

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Julia Garcia Moreno**

Interview Date: 01/30/2010

Interviewer: Diane L. Ware

Transcriber: Olga Barr

Location: St. Theresa Church, Sugar Land, TX

15 Pages



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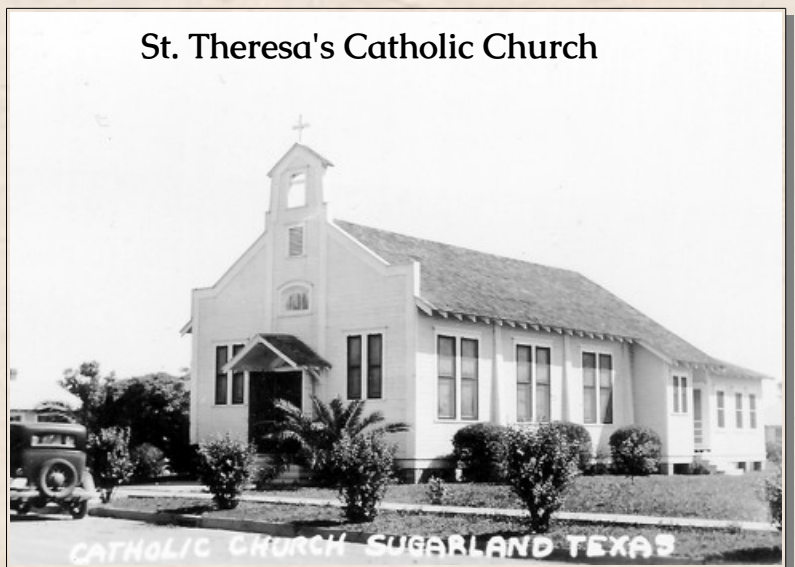
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St. Theresa's Catholic Church



Transcript

WARE: Let's start with some basic biographical information. When and where were you born?

MORENO: January 28, 1930

WARE: And where were you born?

MORENO: In the neighborhood. There were no doctors in Sugar Land at the time.

WARE: So who delivered you?

MORENO: It was a black lady, Mrs. Esther, Esther Fowler.

WARE: Esther Fowler? She was a black midwife? Did she deliver most of the babies in the area?

MORENO: Yes.

WARE: When you say the neighborhood, where exactly did you live?

MORENO: We used to live on Main Street, it was Ulrich Street.

WARE: And did you live there most of your childhood?

MORENO: Yes, all my life. [giggles]

WARE: Really.

MORENO: Yes, my parents came in 1908 to Sugar Land.

WARE: What brought your parents to Sugar Land? Did they come for work?

MORENO: Yes, to work.

WARE: What type of work did they do?

MORENO: Well my father used to work at the sugar refinery. And at that time we didn't even work, they stayed home with the kids, you know.

WARE: And when you say kids, how many kids were there at home?

MORENO: Ten.

WARE: Ten, okay. Are you the oldest or the youngest?

MORENO: No. My oldest sisters she's ninety-six. She used to work for the refinery too. And she left in 1951 to California. She's still living.

WARE: What is your oldest sister's name?

MORENO: Georgette.

WARE: Georgette. That's fascinating. Go ahead and name the rest of your brothers and sisters.

MORENO: Oh my brother, the second was my brother Manuel. He used to work for the refinery too. He's gone. You know he passed away already. And Lupe, she used to work there too. And my brother Charles, he went to the service in World War II. He used to work for the feed mill. You know we had a feed mill. And let's see. Mary, my sister, used to work for the refinery too. And my sister Hortense, she retired from the sugar refinery. I had a sister Adela, but she passed away when she was young.

WARE: Was she ill?

MORENO: Um hum.

WARE: Is that everybody?

MORENO: No. And my brother Eleno; he used to work for the canning plant when it was open. We had a canning plant on Main Street here.

WARE: Tell me about the canning plant.

MORENO: Well it used to can spinach, cabbage, saukraut, pork and beans, you know all kinds of foods. I used to work there too, for a while.

WARE: What did you do? What was your job at the canning plant?

MORENO: Cleaning...you know the spinach used to go in a belt and we used to pull out whatever was in the belt. Different things we used to do.

WARE: Did they grow the spinach here in Sugar Land?

MORENO: At that time, no, I don't think so. They used to bring it from the valley.

WARE: On the train?

MORENO: No, in trucks. Corn, they used to bring from the penitentiary at corn season.

WARE: Right.

MORENO: It was closed down. I think it was in seventies. Then I stayed sometime at home.

WARE: Did you have children?

MORENO: Oh yes, I had five.

WARE: Were they all born here in Sugar Land?

MORENO: Yes.

WARE: And were they delivered by a midwife?

MORENO: Noooo. [laughter]

WARE: It changed, didn't it?

MORENO: It did change a lot.

WARE: Where were they born?

MORENO: Let's see. My oldest son was born in Rosenberg Hospital, one of the oldest hospitals they had, the only one. And my daughter Terry, she was born in this hospital here in Sugar Land.

WARE: Eldridge Hospital?

MORENO: Uh huh. And let's see Carlos, Carlos was born there too, and Melba, my daughter Melba. And then my son Jeffery was born in Polly Ryon in Richmond.

WARE: Tell me about the medical care. Let's look at the medical care from both sides of the coin. In your childhood what was medical care like for you?

MORENO: I don't think there were any doctors. People used to give you home remedies, you know, for colds. Give you hot lemonade or soup, homemade cooked soup. So really we didn't see doctors too much. I didn't!

WARE: What if there was an emergency? Do you remember any emergencies?

MORENO: No.

WARE: Do you remember any other home remedies that folks used to use?

MORENO: [laughing] Some grease with...grease and what else? I really...I don't remember.

WARE: She would use the lard as a...

MORENO: Yeah.

WARE: And she would rub it on things.

MORENO: Uh huh.

WARE: Like what would she put it on?

MORENO: For colds you know, things like that. Lot of things I remember.

WARE: You mentioned Esther Fowler as the midwife who delivered you. Did she deliver your brothers and sisters as well?

MORENO: I think so.

WARE: Okay. Were there other midwives in the area?

MORENO: No, that I know of.

WARE: You said that your family lived over on Main Street but on Ulrich?

MORENO: Yes and I guessed we lived in Avenue D.

WARE: What year did you move to Avenue D? Do you remember?

MORENO: No.

WARE: During your childhood though, right?

MORENO: Yes.

WARE: Okay. Your parents were the first to come to Sugar Land. Did your grandparents or any of your aunts and uncles come to Sugar Land?

MORENO: One uncle on my mama's side and an uncle from my dad's side. They went back to Mexico, except my father.

WARE: What were your mother and father's names?

MORENO: My father was Ricardo Garcia. And my mother was Juanita.

WARE: Do you remember what type of job your dad did at the Sugar Land refinery?

MORENO: No.

WARE: Okay. Was your family members of any church?

MORENO: Oh yes! They were St. Theresa's (Catholic Church)

WARE: Always St. Theresa's? Where did St. Theresa's meet during your childhood?

MORENO: Fifth Street.

WARE: Tell me about what that church was like.

MORENO: It was a small wooden church. I remember we used to come to 7:00 mass mostly every day with my mother. [giggles] Rosary on Wednesdays. And we used to walk all the way down because we didn't have no cars at that time. We used to walk. Then later on it was moved to Seventh Street. We kept on coming.

WARE: Did your parents ever get a car?

MORENO: No, I don't remember because my father died in 1937. We only had mother.

WARE: Did your mother ever drive a car?

MORENO: No.

WARE: My mother never drove a car either. Your brothers and sisters were all born in Sugar Land.

MORENO: Except the oldest one, Georgette. She was born in Mexico.

WARE: Where in Mexico was your family from?

MORENO: I know it, but I forgot. What's the name? [pause while she thinks] Well I guess the state was Aguas Calientes.

WARE: Okay so you worked at the canning plant?

MORENO: Yes.

WARE: And about what years did you work there?

MORENO: Oh, I think it was the '60s. I believe it was the '60s and the '70s. I didn't work that long maybe a few years you know.

WARE: If you had children you must have had a spouse. Where did your spouse work?

MORENO: Oh my husband came out from the army and he was working in Houston.

WARE: Did he ever work in Sugar Land?

MORENO: Um Um.

WARE: How did you meet him?

MORENO: We didn't have no place to go here in Sugar Land and they had the theatres over there in Rosenberg. We used to go to the movies.

WARE: And what was it called?

MORENO: Lowes I guess the theatre, and the other one. I don't remember the name of the other one.

WARE: So you met him in Rosenberg? At a movie theatre.

MORENO: Well, yes I guess [laughter].

WARE: And what year did you meet and get married?

MORENO: Well, I met him in 19...I think it was forty-three. But I was with my sister. I think I was only thirteen at the time. And then when he came back I was sixteen.

WARE: Okay, very good. So you married in 1946?

MORENO: Um hum.

WARE: Where did you get married?

MORENO: In Guadalupe Church in Rosenberg.

WARE: Your husband served in the Army. Did a lot of the boys in Sugar Land serve in the military?

MORENO: Oh yes.

WARE: Tell me about some of those that served that you remember.

MORENO: George MORENO, Larry Hernandez, Mike Hernandez. I think it was Manuel Carillo, and Johnny Carillo, brothers.

WARE: Was it very common for the young men to go into the service? That most of them go into the service?

MORENO: Yes. They drafted you know. I still remember when the Jeep came and picked up my oldest brother. The house that we used to live in, the steps were high steps, you know. And the Jeep just stopped in front of the steps and he just jumped in the Jeep and left. But he came out okay. He was in the South Pacific, Guam. But he came out okay. My brother he was in Germany. So he came out okay. But he died in the Texas City disaster in 1947. Was it '47?

WARE: Yes. He was one of the people that died in the Texas City disaster?

Which brother was that?

MORENO: Well, his real name was Salome, but we called him Charlie. But you can put Salome because that's his real name.

WARE: Yeah.

MORENO: In didn't happen over there (in the war) but it happened here (in Texas).

WARE: Did many Sugar Land, young men die during, in the service?

MORENO: I think Manuel Carrillo.

WARE: Okay, so not many but some?

MORENO: Yes, some.

WARE: How did the town react when they lost someone?

MORENO: They were all sad, you know, because it was a small community. Everybody knew each other. The community was very close, respectable you know. People used to take it real hard. My mother couldn't sleep at night. That's when she learned how to smoke. [laughing] [inaudible] She smoked a lot.

WARE: So she started smoking when your brothers went away to war.

MORENO: Um hum. My brother was from Mexico, my brother Manuel. He came when he was fifteen days old. And they took him in. But they (the military) never asked him if he was an American citizen or not. He was only fifteen days old so...

WARE: So they drafted him even though he wasn't technically an American citizen?

MORENO: At the time I don't think they asked questions. But he served. We were proud that he served his country. Well this is our country.

WARE: Right, this is where you live. [laughter] When your brothers went away to the service did you have any kind of party or anything before they went?

MORENO: Oh no, at that time we didn't have no parties or anything like that.

WARE: What about when they came home?

MORENO: Nuh huh.

WARE: You mentioned that Manuel Carrillo was killed in the service. Tell me, was there was a funeral? What did people do when there was a death of someone in your neighborhood?

MORENO: Well, I don't think they brought him back or anything like that. I don't remember that, you know, because he was a whole lot older. Those people were a whole lot older than me you know. I just know that they went to the service because they still have relatives here.

WARE: After you got married where did you live?

MORENO: In Rosenberg. Well about a year and a half, then I came back.

WARE: And what house did you live in when you moved back?

MORENO: I was renting a little house here in the neighborhood.

WARE: Okay, do you remember what street it was on?

MORENO: Um hum, Ulrich.

WARE: And did you stay there most of your marriage?

MORENO: Yes, the same house. Well I went to Chicago I think in '51 but we came back in a couple of years because I didn't like it. I didn't like the big city. It was too much for me.

WARE: Okay, so you chose to move back to Sugar Land? Why did you choose to move back to Sugar Land other than the fact that it wasn't a big city?

MORENO: Well, it was my family, 'cuz since we didn't have uncles, no aunts, or nobody, just my momma. So I really came back on account of my momma and my family. That's the part of it that I missed most, my family.

WARE: What year did your mother pass?

MORENO: I think it was '80, '84 I believe. I'm not too sure.

WARE: So about how old was your mother when she passed,?

MORENO: About ninety-two or something like that. She was a strong women.

WARE: Sounds like she had to be a strong woman.

MORENO: Yes, she was a mother and father to us.

WARE: After your father passed away did your mother have to work?

MORENO: There were no jobs here in Sugar Land for women, really. So she didn't work. My brothers did, my two oldest brothers and then my sisters started working. During World War II that's when women started working at the sugar refinery, my sisters.

WARE: Okay, are you one of the younger children?

MORENO: I'm the third one of the youngest.

MORENO: I still have my youngest sister living, Annie. She lives in the neighborhood.

WARE: What is your favorite memory about growing up in Sugar Land?

MORENO: Well, I guess coming to church that's all we did because we had no place to go. I used to go with my sister on Saturdays and Sundays, since we didn't have no place to go. All the girls used to come to the (Sugar Land train) depot and see the soldiers pass by. [laughter] I was kind of young. I think I was about ten or eleven years old and I used to play in the depot a lot. The girls we used to go watch the soldiers pass by because the trains sometimes used to stop.

WARE: Did you ever ride the train?

MORENO: Oh yes, I did. Not that one! To Chicago. I came back to see my mom and go back.

WARE: And then you came back and stayed.

MORENO: And stayed for good. Oh I came back and never went back. [laughter]

WARE: What are some of the major changes that you noticed in Sugar Land during your lifetime?

MORENO: Oh, it's changed quite a bit. Not country no more [laughs].

'Cuz there used to be, you know, now we have shopping centers everywhere. And way back it was only three neighborhoods and everybody knew each other. Now these days you hardly know anybody.

WARE: What were the three neighborhoods?

MORENO: The Hill, and ours was Mayfield Park, and Brooks Street. We called Brooks Street 'the other side'.

WARE: Okay. [laughter] What did your family do for recreation? What kind of fun things did you do when you were a child?

MORENO: Oh, we used to play baseball the front yard. I don't remember. All I remember that that one time when I was already married. Mrs. Flores' husband used to be the driver...we had an old bus here, had a little old bus. He used to drive it. And he used to be our coach, [laughter] Mr. Flores. We used to go to Houston to play softball over there. It was a lot of fun.

WARE: So the church had a softball team?

MORENO: At the time only us Hispanics. There were a few married ladies and the rest of them were teenagers, you know.

WARE: So you played softball?

MORENO: I did play with my daughter and Mr. Flores two daughters, and Mrs. Carillo, and Maggie Garcia, her name was Margaret.

WARE: Tell me about what years were those that you played, played softball.

MORENO: Well I think my daughter was only about twelve, fourteen. I don't remember. It was seventies I guess, '75, '78, something like that.

WARE: I've never heard that before. Where did you and your brothers and sisters go to school?

MORENO: Well, we went into the neighborhood school. And then I went to Lakeview School.

WARE: How old were you when you came over to Lakeview?

MORENO: Let's see, maybe thirteen or twelve.

WARE: Did you older brothers and sisters just go to school in the neighborhood or did they come over to Lakeview also?

MORENO: The oldest ones, I don't know. I know Hortense came to this one and I think Mary too. I was transferred to Lakeview when I was in the fourth grade, I believe.

WARE: And how high did you go in school? How high did most people go?

MORENO: I went up to the seventh grade then I quit. We used to walk all the way around the refinery to Lakeview.

WARE: What was your mother's reaction when you quit?

MORENO: Well, she didn't like it.

WARE: Did she try to get you to go back?

MORENO: No, I didn't want to go.

WARE: I'm a mother I understand. [laughter] Did any of your brothers or sisters go all the way through school?

MORENO: No.

WARE: Tell me how things were different before and after integration in the 1960s.

MORENO: I don't remember.

WARE: Where your mother go shopping?

MORENO: Here in town, in the mercantile?

WARE: Okay. Can you tell me what the mercantile was like?

MORENO: Well, they had groceries one side and the dry goods in the other side. Everything was together; furniture was in the back. In the same store they had everything.

WARE: Did your mother ever send you shopping there?

MORENO: Sometimes to get whatever she needed. Sometimes. We used to walk.
[laughter]

WARE: And carry things home.

MORENO: Oh yes!

WARE: When you went shopping at the grocery store, would you pay with money, or would you just put in on her bill?

MORENO: No, they used coupons; tablets of coupons of five dollars and ten dollars, I believe. That's how we used to buy the groceries and the dry goods and whatever. Coupons were money, you know. Ten cents and five cents, and one penny.

WARE: Did Imperial make those coupons?

MORENO: Yeah.

WARE: I don't think I've ever seen those. That would be very interesting to see. Did your mother ever shop outside of Sugar Land?

MORENO: Later on the 70s to 80s she went shopping with my sisters, you know. But way back, nobody went out, until they had cars. Nobody had cars, maybe horses [laughs].

WARE: Right, it sounds like you walked to your job, and you walked to school.

MORENO: Yeah, walked to church. And people wasn't too big at the time.

WARE: Got a lot of exercise.

MORENO: We also wore jeans, cotton jeans, you know.

WARE: Right.

MORENO: Bernie Road was nothing but gravel, you know. You could hear those wagons at five o'clock in the morning rolling. You could hear them from my house.

WARE: The wagons to the cotton gin?

MORENO: Um hum.

WARE: Tell me about the cotton gin. What do you remember about it?

MORENO: Well, it was where Nalco's is now, right in the front. The depot was here and it was just across the depot. And the clinic, they had a clinic on this side. How can I explain it? It was a whole lot different, you know.

WARE: Right, so there was a clinic right there before Laura Eldridge Hospital was built?

MORENO: No, no, when there was Eldridge Hospital.

WARE: There was the hospital, but there was a clinic also.

MORENO: It was a clinic. I think in was the forties, I believe.

WARE: And who ran the clinic?

MORENO: Well, I knew it was Dr. Slaughter and Kuykendal, Dr. Kuykendal. But I don't know who ran it know because Imperial used to run everything. [laughter]

WARE: Did your children go to school in Sugar Land?

MORENO: Yes, uh huh.

WARE: Where did they go to school?

MORENO: Dulles High School. The five of them.

WARE: Did they graduate from high school.

MORENO: Yes, uh huh.

WARE: Good for you. And did they go to any local schools for elementary school.

MORENO: Yes, they went to Lakeview, all of them.

WARE: Did you write to your husband? Did he write to before you got married from the service? Do you have any of those letters?

MORENO: I threw them away. [laughter] The only thing I have from him is his old map from when he was in Germany. He was a staff sergeant and he used to have his old map when he was in Germany.

WARE: Neat.

WARE: Tell me about the dirt over in Mayfield Park. It is the best?

MORENO: The best from Sugar Land. Well you can grow anything, any kind of vegetable. My momma use to grow them. Everybody used to have a garden. The used to have peas, chickens, cows. When my father died he had a cow and a little calf. And my sister, Hortense, used to milk the cow [laughs]. And momma used to kill the pigs after my father died. She had pigs, kill the pigs.

WARE: She knew how to slaughter the pigs?

MORENO: Yeah. And we would have the cow slaughtered here. You know where the old telephone office was? In the back there was a slaughterhouse there.

MORENO: Yeah you can raise anything; I mean it's good dirt. You can grow anything there.

WARE: So what kind of crops did your mom grow there.

MORENO: Squash, corn, and spinach, and onions, garlic.

WARE: When you grew up did you eat meat very often?

MORENO: No, uh uh. They used to have their own chickens, you know. They used to grow everything in there.

WARE: That's great. Thank you.

Addendum from phone conversation 9-12-2014 with Jane Goodsill:

MORENO: There were German POWs in Sugar Land during World War II. Half of them were at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, the rest were at our school here. The school was empty and they used it for the POWs. They let the hedges around it grow really tall so nobody could see in. I was about 11. Neighborhood kids would go peek but we never could see anything.