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## Hermosilla, Laura Interview

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# Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

## **HERMOSILLA, LAURA (Mexican)**

October 28, 1980

Interviewed by Mary Wedegaertner

Transcribed by Rukhsar Shiraz

Wedegaertner: Your first name is Laura?

Hermosilla: [Yes]

Wedegaertner: And what year were you born?

Hermosilla: 1918

Wedegaertner: What year did you come to the United States? That's it figure it out (laughing)  
approximately anyway...

Hermosilla: 35 years [less], 1935.

Wedegaertner: Did you come directly to Stockton?

Hermosilla: No, first to San Francisco and got married in San Francisco in the [French] Church. French  
because my parents are French descent and we went to Our Lady of [Victory] [ ] [the priest  
there was] [ ] [a formal ceremony] [ ] [ ] .

Wedegaertner: Very formal, you said?

Hermosilla: Yes

Wedegaertner: Before we discuss your life here. Let's back up and where in Mexico were you born?

Hermosilla: I was born in Guadalajara.

Wedegaertner: Guadalajara. And how many children were there in your family?

Hermosilla: We were eight and my cousin's family eight, too, [and I have eight too].

Wedegaertner: Is that right? Were you the oldest or the youngest?

Hermosilla: One of the youngest

Wedegaertner: One of the youngest. You have both brothers and sisters?

Hermosilla: Yes.

Wedegaertner: What did your father...

Hermosilla: [ ] [ ] because my older brother owns 36 [ ] my father's business was monopoly of rice. He was a business man.

Wedegaertner: Oh.

Hermosilla: Had the monopoly of rice of the West Coast.

Wedegaertner: Of the whole West Coast?

Hermosilla: He was the only one to sell the rice.

Wedegaertner: Not just the West Coast of Mexico, but the whole West Coast?

Hermosilla: West Coast of Mexico.

Wedegaertner: Of Mexico.

Hermosilla: He had to be common citizen to stay in Mexico because in that time was in the revolution that all the foreigners have to leave Mexico. He wants to live in Mexico, and he became a Mexican citizen. He was French.

Wedegaertner: He was French? And your mother was French?

Hermosilla: He was born in Alsace.

Wedegaertner: [uh huh]

Hermosilla: My mother was Spanish [ ] [ ] [ ]

Wedegaertner: Did your mother work outside the home? [laughs]

Hermosilla: [No]. We couldn't even go to school out of the house after we finished grammar school. Tutors have to come teach us.

Wedegaertner: I see

Hermosilla: I have all of my papers of... Just name it and I took it.

Wedegaertner: But you did go through school through the elementary grades?

Hermosilla: Yes, which means even [higher] school because I wanted to teach here to [Lincoln] school and I taught history and I went to [Henry the eight] like nothing because [I continue to] study in my house with the tutors. I study history of literature, Philosophy, I study [ ] [ ] I had my papers.

Wedegaertner: Did you go to a private religious school?

Hermosilla: Always [yes,] French colony and the my [husband is there] because he knows we are French and they could teach us French.

Wedegaertner: You grew up probably speaking French and Spanish.

Hermosilla: [ ] [yes]

Wedegaertner: What about English? Did you?

Hermosilla: We had a tutor in English. Mr. Williams. That became a council in Guadalajara and was killed about ten years ago. They kidnapped him and Mexico has [ ] [ ] things that United States does not. My teacher [ ] and [ ] [ ] because he used to teach English through vocabulary and through vocab then you will start your phrases and your grammar and all that. [ ] [ ] My French teacher was fathers [ ] he used to come one after another. And for me the three languages were almost like one. When you are very young one year old it's one language.

Wedegaertner: Which language did you speak at home?

Hermosilla: French sometimes to my husband now. We used to write to each other always in French. He speaks very well French. He has French [patients]. We can write in French, read in French, [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Wedegaertner: What about your sisters, brothers, and your parents? What languages did you speak?

Hermosilla: We spoke Spanish because of the [ ] especially because of the [ ] I went back to Mexico about twenty years. I have my last child there, [Leticia], but now she's [leaving], all have graduated college with different bachelor's degrees. So [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] the oldest one is a [radiology] technician [she] works in San Josephs [for years until she got married] and I have two doctors and a lawyer. [both boys] One is a gynecologist, married a Mexican girl and he's living in Guadalajara. The other one is in Newport and is a plastic surgeon, very successful he's the

youngest. [And the middle one] Joseph lives in Washington and married a Lawyer. He to Notre Dame and studied there. But before then he studied in Santa Clara to be, how do you call it. He had to work in Livermore, he worked for a year in [ ] he has graduated in Santa Clara in Aero Space Engineering.

Wedegaertner: Aero Space Engineering oh yeah.

Hermosilla: He worked there for two years. He saw no future. He saw they were taking students and letting go of a 50-year-old man. He wanted experience so he took long, and he went to Notre Dame. Carlos, because he learned German so well, he was in Notre Dame [too, also] for a year studying, I don't know 3<sup>rd</sup> year of college [ ].

Wedegaertner: Wow so your family is really spread around then (laughs)

Hermosilla: So, right now he's in Newport and the only one far away is Luis, the oldest. Married to his Mexican girl very nice family. We knew them since they were young, they have two children. Then Carlos is not married. The other two, Joseph is married to the lawyer. She works for a security market and he works for [ ] Civic [ ] because he knows so much about, they send him very often to Columbia, to South America, to Mexico because he speaks Spanish very well and French too. Then the other daughter is right now in Colorado because her husband is in his last year of, same thing of Carlos, he had to go to Guadalajara to be a medical student because he could not receive any university here. He [ ] he is the son of the Pacific Lumber Company. He worked for his father and all of the sudden he decided he wanted to become a doctor. He has to study in that, poor Cecilia. [ ] [ ] [ ] She used to study to him. He had to have two sets of medical books because he couldn't understand Spanish. But he made it and he's going to be a, supposed come to work with Dr. [Griffen] for plastic surgery in June.

Wedegaertner: Well now, did only your one son marry a Mexican? Girl? Of Mexican descent?

Hermosilla: Yes, all the others, one is English the one from Notre Dame, the one is a lawyer, Joseph. Carlos is not married. [ ] [ ] [ ]

Wedegaertner: I'm sure it didn't make any difference to you did it? What nationality your children married, or did you have any strong feelings this way?

Hermosilla: No, I think if they are Americans, all are Americans except [Patricia], Joseph's by chance we were living in Mexico, was born in Mexico, but all are Americans.

Wedegaertner: You and your husband also evidently had very high standards for your children in terms of education. Were they all in agreement? Did they want to go on?

Hermosilla: By themselves? They are very eager for learning. Carlos is a person who never could see television. He would turn it off for his brothers and sisters. Don't lose time and study! It's a type, I think my husband was a very good student. I loved to study too when I was younger. My children even the youngest, you know she went to [ ] psychology and she went as a, those who

take care of sick people, how do you call them? Which I admire in her but I want her to move into another field. How do you call the people who doesn't have legs [ ]?

Wedegaertner: Oh Paraplegic or Orthopedically handicap.

Hermosilla: Handicap people.

Wedegaertner: Oh I see yeah.

Hermosilla: In Santa Clara, then went to UCLA for year because she was going to take her [ ] [ ] English. Then they put her to advice married people. Even the counselors gave her a leave of absence because she is very young for that. Maybe two three months in second semester she can continue education and finish the year. Willingly she has been doing this.

Wedegaertner: How much education did your father have?

Hermosilla: My father was a genius. He used to say one day we will be able to see in the radio will be people, which became television. Being a French man his father [ ] all. He was the director of the Orchestra in San Francisco. [We] arrived in San Francisco first then France. My sister was born in [ ] [ ] and he played the piano, violin, the children too. So, he was a genius.

Wedegaertner: How about your mother. How much formal education did she have?

Hermosilla: My mother like my father was a school [ ] [ ] [ ] The women in Mexico [ ] [ ] suppose not to do anything. [ ] [ ] We lived for three years in Mexico because my father his father wanted him to go back to live in Mexico. [we] took the children there they never got use my father never got used [ ] so we came back.

Wedegaertner: In your family did your father travel a lot then?

Hermosilla: Yes, he used to come every year to see his brothers who never became Mexican citizens. Oldest sister and youngest brother they live [north] side.

Wedegaertner: What about his business? Did he travel a lot with his business?

Hermosilla: [With his business] in Mexico. Once a year he used to come near Christmas to buy Christmas gives for ourselves.

Wedegaertner: And where would he go for that?

Hermosilla: [ ] [ ] to Oxnard, California or Los Angeles. My dad lived [ ] [ ] Los Angeles. I still have an aunt [ ] [ ] living in Los Angeles.

Wedegaertner: What would you say in your family, who made most of the decisions? Your father or your mother or did they do it together?

Hermosilla: Together, I think. [ ] [my mother was very intelligent], and my father loved her very much [ ] [ ]

Wedegaertner: Was that the way how it was usually done? Or in most homes did the father make the decisions?

Hermosilla: Yes, the class the more the man [dominates]. [ ] [ ] [ ] Especially foreigners they keep the woman [ ] [ ]

Wedegaertner: What about the financial decisions and paying the bills and who did this?

Hermosilla: My [mother] [ ] [ ] [ ] pay the schools

Wedegaertner: What did your family do for fun or recreation [when you were little?] [What] did they like to do?

Hermosilla: [ ] [ ] [ ] I want to [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] my sisters, each one had [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] studies were one of the things

Wedegaertner: Were there any things

Hermosilla: For recreation, movies, studies or theater [ ] [ ] [ ]

Wedegaertner: Were there some things your whole family did together?

Hermosilla: Yes [we used to] go to the Opera we used to see [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ].

Wedegaertner: When it came to holidays or customs. Did you celebrate a lot of your French customs you carried on or did you adopt Mexican?

Hermosilla: [ ] Mexican was the [ ] [ ] [ ] Posadas [ ] [ ] In Mexican [ ] even up to now my eldest brother.