger than I am. So I was an only child for quite a bit of time.

ROBINSON: And so did he come too?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes. I arrived the 4th of January, 1962, and he came exactly about a month after. Because that's when they gave him permission, you know. We didn't come out – we wanted to. We had to wait for permission from the government to leave. And his permission didn't come. We had all our papers together, but his permission didn't come until after we had left.

ROBINSON: So he was probably around, what, 19 or so?

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly.

ROBINSON: And did they maybe want to keep him there for military service or anything?

L. GUTIERREZ: At that time, the government was not very organized, yes, you know. And today he would have been what they would call military age. So they would not let him out at this point. But that time the government had just been in power for roughly three years. So they were really still in a miff.

ROBINSON: So it was mostly disorganization. They weren't trying to, okay.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

ROBINSON: Did you all come together? Did the rest of you come together?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay. We came, my ex-husband and I – you know, I'm divorced, you know that – and then his father, myself, [unintelligible]. Those are the four, we came together.

ROBINSON: Okay. So then you all lived together when you got here for a while, right.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. Yeah, we lived in Miami, Florida. And after looking and looking and looking for a place to live, we finally got one person that rented us a house. It was like a duplex with one bedroom.

ROBINSON: Oh wow. Goodness. That'd be very hard.

L. GUTIERREZ: So my brother would sleep in the living room. We would open the couch at night, he would sleep in there. And then we slept, the four of us, in the only room that the house had. And whoever arrived was welcome. There was one time that there was about six or seven of us in the house, you know, necessity. That's the way you call it.

ROBINSON: Yeah, that was just the way you did it. Now your mom and dad came too, right?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, my mother died in 1960, just one year after Castro took power.

ROBINSON: Okay. And then this is your father, right?

L. GUTIERREZ: That's my father. He arrived about 11 years ago.

ROBINSON: So he came over later than you. Now, Ana was telling me your father owned some chains of...

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay, my mother was a pharmacist. And my father's a businessman. So what they did was, they started a pharmacy, then they started a wholesale drug store, and they ended up having like seven pharmacies and the wholesale drug store and some other businesses you know, but that was the main ones.

ROBINSON: Was that unusual for your mother to have a profession like that?

L. GUTIERREZ: No. Not really, no. Actually, that pharmacy school was 98% females and 2% males.

ROBINSON: Oh, that's good. I like those odds.

L. GUTIERREZ: It was a woman career back home, and it's becoming here too.

ROBINSON: Yeah.

L. GUTIERREZ: Now the trend is changing. When I attended USC, probably 10%, something like that, was female. And now it's up to about 40% female.

ROBINSON: So you went to school in Cuba?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay, I went to school at the University of Havana from 1950 to 1954. It was four years for pharmacy school. And I got my degree of Doctor of Pharmacy.

ROBINSON: Do you remember how many of schools it was, like elementary school here, or?

L. GUTIERREZ: When you got up to sixth grade, you had a choice. You could go either two more years or you tried to get into high school.

ROBINSON: And the two more years, was that like a trade thing?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, it was two more years – usually the people there were going to education. They would continue those two more years. Most of the people who were going into careers which were science oriented. Orientated? No, oriented.

ROBINSON: Oriented, mmhmm.

L. GUTIERREZ: Oriented. They would just go ahead and try to go into high school, and high school was five years.

ROBINSON: Oh, okay. So they wouldn't gain too much in the extra two years.

L. GUTIERREZ: [cross talk] Not really.

ROBINSON: They would just go on to the sciences. Yeah. Okay, I see. So is that what you did?

L. GUTIERREZ: When I got to sixth grade, I took my exam to get into high school. I passed it. If you didn't pass it, well, you had to keep going in.

ROBINSON: So then you did your five years of high school.

L. GUTIERREZ: Five years of high school. And the fifth year in high school – by that time you had made up your mind what you were gonna study. Because you had liberal arts or science.

ROBINSON: Oh. So you had to specialize more in high school.

L. GUTIERREZ: One or the other. Some people didn't know what they wanted at the time. They would take two, both of them. But it was very hard to carry both loads, you know. So in my case, I didn't have any doubt I was gonna get into pharmacy. So I just took science.

ROBINSON: Do you think that helps you get more prepared for college or whatever? Because I know in our high school, we kind of have to take a little bit of everything, but we don't really get too specialized into the sciences.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let me put it this way. I feel one of the things that helped me a lot when I got over here that we had a pretty good curriculum. In other words, you went to first year and you knew you had to take math, chemistry. It wasn't what you wanted. It was it. The second year got around and you had to take so and so and so and so. And everybody would walk out that door with the same classes, with the same everything. So it wasn't that you had a choice, well then we get a little Mickey Mouse and working a little bit harder and you know, those type of things. It was a must.

ROBINSON: Yeah, a free period.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. It was a must. So I think really it helped me quite a bit, because when I got over here, it was hard. But it was not as hard – I think our base was pretty good, you know. Our basics was pretty good. So that really helped.

ROBINSON: Yeah. Okay, so what's your parents' religion?

L. GUTIERREZ: Catholic.

ROBINSON: Is that the same as your own?

L. GUTIERREZ: Mmhmm.

ROBINSON: Did your religious views change when you came over here at all?

L. GUTIERREZ: Not really, because for me religion is... I'm not a fanatic. I see the good things the Catholic Church has, I see the bad things, and I take some and I don't care for others. So I'm a Catholic in my way. If I don't feel like attending church on Sunday, I will not get up and go. That's it. I feel you can pray from wherever you want to. You can do good things from wherever you want to. You don't have to go to that church, you know. That's why I have it my way.

ROBINSON: You're so intelligent. [laughs]

L. GUTIERREZ: And that's the way, you know, for years, I went to Sunday mass with the girls. They were in Catholic school. I thought it was my obligation to give them some religion, you know. But when they were old enough, and I mean probably when they were 18 or something like that, I woke up one day, I says, "I'm not going to mass anymore on Sunday." And that's been it. I go when I feel like. If it's a Tuesday I want to stop at the church, I'll stop.

ROBINSON: Okay. Now did your mother work full time outside of the home? Or did she work part-time, or?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, for many years she worked full time, and then in her, what would I say, five years before she died or something like that, she had been trying to cut down hours. Maybe she was already feeling pretty sick you know, and that's what made her start thinking of cutting down hours.

ROBINSON: How did you feel about that? Do you remember how you felt about having her working outside the home? Was that common for all the women to work outside the home?

L. GUTIERREZ: She had a pretty nice set up, because we had the business downstairs. And we had a house in the upstairs. So when I got to school, she was there, you know. And so it was...

ROBINSON: So she could greet you when you came home from school.

L. GUTIERREZ: It was very convenient, having an old building where the business was downstairs and we lived upstairs. And this went on until I was about 17, 18, something like that. Then we moved.

ROBINSON: Were the children her main responsibility? Mostly? As compared to her father or whatever.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. Mother was always the one that said no, yes.

ROBINSON: How did you feel when you left the old country of Cuba?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I imagine like every refugee feels. It's something you want to happen, because when we applied for our visas to leave the country, we were desperate to leave the country. And once it happened, you just feel – you know, I can remember, I cried in that plain since I left Cuba until I arrived in Florida. I stopped when I got to Florida because it was so many papers and things and you know.

ROBINSON: You couldn't keep up. [laughing]

L. GUTIERREZ: No, I couldn't. That was it, you know. Plus you're very nervous at the airport when you were back in the Havana airport.

ROBINSON: Afraid they'd stop you at the last minute?

L. GUTIERREZ: Right, anything could go wrong. If they just felt you were bringing something in the luggage they would want, that would be reason enough to just stop you right there. You know.

ROBINSON: So you were afraid.

L. GUTIERREZ: For example, where did you leave the car? Right, you had fear. That's another thing. You had fear. Where did you leave the car? There were so many questions and things, you know, and you don't know what's gonna happen. At the time, like I tell you again, they were still not 100% organized. So you could get away with a lot of things. But if they would catch you, that was it.

ROBINSON: So what triggered your coming over was mostly the change in the government?

L. GUTIERREZ: It was the change in the government, it was the political... Myself, I could foresee a civil war, which never happened, but that's what I thought. There was gonna be a civil war. And the [foolt?] part was getting worse and worse and worse. They tell me that it's nothing compared to today. But for us, you know, looking for eggs to eat and looking for meat to eat and looking for rice to eat, you know. We were not used to that. So for us it was already a starvation period, let's put it that way.

ROBINSON: So you had to really think about it.

L. GUTIERREZ: I remember we used to get like the navy beans. Those are the last ones I remember. I remember we used to make every day like kind of a navy bean soup for Leida and Ana. They got to the point where when they saw that dish coming, they would just refused to eat it. Although they were little, they already knew it was white, you know. Oh, they were so sick and tired of those beans.

ROBINSON: [laughing] I can just see Ana.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well you know, it was starting to get pretty bad. Nothing compared to what it is today, I understand. But when you have been used to, well, you need eggs, you go to the market and buy it, and you want this and you have the money to buy it, and you have nothing to start buying, you know it's getting pretty bad.

ROBINSON: And once you got here, did your feelings stay pretty much the same as that? Or did you change at all when you got here?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, it was many years of adjusting, let's put it that way. It was starting all over. When I came here, it was, like I had no career. So when we came to Los Angeles, what did I do? Start working for Thrifty. I worked at the cosmetic department, the camera department, you know. Which I didn't know too much about, because [medics?] our camera or anything. But I had to make a living. So I always thought, well, I'll go back to school. So that's when I started going to USC. And it took them about three years. I keep the letters and I'll never forget it. It took them about three years before they finally – the way I look at it's just like a little favor. Go ahead and get started because you're gonna fall flat on your face. But let's get you started and that's it, you know. So I'm very happy because I didn't fall flat on my face.

ROBINSON: I would say so. Now, what did you like most about your life in the old country, in Cuba?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess the pace of life.

ROBINSON: What was different?

L. GUTIERREZ: It was a lot slower. We have lots of things here that sometimes you're so tired and you just can't enjoy it. Maybe we lived with less things. Although we had the American influence, so we had refrigerators, TV, you know, name it, we have all those things. But I don't know. The pace of life was a little bit... Much slower, let's put it that way. So I really miss that.

ROBINSON: There were some things you didn't like, and that's why you eventually came here, but did you ever feel like you could change any of those, like for instance, what things didn't you like about the country there?

L. GUTIERREZ: You mean the communism?

ROBINSON: Well, either that or – besides the government, just any other things that maybe you'd have a...

L. GUTIERREZ: Not really. Let's put it this way. If there would have not been the take-over of communism in Cuba, I probably would have never left my country. Because we had a way of living, we had you know, everything going for us. So there was no reason really to leave the country. We loved to come over here, you know, from Florida to Cuba was 95 miles, so it was about on the plains at the time, an hour trip. So we would just come like for a weekend to Florida. To Miami, you know. And we loved to come and buy things and this type of thing. Plus we loved to come to Florida at the time. Now I don't like to go to Florida. Isn't that terrible?

ROBINSON: Oh wow, yeah. Why is that?

L. GUTIERREZ: I don't know. It seems to me like – let me put it this way. Our community of Cubans in Florida has become classless. By that I mean we're all mixed up together over there. I say we all mixed up; I lived there, but that's the way it is. In our country we had more of a class, you know.

ROBINSON: A class system?

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. There are certain people in Florida right now that they will live in their neighborhood, and I would live in a different neighborhood. Right now we're all together, and I don't care what nationality it is, there are certain people I don't care about mixing with them or mingling with them, or you know, this type of thing.

ROBINSON: So are just lumped into one section in Florida?

L. GUTIERREZ: More or less. Although now there are so many that it's really spread out. Plus I felt if I was gonna come to the United States, I was gonna try to blend in as much as possible. If you keep and stay among your own, you never can blend in. Because you're too attached to the things you have brought from your homeland. So that's the way it really works.

ROBINSON: That would be kind of scary to think about though. I can see how some people would feel – well, there are bad things and good things, but I'm gonna hold on to the good things over here when I'm safe in Florida or whatever. But there wasn't really any way that you could do anything about the takeover or anything like that, was there?

L. GUTIERREZ: Nothing really. At the very beginning, you know, I'll put it this way. For a few months before he publicly admitted I'm a communist, I had a little bit of hope that maybe there were so many bad things about him that – I would have loved somebody to fix them up, let's put it that way. It's just like I see things right now, I wish somebody would fix them up. I guess from wherever you are, you want the best. So I thought, well, let's give him credit for a few months, you know. But that's all it took, a few months. I could see that he wasn't gonna do good to anybody. The poor was gonna be poor, the rich wasn't gonna be rich anymore, and it was just gonna be a mess, you know. And that's what exactly the communism does. The poor is poor, nothing to lose. The rich one just goes down and everyone's at the same level. They become the new class. Cause they live real good, you know. Don't let anybody kid you.

ROBINSON: Oh, they live really well, huh? And then they say everybody should be equal except for them.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. There's no such thing, you know.

ROBINSON: Okay. What kinds of things did you expect to find? Well you toured around, so you knew what to expect in the United States.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, actually, in I think it was 1952, we came to the states. We traveled for about 4 months. So we pretty much knew the United States, and it's great, let's put it that way.

ROBINSON: And so then you settled in Miami when you first got here.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. When we first got here, we settled in Miami for about eight months. The reason we left Miami is, we could not make a living. We were living off of a hundred dollars the refugee program was giving us, plus they were giving us food, you know. So we were practically just eating, sleeping, and that was it. And when you have certain kind of a vision to live some other way, you just don't want to stay here, you know. And at the time, that's the way Florida was, at least Miami. We just couldn't make a living. So it was hard to come up with a decision.

ROBINSON: Yeah, because you'd already moved once, and then move.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right, and we still had some uncles and aunts, so we still felt a little bit at home.

ROBINSON: A little safer, kind of.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. Safer, exactly, that's the word.

ROBINSON: So when you first got here, did you settle with your family and your relatives there for a while? Did they help you out?

L. GUTIERREZ: For about a week or something like that. I had an uncle and an aunt. So they just took us in their home until we could go ahead and find our own place to live. So we only really stayed with them for about a week.

ROBINSON: Okay. And then you found that house that they rented to you or whatever.

L. GUTIERREZ: Mmmhmm.

ROBINSON: So did you have trouble getting someone to rent to you because you had just come over?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes. First it was the number of people that were gonna be living in that house. Second it was renting with two children. And it seems like wherever you went, when they saw a three- and a four-year-old, they don't want children. That was it, you know. And when you tell them you're looking for a one bedroom or two bedroom at the most and with five people, because I had to tell them about my brother coming you know, and it seemed like it was no, no, and no and no. That's one of the things, it was very hard on me. I couldn't understand, why don't they want to rent me a house, or an apartment, anything? Until we finally got one, which I was grateful.

ROBINSON: That's good. Was it in a neighborhood mostly with people from Cuba?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I can in 1962. There was still a lot of refugees. But not too many. So actually, in the block I lived, there was just another family and myself Cubans. And the rest were Americans. Some were spending the winter months, you know, away in New York. I remember one of the neighbors we had, a very nice couple. They were so nice and so helpful, and I always remember them you know. And what they did was every year during those months, they would come to Miami, Florida and spend it away from New York. That's where they lived.

ROBINSON: That'd be nice.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. I guess they were retired you know. They were an old couple.

ROBINSON: So you turned to them for help a lot, and what language or languages were spoken at home?

L. GUTIERREZ: Just Spanish. English was... Most of the schools they tried to at least have one subject, like we had in high school. We had about two years or three years of English, but we didn't really accomplish much.

ROBINSON: [laughing] Uh-uh. I had two years of French.

L. GUTIERREZ: And Mary's a girls and Tom is a boy and Spot is a dog and I think that's all you really, you know, and the colors... But you really couldn't put two sentences too much, and if you did, you forgot them next semester. That was it, you know.

ROBINSON: Okay. Well then English obviously became the main language spoken at home. When did that happen?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay. Not really. For years, I did speak to Leida and Ana in Spanish. They would, actually Leida started school in September of '62 in Los Angeles. She would not speak one word of English. So she had a hard, hard time. She went to this Catholic school and there was this Mother Superior. That's the way they were called. Not anymore. And she knew a few words in Spanish, so what she would do is take Leida out of class and drag her around the school for so many days until Leida got used to it. She would cry at the beginning. She wouldn't want to go to school because she could not communicate with other children.

ROBINSON: Was it a matter of really not wanting to, or was it...?

L. GUTIERREZ: She felt lost. She could not communicate with other children.

ROBINSON: Oh, I see. Yeah, because Ana said she didn't have too much trouble because she was younger.

L. GUTIERREZ: No, Leida taught her everything. When she was gonna go to kindergarten, Leida had taught her all the little songs and all the little numbers and whatever. It was nothing new when she got here.

ROBINSON: Yeah, see Ana forgets that. I bet Leida'd remember that.

L. GUTIERREZ: So it was really harder on Leida than on Ana because of her 17 months of – well she had to go to school first.

ROBINSON: I remember that. I'm the oldest too. They'd always figure out all my mistakes and fix 'em all up or whatever. So now is English the main language spoken in your house or do you still speak a lot of Spanish?

L. GUTIERREZ: I still do speak Spanish to them, although for years they have answered back in English. It was a battle I lost. I tried at the very beginning, and years I tried, for them to keep Spanish as much as possible. Not thinking Spanish would be the main language, but it would be a bilingual situation. But I guess maybe they just wanted to blend in with the rest of the children and just speak one language, so they drifted away from Spanish. They can understand quite a bit, and Ana speaks a little bit more than Leida, because Leida made it a point I do not want to...

ROBINSON: Yeah, she got burned when she was little and she decided she was gonna speak English, yeah.

L. GUTIERREZ: So now, it has become something that doesn't bother them. But for years it did bother them to be different from the rest of the children. So they spent a lot of time trying to just blend in too.

ROBINSON: Did you live in any neighborhood where there were any other languages spoken at all?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay, when I came to Los Angeles, I moved to a neighborhood in Culver City. There was at least five families that were Cuban. We tried to... I don't know it's a feeling you want to have some of your own around or I really don't know what it is. You try to, you know, stick together. I don't know what it is.

ROBINSON: Well it makes sense. You just get used to having them around.

L. GUTIERREZ: That's one thing. All of us would work at jobs where we had to speak English. So that's one thing that really made us kind of, you know, pick up the language. When I went to

Thrifty, there was nobody at all that would speak Spanish. Not even, you know [name or name]. So it was eight hours whether I liked it or not speaking English. Plus I made up my mind that I was gonna learn the language and you know. I had the basics, but that's all I have is basics. And I did speak English as a little child. Maybe I was... My first language was English, believe it or not.

ROBINSON: Oh, why is that?

L. GUTIERREZ: In 1933, when it was world depression, my parents came to the states. My father lost everything he had back home. So the first thing is let's go to the promised land, you know. So they came over...

ROBINSON: [laughing] They weren't doing too well here either.

L. GUTIERREZ: No, but he always says you know, as bad as they were doing here, he got here, second day he was holding a job, you know. So he left my mother and myself behind, and we didn't come until... Oh, I'm talking about when I was a baby, because I was born in '33. So he actually had to borrow the money so he could come over here. Then I didn't speak English or Spanish until I was about two years old. I guess I was probably very confused listening in the street English and at home Spanish. So my mother always tells me she says, aren't you worried she doesn't talk and she's almost two years old? My mother used to say, well, she'll talk. And I sure did. So I would speak English. I spoke English.

ROBINSON: You must have picked up more of it.

L. GUTIERREZ: Or I picked up at the time, just imagine, Spanish was not even heard, let's put it that way. So I picked up the English. So my vocabulary was of a seven-year-old child when I went back home. And then I went through the same thing. I didn't want to speak English. I just wanted to speak Spanish. [] would laugh at me and make funny faces when I, you know, talked to my mother or something like that at the beginning when I didn't speak Spanish. So that's where I forgot about it completely. That was it. I erased it as much as I could. Where when I came here in '62, it was a problem because I had lost it completely.

ROBINSON: Yeah. And you probably thought...

L. GUTIERREZ: I never thought I would need it, you know.

ROBINSON: I bet when you got here, you thought, well, I can learn it once, I can learn it again.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, you know, it's funny. My parents always were after my brother and myself back home. Making us learn English. Because they wanted us to have a second language. And

I'm the one that put up the battle. I didn't want to. It was just like the same thing that Ana, I didn't want to. So I made it a point that I don't want to.

ROBINSON: So you're the oldest, right?

L. GUTIERREZ: My brother picked it up pretty good, you know. He would come to summer camps over here and all this type of thing. And he's almost accent-free. Actually, you have to be either the teacher or somebody that deals with languages to really know that he has an accent, you know. He picked it up pretty good.

ROBINSON: You speak pretty well too.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I still have an accent you know. Like when I went to Santa Monica City College, I took speech and I asked the professor one day, well, you know, I was crazy trying to get rid of my accent, you know. It was worse at the time. I know that. And I says, do you think I have improved, you know. Yeah, I was desperate, you know. So he says, well, I'll tell you one thing, he says, you know, you have improved quite a bit. But don't ever think you're gonna get rid of your accent. That's something you're gonna have to carry for the rest of your life. And if you know how to carry it, it's very nice. So, you know, he was an older man, and it was very nice the way he put it, you know.

ROBINSON: Yeah. Well that's good. I think the only time it would ever bother anybody is if you can't be understood. And that bothers both the person trying to understand and the person trying to communicate, you know.

L. GUTIERREZ: It doesn't bother me at all anymore. Actually, I like to be asked, where is your accent from? But at the very beginning, it did bother me. Because I wanted to blend in. And I couldn't blend in with the very definite accent, you know. And communicating was a problem, you know. It was a lot of yes, yes and no, no without the yes, yes when right or no, you know.

ROBINSON: Yeah. Okay, who lived in the household during your growing up years? Was it the four of you?

L. GUTIERREZ: Just my parents, my brother, myself.

ROBINSON: Were your uncles or grandparents or aunts living in the town around there?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, around the town, but then, you know. Probably 15, 20 minutes, half an hour trips.

ROBINSON: Did you ever have boarders or anything like that?

L. GUTIERREZ: Living at the house? Not really.

ROBINSON: Okay. Do you remember how your parents felt about having other family members living there, or did it just never come out?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, for example, now that you mention it, I remember an aunt on my mother's side, her sister, she lived with us for a little while, but it was one of those things that, you know, she was sick and tired just living with the family. She never married, but at that time she was still young. By young, 20-something years or maybe 30 already. So she decided she was gonna move on her own and this type of thing. But it would have been for my mother, she would have lived there until, you know, God knows when. But my aunt said forget it. So not to be living with somebody else.

ROBINSON: So she wasn't married at all?

L. GUTIERREZ: No.

ROBINSON: Was that alright in the society for her to live by herself?

L. GUTIERREZ: It was acceptable at her stage already, you know, because she was already, what, about 30 years old or something like that. But in our society, it was, you leave home married. That was it. That was the pattern, right. Well, for example, in my case it was, I either got married and walked out of my house and that was the right thing to do.

ROBINSON: Otherwise you didn't walk out.

L. GUTIERREZ: That's it.

ROBINSON: Okay. Did you like having her live with you, or were you to remember?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, no. I really enjoyed it. I really did.

ROBINSON: Did the children in your family have regular chores? Did you have certain things you were expected to do?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, there were maids. And the maids had their things around the house to do. But all of us had duties in a way, you know. There was no messy bedrooms because there was a maid, or you know, you were expected to not leave clothes here and there. So I guess we had duties and we didn't have, you know.

ROBINSON: Wait, did they expect anything different of you as opposed to your brother because he was male and you were female?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, male had it, you know. That was it. For example, you know, I remember I used to kind of, take the situation where he could come to the United States to summer camp and all this type of thing. And they wouldn't let me do it. Because I was a girl.

ROBINSON: Was it because they didn't think it would be helpful for you? They just were afraid something would happen to you?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, it was. Right, it was not right. It was not right for me to come by myself over here, you know. I had to be chaperoned.

ROBINSON: Oh, I see. And especially since you were so much older, I'm sure you thought, what is this?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, it bothered me to see him come to summer camp, and here I was deprived! I was a deprived child. [laughing]

ROBINSON: Did you ever work outside the home?

[End of Tape]

[TAPE 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape.]

ROBINSON: Did you ever work in a job outside the home when you were growing up?

L. GUTIERREZ: No. I never worked until after I became [a pharmacist?]. It was another thing.

ROBINSON: Now did you get married before you became a pharmacist?

L. GUTIERREZ: No. I got married about, let's see. A couple years after I was out of pharmacy school. And it was a big thing, you know. You didn't work when you were in high school or college. As long as your parents were able to support you.

ROBINSON: That just wasn't done.

L. GUTIERREZ: That wasn't done. Maybe there was not many jobs and maybe that was one reason. I don't know, but that was the thing. You were supported until, you know, you finished school, you finished a career, you were supported.

ROBINSON: Okay. So when you became a pharmacist, did you work for your parents?

L. GUTIERREZ: I worked for my parents. It was the thing, you know.

ROBINSON: Sounds good to me. [laughs]

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, and they had a job, you know, that's it. In a way, it was expected, you know. If they had a job there, it was, how could I go some place and look for one, you know?

ROBINSON: Yeah, when there was a job there already. Okay, who made most of the family decisions between your parents?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I think my mother had quite a bit to do with the decision. Although that's one thing, if my mother said yes, maybe my father felt no, but we didn't know about it. It was kind of, you know, it was something that was at least worked out in front of us. They agreed to whatever it was. If they disagreed, we never found out.

ROBINSON: So possibly they discussed it before, or do you think maybe just what your mom said went more?

L. GUTIERREZ: It was more my mother taking most of the decisions. And it was, you know, my father went along with it because most of the time they were just the right thing to do, so there was not really anything to throw? about, you know.

ROBINSON: Did your parents ever disagree on things though, that you remember?

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, yeah, they disagreed on things. I guess like everybody, they agree and disagree.

ROBINSON: How did they handle that? Did they yell, or did they discuss quietly, or?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess they quarreled like every other couple does. The trouble is we didn't have too much saying in it, you know. That's something they would work out and you would just listen and keep your mouth shut, you know.

ROBINSON: Now did you ever disagree with your parents about things?

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, every other day! [laughing] If not every day.

ROBINSON: Well what'd you disagree with them about?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess when you're growing age, you just rebel against everything, you know. Like if I wanted to go some place and it'd have to be, well, my mother could go, and it was kind of strict on us, you know. And it bothered me, so I disagreed.

ROBINSON: Can you remember anything specific?

L. GUTIERREZ: Let me see if I can remember. Well, for example, one time I remember I had this piano teacher, and she was gonna get all her pupils together and they were gonna go to a little

ranch, like a picnic type of thing. So my mother said no, I can't go. She couldn't go, and that was enough, you know. She could not go to...

ROBINSON: Chaperone you.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. She could not trust the teacher taking like 10, 15 of us, whichever, you know. And she was kind of strict with me, you know. So I rebelled. I rebelled. But the only thing I could do is open my mouth and shut it up real fast, because she would get it to me.

ROBINSON: So basically, was it a custom of the country do you think? Or do you think it was more your family?

L. GUTIERREZ: I was gonna say, it was a custom. And some people you know more strict than others, and I think my mother was pretty strict when it came to that, and my father would back her up. So it was not that they disagreed, you know. They agreed.

ROBINSON: So you didn't have a chance. [laughing]

L. GUTIERREZ: No, and I didn't have any court to go to.

ROBINSON: What if any customs and practices did you observe at home from Cuba? Anything special that you don't have here that you can remember? Religious, or recipes and foods?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, we have some of our dishes which is very typical of our country, you know. Like the black beans, which I do keep like when Christmas comes. I still keep it as our tradition, you know. To have the same meal we had back home. Although when Thanksgiving comes, I have turkey like everybody, and our daily menu is more of like an American family.

ROBINSON: Are there any ceremonies or superstitions or anything like that you can think of?

L. GUTIERREZ: Not really. I just remember being 90 miles from the United States, we had quite a bit of an influence of this country back home, you know.

ROBINSON: What groups did you belong to while you were growing up? Do you remember any special groups, or did they have that kind of thing in school?

L. GUTIERREZ: Let me put it this way. You know, like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and all those kinds of things. I heard about them, but they were not very developed back home. So there was really not much to belong to, you know.

ROBINSON: So it was more family oriented in a way.

L. GUTIERREZ: More family oriented, and yeah, I would say so.

ROBINSON: Were your friends mostly of the same religious and ethnic background?

L. GUTIERREZ: Not really. Not really, but that's one thing, you know. You never bothered if a girl or boy was Jewish or Presbyterian, although Catholic was predominant. But you really didn't start to think about it, you know.

ROBINSON: Well that's nice. Did your parents object at all, like for instance, I don't know what the dating was like, but if you wanted to date someone, like say a Jewish boy, would your parents object to that?

L. GUTIERREZ: It never happened, but I don't know if they would've objected to that, you know. My mother was very narrow-minded for some things, but for religion, she was very broad-minded. She was, you know, her religion was not, you know, praying and doing this. I don't know, it was different for her. I don't know why.

ROBINSON: Did you bring friends home as visitors and things? Like from school and stuff?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. The only thing is, you wouldn't go to anybody's house, like for example, you came here and you don't know us or anything. That's one thing, you know, I can understand. Back home, the families had to know each other. They wouldn't let me go to any place they didn't who was the father, who was the mother, you know.

ROBINSON: I think we could use more of that here.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, there was kind of a relationship among the parents.

ROBINSON: Would it be a little bit easier in Cuba? How big is Cuba?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay, at the time you're talking about barely 6 million. And I forgot how big Cuba is now. Cuba's the biggest island in the Caribbean.

ROBINSON: So maybe it was a little easier to get to know the people in your neighborhood.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, for example, you would make it a point to know the parents of the children your child was going with. For example, you know, you have three or four friends, you know, which are maybe the favorite or the ones you go up or study or, you know, you do and those[?] So each of the parents made a point to know the other parent. To know who they were, what was going on, what kind of people they were. Maybe being a smaller place made it easier or I don't know.

ROBINSON: Did your parents set any rules about dating?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, the rules of dating back home were clear and that was it. You had a date. The date wouldn't even argue about anything. The date knew that he had to carry the date and the chaperone, whether he liked her or not.

ROBINSON: That was it, huh?

L. GUTIERREZ: Or he couldn't go out. That was it. It was no questions, you know.

ROBINSON: You just came, and would your mother go with you, or?

L. GUTIERREZ: It was something natural, yeah. It was something natural. Nobody ever even looked at you as a strange creature, you know. It was so natural. You know, what we would do is sometimes double-date. So then the chaperon and the other chaperone, at least they kept company.

ROBINSON: [laughing] They talk over here while you guys get a couple minutes.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right, that type of thing.

ROBINSON: A three-way conversation would be kind of difficult.

L. GUTIERREZ: It was pretty boring for the chaperones, I'll tell you that much.

ROBINSON: Yeah, because either that sat down and talked down with you and your date, or they sat and just watched you.

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, they sat down there while you were dancing and that's it.

ROBINSON: So did your parents have anything to do with who you married?

L. GUTIERREZ: Not really. Not really. It just happened. That was it, yeah. You know, one time I was asked this question. Leida, like, was your married set up, like you knew maybe three years or four years before that you were gonna marry this person? I says no. You're talking about maybe 50 years before that time. Maybe things were done that way, but in that time, no, you know. You had your free will to...

ROBINSON: To choose. And you didn't need an arranger or anything?

L. GUTIERREZ: No. No arrangement, no.

ROBINSON: In class on Thursday, they were talking about how the Japanese and the Chinese both do that. And our professor says he has a foster daughter who met her husband and got to know him herself, but they went to an arranger, I don't know what the word is. And they went to their parents and said, we want this marriage set up. And they still had to have the arranger

do it all. And she's, you know, 30 maybe. 20. 25, 30, around in there. I just thought that was really funny because they still do that I guess.

L. GUTIERREZ: Isn't that something?

ROBINSON: Yeah. Now I know you went to school in the United States. You went to USC, right?

L. GUTIERREZ: I went to USC, right.

ROBINSON: Were you speaking English then fairly well?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I had been here for three years already. I arrived 1962 and I started January 1966. So I'd been about, you know, three years because '66 was just starting. And it was a lot better. It was still very poor. And I found out when I started taking classes, where I would never forget my first class I took was pharmacology. Well, during the day.

ROBINSON: It's hard enough to take pharmacology if you knew the language!

L. GUTIERREZ: You know, it helped, the Latin elements of the scientific words. Because I could hear that and it would ring a bell. But I remember, you know, like a notebook. I would take two words, miss another three, take another two, miss another three. They'd have to time it with three of us in the same class, three of us Cubans. So what we did after class was got together, and the three I picked up, and the two she picked up, and the other two the other one picked up. Try to build up the notes, you know, so we could get something out of it that would make sense.

ROBINSON: Yeah, you had to work extra hard.

L. GUTIERREZ: We did. We did. But I think that was the worst semester. I think after that, it got a little bit easier, it got a little bit easier, you know.

ROBINSON: Did the professors handle the language differences, or were they kind of doubtful of you?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess you find everything, you know. For example, this professor of pharmacology, he gave his class and he could care less if we got the notes great. If you didn't get it, and we didn't get any sympathy from him. Let's put it that way. He was giving his class, you took the exam, you passed it, you didn't pass it, that was your problem. But you would find, you know,, people that really could understand.

ROBINSON: And would be more helpful.

L. GUTIERREZ: right. Trying to be more helpful or if you have any questions, please come after class and I'll be glad to answer them. Or if you want, you know, all this type of thing. [end again]

ROBINSON: Okay, I was gonna ask you to tell me about getting into USC. Was he prejudiced against you because you couldn't speak English?

L. GUTIERREZ: I don't really know. I don't think it was that. I just think it was the way he was. He was used to run everybody his way. And I guess he just felt like it was just little puppets, you know. He could pull the strings whichever way. I really can't understand why. Maybe he was prejudiced? I don't really know.

ROBINSON: Do you have a tendency to think it was more because of your background, or because you were a woman? Or a combination maybe?

L. GUTIERREZ: Sometimes I feel that he felt that, you know, maybe it was not good enough for USC, or not as a person. The background, you know. Well, a little Korea[?] there from the University of Havana. And University of Havana was at the time, you know, under the classification it was like A1 for over here, you know. It had a very high rank.

ROBINSON: For you to be able to go through pharmacy school when you hadn't spoken English that long, I'm sure.

L. GUTIERREZ: It was, you know, pretty good. So I guess when he finally after three years, you know, every semester I would go. And he would give me a little sweet talk and tell me that I have to go to school and get geography, history, psychology. I kept telling myself, look, I can't see myself after having a degree from another university studying geography and history. If you tell me I have to take extra classes in pharmacy, fine. Because year has gone by since I finished school, about 8 years at the time. 9 years, you know. Fine, I have to update that, I agree. But I couldn't see myself studying geography and history. Because he said that I have not fulfilled the prerequisites for, how do you call the first two years? Pre-pharmacy. So I don't really know what went in his mind, but finally one day he said, well, start at the Nine College. And the feeling I got as well, you're gonna fall flat and hit your nose. I didn't, and I'm very happy I didn't.

ROBINSON: [giggling] You should have gone back to visit him. Did you?

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, not anymore now, but for many years I could see him in the different meetings and this type of thing. So one time I remember the remark he made at one of the meetings we were at. He says, well, have you become rich? I says, well, I always was rich. I always had [] and red blood cells coming with me. You know, it was a nasty remark and I answered back with a little nasty, you know. But I don't know. It was his way, because it was nothing personal. Because it was three of us trying to get in at the same time. Actually, it was

two of us. The third one, don't ask me how. She just walked up one day and she told him she wanted to go to pharmacy school, and he told her, start next week at night at such-and-such class. And she called us, she says I got accepted to the school. I says, how can you? If I was just there a week ago and he just gave me a no.

ROBINSON: Did you go back again and then get accepted?

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly.

ROBINSON: He probably decided that...

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I told him I knew that she had been accepted. I just spelled it out for him. So at that point, he had no choice. It was kind of a no-choice, you know. Because he couldn't say, well I'm accepting her and I'm not accepting you. Because we had the same requirements, you know. I never have been able to figure out why he did it.

ROBINSON: Maybe he was just in a good mood that day.

L. GUTIERREZ: We started at night class, but we still was not accepted to the school. We were still not accepted at USC, let's put it that way. So finally when I had finished that semester, I went to see him. I says, look, I can't keep taking classes without knowing if it's gonna be of any value, without knowing I'm not accepted to the school. Economically, I cannot face it. I don't have the means to pay the tuition. And while I'm not accepted to the school, they will not give me a loan. So he kept kind of, you know, avoiding – he had to sign that paper. So he just came out with a nasty remark of, well, these rich kids with the money and the Swiss banks. So I walked out because I didn't wanna cry in front of him, because I didn't want him to have the satisfaction. I didn't wanna give it to him, you know. But I went out and I was crying out there, and at the time, this other girl had been accepted about a week ago just walked in. And this other friend and myself, we were both there. So she walked after me, and this third one just was coming in. She says, what happened? I says, well, Brady doesn't want to sign the papers, and I can't keep going. I don't have the means. I'm not a kid anymore; I'm 32 years old at this point. I have to know where I'm standing. I have a family to support, I have to go to work, and I have all these things to do. So at the time, he came out. He says, well, bring in your papers tomorrow morning. I'll sign them. That was it. I never asked him. Sometimes I feel like one of these days, ask him, why in the heck did you do that? Why'd you play with my life for three years? But I thought, well, it's over, it's over. Why even dig him? Because he can't come up with any logical explanation.

ROBINSON: No. It's gotta be something like, well, you know.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

ROBINSON: What was your family's attitude toward school? Since your mother was a pharmacist, I would imagine...

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, the attitude my mother had toward school is, everybody in the school was gonna have an education. That was it. Which one? You were free to pick up. Actually, she wanted me to be a physician. Because she had a dream in her life of being a physician, but she didn't have the means. She was an orphan at 17. Her mother died, and her father was left with five children, so she never could fulfill being a physician because she didn't have the means. So she thought, well, I have the means now to send my daughter to medical school. I want her to be a physician. But I didn't want to. And actually, it got to one point where I didn't want to have a career at all. They were pretty well off and I thought, well why sacrifice, you know? I have it made. I'm gonna inherit this, so why even go to school? And I told her one day, and she threw a book at me. And I never came up with the subject again of I'm not going to school. Because I knew I had to.

ROBINSON: Okay, well that's pretty clear!

L. GUTIERREZ: Education was very emphasized at my house. It was this thing and that was it, you know.

ROBINSON: They thought that was very important.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, they thought that's the only thing nobody can take away from you. And it proved true.

ROBINSON: Did they help you with problems at school? If you had any.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, my mother was pretty much always aware if I was having any difficulty, or trying to get me a tutor or this or that, yeah. She was, you know, watching it pretty close.

ROBINSON: Did you or your brother stay in school longer? Or was it about the same?

L. GUTIERREZ: Now, remember that my brother when he came here, he was 19. So all he had finished was high school. He had started his first year at pharmacy school. They closed the university. So that really, you know, there was being so many problems at home with bombs and all this type of thing, that they had to close the university. So that really ended his career there. When he came to the States, he never went back to pharmacy school, and he was kind of wandering around a little bit, not wanting to go back to school, until he met this girl. And I guess she really told him, I'm not gonna marry a stupid ignorant. You either go back to school or, you know, forget it. So he did and he became a mechanical engineer. But he had in mind he wanted to fly. But at the time, it was too expensive. He couldn't afford it and all this type of thing, you know. So he started working on it and today that's what he is. He's a pilot.

ROBINSON: So he became mechanical engineer and then a pilot. So he probably ended up with the same amount of education as you.

L. GUTIERREZ: In a way, yeah. Right. Probably he went into a completely different field of what he was gonna be. Because there was gonna be another pharmacist in the family!

ROBINSON: Did your parents ever emphasize that it was more important for him to have schooling than you?

L. GUTIERREZ: No. It was equal. Yeah, when it came to that it was equal.

ROBINSON: Did you participate in school activities at all?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

ROBINSON: What kind?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, like I tell you, there was not so many organized things. But the little there was, I would participate, you know. Let me see if I can think back to whatever. We didn't have like the sorority houses, but it was a little bit close to it. So we would participate of things, and you know. It was not as organized as it is over here, let's put it that way, you know.

ROBINSON: But you had parties and things.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, we had parties. Yeah. We called it asado[?] There was not such thing. Asado means taking over. And we would say, let's have a party in such and such house, and was not supposed to know we were gonna have the party there. She knew, you know. So I would bring the potato chips and she would bring dips and the other one would bring ham, and this type of thing. So we got together and it was no burden on anybody. It was just the person – well, they have to clean it afterwards and you know, this type of thing.

ROBINSON: Yeah, we used to do that too.

L. GUTIERREZ: But it was fun. [inaudible, break]

ROBINSON: Can you think of any differences between your life when you came to the United States and that of Ana and Leida now?

L. GUTIERREZ: In which way?

ROBINSON: Well, say for instance when you first came over. You were married and then you had two small children. Do you think you had a lot different views than, say for instance, Leida will when she gets married? If she gets married? Or whatever she's doing. I know it's a hard question.

L. GUTIERREZ: If I had different views... That Leida will have now? Well, let's put it this way. When you're younger, you look at things in different ways. As you get older, you mellow down, or I don't know how to describe it.

ROBINSON: It seems like you've mellowed down [] real tight like my grandpa.

L. GUTIERREZ: You really look at things in so many different ways. Plus you have learned so many things the hard way, and by the hard way, I mean bumping your head straight, that you know, your way of thinking changes so much. Because I look at things today that, you know, I wish they would have happened to me today instead of ten years ago. I would have handled it in so many different ways, you know. So I guess I really don't know how to answer that question.

ROBINSON: These are a little more specific, but, let's see. First of all, do you have any different customs that we don't celebrate here?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess you're thinking like about Christmas. Okay, we had Christmas. The only thing we didn't have, on the 25th we will not get our gifts. We got our gifts on the 6th of January, which is when, you know religiously, the wise men come. You know the three wise men came at the time.

ROBINSON: Okay, so rather than His birth, it was when the wise men arrived?

L. GUTIERREZ: Right, with the gifts. So that was the 6th of January. And that made it really terrible on us, because it was always the day before we went back to school. So you know, as a child, you wanna play with them? You gotta go back to school the next day. So that's a different custom, you know.

ROBINSON: Do you do that with Ana and Leida?

L. GUTIERREZ: No.

ROBINSON: So they all probably just celebrate Christmas in their homes with their families just the way you do.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. Actually, Leida and Ana will be more American than ever Cuban. Because they were three and four years. So they don't remember anything from back home. And I have tried to, like I tell you, blend into the society I'm gonna live for the rest of my life. So their homes are gonna be a typical American family.

ROBINSON: Do you think they'll – you were talking about some different foods you serve, like at Christmas or things like that.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah, for example, our typical Christmas meal back home, which we always did the 24th late at night, would consist of rice, black beans, pork, salad, and then we imported from Spain what we call durones. There's different types. They're very rich. So you just eat a little piece and you had enough of it. Mostly they're made of almonds and egg yolk. So they're very rich. Actually, I'll show you some I still have from Christmas. And so that's one thing we still buy. So I think that the 24th, although we don't do it the 24th at night, because it's a day I always work. So I have to just make it on the 25th. Our meal is still our meal from back home.

ROBINSON: So do you think they'll do it in their home some day?

L. GUTIERREZ: I don't think so. I don't think so. I think the tradition is just gonna be over with my generation. I think their meal is gonna be the turkey and, you know. Meanwhile I cook it will probably be my, you know. But they have to do it, I'm pretty sure will be their way.

ROBINSON: I don't know, they might decide to be different.

L. GUTIERREZ: Unless they would marry, you know, a Spanish, a Cuban, let's put it that way. Because if it was any other country, they'll still do it the American way, you know.

ROBINSON: Alright. "Think of the kind of lives your children are living, and what do you think some of the things their lives are now?" You know, as compared to if you had stayed there, what it would have had to have been like.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I think you're a little bit more independent than what I was. Which like everything in life has advantages and disadvantages. You pay a price for everything. I got up to like 22, 23 years old, I never worked. I was sheltered, you know. So they haven't had it as easy as I have it. But they have had a kind of a freedom. They have had more to say about their life than what I had to say about mine.

ROBINSON: If you were to do something to help them, what would it be? [laughing] Aside from putting them through school and what you're doing now, I guess.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess I try to help them as much as possible, but I think that's like all mothers do. We try to help our children as much as possible, but there's certain things you just can't help. You have to let them find out their way, find out the hard way sometimes. You know, you want to help them. You tell them, don't do it this way. Do it that other way. And sometimes you can't say it, because you sound like how wise my mother is. That's not the word. Oh, she knows too much. It's not that. But you have lived it already. You have bumped your head into the wall and you learned the lesson and you don't want your children to get hurt. But sometimes you can't. You have to let them get hurt. Whether you suffer along with them, you know, but it's the way it is. Does that answer your question?

ROBINSON: Yeah, it does. Okay, what is life here like for people from your country? Do you think the majority of the people from Cuba think it's good, or are a lot of them having trouble?

L. GUTIERREZ: Most of the people feel it's good. Most of them will agree with me the pace of life is completely different, but there's a saying that you either adjust or you don't make it. So we have to adjust. It's a fact, you know. And I guess most of us have adjusted pretty good.

ROBINSON: Do you feel close to Cuba at all?

L. GUTIERREZ: For many years, I did. It was the dream of the country left behind. It's your country. It will still always be my country, you know. I have the feeling for my country. It's hard to understand why after so many years, when there's nothing left over there, where there's nothing I care about. But it's still your country, you know. It's a feeling, right.

ROBINSON: Do you have relatives or friends still there?

L. GUTIERREZ: I have very few relatives there. Very few. By that I mean, oh, an uncle and an aunt and then a few cousins. So very few.

ROBINSON: And do you have any friends there? Probably not.

L. GUTIERREZ: Not too many left anymore. And the few I have left, there's really not too much in common anymore because it's been too many years away from each other?

ROBINSON: Do you feel that you are affected by what happens there? Anything happening in the government or anything like that? Does that affect you or is it more detached, just interesting?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let's put it this way. At this point, Cuba has become an international problem. So it definitely affects me, you know.

ROBINSON: But you feel it affects you more as an American...

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. Exactly. It affects me more as an American citizen. I feel like Cuba's a threat to the world now, you know.

ROBINSON: And you probably know more than some us would know about that too.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right, because I try to keep updated. Although there was many years, I try not to even hear the name. I didn't wanna hear Cuba. I didn't want to hear anything that would have to do with it. I wanted to forget.

ROBINSON: You just wanted to work on your life here.

L. GUTIERREZ: That's it. Yes. For many years, I was still living in two places, let's put it that way. Until I made up my mind that I either had to forget about there and start a new life.

ROBINSON: It would be very difficult to live in two places.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. I was still, you know, hanging on to the things I left behind, because that and that and that. And I realized that there was nothing there. It was just in my mind, you know.

ROBINSON: So now you think of yourself as, I guess, a Cuban America? Or as an American?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, not really. I think of myself as an American citizen born in Cuba. I really don't like that Mexican American or Cuban American, because I don't think there's such things.

ROBINSON: What about Ana and Leida?

L. GUTIERREZ: They're just real American. That's it. Because they don't have any language.

ROBINSON: So have your attitudes toward Cuba changed over time? Or do you think it's just a matter of deciding that you're living here now.

L. GUTIERREZ: That's it. It's another society. I'm living here and I have to forget about there because there's nothing there. What I have in my mind when I dream up doesn't exist anymore. There's not such thing, you know.

ROBINSON: So you don't really feel any differently about Cuba, you just feel that...

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, the way I feel, I feel hate about who was there right now. I don't feel hate about the country, you know.

ROBINSON: So you feel they're changing your...

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. They're changing what I had. So what I really feel is hate. You know, if I could get Castro in my hands, I would just kill him right now. And I couldn't kill anybody. I could do it to him.

ROBINSON: I think I understand, because it's your country.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. I don't like to see my country in the newspaper, and like the other night I was watching on TV, and the troops of Cuba and Russia had been in []. And I want to remember the country I left nice and peaceful. Not that I meant when I left it was already a mess. But the one I grew up in. I had hopes when I left that that would be over, and pretty soon as a matter of fact. I thought four or five months, I would be back. It was a matter of six months maybe, at most. And then six months became a year and two years and three years.

ROBINSON: Yeah, that would make a big difference if you were just hoping to come over here until the economy and government stabilized and hopefully went back to what you're...

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. Until Russia was out of the country and all this type of thing.

ROBINSON: Have you gone back to visit?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, I will never go back to visit. There's really no reason for me to go back to see anybody. I would like to see Cuba, but I dream of a Cuba that doesn't exist. So I'd rather just have the memory of what I left and not the mess there is, you know. Plus I would never feel secure going back with Castro in power. Because he thinks one thing today, and the next day he gets up in the morning and thinks a different thing. So what kind of security do you have?

ROBINSON: So you would be afraid of whether you could get back out.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. I wouldn't go back for nothing.

ROBINSON: If the situation changed and it did go back to – I mean there's no way it can go back.

L. GUTIERREZ: If Russia would be out of Cuba, let's put it that way. And you know, it was a government and all that. I probably would like to go back and see my country. I would never go back to start again. I'm too old for that. I don't want to struggle again, no. No! Believe me, I had it. I had it. No, starting from scratch, that's the most horrible thing there is, you know.

ROBINSON: Okay, now you've already said you didn't live in a neighborhood with Cubans when you came over here, right?

L. GUTIERREZ: In Florida? In Florida, I tell you, in the same block, there was another Cuban. So there was nobody else. It's not like today, where there's neighborhoods and neighborhoods where you don't even hear one word of English. All it is in Spanish because of the amount of refugees there are here right now.

ROBINSON: Do you think that's good for those people?

L. GUTIERREZ: I don't think so. But some of them don't know any better. Some don't care. Some are too old. And they don't want to, they can't start a new life. So they have to hang on to the old land as much as they can. It doesn't matter the old land is not [] it's just in Florida, you know. So you have to see different situations, you know. You get an impression at 60, 70 years old, you don't learn a language. He can't and, you know, this type of thing. So he has to hang on to his own as much as he can to support him.

ROBINSON: Was there any other time that you felt discriminated against on account of your background besides when you were applying to USC?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let me put it this way. At the very beginning, sometimes I felt discrimination. But I felt that it was a very small group. And you have to think of the person. If that person doesn't have any brains to know what's going on, what do you care what he thinks, or she thinks? So that's the attitude I took. I says, well, a hundred accept me, one doesn't. Who cares about that one? And that's the way I took it. So it was very easy for me in that way, you know. I never really felt discriminated, really. It was one in a hundred, so who cared about one?

ROBINSON: Have you participated in any organizations or groups here, like professional organizations?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, after I graduated from USC – before then, I didn't really participate in anything. So then I was, like you said, board member is a support group for the School of Pharmacy. So I started kind of, you know, participating and attending the board meetings and really participating, and then I became a member of the California Pharmaceutical []. And then I became a member of East Los Angeles. Now I'm corresponding secretary for East Los Angeles. So I really try to participate in something. I can't have too many things at the same time. Because I have too many things as it is.

ROBINSON: What kind of recreational activities do you like to do?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, for many years, there was no chance of any recreation. Let's put it that way.

ROBINSON: Taking care of the kids was your recreation.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right, right. Working, going to school, and then after I went to school, I never forget the day I graduated, all I had left in the bank was \$5. So it was time to get out of where I was. It was not a ghetto because Culver City, I can't call it ghetto, but it's not the environment I wanted for my family. So it was, you know, working 24 hours a day almost. Not 24 because you have to go to sleep, but it was, you know. It felt like it. Let's put it this way, I had rode down a hill, and I was determined to climb up that hill again.

ROBINSON: Because you had been living here, and when you came...

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. And I just couldn't feel happy being at the bottom of the hill. I wanted to maybe not climb up as high as I was when I came from back home, because that took many, many, many years. But at least I wanted to be where I am today. I'm very happy where I am today. But it took hours and hours and hours of work, believe me.

ROBINSON: Have you ever worked part time?

L. GUTIERREZ: I have worked full time and part time. Actually, after I got out of USC, I started working for [Safemart? Safeway?]. That was my city job, because I worked about 2-3 weeks apart until [] hired me. So once they hired me, around June, then in September I started working full time for [] and part time for another pharmacy. So I could save my money.

ROBINSON: How many hours did you have to put in?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay, the way I would combine it, I had... Wednesday and Sunday and Wednesday and Thursday. Every other week it was []. So the week I had off Wednesday, I worked in the morning until about 3:00. And 3:00 I took off so I could go and pick up the girls at school and bring them home. It was my day off. I wanted to be with them. So meanwhile they were in school. So some other times when I started to work like at 2:00 at [], I would work in this other pharmacy from 9 to 12. Get off at 12, grab something on the way to eat, and start working at 1. And then it was very close to the house, so I would have lunch at 4:35, or early dinner. And that's the way I did it. So when I had Wednesday and Thursday off in the middle of the week, I would work those two mornings until 3. So after a year and a half it was getting to me. It was too many hours of keeping the home and picking up the girls at school.

ROBINSON: What time did you get off work usually? I mean would the girls come home by themselves or did they get picked up?

L. GUTIERREZ: When I was home, I would pick them up. If not, they had another friend that had a ride home.

ROBINSON: And did they stay by themselves here?

L. GUTIERREZ: No, that was when we were living in Culver City. And so sometimes either they would stay with the babysitter, you know, until I could pick them up, or we worked it around that way, you know. Whichever schedule I had at the time. Sometimes it was, you know, 1-10, sometimes I was off at 5:00, so...

ROBINSON: That would be difficult. I know how hard it is to have your hours changed all the time.

L. GUTIERREZ: It was very hard. The only thing, you know, when I started working at [] I fell in Heaven, because at least I knew every week ahead of time what it was gonna be for that week. So I could plan the whole week. You know, this day you're gonna stay with the babysitter. This day I pick you up. This day, so-and-so is bringing you home. Then when they were maybe 10 or 11, they would stay home for a couple of hours by themselves, you know. They were growing up. It was like 3-4:30 or something like that.

ROBINSON: Now you said something about, did you work in the department store?

L. GUTIERREZ: I worked at Thrift when I came here at first. So they hired me first, just like for relief, you know. I worked one day one store, another day another store, maybe I didn't work two days, then they work me another week.

ROBINSON: You didn't like that too much, did you?

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, I hated it. And this went on for about 6 months. I was just like a fireman, you know. Any time the telephone rang, I had to have my things prepared. "Just go to such-and-such store and be there at 2:00" or whatever, you know. So wherever there was somebody sick, that's where they would send me. So after 6 months, I was getting pretty tired. So I talked to Estelle and I says, "Well, how am I gonna get a steady job?" So then I got a steady job about 2 or 3 weeks after that. Maybe I should have opened my mouth before, but I wasn't experienced enough, you know. And I took 6 months. Well, they dished it out and I took it, so that was it, you know. It was very convenient for them. Well, they don't care, you know. They needed a relief and I didn't open my mouth. They kept sending me from one store to the other one, you know. So then I got this steady job at the Thrifty at [Rodeo ?].

ROBINSON: Was that better then?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, it was a pretty crummy neighborhood, but for me it was great. It was maybe 20 minutes from my house, and I could plan my life, you know. It was not like calling the babysitter, and "Half an hour I'm gonna drop the kids over there" and you know, this type of thing.

ROBINSON: Was it hard for you after having been trained and working as a professional pharmacist to have to go in and work at the counter at Thrift?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I had made up my mind that I had to take whatever came. And I was gonna take it with the idea that I wasn't gonna stay there. That I had to get back my license, you know. Actually, one day the manager of that store, he called me. "Gutierrez, why are you trying so hard to get into USC? They have turned you down so many times" – I says, I don't care. I'm gonna keep trying. He just felt I was fighting a lost battle, you know. And he probably went great, you know. But I'm not gonna give in. That's it.

ROBINSON: I've worked at Liberty House and Macy's for the past 4 years, and some of the women there start working part time, and then they get divorced or their husband gets sick, and they start full time and [] and I don't see how they could stay there for that long, but you know. If they had to.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, you know, for example, when I worked at [] where I worked the store, they would send me sometimes in the city [whispering, unintelligible] I didn't know about it.

ROBINSON: No really, what kind of alcohols...

L. GUTIERREZ: Then [] the customers you get was half of them drunk and the other half not drunk.

ROBINSON: I remember the Thrifty. They have it out in front at our store.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. I hated it, but I made up my mind, what can I do? I have to create the children, so that's it. You know.

ROBINSON: When did you get your first paying job? So how old were you when you started working for your parents?

L. GUTIERREZ: []?

ROBINSON: And then you didn't work before you were married.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes, I worked for a couple years before. Because I didn't get married til I was 23.

ROBINSON: And then did you stop working when you got married?

L. GUTIERREZ: No. I worked until... I had a very easy job back home. I would just work half-day. Like [] and that was it. So when Leida was born, I didn't work at all for about 7, 8 months, something like that. Then I would leave her with the maid, you know, there was a steady maid. All she did was just take care of the child until I came home. So there was really no problem with that. Because she was left at home with the maid. It was a very steady feeling.

ROBINSON: Did you enjoy working? Did you like it?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes, I did. I enjoy my job. I really do.

ROBINSON: What do you find most satisfying about working?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess the relationship with the people. I enjoy it. I really do.

ROBINSON: I can see how you would like it.

L. GUTIERREZ: I really do like to work with people.

ROBINSON: What's the least satisfying?

L. GUTIERREZ: Maybe seeing things that I can't do anything about, and then I don't like it. For instance

[End of Tape]

[Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape.]

ROBINSON: Okay, the welfare program?

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. I just feel I have no say. There's nothing I can do about it. I see these young people on it. I have nothing against the welfare program for the really needy. For the old people, for the disabled, and so on, you know. But I just can't see any 20-year-old having one child one father, another child another father, getting a welfare check, when I'm working hard and paying taxes. Whether I feel bad, better, worse, great, I have to get up. I have to go to work. And we would go into a medical field, there's a lot of things I see that I don't like. I have no control over it. So I just have to play the game. I don't like playing the game. So I guess that's the part I don't enjoy.

ROBINSON: Yeah. That would be hard. Do you think you'd have worked if you had stayed?

L. GUTIERREZ: I would have worked part-time like I was. Like working 8-1, something like that.

ROBINSON: When you worked after you were married, you had help at home with the chores for a while, and then you didn't for a while...

L. GUTIERREZ: No, when I was back home, I had help all the time.

ROBINSON: And then when you came here, you didn't have help.

L. GUTIERREZ: That was it. [laughing] The maid that Ana's going never comes around.

ROBINSON: Funny thing, our maid never comes either. Hard to get good help these days. When you first held a job, did it seem only certain types of job were available to you as a woman? Or were pretty much any jobs open to you?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let me put it this way. I never thought of going and cutting trees or, you know. I wouldn't even dream of driving a bus or anything like that. Like, well, I'm gonna have to go into a factory and do some type of job where, you know, I could do it. Or working in a department store. Thrifty came up, you know, like any other place. I've thought of jobs that I could do.

ROBINSON: But like, for instance, when you thought of becoming a physician or something like that, you thought you'd be able to do that, right? You just didn't want to.

L. GUTIERREZ: I just didn't want to.

ROBINSON: It was acceptable for women then to be physicians?

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly, but I just didn't want it because it was going so many more years of school, and I just didn't want to sacrifice.

ROBINSON: Did you get married in Cuba?

L. GUTIERREZ: Right.

ROBINSON: And how did you meet your husband?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, it happens to be that his parents and my parents were friends. But we didn't see each other for many years, and actually, I don't remember him as a child, you know. Because they lived very far away from where we lived. So I would remember seeing him maybe one time now and maybe in another 4 years my parents would visit his parents or vice-versa. So that's the only way I remember him.

ROBINSON: And you were 23? Did you date him very long?

L. GUTIERREZ: I dated him for about a year and a half. Actually, we dated for a little while, and then we became engaged.

ROBINSON: And when you're engaged, are you allowed to go out without a chaperone?

L. GUTIERREZ: No.

ROBINSON: Nope. That's it, huh?

L. GUTIERREZ: Actually, I'll never forget you know, like four dates before the wedding, with the wedding all ready, you know, such day, the 14th of July and all that, something came up about we had see some part of the furniture. They had not finished, and this and that. So I wanted to go with him just by myself, and it was no. That was it. That was a no.

ROBINSON: Oh jeez. That would be really hard.

L. GUTIERREZ: Yeah. You get used to it, you know. I guess you have to handle everything. Survival again.

ROBINSON: That's funny. Would they let you go by yourself, or was that acceptable? I mean, could you have just gone over and looked at the thing by yourself?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I could have gone by myself.

ROBINSON: But it was just that they didn't want you going with him.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. It was not correct for me to go out with him, even if it was 4 days before a wedding.

ROBINSON: Okay. Was your decision to marry influenced by your family at all?

L. GUTIERREZ: Not really. Not really.

ROBINSON: What kind of job did he have?

L. GUTIERREZ: Okay, at the time when we married, he was in his first year of CPA. So he had about 3 or 4 more years. We were still married, and he was going to school. So finally, in 1960... Let's see. Castro came in '60-what? 1959, we finished school. So we didn't get to enjoy much of his CPA back home, because about a couple years after that, we left.

ROBINSON: Did he change jobs when he came over here?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, when he came over here, again, you know, either you went back to school or you could forget about your degree. So he started working for a bank. Security bank. And I don't know why he never wanted to go back and get his degree. I guess it was a lack of vision you could call it? But he never got that degree, which was []. Right.

ROBINSON: So he probably worked using his skills there, but he never had his degree.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. The bank was great for the bank because they were employing a CPA doing another job, so, you know, it was perfect for them, but it wasn't perfect for him.

ROBINSON: They didn't have to pay him as much money.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly.

ROBINSON: How did his job compare with the things the other men from Cuba did when they came over?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, when my father came over, you know, he had a job in Florida. It was making sandwiches in a restaurant. Not a restaurant. It was just like a little coffee shop. I don't think he ever even sliced a ham back home. So, you know, it was kind of a thing, right. So that was his first job here. Because when he got here, at the very beginning you know, he went out every day with a tie and a jacket. And he couldn't find a job in Florida. In Miami. There was no jobs available where they could employ him. No language. The degree was not of any value over here, so we had to do something because with \$100 the refugee center was giving us and the food, that was really just going by, you know. So he started working in a coffee shop, and that's what he would do. Sandwiches.

ROBINSON: After you got married, kind of like the one with your parents, did you make more decisions or did you make them together, or?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess in most houses, the woman usually has more to do with the children. So I guess with Leida and Ana, I was more or less, you know. Although when we got divorced, they were just about 7 and 8 years old, so they were still very little. So from there on, it was my total responsibility, you know.

ROBINSON: And how did you divide responsibilities in the house? Did you take care of the cooking and cleaning and all that kind of thing?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let's put it this way. In the background we had back home, men had nothing to do with the house. You know, it was either the woman ran the house and took care of the cleaning and most of the places there was a maid. In my case, there was the maid that took care of the house. I would make sure that she did that, she did the other thing, or what had to be done. So he had no responsibility when it came to that part. So we didn't really have to divide anything.

ROBINSON: How did you resolve your differences? For instance – well, I don't know what that question means, really.

L. GUTIERREZ: What does it say?

ROBINSON: How did you resolve your differences?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, so far we really haven't been talking about any differences. He was just the provider, exactly.

ROBINSON: Are your child-rearing practices different from your mother's?

L. GUTIERREZ: Are my who?

ROBINSON: Did you raise your children differently than you were raised?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes.

ROBINSON: Probably a lot because of just the outside environment.

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. Well, the years go by.

ROBINSON: And the chaperone thing with Ana.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, if you ask my children, they would probably feel I have been strict with them. I don't feel I have been probably compared to what I have, you know.

ROBINSON: Did you compromise a lot?

L. GUTIERREZ: Times have gone by. Things have changed. We're living in a different era. We're living in a different environment. So I have to make my adjustments. It's a fact, you know. I had to make my adjustments. Well, and they have to adjust to me a little bit.

ROBINSON: Were your children very demanding on you, do you think?

L. GUTIERREZ: In what way?

ROBINSON: Time, or I'm sure they could be a drain.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I'll answer that question. I have been a refugee, I have worked hard, I have, you know, done lots of things. But I feel the most demanding job I have had in my whole life has been raising a family. It's very hard.

ROBINSON: Did your husband seem to realize how demanding the children could be?

L. GUTIERREZ: I don't think so. They were little when we got divorced, so from there on, they have been my full responsibility, you know. So I don't think he really realizes how demanding it was on me.

ROBINSON: Did you sometimes help your children with problems they had at school?

L. GUTIERREZ: I tried to. They were pretty good children at school. I never had any problems with Leida and Ana, like having to stay after school because they did this and that. I don't know why. They have been pretty good. They really haven't been bad kids, you know.

ROBINSON: Did your relations with members of your own family change after you got married?

L. GUTIERREZ: [] Yeah, cousin was a cousin.

ROBINSON: What was your greatest satisfaction as a mother?

L. GUTIERREZ: I really can't pinpoint any time, but I think as the years go by, you feel some satisfaction, you know, of seeing your children grow. You see them getting some place, graduating, starting a new life. So it's a constant reward, let's put it that way. It's a constant reward.

ROBINSON: What were your greatest concerns as a mother?

L. GUTIERREZ: I guess there's one for every day. I guess the greatest concern in my case is first being able to support them. See them grow.

ROBINSON: Financially.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. Be able to, you know, face the demands of money-wise that the school has imposed on me. So it's been one day after the other, constantly for many years. Now I feel like I am trying to breathe again. That's the feeling I have.

ROBINSON: What were you especially proud of in running your home?

L. GUTIERREZ: Let me put it this way, I think raising my two girls has been the thing I'm more proud of. Of being able to raise them, see that they have gone to school. They're graduating. You know, seeing that they want to do something for themselves, let's put it that way.

ROBINSON: At what ages did they begin to be really independent?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess everybody tries to, not successful, but as soon as you get in your teenage, you want to. Although everyday life, you just can't. So I really pinpoint where I can say Leida has become independent. I really don't know.

ROBINSON: How does this compare with when you were that age? Are they more independent?

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, sure.

ROBINSON: And that probably has a lot to do with the rules in the family?

L. GUTIERREZ: Exactly. When I was back home, if I was gonna do something, I had to ask permission. I have a different relationship with my girls. They don't ask me permission. They tell me, "I'm gonna do it."

ROBINSON: What were your main concerns as they began to go more out on their own? Can you remember?

L. GUTIERREZ: To tell you the truth, I guess when you have children, you worry constantly. I wish I had the experience I have today. I would have worried a little bit less. Because it seems like things work out one way or the other. Sometimes you like the end result and some others you don't, but it works out anyway. So I really can't pinpoint, you know, one thing or the other. I really can't.

ROBINSON: I think I know the answer to this question, but do you feel you gave up your own interests while you were raising your children?

L. GUTIERREZ: In a way you had to. That's why I tell you I feel now that I have years ahead of me which is gonna be a different type of life. Because these years I felt the responsibility. And I just didn't wanna pass it on. I wanted to fulfill what I thought it was my duty to do.

ROBINSON: Do you see your brother very much?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, when we can, because he's in Tennessee. He lived many years here in California, then he moved around 3 or 4 times, but now he's in Tennessee. So if I go out to some place, I try to make it a point to stop and see him, even if it's just a couple of days.

ROBINSON: Do you talk to him about the way you raised your families?

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh, he lived with us until we got married. So for him, you know, the girls are like part of his life. It's not like another niece, you know. They were babies and they would just climb on top of him and jump on top of him, and he would just, you know, play with them, you know. So I lost track of what...

ROBINSON: I just asked if you talked to him about his family and stuff?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let's put it this way. Over the phone, if it's not every week, we almost talk every other week.

ROBINSON: Oh, that's pretty close then.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. Usually he's the one that does the calling. He's the one that can afford the money. [laughs] He doesn't have to send anybody to school right now!

ROBINSON: That's true. Did your children's activities sometimes involve you in different activities? And did you meet people?

L. GUTIERREZ: For example, I remember when they were in grammar school, I would always try to be quite active with the school and take care, like the periods in between classes, they would go out and play in the playground. So I would have X amount of days where I would help. Usually when I worked late at night, so then I would offer my services in the morning. I tried to be very involved in the school. That's one thing I kind of missed when they started high school, that it was over right there, you know. It was it.

ROBINSON: Well Ana told me you'd see her football games sometimes.

L. GUTIERREZ: Oh yes, that I did, but it's a different thing. It's a different thing.

ROBINSON: You just kind of watch, rather than helping out.

L. GUTIERREZ: Right. Exactly. I didn't help out. I watched. In high school... No, it was more grammar school. Like they were cheerleaders, I would take them to the different schools where they had to go for the game. So in high school, once they started driving, that was it you know.

ROBINSON: Taking all things together, would you say you're happy, pretty happy, or not too happy with the way your married life turned out?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, very unhappy, let's put it that way.

ROBINSON: It says, "Think of your life after you were first married. And what did you expect to get out of life then?" And then it says, "Did your expectations change?" But I don't know.

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess like everybody gets married and expects to have the marriage last forever. And, you know, to be together, to raise a family.

ROBINSON: Did you want to have lots and lots of kids?

L. GUTIERREZ: My dream was 4 kids. But when you start getting practical, you have to just cut down an hour to half.

ROBINSON: Were the goals that you had for your family different from the ones of your parents?

L. GUTIERREZ: I guess not very much different, because my goal was I guess the same as my mother's was. I wanted my girls to have an education. Because with the experience I had, that's the only thing I had left when I came to this country. It took me X amount of years to get it back, but it was there. And all the material things were gone in a 45, hour trip from Cuba to Miami. Because there was no material things left, because all they'd let us bring was clothes, and that was it.

ROBINSON: They wouldn't let you take anything else?

L. GUTIERREZ: And so many counts of clothes and that was it.

ROBINSON: Do you think your experience was different from other people from your country your age? Say for instance before you thought you were gonna leave. Before you had to leave. Would your goals have been different then from some other people?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, let's put it this way. For example, who were my friends? They were just most of the girls I had gone to pharmacy school – I mean 3, 4, 5, because not all the people you go to school with become friends, you know. But we had a group like about 4 or 5. We had gone to pharmacy school together. We more or less got married within a couple of years of each other, so our children were more or less. And it seems like their goals have been about the same as my goals were at the time, you know.

ROBINSON: And generally, did your husband think an education was important also?

L. GUTIERREZ: At the time, he did think an education was important. What happened after, I don't know.

ROBINSON: Possibly coming over maybe changed. This is working out so well. I hear an Ana.

ROBINSON: Where were we? We were just gonna ask you, have you become a U.S. citizen, Ana?

ANA GUTIERREZ: Have I become a U.S. citizen?

ROBINSON: How can they let you? [laughing]

L. GUTIERREZ: They don't know about it.

A. GUTIERREZ: [] let my mom.

ROBINSON: I guess she was too young. Good night Ana. Anyway, I was gonna ask you, have you become a U.S. citizen?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes.

ROBINSON: When?

L. GUTIERREZ: Probably about a year after I was out of school. I can't remember exactly what day. I think it was 1970.

ROBINSON: So you'd been here about 10 years?

L. GUTIERREZ: Without being a citizen? I got out of school in '68. I still wasn't a citizen. So a good guess, it's either late '69, early '70.

ROBINSON: Okay. And how do you feel about the United States?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I feel it's the greatest country in the world to live in. And the people don't know it.

ROBINSON: Considering your own life, what's the best age to be?

L. GUTIERREZ: Let me put it this way. If I look back to my years before my 40s, all I can remember is, you know, after 28 until about 40 is struggling. So I don't care for all those years. So I think my 40s have been my happiest years.

ROBINSON: Can you think of some times that great changes happened that changed your life or gave it new directions?

L. GUTIERREZ: Can I think of any time? Well, in 1962, I came to the states. It was a complete change in direction.

ROBINSON: Did the Great Depression affect you or your family?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, it did affect my parents. That's when my father came over here. And they stayed for about 7 years and then they went back home.

ROBINSON: And World War II? Did that affect you?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, I guess being that I was just about 8 years old, I didn't pay too much attention to it. The only thing I can remember, the day it ended. There was rejoice back home, you know, although we were not fighting or anything. But everybody was happy that it was over.

ROBINSON: Did any purchase made by your family change your life in any way?

L. GUTIERREZ: Maybe when we purchased this house, it made kind of a turning point.

ROBINSON: When did you get your house?

L. GUTIERREZ: We'd been here for 9 years. It was kind of a turning point. It was, you know, kind of a point where we started climbing up the hill again.

ROBINSON: Have you ever heard of the Women's Liberation Movement?

L. GUTIERREZ: Yes.

ROBINSON: I would hope so. And what do you think of it?

L. GUTIERREZ: Well, it has its good things and its bad things. Maybe myself, belonging to another generation that's not like yours right now, I think we should have freedom up to a certain point. But if we get too much freedom, we're gonna lose a lot of things we have right now. Because if we want to be equal to men, we're gonna have to be equal when it comes to the marriage. We're not gonna be able to stay home and take care of our family, because if we're equal, we're just gonna have to go out and work. So I like to see liberation up to a certain

point. And we can't go too far, because if we go too far, we're gonna be missing out on many things.

ROBINSON: So you think that as a woman, we'd be ahead to keep some of the things, like what for instance? Like being able to stay home.

L. GUTIERREZ: Like being able to stay home. There's certain privileges we still have. I feel our liberation should be like, when it comes to a job, there's no reason why they can have a man and a woman working the same job and having a different pay. And if you want a job, and you're qualified for it, and there's a man and he's not as qualified as you are, you should get the job. But I still don't believe that you should get the job because you're a woman and they have to have a certain amount of workers in a job. So I'm not 100% for women's liberation. I still feel that I would like to have men sheltering me a little bit.

ROBINSON: Well, that's pretty much.

L. GUTIERREZ: There was a little left.

[End of Tape]