

Joey Magallanes interviewing Juan Rosas an x-member of 12th street

Joey Magallanes: This interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of Century High school. The interviewee is Juan Rosas The interviewer is Joey Magallanes. The interview took place on May 21 of 2005 at 10:45 (pm)... O.K. first of all how long have you lived in Hillsboro?

Juan Rosas: oh about 22 yrs.

JM was that, did you live any were else in Oregon or was it...

JR No, basically, Hillsboro, Cornelius, Forest Grove, just...

JM around here...

JR ya just the surrounding area

JM What do you think about the crime in Hillsboro? Throughout the yrs. that you've been here.

JR well its gotten worse. I mean its like with everything, you know, everything progresses. So does crime. It's gotten more violent.

JM With it being more violent, do you see crime enforcement getting better? Or is staying the same?

JR: There's more of them out there. I guess they do try to make it better but I mean at the same time crime also evolves with them they find new ways of getting away with stuff.

JM what gang were you in

JR 12th street

JM how long were you in the gang?

JR well see I was there before it even started. Before it even became 12th street. It was just a hand full of guys hang'n out. I would say about 5 or 6 yrs. And then you know, active, and then you know and then from there on just you know just hang'n out not really doing anything them.

JM so it was just like a hangout, not like what we see on tv

JR well it was diff. Back then cause like I said the incidents didn't happen like with drugs and stuff like that back then. The most dangerous weapon that we carry around was like a stick or something. Not even a pipe just a stick. When ever you got in a fight it was just one on one. It was you gang up on somebody you know. You know if you got beat up you got beat up.

JM Did you ever get beat up?

JR ya, oh ya of course. It comes with the territory. There's somebody bigger and better then you, you know. [chuckle]

JM So you were in 12th st. when it started, were there any rival gangs?

JR there was 1 to begin with, then like a year later another one came into the picture from main stream California. So there was... there was only a couple.

JM

JR the one that was around, that was actually around before 12th st was LCG. And then 18th st came like a said about a yr. Later.

JM do you see a big difference, or what's the biggest difference between then and gangs now?

JR there more violent, there's quiet a few more members. And the graffiti, there's a lot more graffiti going around now.

JM how do you feel about mob mentality, like how peer pressure effects you?

JR Oh ya, it effects you. There's... its like a status thing the more you do the higher the rank you get, I guess, you could be one of those smaller guys but if you commit more crimes, without getting caught of course, your rank goes up higher. Your crazier your more of a loose cannon. You do anything for your peers.

JM what was the worse thing that you saw?

JR I would say... a walk by. That only happened once though. I've seen somebody get beat up pretty bad. Get sent to the hospital, broken ribs, broken jaw. And thats about it. We didn't really, well we did get in fights but back in those days

JM so its not like what you see on tv

JR No not back then. Now it's bad now. Now its bad. Up until maybe a year and a half or so my cousins were still involved so that's were I would get some information on how most of my friends that I had back than are in jail and stuff like that.

JM are they the ones that got you into it?

JR ya. I was one of the older ones. It didn't really start out as a gang. And then through association I guess. Society basically recognized us as a gang and that were we went from and created a name.

JM did 12th street start in California?

JR no it started up here

JM so weapons wise it was pretty much nothing

JR pretty much nothing, just your hands. Like I said once and a while you'd carry a little stick with you its not gonna do much but...

JM but its there

JR ya but its there, it's a weapon.

JM so your cousins, are they still in it now?

JR no, they've pretty much left it all alone

JM what lead you to leaving?

JR basically I got put in jail. I got put in jail and I realized that that wasn't for me. I mean it wasn't a long time, it was about what a month and a half two months but that was just a little to long for me.

JM what was jail like? Was a completely diff. experience?

JR. oh ya, definitely, I was 18 yrs old. There's grown men in there that will tear you head. It was a diff exp. It wasn't as bad, you 3 meals, 2 snacks, you get up when ever you want. But I mean you don't have any freedom. That's you know, that's what drove you to never go back there again. And I haven't

JM was the gang you freedom

JR yes, ya. Cause I guess its also, you get known basically. And there was like 2 of that actually went to school. The only thing we had to protect us was just our names or who we hung out with. If not, if we didn't have that, we would get ganged up on. There was a pretty big feud with the jocks, which was kind of iffy because I also played football, basketball, baseball. So they were on my team but then when it came down to it, I guess I picked my friends over my team mates. Which I guess was a mistake at the end but...

JM was there a lot fights?

JR Oh ya, the games at hare field. Friday nights were the biggest nights of fights... I guess it was fun in a way, the adrenalin rush, but I wouldn't do it again.

JM does that affect how ppl played with you

JR oh ya, of course. I was always a target. But they new that they could get me at school. But when we were out of school it was a totally different story. I didn't have any back up when I was school cause it only me and one other guy that went there and we hardly ever saw each other. But when we were out of school especially at football games you know when we got together, it was a totally diff. Story.

JM do you remember how many ppl

JR about... well you see it progressed. It started out with maybe 7-8 and then it progressed yr by yr it got up to, I would say about 60-70. every generation through the years. You got about 3-4 yrs before the younger bro. Get old enough to were there useful, in a sense. But I'd say about 70 now its... a lot.

JM Have you heard about ms-13 coming to Oregon?

JR ya, I've heard a little bit about, but, like I said, ever sense my cousins basically left they're not involved in it any more we don't really keep up with it anymore. But I did hear about ms 13 coming up from California or something.

JM in the newspaper it talked about, in California, Virginia, North Carolina.

You don't worry about it anymore?

JR no, anybody says anything to me I'm just like 'that was a long time ago man, its long gone. I've got family, I've got kids.'

JM Does you family effect that a lot?

JR Ya, ya it did. Basically when I got locked up my mom told me that shje wouldn't help me out, that she would leave me there. I needed to be there basically to teach me a lesson. And I was glad that she did, cause it really did. Being there for a short time, compared to some other ppl, it really did teach me a lesson. It helped me out quite a bit.

JM are you worried about you kids joining gangs? Or do they know not to mess with that stuff?

JR They know and I'll let them know the situations that you can get into. I didn't get my license until was 16 because of the problems I had when I was 18. I was suspended for 10 yrs. It's hard, you have fun, I guess you think you have fun but if your gonna be do'n it its just mess'n up your life for later on.

JM did you graduate?

JR no. there was only one of us that graduated, and that was from the older crowd. There was what maybe 30, 25-30, only one that graduated.

JM what would be the biggest advice that you could give

JR I would say just talk to your kids about it. Let them know the dangers of it. Now days it's even more of a problem cause there is even more drugs out there, more weapons that they could use, and they are just more violent. Now with measure 11 some of those crimes are mandatory min sentences were you spend yrs. Years and years in prison. I don't know? People die I had... a friend of mine from the old days, he got killed about 2 yrs ago, in prison, over a drug deal. Its.. there is death. My smallest cousin, he got shot twice. He got shot in the head and in the chest. At 2 diff pts of his career. Its violent and just them know that. It will effect the rest of you life.

JM is that the only ppl that you saw got injured. Just those ppl

JR no, there's minor, minor incidents. To that effect. There's stabbing and stuff like that, but not life threatening. Just like in the arm or something... but its more now. You hear about it more now.

JM do you remember what year you got locked up?

JR I got locked up, 2-3 days before thanksgiving and I got released the day before new yrs. It was about a month and a half.

JM were you 18?

JR ya. They were just waiting for me to turn 18. cause I was like a little kid. By the time I was 18 I had already had like 3 hit and runs, 3 or 4 minors in possession, you know alcohol. Just a bunch of stuff.

JM so your parents were aware

JR well, no. not until they came into my door at 2 o'clock in the morning. Then my mom found out.

JM was it a lot of Hispanic ppl in the game? Or was it mixed.

JR ya, ya... well it was mixed. The majority was Hispanic. But there was a few caucasians. Because, just from the area. Ya it was mixed. when 18th street showed up. There was a couple of African Americans. Cause there for a while, they would like work together, for territory. But then they started fueding, and trying to take eachother territory I guess. Ya it was diverse.

JM was your guys' territory all of Hillsboro? Or...

JR no it was just basically 6-7 blocks. But we could go anywere we wanted. To feel, the safe zone, would be about 6-7 blocks.

JM did everybody, is that the 6 blocks that everybody lived in?

JR basically, ya.

JM who was the... do you know the leader at your time?

JR ya

JM were they there for a long time? Or did they get busted real fast?

JR no they were there, he was there until I got out. He actually had, he had woo. So they kicked him out. They told him that if he stayed around they would just lock him up. So his parents decided to move down to texas.

JM so they moved texas? Did they just pick another guy?

JR ya, basically it was already, there was already a pecking order. But it ended up that, I would say. A good 85% ended up going to jail. For quite a few yrs. And then from then I just stop track. I lost track of who was do'n what. Like evry 3 or 4 months and we would get together at my moms and my cousins would come over and they would fill me in a little bit here and there. That's about it, I started my own life and left all that behind.

JM Did you meet Alma in high school?

JR well she... ya she was in high school. I was already out. I had already been out for 2-3 yrs.

JM did she effect how...

JR oh ya, she totally effected the way... if it wouldn't have been for her and my mom. I would have prob. Never left, cause they encouraged me, and I guess they gave me a sense of stability. That I could do it, that I didn't need, you know, to be out there endangering basically me and my family. Cause, I mean it didn't get rough. But they knew were you live, they knew if they wanted to do something. But ya she had a big influence on me.

JM did your family or anybody else's families get targeted?

JR ya, my aunt, my cousins. They got targeted quiet a bit. Later on 4-5 yrs after I had already gottn out. That's when they were heavy into it. They got their house shot at and

they were always get'n busted by the cops try'n to find something at their house, they never did but...they were targeted, like I said my cousin got shot at twice.

JM did your cousins end up having to have guns with them and stuff?

JR oh ya, they did. It was... protection basically but ya they ended up having guns.

JM since you were in it from the beginning, can you see the big evolution.

JR well, I'm just saying, as more ppl joined it got more violent. More organized in the sell of drugs and stuff like that.

JM what school did you go to?

JR Glencoe

JM so was it like the 6 blocks that was there or was it sort of separate?

JR no actually I was one of the ones that lived out of the area. Back then it was just a little housing development out there. There was only like 20-30 houses out there. The rest was like farm fields. So wasn't much crim out there at all. I basically had to come into town to hang out.

JM was there a lot of theft?

JR no, we pretty much kept to ourselves. Unless... we felt threatened or what ever. But we pretty much just kept to ourselves. I mean there was a couple, a couple them that were crazier then others. They went out and looked for problems. Which only got everyone else involved in them. It was pretty quiet...

JM was there a way to identify you as 12th street.

JR by the ppl, prob. Not, like at first, the first couple of yrs, its not like we were dressing like we were gang members. What ever you identify a gang member to be wairing. Just regular cloths. Say a few yrs or what ever, ppl did start wereing the cloths for general public to be able to identify them.

JM was it colors or a logo?

JR no just like... the Nike corteses, cackies, the flannels, the bandana.

JM just the stereotypical thing

JR ya exactly

JM did 18th street or the other gangs that came up, did they have colors and stuff

JR I guess that's...when they came up, they came up from cali. That would have been the right time were...were they started, when everybody else started. Cause when they came up from cali. they brought the style I guess, of what they were wearing down there. So I guess they did bring the style of clothing from down there. But basically we had the same color, the same blue. LCG was red, they were the nortenoos (northern gang)

JM was there, how we have the blood and the crips

JR that was the bloods, the big problem back the, was the bloods and the crips. That was up in Portland. They never really came down to our part or what ever. There was once a situation were we heard that the bloods are gona be comeing down. That's when basically all 3 gangs got together and said, if they do come, the only way to make sure that they don't make an impact is to go head and get together as one group to make sure that they don't come down.

JM so did they merge? Or was it just a co. op.?

JR it was just a co op to make sure the bloods didn't make an impact, and make a terr.

Down here for them. So basically it was an agreement that if it did happen that we would merge as one and not them come down here.

JM did that ever happen?

JR no it was just a rumor, but it just goes to show that we could co-exist, we just didn't want to.

JM so is co-operate when there's a threat but...

JR but when there isn't...

JM you are the threat.

JR ya exactly.

JM is there anything else?

JR no, just... it really affected the outcome of what I wanted to do for myself. It also taught me a big lesson that you are gonna pay for do'n wrong

JM what do you do now

JR right now I have nothing

JM its just alma working

JR ya alma's the only now working now.