

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Emilio Hernandez
At the home of Emilio Hernandez in Forest Grove
March 22,

Informant: Emilio Hernandez
Interviewer: Michael O'Rourke
Transcriber: Lauren Scher

M= Michael

E= Emilio

M= For the Washington County Historical Society, beginning an interview today, March 22nd, with Emilio Hernandez, did I pronounce your name correctly Emilio?

E= Yup.

M= And today's interview is taking place at Emilio's home in Forest Grove. I'd like to just, sort of start at the beginning here Emilio. When and where were you born?

E= I was born in McCallen, Texas.

M= Date?

E= June the 13th. 1919.

M= Okay, and what did your family do in McCallen?

E= Well my daddy, he was a regular carpenter.

M= Okay.

E= At the beginning of his life in the United States, because he was from Mexico, he was a sharecropper in a cotton field. Where they plant some cotton, you know, and 50/50 with their landlord.

M= So you do all the work and bring in the crop and spread it...

E= Well we was little ones you know, I have a brother older than I am and then myself, we were about the age. I was about 13 years old when I start working on the farm and then my brother he was 15. And we'd start working behind those cultivators you know, with a team of mules all day long. And we enjoyed our lives, our early life.

M= Yup, you had a good time as a boy then?

E= Yeah, we did. Uh-huh.

M= And your mother was a housewife?

E= Yeah. She was a housewife. She never worked.

M= She didn't work in the fields then either?

E= No.

M= And they both came originally from Mexico?

E= Yeah. I think they come in about 1915.

M= Okay.

E= 1915 they come in from Mexico.

M= Did they enter the country legally? Or were they...you don't know?

E= I don't know. I'm sorry, but I don't know how they come in..

M= Did you ever visit Mexico as a boy?

E= Yeah I was... I spent four years. Four years with an uncle of mine in Mexico.

M= Okay.

E= I was in El Monte a town in and then I went down and stayed in Guanajuato. I stayed in El Monte for two years and then I went and stayed in Guanajuato for two more years; two and a half years. Then I had to come in because I had to go into the service. In the army.

M= So you were a teenager then? When you lived in Mexico?

E= Yeah. Uh-huh. I was only 15.

M= Okay. Why did you go down to Mexico for those years?

E= Well I was raised by my grandfolks and uncles. And this uncle of mine that took me down to Mexico with him.

M= Now in your family, while you were growing up, was Spanish the language you spoke?

E= Yeah. All the time.

M= All the time?

E= Yeah.

M= And did your parents speak English though? They must have a little bit?

E= My daddy. My daddy used to speak the language. English.

M= And did you go to school then? In McCallum also?

E= Yeah. I went to six grades in McCallum, and then I went to four grades in Mexico. A school in Mexico.

M= Okay, the last four years of school then?

E= Uh huh.

M= And how did you find school in McCallum?

E= Pretty good. In those years there were pretty strong teachers. If you didn't do it right, they make you do it again. And if you didn't have good grades, it's too bad, you don't pass grades. You don't pass to the next grade. You know, you stay on the same grade until you pass everything and then you go.

M= Then you go on huh?

E= Go up. Even if you were 50 years old, if you don't know what you're doing, they don't pass you. And they were really strict. If you do something wrong, they punish you. And besides that, they send a message to your daddy what you did. And they tell your dad, or your mother, and sometimes, we didn't tell them. My dad or my mother. What we did wrong in school because we got whipped at school and then we'd go home and tell my mother or my dad what we did in school and we'd get a whip again. That's what we were afraid.

M= Do you remember any times that you were sent home? And what you were sent home for?

E= Yeah. One time, I'm going to tell you one thing. This teacher we used to have, he was smoking, and he was teaching us how to smoke and he rolled the **Bulldorn** cigarettes. **Bulldorn** tobacco. And he was, on the recess time, we used to go out to the outhouse, because those days we didn't have no toilet. You had outhouses. By the end of the **hill(?)** by the school field. And he rolled cigarettes and gave us cigarettes. And one day, I'll never forget it, one day I got off you know, I asked for permission to go out to the bathroom before the recess-time, about five or ten minutes. And he used to set, on the top of the outhouse, the tobacco, paper, and imagine, I got in the outhouse and got the tobacco and rolled my cigarette and light my cigarette. But I didn't put the match out and the outhouse was full of paper on the inside. I threw the match and the

outhouse caught on fire and burnt the outhouse. And that cost me three days, the hard labor, you know? The first day, that was... (starts laughing, inaudible) The one that told my daddy, and my daddy had to come in and build an outhouse for the school.

M= Oh yeah. Did you work with him to help him build the outhouse?

E= No because we were in the school. And we didn't have no busses. We had to walk. We had to walk about ten miles a day to school. Five in and five out. You know? Through the cotton fields or to the pastures. But we were a bunch of kids you know? But we had some good times. Good times. Did you learn English in school? Or did you have English before that.

E= No, I learned it through school.

M= Okay.

E= But I forgot it. Part of it. Of the English when I went to Mexico. Because of Mexico for four years and never practiced. And I forgot about it. Not all of it, but I forgot some of the English. And I had a hard time when I got back to go into the service. Because I had to go to come in the soonest. And they had me as a deserter from the army already because I went in '43, and the war started in '42. And as soon as I crossed the border, Headfield, I think was his name, the head of the policemen, they got me and put me in a car and took me to a local board. A local board where they had to sign in and reporting it to go into the service. And I remember that I went to sign up at this local board #2 in M---, Texas, December the twelfth. By January the third, I was a GI in Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. That fast.

M= That was pretty fast.

E= That was, that was pretty fast. And I thought I wasn't going to pass the exam because I couldn't speak English. And when I went through the exam, they told me they were going to put me on a Company C I think. So Company C or Company B, one of those two companies. They had all the ones that didn't talk English for three months, and school, and if at the end of the three months if you don't learn anything, they will send you home with a discharge. And I don't know what happened with me that they keep me on for a week in Fort Sam Houston. And they send me to a..... (inaudible), Florida. By Jacksonville, Florida. And we're supposed to take thirteen weeks of basic training and they only give us seven weeks. And then we pass through Camp Shanks, New York straight to go overseas.

M= Wow, everything was fast huh?

E= That's right.

M= What was basic training like?

E= It was pretty rough.

M= I'll bet.

E= Yeah, it was pretty rough. Pretty rough. It's rougher in the basic training and the boot camp then what your used to on the front.

E= In basic training, you have to use all these tactics that the corporals, captains give you or show you. In the service, you're going to defend yourself anyway you want to do it. You're going to have to do it by yourself.

M= So you're more on your own..

E= That's right.

M= And so you went to New York? And then you went overseas from there?

E= Oh yeah. We went from there...we landed on Omaha Beach, not Africa, on invasion morning.

M= What was the landing like?

E= Rough. Yeah it was really rough. Cause when you coming from the sea and to the open ground and you have a pill box, a sand box (?) it's pretty rough. And you walk right, like you're walking down the street you know? No protection on yourself. We had a lot of GI's, we had thousands and thousands of GI's....

(sound quality is poor. Cannot make out what E is saying)

...And sent off to the beach. But they were...

M= So you were under fire then when you made the landing?

E= Yeah. Yeah.

M= Uh huh. From German?

E= Germany. Yes. From Germany....well, I don't know. I hate...I don't like to talk about it but...what happened you know? What I saw...I don't know. You know...to bring back the memories I already forgot. I haven't forgot; but I've been trying to forget those memories.

M= So you fought in Africa for how long?

E= We fought in Africa, then from Africa, we went down to Sicily. From Sicily to France, and then from France to Germany.

M= Were you ever wounded?

E= No, thanks to God, that I'm never. And I was a first gunner on an air machine gun. We called them a water cooler air machine gun. They fill it up; the barrel is about four inches wide. I mean the diameter. And then they got the barrel inside and they fill it up with anti-freeze. Because if you fill it up with water; they evaporate. You know, and with the anti-freeze they don't evaporate.

M= To keep the gun cool then huh?

E= Uh-huh. Yeah. And that way you can fire or use it anytime because Germany and France get pretty cold; real cold. And we had the machine guns set up on the top of the ground and we were on our fox holes. We stayed in the fox hole... I think about 2-3 months we stayed in the fox holes.

M= Oh, that must have been rough too.

E= Yeah, all the winter of 1944 we were on our Rhein river, river bank.

M= And what did you think of the war then? As a young man?

E= I was worried. Because what I hear, about what Hitler said... you know, they were (mumbled) those countries and then they would jump up here to the United States and destroy United States. If he's going up there to destroy our country, we're here to destroy his country. You know, and that's what I had on my mind, you know? The people were beautiful. Nice people. Real nice people; I don't have nothing to say against the German people because it was real nice people.

M= Right, they just had a rather misguided leader at that time.

E= That's right. It was like us, you know? They were not... nobody noticed. (inaudible)

M= Did the... how did you feel as a someone who was on the business end of a machine gun? Was that difficult for you to fight?

E= Yeah. A lot of people they ask me... how many people did I kill with a machine gun? I don't know; because we never fired directly into the people. We fired overhead; because the rifle men were in front and we'd shoot overhead because we'd try to break the line up there. They were on our right side or left side; whatever flank. They call them right flank or left flank... (inaudible). Then we started shooting, but the water cooler, it was a type of gun, you could shoot it day and night and you'd never burn up the barrel you know? And the bullet never hit the same place; they would hit all over you know?

And the other one we had was the 30 caliber on an air cooler. If you did hit one, there were 50 bullets to the same place you know, and that was the same thing with the German machine guns, if one hit the, one bullet hit there, all 50 was gonna hit. And they had every time, every 50 shots, there was one tracer where you could see where you were shooting to find the target. And you could see the bullet; I mean their tracer, but between those 50 bullets.

M= So a lot of bullets in one spot.

E= Yeah.

M= What was the, what would you say was your most difficult battle there or were they all bad?

E= All of it was real rough, but the ones that I consider rough were the secret line. Secret line was, uh, pill boxes, right on top of the hill. All over. You know, it was a line like the, like a concert line you know? Germany and France. Right divided by the pill boxes and all those pill boxes, they were about this thick. (Motions with hands) Not even the TNT or dynamite was doing nothing to them. The tanks were firing against those damn pillboxes and never hit. Never did nothing. Just scratched them up. And they had trenchers all over. Where the Germans can run from one pillbox to another one or do whatever they want and nobody seen... (inaudible) And when we hit, we hit the bottom of the hill, of the secret line, it was about 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock in the morning. Because it was a little town called Sacrament, France, that's where we started that morning. And we got to this little town about 2 o'clock and they gave us the order to retreat and they were going to attack the next morning about 5 o'clock. It was about 3 or 4 o'clock, the commander, it was Eisenhower, changed his mind. They give us the order to attack that evening. All 1,700 you know? And the people were prepared in the pillboxes. The Germans, they were ready and waiting for us, but we didn't know what was going to happen. It started, all 1,700, we started going up the hill. And the ADA's, machine guns and (inaudible) started coming in, everything, started coming in. Started killing G.I.'s like ants. But by the next morning, 7 o'clock, our division was the first one that broke through the secret line, about 7 o'clock in the morning we got the news that our division broke through the secret line. (inaudible) And they get the clean-up details. You know, they call them clean-up details picking up the dead ones. Load them up and truck them. And just dump them in the big trench. They had the bulldozers to get them off. Line them up, take a dog tag, you know? And that's the way it was. But who it was? We don't know. They don't let us, they don't even, not even a plastic bag or anything like that. There was no chance. And there was thousands and thousands of G.I.'s.

M= So you used the bulldozer to dig a grave site?

E= Yeah, they were digging the trench. Line them up, the bodies. Then cover them up. And then they'd dig another one and do the same thing. And I remember one night, I mean one morning, a little town, they called it Albon (cannot understand town name). We'd hear the tanks motors, we couldn't see because the fog and the snow was real heavy. We couldn't see the bottom of the hill, where right on top of the hill were other pillboxes. You know? And we hit a lot of, tanks were going around and we had no idea what was going on...because our division at that time, it was backing up the 44th division, the 44 was in the front line and we was backing up the 44th division. But we hear the Germans broke through the lines of the 44th division but we didn't know they were up in the bottom already. You know, and start coming out. Start coming out with the tanks and everything and we had to fight them and we turn 'em back. And it was pretty dangerous.

M= It sounds pretty dangerous. Did your division that you were with, were there other Spanish speakers? Or Hispanic people in your division?

E= Well, I don't know in the whole division, because there were about 20-30 regiments in that division. It was a pretty good size division. But in our company, we were three. But, when we finished the boot camp and Camp (inaudible) they sent those two guys to visit their families and this guy went to Mexico and never came back. I was the one that got the dirty end of the stick because after those guys had been AWOL, they didn't want to let me go home.

M= Oh so you couldn't go home?

E= I couldn't go home. I was down in the personal barracks, you know, after the training and one day I went to the NCO office and I asked, "I want to know how long you guys are going to keep me down here. If you guys are going to keep me down I'm going to go home. I'm not going to be here." He said "let me talk to the battalion commander." It was Captain Smith and I said "but I want to talk to him too." And the line-up, the meeting was... I said "I want you to tell me why you don't ship me out." He said, "Well you hear what Paolo..." and I can't remember the other guy's name, "did". I said, "yeah I know, but I couldn't do the same thing, I was in Mexico. If I didn't want to come, I would have stayed up there. You guys didn't know where I was. And I could have stayed up there but I ended up down here because I wanted to serve my country." He said, "Well, get ready. You have to buy the ticket from here, home, and then round-trip ticket home to Fort (inaudible)." I said "Don't worry; I got my own money to buy my ticket." He said, "Well get ready, we take you home tonight." Okay, and that afternoon, same evening, they get all my transfer papers and everything and took me down to the station and put me on a train and I went home, spent two weeks with my family and then I come back. And what I did wrong coming back; that I had a bottle of rum, Mexican rum and started drinking. I took the train in McCallen down to New Orleans. After we got to New

Orleans, you know, we got about three or four guys together and we started drinking. And we were breaking the rules because there was a (inaudible). In New Orleans there was a lot of G.I.'s and if they had a chance to form a (Crew Crane¹?) Crew Crane they don't stop nowhere; they just keep going. Open ground. They don't stop; you have to pick up something to eat for the people (inaudible) and we started drinking. I was supposed to change trains around Pensacola/Alabama. I was supposed to transfer and go through Miami, Florida and I went to sleep before we got to the transfer. And I wake up the next morning and I look over and we're in Alabama. (Laughs). I said "where we are??" The guy on the train said "Well, you're in Montgomery, Alabama." And I said "I missed the change. I was supposed to change trains 2 o'clock in the morning." He said "Well, it's too late." And I said "What am I going to do?" He said, "Get off right away and go up there and change the ticket." I got off running. I went up there and told the ticket, I mean at the office, what happened and they give me a new ticket and he said "just keep going on the same train. You going to meet the other one up there." And that's what I did. And I left the duffel bag in a train. I said "I don't want to carry that damn duffel bag. It got to the camp before I did."

M= So you found your bag?

E= Oh yeah. I got up there about 8 o'clock that night. The next morning, about 9 o'clock, the supply store called me and said "Come on out and pick up your duffel bag. It's in the office." (Laughs).

M= When you were in the war, in the army, did you ever feel that you were discriminated against because of limited English and your background? Or was that not a problem?

E= No, I had a good time. Right now and before I went to the service, I feel the discrimination. Because a lot of people, even in this town, is not the original Oregonians; they're from outside people. You know, they were discriminating. My daddy was discriminated..

M= You say right here in this town?

E= Yeah, in this town.

M= And what were you saying about your father?

E= My daddy was...

(Audio cuts out)

¹ Cannot understand the verbiage that Hernandez uses.

E= We stop at the El Campo to buy some gas for the truck. He said "We don't sell to the Mexicans." You know, and all the people there. The white ones, they're against us. You know, we had to take chances to go from El Campo to Victoria to get some gas up there. And we take chances, that we might not get gas up there either. La Mesa, Texas was the same way. West Texas, they was bad. Down here, that's when we came here, we didn't see any discrimination. But we were the original people. The people start coming in from the south, California, New Mexico, Texas....that's when they start all this discrimination up here. Even the womens. The other day I was coming on a main highway in Hillsboro. I was coming from Beaverton by the huge park in Hillsboro and this lady drove the car in, almost hit my station wagon (inaudible) and then she jump on me. Call me a bunch of shit and I told her the same thing from the back. You know? I talk the same language to her because of the way I was treated by here. And I received a lot of those things.

M= How did you leave the war? When did you come back to the states?

E= I come back to the states in '47/'48.

M= And you came back as soon as you were discharged?

E= Where? Florida?

M= No, to Texas.

E= To Texas? Oh yeah. We sent from Camp Shenks, New York from a boat, to Camp Shenks, New York and they took all the clothing. And they gave us new clothes and then they ship us down to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio and they took us through two days to get discharged and they put us on a bus and bye-bye. They offered me another rank, (inaudible) they wanted me to be a staff sergeant if I signed two more years. I said "no I don't want nothing to do with it." (Inaudible)

M= And you'd been in what? Almost four years then at that time?

E= Yeah. Uh huh.

M= And so you stayed in Europe for awhile after the war ended?

E= Yeah. I stayed for one year. I give myself a volunteer for overseas duties because I want to know the countries and then I went to drive for a measure. This man was in charge of the transit mass from Marseille, France all the way to Germany. And all I had to do was drive for him. I had to take off in the morning from Marseille, France down to Lyon. And they stay there, a couple of three days. We stayed in the best hotels eating the best food. Do nothing. You're drinking wine and getting drunk. You know. And then from there you go down to Dijon, and then Paris and then Frankfurt.

M= So your last year, it sounds like it wasn't too bad.

E= No, it wasn't too bad. The only thing, I didn't like Marseille. It was a dangerous, dangerous town. Marseille was a dangerous town.

M= In what way was it dangerous?

E= Wide open.

M= Sort of a lawless place?

E= Yeah. That's right because it was a port, both kind of, you know, merchant marines, navy and army and air force. All kinds. And the army and navy, never were friends. Every time they get drunk they get in a big fight. And they had to get the shore patrol and the MP's line up and to come and break up the fights.

(Pause in taping – adjustment of microphones)

M= Did you have any tough times yourself in Marseille? I mean close calls?

E= No, I wasn't going out too often. We had the main part of the town off limits, you know, for the GI's. (inaudible) from this street where you couldn't get in. MPs and Shore Patrol walking down the street there. You know, watching the GIs.

M= Well when you got back to Texas then, did you go back to live with your parents? What happened then?

E= Yeah. I was a single; when I went to serve I was married. My wife died after two months I was overseas. But I couldn't come to her when she died because we were right on invasion day. Eisenhower don't let me leave, didn't let me leave. He cancelled all the leaves.

M= She must have died as a young woman then?

E= Oh yeah. She was about 19/20 years old.

M= Well that must have been difficult for you too.

E= Yeah it was. It was because you know because it was quite a few months without see them you know. (inaudible)

M= How long had you been married then?

E= Uh...I married 1940. About 4 years. 5 years.

M= Um..and then did you meet your present wife after you came back?

E= I meet her in, uh, in a dance hall one night.

M= In Texas?

E= In Texas. In my hometown and then we started going out and I didn't know the girl. She was with my niece. And I took another girl to the dance. You know? But after I saw her and then I started talking to my niece to help me with her you know? (E & M laugh) And I got it and then I had to leave that other one.

M= Uh huh. And then you married and had a family of your own?

E= Uh yeah. Uh huh. Yeah we started....When I got back I started. My daddy had two trucks and I started driving one truck for him; getting the food out of the fields. The grapefruits and oranges and all those and driving truck for him. Then we got married in 1948, we went down to Mississippi and spent a couple of years in Clarksdale, Mississippi, you know, as a sharecropper and we had bad luck. We didn't have no bad luck but if you wanna know about a discrimination people. People of Mississip and Arkansas; those sort of people. God. We had, well, it's a long story. You want me to tell the story?

M= Sure, go ahead.

E= We were working with this guy.....

(change of microphones)

E= This guy, where we were working, he had a brother-in-law, that he used to be a State Farm Commissioner. The State Farm Commissioner is state penitentiary, but they had farms. You know. Thousands and thousands of acres. You know? Then every year when they need people for chopping cod or cleaning up the fields and everything they used to go a make a raid on Negro towns. You know. Take them down to the camp to State Pen. Keep them up there. Womens and mens. You know, until they finish what they had up there and then turn them loose.

M= So they kidnapped them essentially.

E= Yeah, uh huh. But it was like, that little town was funny you know? The division of the ration people was the railroad tracks you know? The railroad tracks run in the middle of the town. And on one side were the American people and the other side were the Negro people you know. At 6 o'clock in the evening, the Negro people couldn't go across the other side of the railroad tracks. But the American people could come to the Negro town. You know, to have some love with the Negro womens. It was beautiful. Beautiful girls up there. Half and half. Half Negro, half white; but beautiful. And uh, this guy, he quit being a commissioner to farm a state farm and he had on, I don't know, I

never thought of it, he had about twenty tractors. I don't know how many acres of cotton he had. They had, the Negroes were the sharecroppers, you know. And he used to go to the, when they were ready to settle with the Negroes, they go to the bank and get some burlap bags full of dollar bills. And bring it home and put it on the big tops (?) and they stir them up. Those dollar bills. And they bring, put the Negroes in a line and he said "with your left hand, whatever you get out of the pile is your settlement (inaudible) The Negro couldn't do anything. Was crying, the Negro was crying. You know? Because he couldn't do anything. Couldn't leave, couldn't go nowhere. "If you don't like it, the way I do it, you get out of my place!" Well the Negro couldn't go. He didn't have no place to go. He had to suffer until the younger generation started moving out. Started going to Chicago, Illinois and big cities you know, and they changed. But the old people more, it was rough. We had to pull out. We had the one girl, who was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The oldest. Yeah. I don't know.

M= You had to pull out what?

E= Well we had to pull out from up there because I didn't like the actions of the people.

M= Right, I see. And then what made you decide to move up here?

E= Well that's something, another thing that was funny. I was, I worked for years and years after we had gotten back from Mississippi. Started driving a semi-truck. And I drove semis for moving company, you know, a transfer company. I drove some trucks for an oil field companies. You name it I drove it. The last time I was driving I drove for twelve years for this road company. Road construction company. My job was to move all the machineries. You know I had a big float and I had to move the drag lines, rodarists (?), maintainers, bulldozers, foot-rollers, all the machinery they need on the construction of the road I had to move it. And move the tractors wherever they wanted you know? And that was my job. And that was on a 24 hour call all the time. That was the same way with the Annoy company (?) I was on a 24 hour call. Couldn't go nowhere because they was dependent on me. I had the truck at the house and they called me up. They didn't care what time. One time, they called me up at 2 o'clock in the morning. They want a 10 ½, 5 and 7 ½ for service on an oil field. And the ice was about that thick.

M= Oh yeah, so that was 3" thick wall on the pipe.

E= On the road it was everywhere. It was a big freeze. And we had to go up there and load up those pipes you know? At 2 o'clock in the morning. Me and my sumper, a sumper was a helper (?) and take them onto the rate (?) Dangers they can be man. Steel with the on the top of it. A little mistake and you'd cut your head off.

M= So it was wintertime then?

E= Yeah that's right. And I got tired and one day and I said "well" I told my boss man "I'm going to ask for three month provision." (?) (inaudible). I said "well I'm pretty tired, I can't take it anymore. I'm just going to have to take a few. If you still got work for me when I get back, that's ok." And he raised hell because he didn't want me to leave because he was real dependent on me, that guy. And we came down to Fresno, California to see a sister of mine that was living in Fresno.

M= So you packed up your family and drove to Fresno?

E= Yeah, uh huh. Yeah and one evening we were sitting on the front porch like we are down here when a car drove into the parking place you know? And said they were looking for my brother-in-law. I said "he lives up there" and I sent him up there and he went and talked to my brother-in-law. This guy was a Japanese from Hillsboro. Ike, I can't remember the last name, they had those three nurseries in Hillsboro. And he said, as he was getting ready to leave "well how big of a family you have?" And I said, "we got 4 girls and a boy". He said "How old they are?" I said "well the biggest is 14. The other one is 11. And the other one about 7 and then went down." The youngest was my boy who was not even a year old. He said "you know, you could make money up in Oregon." "doing what?" He said "picking strawberries." "picking strawberries? I don't know, I've never picked strawberries." When I work on fields, you don't make as much money as girls do. That's kids work. I said "well if my brother-in-law goes up there I might go." He said "well what I'm going to do I'm going to give you the money for expenses." I said "No. I'm sorry but I don't take any money." I said "because if I can't go I don't want to be compromised with you because you give me the money." If I can go, I'll see you down there and then you can give me the money when I'm up over there. Not over here. That's the way I did it. About 3 days later, we decided to come. And we come in and then on Scholl's Road and River Road there was a camp. A good camp; where the Japanese had the camp up there. A labor camp and that's where we wind up, in that camp. And we stayed with them up there, even the one of the brothers of Ike, he had a station wagon, a family station wagon and he decided to sell it. And I bought it. It was the first car that we bought up there in Oregon. It was a Ford station wagon and it was nice and clean and real good shape for \$495.00. (laughs). But we had some bonus, you know, because it was paying 55 cents I think. 55-60 cents a flat; for the strawberries. But they were leaving 10 cent as bonus. They called them bonus. They were holding wages (?) but they called them bonus. I said "ok" but we had about \$600 dollars in bonus or \$700 in bonus. With that bonus we paid...

M= You bought the car with that bonus.

E= And then the girl, the first day that we got up there, that we got up here, Annie and Alma, the other one in Hillsboro, said "Daddy, let's stay up here". I said "No. I don't want to hear you crying for Texas." "No," he said "we promise you not to cry for Texas"

he said, "we want to stay here. It's beautiful. Look at that mountain up there and the fields." (laughs). "well, you wanna stay?" He said "yeah, we can stay." "Ok, I'm not promise, if I find a place. I find a place to work where I can support you, we stay. If not we going to have to go back home." "Ok."

And then we started coming up here to Forest Grove, you know? Just to driving around. And there's a bridge on up here they call Past Time and next to Past Time is a barber shop, you know? With a bunch of old man that used to come there. You know? We had some good times every evening. And one day I told my wife I said, "Well we're here in Forest Grove" I said "let me go down to the barber shop and get myself a haircut." Ah we start talking up there. Start talking to the people; to this old senior citizens and one man he said "you talking about staying here?" I said "Yeah, but if I find a job. If I find a work to do to support my family; yeah I stay. If not I just can't stay." "Listen, I'm going to take you to my farm. We're not talking about wages right now." He said, "I'm going to take you to the farm." But I didn't know who it was. "And if you like the living quarters and the farm, and then we talk about the wages. I said "okay." They finished with my haircut and we got in the car. Took cars down here south of Forest Grove about 3 or 4 miles on Springtown Road. I find out it was Mr. Nixon; Bob Nixon, who's the dentist down here in town. We like the house, where we gonna live. Liked the place and everything. I said "Yeah, we like it". He said "Okay," he said, "I'm going to pay you \$4.00 an hour straight. Eight hours a day. And your wife, \$4.00 an hour when she works." I said, "Okay, that's good." And everything free and I stayed two years with him. I took over the ranch, the farm, he had blackberries, boysenberries and strawberries.

I stayed with him two years and then I started going, started meeting different people up here and met a guy from Techtronic and he asked me if I want to go work for Techtronic. I said "Yeah, I'd like to go but I can't because we just plant the cucumbers and I had to stay with him until we harvested the cucumbers, that would last in September. And we finished by September. "You see, you got a contract signed with him or what?" "I said no I don't have any contract signed off with nobody. But my work is good as contract. Signing contract. I said, "I told him I was going to stay till the end of the crop and now I'm going to stay with him. After that, if you want to give me a job, I take it, but not before." He said, "Okay, when you finish, call me." "Okay." Sadly, they told me the Friday, it was going to be the last day on Friday with the farm. I called Techtronic. They said come to work on Monday. I went and started working with Techtronic on Monday. And then I stay there for about two months and then I moved onto Shaw, Mr. Shaw's, between Cornelius and a golf course, you know? And I stayed up there two years with him. Let me see....No I stayed about a year. With Mr. Shaw's up there. And during harvesting season I was helping Mr. Shaw up there driving trucks. He was planning...

M= While still working at Techtronics?

E= Yeah uh huh. Yeah, I would go to work at 3 and get off at 11 o'clock then come home and go to bed about 1 o'clock and Mr. Shaw's, it was uh, he had corn on the cob and carrots for the canneries and him and his wife used to load up the trucks with the **diggers**, you know, and have the trucks all ready loaded by the time I was coming in. And I used, sometimes, got in and eat something and go get up in the truck and take off in to the Blue Goose in Salem, in the morning. Go up there and dump a load and come back and about 8 o'clock take off with the other one. And that's the way we did it.

M= And you'd be back in the afternoon in time to go to work at Tech.

E= In time to work at Tech. You know? And that way we decided, we move up here, we got this house up here at Birch and 16th Street. My family was the first family, was the first Mexican family to live in Forest Grove.

M= To live in Forest Grove.

E= To live in Forest Grove. And my wife went to work for the Japanese guys up there, planting those little plants, you know, those flowers pots and all...? They want me to irrigate the plants and every morning, Ike or Arthur, they used to call me up and "Come on Emilio. It's already time for irrigate the plants." You know, get up and go to work. And work until about 2 o'clock, two-thirty. And then from there go down and work in Techtronic.

M= What did you do for Techtronics?

E= I went, when I got to Techtronic, they asked me what kind of job I can do, I said, "well, I don't know like, I never worked in this kind of work, just give me a chance and maybe I can learn." They said, "you have to put **your** step in. Do you want to take as a janitor?" "Fine." **A janitor. The building is 96 or Sunset Plant, you know, straight across from Sam Benson Hospital.** That's where I started. And then I...

M= And what year was this roughly?

E= '64?

M= Okay.

E= '64/'65 something like that. Around those years. I can't remember to good what year it was. And then they said "from there you can move. Everytime you see an open put..."

AUDIO BREAKS

M= This is a continuation of the interview with Emilio Hernandez on March 22nd. Okay, So you were saying.