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## Parks, Maria Interview

Mary Wedegaertner

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# Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

## **PARKS, Maria (Argentinean)**

October 20, 1980

Interviewed by Mary Wedegaertner

Transcribed by Robert Siess

**[TAPE 1, Side A]  
[Begin Tape.]**

MARY WEDEGAERTNER: Let's see. I have your first name, Maria Parks. When were you born?  
What year?

MARIA PARKS: '27.

WEDEGAERTNER: '27. And what year did you come to the United States?

PARKS: '56.

WEDEGAERTNER: '56. And where were you born?

PARKS: Buenos Aires, Argentina.

WEDEGAERTNER: What did you father do? What was his occupation?

PARKS: Pharmacist.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did your mother work outside the home?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did she ever work outside the home as you were growing up?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: How many children were there in your family?

PARKS: Five.

WEDEGAERTNER: Were you older or younger or in the middle?

PARKS: Well, I am one of the youngest, but now we were five. We were seven, and two died.

WEDEGAERTNER: How far in school did you go?

PARKS: High school.

WEDEGAERTNER: High school? Your father was a pharmacist. Did he go to college then?

PARKS: Mmhmm.

WEDEGAERTNER: All four years and then a pharmacy school besides?

PARKS: Well, I guess so, because this is a long time. My father is already dead now. And he died when he was 80 years old, and it's about 20 years ago. No, 25 years ago this year.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you know how much school your mother had?

PARKS: My mother make it to high school too.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you live right in the main part of Buenos Aires, or did you live in the outskirts?

PARKS: The outskirts of Buenos Aires, where we live in most of the time.

WEDEGAERTNER: In your family, what did you or your brothers and sisters and parents do for fun and recreation? That you can remember.

PARKS: If I can remember. Well, we all were gathered together in family. I don't have friends. And that's all I can...

WEDEGAERTNER: But you'd have friends in – to your home, for dinners or anything like that?

PARKS: Oh yeah. Yes. Many times. We all make a banquet over there. They used to do this sort of thing. Friends and family. And they still do it now.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about customs and special traditions? Were there some special things in your family that you did? Maybe special ways of celebrating holidays?

PARKS: Oh, like in here holiday? No, we don't have like here Thanksgiving. Only Christmas. New Year. And the celebration they do when it's for Independence Days. And that's all. They don't have anything special like here.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about birthdays? Was there anything special in your family that you did for celebrating birthdays?

PARKS: Well, just like here.

WEDEGAERTNER: Birthday cake?

PARKS: Birthday cake and presents. The only difference I find here, for Christmas all give presents in between. We don't have that in Christmas. We Christmas celebrate for instance going to church. And then we have a big dinner at midnight. And then, in 5<sup>th</sup> January or 6<sup>th</sup> January will be the date for the whole childrens. And all of the children puts his shoes in the window to get the present, the toys and whatever. So next day in the morning, all the children get up and find all the present. And that's very exciting, very beautiful, no?

WEDEGAERTNER: You don't have Christmas trees then, do you? Decorated like we do here?

PARKS: Oh yes, we have. We have. Sometime the Christmas tree we decorate in the house. We have a house outside, and down there it's summertime. It's no wintertime like here. December is a very hot month. It's summer. So in many house, they have Christmas tree already [ ], and they decorate it, and it's outside. So all the celebration we made, it's all outside. It's all very hot. And they day, like I say, by midnight it's a big, big table where we put it, no? And they all gather together, friends and families, and they just celebrate.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, the birthdays. Did you ever have the custom of going and serenading the person who had a birthday? Going to their home and singing to them in the middle of the night or something on their birthday?

PARKS: No. Most of this is Mexican people or Spanish-speakers...

WEDEGAERTNER: Right. I knew that was one of their traditions, and I didn't know if that was the same, or a similar tradition for you. After you got out of high school – well, first, did you work any before you got out of high school?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you have certain chores you did around the home?

PARKS: Well, yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: What were your special chores?

PARKS: To go to the grocery and buy thing for my mother and do something, just little things like this.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you ever do much of the cooking?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Or the cleaning?

PARKS: No. Because my older sister doing that. And I was one of the youngest, so I don't have to do this in my house.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you have any household help, hired help?

PARKS: Yeah. My mother, she used to have.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did she have a maid or something? Or a cook?

PARKS: Yeah. Mmhmm.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you ever have any relatives living in your home besides your family? Any grandparents or uncles and aunts or anyone?

PARKS: No. Just one cousin. He used to come and stay for a while and go home, and he'd come back depending in summertime. We all would have family come and stay for a few days.

WEDEGAERTNER: What did you do when you were through high school? Did you get a job then?

PARKS: No. I went to a nurse's school. And I get my diploma for the nursing.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, you did? Was that like three years?

PARKS: I made four years. Three years regular nursing, and then I make one year more for especial. Which I was assistant for the anesthetics doctor.

WEDEGAERTNER: Anesthetist?

PARKS: Mmhmm. That's what I worked until I came here in 1956.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you come here by yourself, or were you married at that time?

PARKS: Yeah. I married.

WEDEGAERTNER: How did you meet your husband?

PARKS: I met him in Argentina through friends.

WEDEGAERTNER: Through friends. Did you have a very long engagement, or how does that work down there?

PARKS: Well, I know him for about three years, maybe four. About three years I would say. Then I never thinking to marry him at all. So one day he said to me... Oh, excuse me.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay, you were telling me that you and your husband, you'd known him about three years, and then one night he said something to you, and we got interrupted at that part.

PARKS: And then so one day he told me, "I wants to marry." I never think about. I say, "Well, I will think, and I will let you know tomorrow." So next day I say, well he say, "Then when we marry, would you go to United State?" I say, "Yes." Because I like very much travel. Anything that enjoyed me most is to travel.

WEDEGAERTNER: Had you ever been to the United States before?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Had you ever traveled outside Argentina?

PARKS: Travel Uruguay, Chile, and Paraguay. That's just country around Argentina.

WEDEGAERTNER: During those three years, you had gone out with him though, and dated?

PARKS: Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: Uh huh. And then about how long was it after you decided to get married, before you did get married?

PARKS: Well, when he tell me, next day I say okay.

WEDEGAERTNER: And then when did you get married from that? Few weeks or months?

PARKS: Maybe two or three months later.

WEDEGAERTNER: What type of work was he involved with in Buenos Aires?

PARKS: He was an American. And I met him because he would travel. And so that's why I met him.

WEDEGAERTNER: Was he a salesman with a company or something?

PARKS: Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay. How did your parents feel about your leaving?

PARKS: Well, my mother is the only one was that time. My father already was... And they never say to me anything. So I was no very little young girl, so I decide for myself.

WEDEGAERTNER: Right. So they didn't really try to influence you?

PARKS: Mmhmm. No, no.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay. Before we talk about you and your husband over here, what languages did you speak at home?

PARKS: Just Spanish.

WEDEGAERTNER: Just Spanish. Did either of your parents know any English?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay. And were you of the Catholic religion?

PARKS: Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: And with your mother and your father, who made most of the decisions in the family would you say?

PARKS: My father.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about handling the money, the finances?

PARKS: My mother.

WEDEGAERTNER: Really? Okay, so it wasn't just a father-oriented or authoritative type of relationship.

PARKS: Well, my father all were concentrating his working. And the rest of the take care of the house was my mother. So everything has to be buy and everything, she is the one that... Well, because my father's on once a while, he go and travel, buy everything for us. And then like presents.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about like major purchases? Did they talk about it and decide together?

PARKS: Oh yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: And like the discipline and how to raise the children, did you feel that they kind of came to decisions together, or was it pretty much what your father said would go?

PARKS: Well, no, because my mother... When we want to go some place, we'd ask my mother.

WEDEGAERTNER: Right. Because she's the one that's there.

PARKS: Oh yes. Now, if she think it's more... We going someplace for a day maybe, so we had to go to father to ask. Most was my older sister, then we younger sisters. Because when we was younger, my father was more older. So he concentrate more on what he doing, so we always go to mother and ask her for going someplace. He never have an objection for me, my sister, or other younger sister. So now, the older sisters, yes. It was my father. That would have to do with more than my mother.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you always live in the same house when you were growing up, or did you move any?

PARKS: Oh yes. We move twice or three time I think it was.

WEDEGAERTNER: In the same general area though?

PARKS: Uh huh.

WEDEGAERTNER: What were some of the things that you missed most about leaving Argentina?

PARKS: When I left to the United State? Well, it's a lot of difference. Before I notice a lot of difference, and then I make two, three trips more, then I don't notice the difference anymore. So of course, the custom was a little difference. They weigh more[?]. What time we eat. Here, we eat about five, six o'clock. And there, five, six o'clock is tea time. And then after the tea time, you have to wait at least to nine o'clock to dinner. So that's the difference.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you immediately adjust to the eating schedule of the people here? Or did you try to carry on the way you were used to?

PARKS: No, no. I follow that way.

WEDEGAERTNER: How did you come to the United States? By boat, or by plane?

PARKS: Plane. Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you come directly to Stockton?

PARKS: No. I land Miami. From there I live almost 11, 12 years in New Orleans. That's very nice, exciting city.

WEDEGAERTNER: What were some of your first impressions of the United States? Were they good or bad? Just immediately upon arriving.

PARKS: You want to know the first, what happened to me? When I land in Miami, I took another plane to come into New Orleans. So one of the stewardesses asking me if I want to drink something, I say, "Yes, Coca-Cola." So she brought me a Coca-Cola, and I wait and wait she bring me the glass. So she never came with the glass. So I ask her, "Can you give me a glass?" So she look at me, but she don't say anything and she give me the glass. For one, that's one of the customs. We never have to drink it from the bottle.

WEDEGAERTNER: Right. She had just brought the bottle to you. Uh huh.

PARKS: Mmhmm. And that's one if you want them. Well, little things like this is sometime I notice. Which we don't have. That for us is very bad manner to drink it from the bottle. So we never do that. And never you find any lady or any men who drink them from the bottle. In any place. And it's still to now. You never find nobody drink it from the bottle.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did your husband fly with you, or did you come by yourself?

PARKS: No. Myself.

WEDEGAERTNER: He had already come back?

PARKS: He was already here.

WEDEGAERTNER: How long after you got married did you leave Argentina?

PARKS: Well, I got married in April, and I came here in October.

WEDEGAERTNER: And when did he come back? April or May or something?

PARKS: Oh, he was here in April.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay. Did you learn any English before you came here?

PARKS: I learned.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you know any English before you met him?

PARKS: Oh, yes. [ ] school, study English in Argentina.

WEDEGAERTNER: Is that one of the required subjects to study English, or did you just choose to?

PARKS: No. Part of the education is language, and not matter what language you learn, it has to be a language. So it's part of your education. Like French or Italian or English or German.

WEDEGAERTNER: But you got to choose which one?

PARKS: Well, yes. You choose what you want.

WEDEGAERTNER: And you learned this in high school? Or even younger?

PARKS: No, no. When I get older. After I get out from high school. Well, they give us a little... Like here, you go in high school, you have to learn some language. But it's not so deep. You just have to know a little bit.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay, so when you arrived, you didn't have to make that adjustment quite as much as other people did, because you already knew the language?

PARKS: Oh yes. I know how to say elementary words.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you have any trouble with the shock or anything like that?

PARKS: Oh yes. Sometimes yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: When you moved to New Orleans, are there any other things you can think of that surprised you about the American way of life, or how things were done, at least there in that city?

PARKS: Oh yes. Many things. [laughing]

WEDEGAERTNER: Could you think of a couple more maybe?

PARKS: Well, I was thinking about that. If you told me, I would think many times. Of course, you know, I live in that city. And I started in that city. And especially the way in what [ ] you are living. They call it a French word. Which I don't know this too much. Because New Orleans is very much... Like it used to belong to Spanish...

WEDEGAERTNER: It's very cosmopolitan.

PARKS: Yes. And then to French. And it's a lot of descendents from the French over there. A lot of descendents from Italian people. And all this is part of the country. So in that way I don't notice so much. It's not so closed like in the [American?] United States. United States [of America?] don't. And especially, I know that most in this town, they're not that many [ ]. Well, what else?

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay. Did your husband's parents live in New Orleans?

PARKS: No. They used to live in [Woolworth?], Oklahoma. His mother, that's where I went down there to go to his mother.

WEDEGAERTNER: After New Orleans?

PARKS: Yes. After I came to New Orleans. I don't know if it was the first year. I think it was the second year. We traveled and came to Oklahoma to meet his mother. She was still living there.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you work when you were in New Orleans?

PARKS: Oh yes. Because my husband bought a little business for me to take care of it. So we have a little bookshop and guest home. So I take care of that.

WEDEGAERTNER: Have you ever gone back to your nursing?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: You did do that a while though, before you were married. You were an anesthesiologist?

PARKS: Oh, in Argentina? Yes. But no in the United States.

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay. How many years did you live in New Orleans?

PARKS: About eleven years.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, that's right. You did say that. And did you have your business that whole time?

PARKS: Yeah. I have whole time. Then, in 1962, his mother moved here. So then before us his mother move here, so we came here and bought a house in 1962. That's when I make the trip to California. I like very much California for the weather. The climate's beautiful here. Because the climate in New Orleans was very, very...

WEDEGAERTNER: Sticky, wasn't it?

PARKS: Sticky, yeah. You've been in there?

WEDEGAERTNER: No, I haven't been there. I'd like to visit there.

PARKS: Before I go further, what most excited me was the first Mardi Gras I was on there. That's what's beautiful. Something that I never saw before. And I see all this, and the casting, oh so beautiful was, no? So after that, every year I was in Mardi Gras. And in fact, that I was in 1977, I come back, and I get to stay again in Mardi Gras. And all what I see, all what it is excited for me, that.

WEDEGAERTNER: You say you were there, were you in the Mardi Gras parade or just watching it?

PARKS: No, just watching it. And all were passing by the corner my house, so I just have to walk a little bit to go see that.

WEDEGAERTNER: Now, did you have an apartment or a house?

PARKS: House.

WEDEGAERTNER: In New Orleans?

PARKS: Yeah. Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you have many friends that were Latin American?

PARKS: Well, I have many in my new American too. Because New Orleans was a country have a lot of hospitality. From every part of the people. American people was very friendly. Very friendly. So I have all them. So all kind of friend.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you have children other than your daughter?

PARKS: Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: How many others?

PARKS: That's the only one.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, okay. I thought you said you had more. I'm sorry.

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: How old is she?

PARKS: Sixteen.

WEDEGAERTNER: So she's in high school, second year or third?

PARKS: Third year. That's why we came here. Because when we were down there, she developed some kind of asthma allergy. So I ask the daughter if the climate have something to do with her to get well, because sometime I have to put her in the hospital. And he said, "Well, it's possible." So that's when I came here. But the [ ] no like at all.

WEDEGAERTNER: You didn't like it at all here? What were some of the things you disliked?

PARKS: Don't like it? I don't have friend, I don't have nobody, and people they're very hard to talk to them here.

WEDEGAERTNER: So it was much harder here than in New Orleans.

PARKS: I can walk any part of the street in New Orleans. I used walk in, I'd stop in all the time, talk with any different kind of people. I don't know if they change so much now, but New Orleans is a very large city. When I came back from Argentina, I stop in Miami. I land in Miami. From there I take another plane to New Orleans. And I stay a few days over. Because I have friend. So I stay with them. And then I came here.

WEDEGAERTNER: You said you bought a home when you moved here.

PARKS: 1962. So then I don't came here until 1967.

WEDEGAERTNER: You didn't come here until 1967?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: What'd you do in '62?

PARKS: We came and buy the house.

WEDEGAERTNER: And then did you rent it out in the meantime?

PARKS: Yeah. And then I still live in New Orleans. The only reason I move, because I think my daughter would get this asthma.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did she get better out here?

PARKS: Yes. Well, the doctor told me probably when she grown up would be okay. And then when she was five year old, the pediatrician told me it's better to take the [Tums?] a lot. And after that, she get well, and she never have anymore.

WEDEGAERTNER: So she was about five when you moved here?

PARKS: About four.

WEDEGAERTNER: And what did your husband do here?

PARKS: My husband, he retire at that time. Because he get sick and can't work anymore.

WEDEGAERTNER: Was he about the same age as you though, or older?

PARKS: No. He was much older than I. And then he passed away last year.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you work then, when you first moved out here?

PARKS: Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: What did you do?

PARKS: Well, I try to go to school to see if I can get my paper for work here. And I been in Delta College for about two years.

WEDEGAERTNER: And you're in the nursing program here?

PARKS: Yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: Will you finish up...

PARKS: No, I was do first as a [ ] they told me to doing. And then when I was ready to go to the nursing school, so the counselor told me. That's what he told me. The doctor would not understand me. So that I'd look for another.

WEDEGAERTNER: Is that right?

PARKS: And I still know the [medicine?]. I don't like him, and I don't like that. Because that's not the way you do it.

WEDEGAERTNER: I think your English is fine. I don't know what the problem would be.

PARKS: Well, sometime I have very broken English, no? But if he go in my country, he would have a broken Spanish too.

WEDEGAERTNER: And there are many doctors you can't understand that well here either.

PARKS: So I don't want to arguing him to do anything. I was very disappointed. So I talked to another counselor and tried to get in to be a dietician. So I study one for a while. Then when they told me I have to go another school. Because he [ ]. They told me something in the south part of California. I think in Long Beach or something. I don't know where it was. Don't remember. But I have really too small. And I say, "If I go another place, then I don't know nobody. Who would take care of the child when I went in the school?" And so then I quit.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you get a job then?

PARKS: Oh yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: Had you been working at all while you were going to school?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: What type of job did you get first? Or what type did you get?

PARKS: The same thing I do now. I work in here for many years.

WEDEGAERTNER: Managing the apartment?

PARKS: Uh huh. I managed a hotel first. It's the same owner, no?

WEDEGAERTNER: Where's the hotel?

PARKS: Downtown. And then I came here.

WEDEGAERTNER: How old of a building is this?

PARKS: I don't know, but I think it's more than 50 years.

WEDEGAERTNER: Because I said it was a really pretty building. I like the high ceilings. Okay. In your own family, with you and your husband, who would you say made most of the decisions? Or how were decisions arrived at?

PARKS: I do. I do.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you handle the money too mostly?

PARKS: Oh yes. Most.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you have any different ideas on how to raise your daughter, or were you pretty much in agreement on that?

PARKS: With my husband you mean?

WEDEGAERTNER: Uh huh. You or your husband.

PARKS: Well, he don't say very much. I don't know what idea, but I was the one always take care. And I try to raise her, which I think is wrong. I don't know. Because I want to raise what they raise in Argentina, my country. And I have some difficult for that, because not really when she was a little one. It's more now that she was growing up. And especially when she started high school, no? Because she see from the other girl what they have or what they talk, and she

wants to do the same, and I say, what does she come in and tell me? Because she is a girl, she will tell me everything. Sometime we sit down together and she start talking, I start listening. And then when she say, "You know Momma, such-and-such girl, they call their mother to come and get from the school. You should see how they talk to their mother!" she said. "Well," I said, "no for that you pay any mind what they say another one. That's the way they've probably been raised. You don't have to do that." So things like this, because I teach her a different way, no? That she's supposed not to talk to me...

WEDEGAERTNER: To respect more.

PARKS: To respect everybody. Inclusive to her friends. Because then you will get respect. That was the wrong thing. Because many of those children, they don't know anything. So that's when I stop, and she think I'm more old-fashioned because I teach her all this.

WEDEGAERTNER: Does she rebel against this very much, or does she go along?

PARKS: Not really until she started high school. The second year in high school was when she started to rebel. So many time I have to stay, explain, we talk over and over and over. So she can understand me, what I mean, and what I try to tell. So when I went to Argentina now, and I took her with me because I want you to see other environment...

WEDEGAERTNER: This was her first trip down there?

PARKS: Oh, no. Every time I go, I take her. But this is the first time she's growing now, and she understand more. When she was nine years old, we went down there, but she know less than nothing, she was too young. So now she go over there and find... I try to tell many time how people is, because she don't know. So she met a lot of younger peoples. Of course, some from college and some from the university. They take her some place. The boys over there, they too much a gentleman. They come and open door for her or [ ]. And that difference, for her there was a tremendous difference for her. She can tell you more probably about her experiences than I. And everybody, when you go in the house, you wait. And they will greet you, and they will kiss you on the cheek, no? And the same is with the boy. One day I went to a birthday, one of my nephew's sons. He is in university already. So he has a lot of [ ] already. So sitting, talking, and of course some probably, they are not much for drinking either. And my niece was over there. My nephew was there. And my nephew was 24. His 24<sup>th</sup> birthday. So they start talking, they making joking, they talking, and everybody is in it. So when I get there, I don't know anyone. So when they go, they come and say goodbye and kiss me. I never saw them. So that custom. And she see all the thing, and it's something strange about her that never before. And they take her in different part of the city, and they show everything, and they don't call the café. We call this confeteria. You can drink the tea, coffee, and of course you can drink some liquor too, no? So they take it. So you can go in there, no matter if you are manner. Because

New Orleans drinking, you can eat a special sandwich, no? And some little, like a cake. It's a little cake. So you can eat in there too, you see? So it's difference. I couldn't say what is similar here, because there's no any one similar. So when we go over there, for her to sit, they put the chair out, all those boy, and she's so exciting to see all the thing that she never get that treatment here. So that's it.

WEDEGAERTNER: Are almost all of your relatives still in Buenos Aires?

PARKS: All of them.

WEDEGAERTNER: Have they been here to visit, to the United States?

PARKS: No. Never.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you ever at any point want to move back to Argentina?

PARKS: Oh, I say maybe when I get older, yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: But when you were first married, did you ever feel like you wanted to move back?

PARKS: Oh, many time, many time. [laughs] Many time. When you come in young children, you don't miss. But when you come old into another country, yes, you miss. You miss a lot. Like now, I am drinking coffee. I ask deliver coffee that I brought from there. So I grind coffee and I make coffee. But this coffee is so strong that I put half milk and half coffee. And that's what I like.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you or your husband ever actually talk about moving back to Argentina?

PARKS: No. No. No. He never will go because probably what happen to him is what happen to me. It's all different. And he has family here too. So no, I never did. I never ask. I never tell him.

WEDEGAERTNER: How about when you moved here to Stockton, and you said you were quite unhappy at first because you didn't find the people very friendly? Did you ever think of moving away from Stockton after you got here?

PARKS: Oh yeah, many time. I want to come back to New Orleans. New Orleans is my home town.

WEDEGAERTNER: How did you finally make your first friends here? Did you meet them through church or at the college or...?

PARKS: Oh, the first one I meet, Maria, yeah. We are friend for long time here. Almost since I came here. And the other I meet a lot of people, and some I met through... I belong to the women business association. So then I met all the [ ]. Every month we have a reunion, no?

WEDEGAERTNER: You have a lunch or a dinner together?

PARKS: Dinner.

WEDEGAERTNER: Have you ever been an officer of the organization?

PARKS: No. Sometime I help, but then I don't do that. I don't get too much involved. Because sometime I don't have very much time. I have to be here. If I go out, I go just for a very short time, and I have to come back. So I have to be all the time here.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you belong to any other organizations?

PARKS: I used to be in the garden. But then I didn't want to anymore, because I don't have time.

WEDEGAERTNER: When your daughter was younger, what did you and your husband and your daughter like to do for fun?

PARKS: Oh, we used to go fish. That's one of the things I like. I used to go fish very much in New Orleans.

WEDEGAERTNER: You'd go out on a boat fishing?

PARKS: Oh yes. I go [on a bunch of trains?]. It's beautiful.

WEDEGAERTNER: Your daughter went too?

PARKS: Well, she used to be very young. No, that's before she born.

WEDEGAERTNER: She was too young. Yeah.

PARKS: But here we went two or three time when she was very young.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you go out on the delta, or just shark fishing, or...?

PARKS: If you tell me, I don't know.

WEDEGAERTNER: You went on a boat?

PARKS: No, no. From the shore. We don't have farther than that. We went two, three time and then we don't.

WEDEGAERTNER: You said you like to travel. Have you traveled places other than back to Argentina since you moved to the United States?

PARKS: No. I just go in Argentina.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about as a family? Did you ever take short trips or anything? For vacations?

PARKS: Oh, I know a lot of park in the United State. And I went for a short trip and traveled in the car, and we see a lot of things when we travel in the car.

WEDEGAERTNER: Before your husband died, did he help you manage this building?

PARKS: No, no, no.

WEDEGAERTNER: Just you?

PARKS: No. Just me. He used to live in the house.

WEDEGAERTNER: I see. You didn't live here then.

PARKS: No. He never live in.

WEDEGAERTNER: Where was your home located? What part of Stockton?

PARKS: East part. Here, close to. I have one over there, and I used to have another here.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you still own the homes?

PARKS: Yes. The other one I sold. I still own one. And I still own some land in New Orleans. That's what I want, because I love that place. And every time I go there, I...

**[End of Tape]**

**[TAPE 1, Side B]**

**[Begin Tape]**

PARKS: So I tell my friend's daughter, "Take me down there," because I don't have my car. And she has her car, so let's go. And we go.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you buy that land before you left New Orleans?

PARKS: Oh yes. Long...

WEDEGAERTNER: Had you planned to build on it or something?

PARKS: Oh yeah. I still plan.

WEDEGAERTNER: Sure! That sounds wonderful. Did your husband speak Spanish at all?

PARKS: No. Very little.

WEDEGAERTNER: So did you have friends in New Orleans that you spoke Spanish with?

PARKS: Oh yes. Mmhmm.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about your daughter? Did she learn Spanish from you?

PARKS: Yes, from me. When she was little and I used to speak in both languages. And she know. She speak very well. Broken, but very well. Now she like Italians, so sometime I call her on the phone, and she don't say hello. She say to me, "Bongiorno."

WEDEGAERTNER: How about when she visited Argentina with you? Did she use her Spanish down there quite a bit?

PARKS: Oh yes. A lot.

WEDEGAERTNER: All the time?

PARKS: Yeah.

WEDEGAERTNER: Is she in any organizations at school?

PARKS: Well, just school.

WEDEGAERTNER: Band or anything like that?

PARKS: No. No. No. She just like music, and I send her to play piano. And she played fairly good.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you attend any of the Catholic churches here in town? Which one do you go to?

PARKS: Annunciation.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did she go to the parochial school?

PARKS: Yeah. She go to parochial school. St. Mary.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you celebrate... Well, I sort of asked you this before, but do you still carry over some of the customs that you grew up with?

PARKS: No. No.

WEDEGAERTNER: What about special foods or anything? Do you cook any special foods that you used to have in your family?

PARKS: No. No. Sometimes, if I like to eat something special, I cook... Well, mostly we eat like Italian people. And I remember we'd eat all kind of food.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you have, besides Maria Bossana, do you have many other Latin American friends here in Stockton?

PARKS: Oh yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: Would you say there are quite a few other people from Argentina here in town?

PARKS: Oh yes. Sometime very few. But just now there is a girl coming. Well, she don't born in Buenos Aires, but she born in Uruguay, which is neighbors. Her mother was. But I don't associate very much, because I don't have too much time. You have friend and you have to take care of the friend too, you know?

WEDEGAERTNER: That's true.

PARKS: Well, once in a while, I know American people here, and sometime I invite for dinners. And that's it. I have a lady that I know very well, which that's what I wanted to tell you. I have to send her before I came. So she came before, because the school was starting in September. So she has to be before September. So I have a lady, a very nice lady, that I talk to her before I go. It's okay for her for Rene to stay, because Rene liked her very well and her husband. So she say yes. Because when she come and she go get Rene from the airport to stay with her until I came. She stayed five months with her. She's the one that teach Rene a lot of things too, about here. Another way she stayed in the house where it's no my custom, you see? It's American custom. So she learned a lot in there with her too. Stay over there, and I talk to her, and I say that I'm very grateful what she did to Rene. Because she taught Rene. You know, youngest like Rene...

WEDEGAERTNER: When she was real young you mean?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: When she stayed with this lady, how old was she?

PARKS: Oh, just now. Last month.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, I see. When you came back from Argentina.

PARKS: Yeah. In September.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, okay.

PARKS: Yes, because I don't know. I suppose it's hard on her husband, no? A very nice person. She's a very nice person.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do they have children too?

PARKS: No. She don't have. Rene liked both of them.

WEDEGAERTNER: And they probably really enjoyed having her then.

PARKS: Oh yes. I guess. So sometime she have people come in the house to... Some parties, something. So she call Rene to go help her. So Rene go over and make a host with her and help. So most of the time, when she want Rene, she call, and she live just close to here.

WEDEGAERTNER: Have you and your husband and Rene ever had anyone living with you? Relatives or household help or anything?

PARKS: No. No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Now that you've been in Stockton a while, is there anything about Stockton that you have grown to really like?

PARKS: Stockton?

WEDEGAERTNER: [laughs] No? Are there some things about it that you still dislike?

PARKS: Well, I met a lot of people that I like. Many I don't like. Maybe they don't like me. And maybe they like me too. But I don't associate too much. I don't have a lot of time to take it. I like the people come in my house. And I enjoy very much there. But I don't go to the people's house too much. Very seldom.

WEDEGAERTNER: Well, you mentioned the incident with your counselor at Delta. Have there been other instances where you would say you've felt any discrimination because of language difficulties or because of your background, since you've been in Stockton? Besides that?

PARKS: No. No. Because I don't go too much to the people. Because one, that's probably I don't notice. I have one time when some woman, and that happen to me too. But what I think myself, no? Just a poor woman. Don't have any... In the college that I met her. Then Rene used to go in Annunciation School when she was little. So I met her in school again. So I go to her to

say hello because I met. So she turn around and give me the back. So then I saw how cold is, and for me don't have any manners and education, and it's nothing. So I have what we say, the weather you no can bring, let it [rain?]. So for me, it's nothing. So that's the only incident I have here in Stockton. No in New Orleans.

WEDEGAERTNER: That's what I figured from what you said.

PARKS: Then the rest of the people that I met, no. I don't have any.

WEDEGAERTNER: What would you say, looking back, of your life has been the worst time, and what's been the best time of your life?

PARKS: The best time of my life. I have a lot. [laughs]

WEDEGAERTNER: It's better to have a lot of best times!

PARKS: Yeah, well I am a natural thinker. I never sad or angry or nothing. Most of the time I enjoy my life, am happy, no? Sometimes it happens some incident like this, but I forget it. There's no use to it. Just because you ask Maria, I tell her. You know, I mention. Just for me, those kind of people, it's nothing. I'm still more superior than myself. So I know a lot of people in my life that high, medium, low. I go with the same attitude for everybody. So that's why I am happy. Those people which it sometime they do to me something or want to discriminate me or something, I don't bother me. I know right away what I'm talking to. I know who they are. The level they are. So I know I can't put myself in the level they are. That's the way I learned , through my life and to school and my life.

WEDEGAERTNER: When you had your business in New Orleans, it was a bookstore did you say?

PARKS: Mmhmm.

WEDEGAERTNER: Who did you have taking care of your daughter when you worked?

PARKS: Well, she don't born yet.

WEDEGAERTNER: She wasn't born when you had the bookstore.

PARKS: Yeah. No.

WEDEGAERTNER: After she was born, did you work at all?

PARKS: I still have that, but I still at home. It's my house.

WEDEGAERTNER: Was that – in your home?

PARKS: Yes. I live in the back, and I have my store in front.

WEDEGAERTNER: But you didn't have someone come in and care for her or anything?

PARKS: Oh yes. I used to have one woman take care of the rest, clean house, to clean rooms and all the rest. Oh yes, I used to have that.

WEDEGAERTNER: Well, since your family was so far away, and your husband's family was in another state, who would you – if you had had any real problems of sickness or something, who do you think you would have turned to? Mostly just depend on each other, or were there close friends that you...?

PARKS: I have a lot of close – well, we don't say very close, but a very good friend. In fact, in New Orleans was one of the city, they all were coming people through my house and pass by and say to me hello. That's what I tell very friendly. And maybe they stay two or three minutes, maybe ten minutes, and just pass by and go. Or if they call on the phone. The same thing I do for them. I go through the house, and if I go shopping or something, I walk. Most of the people around, if they live far away, so I call the phone. So they just passes, stopping in the house, and I say hello. And just stay, talk maybe five, ten minutes, and continue doing what I have to do. So that's why I say in New Orleans was very friendly people.

WEDEGAERTNER: When you moved to Stockton, did you ever think of opening a bookstore here?

PARKS: No. I have a restaurant here.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, you did have. Was that before you started going to Delta?

PARKS: No, this is just recent now.

WEDEGAERTNER: You have it now.

PARKS: No. I sold. Because the reason I had to get up too early and take care this, and take care my restaurant...

WEDEGAERTNER: What kind of restaurant did you have?

PARKS: I sold breakfast and lunch. That's all.

WEDEGAERTNER: What was the name of it? I might have recognized it.

PARKS: Tip Top.

WEDEGAERTNER: Where was that located?

PARKS: You know downtown, in California? Next to Bert?

WEDEGAERTNER: Okay, yeah.

PARKS: There was a restaurant there, a very old restaurant. So I bought with another lady. A friend of mine in Argentina too. In fact, both work in different place, so we get so tired. So we have to sell. So she work as secretary for an Argentine dentist.

WEDEGAERTNER: I see. You both had your own jobs, and you were trying to run the restaurant too.

PARKS: Yeah! There was too much. I have to get up 4:30 in the morning and get ready to go to open. No. 4:00 I get up. 4:30 I get up from here to get in a half hour, but then to open the restaurant 5:00 in the morning. Then she come in later and stay. Then I come back. Then I go about 12:00, I go back again. And she go get ready to go on her job. So was too much!

WEDEGAERTNER: You had some other help too though, didn't you?

PARKS: In the restaurant? Oh yes. I used to have a cooking and dishwashing, and sometime we have part-time waitress.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did you have breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

PARKS: No. Breakfast and lunch. We close about 2 or 3:00. And we'd all been in it more until next day.

WEDEGAERTNER: You had a lot of the business trade then.

PARKS: Mmhmm. That's the way they used to run. So we run the same way.

WEDEGAERTNER: Were you closed on weekends?

PARKS: Sunday. Saturday we open.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you think you'd ever do that again?

PARKS: No, I don't think so! [laughs] Maybe if I no have a business I would do. I was thinking to do... I am very much for business, you know? That's what I entertain my life. My life entertain to make business.

WEDEGAERTNER: Which leads us to one of our questions. How do you feel about women's liberation here in the United States, and about the equal pay and various things for women?

PARKS: That's one liberation for me, I been liberate all my life. The only one thing I believe is the equal pay. Because many ladies here, they are divorced, they are widows, and had to

support their own children, so I think it's the right thing. If you have the same education the men have. The rest of it is...

WEDEGAERTNER: And I'm sure you believe in women being able to get as much education as the men.

PARKS: Oh yes. Mmhmm. That's the main part that I told my girl. Get a good education, so she can... If she has to marry, to find somebody equal to her. And if no, she has her own earning money.

WEDEGAERTNER: Would you try to influence her in any way in what type of person to marry? Other than what you mentioned, a person equally educated, etc.?

PARKS: Well, I told her that she has to like this. First, has to have equal education. The man she would marry has to have some education too. And most I think the religion, here in this country especially, has [nothing? something?] to do. That she can marry with the same religion she has.

WEDEGAERTNER: Would you have any reservations about her wanting to go into a field that is basically for men? If she wanted to try something?

PARKS: I don't quite understand.

WEDEGAERTNER: Well, of course most of the fields I'm thinking of, of course doctors, most women have already gone into those fields. But if she wanted to do something really unusual.

PARKS: What, you mean her education?

WEDEGAERTNER: Right, as far as what her goal would be. If she really wanted to be a pioneer in some field that...

PARKS: Well, I noticed when she was a little one, she started very much writing and reading. A strong subject was that. Like for instance, she don't like very much math. So what I told her, the field for her to study or to be something, I would like for her to be a journalist. Because she's strong in that part, no? And talk. And everything I told that she would have the opportunity to meet a lot of people. And she would see the difference between the people. And she would learn about people. And then she would have opportunity to go in difference place. And maybe in different country. And so she will know all the difference. And that's what I told her.

WEDEGAERTNER: Does she have plans to go to any particular college yet?

PARKS: No. No. Because I told her which I like it she go in a college in the East part of the country. But I don't know what would happen in two years more for her to finish, no? I would have a little difficult with her last year, but I think it was just the age and the teachers, or some

friend that tried to guide her for different way. And that's where I'm stronger, and I try to tell her no. And she still balancing between that friend and me. Well, fine. She get to learn what I told her already in advance, what'd happen, and what the friend is. So it's over.

WEDEGAERTNER: I forgot to ask you earlier. Did you become a U.S. citizen very soon after you moved here?

PARKS: Well, the requirement I have to live five years here, no? So I did. After five years, I became citizen.

WEDEGAERTNER: When you were in New Orleans, did you go to school at all? Night school or anything like that? Take courses.

PARKS: Oh yes. A lot of English I take. And I went to school to learn about when I had to get my citizenship. When I went to get my citizenship, we have to go, and we have somebody to make a lot of questions about the United States. And one of the person I met, I couldn't forget. It was a man. The most fine people I find in him. And he very, I guess, psychologist to admit the people and see the people. So I was talking, and you know, one of them get a little nervous, and especially when they don't know very well. So he was asking me questions. Of course I have a little handkerchief in my hand, and I would stay running there. And he was talking, so I started telling him, after he make some questions, and then he say, "I see you are a little nervous." "Of course," I say, "I'm a little nervous." Very much nervous! So he ask me, "Do you smoke?" And I say, "Yes, sometimes." And he say, "Well, we wanna wait for a while, and we will smoke." So he give me a cigarette and we smoking and talking. And we talk different things. Nothing about the examination. Talk about Argentina. He was a man very well educated. He knows a lot that part of the world, I guess. And then he told me it was the only thing in all the United State, they don't carry. They supposed to be a lawyer. An attorney. To hold a job. And it was the only man in the United States at that time that don't have that degree. But he has a lot of other degrees, no? But it was the only one, he was not an attorney. Because all has to be attorney to take the examination and to hold the job. So he tell me all this, and talking, and right away, he say, "Well, I see you are very quiet now. We continue." So we start again. Then he make more question and say, "Well, that's it." But he was very fine person. And I don't know what is his name. This was in New Orleans. And I never forget. He told me all the degrees he has. He have several degree. But never have been an attorney. Thing like this that I sometime remember, because this is very important to know people like that, you see? Very well educated person. So then I say, "Well, what is now? Did I pass or no?" Or I had to come back. "No, you pass." "Okay, I'm glad I don't have to come back again!" He say, "No, you pass."

WEDEGAERTNER: Can you think of any government programs or benefits that you get from the government that you really like? Or some government programs that you dislike?

PARKS: Suggest me one.

WEDEGAERTNER: You might like, say, Medicare or something like that. Perhaps the way some programs for older people, or you may dislike the way you're taxed. The system of taxation. Or you might dislike the way our political system is set up or something.

PARKS: Well, what I know from another country, I think this is the best. It has programs for the old people. They give Medicare, and they give help, no? I hear for people they say their tax going, and they take out the tax to give to people, they don't work and they [ ]. But sometime I put in there, suppose I am that. That I suppose no can work, of course I have to get help. So for me, I think it's okay.

WEDEGAERTNER: How do you feel about the welfare system?

PARKS: Well, some things, to me it's okay, but like they say, there's a lot of people here no wants to work, and I saw for instance a woman have a lot. I see many things, no? I just have several children and get a lot of welfare, and she no working, and she is not married, but she live with somebody. In fact, I saw one time a woman that have a lot of children, and they give thousand dollar a month or something like this. And I see the children go around in the street. She don't pay care. She don't working. And she has a boyfriend or husband or whatever it is. I don't know. And then drinking. And that's the part I don't like.

WEDEGAERTNER: It can be abused, yeah.

PARKS: Yes. I don't like this thing, because I think they help for the children, but the welfare should investigate more, and see where is the money going. Because I think the children, they don't know anything, and they should check more in that. That the children get more benefits than their mother. In fact, one time, it was a very cold night, and next to the hotel where I was, every night I saw a car parking and a child inside the car and a little dog. And it was cold. So I go and ask the boy, where is his mother or father. And he say, "No, my mother is in the bar. "Oh," I say. "Then you are by yourself." And he say, "Yes." Well, I don't say anything more. I come back and go. The child told the mother that I – somebody, some lady from there, they ask him. So another night I saw, and she came out from the bar, and she started get angry with me. And then I get angry too, and I say, "What are you doing with the child in the car with a cold night like this, and you are in a bar?" So she get angry and told me what is my business, and it's my business, I say. "Probably you get from the welfare, and go spend all the money in the bar. So I will call the [attorney?] and just tell her." I never call. Things like this. That's what I think is wrong. Now, what they do for older people, they help a lot. I think it is okay. Because some day, everybody will get old, and we don't know how we'll pay. So I think many things the system here is very good, which no in other is like this. They don't used to do this in my country, but I find this now. This time when I went, I find, like here, they have like a Medicare. But they call

another name. So the older people, the retired people, they have benefits from this, and they get Medicare. They get hospitalization and doctors and medication. And all the people go buy their medication, and they get 70 or 50% discounts, I think. Which I think is very great for the retired and older people.

WEDEGAERTNER: Did I understand you right? Did you say that at one point you managed both the hotel and the apartment? Or did you manage the hotel first?

PARKS: Oh, I managed the hotel. Then we have here another management, so when she left, so I came take care.

WEDEGAERTNER: But do you own the apartment building too?

PARKS: No.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh, okay. And it's called the Mayfair Hotel downtown too?

PARKS: No, no, no. This is the Mayfair Apartments.

WEDEGAERTNER: What's the hotel called?

PARKS: The Sherman.

WEDEGAERTNER: Oh. That's a fairly old hotel, isn't it?

PARKS: Oh yes.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you know how old it is?

PARKS: Oh, I think it's more than 50 years.

WEDEGAERTNER: What do you like most about your job of managing the apartments?

PARKS: The quiet. [laughs] It's quiet here.

WEDEGAERTNER: That's good.

PARKS: No, I enjoy them all.

WEDEGAERTNER: Have you been pretty lucky as far as the people living in the apartments? You say it's quiet, so you must.

PARKS: Oh yes. We have elder people, and we have younger people and middle-aged people. All them is very nice people.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you have different sized apartments?

PARKS: Oh yes. Yes. Most we have studio apartments.

WEDEGAERTNER: What do you dislike most about being a manager of an apartment house like this? I suppose the long hours, or that you have to stay so close.

PARKS: That I don't like it? No. I like. I enjoy my place here. Sometime I am reading when I no have nothing to do. I read and I write and I do something. I always find something to do. So I enjoy myself, and I no very much to going. I like to going and come back quickly. I no can stay longer.

WEDEGAERTNER: Do you have an assistant manager that took over for you when you went to Argentina?

PARKS: Yes, I have.

WEDEGAERTNER: It's nice that you could get away like that.

PARKS: Yes. And I have a man that come in every night and take care of the garbage and take care of the maintenance things. Like if something get wrong in apartment, leak water or something, they come and fix it. Then I have a man come in once a week and clean all this. The hallway, the lobby, the basement, outside. Once a week he come. So that day I have to be very close here.

**[End of Tape]**