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Leida, Ana and Leida, Gutierrez Interviews

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

Leida, Ana Leida, Gutierrez [Spanish]

[Date: n.d.]?

Interviewed by Beth Robinson

Transcribed by Jamie Lynn Culilap

[Tape 1]

[Begin Tape]

PLEASE NOTE: I'm pretty sure the first interviewee is Ana Leida, the second interviewee is her mother, Gutierrez Leida. Later on Gutierrez started to refer to her two daughters, Ana and Leida, so Ana is most likely the daughter. There was a tape switch in between tape 1.

Beth: Okay did you or your classmates have the same ethnic background?

Ana: No. (laughs)

Beth: You went to school in English?

Ana: Mhmm.

Beth: But what was your first language?

Ana: Well I spoke Spanish when I first started school. It's not like they put you in [] class but everyone is pretty much learning at the same time, so I had to pick up-

It was kind of like, I wasn't an outcast but still. There was a lot of little things that I did that was different you know.

Beth: Did you so how old were you when you came here?

Ana: I was two.

Beth: So you had already started speaking in Spanish though?

Ana: Right, well even before we started school, I didn't start school until I was four. So up to when I was four, 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-

Beth: Yeah so you just learned both right away. It wasn't like you just got there [] Do you remember how the teachers when you first started handled language differences from other kids?

Ana: See I don't think I dealt with that. They have kids coming in from third to fourth grade, like from Vietnam or something like that, and they don't another language exists. But with me, you know how all the little kids they all learn how to write their ABCs when they're in kindergarten and just like, it wasn't a problem. It wasn't like I was in 5th grade and I couldn't go to class and learn things because I couldn't speak the language.

Beth: So you probably just learned as much as you could and never had any special problems or anything like that?

Ana: Right. Not really.

Beth: Do you recall any funny incidents while in school?

Ana: I remember when the nun 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. I never did anything wrong. But one time she hit me in the head and I got so mad.

Beth: (laughs)

Ana: I don't know why she hit me but I got so mad, because I remember coming home and like oh gosh I think that's bad for your health when you get hit in the head like that. I probably wasn't doing good!

Beth: Did your parents ever hit you at home?

Ana: No. I just think it's stupid for a nun to go and hit you on the head.

Beth: What was your family's attitude towards school?

Ana: My mom's parents were both educated, my dad's were- my mom was a pharmacist, my dad was an accountant. School was the most important thing. That had a really high priority.

[Tape pauses]

Beth: both of your parents and all of your family was educated right?

Ana: Yeah, just school. I don't know if it's a thing of a family priority or just the difference in nationality, but education really placed high. That's a real importance [role].

Beth: Did you feel that same way too?

Ana: Mhmm. I feel it now more than- You know in high school I always wanted to be a pharmacist. 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 value my education a lot.

Beth: Did your parents try to help you with problems at school?

Ana: Yeah.

Beth: What was your attitude like if you got in trouble with school or if something is going wrong, do you solve it or did your mom help?

Ana: 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 going to make it, why am I wasting my time-' I've always been encouraged to make it through school, but I think almost sometimes, I feel like I haven't gotten enough support. Because it was always 'I know you can do it, you don't need my support' you know.

Beth: It was like they just expected it from you?

Ana: Yeah it was more understood that I could easily do it, just like anybody else can. Which I sometimes felt, I couldn't do it.

Beth: Did anyone else help you? Like your sister?

Ana: Yeah I think she's been a [big help]. My definite encouragement in how far I've gotten would be my mom. Just because she is so much like me in so many ways, she doesn't consider herself very bright, or she made it through college, through pharmacy school with Cs. And I see her now, and she's bright. I figure that someday I can be that way. She just keeps me going because I know she's like me, and I figure if she can do it, I can.

Beth: you have one sister or two?

Ana: One sister.

Beth: And no brothers right?

Ana: Right.

Beth: So your sister went through pharmacy school?

Ana: My sister is an engineer. Civil Engineer.

Beth: How long did she go to school?

Ana: She went to four years of college, but she's going to go back to school. She did get her degree but she wants to go back and get her [masters].

Beth: So your mom expected about the same for both of you guys right?

Ana: Yeah. Everybody said the reason you're going to pharmacy school is because your mom is pharmacy student, your grandma was a pharmacist. But it's not really true, it's just education and I really liked it. And she really liked engineering and stuff so. She's very goal and education oriented. You can talk with her, she believes that 'I'm just the two career family type.'

Beth: Your grandma was a pharmacist too?

Ana: Mhmm.

Beth: What about your grandpa?

Ana: He owned a chained pharmacy.

Beth: So your mom is a pharmacist too, and your dad is an accountant, what about his parents?

Ana: I don't really know. The reason why is because the grandfather died before I was born. The grandmother was living in Cuba and she didn't come out here until later, by the time she got here she was like 89. You never really thought to ask, I never really knew her you know. I left when I was 2 and when she got out here I was 14. This lady wasn't a stranger but- I can't fly back there, you can't really do anything so I never really, yeah.

Beth: Did you participate in school activities?

Ana: Yes.

Beth: What did you do?

Ana: I always ran for student government and I liked class representatives of things and when I got to high school, I was class secretary. And then I always did the cheerleader song girl type stuff. I was a cheerleader for my first year, and I was a song girl for my last two years. The year I wasn't a cheerleader or song girl that was the year I ran for office and I was the class secretary.

Beth: Was that important to you?

Ana: Yeah.

Beth: Was it more important than the school itself?

Ana: School is always important, but I don't think high school is too important. And I went to a private high school and I used to watch people who go to public schools and they barely took classes. They went to classes and they []. We couldn't ditch or anything like that. We went to school, we came home we did homework, I took hard type classes. Chemistry, you know classes that not everyone had to take. But I took them, but school wasn't very important to me then. I wouldn't give up a football game to stay home and study. Where now I might have to but back then I wouldn't.

Beth: Did you participate in church activities? Or neighborhood activities at all?

Ana: No not really. I went to catholic school my whole life. That was- your friends were- that kind of thing.

Beth: So you didn't need to spend extra time?

Ana: Right.

Beth: And how far did you go in school?

Ana: I'm now in my first year of graduate school.

Beth: Wow.

Ana: We go through four years and then two years of graduate, which is what they call pharmacy grad. []

Beth: During your years in high-

Ana: You know what cracks me up? This last semester was like senior year for me- and Robin [Seward] said – This is what I was going through I was going through [Little Sister] rush and I was doing all these crazy things. I said ‘gosh I never thought school could get like this’ and she goes ‘School? What school?’ and I said ‘Well I’m doing what I’m supposed to do in my senior year, in my graduate school.’ And she’s like ‘Graduate school? You just don’t seem like the type’ I just couldn’t believe what I heard. I was like Robin, I don’t know if I could take that as insult or compliment.

Beth: Well she’s getting ready to graduate, she’s almost 19. And she doesn’t seem like the type at all.

Ana: No it just cracks me up. When she said that to me ‘You don’t seem like the type’ it was just oh! Excuse me?

(laughs)

Beth: During your years in high school, did your family give you some independence in certain ways?

Ana: No, well-

Beth: Were there any arguments about your coming in?

Ana: Oh yeah. But see, I was the person where- well when I was a freshman in high school, and all the other little [socialities] groups- I mean I was into the social scene and stuff like that. But after football games everybody would always go to [Bob’s] or just something like that, I never did anything. After the football game, my mom would pick me up and I would go home. I never went to any parties

when I was a freshman or sophomore. In junior year, that's when you started to drive. Junior year I kinda started going to parties then. But see, you know how everybody, all the people would like to drink- freshman, sophomore, junior- Yeah I never even knew what alcohol was till I was a senior. And I never even went to any parties till senior year because it was so structured. I wouldn't even think of coming home with... you know. Yeah it was very strict I'd say.

Beth: And how did you feel about your family because of that? Because of those years. Were you happy that they were doing it, or do you appreciate it now?

Ana: Yeah I appreciate it more now, but then at times I thought it was very ridiculous. It goes back to where you can't go out on a date until you are 16. I think that's ridiculous you know. What makes a 15 and a half- or 16 and a half- 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- there's a lot of weird things you know.

Beth: It's more like a tradition that they were used to.

Ana: Right they're raised in a different- in their culture they didn't even go out alone on a date until they were married. Thinking of that coming out here, of course there's a lot of adjustment but still.

Beth: Did your mom speak English before you came? Or did she learn?

Ana: Do you want to hear a story? My grandfather is pretty wealthy and they travelled 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 started speaking English and she said all the kids thought it was weird, not like making fun of her or anything, because she spoke English and they only spoke Spanish. She was so embarrassed that she didn't want to speak English around anybody, she didn't want anybody to know that she could speak English. So she started speaking Spanish. When she came here she had a definite-

Beth: -Advantage.

Ana: Well she knew the language, but there was a lot to picking up. She could do pretty well.

Beth: Was it ever difficult for you when your friends were present in your home. Were you embarrassed ever to bring anybody home?

Ana: No.

Beth: Did any of them make fun?

Ana: No not really, my mom was really- so many things are really different. When I was in grammar school and I was in 8th grade we were living out here, and I was going to school in LA. So my mom would have to drive me and she would go, and I was an 8th grade cheerleader, and she would go to the little games and drive me there and she would do that. Even when I was in high school, she would always go- my sister in senior year was a flag girl, and I was a song girl- my mom would go to [both] games. That's pretty bizarre but it doesn't seem like my mom, she would go to football games and she's, you know, adjusts really well to things.

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

Ana: Yeah when I was younger, yeah. I always wanted to be a pharmacist I think.

Beth: Did the school help you at that point?

Ana: Yeah. I had definite advantages because when I got to city college, there was a lot of classes that I needed prerequisites for before I would take other classes. I had most, if not all, my prerequisites done from high school. So when I got to college I pretty much could take all of my classes that I needed and graduate on time. I was pretty prepared.

Beth: You're 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?

Ana: I grew up here, so I never knew anything besides this.

Beth: Do you ever remember anything confusing about what you learned about the United States in school?

Ana: No, one thing, they were raised in a much more strict type of home. I'm not saying anything against the way Americans lived there. A lot of them tend to be more: let their kids do what they want and maybe they will grow up right. Where they're so much more family, so much more strict type. They are very [liberal].

[Tape cuts, interviewee changed]

Beth: We're just going to talk about life. What's your full name?

Gutierrez: Okay Leida, and put Gutierrez.

Beth: Can you tell me about your early life and before you came into this country. Like where were you born?

Gutierrez: [South] California, [] I spent 28 years of my life in Cuba and I arrived in the United States uh, my 29th birthday was the following month. I arrived January 4th, 1962. And in February was my [] birthday. So it was 28 years since I arrived in the United States.

Beth: Now have been [] city right?

Gutierrez: Yes.

Beth: When you came through the United States, did you go through any other countries?

Gutierrez: No it was direct from [Havana]

Beth: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Gutierrez: I just have one brother, and he is 10 years and 9 months younger than I am. So I was the only child for quite some time.

Beth: Did he come too?

Gutierrez: Yes, he came- Okay I arrived January 4th, 1962. And he came exactly about a month after because that's when they gave him permission. We didn't come out when we wanted to, we had to wait for permission from the government to leave. And his permission didn't come in till after we had left.

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

Gutierrez: [Exactly]

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

Gutierrez: At that time, the government was not very organized yet you know. Today would have been what they would call a military [page]. So they will not let him out at this point. But that time, the government has been in power for roughly 3 years. So they were really a mix.

Beth: Oh so they were mostly in disorganization and then they weren't trying to-

Gutierrez: Yeah.

Beth: Did the rest of you come together or all of your family or?

Gutierrez: We came, my ex-husband [], myself, and []. Those are the four we came together.

Beth: So then you all lived together when you got here?

Gutierrez: Yeah, we lived in Miami, Florida. And after looking for a place to live, we finally got one person that rented us a house. It was like a duplex with one [bed]. So my

brother would sleep in the living room. We would open the couch at night, people would sleep in there. And then we slept on the floor []. And whoever arrived was welcome. There was one time there was about 6 or 7 of us in the house [that was a necessity]. That's the way you call it.

Beth: Your mom and dad came right?

Gutierrez: No my mother died 1960, just one year after [Castro].

Beth: And your father?

Gutierrez: He arrived about 11 years ago.

Beth: Ana was telling me about how your father owned some chains of-

Gutierrez: My mother was a pharmacist and my father was a business man. So what they did was, they started a pharmacy and then they started a wholesale drugstore. They ended up having like 7 pharmacies and the wholesale drugstore. And some other businesses but that was the main one.

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

Gutierrez: No not really. Actually back home, pharmacy school was 98% females and 2% males.

Beth: Oh I like those odds!

Gutierrez: It's a women career back home and it's becoming here too. Now the trend is changing, when I attended USC there was probably 10% female and the rest were male. Now it's up about 40% female.

Beth: So you went to school in Cuba?

Gutierrez: I went to school at the University of [Atlanta] from 1950-1954. That was the [] it was four years for pharmacy school. I got my degree of Doctor of Pharmacy.

Beth: How many years of school do you remember, like elementary school here-?

Gutierrez: Okay Elementary school was about- Okay, when you got out of 6th grade, you had a choice. You could either go two more years or try to get into high school.

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

Gutierrez: No it was usually the people who were going to education, they would continue those two more years. Most of the people were going to go into careers, which were science oriented, they would go to high school and high school was 5 years.

Beth: So they wouldn't gain too much in the extra two years?

Gutierrez: Not really. []

Beth: - They would just go into the sciences, yeah. Is that what you did?

Gutierrez: When I got to 6th grade, I just went and took my exam to get into high school. I passed it, so I-

Beth: Well not-

Gutierrez: - If you didn't pass it? Well you would have to keep going you know.

Beth: Well that's good you passed it. So then you did your 5 years of high school?

Gutierrez: 5 years of high school. And by the 5th year of high school, by that time you had made up your mind of what you want to study, because you had liberal arts or science.

Beth: Oh so you had to specialize more in your-

Gutierrez: In one or the other. Some people didn't know at the time, so they would take two, both of them. But it was very hard to carry both loads. So in my case, I didn't any doubt I was going to go into pharmacy. So I just took science.

Beth: Do you think that helps you get more prepared for college? Because I know in my high school we would have to take a little of everything. But we don't really two specialized within the sciences.

Gutierrez: Let me put it this way: One of the things that helped me a lot, when I got over here, that we had a pretty good group. In other words, you went through first year and you knew you had to take math, chemistry. It wasn't what you wanted, *it* was it.

Beth: That was it hm.

Gutierrez: The second year got around and you had to take so and so and so. And everybody would walk out that door with the same classes, same everything. So it wasn't where you had a choice, where you get a little Mickey Mouse and then you work in another little harder and those types of things-

Beth: (Laughs) Yeah.

Gutierrez: It was a must. So I think it really helped me quite a bit, because when I got over here it was hard. But it was not as hard- I think our basics were really good so it really helped.

Beth: What's your parent's religion?

Gutierrez: Catholic.

Beth: Is that the same as your own?

Gutierrez: Mhmm.

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

Gutierrez: Changed it? Not really because for me, religion is... I'm not a fanatic. I see the good things the Catholic Church has, and 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. That's how I have it my way.

Beth: That's my views too. (laughs)

Gutierrez: That's the way for years, I went to Sunday Mass with the girls. You know it was a Catholic school, and I thought it was my obligation to give them some religion. But when they were old enough, probably when they were 18, [I] said "Well one day I'm not going to Mass anymore" and that's been it. I go when I feel like, if it's a Tuesday and I want to stop by the church, I'll stop.

Beth: Did your mother work full time outside of the home or did she work part time?

Gutierrez: Well for many years she worked full time, and then in her 5 years before she died she has been trying to cut down hours. Maybe she was already feeling pretty sick, and that's what made her think in a funny manner.

Beth: 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 or?

Gutierrez: She had a pretty nice setup because we had the business downstairs and we had a house in the upstairs. So when I got to school, she as there and... it was very convenient having a building where the business was downstairs and we lived upstairs. And this went on until I was about... 17 or 18, then we moved.

Beth: So the children was her main responsibility, as compared to her father?

Gutierrez: Right, yeah. Mother was always the one that said 'no' or 'yes'. And that-

Beth: You had to ask things?

Gutierrez: Right.

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

Gutierrez: Well, I imagined how every refugee feels. It's something you want to happen because when we applied for a VISA to leave the country, we were desperate at the time to leave the country. Once it happened, I can remember I pride in that plane since I left Cuba, till I arrived in Florida. I stopped when I arrived [] there were so many papers in the things and-

Beth: -You couldn't keep up (laughs)

Gutierrez: No I [could] you know. Plus you were very nervous at the [Havana] airport when you were back home because anything could go wrong, if they just felt you were bringing something in the luggage thing they didn't want, that would be reason enough to stop you right there. For example where would you leave the [cart]?-

Beth: So you were afraid probably?

Gutierrez: Right, you had fear. That's another thing. Where would you leave the [cart]? There's so many questions and things, and you don't know what's going to happen. They were so not 100% organized, so you could get away with a lot of things. But if they were to catch you, that was it.

Beth: What triggered you coming over was the change in government?

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 why I left. I didn't know if there was going to be a Civil War. The [] part was getting and worse. They tell me that it is nothing comparable to today. But for us, looking for eggs to eat and looking for meat to eat and looking through rice to eat- you know. We were not used to that. So for us it was already starting a starvation period to put it that way. I remember when we used to get Navy Beans and I remember we used to make a Navy bean soup. And it got to the point where we saw that dish coming, then we just refused to eat. Well there were little [] knew it was white. Oh they were so

sick and tired of those beans. It was starting to get pretty bad, nothing how it is today I understand. But when you have been used to it [] market and buy it and you want this and you have the money to buy it, then there's nothing to start buying- it gets pretty bad.

Beth: Once you got here, did your feelings stay pretty much the same? Did you change at all when you got here?

Gutierrez: Well it was many years ago of adjusting. 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. Which I didn't know too much about cosmetics or cameras or anything. But I had to make a living! So I always felt that I would go back to school, so that's when I started going to USC. And it took them about 3 years. I keep the letters and I never forget it. But it took them about 3 years before they- the way that I look at it is just like a little [favor]. Go and get started because you are going to fall flat on your face. But let's let you get started and that's it. I'm very happy because when I started I didn't fall flat on my face.

Beth: What did you like most about your life in the old country, in Cuba?

Gutierrez: Well the pace of life.

Beth: What was different?

Gutierrez: It's a lot slower. We have lots of things here but... sometimes you're so tired and you just can't enjoy it. Maybe if we lived with less things, although we had the American influence. We had refrigerators, TV's- you know, name it. We have all those things. But I don't know. The pace of life was a little bit much slower. So I really missed that.

Beth: Did you ever feel that you could change any of those? Like for instance, what things did you not like from the country there?

Gutierrez: Not really. If there would have not been, the takeover of communism in Cuba, I probably would have never left my country. Because we had a way of living, we had everything going for us. So there was no reason to leave the country. I would love to come over here- from Florida to Cuba, it was an hour trip. So we would just come for a weekend to Florida, to Miami you know. And we would like to come and buy things because we love to come to Florida at the time. Now I don't like to go to Florida, isn't that terrible.

Beth: Why is that?

Gutierrez: I don't know, it seems to me like our community of Cubans in Florida has become [classless]. By that I mean we are all mixed up together over there. In our country we hold more of a class.

Beth: Like a class system kind of thing?

Gutierrez: Right. There's certain people in Florida right now that they will live in their neighborhood and I would live in a different neighborhood, right now over there we are all together. And I don't care what nationalities it is, there are just certain people I don't care about mixing with them, mingling with them or that type of thing.

Beth: So are they just lumped into one section in Florida?

Gutierrez: More or less. Although now there are so many, that it's really spread out. Plus I feel that if I were to come here in the United States, I would try to blend in as much as possible. If you keep and stay among your own, you will never blend in. Because you are too attached to the things you brought from your homeland. So that's the way it really works.

Beth: That would be kind of scary to think about though. I can see how some people would feel, where there are bad things and good things but I'm going to hold on

to the good things over here, where I'm safe. There wasn't really any way you could do anything about the takeover or anything like that right?

Gutierrez: Not really. For a few months before he publicly admitted 'I'm a communist' I had a little bit of hope that maybe there was so many bad things that I would have loved somebody to fix them up. I see things right now where I wish somebody would fix them up. For wherever you are, you want the best. Let's give him credit for a few months, but that's all it took was a few months. I could see that he wasn't going to do good to anybody. The poor was going to be poor, the rich wasn't going to be rich anymore and it was just going to be a mess. And that's exactly what communism does. The poor is poor, the rich ones just go down and everyone is at the same level. And then they become the new class, because they live real good you know. Don't let anybody kid you.

Beth: (laughs) Oh I see, they live really well, and then they said everyone should be equal except for them!

Gutierrez: Exactly, there's no such thing!

Beth: What kinds of things did you expect to find-?

Gutierrez: In 1952 we came from states- we travelled about four months. We pretty much knew the United States, its great! Let's put it that way.

Beth: And so you then settled in Miami when you first got here?

Gutierrez: When we first got here, we settled in Miami for about 8 months. The reason we left Miami is... we could not make a living. We were living off of 100\$ of the refugee program was giving us. They were giving us food, you know. So we were practically eating, sleeping, and that's it. When you have certain kinds of ambitions and you have been living a certain way, you just don't want to stay here you know. At the time, that's the way Florida works, at least Miami. We just

couldn't make a living. So it was hard to come up with a decision because we had just arrived and we still had some [] so we still felt a little bit at home.

Beth: A little safer, kind of.

Gutierrez: Safer, exactly.

Beth: So when you first got here did you settle with your family or your relatives there for a little while?

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

Beth: Did you have any trouble having someone to rent to you because you had just come over?

Gutierrez: Yes. First was the number of people that was going to be living in that house. Second, it was renting with two children. It seems like wherever you went, if they see a 3 or 4 year old. They wouldn't want children. And when you told them you are looking for a 1 bedroom or a 2 bedroom at the most, and then 5 people are going to live, because I have to tell them my brother is coming you know. It seemed like it was no, no, no, and no. It was very hard on me, I couldn't understand why they didn't want too many in the house. Or in an apartment or anything. Until we finally got one person's attention, which I was grateful.

Beth: Was that in a neighborhood mostly from Cuba at all?

Gutierrez: I came in 1962, there was a lot of refugees, but not too many. So actually in the [] I left, there was another family and myself []. The rest were Americans. Some were spending the winter months away from New York. I remember one of the neighbors they had a very nice [uncle]. They were so nice and so helpful, I would always remember them. Every year, during winter, they would come to Miami, Florida and spend it away from New York. I guess they were retired.

Beth: What languages were spoken at home?

Gutierrez: Just Spanish. English was- Most of the schools tried to at least have one subject- like we had in high school, we had about 2 or 3 years of English. But you really aren't going to accomplish too much-

Beth: - I had two years of english-

Gutierrez: Mary is a boy and Tom is a girl, and Tom is a boy, and what is a dog. And I think that's all you really- you know the colors- but you really can't put two sentences together too much. If you did, then you forgot the next [mastery] levels you know.

Beth: Yeah even if you're really good and you just remember first semester. Well English became the main language spoken at home, when did that happen?

Gutierrez: Okay well, not really. For years I did speak to [Leida] 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 time. She went to this catholic school and she knew a few words in Spanish, so what she would do was take Leida out of the class. And drag her around the school with her for so many days, until Leida got used to it. She would cry at the beginning she didn't want to go to school because she could not communicate with other children.

Beth: Was it a matter of really not wanting to or was it-

Gutierrez: She felt lost, she could not communicate with other children.

Beth: Yeah Ana said she did not have too much trouble because she was younger and-

Gutierrez: No Leida taught her everything, when she was going to go to Kindergarten, they had already told her all the little songs and all the little numbers and whatever she- It was nothing new. So it was really hard on Leida than Ana, because of her 17 months of [hardwall], she had to go to school first.

Beth: Now is English the main language spoken in your house?

Gutierrez: I still speak Spanish to them. For years they have answered back in English. It was a battle I lost, I tried in very beginning for them to keep Spanish as much as possible, not thinking that Spanish will be the main language. But that it will be a bilingual situation. I guess 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 []

Beth: Yeah she got burned when she was little and she decided she didn't want to speak English.

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. They spend a lot of time trying to blend in too.

Beth: Did you live in any other neighborhood that had different languages spoken at all, or were you in a mostly English speaking neighborhood?

Gutierrez: I came into Los Angeles, I moved into a neighborhood in Clover City. There was a feeling you want to have some of your [own] around, or- I don't know what it is. You try to stick together.

Beth: It makes sense, you get used to having some around.

Gutierrez: All of us would work a job where we would have to speak English. So that's one thing that really made us pick up the language. When I went to Thrifty's, there was nobody at all that would speak Spanish, not even []. It was 8 hours, whether I liked it or not speaking English, because I made up my mind that I would learn the language and I had the basics. But that's all I had, was just basics. I did speak English as a little child. My first language was English, believe it or not.

Beth: Oh really? Why is that?

Gutierrez: In 1933, when there was all Depression, my parents came to the states. My father lost everything he had back home, so the first thing was 'Let's go to the promised land'. So they came here. He got here, second day he was holding a job. He left my mother and myself behind. We didn't come until about- when I was a baby in 1933. He actually had to borrow the money so he could come over here. Then I didn't speak anything till I was about 3 years old. I guess I was very confused on the streets with the English and then at home, Spanish. So my mother always told me, they would say, 'aren't you worried she doesn't talk and she's two years old.' My mother used to say, 'Well, she'll talk.' And I sure did. I spoke English, I picked up English.

Beth: Yeah you may have just heard more then.

Gutierrez: Right, so I picked up at the time, just imagine Spanish wasn't even heard. So I picked up the English. My vocabulary was of a 7 year little 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 so I can blend in with the rest of the children. They would actually laugh at me and make funny faces when I would talk with my mother 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. When I came here in '62 it was a problem, because I lost it completely. I never thought I wouldn't need it. It's funny, my parents were always 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.

Beth: So you're the oldest right?

Gutierrez: Yeah. My brother picked it up pretty good. He would come to summer camp over here and he's almost accent-free. You have to be a teacher or somebody who deals with languages to really know that he has an accent.

Beth: Well you speak pretty well too.

Gutierrez: I still have an accent. When I went to Santa Monica city college, I took speech and I asked the professor- I was crazy trying to get rid of my accent, it was worse at the time. And I said, "Did you think I have improved?" here I was desperate. So he said "You have improved quite a bit. But don't ever think you're going to get rid of your accent. That's something you're going to have to carry for the rest of your life. And if you know how to carry it, it's very nice." It was nice the way he put it.

Beth: I think the only time it would ever bother anybody would be if you can't be understood and that bothers both the person trying to understand and the person trying to communicate.

Gutierrez: It doesn't bother me 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 could not blend in with a very definite accent. Communicating was a problem, it was a lot of "yes", "yes" and "no", "no" and no one knows what is right.

Beth: Who lived in the household during your grown up years, was it the four of you?

Gutierrez: Just my parents and my brother and myself.

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

Gutierrez: Well, around the town. Probably 15 minutes – half an hour trips.

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

Gutierrez: Living at the house?

Beth: Uh huh.

Gutierrez: Not really.

Beth: Do you ever remember about how your parents felt about having other family members living there?

Gutierrez: I remember an aunt on my mother side, she lived with us for a little while but she became sick of us; living with a family. By that time she was still young, 20 something. So she decided she was going to move on her own []. If it wouldn't have been for my mother she would have lived there for Gods know when. But my aunt said "Forget it", she's going to live with someone else.

Beth: So she wasn't married at all?

Gutierrez: No.

Beth: Was it alright in the society to live by herself, was it acceptable?

Gutierrez: It was acceptable at her stage. She was already about... 30 years old or something. In our society, it was: you leave home married. That was it. For my case, I either got married and walked out of my house and that was the right thing to do.

Beth: Did you like having her live with you?

Gutierrez: Yes, I really enjoyed it.

Beth: Did the children in your family have regular chores?

Gutierrez: There were maids, and the maids had their things around the house to do. But all of us had duties in a way. There was no messy bedrooms because there was a maid or we were expected to not leave holes here and there. We had duties and...

Beth: Did they expect anything different of you as opposed to your brother, because he was a male?

Gutierrez: Well males had it. I remember he could come to the United States for summer camps and they wouldn't let me do it because I was a girl.

Beth: Was it because they didn't think it would be helpful for you? Were they afraid something would happen to you?

Gutierrez: No, It was just not right. It was not right for me to come by myself over here. I had to be chaperoned.

Beth: Especially since you were so much older you thought, "What is this..?"

Gutierrez: Well I thought of it, to see him go to summer camp and here I was deprived. I was a deprived child! (laughs)

Beth: Did you ever work outside the home –

[Tape stops]

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

Gutierrez: No I never worked, until after I became a pharmacist.

Beth: Did you get married before you-

Gutierrez: No I got married about a couple years after. It was a [neat] thing, you didn't work when you were in school. As long as your parents were able to support you, then it [] maybe there were not many jobs and maybe that was one reason- but I don't know. You were supported until you finish your school, your career, you were supported.

Beth: When you became a pharmacist, did you work with your parents?

Gutierrez: I worked with my parents, it was [the thing] you know.

Beth: Sounds good to me! (laughs)

Gutierrez: They had a job, that's it. In a way it was expected you know. If they have to jump there it was... How could I go someplace and look for one you know?

Beth: Who made most of the family decisions, between your parents?

Gutierrez: I think my mother had quite a bit to do with the decisions. Although if my mother said yes... and maybe my father felt no... we wouldn't know about it. It was something that was at least worked out in front of us. They agreed to whatever it was. If they ever disagreed, we never found out.

Beth: So possibly they discussed it before or do you think what your mom said-

Gutierrez: It was more my mother taking most of the decisions. My father went along with it because most of the time they were just the right thing to do. There was not anything to [worry] about you know.

Beth: Did your parents ever disagree on things?

Gutierrez: Oh yeah, like everybody they agree and disagree.

Beth: How did they handle that? Did they yell or discuss quietly or...?

Gutierrez: I guess they [quarrel] like every other couple does. They didn't have too much saying, if something wouldn't work out, you would just listen and keep your mouth shut.

Beth: Did you ever disagree with your parents about things?

Gutierrez: Oh! Every other day! (laughs)

Beth: What would you disagree with them about?

Gutierrez: I guess when you're in the growing age, you just rebel against everything. If I wanted to go someplace, my mother would have to go and... it was kind of strict on us. It bothered me so I disagreed.

Beth: Can you remember something specific?

Gutierrez: For example I remember one time I had this piano teacher, and she was going to get all her pupils together to go to a little ranch. Like a picnic. So my mother said I can't go. She couldn't go and that was enough. She could not trust the teacher taking 10 or 15 of us. In that way she was kind of strict with me, so I rebelled. The only thing that I could do was open my mouth and shut up real fast because she would give it to me you know.

Beth: Was it a custom of the country or more of your family?

Gutierrez: It was a custom and some people are more strict than others and I think my mother was pretty strict when it came to that and my father would back her up. It's not like they disagreed, they agreed.

Beth: So you didn't have a chance? (laughs)

Gutierrez: Nope, I didn't have any[where] to go to.

Beth: What any customs or practices did you observe at home from Cuba? Religious or recipes?

Gutierrez: We have our dishes which are very typical for our country, like black beans. Which I do keep when Christmas comes, I still keep it as our tradition to keep the same meals we have home. When Thanksgiving comes I just have the turkey like everybody and our daily venue is more of an American family.

Beth: Are there any ceremonies or superstitions?

Gutierrez: Not really, just remember that our short, I think 90 miles; from the United States we had quite a bit of the influence of the country back home.

Beth: What groups did you belong to when you were growing up?

Gutierrez: You know the boys scouts and girls scouts and all those things? I heard about them but they were not really developed back home. So there was really not too much to be belonged to you know.

Beth: So it was more family oriented in a way?

Gutierrez: More family oriented and yeah.

Beth: Were your friends mostly of the same religious or ethnic background?

Gutierrez: Not really. But that's one thing, even if it bothered if the- if the boy was a Jewish or he was Pescetarian- Although Catholic was predominate. But you didn't really start to think about it.

Beth: Well that's nice. Did your parents object at all if you would have wanted to date someone like a Jewish boy, would your parents object to that?

Gutierrez: It never happened but I don't know if they would object to that. My mother was very narrow-minded for some things, but for religion she was very broad minded. For her, religion was not only praying and doing this and- I don't know, it was different for her.

Beth: Did you bring friends home as visitors like from school and stuff?

Gutierrez: Yeah, the only thing you wouldn't go to anybody's house. For example, you come here and you didn't know us or anything-

Beth: No (laughs)

Gutierrez: I couldn't understand back home that families had to know each other. They wouldn't let me go to any place where they didn't know who was the father and who was the mother.

Beth: I think we could use more of that here-

Gutierrez: There was a kind of a relationship among the parents.

Beth: Would it be a little easier in Cuba- How big is Cuba?

Gutierrez: Okay the time you're talking about is barely six million. []

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

Gutierrez: You would make it a point to know the parents of the children your child is going with. For example, you would know you would have three or four friends which are the favorite or the ones you go out and talk or study- 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 in a smaller place made it easier or it was a custom I don't know.

Beth: Did your parents set any rules about dating?

Gutierrez: The rules of dating back home was clear and that was it. If the date went even an [], the date knew he had to carry the date and the chaperone. Whether he liked it or not. He couldn't go out, there were no questions. It was something natural, nobody even looked at you like a strange creature you know. It was so natural. What we would do is double date, so then the chaperone and the other chaperone kept each other company. They could talk to each other and []. If not then it would be pretty boring for the chaperone I would tell you that much.

Beth: Yeah they either talk with you or just watched you-

Gutierrez: [] while you were dancing and that's it.

Beth: Did your parents have anything to do with who you married or did you-?

Gutierrez: Not really. It just happened, that was it, yeah. One time I was asked this question, "Leida was your marriage set up?" Like you knew maybe 3 or 4 years that you were going to marry this person, and I said no. You are talking about maybe 50 years in that time, but in that time no. You had your free will to choose.

Beth: And you didn't need an arranger or anything-

Gutierrez: No arrangement.

Beth: I know you went to USC, were you speaking English then fairly well?

Gutierrez: I had been here for 3 years already, I arrived in 1962 and I started January [1966] so it's been about 3 years. It was a lot better, but still [very poor] and I found out when I started taking classes. I would never forget my first class was [pharmacology] well during the day. It helped to [hear the Latin] the components of the scientific words, because it would ring a bell. But I remember the notebook. I would take two words, miss another three, take another two, miss another three- They would have to [] in the same class. It was []. So what we did after class is we got together and the three I picked up, the two she picked up, and the other two the other little ones picked up; tried to build up the notes. So we could look at something that would make sense.

Beth: You had to work extra hard for something like that.

Gutierrez: We did, we did. But I think that was the worst in history. I think after that it got a little bit easier.

Beth: Did the professor handle the language differences or were they kind of doubtful of you?

Gutierrez: I guess you find everything. This professor, pharmacology, he gave his class and he could care less if we got the notes right or didn't get it. And we didn't get any sympathy from him. He was giving his class, you took the exam, you passed it or you didn't pass it, that was your problem. But you would find people that could really understand, trying to be more helpful. "If you have any questions please come after class and I'll be glad to answer them" and all these types of things.

[Tape cuts off]

Beth: Tell me about getting into USC... Was he prejudice against you because you couldn't speak English?

Gutierrez: I don't really think it was that. I just think that the way he was. He was used to [run] everybody his way. And I guess he felt like I was just a little puppet. He could just pull the strings- I really don't know why. I don't think.. maybe he was predigest I don't know.

Beth: Do you think it was more because of your background or because you're a woman? Or a combination really?

Gutierrez: Maybe he felt that it wasn't good enough for an [], not as a person. The background... well a little [] there with the University of Havana, at the time the University of Havana at the time was- out of the classification, it was [A-1] over here. It had a very high rank. It was pretty good. I guess when he really [found] me – every semester I would go – he gave me a really sweet talk and told me I had to go to college and get geography, history, psychology. I kept telling him, “look I can't see myself after having my degree from another university.” Starting geography and history. If you tell me I have to take extra classes in Pharmacy, fine! Because [] has gone by since I finished school at 8 or 9 years at the time. Fine I have to update that. I agree, but I couldn't see myself studying geography and history because he said I had not fulfilled the prerequisites for pre-pharmacy. So I don't know what went on in his mind, but finally one day, “Well start at the [], the feeling I got as well is that you're going to fall flat and hit your nose.” And I didn't, I'm very happy I didn't.

Beth: You should have gotten back to visit him, did you?

Gutierrez: Oh I see him but not anymore now. For many years I would see him in a different meeting and this type of thing. So one time I remember he made this remark at one of the meetings we were at and he said “Well, have you become rich?” and I said “Well, I always was rich!”

Beth: (laughs)

Gutierrez: I always had 5 million red blood cells coming with me. It was a nasty remark and I answered back with another nasty thing you know. But it was his way, 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 just walked up one day and she told him she wanted to [join] a pharmacy. And he said to start next week at night at such and such class. And she called and said "I just got accepted into the school". And I said "How can you?" if I was just there a week ago and he just gave me a blunt "no."

Beth: Did you go back again and then you got accepted?

Gutierrez: Exactly.

Beth: Well he probably decided-

Gutierrez: Well I told him I knew that she had been accepted. I just spelled it out for him. At that point he had no choice. He couldn't say "Well I'm accepting her and I'm not accepting you", because we had the same requirements you know. So I was never able to figure out why he did it.

Beth: Maybe he was just in a good mood that day and after that he decided...

Gutierrez: We started that night class but we still were 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 said "Look I can't keep taking classes, without knowing if it's going to be of any value, without knowing I'm accepted to the school." Economically I cannot face it. I don't have the means to pay the tuition; meanwhile I'm not accepted to the school, they will not give me a loan. He kept kind of avoiding the- he had to sign that page. He just came out with a nasty remark of "well these rich kids live with the money and the [Swiss] banks". So I walked out because I didn't want to [cry] in front of him. I felt that I didn't want

to give him that satisfaction. But I went out and I was crying out there. At the time, this other girl who just been accepted about a week ago, just walked in. This other friend and myself we were both there. So she walked after me and this third one was just coming in. She said "What happened?" and I said "[] doesn't want us to have any papers and I can't keep going." I don't have the means, I can't- 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 and said "well bring in your papers tomorrow morning, I'll sign it." That was it. I never asked him. One of these days when I see him and ask him "Why the heck did you do that? Why did you play with my life for three years?" but I felt well its [over] []. He can't come up with any logical explanation.

Beth: No it's got to be something like "well I don't know-

Gutierrez: Yeah [].

Beth: What was your family's attitude towards school? Your mother is a pharmacist I would imagine-

Gutierrez: Well my mother [], everybody in the family was going to have an education that was it. Which one? You were free to pick up. Actually she wanted me to be a physician. She had a dream in her life where she made her own decisions but she didn't have the means. Her parents could not- She was an orphan at 17 and her mother died. And her father and they were left with 5 children. So she never could fulfill being a physician because she didn't have the means. She had the means now to send her daughter to medical school; I wanted her to be a physician. But I didn't want to. It got to one point where I did not want to have a career at all. They were pretty well [], why don't [] applies? Why should I even go to school? And she threw a book at me. And I never came with the subject again if I'm not going to school. I knew I had to. So education was very emphasized in my house.

Beth: They thought that was really important.

Gutierrez: They felt that was the only thing [] could take away from you. And it proved true.

Beth: Did they help you with problems at school?

Gutierrez: Yeah my mother was always aware if I was having any difficulty or trying to get me a tutor or this or that. She was watching pretty close.

Beth: Did you or your brother stay in school longer? Or was it about the same amount of time?

Gutierrez: 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 in pharmacy school at the [] university. There were so many problems at home with [moms] and all these sorts of things so 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 going to marry a stupid []" You either go back to school or forget. 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 all these types of things. So he started working on it- and now he's a pilot.

Beth: So he became a mechanical engineer and then he- so he probably ended up the same [] as you did.

Gutierrez: Right trouble he went into a completely different field of what he was going to be. There was going to be another pharmacist in the family!

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

Gutierrez: No it was equal. When it came to that it was equal.

Beth: You both went.

Gutierrez: Yeah.

Beth: Did you participate in school activities at all?

Gutierrez: Yeah.

Beth: What kind- did they have clubs?

Gutierrez: There was not so many organized things. But whatever there was, I would participate. We didn't have the sorority houses, but it was something a little bit close to it. So we would participate in things and... it was not as organized as it is over here.

Beth: And you had parties and things-

Gutierrez: We had parties and yeah. We would get together, it was called [Asado] it was not such thing [Asado] means taking over you know. And what we would say is "Well, let's have a party at such and such house." Such and such house was not supposed to know we were going to have a party there. She knew you know. And then I would bring the potato chips and she would bring dips and other one would bring ham and those types of things. So we got together and there was no burden on anybody. It was just the person who had to clean it afterwards. But it was fun.

Beth: Can you think of any differences between life when you came into the United States and that of Ana and [Leida] now?

Gutierrez: In which way?

Beth: Say for instance, when you first come over you were married and you had two small children. Do you think you had a lot different views when [] Leida gets married or if she gets married, whatever she's doing?

Gutierrez: If I had different views that... Well, 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.

Beth: Well you seem like you mellow down [and get real tight] like my grandpa.

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 your way of thinking changes so much because I look at things today that I wished would have happened to me today, instead of 10 years ago. I would have handled it in so many different ways. I really don't know how to answer that question.

Beth: Do you have any different customs that we don't celebrate here? That you saw at break?

Gutierrez: You thinking like Christmas?

Beth: Mhmm.

Gutierrez: Okay we had Christmas, but on the 25th we did not get out gifts. We got our gifts on the 6th of January. Which is when, religiously, the wise man comes. You know the three wise men came at the time.

Beth: Oh okay so rather than the Jesus's birth it was when the wise men arrived...

Gutierrez: Right with the gifts. That made it really terrible on us because it was always the day we go back to school. So we got our gifts today, as a child you want to play with them? No you got to go back to school the next day. So that was a different custom.

Beth: Did you do that with Ana or Leida?

Gutierrez: No.

Beth: So they probably celebrate Christmas in their homes?

Gutierrez: Actually Leida and Ana will be more American than ever Cubans. Because there were three and four years [old], so they don't remember anything back home. And I have tried to blend in to the society I am going to live for the rest of my lives. They're homes are going to be the typical American family.

Beth: Do you think you were talking about some different foods that were served for Christmas or Thanksgiving.

Gutierrez: Our typical Christmas meal back home, which we always did the 24th at night, would consist of rice, black beans, pork, salad, and- imported from Spain... [turrones]. There's different types. They are very rich, so you eat a little piece and you had enough of it. Mostly they are made of almonds and egg yolk. That's one thing we still buy. I have to make it on the 25th because I work on the 24th. But our meal is still traditional.

Beth: Do you think they will do that in their home possibly?

Gutierrez: I don't think so. I think the tradition is going to be over with my generation. I think their meal is going to be the turkey and you know. If they do it, it would be their way. Unless they would marry a Cuban, but if it was with any other country they would still do it the American way.

Beth: Think of the kind of lives your children are living, and what do you think about the best things are in their life right now? As compared to if you were to have stayed there?

Gutierrez: Well, I think they are a little bit more independent than I was. Which, like everything in life has advantages and disadvantages. You pay a price for everything, I got up out of work to 22 or 23 years old. I never have worked, I was sheltered. So they haven't had it as easy as I have had it. But they have had it an

independent or freedom, more to say about their lives than what I have to say about mine.

Beth: If you were to do something to help them, what would it be?

Gutierrez: I try to help them as much as possible. But I think that's what all mothers do. We try to help our children as much as possible, but there are certain things you just can't help. You have to let them find out the hard way sometimes. You want to help them and sometimes you can't say it, because you sound like how [] my mother is. Not how wise, that's not the word. Oh she knows too much. And it's not that. You have lived it already, you have [bumped] your head on the wall 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 but that's the way it is.

Beth: What is life here like for people from your country? Do you think the majority from the people of Cuba think it's good? Or are a lot of them having trouble?

Gutierrez: I think most of the people think it's good. Most of the people will agree with me that the pace of life is completely different. There was a saying that you either adjust or you don't make it. So we have to adjust. It's a fact. Most of us has adjusted pretty good.

Beth: Do you feel close to Cuba at all?

Gutierrez: Well for many years I did. It was the dream of the country left behind. It will always be my country; I have the feeling of my country. It's hard to understand why- after so many years when there's nothing left, where there's nothing I care about, but it's in your country. I guess your root. It's a feeling.

Beth: Do you have relatives or friends still there?

Gutierrez: I have very few relatives left. An uncle, an aunt, and [two] cousins, very few.

Beth: Do you have any friends there? Probably not because-

Gutierrez: Not too many left anymore, the few I have left, there's not too much [in common] it's been too many years away from each other.

Beth: Do you feel you were affected by what happens there? Like anything in the government, does it affect you or is it more detach.

Gutierrez: At this point, [Cuba] has become an international problem. So it definitely affects me.

Beth: Do you think it affects you more as an American?

Gutierrez: Right, it affects me more as an American citizen. I feel like Cuba is a threat to the world now.

Beth: You probably know more than some of us would.

Gutierrez: Right because I try to keep updated, although there were many years I tried not to hear the name. I did not want to hear Cuba; I did not want to hear anything that would have to do with it. I wanted to forget.

Beth: You wanted to work on your life here and-

Gutierrez: That's it. 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 have to forget about there and start a new life. I was still hanging on to the things I left behind because that and that and that- I realized there was nothing there. It was all stuck in my mind you know.

Beth: So now you think of yourself as a Cuban-American?

Gutierrez: No not really-

Beth: Or do you think of yourself as an American?

Gutierrez: No... I think of myself as an American citizen born in Cuba. I really don't like that Mexican-American, or Cuba-American. I don't think there's such a thing.

Beth: What about Ana and Leida?

Gutierrez: They are just two Americans. That's it. They don't have any memories.

Beth: So have your attitudes towards Cuba changed over time? Or do you think it's just a matter of deciding that you are living here now?

Gutierrez: That's it. It's a matter of deciding on living here and not having to forget about there because there's nothing there. What I have in my mind what I dream of- it doesn't exist anymore. It's [over].

Beth: So you don't really feel differently about Cuba you just feel...

Gutierrez: Well I feel hate... about who is there right now. I don't feel hate about the country.

Beth: So you feel they are changing your...

Gutierrez: Exactly, they are changing what I had. So what I really feel is hate. 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.

Beth: It's your country and you don't...

Gutierrez: Right I don't want to see my country in the newspaper. The other night I was watching TV and the troops of the Cuban and Russian had been in [Ethiopia] and I don't like that. I want to remember the country I lived in, nice and peaceful. Not that when I left it was already a mess. When I grew up-

Beth: You probably still had hope-

Gutierrez: Yes I did have hope when I left. I thought it was a [metaphor] 4 or 5 months I'll be back. It was a matter of 6 months at the most. And the 6 months became a year, two years, and three years. Russia was out of the country and all these types of things.

Beth: Have you gone back to visit?

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

Beth: So you would be []. If the situation changed and it did go back to...

Gutierrez: If Russia would be out of Cuba and its 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. I've had it. Starting from scratch, that's the most horrible thing there is.

Beth: You didn't really live in a neighborhood with Cubans, when you came over very much right?

Gutierrez: In Florida? In Florida there was the same block with another Cuban. There was nobody else. It's not like today that they're neighborhoods and neighborhoods where you don't hear one word of English. Well except for Spanish, because of the amount of refugees there are right now.

Beth: Do you think that's good for the people that's living there?

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, but they can't... start a new life. So they have to hold on to the old [land] as much as they can. You have to see different situations you know. You got a person at 60 or 70 years old, [] he can't. He has to hang on to his own as much as he can.

Beth: Was there any other time you felt discriminated against on account of your background?

Gutierrez: 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 didn't have any brains to know what's going on, then what do you care about what he thinks or she thinks? That was the attitude I give.

Beth: That's how you handled it-

Gutierrez: Yeah, that's it. Well, a hundred accepts me but one doesn't. Who cares about that one? That's the way I took it. So it was very easy for me in that way. I never really felt discriminated.

Beth: Just an odd person there-

Gutierrez: It was one in a hundred so who cared about more?

Beth: Have you participated in any organizations or groups?

Gutierrez: After I graduated from USC, I was board member of [Cusan] this was a support group for the school of Pharmacy. So I started participating, attending the board meetings. And then I became a member of the California Pharmaceutical too. And then I became a member of the [East Los Angeles] now [I'm covering] secretary [] pharmacists. So I really try to participate in something, I can't handle too many things at the same time, because I have too many things as it is.

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

Gutierrez: For many years there was no chance for any recreational things. It was working, going to school, and then after I went to school it was trying- I never forgot the day I graduated and got my license and all I had in the back was 5 dollars. So it was trying to get out of where I was. It was not a ghetto, but it's not the vibe I wanted for my family. So it was working 24 hours a day almost. It wasn't really 24 hours-

Beth: It felt like it for sure-

Gutierrez: Let's put it this way, I have rolled down a hill. I was determined to climb up that hill again.

Beth: Because you had just been living here and –

Gutierrez: Exactly. I just couldn't feel happy being at the bottom of the hill. Maybe not climb up quite as high as I was when I came from back home because that took many years. At least I wanted to be where I am today. I'm very happy with where I am today. But it took []

Beth: Have you ever worked part time? I know you worked part time.

Gutierrez: Yes I have worked full time and part time. After I got out of the SC, I started working for [Sava]. That was my steady job because I worked 2 or 3 weeks required until [Sava] hired me. Once they hired me, this was around June. Then in September, I started working full time for [Sava] and part time for another pharmacy. So I could save some money.

Beth: How many hours did you have to-

Gutierrez: Okay the way I would combine it, I had off Wednesdays and Sundays, and Wednesdays and Thursdays every other week. It was work half way. So the week I had off Wednesday, I worked in the morning until about 3 o'clock. At 3 o'clock I took off so I could pick up the girls from school and bring them home. It was my day off so I wanted to be with them. Some other time I would work at this other pharmacy from 9 to 12. I got off at 12, grab something on the way to eat, and start working at 1. It was very close to the house so I would have lunch at 4:35, well early dinner with the girls. That's the way I did it. So when I had Wednesday and Thursday in the middle of the week, I would work those two mornings until three. So after a year and a half it was getting to me. It was working too many hours and up-keeping the home and picking up the girls at school and-

Beth: Now what time did you get off work usually? Would the girls come home by themselves-?

Gutierrez: When I was off, I would pick them up. And if not, they had another friend that would arrive home. So either-

Beth: Then they would stay by themselves here or...

Gutierrez: No definitely still living in [] Sometimes they would stay with a babysitter, until I could pick them up. We worked it around that way, whichever schedule I had at the time. Sometimes it was 1 to 10; sometimes I would be off at 5 o'clock.

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

Gutierrez: It was very hard. When I started working in [Savan] I thought I was in heaven. Because at least I knew what was going to be for that week. So I could plan the whole week. So this day you're going to stay with the babysitter, this day I pick you up. This day so and so is bringing you home. Maybe when they were 10 or 11, they would stay at home by themselves you know. They were already growing up.

Beth: Did you work in the department store or...?

Gutierrez: I worked at [Thrift] when I came here [] so they hired me first just as relief. I worked one day at one store and another day, another store. Maybe then I wouldn't work two days, then they work me another week.

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

Gutierrez: Oh I hated it, and this went on for about 6 months. I felt like I was a fireman you know. Anytime the telephone rang, I had to have my things prepared, just go to such and such store and be there at 2 o'clock or wherever. So whatever there was somebody sick, that was where they would send me. So after 6 months, I

was getting pretty tired so I was talking to this fella. When am I going to get a steady job? So then I got a steady job, two or three weeks after that. Maybe I should have opened up my mouth before but I was not experienced you know. And I took 6 months off, I dished it out and I took it. So that was it, it was very convenient for them. They don't care, they needed a relief and as long as 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 [].

Beth: Was that better then or...?

Gutierrez: Well it was a pretty quiet neighborhood, but for me it was great. It was 20 minutes from my house and I could [plan] my life. It wasn't like this calling the babysitter, "in half an hour I'm dropping the kids over there!" and this type of thing.

Beth: Was it hard for you after having been trained and working as a professional pharmacist, to go in and work at the counter at [Thrifsters] or...?

Gutierrez: I had to take whatever came. And I was going to take it, with the idea that I wasn't going to stay there. That I had to get back my license to know- one day the manager of that store he called me and said "Gutierrez, why are you trying so hard to get into [nursing]? They have turned you down so many times." I said, "I don't care". I'm going to keep trying; he just felt I was fighting a lost battle. And he probably meant great. But I'm not going to give in, that's it.

[side conversation]

Gutierrez: For example, it's when I worked over this weekend and when I worked the store. They would send me sometimes to the [] to the back []. I'm []. The customers you got was [] and drunk. I hated it. But I made up my mind, what can I do. I have to feed the children, so that's it!

Beth: When did you get your first paying job? How old were you?

Gutierrez: Um 21?

Beth: And then you didn't work before you were married?

Gutierrez: Yes I worked a couple years-

Beth: - Oh you worked before you got married.

Gutierrez: Yeah because I didn't get married until I was 23.

Beth: Did you stop working when you got married?

Gutierrez: No I worked until- I had a very easy job back home. I would just work half day. So when Leida was born, I didn't work at all for about 7 or 8 months. Then I would leave [] and all she did was take care of the child so I think []. So there was no problem with that, because she was left at home with the maid- it was a very steady feeling.

Beth: Did you enjoy working?

Gutierrez: Yes I did. I enjoy my job, I really do.

Beth: What do you find most satisfying about your [].

Gutierrez: It's the relationship with the people. I enjoy it. I really do like working with people.

Beth: What's the least satisfying?

Gutierrez: Maybe seeing things that I just-

[Tape cuts off]

[Tape 2 starts]

Beth: Okay the welfare program?

Gutierrez: I feel like I have no say, there's nothing I can do about it. I see those 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. But I just can't see any 21 year old having one child, one father, and a job. Getting a welfare check when I'm working part and paying taxes. Whether I feel bad, better, worse, or great; I have to put up with all the work. So Ana we would go into the medical field, there's a lot of things I see that I don't like and I have no control over it. So I just have to play the game. That's the part that I don't enjoy.

Beth: Do you think you would have worked if you stayed or..?

Gutierrez: I would have worked part time like I was. It was working 8 to 1.

Beth: When you worked after you were married, you had help at home with the chores for a while...

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

Beth: And then when you came here, you didn't- that was it.

Gutierrez: []

Beth: When you first held a job, did you feel only certain types of jobs were available to you as a woman?

Gutierrez: I never thought of cutting trees or you know. I wouldn't drive a bus or anything like that. Or go into a factory and do some type of job if I could do it, or working in a department store- Thrifty came up like any other place, but I thought of jobs that I could do.

Beth: When you thought you were going to be a physician you thought that you would be able to do that right? But you just didn't want it- it was acceptable then for women?

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.

Beth: Now did you get married in Cuba?

Gutierrez: Right.

Beth: And how did you meet your husband?

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 [only] remember him as a child, 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 and vice versa. So that was the only way I remember him.

Beth: Did you date him very long?

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

Beth: When you were engaged were you allowed to go out without a chaperone?

Gutierrez: Nope. That's it. I'll never forget 4 days before the wedding where the wedding []. 14th of July and all that. Something came up about having to see some part of the furniture that they have not finished. So I wanted to go with him just by myself, that was it. It was a no. You get used to it.

Beth: Would they let you go by yourself? Or would you [] could you have just gone over and looked at the thing by yourself?

Gutierrez: I could've gone by myself-

Beth: But it was just that they didn't want you going with him?

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

Beth: Was your decision to marry influenced by your parents at all?

Gutierrez: Not really.

Beth: What kind of job did he have?

Gutierrez: Okay at the time, when we married, he was his first year at CPA. So he had about 3 to 4 more years and he was going to school. In 1959 we finished school so we didn't get to enjoy much of his CPA [payroll] because he was [] a couple years after that we left.

Beth: Did he change jobs after that?

Gutierrez: Well he came over here again. Either he went back to school or he could forget about his degree. So he started working for a [] security. And I don't know why he never wanted to go back and get his degree. I guess it was a lack of ambition? But he never got that degree back.

Beth: So he probably worked using his skills there but he never had any-

Gutierrez: Exactly. It was great for the bank- they were employing a CPA doing another job so it was perfect for them, but it wasn't perfect for him.

Beth: How did his job compare with the other men from Cuba did when they [came out]?

Gutierrez: Well it was [] he had a job in Florida. It was making sandwiches in a restaurant you know. It was just a little coffee shop. I don't think he ever sliced a ham back home. That was his first job here because when he got here, at the very beginning he went out with a tie and jacket. He couldn't find a job in Florida, in Miami. There were no jobs available, where they could employ him. No language, no [] the degree was not of any value over here. We had to do

something because with 100\$ at the refugee center was giving us, and the food. That was really just [] We started working at a coffee shop and that's what he would do- sandwiches.

Beth: After you got married, which two of you made more of a decision? Did you make more decisions or did you make them together?

Gutierrez: In most houses, the women usually has more to do with the children. With [Leida] and Ana I was more or less [ticked] Although when we got divorced they were just about 7 or 8 years old, so they were still very little. From there on it was my total responsibility.

Beth: How did you divide responsibilities? Did you take care of cooking and cleaning-?

Gutierrez: With the background we had back home, men had nothing to do with the house. It was either the women ran the house and took care of the cleaning and there was always a maid. In my case it was the maid that would take care of the house, I would make sure she would did that and whatever had to be done. So he really had no responsibilities when it came to that part. We didn't have to divide anything.

Beth: How did you resolve your differences?

Gutierrez: So far we haven't really been talking about any differences. It was a pattern, he was just the provider.

Beth: Are your child rearing practices different from your mothers? In other words, did you raise your children differently than when you were raised?

Gutierrez: Yes.

Beth: Probably a lot because of the outside environment.

Gutierrez: Exactly. [] If you asked my children, they probably feel that I have been strict with them. I don't feel I have been, compared to what I had.

Beth: Did you compromise a lot on...

Gutierrez: Well I have to give in a bit, times have gone by, things have changed. We're living in a different era, we live in a different environment. So I have to make my adjustments. It's a fact, I have to make my adjustments. They have to also adjust to me for a little bit.

Beth: Were your children very demanding of you?

Gutierrez: In which way?

Beth: Time, I'm sure-

Gutierrez: I have been a refugee, I have worked hard, I have done lots of things. But I feel the most demanding job I have had in my whole life was in making a [family]. It's very hard.

Beth: Did your husband realize how demanding the children can be.

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

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

Gutierrez: I try to. They were pretty good children at school, I never had any problems with Leida and Ana. Having to stay with them after school for them to do this and this- I don't know why, they have been pretty good. They really haven't been bad kids you know.

Beth: Did relations with your own family change after you got married?

Gutierrez: I don't really think so, it was about the same.

Beth: What was your greatest satisfaction as a mother?

Gutierrez: Well I think as the years go by, you feel a constant satisfaction. Seeing your children grow, you see them going someplace, graduating, starting a new life; it's a constant reward after demanding- it's a constant reward.

Beth: What were your greatest concerns as a mother?

Gutierrez: Well I guess there's one for every day of the week.

Beth: (laughs)

Gutierrez: The greatest concern is first being able to support them, see them grow-

Beth: Financially?

Gutierrez: Right. Be able to go to school, financially be able to face the demands of money- wise the school has imposed on me. It's been one day after the other, it's been constantly through many years. Now I feel that I'm trying to breathe again. That's the feeling I have.

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

Gutierrez: I think being able to raise my two girls and see that they have gone to school, they're graduating- seeing that they want to do something for themselves.

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

Gutierrez: Everybody tries to, as soon as you get into your teens you want to be independent although everyday life you just can't. I really can't pinpoint where.

Beth: How does this compare when you were young? Are they more independent?

Gutierrez: Sure, quite a bit.

Beth: []

Gutierrez: When I was back home and I was going to do something, I would have to ask permission. I have a different relation with my girls. They don't ask me permission, they tell me, "I'm going to do it." It's just different.

Beth: What were your main concerns as they began to go more out on their own?

Gutierrez: 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 another. Sometimes you liked the end result and some others you don't but it works out anyway. I really can't pinpoint one thing.

Beth: Do you feel you gave up your own interest while you were raising your children?

Gutierrez: In a way you have to. I have years ahead of me that's going to be a different type of life. These years, I felt the responsibilities and I just didn't want to [pass] it all. I just wanted to fulfill what I could in my duty to do.

Beth: Do you see your brother much?

Gutierrez: [whenever we] really can because he's in Tennessee. He lived many years here in California, then he moved around about 3 or 4 times, but now he's in Tennessee. So if I go out to some place, I try to stop and see him even if it's just a couple of days.

Beth: Do you talk to him about the way you raised your family?

Gutierrez: He lived with us until we got married, so for him, the girls are a part of his life. It's not like another niece you know. They were babies and they would climb and jump on top of him. He would play with them. Over the phone, we talk every other week. Usually my [] would do the calling, he's the one that can afford the money. He doesn't have to put anybody through school right now.

Beth: Did your children's activities sometimes involve you in different activities?

Gutierrez: Oh yes, for example they were in [middle] school and I try to be quite active with the school and take care of the periods 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 would work late at night I would offer my service in the morning and I try to be very involved in the school. That's one thing I missed when they started high school. It was [] by there.

Beth: Ana told me you used to go and see her football sometimes.

Gutierrez: Oh yes that I did. But it's a different thing-

Beth: You just watch-

Gutierrez: Right. I didn't help out, I would watch. I would get off work and maybe run- In high school, it was different, once they started driving that was it you know.

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

Gutierrez: Well very unhappy.

Beth: [] Think of your life after you were first married, what did you expect to get out of life then? Did your expectations change?

Gutierrez: I guess everybody gets married. Expect to have marriage to not last forever. To be together and raise a family and-

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

Gutierrez: My dream was 4 kids. But when you start getting practical, you have to just cut down the numbers you had.

Beth: Were the goals you had for your family different from your parents?

Gutierrez: I guess not very much different because my goal was the same as my mother- I wanted my [children] to have an education. With the experience I have that's

the only things I have left when I []. It took me x amount of years to get it back, but it was there. All the material things were gone, and an hour trip going from Cuba to Miami. There was no material things left at all, all they let us bring were clothes and that was it.

Beth: Do you think your goals were different from other people from your country of your age? For instance, before you thought you were going to leave, would your goals have been different then?

Gutierrez: Well who were my friends? They were just- most of the girls have gone to pharmacy school, we had a group of 4 or 5 and we all went through pharmacy school together. We more or less got married within a couple of years of each other. So our children were more or less [the same age]. Seems like their goals have been about the same as my goals at the time.

Beth: In general did your husband think that an education was important also? Or was he different on that?

Gutierrez: At the time he did think education was important. What happened after? I don't know.

[Tape stops]

[Tape starts]

Beth: Have you become a US citizen Ana?

Ana?: [11 years] []

Beth: So you have been here about 10 years?

Gutierrez: I got out of school in '68, I still wasn't a citizen. Good guess is late '69 or early '70.

Beth: How do you feel about the United States?

Gutierrez: I feel that it's the greatest country in the world to live in. The trouble is the people don't know it.

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

Gutierrez: If I looked back to my years before my 40s, all I can remember after 28-40 is struggling. So I don't care for all those years, so I think my 40s have been my most happiest years.

Beth: Can you think of some times that great change happened that really changed your life or gave it new directions?

Gutierrez: In 1962 when I came to the States, it was a completely change of direction.

Beth: Did the depression affect you or your family?

Gutierrez: It did affect my parents, that's when my father came over here. They stayed for about 7 years and then [never went back home]

Beth: And World War 2? Did that affect you at all?

Gutierrez: I was just about 8 years old, I didn't pay too much attention to it, the only thing I can remember, is the day it ended. There was rejoice back home, people [] although we were not fighting or anything. Everybody was happy that it was over.

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

Gutierrez: Maybe when we purchased this house it made kind of a turning point.

Beth: When did you get your house?

Gutierrez: [1971] we've been here for 9 years. It was kind of the turning point. Kind of a point where we started climbing up the hills again.

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

Gutierrez: Oh yes!

Beth: What do you think of it?

Gutierrez: It has its good things and its bad things maybe myself belonging to another generation that is not like yours right now. I think we should have freedom up to a certain point. But if we are going to get too much freedom, we are going to lose a lot of what we have right now, because if we want to be equal to men then we have to be equal when it comes to the marriage, we are not going to be able to stay home and take care of our families. Because we are equal- We are just going to have to go out of work not the same way they go out and work so... I like to see liberation at a certain point. And we can't go too far, because we are going to be losing out in many things.

Beth: So you think as a women we would be ahead to keep some of the things that we have... like what for instance? Being able to stay home?

Gutierrez: Being able to stay home. There is certain privileges we still have. Even if we were still liberated and I feel like our liberation should be, when it comes to a job there should be no reason why they can have a man and a woman working the same job and having a different pay. If you want a job, and you're qualified for it, and if there's a man and he's not as qualified as you are, then 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 number of women in the job. You're not qualified, you don't get it. So I'm not 100% for women's liberation. I would like to have a man sheltering me a little bit.

[Tape Ends]

