

MICKEY IBARRA

Salt Lake City, Utah

An Interview by

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EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Ibarra Oral History Project

U-3043

Interview 1

J. Willard Marriott Library

Special Collections Department

University of Utah

Salt Lake City, Utah

THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH MICKEY IBARRA ON AUGUST 19, 2010. THE INTERVIEW IS BEING CONDUCTED ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH AT THE J. WILLARD MARRIOTT LIBRARY. THE INTERVIEWER IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON. THIS IS THE FIRST OF THREE INTERVIEWS WITH MICKEY IBARRA. THIS IS THE IBARRA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, TAPE No. U-3043

GCT: The following is the first of what I am assuming will be a series of interviews with Mickey Ibarra on August 19, 2010. The interview is being conducted by Gregory C. Thompson at the J. Willard Marriott Library in the Marriner Eccles room of the Special Collections Department. Mickey, let's start our interview with you—and thank you for doing this; it's great to have you here—tell me when were you born and where were you born?

MI: On March 27, 1951, here in Salt Lake City, Utah, I believe at the LDS Hospital.

GCT: Tell me, who was your father?

MI: My father, Francisco Nicolas Santiago Ibarra.

GCT: And your mother?

MI: Bonnie Bird.

GCT: I'm assuming there's quite a story behind those two last names. I want to explore that just a little bit. Your father came to this country from Mexico.

MI: Yes.

GCT: Do you know when he came and tell me about the program he was involved in that brought him here.

MI: Yes. My father came to this country in 1945 as a young man, as he tells the story, at fifteen years old, as a *bracero*. The *bracero* program was established by the United States government as a labor program to really bring laborers from Mexico during World War II, primarily, to assist with harvesting the crops.

GCT: It was mostly agricultural.

MI: Primarily agricultural. It really was an attempt to replace the loss of the work force dedicated to the World War II and all of the troops, both men and women, who were engaged in that effort. So thousands, thousands of Mexican laborers were brought to the United States to help fill that void. For Dad it was in 1945. His first camp, his first assignment was Spanish Fork, Utah, where he picked fruit. He's indicated to me that he was actually fifteen years old. The rule, you were supposed to be at least eighteen to receive a permit to come, but somehow he figured out how to get a permit and came at an earlier age.

GCT: It must have been awfully hard for him being fifteen and coming this distance and setting up in a pretty tough environment, really.

MI: Yes. He talks about it being long hours, hard work, homesickness, all of those things, and yet he, like I think so many others, were propelled and motivated by the desire to earn a living and to get ahead. I don't sense my father left Mexico expecting to return. I really feel as though he believed that America was his future, the United States.

GCT: And what community did he come from?

MI: Oaxaca, which is really the Mecca, the gathering point of the indigenous people of Mexico.

GCT: It's also one of the mining centers.

MI: Yes. So Oaxaca, Mexico, is where he was born.

GCT: Did you meet your paternal grandparents?

MI: Never met them, although I did return to Mexico on one occasion in 1980, I believe, to Oaxaca with my father to meet an uncle that at that point had never left

Mexico, Uncle Raul, and also a great-aunt, a sister of my grandmother and their families, a number of cousins there in Oaxaca. We had quite a reunion.

GCT: So by then were your father's parents deceased?

MI: Yes.

GCT: Did your father talk much about his early years growing up in Oaxaca?

MI: He had talked some about those, I mean it was a very hard life. He actually lived in a village, a name of which I don't recall. It was high above the city above Oaxaca. And very Indian. My father is very, very Indian in appearance, very dark, very short, hard features. My father talks of the time that Spanish was his second language.

GCT: So his native Indian language was his first?

MI: Yes. He is a Zapotec Indian. They have their own dialect, their own language, that is the language...he remembers only a few words from that language now. But he was actually born and raised as a little boy high above the city of Oaxaca in an Indian village [Quajimoloyas] that to this day is connected by trail to Oaxaca—there are no roads.

GCT: [unclear]

MI: Yes.

GCT: There had to be desire to improve his life and probably help his family was one thing. There had to be other prompts that got him to the United States. Did he talk about how he learned about the program? Were there recruiters coming through? Did you talk to him about that?

MI: I don't recall exactly how he was connected, but I do understand that there were others that he became familiar with that had successfully entered the program. It really was a major draw. There were many, many more Mexican laborers who wanted to come

here than could be accommodated. Of course, Dad was very, I think determined to figure out how to do this. He tells of a story that one of the checks that they would make, those that were receiving applications for the program, was to look at an applicant's hands. The reason for that was to see if they were actually workers, field hands. Exactly. My dad's first attempt, he was rejected because his hands clearly did not show the callous and the work and wear of a laborer. So Dad talked with friends who showed him how to prepare for this test by taking sand on the side of the stream and rubbing the hands to really build a callous and to scrape the hands and to make them rough to look as though he was a field worker. It was that that helped him succeed. My dad previously had served, he tells me stories of working as a houseboy. His mother was a servant and he worked as a houseboy in the home that she was a servant for. She became ill and passed away when he was very young.

GCT: Oh really?

MI: Yes. And by that time he had also been disconnected from his father who also passed away. So for some reason, somehow, his mother and father were separated at an early age. She left the village and went into Mexico City to work as a servant.

GCT: so she probably worked in an upper class Mexican home.

MI: Exactly.

GCT: Your father, then, when he comes to the US, was his mother dead by then?

MI: Yes, I believe she was. My father, as I recall, was not the first of his family. There were three boys. There was my uncle, they call him Shorty, and my dad. Shorty had actually made the first trip as a *bracero* to the United States and encouraged my dad to do

the same, although Shorty was working in California in the tomato fields, and Dad ended up in Spanish Fork picking fruit.

GCT: Was your dad being raised by relatives then?

MI: Pretty much on his own.

GCT: Was he?

MI: Oh, yes. Yes, at a very early age on his own to make his way.

GCT: The program at that time had an annual, it was an annual program, wasn't it? You came up for a certain amount of period and you went back.

MI: Yes. That was the idea to go back. The idea of the program was to bring in laborers, import laborers, and then return them to Mexico at the time that their work permit had expired. Dad didn't wait for his permit to expire before he left the camp.

GCT: He moved on.

MI: He moved on. And for him, there were some periods in between that farm work where he talked to some wonderful people in Utah, farmers, that helped him when he was very hungry and gave him work and that sort of thing.

His big break came when he landed a job at Kennecott Copper Mine outside of Salt Lake City. They gave him the most difficult job in the whole array of jobs there, that was demolition crew. Those are the folks that drilled the holes on the side of the mountain, filled in with explosives and then detonated for the big shovels to come and pick up the ore to be smelted. Dad landed a job there. It was a union job, more stable, better benefits, higher pay. This was a big, big plus in his life to get a good job.

GCT: And how long after the 1945 entry in the country was that? Was it a couple of years?

MI: I believe it was a couple of years, yes.

GCT: At that time they were operating huge labor forces out to Kennecott, about 15,000 people.

MI: Yes. Dad describes Bingham Canyon and Bingham, Utah, like the United Nations (laughs). They had people from all walks of life, all countries, it was quite a place.

GCT: I've got some of the personnel records for Kennecott, including probably the period, up through the period that your dad was hired.

MI: By this time his name would have been shortened to Frank Ibarra. Folks at Kennecott didn't know my dad by Frank. It's one of the earliest memories that I have with my dad. I wasn't with my dad long as a young boy, but I remember him being called Mickey Mouse. My dad's stature, very short, five-foot-four, very, very big personality. Happy-go-lucky, always the life of the party. My dad's nickname, everybody knew him by Mickey Mouse. I even heard people yell across the street, "Mickey Mouse!" (laughs). That's how it was, the firstborn, I was named Mickey. On my birth certificate, it is Mickey. Folks get quite a kick out of the fact that I share with them that I was actually named for Mickey Mouse, in a manner of speaking.

GCT: Your father really had a hand to mouth existence there for quite a long time.

MI: Yes, and I think not an uncommon experience for Mexican laborers. Not an uncommon experience for many in Mexico.

GCT: Tell me about your mom. Let's talk about your mom's side. Your mom, I'm gathering, was probably a resident of Utah.

MI: Yes. As I best understand it were emigrants from England in Salina, Utah. She was born in Salina.

GCT: Had they come some generations before?

MI: Yes, yes. They were part of a big Mormon immigration to Utah.

GCT: In probably the 1850's.

MI: Yes. They ended up becoming shepherders in Salina.

GCT: I'm assuming not only herders, but owners.

MI: Yes.

GCT: So they were ranchers.

MI: Yes.

GCT: There are a lot of sheep in that area.

MI: Yes.

GCT: Do you know how old she was when she met your dad?

MI: Very, very young. I've got...well, what I do know is that my mother was sixteen years old when I was born.

GCT: Is that right?

MI: Sixteen years old. So my guess, she was probably fourteen, fifteen years old.

GCT: How old do you think your dad was then?

MI: My dad was certainly older, I think twenty-one.

GCT: Twenty-one.

MI: Yeah. So here we had just a situation that was just ripe for a lot of difficulty. A dark skinned Mexican—I'm trying to think of the years here, this was the late 40's or early '50's in Salt Lake City, dating a teenage white, blonde, a significant difference in age. This was not a very socially acceptable behavior in Salt Lake City.

GCT: Yeah, the tolerance level wasn't high for that.

MI: No. So it was quite a...again, they were married. I was born. My mother was sixteen. Again, I think as would be quite easily predicted, that wasn't a marriage that really would last very long, and it did not.

GCT: Do you know, when was your mom born?

MI: I don't know. Well, she was sixteen; I was born in 1951...

GCT: If she was sixteen, you're talking '37, '36 somewhere in there?

MI: Yes.

GCT: Where did your mom and dad meet?

MI: They met here in Salt Lake City.

GCT: So he was up here at Kennecott?

MI: Yes. He was working at the mine.

GCT: Do you know what your mom was doing up here?

MI: I don't. I don't. At some point...

GCT: She must have left home?

MI: Well, at some point my mother was also living in foster care. I'm not sure if...she and her parents were having difficulties and I'm not sure exactly where she was, if she was in foster care at that very time when they met or not, but that is what I believe brought her to Salt Lake City.

GCT: I see. She wasn't necessarily living with relatives here.

MI: Yes. I think that's right.

GCT: Do you know where she went to high school or anything like that about her?

MI: I don't. Those are great questions that I can ask.

GCT: Your dad's still alive, right?

MI: Yes.

GCT: So one of the things we ought to do is we ought to do an interview with your dad.

MI: Oh, you'd gain a treasure trove.

GCT: Where does he live?

MI: He lives in Sacramento. But we bring him here from time to time. We could get an hour or two scheduled with that.

GCT: How old is your father now?

MI: He is going to be eighty-two years old on September 10.

GCT: His health is good and his mind's good?

MI: Yes. Difficulty he has is hearing. Again, we tie that directly to his experience at Kennecott.

GCT: Has he lost his hearing?

MI: Yes. Now what we're doing is, he's had some restored through this cochlear implant on both and we're making some progress. The Veteran's Administration has been really good to him. Dad went on to serve in the United States Army also and now is 100% disabled, so the VA has really been doing a good job of caring for him. But he is; he could very easily do an interview.

GCT: Fill in the blanks?

MI: Oh, yeah. Could respond to the questions like he needed to. In a quiet room like this, I don't believe there'd be any necessity for a...you may have to repeat. He'd be able to do it.

GCT: It would be fun to put that together, Mickey.

MI: It would. Let me go, is there a time in the year that would be best for that?

GCT: We can do it darn near any time we've got. We get awfully busy in the fall. Right now we're just madly running around.

MI: Yeah. So when does it...

GCT: May or June or slower times. It never really slows down a lot. But by then...

MI: I'd like to do that.

GCT: It would be really good to do it with David and you, together.

MI: Yes, and dad.

GCT: Yes. He's the main target, here.

MI: Yeah, because I'm sure, Greg, that David and I would learn a lot.

GCT: Do you know why it's so important to me? We have in the collection three or four hundred, I guess now, interviews with Hispanics of Utah. This could be one to be added. What we're doing here is part of the next. But to get him and get his experience in coming over in '45 and his involvement in Kennecott, I'd love to have that just on a standalone.

MI: He's a storyteller, too.

GCT: Just as a standalone document relating to early experiences in Utah, but the fact that we need this...

MI: This would be a nice little chapter in a book.

GCT: It would be. Plus it gives you guys a chance to learn a little more about your own history.

MI: Let me ask you this. Would you be interested at all in scheduling an hour with my mother?

GCT: Sure. She's still alive?

MI: Oh, yes. She lives only blocks from here.

GCT: Oh, we could do that almost any time. Absolutely. Would she do it without you present?

MI: I believe she would.

GCT: This is probably not the best experience in her life, and that's kind of a dark...

MI: I'm wondering if she might even be more comfortable with me not being present.

GCT: Are you pretty close to her?

MI: No.

GCT: Is David?

MI: Closer, because, of course, they live closer together.

GCT: Does she have a second family?

MI: Yes.

GCT: So that probably...

MI: That probably, yeah. The reality is this, Greg, my mother and father were divorced when I was two years old. David was eleven months younger than me. And for a host of reasons, some of which that I have no idea about, I'd like to believe it was quite simple, she felt it was in our best interest, she relinquished custody of us to the State of Utah. That's got to be a pretty painful memory.

GCT: That's what I was alluding to. As I said, this is not the happiest period of her life, I'm sure.

MI: I would be glad to explore that with her.

GCT: I would certainly do the interviews with her, if she'd allow me to.

MI: Let me ask you this, would it be too inconvenient if you went to her?

GCT: No, I do that all the time. No we can do that. In most cases, you're somewhat of an exception in this business. Your experience makes you comfortable no matter where you are. I know that you're comfortable here. I know I can count on this being a proper setting for you. Usually you want to go to the people where they are the most comfortable, and oftentimes that's their home or something close by.

MI: See that would be an ideal time, too. Do you ever get to Sacramento?

GCT: Yeah, occasionally.

MI: What I'd like to do is this. Let's keep that open as an option, too. That would be wonderful if we were able to do it in my dad's home.

GCT: I could put together several days and go out. I've got a couple other donors in that area that I can work with.

MI: For me, going to Sacramento's always easy to do because I've got a lot going on there. One of our strategic partnerships is there.

GCT: So we could come together. Your dad, you said is eighty-four?

MI: He'll be eighty-two on September 10. I'm going to go to Sacramento on September 1st to visit with him for a few days.

GCT: What I have found in my experience and it's common, I think, is when you get in your eighties you tend to tire a bit, so it's better to do these interviews in the morning. People tend to be a little more rested and a little brighter. You might be able to do a couple of hours. With your dad, if he's pretty sharp, we might be able to sneak in a couple of hours in the afternoon.

MI: I think you could.

GCT: But you've got to count on probably trying to get five or six hours of tape time with him to be of worth. And you want that. You and David want that if we can pull it out.

MI: Boy, that would sure add a whole dimension to this, to actually get their story out, because it is also a Utah story.

GCT: Sure it is.

MI: And very connected to our life and much of which I do not know, Greg.

GCT: I was gathering that as we were going along that there were some holes in there that we can fill for you.

MI: Part of it is just information that is, some folks, I guess, are born curious, others are not. In this regard, I was not, in part, I think, because the answers to those questions are so sensitive.

GCT: They're painful.

MI: Yes. Again, I've always had the view that—and one of the ways that I learned to cope in Utah and other places with this unique upbringing that I've experienced—it couldn't change anything. Me knowing the real reason why my mother decided that it was time to turn us over to the State at two years old, doesn't change anything.

GCT: It was more common than you think.

MI: At any rate, I think if we could get them to agree—my father clearly would. My mother, I don't know, I'd like to talk to her about it.

GCT: You guys would have to set it up. If I went kind of cold and said I wanted to talk to her about her experience...

MI: No, no, no. I'd set it up. I'd explain to her what we're doing and all that sort of stuff. If she'd be willing, then you would come over, or we schedule it and you could go over to her place. She's there, you know where the police station is, the Salt Lake Police station is there on the corner. Is that 3rd South?

GCT: On 2nd South and 3rd East?

MI: Yeah, about there. She's at a condominium complex called The Club. So it's easy to get to.

GCT: Well, so your mom and dad get married.

MI: Yes.

GCT: You're born about a year later?

MI: Yeah. I don't know exactly what the timing is, but close to that.

GCT: So they're living in Salt Lake.

MI: The subject has never been raised. I've got to believe that my mother was pregnant when she married my dad.

GCT: You think so?

MI: Yeah, I've got to believe that.

GCT: The age and the timing kind of says that, doesn't it?

MI: Yes.

GCT: Your dad was working at Kennecott?

MI: Yes.

GCT: Were they living on the west side of the valley?

MI: One spot that I know where they lived was actually just off of State Street, east of State Street at about, really, 17th, 18th, 19th South. That's one place. They had a basement apartment, I know that.

GCT: So he commuted out to work every day?

MI: Yes, oh yeah. That was quite an ordeal in itself because what they would do, the miners would get together and it was kind of a, they'd fill up a car, that's how they would commute.

GCT: They'd carpool?

MI: Exactly.

GCT: So your dad, I'm curious, your dad comes up here on the program, he has the certificate for that. He doesn't have any other documentation that allows him to stay and yet he very quickly shows up at Kennecott in a union position, full-time pay. So somewhere along the line he's picked up some documentation that gives his some status.

MI: Yes. The fact is, I think that's an age old experience that those undocumented figure out how to get by. There's another thing here, and that is a lot of employers have always winked at that because they need the labor.

GCT: Well, it was easier to get a working visa or a working permit in those days, also. There was a pretty strong demand.

MI: Yes. My dad was undocumented. In fact, that's a whole other line that would be interesting to pursue. He actually didn't officially get documented until many, many, many years later, many years later.

GCT: Did you do that with him?

MI: No, he actually did that on his own and he had a reason to. His wife, he's still married, they've been separated many years, but his wife, much younger than he, left two children in Guadalajara. My dad had retired already as a hairdresser and met her in a restaurant. She was here to work. Left her kids back there. My dad suddenly had a reason. He was not going to be able to sponsor her kids and bring them over here until he got his documentation done. So he was able to get all that done officially and actually went and had the two kids brought over here to the United States.

GCT: Did he adopt those two children?

MI: He didn't adopt them.

GCT: But he sponsored them?

MI: Yes.

GCT: So you guys, both you and David are now here. So walk me through what happens in this period where your mom and dad separate and go on their different ways. I'm taking it that when they do that, you go with your mom, the two of you.

MI: Yes. My understanding is that my father actually by this time went into the United States Army and was actually in Korea either during or shortly after—not in Korea, excuse me. It was during the Korean Conflict; he was actually stationed in Germany.

GCT: So he comes in '45, spends a year, or part of a year, in Spanish Fork. He gets into Kennecott, he works a couple of years, and then joins the army when the pressure for the Korean Conflict comes out.

MI: Exactly right, and still without documentation. Of course we realize now—most people really don't—you know there are 60,000 members of the United States military serving today, Greg, that are non-citizens (laughs). Sixty thousand.

GCT: It's the mercenary army (laughs).

MI: At any rate, and for whatever reason—I don't know what Dad was thinking, we'd have to ask him—why in the world didn't he get his citizenship then? But he didn't.

GCT: Probably didn't think it was necessary.

MI: Well, maybe not. My understanding was is that my dad was overseas in Germany when my mom gave us up.

GCT: Oh, really?

MI: Yeah.

GCT: So it was probably without his permission?

MI: Yeah.

GCT: Were they separated at the time?

MI: I believe they were divorced at the time. That's her call; she had custody. At any rate, my earliest memories are of...I have very few memories of ever being with my mother.

GCT: Really?

MI: Oh, yeah.

GCT: So how old are you when you get into foster care?

MI: Two.

GCT: Well, you wouldn't have any memories.

MI: I guess it couldn't have been quite two. Yeah, it couldn't have been two; I was probably around three or four, because we lived with her for a period of time.

GCT: There's got to be some years in there to make this work to get to the Korean Conflict.

MI: But I do remember going to kindergarten, first grade...kindergarten and first grade I was in foster care in Midvale, Utah.

GCT: Do you remember who your foster parents were?

MI: Joe and Sally Gomez are the first ones that I remember their name and really remember, I remember where we lived. I remember going to Midvale Elementary School.

GCT: Did they speak Spanish?

MI: Yes, oh, yes they did. It was Joe and Sally Gomez. He was a railroad worker. I don't recall if it was Union Pacific or Rio Grande or what, but he worked on the railroad. In fact, we actually lived right on the side of the tracks in railroad housing.

GCT: There's a community, I don't think it exists, I think it's gone today, but there were two things going on down there that still existed. There were remnants of the whole refining process operations that were in Midvale. They were a lot of [unclear] was full of refiners, and that was the center. The railroad, you had the D&RG Western lines came through there, and then the lines from Price. There was a separate railroad, it was the Utah Railway.

MI: Coal?

GCT: Coal.

MI: Well, this location is near the Midvale downtown. In fact, the property butted right up to the railroad track and next to the railroad tracks were I-15. So it was right there. It's no longer there. The homes have been wiped out. We had no plumbing.

GCT: Outdoor?

MI: Yes, we had outdoor toilets. We did have plumbing that came in the back, but it wasn't hot water. We had to heat the water in a big tub, a big kettle, then they'd put it in a big tub and we took a bath.

GCT: How long were you with the Gomez's?

MI: Joe and Sally Gomez, we lived, as I recall, from around four years old probably till I was in second grade. That's when we moved to downtown Salt Lake City. What happened was this. My dad probably came out of the service. Back in those days, unless you could prove that you had a stable family, place and married and all that stuff, the State wasn't going to give you the kids. So my dad went out and got married and got custody of David and me.

GCT: So the marriage was kind of for convenience?

MI: Yes, I've got to believe that was part of it. He ended up marrying a German, an immigrant from Germany.

GCT: Do you remember her name?

MI: Maria.

GCT: Do you remember her last name?

MI: I don't. So here, my understanding is she was like eighteen years old. So very young.

GCT: All of a sudden she has two young kids.

MI: Yes. I guess it worked inasmuch as Dad was able to take custody of us. I remember him taking custody of us from Joe and Sally Gomez.

GCT: Did you remain connected to Joe and Sally?

MI: Yes. We did. We did visit with Sally. She had a daughter and a couple of sons that we kept in loose contact with. She and Joe, Joe passed away a while ago. Sally's passed away several years ago too, now. It's been a long time. I haven't seen Sally Gomez in a long time, maybe twenty years, I don't know. It's been a long, long time. But they were a family that I clearly have memories of, of going to school.

GCT: Did your dad know them?

MI: Yes, he did know them.

GCT: Is that partly why they...

MI: I'm not sure if that had anything to do with it, or if that was just simply an accident. They were in the Utah foster care system. But I don't know that my dad had anything to do with it. I think that was more of an accident than anything else. But if you were Mexican and from that Midvale area, Dad knew everybody. So what it was then when my dad got custody of us, got married, got custody of us, took us from Midvale and we moved right downtown here, right downtown. In fact I go by there once in a while just to...I can't imagine.

GCT: Where's that located?

MI: It's over there by, it's not too far away from Trolley Square. We went to Hamilton Elementary School, which is no longer there. They call it now Hamilton Senior Apartments or whatever.

GCT: Oh, it's the Hamilton Condos.

MI: It was a tennis club at one time.

GCT: It's on 8th South and it's 8th East.

MI: The reason it's called Hamilton is because of Hamilton Elementary.

GCT: I remember that, when they put the tennis thing up.

MI: I think it was more than an elementary school. I think on one side it was elementary school and on the other side it may have been a junior high. It took up the whole block.

[brief interruption]

MI: That's where I went to second grade.

GCT: Did your dad connect with you at all when you were with Gomez's?

MI: Yes. Oh, yes. When he got out of...he didn't get custody of us immediately. Oh, yes, he came and he would visit with us.

GCT: So your dad never veered away from claiming you?

MI: No, he didn't. Although in fairness I would say that I think Dad really struggled with that. He was a single man then and all this and that. We didn't see him probably nearly as often as we should have, but I do remember weekends he would come by. It used to be one of our biggest hopes. David and I would wait and wait and wait to see if he would come that weekend.

GCT: Oh, that's hard.

MI: It is hard. Dad was a real flashy guy, always had great clothes, new car, convertible, usually. Always the dapper. Spent large, lived large, quite a character and well liked. Well liked. He had some dust ups here in Salt Lake City with law and stuff like that. Nothing...he never went to prison or anything like that, but I'm sure, I'm very positive there's more than one night he spent in jail, partying and stuff like that, fights.

GCT: Of your natural mother, do you have a sense of her personality at all?

MI: Yes, because we were reunited. I'll flash forward. We had very little contact with my mother. When she gave us up, that was basically it.

GCT: But she never moved out of the area?

MI: Yes, she did. She moved to California. Married there, moved to California and she married Jack Siciliano. That's the connection to...that was kind of strange.

GCT: I haven't asked Rocco about Jack.

MI: Jack, as I understand it, is the, Rocco is his uncle. Jack has passed away now. But he'll remember Jack and Bonnie. Jack and Bonnie. That's my mother, Bonnie. They were not real close to him, but he was a recognized family member and all that sort of thing. I remember, I believe the first time I ever heard about Rocco Siciliano was from Jack Siciliano. I liked Jack. Jack lived long enough to visit me at the White House with my mom. He told me, he said, "Mickey, this is the best vacation I've ever had in my entire life."

GCT: Where did they live?

MI: They lived near Long Beach.

GCT: They were in Southern California?

MI: Yes, even though they weren't that close to Rocco, because he was living in California, too.

GCT: Yeah, he lived in Beverly Hills when he came back from, essentially came back from Washington.

MI: I don't think they saw each other.

GCT: Lived in San Francisco for a while, then he came back, moved to Beverly Hills, probably in the very early '70s.

MI: I recall vaguely one or two visits that my mother had when we were very young, but it wasn't until I was about, I must have been about twelve or thirteen that she came back into our lives through a letter she had mailed to Ila and Cecil Smith. That's another thing that I could provide to you that would give some context to this, Greg. Ila and Cecil Smith again were a very, what I would call a seminal experience also in mine and David's life because we lived with them for eight years. We lived with them as foster children outside the official foster system because they were acquainted with both Bonnie Siciliano, now, and Frank Ibarra. When my dad's second marriage was going south and the poor woman was freaked out with the two kids that she inherited, and then they had a daughter in a little tiny house that's not far from here, it was just, it lasted a year and my dad knew this wasn't going work. He went and found Ila and Cecil Smith and asked them if he could bring us to them.

GCT: Were they Mormon?

MI: Yes.

GCT: So you're how old? Five or six?

MI: No, I'd have been older than that, because I went to second grade.

GCT: So you had to be about seven years old?

MI: Yes. Yes. I started...he brought us there in the summer between school years and I started third grade at Hamilton. Excuse me. I got it wrong. I went to second grade at Hamilton, we moved to Provo, Utah, that summer, and I started school at Joaquin Elementary School. Third Grade. I can't believe I can remember this: Mrs. Matthews.

GCT: Was your teacher?

MI: Yes (laughs).

GCT: Wow. I'm impressed. So you spent how many years with the Smith's then?

MI: Eight.

GCT: Both you and David?

MI: Yes. So we moved, but, hey, could that be right? I'm not sure...

GCT: That makes you fifteen years old.

MI: I'm not sure that's right because I think we came to them in 19...well, it could have been. We could have come to them, yes, I think it was 1958.

GCT: It means that you go from them to Sacramento.

MI: In 1966. So does that make eight years?

GCT: Yes, if you're fifteen, because you entered the sophomore year at fifteen.

MI: Okay, so I was living with Sally and Joe. There was a family before that, but I just have a very vague memory of that. I was just too tiny to remember. But I remember Sally and Joe Gomez we lived with two or three years. And then Ila and Cecil Smith. Ila Smith, Greg, took the time to actually compose a diary. She had, I've got a copy of it, and she had a chapter in that diary about David and me.

GCT: You have a copy of that?

MI: Yes, I'll get it.

GCT: We need that in the collection. We also want to spend some time with that, but it will prompt a bit more discussion.

MI: Yes it will. I'm writing things I've got to get here. The Ila and Cecil Smith story. They're both deceased now, but they were just wonderful people. I've got to tell you, from the very beginning I was so embarrassed to be there with them and so was David. I'm a little shameful about that.

GCT: Why?

MI: Because they were older people, because they were white people, because they were Mormon people. They were basically everything we weren't. We were often confused in that neighborhood in Provo as being little Indian kids. Of course, that goes back to the Mormons taking care of the Indians...

[Recording ends]

MI: ...that I would recommend in this whole episode if I can make a fourth thing, I think there ought to be an interview with David

GCT: Oh, absolutely. No, we'll do that because I think we ought to have David's story.

MI: What you'll also find, Greg—I'm sure this is not uncommon—you may get four entirely different versions of the same event.

GCT: Oh, yeah. That's the way memory works.

MI: I don't know how you find out what the truth is.

GCT: Well, it's the role of the historian.

MI: Some of this I'm sure you'll get different versions.

GCT: We may never be able to figure out what the real line is. You get close, but we all tend to remember things, sometimes we remember it with the best scenario and sometimes we remember it because it's accurate.

MI: For David, I'd recommend that we get him scheduled. But he could come and do it here and be comfortable.

GCT: Yeah, I don't think I'd do it in his office; too interruptive. Got to get him out of that environment.

MI: He's going crazy all day long. Should I ask him to schedule something with you directly?

GCT: Yes, let's talk to him.

MI: I'll give him your email address and you guys can figure it out. At any rate...

GCT: I think he'll remember meeting me.

MI: Oh, he'll remember. He'll be delighted because there's something in this for him, also. If this is putting a family story together...

GCT: Well, I want his experience as an adult. What you've told me and what I've talked to him about a little bit in his office is very interesting to me.

MI: And we had very different experiences, back to your earlier questions. It's a fascinating thing that David and I, same parents, and very different experiences in Utah. David is a couple of shades darker than me and I'm here to tell you skin color makes a difference.

GCT: It counts, doesn't it.

MI: It does. It makes a difference in how you are treated. Secondly, David, by disposition, handled all of this experience, painful, very different than me. There was a long period of time, Greg, where David didn't talk. Mickey did all the talking for us both.

GCT: You were the older brother.

MI: Yes.

GCT: Was that because you're the older brother or was it because you were the more outgoing one?

MI: Very different personality at the time. It's hard for anybody to believe David as being shy and bashful today. He's a motivational speaker, in part, I think, because of this early experience. But from the very beginning, I remember being ingrained in me from my dad and everybody else that I was with, I was to take care of my brother and we were never going to be separated, ever. We never were.

GCT: You were the dad.

MI: Yes, and the mother, in many respects. So there's kind of that. It's just the simple stuff. My brother wouldn't even order at a fast food restaurant. He looked at me. "He wants a hamburger and fries with that too, and a Coke." He wouldn't say anything. He was always, it was really painful for David. He was always on the verge of tears.

GCT: Both of you are very athletic.

MI: Yes. Well, (laughs) at one time; I'm paying the price now. Yes, sports was a terrific, terrific equalizer.

GCT: When did you figure out, when did you get a chance to start getting into sports?

MI: Because of Ila and Cecil Smith and their willingness to tolerate all that disruption into the normal day to make sure that Mickey and David had the chance to play baseball and all the rest that came with that. Cecil Smith, steel worker at Geneva, not an athletic guy in any way, a short, stubby, he actually coached our Little League team so that we would have a team.

GCT: So you'd have the opportunity.

MI: Yes. He was quite an extraordinary guy.

GCT: When did you start getting involved in athletics?

MI: Well, in Provo, Utah, in baseball. Baseball was the first real big thing.

GCT: How old were you?

MI: Oh, gosh, I was...

GCT: Were you eight?

MI: No, I think I was a little bit older than that. Probably nine, ten years old.

GCT: About the time when the Little League stuff was common in those days.

MI: I loved it. I can't even believe my first baseball team was Craighead Plumbing (laughs). That was our team. Craighead Plumbing. We played in Timpanogos Park or something like that, I don't know. But, oh, I love that. We have a few old pictures of David and I standing together in a baseball uniform. I was the short stop and he was the second baseman. We even played side by side (laughs).

GCT: So say that again. You were the short stop?

MI: Yes.

GCT: And he was second base?

MI: Yes.

GCT: Even the positions, the short stop's the more active position.

MI: Yes. Exactly right. That's the way it was. Anyway, David and I grew up very, very close. David was really struggling in Provo. Really struggling. I was fine, happy-go-lucky. My Mom Smith, we called her Mom Smith—again these were older people; they were like grandparents when we showed up. We weren't the only kids that they were dealing with. They had three other foster children that they eventually adopted. They were just amazing, all the different...she had two natural children—this is all in her diary—then everybody else was adopted or foster kids or whatever.

GCT: The natural children were earliest?

MI: Yes. She divorced. So she and Cecil never had any children of their own.

GCT: I see. So she brought the two natural children to the marriage?

MI: Yes, exactly right. Harold Tanner and Floydene Madsen. They both live in St. George now.

GCT: Do you see them?

MI: David keeps in touch with them once in a while, because he kind of goes through there. Sometimes he drives from Las Vegas rather than fly and that's easy to stop. I have not seen them for quite some time. The last time I saw Harold and Lela that I recall was in Las Vegas when I was at the White House. I had gone in to an event with Governor Miller of Nevada. I invited Harold and his wife, Lela, to the luncheon. Governor Miller made such a big deal out of Mickey Ibarra, President Clinton's assistant for intergovernmental affairs and all that he had done for Nevada and *dah, dah, dah, dah, dah*. They couldn't believe it (laughs). They couldn't believe it. I don't blame them. I couldn't believe it most the time either. But at any rate, it was a nice thing they showed up.

GCT: So that period when you're down in Provo, you're being raised Mormon?

MI: Yes. We were actually baptized. Every kid at eight gets baptized, certainly in Provo at that time.

GCT: Were you well accepted by your peers?

MI: Again, my experience I think was quite different than David's. I got along. I just got along.

GCT: Do you think you have more of your dad's personality than David does?

MI: In some respects, yes, I think that's right. In some respects, yes. Again, David, I think, I'm not sure it was genetic; I think David's probably gotten back to his genetics now. It was just a different environment and how different folks tolerate and deal with that.

GCT: Do you remember your natural mom as being outgoing?

MI: Yes. I remember, she's starting to age now, but back then I remember I was always, when we reunited with my mom, I was really excited to see her. She was attractive, she dressed well, lived in a nice home, nice car, had a good job, well-spoken. Very funny. She was very funny. Very gregarious. Easy to like. It was nice. But, again, we'd never, it's a different experience. She's more like an aunt to me than a mom.

GCT: It's interesting that you describe both your natural mom and dad as being very outgoing. Probably the center of the party each.

MI: Yes. I think that's, David certainly got that, but that's not where he started. David was darker, experienced direct discrimination, names. I mean, there weren't any blacks in Provo that I know of, so it was the brown kids that got called the "n" word. That's all there were. He was called that quite often. David was a fighter. David was huskier than I and, man, he would just knock the living hell out of people. That was going to get him in big trouble.

GCT: Did it?

MI: Well, it got him in trouble nearly every day at school. Poor Ila. She was at school all the time trying to deal with this. It was real clear that unless something drastic happened, David was well on his way to a very unfortunate future, I think, in Utah.

GCT: You couldn't, it was too hard for you to get through to him?

MI: Yes. What happened was after elementary school was this. Ila did another extraordinary thing for me. The Mormon Church, Brigham Young University, also had a Brigham Young Academy. It was a lab school. Most of your big education departments...I don't know if the U ever did that.

GCT: Yes, they did. It was called the Stewart School.

MI: Well, at that time it was Brigham Young Academy and it was the junior high and high school, whatever. It was a very elite population.

GCT: I think Michael Young went to that program.

MI: I'll tell you, he did. And he knew Mickey Ibarra. Honestly, I don't remember Michael Young.

GCT: But he remembered you?

MI: He sure did.

GCT: He's told me some about that experience.

MI: Several years ago when I was here, it was the year—several years; a long time ago (laughs)—when was it? It couldn't have been...Michael Young wasn't here in 2000.

GCT: He's been here six years now.

MI: It would have been his, I think, his first year and I'm trying to remember what would have brought me...oh, it was when I was named a Hinckley Fellow and delivered an address. Guess what the topic was: immigration reform. He invited me to the President's Home for lunch and put together a nice luncheon with a number of guests. At the end, I can tell you when it was, it was March 27th, because it was my birthday.

GCT: Really. Did they know that?

MI: I didn't think they knew that. At the end, he brings out a birthday cake, everybody sings happy birthday to me, and then he brings out the yearbook from Brigham Young Academy, if you can believe that. So, yes, we were contemporaries at Brigham Young Academy. The reason that happened, Greg, how in the world would I get into Brigham Young Academy? That was a very elite...

GCT: It's almost a prep school.

MI: Oh, yes. Well, as it turns out, as luck would have it, Ben E. Lewis was the vice president of Brigham Young University and the stake president for Ila and Cecil Smith.

GCT: Your stake.

MI: Stake president. I can't believe I remember this. We attended the Oak Hills Ward. It was a part of the, I want to say Eastmont, might have been Eastmont Stake. Well, Ben E. Lewis was the stake president. Ila went and beseeched him to help me get into Brigham Young Academy.

GCT: So clearly you had shown some academic excellence along the way.

MI: Yes, but I don't believe I ever was through high school an outstanding scholar, but did okay. But, like I say, likable, ambitious and he agreed to help. Not only that, he not only got me in, but at no cost. No cost. No tuition. We couldn't pay the tuition. So he did that. Ben E. Lewis did that. I later became very good friends with his son, Steven Lewis. Then David and I were separated because I was no longer going to school with him.

GCT: Yeah. That probably was a killer for him.

MI: Oh, yes. He was lost. Lost. That wasn't good.

GCT: Did he go inward? It implies that...

MI: Yes. He just was not a happy guy. He didn't have a good experience. He was fighting. Then he had a really ugly experience with a girlfriend that he was interested in. I don't recall the name, I don't think now, but the father was the head of the music department at Brigham Young University and just really reamed him out for even thinking that he could be in the same room with his daughter. Any rate, David's self esteem was way, way low. Way, way low. So it turned out that we went on a vacation, because again of Ila Smith. We saw my dad in Sacramento because the vacation was going to be in San Francisco.

GCT: So you're twelve or thirteen?

MI: Fourteen. It was the summer of 1966. My brother David used it as an opportunity to beg my dad, *beg* my dad, to let us come and live with him. He just couldn't take it there anymore in Utah. Hated it. My dad was single, still. Hair stylist. My gosh, man, he had it going on (laughs). Still a convertible. He's living alone. My God, he's going to have two kids? You kidding me? But I'll tell you, this again was a very seminal moment. Ila and Cecil Smith, Francisco Ibarra, finally standing up and doing the right thing. He said yes.

GCT: So your dad would have been forty-five?

MI: Something like that, yes. Still a...

GCT: He comes at fifteen, in '45. This is '66. That's twenty-one years. He's thirty-six, thirty-seven.

MI: Young man. Good looking guy. Hair stylist. He had no idea what being a dad was about. But he said, "Listen, you and David have never been separated and we're not going to start now. You're the one asking me to move here. Unless you and Mickey both

agree to move here, it ain't happening. But if you both agree that you want to come here, you can come here. We'll start again."

GCT: So that move was a pretty...well, for you, you gave up a lot on one side, on the education side.

MI: I did. I was happy.

GCT: Because you'd had as good an experience from an educational sense that you could get into in this state.

MI: And that gets me to sports again. I was on the baseball team. The varsity baseball team at Brigham Young Academy High School, as a freshman, I was on the varsity team. I was on the basketball team; I was on the football team. I had it going on. I was happy as could be. Popular. The only thing that I really felt bad about, I remember being embarrassed by it, is I couldn't afford the clothes to match my classmates. They all had the best of everything. I didn't. We just couldn't do that. So I worked and worked and got some nice things. I didn't have as many things as they had, but I had a pair of Levis instead of some other brand that wasn't as nice, I guess. I don't know. You know how it is. Kids. They can be brutal on that stuff.

GCT: What kind of jobs did you do?

MI: My very first job that I recall—well, of course my very first job was delivering the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

GCT: [unclear] fifty-ten?

MI: Yes, fifty papers. But it was an awful paper route because it was scattered so much and up and down hills. Oh, my gosh. Then the weather, all kinds of weather. Boy, I'll tell you, that thirty bucks—you had to go do all your own collections. I had to go

pounding on doors every month to get the money. But that thirty bucks, that was a big thing for me then. Then I was very fortunate. Juna Washburn, the same family that owned Washburn Motors, in fact their son is the mayor of Orem. What's his first name? Mayor Washburn is her son. Juna and her husband have passed away now. But she hired me. She had a nursery and she hired me to come up after school and water the plants, all the stuff. Down the aisles, back this aisle, *bop, bop, bop*. Twenty-five cents an hour. I had to keep my own time. At any rate, I was doing fine. So that was a very important decision. I wasn't all sure when we left for Sacramento. Ila was just beside herself. She was so upset.

GCT: That you were going?

MI: That we were even entertaining. We hadn't decided yet, because I hadn't decided yet. It wasn't enough for Dad to say yes. Dad said clearly, "You guys are coming together or you're not coming at all."

GCT: David put a lot of heat on you.

MI: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think to this day we haven't talked all that much about it, but I think to this day this was something that I did for him, and I did. But it wasn't just all for him.

GCT: Well, it's your dad, your natural dad.

MI: Yes. I also remember thinking at night, all the wonderful people, Greg, the great experiences that I would miss if I didn't go to Sacramento. If I *didn't* go to Sacramento.

GCT: So in a way you saw it as a land of opportunity.

MI: Yes. Oh, yes. And to finally be connected. I can't tell you how hurtful it was—that's ridiculous—I can tell you. Let me share with you how hurtful it was to be asked, "So your name's Ibarra. Why you living with the Smiths?"

GCT: Yeah. What's the deal? Of course, you had a story that you could give.

MI: Yes. But the reality is, being united with your father, same last name, doesn't that sound like a little thing? It was a big thing. It was a big thing. Then going to school with classmates just like you, lot of Latinos. Names. Rio Grande Boulevard. Sacramento. Just, wow, man. It's okay. It wasn't yet, in that country in the '60's, it wasn't quite cool to be Latino like it is today. But it was a big change from Salt Lake City; a big change from Provo, Utah. So that was, I came to the conclusion we were going to do it together, and we did.

GCT: Is that what kind of tipped it in your mind to go?

MI: No. It was mainly David. If David wasn't put in a different environment, he wasn't going to make it.

GCT: And you knew that?

MI: Yes, oh, yes.

GCT: You understood that.

MI: Yes, yes, yes. While Ila was so upset, she said, "I can't believe that your dad, when we took you two boys, your dad said he would never take you away from us. That was the condition. He's breaking it." She said, "I'm not going to tell Cecil; you guys are going to tell Cecil, not me, that you're leaving."

GCT: Hard deal to do.

MI: It was hard to do, especially...

GCT: Because that was you telling him.

MI: Yes. At that age and all that he'd done for us, he was a great guy to us.

GCT: Did they stay pretty close to you after you first left?

MI: They did. I remember our first Christmas away, we came back.

GCT: Did you?

MI: Oh, yes. We came back for Christmas and spent Christmas with them. We stayed in touch. David always, of course, David lived here; I moved on. We were always close with them. My gosh, they made it possible for me to go to Brigham Young. I never could have gone. They provided me free room and board.

GCT: While you went to BYU?

MI: Yes. They were the ones who really pushed me to go to BYU.

GCT: So you came back and in effect connected with them?

MI: They always wanted me to be the good Mormon kid. That was the ideal in a Mormon family. I never would go to church; I wouldn't go on a mission. Finally, once I graduated from school, ended up requesting to be removed officially from the rolls of the Mormon Church.

GCT: Did you ever tell them?

MI: I don't believe so. I'm not sure that I did or needed to. But it's a formal process you go through. I was glad to do it. There was just no way that I could...

GCT: It wasn't part of you.

MI: It wasn't. It's not something I believed in. So that was many years ago now. But that's what they really hoped, for, that the Brigham Young experience would really put me back on the path to righteousness. At any rate, it was a good experience for me. No

regrets about going to Brigham Young University. I left, I think, with a good solid education. Particularly, Brigham Young University was yet one more contradiction in my life. My life, I think, could be written as a host of contradictions.

GCT: Let me take you back to Sacramento. Did your dad come drive over and pick you up?

MI: No. As I recall...I'm trying to remember. How did we get there? I think it was by bus, Greyhound bus. Of course, that was from the old...

GCT: Downtown?

MI: Yes, right there by the temple.

GCT: It wasn't down in Provo?

MI: No. It was in Salt Lake City.

GCT: And they brought you up, all your belongings?

MI: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Some of it I think was shipped. But, no, we went over there fresh. My dad got an apartment, got a new apartment, two bedrooms in south Sacramento. Registered for school. Started football almost immediately.

GCT: So you went in the summer?

MI: Yes. Went in the summer. David to [Fern Bacon Junior High] to Luther Burbank High School and started our new life.

GCT: So when you get there as a fifteen year old, was football quite a different experience there?

MI: It was. And yet I ended up being in a great position because I arrived having already played freshman football. There was no freshman football in California. They don't start until they're sophomores. So I was a year ahead.

GCT: You had a year up on them.

MI: Oh, yes. And it showed. Not only that, the head sophomore football coach, Coach Jones, Brigham Young University football graduate (laughs). I was the smallest starter on the team.

GCT: Were you fast?

MI: Fast and really, really tough. I was a tackler, the defensive back and loved that. Hunt and pursue. Coach Jones loved it and I did. My teammates were just blown away. Because of my football ability, that immediately opened the doors to my high school experience and all the friends and everything that I had, it was all about sports and all that. So I was right away put into the “in” crowd, if you will, because of sports.

GCT: You were immediately accepted.

MI: By the time I was a senior, I was the senior class president (laughs).

GCT: It’s an amazing story, how quickly you were able to...

MI: Let me add to that. The junior class president was my brother, David.

GCT: Is that right? Now that’s an interesting change, isn’t it?

MI: David began doing better almost immediately.

GCT: Did he?

MI: Oh, yes. Major difference. It wasn’t total. It’s not that David didn’t have his struggles after, but one of the things David discovered is that he couldn’t read.

GCT: Really?

MI: He was really having a hard time. That was one of the things that I think really caused him to struggle in school.

GCT: In Provo?

MI: Yes.

GCT: Was it eye problems?

MI: Just hadn't learned it.

GCT: You have to be pretty creative to get that far without reading.

MI: Now he's the biggest reader; he reads all the time. He's really into management books. He reads all these gurus. Lee Iacocca, all those guys, man. He reads and reads and reads on management. So at any rate, that, Ila and Cecil Smith I consider to be just key. I see our Sacramento move to be just absolutely key that changed the, really just changed our entire future.

GCT: For both of you.

MI: Oh, yes.

GCT: Did David play football, too?

MI: Oh, yes. David was very good. We've got great pictures of me and David. David's twenty-one; I'm twenty-three, numbers.

GCT: Somehow I had this impression that David boxed. Was he a boxer?

MI: No. But he was a fighter, let me tell you. He was a fighter all the way.

GCT: I thought maybe he'd gotten into boxing somehow.

MI: No.

GCT: He played baseball.

MI: No. Both of us gave up the baseball. We did track, basketball and football in high school.

GCT: What did you do in track?

MI: I did the 440, the once around the track at a sprint (laughs). I think that is a hard, hard race. The 100 yard dash.

GCT: You did the relay?

MI: Yeah, some of that. Just it was running. I enjoyed that running pretty fast, that kind of thing. But we had a great high school experience.

GCT: Talk about your relationship with your dad as you're going through those couple of years in high school.

MI: Hilarious.

GCT: Did you kind of take care of yourself a lot?

MI: Yes. And took care of him, too. He, poor Dad didn't know anything more about being a dad than what he might have seen on "Father Knows Best." I don't know. But he had his own life. He had a hair salon full of women all day long. He was very good at it. Had a thriving small business. A number of girlfriends. He really depended on David and me to take care of ourselves a lot. We did. We avoided any big...we had our little scrapes, but nothing serious, always got through school fine.

GCT: Did you learn to cook?

MI: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I remember a couple of comical things. Thanksgiving. Discovering the turkey that has the little pop-up thing (laughs). Yes, I was the one that was always after David to clean up. Dad was really fastidious from being just sharp, having things look sharp, no clutter. That's how I was, too. So I was always in David's...David was sloppy at the time. It was a good experience for us, it really was. We bonded with my dad and got a good experience in it. During all that time, we or I, continued to see my mom more frequently.

GCT: She's in California?

MI: Yes. She came to our high school graduation, all that kind of stuff.

GCT: Probably pretty neat to have a whole family unit together for something like that.

MI: Yes, although it wasn't a close thing. Jack wasn't actually a big fan of Dad's, I'm sure, Jack Siciliano. But at any rate, it all worked out fine. There was quite a story, too, about how we reconnected with my mom, because as it turns out, my mother had stayed in foster care with Ila and Cecil Smith at one time as a young girl.

GCT: Really?

MI: She knew them, too. She's the one who introduced my dad to them. Then my dad brought us back to them, not because of my mother, but simply because that's how he knew them. They liked him, he liked them. I don't know if you've ever had a chance to go on my website, in fact on the new one, I just had them put it back. If you go to my new website under, "About us" and you click on Mickey Ibarra, you'll see an option for a video. It's the video biography that the University of Utah completed on me for the outstanding alumnus award in 2001. They've got home footage. You see two little boys running around playing peek-a-boo around a Christmas tree.

GCT: Who has the footage? Does David have that?

MI: Yes.

GCT: We ought to get a copy of that in this collection.

MI: Yes, we should. It shows David and me (laughs) with Ila and Cecil.

GCT: Walk me through how you reconnect with your mom, then I think we probably should stop.

MI: Well, what it was was that Ila told David and me that she had something to talk with us about and wanted to go for a ride.

GCT: This was before you moved?

MI: It's when we were in Provo, Utah. We were in Provo, Utah. I must have been about twelve years old; David maybe eleven. As she did from time to time, we took a ride up Provo Canyon. Pulled along the side of the road there into one of the picnic areas and she parked and said, "Listen, I got a letter from your mom. I want to read it to you." Just the three of us there. She read this letter from my mom and my mom was just lamenting about her guilt, about leaving us and glad that we were with the Smith's and all this and that, but she was getting help for dealing with the guilt and all that kind of stuff, some counseling. She really wanted to reconnect with us as a part of her getting over this. I remember my brother, again, as is typical, two totally different reactions. David started bawling. He was so angry. Didn't want anything to do with her. "There's no way that I'm going down there to see her. She didn't care about us, why should I care about her?" I remember Ila doing, pretty much just listening. I was saying, "Well, why not. I'd like to see her." Fine with that. She was asking Ila to bring both of us to California to visit her in Long Beach.

GCT: Interesting she wouldn't come to you; it's you go to her.

MI: Yes. I don't know exactly what that was all about. But when it was all said and done, we agreed to do it.

GCT: David came to grips with it?

MI: Yes. Ila drove us.

GCT: Was he still pretty angry about going?

MI: I think he got over it. He wasn't, he was acting very unsure about it all and how he would feel and react.

GCT: Well, at that age, a year or so difference in age makes a lot of difference.

MI: Well, it was the age, I'm sure, but it was just, I don't know, we just had a different attitude about these things. Again, he was always characterized by anger and hurt. I just tried to avoid all of that; I couldn't change any of that. Can't change the past, but we can shape the future. Let's go shape it.

GCT: How much do you think his inability to read plays to that?

MI: Well I think it played into it this way: I think it really fed his inadequacy, his feelings of inadequacy, his feeling of less valuable than others, his feeling of failure, his feeling of rejection, his feelings, all of these things were just exacerbated by, I think, that difficulty he had in learning. So that's how it was. Again, I give Ila credit for that. She set that up and we went down there. In retrospect, I think really what a strong woman Ila was.

GCT: She did a lot for you guys.

MI: Oh, yeah, she really did. We know that more now as time has gone by.

GCT: What was it like to walk up and see your mom?

MI: I remember feeling very excited, a lot of butterflies. Didn't know how she would react, what she would be like, very curious, but excited and glad to see her. I think we were glad to, it was nice to know that she was doing well. She had a happy life there, nice marriage. She had three kids. They're all nice kids.

GCT: Did you recognize those were step-siblings?

MI: Yes, although again, we've never had a brother, sister relationship with any of the

second families or third families on my dad's side. We'd not lived together, so it's not the same experience. You're more like cousins than anything else and most of them very distant. My mother has one of her sons living here with her right now. He's fifty years old, never been married, now living with his mom. It's a spitting image—I invited them to dinner last night, too—he is the spitting image of Jack Siciliano, his father who passed away. His name is Terry Siciliano, but I think they call him Jack.

GCT: When you go to Sacramento, does your mom stay connected with you a bit?

MI: Yes.

GCT: I assume after you have this trip, she's back.

MI: Again, it wasn't frequent, but it was regular. We'd see her.

GCT: Mostly letters?

MI: I don't recall much correspondence that way. We'd see her a couple of times a year.

GCT: Would you go there?

MI: Yes. I remember taking, that was when, I think that was the first plane trip David and I ever went on. She sent airfare for David and me to go from Salt Lake City airport. I can even tell you, it was on the old Western Airlines (laughs) from Salt Lake City, prop jets, and we flew to Los Angeles. That was so exciting. I remember we landed in Las Vegas before we got to Los Angeles. That was a really exciting thing to be able to go on an airplane. That was the first trip and it was because my mom had sent Ila money for our plane ticket. That's how we got to go.

GCT: They drove you up to Salt Lake airport and put you on your way?

MI: Exactly. Off we went. So we started that relationship. We stayed engaged.

GCT: Did it change any or did it modify when you went to live with your dad? Was that more difficult for your mom to deal with?

MI: I don't recall that. I don't recall that it was more difficult. I think she was in the position of, my gosh, how could she say anything? Really? Again, they came, Jack and she both, came to each of mine and David's high school graduation in Sacramento.

GCT: Why don't we stop there. That's a pretty good marking place.

MI: Okay.

GCT: Thanks, Mickey.

MI: Sure, you're welcome. A lot of memories (laughs).

END OF INTERVIEW

MICKEY IBARRA

Salt Lake City, Utah

An Interview by

Gregory C. Thompson

18 April 2013

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

U-3237

**American West Center
and
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department**

University of Utah

THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH MICKEY IBARRA ON APRIL 18, 2013. IT'S ONE IN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH MR. IBARRA, AND I BELIEVE IT'S PROBABLY OUR THIRD OR FOURTH INTERVIEW THAT WE'VE DONE. AND WE'RE DOING IT IN SALT LAKE CITY AT THE J. WILLARD MARRIOTT LIBRARY IN THE MARINER ECCLES ROOM. I'M GREG THOMPSON. AND WE ARE MOVING FORWARD WITH OUR SET OF INTERVIEWS. THIS IS TAPE NUMBER U-3237.

GT: So, you walked away from that meeting with an impression of what?

MI: That we may have met the next president of the United States.

GT: [laughs]

MI: And of course that was very premature. The fact is the campaign was just underway. I believe in the end there were eight serious candidates for president. Not all eight could be sure. One of those candidates, by the way, was Jerry Brown, current governor of California at that time.

GT: Did you know him before?

MI: Did not know him, no, but had met him on several occasions. So at any rate, really that was the beginning for me of what I thought really started as a long process, which I was charged with the responsibility of assisting, Debra DeLee and the NEA with going through the process with all of the candidates. That process included the completion of quite a lengthy presidential questionnaire. It included the completion of a videotaped interview of each candidate, by the NEA president.

GT: Really? So it'd go out to the membership?

MI: That, and also to be seen by the Political Action Committee, which represented the membership, that had to first approve any recommendation to the board of directors, and then from the board of directors to the representative assembly of some ten thousand duly elected delegates from across the country to serve as the highest governing body of

the NEA. That body had to endorse with a super majority, I believe sixty-eight percent, in order for an endorsement to take place.

So at any rate, that really was the beginning of much dialogue and back and forth with Bill Clinton, and the other presidential candidates 'til that process, in fact, was completed. At the end of the day, it was Bill Clinton that received the recommendation. Bill Clinton was very pleased with that because it came at a very early time. We were the first major union to ever endorse Bill Clinton.

GT: So what were the questions you asked the eight candidates?

MI: Well, the questions really dealt specifically with education. What his views were on education. What he felt about class size. What he felt about budget. How he felt about teacher contracts. How he felt about bargaining. What was his vision and his plan for improving our public schools. What were his thoughts about teacher tenure. All kinds of—quite a detailed approach.

GT: Who handled that set of questions best for that film presentation?

MI: Well, the candidate that did the best throughout the entire process was Bill Clinton.

GT: It was Clinton.

MI: That led to his recommendation to the NEA Political Action Committee, who then took it to the board of directors, who then took it to the representative assembly for an endorsement of him in, the endorsement took place in, I believe, early 1992. Remember the election was in November. He came to the NEA convention in July of 1992. The last stop before going on to New York City for the Democratic Convention in which he was nominated.

So at any rate, it was that responsibility and that interaction with Governor Bill Clinton that really first put me in contact with the governor, as well as some of those staff—

GT: Anybody else rise up on the roster of the eight individuals that you were working with?

MI: Well there were a number of folks that did well. I mean, I really recall, very specifically, the interview with Paul Tsongas. At that time, Senator Tsongas really did something quite unique and he put together a book, a book about what he would do; it's kind of a treatise of what he intended—

GT: For education, or generally?

MI: Generally. Which included education. But, it was really quite a new development in the presidential campaign. Today it's quite common for a president to have a plan. It was not so much there. But, that was a very impressive presentation. Liked Paul Tsongas a lot, who of course is no longer with us. We also, of course, had Senator Kerrey. And of course this was Senator Kerrey from Nebraska, who was very, very articulate. But at any rate, those were some of them. In the collection that I have given you, there is, I believe, a button collection of all of those candidates. It's fascinating. But, at any rate, that really was the presidential process, endorsement process, that required interaction. It really led to then, Governor then, Bill Clinton's endorsement, then his nomination at the convention.

I went to the convention of '92. I was one of the four managers for the National Education Association. We divided up all the delegations. The NEA had the largest union delegation of the entire convention. Five hundred plus delegates of the Democratic

Convention were NEA members. So, we had a communication set up to deal with them on resolutions on the nominations of the candidates and so on and so forth. So, that was, again, it just continued.

GT: So did you go to the Republican National Convention?

MI: I did. I actually did go to that convention also. I believe that year it was in Houston. So we had a similar operation.

GT: Ya know, I don't remember that.

MI: Although a much smaller operation on the Republican side also. 'Cause teachers are Republicans too, as well as Democrats. At any rate, we were involved in the Republican National Convention. And through our Political Action Committee we actually provided some funding to help offset the cost to delegates of attending the convention.

GT: Of teachers?

MI: Teachers.

GT: Teacher delegates.

MI: Yes, that's exactly right. So, at any rate, that was part of my responsibility, gettin' us through all of that endorsement process, the convention process. And then of course moving from that to the campaign for the presidency, working with our affiliates throughout the country, to build all of the campaign kits – the posters, the pamphlets, the buttons – to try to coordinate our efforts in the targeted states having the most priority that we thought would make a big difference in the electoral college outcome for a candidate.

GT: So did you—you obviously worked with the National Democratic Committee.

MI: Yes.

GT: And who in that group did you work most with?

MI: Well, in that group it would've been—well, Ron Brown was chair of the Democratic National Committee. And he had a number of folks that, of course, were set up to assist him in the campaign. But it was not only the Democratic National Committee, but it was also the Bill Clinton for President Campaign. The DNC was an important part, but the campaign itself was not driven by the DNC, it was driven by the campaign.

GT: Who was in charge of the campaign?

MI: Ya know I'm tryin' to think right now. The campaign manager was David Wilhelm, David Wilhelm out of Chicago. And I did work closely with David. Very savvy, very committed, very engaging individual. I really enjoyed workin' with David. And David knew the NEA and all of our folks very, very well. They had a very—valued our input, and as a result we had a great deal of access throughout the campaign, the campaign events. We were responsible, the NEA, for ensuring that our members showed up to support the president at the campaign rallies. Showed up to volunteer to help out. Showed up to make sure that we helped turn out the vote. All of that sort of thing. So, we had a close relationship with them.

GT: Was your position mostly focused on the campaign during that period, for NEA?

MI: Yes, I was the official campaign liaison for the NEA. So I'd be the courier back and forth, if you will, between the NEA and the Clinton for President Campaign. So I was very comfortable with that. Actually it was not the first time I'd done that. I'd actually had that opportunity both in 1984 to help with the Walter Mondale campaign,

and then again in 1988 to help with the Dukakis campaign. So, for the NEA, the Bill Clinton for President was my third campaign.

GT: So you were a veteran.

MI: So I was somewhat of a veteran. So at any rate, that's how it was that we just continued to grow our relationship in the midst of battle, for the race to the presidency.

GT: Going through that campaign, once he had been named the candidate, what sticks out in your mind as kinda the key serial activities, points, events that occur?

MI: Well, one that I'll always remember is Bill Clinton's appearance at the National Education Association Convention in Washington DC, in 1992. Again I was responsible for helping coordinate his arrival, his departure. Even from the setting of the music that we used to welcome him inside the convention center. I remember one song that I selected that I still think of every time is—gosh, what was the name of it? “Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now,” was the name of it.

GT: [laughs]

MI: And, at any rate it was a lotta fun. So, yeah, I think of the convention. We did something quite different. Rather than him simply mounting the podium and delivering it, he wanted to do a town hall atmosphere. Now town hall is almost synonymous with presidential campaigning. It was Bill Clinton that really began that whole genre of politicking. So rather than putting him at the main podium, we created a side podium at the Washington Convention Center, and surrounded him with teachers. And, he did not have a podium but rather simply a microphone, and walked around and spoke and made his points, and responded to questions from the audience, in a town hall meeting format.

Which worked out just very nicely. Folks felt like they really had an intimate back and forth.

GT: Yeah, he's the superb master of that setting.

MI: Exactly. And boy he used it to the hilt. So, that was something I remember, being so struck by the enthusiasm from our teachers for Bill Clinton. "Elect me president and I promise to be the education president every day, not just election day." Bill Clinton.

[laughs]

GT: Well and he was a lot.

MI: Yeah. So, he really impressed the crowd. He was overwhelmingly endorsed, by secret ballot, by the ten thousand plus delegates, of the convention. So, that was one part of the campaign that I remember really closely. I remember a second—setting up a war room. And that's the language we used, a "war room," at the NEA. That would be responsible for responding to all of the needs of our affiliates from throughout the country, our fifty affiliates. "I need x number of campaign kits." "I need x number of posters." "I need x number of pamphlets." "I need x number of fliers." "Where do we need 'em?" "What are we doing?" So, we were in the middle. We took a number of staff and put them on special assignment, inside the NEA, to serve as a war room and response center, to help fuel the enthusiasm that we were building for Bill Clinton. So I remember those war room days. It was quite an exhilarating experience.

GT: Pretty intense?

MI: Yes. It was intense. Remember, we were dealing with a big unknown. We had a third party, a third candidate in this race. And that was very, very unusual. And so, it really made for a lot of uncertainty in a number of states about how we'd do. I remember,

in my home state, Bill Clinton came in third place in 1992, behind, of course, [trying to remember the third party candidate, the Texan, but I'm pretty sure it's Ross Perot ?].

But, at any rate, that was a hard fought campaign. We weren't going to leave any stone unturned. And, by far and away this was the most intense, and I think most well thought out, and most well executed effort on behalf of the NEA, to assist in the election of the president. There's no question about it. Bill Clinton really did catch both the heart and the mind of the NEA to ensure his success.

GT: So was your role in mapping out that campaign, were you the central designer of that campaign?

MI: I was a participant of a team of folks that put the strategy together of how we would mobilize the, at that point, one point seven million members of the NEA, and how it is we would coordinate this, and operationalize a close but separate campaign with the president's campaign, Bill Clinton's campaign. So, it was quite an undertaking, and one that, again, turned out to be very successful.

GT: Let me take you on a sidebar if I could. So you must look at today's climate, and what's happening to state education associations and the national, given the Tea Party philosophy, or near to a Tea Party philosophy, what's your observation to that? Are you astounded at where the country has gone in attitude, or not?

MI: Well, the conversation I had earlier today—I mean, during the Clinton years we felt like it was impossible for the nation to become any more partisan than it was as we experienced it, and yet that proved to be absolutely untrue. Absolutely untrue.

GT: We'd love to have those days back wouldn't we?

MI: The fact of the matter is that I was always astonished, Greg, by the passion generated by President Clinton, and candidate Clinton before that, and his wife Hillary, both for and against. There are people in this country to this day, perhaps less, but during that time period, that would just almost froth at the mouth at the mere mention of the Clintons. I never could quite figure that out.

GT: And we had a lotta that in this state.

MI: Yeah. Ya know, I couldn't ever quite figure that out. Those that had the opportunity to listen to Bill Clinton, meet Bill Clinton, I think walked away, more often than not, feeling a bit different about him. But boy there was a, almost a campaign of hate and disparagement that was out there that really, I think, was a harbinger of what was to follow, as it related with the Tea Party and the great amount of partisanship it developed.

GT: Was that in part because of the nature of President Bush Sr.?

MI: Oh, I think that's—the fact that we defeated an incumbent president—

GT: Yeah. Fairly popular.

MI: At one time thought to be absolutely undefeatable.

GT: That's right.

MI: They referred to the Democratic candidates once as the eight pygmies.

GT: [laughs] I don't remember that—

MI: It wasn't so long before that that President Bush, at one time, enjoyed a ninety percent approval rating, after the Gulf War. Almost astounding. But of course, the context for that election had a lot to do with the economy and its downturn. And the belief that Bill Clinton may have a better chance at turning it around. Bill Clinton, of course, rightfully so, really felt that it was necessary to win, not by being left or being

right but by being in the middle ground, where most Americans are. He pulled the DNC, he pulled the left wing of the party, to the center. How do we know that? Through embracing the issue of crime: “We’re gonna put a hundred thousand new police officers on the streets.” By dealing with welfare: “We are gonna end welfare as we currently know it. We’re gonna require people to work.” Those were all very well thought out positions. “We are going to balance the budget. We are going to reduce the national debt.” And guess what? He did. The last president to do so.

GT: All Republican strongholds of principles.

MI: Exactly. To move it forward to where the American people are, move it toward the middle. So, I think that really robbed President Bush of his ability to distinguish and to separate from those that elected him four years earlier. So, that was a part of the strategy, is to really strip them of the issues that had worked so well for them in the past, make them ours.

GT: So the president’s elected. Do you have a role in helping to shape the cabinet?

MI: The first role that I had, the day following Thanksgiving—excuse me, the Friday following Thanksgiving, of the election, I posted up at the Political Transition Office in Little Rock, Arkansas, to assist the president-elect with the transition, which included the naming of the cabinet and other high-ranking positions.

GT: The transition team was headed by...

MI: Yeah, the transition team was actually headed by the—gosh, the former secretary of state. I’ve gotta get on my—I should have my Clinton book right here. Out in Los Angeles. He became the first secretary of state for President Clinton. An attorney, prominent attorney [Warren Christopher] . And of course, Mack McLarty also had much

to say about that. His high school buddy, who would become his first chief of staff, Mack McLarty. Of course we had David Wilhelm, the campaign manager, who was still very, very engaged.

But what they did is they set up a bifurcated system. They had a Little Rock office for the transition, and they had a Washington DC office for the transition. And part of the reason for that was, Bill Clinton was still governor, and living at the mansion in Little Rock.

GT: So he continued through the end of the year? [December 1992]

MI: Well, I'm not sure that it was right at the end of the year, but it was pretty close.

GT: Before he formally stepped down.

MI: That's right. We have to go back and fact-check that.

GT: I don't remember when that was.

MI: But he remained governor for some time after the election. He was certainly governor when I arrived at the Little Rock headquarters of the transition. So what it was—so I stayed there 'til almost—from the Friday after Thanksgiving, until almost the week, I think prior to the inauguration I pulled up camp from Little Rock, and headed to—

GT: Is that right? So you were there a month and a half, almost two months?

MI: Yes. Oh yeah, yeah. That's right. I stayed at the... Capital Hotel, a beautiful little place. And it was close enough to the transition office to be able to walk each day. So anyway, that was quite a fascinating experience.

GT: So what did you do?

MI: Well, primarily dealt with processing, tagging, and sorting out all the many folks that wanted an appointment at the White House.

GT: Was that an eye-opening process to you?

MI: Yeah it really was. So many folks that wanted to work for the administration. By the way, that wasn't anything I ever expected to do, never thought of doing. I was there at the NEA's request simply to assist with processing and managing.

GT: And you were still on the payroll of NEA right?

MI: Yeah, I was just on loan, as a contribution to the effort. So, at any rate, I didn't go on payroll of the campaign until the reelection campaign four years later. So, at any rate, those were the main things. Dealin' with that transition, that was a big piece of business.

And then of course, experiencing a presidential inauguration, ya know, like no other. It was like I had a front row seat—

GT: Yeah, I was gonna say. So tell me where you were that day and evening.

MI: Oh yeah, I had a great seat for the swearing in itself, very close to the main podium. Had great seats at the concert that weekend that happened at the base of the Lincoln Memorial. Was provided an opportunity to follow the president and Al Gore across the Memorial Bridge. Huge fireworks display. A replica of the Liberty Bell at the other end of the Memorial Bridge. And speeches by them both. It was really quite a time. The Inaugural Ball. It was really, in a few words, a dream come true.

GT: When did you first meet Al Gore?

MI: Well, my first meeting with Al Gore would've been on the campaign trail. I had no relationship with Al Gore prior to his receiving the nomination. But he and the

president were nearly inseparable on the campaign trail. That's where we, again, kicked off somethin' that's become popular now. We kicked off the whole bus trip, and the whole idea of campaigning together. And it really worked well for Al Gore and Bill Clinton. They were two peas in a pod. In many ways really helped each other I think.

GT: Did you like Al Gore?

MI: I did like Al Gore. I've got a great picture of Al Gore in the collection which was taken on, I think I might've been, in fact I'm sure it was, taken on the first day that I was in the White House. And I'll always remember, and it brings back a lotta fond memories. I've got it right here on my—I just, for whatever reason, I'm not sure how that happened, but I ended up with it on my iPhone here.

GT: [laughs] Oh look at that.

MI: That was my first day at the White House.

GT: On the group.

MI: As a member of the staff. But yeah, Al Gore and I enjoyed a good relationship.

GT: So, you get through the inaugural—

MI: Yep. Transition, inaugural.

GT: You got him into office.

MI: I got to campaign, transition, inaugural.

GT: And where does Mickey Ibarra go next?

MI: Then it's almost like, "Ok, now what?" Well, I returned to the NEA, again in the political department.

GT: Where were your offices at that time?

MI: At 16th and M Street. Oh yes. It has since been totally renovated. Beautiful building. But yes, that was my—I was about three blocks from the White House. And then it really evolved into, “Ok, now what?” We really started then dealing with the difference between campaigning and governing. I continued to serve as a liaison from NEA to the White House. So, helping to coordinate our social and policy events, NEA’s involvement in that. And trying to really facilitate and coordinate NEA’s efforts to try to partner with the Clinton Administration.

GT: The secretary of education was?

MI: Dick Riley.

GT: And what did you think of him?

MI: Very highly regarded, ya know, the former governor. Just really a fine man. Very personable, very engaging, very committed to education.

GT: How much of your work and interaction was through him, and how much would’ve been through other parts of the staff, other members of the staff?

MI: Well education certainly was one of the main centers, and not the only center. And education was not even my main responsibility. Mine was the White House staff. So, we had cabinets and agencies. But under President Clinton, you had a very strong White House team that ran the show, and would coordinate with the secretaries, but it was more like the secretaries needed to coordinate with the White House. So, at any rate, my job was primarily dealing with them, a second entity, in addition to the White House, in addition to the departments and agencies. And you also have a third entity, and that is the part—there’s still a functionary role for the Democratic National Party, namely

getting ready for the next election. And, I also served working with that. It was, ya know, getting ready for the next campaign, the next campaign, the next campaign.

GT: So you were really the political officer for NEA?

MI: Well, in a lotta ways that's exactly right. Exactly right. I wasn't the highest ranking, but I was the grunt.

GT: You were the functionary—

MI: Who moved it around and got it done. Exactly right.

GT: What did you learn, in that scenario Mickey, what did you learn about strategy and function and how do you get things done in that environment? It had to be a change.

MI: Well several things: one was the importance of good relationships. Relationships are so important. To be good to people.

GT: And that's more than just networking.

MI: That's right, it is. And finding out what a person needs, what it is they want, and how it is that you can be helpful serving them. That's one, certainly, thing is understanding people, relationships and how important they are. I think the second thing is being very good about offering help. What you find is that so many of our government officials are stretched so thin. What do you have in your [data base] that can be offered to the White House? The White House, "Oh, we need to have more members of Congress contacted about this healthcare reform that Hillary's leading." "Ok, well let's see what we can do about that." Then we figure out where it is that we can depend on states, where it is the most critical votes are gonna come from on any healthcare vote. Let's figure out where our members are and locate them. Then I'd start pullin' the trigger after educating them on the importance, why it's important to engage. And show the White House that.

And when the White House comes and sees that you can produce bodies, you guys can produce votes, you guys can get it done, then you're in much, much better shape. And that's what we intended to do. My rule of thumb, I learned about, under-promising and over-delivering. Be realistic but always do more than you said you would. That immediately sets you apart. So my job was really to make sure the NEA's wishes, their needs, were met, through the White House that they helped establish.

GT: If you had to articulate the four major things NEA wanted in that first administration era, period, what were they?

MI: First and foremost, access. Access to President Clinton, the secretary, domestic policy council, other officials responsible for shaping the education policy. They wanted access to this White House. Access also included not only political events but social events.

GT: Access means being included as well?

MI: Yes, being invited to a holiday party, being invited to a state dinner. Access, is I think one of the big things they wanted. Secondly, they wanted a president that was going to be supportive of their education agenda, be it salary increases, be it support for collective bargaining, class size, testing, all the rest. They wanted a partner, so they could depend on them. So, I would say that was the second one.

Thirdly, they also wanted to have a say-so in the nomination process and the selection of the staff, both in the White House and the departments and agencies. They wanted to be consulted. And they wanted to have placement of some of their folks. So, that was another big part of it too, that they wanted to have that access, and they also wanted to have influence.

And then I would say also, again, influence, meaning that when public policy was being considered for education they wanted to be consulted. They wanted to have an opportunity to help shape that policy, weigh in. While the Department of Education was normally the primary focus, education was wider than the Education Department too. The NEA has viewpoints on a lot of issues. And again, the idea was to keep the skids greased, so that we're makin' sure that we're havin' the kind of interaction we need, and is worthy of an organization that was largely responsible for providing support.

GT: So who was the hardest person to work with in that administration?

MI: [laughs] The hardest person to work with. Well I'll tell ya, one of the things that really struck me that was different, was the demeanor of so many White House staff. Who often looked like they were carrying around the weight of the entire world on their shoulders, and couldn't be bothered. I remarked one time to a colleague, what is it about the West Wing? There are people who come to work here every day looking so sad, so grim, so stressed, so overdone. And forget the manners that their mother taught them I'm sure, and their father, from a very early age.

GT: Was there a high arrogance level?

MI: Yes, yes, yes. All of that. Which I—'course sometimes I think I was sent to the White House to kinda just ensure some adult supervision. Younger folks, of course, than I was. But also folks that I think were far too intense. It's ok to take your job seriously, but don't take yourself so serious.

GT: Did you learn from that so that when you were in the role of being a staff member did you remember some of that?

MI: Certainly. Those non-examples. And certainly the learning opportunities.
Certainly.

GT: So who was the hardest person to deal with?

MI: Well, that's a record that was—I'm not sure if there was one over the other. But, Rham Emanuel was a real hard charger.

GT: Is that Right?

MI: Oh yeah.

GT: Pretty demanding.

MI: Oh yes.

GT: Was he hard to satisfy?

MI: Yes.

GT: Was he realistic?

MI: I think so. I think he was demanding to be sure, but still, I mean, boy, a ferocious advocate for the President and all that he wanted to do. But he didn't suffer fools well. And always you could depend on Rahm for some very colorful language. But again, I really tried to set a very different tone at the White House. And for the most part I think I succeeded with that effort.

GT: So in that period, not later but in that period, what was the most frustrating set of things to you, the first administration?

MI: The first administration? Oh, I think... generically, response time. By definition, if you're given an assignment from NEA, in my case, it's the most important thing to them. Let me tell you what, by the time you get to the White House, it's surely not the most important thing to them. They're dealing with a lotta things. That's real. They've

got—they're every day in a position of trying to take a drink from a fire hydrant, and you're tryin' to get their attention. So, responsiveness is a challenge that you really had to deal with. And you had to deal with it in a way that would get your outcome without burning bridges needlessly, 'cause guess what? You would know you'd have to walk across that bridge maybe the next day.

GT: Yeah. Multiple times.

MI: Exactly right. So you just had to really calibrate your message and the pressure that you put to bear, and look for the opportunities. And sometimes it was pretty indirect.

GT: Did you learn some good, useful techniques and tools out of that?

MI: Yes. I think so. I think that was the—several things: one, be good to people. Be good to everybody. It's amazing what a small world we live in.

GT: Patience?

MI: Patience plus persistence equals success. It's not enough to be patient. If that's all you are, it'll probably never get done.

GT: Yeah you'll be forgotten.

MI: Very important to be persistent. But if that's all you are, you may get frustrated and quit.

GT: From your perspective, how difficult was it having the failure of the health initiative, and Mrs. Clinton's role, and that whole—

MI: Oh, yeah it was difficult. Of course then I was not at the White House then. That was before me. We were big supporters at the NEA of the healthcare reform that she was trying to enact.

GT: Has a big educational side to it.

MI: Yes. And of course, by comparison to the current healthcare, it was more progressive as well.

GT: Yeah, a lot more.

MI: So, at any rate, it was thought to be a major disappointment. There's no question about that. But again that paled by comparison to when we were defending ourselves from impeachment. That's the next chapter.

GT: Have you watched the PBS... I think it's PBS doing—they had a documentary on Clinton, it's three or four sessions.

MI: Yes, I have.

GT: I haven't seen the latter part of it.

MI: I have. Who was the PBS... KUED.

GT: Here?

MI: Yeah. Who was the person that moderated the session that you put together?

GT: Ken Verdoia.

MI: Yeah, Ken. Really nice guy.

GT: I had him do another one for me on the fiftieth anniversary of Ballet West. We did a celebration down in the Gould. And we had a hundred and seventy-five dancers, and artistic directors present, past, and past past. Again, he did a wonderful job with it. Yeah, he is so good and talented.

MI: Yeah, I like him a lot. PBS is still my client.

GT: Is it? Good.

MI: Yeah, PBS is my client.

GT: So, I think we probably should be stopping here in a minute. But, tell me, we've not talked at all about your private life, during this period and even before. When you were part of the campaign effort and on the road a lot, away from home, and putting the team together you were away from home. Your family lived outside of the corridor of Washington? Inside Washington? Where did you live?

MI: Well what it was is I was single.

GT: Were you?

MI: Yes. Which made it a lot easier, for the campaign of '92.

GT: [laughs]

MI: I was married for the campaign of '96, but not '92. I was single. I got married after that. A marriage that no longer—

GT: You have a daughter?

MI: Yes, from the first marriage. I was married at age twenty for ten years. And that was a marriage that resulted in my daughter's birth, Lina Marie. And then I was single for basically ten years. And then married a second time for ten years. I tell folks that—most folks—you hear about the seven year itch, well I'm kind of a slow learner. Takes me ten years to get there.

[both laugh]

MI: But at any rate, yeah, but those were very challenging times. This was my White House experience. It takes a toll. It does take a personal toll, there's no question about that. And I lived to experience that my second time around.

GT: So in your White House experience you were in your second ten year run of marriage?

MI: Yes, I was.

GT: So, I think, unless you wanna add anything in summary, I wanna stop there.

MI: The only thing I can think of, there's so many things that I know that I'm missing that...

GT: We'll have a chance to pick 'em up.

MI: Yeah, there will be a chance to—I need to get in here and review my own papers.

GT: We'll make that happen. And, ya know, we really only looked, basically, at two years past the first election today. That's basically what we were doing. And, 'cause then you start cranking up for the next round.

MI: Right, it was very different experiences. I mean, my '92 experience and my '96 experience were totally different. I was on the payroll of the Clinton/Gore Campaign in '96.

GT: Right, so you had left NEA?

MI: Yes. I was a senior advisor for—

GT: Was that kinda scary, moving from—

MI: It was scary.

GT: Yeah, I'll bet it was.

MI: It was scary in the sense that... And less scary because the NEA, I was guaranteed a job back, after that election. Joining the Clinton administration in '97 I was not guaranteed a job back, nor could I be. But it was. It was an intense experience in '96. It was a very different one than '92. All of them were very unique from one another. But it's a different experience when you're working with the NEA, really focused on managing their campaign.

GT: Yeah, one basic issue.

MI: It's much different when you are a member of the campaign staff, dealing with a whole lot of other...

GT: So when we meet next time, hopefully it won't be as long as this last round, but we will talk about coming up to joining the campaign, how it happens you do, and what you do, and walk through that experience.

MI: And then how that leads to the White House.

GT: And then into the White House. We need three or four more sessions at least to make this thing work right. And I want you to do something for me Mickey: think about – you'll see in there the early part of what we've talked about – think about what we missed in there. I'll see where—I'm a little puzzled. I thought I had both interviews that we've done in place, so I'll have to go back and see what's happening, and take a look at that second period, see what we missed. And I'm interested in, what's shaping your philosophy, what's shaping your decision making process, and what are the factors that give you direction in each of these events? And you can hear that the way I was asking you questions, I was pushing you towards that. And then, when we get into your role on the staff, I'd like to get kinda down deeper into detail, because when it comes to the writing time that's what's gonna count.

MI: And that's where those—when we get to the White House years, that's where those notes will really come in helpful.

GT: Yeah, let's try to have that front and center.

MI: That's where I really—I'll be helpful for that. I tried to get somethin' in there every day. I didn't make it. But there are things that will trigger memories.

GT: Well, when you—as an educator, you know, association and recall are two of the most important tools you have for memory.

MI: Yeah. They'll be a time too, I'm really hopeful that there'll be a time, Greg, when I could really go through and look at my things again, in kind of a systematic way, take a look. I'd love to be able to take a look at everything in here. I've never been able to do that.

GT: I'm gonna end this. Thank you so much. It's great to see you and great to have you here.

MI: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

MICKEY IBARRA

Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by

Gregory C. Thompson

23 February 2015

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

**American West Center
and
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department**

University of Utah

THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. MICKEY IBARRA ON FEBRUARY 23RD, 2015. THE INTERVIEWER IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON. WE'RE CONDUCTING THIS INTERVIEW IN SALT LAKE CITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND WE ARE IN THE MARINER ECCLES ROOM IN THE LIBRARY IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS.

GT: Mickey, we've been doing a series of interviews. And we have completed your childhood, your education, your early career, and all the way up to your involvement with the Clinton administration during the first administration. And then we stopped, at our last interview, at the time that you were being approached, I believe, to come into the administration to be a member of the White House staff. Back up for me just a little bit and reset that agenda on how that comes about.

MI: Well, of course, I mentioned that I see the National Education Association as being most responsible for paving my road to the White House in 1997, based on my work on the '92 campaign on behalf of the NEA, supporting their endorsed candidate for president, Bill Clinton. And, really being further enhanced by the invitation I accepted to leave the NEA, take a leave of absence, to post up at the Clinton-Gore reelection campaign of '96. I was named the senior advisor to the campaign manager, Peter Knight, and was responsible for special projects there. And, that very successful reelection experience, again, the first president, Bill Clinton, first Democratic president to be reelected president since Franklin Roosevelt. I really felt like that was probably the best campaign experience of my career to that point.

GT: So, Mickey, I don't know that we talked about that too much. Was Peter the first to contact you to come on board? Who came to you and said, "We want you in the mix"?

MI: Yeah, well, I'm talking about, first, the campaign reached out to me through Peter Knight and asked if I would be willing to come and join the campaign, take a leave of absence, become an employee of the campaign.

GT: And this was about when?

MI: Oh, this would've been—I was out from the NEA for about a year prior to the election of '96, November of '96. So this would've been early in the year of '96.

GT: So this would be all the year of '96.

MI: Yeah. I'd have to go back and check exact dates but yes, early in the year of '96 I agreed to leave the NEA, leave of absence, join the campaign, and do what I could to assist there.

GT: And any second thoughts or what was the downside when you were considering that?

MI: No, the only downside really is if you're up to working the kind of hours required, and the kind of focus that's required, and to leave the excitement that you currently have with your employer, in my case the National Education Association campaigns and elections division. I didn't see there being much downside because I was, in essence, going to be... my salary would be matched, all that sort of thing. So I would be made whole that way.

GT: And was there resistance from the NEA?

MI: Oh, none at all. The NEA was very supportive.

GT: They probably saw that as a positive for them.

MI: Yes, because they, as a matter of routine, have an NEA staff that is designated as their liaison for the presidential campaign. In this case, they kind of had a twofer. They

not only had their staff person designated but they also had me on the inside as well. So they were very good with that.

So once we had the campaign done, we had the victory secured, then is when I returned to the NEA. I scheduled a meeting with the then executive director of the NEA, Don Cameron. I said, “Don, I’ve just experienced probably the best campaign and election experience of my career. And I’m done with this. I don’t want to do it again. It’ll never get as good for me again as helping reelect a president of the United States. Is there any other thing that you have for me to do here at NEA other than campaigns and elections? I really don’t want to return to my last position.” And he said, “Well, we want you to stay here of course, and, what would you think about being the manager of international relations?” I said, “What? I didn’t even know we had one of those.”

[both laugh]

MI: He said, “Oh yeah, we’ve got one of those. And the job is vacant. I’d like you to consider taking that job. I think you’d be real good at it. Give you something different to do out of the government Relations division, not in campaigns and elections. How about that?” So, I took a look at it and decided yes, I’d like to try it. I became the manager of NEA international relations. Moved up to the eighth floor of the executive level of the building – the big, thick carpet, the beautiful furniture, all of that. Had a beautiful office. And began engaging in the work of the NEA related to the relationship with Education International.

Education International, based out of Brussels, is dedicated to advocating for a free, high-quality public education for every child in the world. So it really just kind of took the NEA’s objective domestically in the United States, took it to a worldwide stage.

So I began going to work and preparing for what was to be my first Mission on behalf of Education International, and that was to help teachers in Ethiopia and in Djibouti.

GT: Those were your two early—

MI: Yes, I was being assigned and prepared to go in and to really address some very difficult issues there with the governments of both of those countries, as an NGO, not as a representative of the United States government of course.

But, as I was preparing for this, is when I received a phone call from none other than Erskine Bowles. So this would've been in the early part of 1997. And Erskine Bowles had just been named by the President to become his new chief of staff, replacing Leon Panetta. So Erskine was then to become the third chief of staff. And he had not yet assumed his new responsibilities but had set up his transition office in the old executive office building next to the White House. "I'd like you to come down to speak with me, Mickey. I'm going to be coming in soon. I'm looking at making some changes and I'd like to talk to you."

GT: And had you crossed paths with him in the election—

MI: No, I do not believe I'd ever met him before.

GT: Really? How'd he know about you?

MI: Because he had been asking others at the White House and others outside the White House about the need to bring in more diversity at the White House. President Clinton, in his campaign of '92, promised to appoint White House officials that would look like America. He wanted to have a West Wing staff that looked like America. Well, Latino leaders were unhappy with President Clinton's record of appointments at the

White House and were pressuring the President to fulfill his campaign promise to reflect the diversity of America in his White House. Erskine Bowles, I believe, was brought on in part to help the President achieve that, as he thought about adjustments in his second term, bringing in more diversity and bringing in some new people.

GT: Bowles got around to do that.

MI: Well, Bowles was, at one time, the SDA administrator. He was close to the president. A business guy. Was very highly regarded. Erskine Bowles was less a political guy and more a policy operational technocrat that really was highly regarded. A business guy.

And so, at any rate, Erskine set about the task of finding who is it that he should consider to recommend to the President to bring into the White House that would reflect additional diversity and some new energy and some new thinking. Again, oftentimes a president beginning their second term takes a look at some changes. And so, Erskine planned to make some of those changes and asked me about my interest in joining the White House team.

I must tell you, Greg, that Erskine Bowles prevented Mickey Ibarra from making the biggest mistake of his professional career.

GT: By you not saying no?

MI: We had a conversation that I haven't shared often with folks. But it was when I could actually feel my face getting red as he talked to me about wanting me to come to the White House. He said he talked with a lot of people, that he couldn't find anybody in this town that didn't like Mickey Ibarra or had anything bad to say about him. He said, "That's quite an accomplishment" [laughs] "in Washington. And I want to have you on

the team. The President knows you, likes you. We would like to have this done.” So, at any rate, we went through quite a conversation. Before that first conversation ended he came up with an idea that he wanted me to be a deputy assistant to the President for public liaison. And that would be basically being the senior Latino in charge of communicating with other people in the community. Well, that didn’t really intrigue me that much. As much as I wanted to be helpful to the President, and as honored as I was, I was also scared. I don’t know that anybody’s really fully prepared to work at the White House. I was surprised. In retrospect, I don’t know why I would be so surprised. But I was. I wasn’t applying for any job. I wasn’t maneuvering or talking to any friends about trying to get my name before the White House personnel to be considered. I was just happy in my new job at NEA.

GT: On the other hand, your whole career had kind of prepared you for that.

MI: You know, it really had. And I mentioned to Erskine that I felt like I could continue to make a good contribution outside of the White House and certainly would do that but that becoming a deputy assistant to the president for public liaison, that just wasn’t of interest to me. And thanked him very much. He was very gracious. And before he left he asked me, “What would it take to bring you here?”

GT: It’s a good question on his part.

MI: And I said, “Well, you know, Erskine, I’m really kind of a deputy director now. I’m a manager. I’m not a director of any thing, I’m a manager. For me to be interested it’d have to be a step up. It’d have to be a director, something where I’m in charge of my own office. And I’d also have to have the commitment of the President and you that I was

going to be given the opportunity to lead that office and have your support.” He said, “Well, okay.”

I left thinking I’d never hear from Erskine Bowles again. I really did. I had a good conversation, felt very complimented by it. I feel like I had this chance, but again, very focused on NEA, very focused on preparing for my Mission to Africa, and very happy in my career assignment. I was very reluctant to take on a new job, a big White House thing, all that goes with that, including the requirement that President Clinton made of all of his senior staff, and that is to resign from your current position. NEA, I always thought of, Greg, as my career. I was going to retire from NEA. And resign from NEA? Are you kidding?

GT: How far away from retiring were you at that point?

MI: Oh, quite a ways.

GT: Ten years, fifteen years?

MI: Yeah, but then I started at NEA May 29th of 1984. And this conversation was going on in early ’97.

GT: Not quite ten years.

MI: No, no, it was, like, thirteen years. So I was well on my way. I was well on my way. And for a kid that struggled, to have a job where you’re getting paid well, who had a Cadillac benefit program, I was very reluctant to let that go. That was just a little bit risky.

GT: Like heaven wasn’t it?

MI: So I’m going to leave that job that I love, that’s been good to me, that’s paid me more money than I ever thought I’d ever earn, great salary.

GT: What did your family think about this possibility?

MI: Well, as I recall, there was really two schools of thought, one arguing for the security, and that's with the NEA. That's for sure at NEA. I could be at NEA as long as I want to be. Where on the other side, you're taking a big risk, going with someone who you know is done at exactly noon on January 20th in 2001. Your job is over with. And then what? Then what?

In addition to resigning from the NEA, I would be required to also have no conversations with the NEA for the first year at the White House. No interaction with them at all for the first year.

And thirdly, NEA – and either implied or explicitly – could not offer me a position to return.

GT: In the first year?

MI: No. Meaning that if I resigned, they could not offer me or—in other words, you leave with absolutely no guarantee of ever being able to return. That was a bit too much for me to really get my head around. That was part of it. That certainly was part of it. And the job itself wasn't all that appealing to me. And, also, if I didn't go there, then I wouldn't have to confront the big challenge and could I really do this?

But I left that meeting, again, thinking that that was it and that was fine. And I was complimented and yet still feeling as though the NEA was for me. But I got a second call. Several months later, at least two or three months later. Two or three months later I get a call. This time it wasn't from Erskine. This time it was from Sylvia Matthews, the deputy chief of staff, who is now Sylvia Matthews-Burwell, the secretary of health and

human services for President Obama. She's new. She called me up. She replaced Secretary Shalala very early on in the second term of President Obama.

GT: She's been there twelve months.

MI: Yeah, something like that. Doing a good job at overseeing the implementation of the healthcare reform and all that. It's settled down significantly.

So at any rate, she called me. Again, I was surprised. Don't ask me why I was so surprised but I never thought I'd hear from them again. She said, "Well, listen, Erskine asked me to give you a call. He and the President have agreed that they'd like you to become the new assistant to the President and director of the office of intergovernmental affairs."

GT: Now, how did they come about picking that?

MI: [laughs] Well, one, they wanted to make a change from their current director, Marcia Hale. And she had already been overseeing that office for four years. My guess is that Marcia may well have wanted to depart too. Four years is a long time. And the average tenure in those positions is two and a half, three years. So, she had done enough.

By the way, the first director of intergovernmental affairs for President Clinton was a Latina, Regina Montoya.

GT: From?

MI: From Texas. Regina Montoya from Texas. Lasted six months. Just didn't work out. And they changed to Marcia Hale. Marcia Hale held it down for four years and now they were ready to make a change and decided that that was the spot they'd like me to consider, in part because education, when you think of it, is really an intergovernmental responsibility. It's dealing with local officials, state officials, federal officials. It's the

local district, the state office of public instruction, and the Department of Education of the United States. Because of my thirteen years of experience in that area, I knew many local and state elected officials and understood how that worked.

Secondly, I think loyalty's always a factor. I played a role in the '92 and '96 campaigns. I made sense to them By Gosh. "He's one of us. Let's—"

GT: They've seen how you can network firsthand.

MI: Yes. And thirdly, it was also responsive to the demands of Latino leaders nationally to name more Latinos to senior positions. This was a very senior position. They don't get any bigger, assistant to the president.

GT: You were the highest ranking Latino in the administration.

MI: Latino, yes. But I hasten to add, there was a Latina there of equal rank, a woman, already. Her name, Maria Echaveste. Maria Echaveste was the assistant to the President for public liaison. President Clinton achieved something that no other president has done before him or since: named a second Hispanic assistant to the President, the highest level. Remember, it's assistant to the President. Below that, deputy assistant to the President. Below that, special assistant to the President. The assistants to the presidents are the highest rank. And normally you're a director of an office as well. So the rank is assistant to the president, the title is director of intergovernmental affairs.

And, through a minimal amount of back and forth – again, me wanting to get the assurance that I was going to have the support I needed. And, realizing that the entire office had already been hired. I was the last one coming in and I was going to be the boss. I would be inheriting three deputies that all were being passed over for the position. And that created some challenges.

But at any rate, basically, it came down this way, “You said you wanted to be an assistant to the President. Well, we’ve got an assistant to the president for you. When can you start?”

GT: They didn’t ask you to accept it, they just said—

MI: They called me on it. “You got what you want. Okay. Then let’s go.”

Now, I quickly requested and was granted permission to complete my Africa Mission, which was scheduled for May of 1997. That’s how it was that we established the date of June 6th for my arrival at the White House, allowing me to complete my trip to Africa. The White House announced my appointment a full thirty days before I was to start at the White House, which was somewhat unusual. Fortuitously to my work with the NEA at Education International, that was a great benefit. Ethiopia and Djibouti welcomed me as a senior member of the White House staff. I hadn’t been appointed yet.

The fact of the matter is, I ended up, Greg, with a forty-five minute meeting, one on one with the strong man of Ethiopia, Prime Minister Meles, to hear out our concerns. We were attempting to free the President of the Ethiopian Teachers Association, Dr. Taye, Dr. Taye was president, what we felt were some trumped up charges. And we wanted him released. The Prime Minister agreed to meet with me. He wouldn’t meet with any of the other delegation, only me. The delegation met and there was only three of us in the delegation. I think we had another colleague from Belgium, another one from Germany. And we quickly agreed that it made sense for me to meet with the Prime Minister and make our case to him on behalf of Dr. Taye. And we proceeded. And I got my forty-five minute meeting with him. Asked him for release. He wouldn’t do that. I asked him if we could go see him, Dr. Taye, and make sure that he’s being treated well

and see how he's doing. And he granted that, and allowed my two other colleagues to join me as well. So we went out to the prison and visited with Dr. Taye.

So, at any rate, I had a chance there and also later in Ethiopia. When I was greeted in Ethiopia they separated me from my two colleagues and the United States government took me to the ambassador's residence, the US Ambassador's residence. And that's where I stayed during our Djibouti trip. And there it was, a situation where these teachers of the public school system there in Djibouti had not been paid for three months. The government didn't have any money to pay them. And so we were there on behalf of Education International to beseech the government of Djibouti to do right by its teachers and provide them economic relief.

So it was a thrilling experience. I was in-country for only, like, about—I was in Ethiopia for three days. I was in Djibouti I think for a day. So it was like a five-day trip. Of course, then travel on both sides. But it was a week-long experience. And I was allowed to complete that trip. When I returned I posted up at the White House on June 6th.

There's one little piece that I need to share with you too because I'd like that to be a part of the record. When the White House called the second time, I didn't say yes immediately. I said, "Give me twenty-four hours, sir. I want to have a couple of conversations." One of those conversations I wanted to have was with the executive director of the NEA, Don Cameron, who was kind enough to find me a new position within the NEA when I came back from the campaign. I said, "Don, I've gotten a call from the White House. I told you about the first one" – and I did – "I told you I wasn't going. Well, they called me again and offered me a position of assistant to the President

for intergovernmental affairs. I would like to get your advice about this.” Don Cameron looked me straight in the eye and said, “Mickey, let me just tell you something. Here at NEA, we love you. We’re going to take care of you. Down the street” – NEA’s located right on 16th Street, near the White House — are they going to love you? And when they’re done with you, they’re going to spit you out like used bubblegum. That’s your choice. That’s the way I see it.” And I was not prepared at all for that advice. I thought that, like the decision to post up with the reelection campaign, that they’d be thrilled to death to have someone in the West Wing of the White House. I was really quite surprised. But do you know that that actually helped me make the decision to go to the White House.

GT: Articulate that.

MI: Well, one, I disagreed with it, totally disagreed with it. I wasn’t looking for somebody to love me. I was looking for somebody to give me a chance to make a difference. And I thought the President was working hard to make a difference. I would be very proud to be a part of that. And this would give me the chance to do that.

Secondly, I [inaudible] with the notion that you have to overcome your fear of failure. It will really reduce the opportunity for success and achievement. Oftentimes, we’re the ones that put the ceiling on ourselves. Got to think big. Got to think bigger. Got to be ready for these opportunities.

And thirdly, I felt an obligation to Erskine Bowles. I told him what it would take to get me there, and he offered it. I felt a personal obligation to be responsive to him.

And again, that interaction with Don really kind of put a bad taste in my mouth about this. I was very surprised. I'm sure that he was sincere. We've never talked about it again. I don't suspect we ever will. But it was horrible advice.

GT: Did he say it to you as an individual or did he say it representing his agency?

MI: As an individual, that's the way I took it. This was not the NEA, no. And again, he was... By the time I left the White House, Don Cameron had left the NEA. He completed ten years as executive director. Was replaced by John Wilson. When I returned from the end of the White House I decided I was going to do something quite surprising and that was try to open my own business. They offered me the NEA, not obligated to it in any way. But they did offer me it, "Would you like to come back to the NEA? We'll put you to work here?" I said, "No." I said, "I'm going to try something crazy. I'm going to try to build my own business and see how this works out for a year or so." And John Wilson says, "Well then we're going to be your first client." My relationship with the NEA has only been interrupted by the nearly four years I spent at the White House. So thirteen years I was with them before the White House. When I came out of the White House, I've now been with them fourteen years, as a consultant. [laughs] So my relationship with the NEA has endured all of that. And that's very satisfying to me.

GT: So you walk out of the office with this negative interpretation. So what happens then?

MI: Well, I, again, was very disappointed, really taken back. I knew I was going to take the job at the White House. And honestly, I was going to take the job at the White House. That's where I was going even before my discussion with Don. Don I don't think

could've said anything to me to stop that. But I did want to give him an opportunity to tell me what he thought. I was not prepared for the sentiment that he shared with me. I went back to my house, picked up the phone and talked with Sylvia and indicated I wanted to talk with the current director. And the current director and I spoke, Marcia Hale. And she started out the conversation, "Okay Mickey, my job is to talk you into taking this job." [laughs] "What do you need to know?" And we quickly reached an agreement on the start date, the late start date, to allow me to complete the Mission to Africa. And so I arrived June 6th, 1997.

GT: So coming in the front door or the back door, whichever – back door I suppose – what was the first day like? Do you remember the details?

MI: Exciting and scary. And it was through the front door. I showed up at the West Wing, the private gate. They've relocated a lot of the process now. But there was a dedicated gate for those that had a pass for the West Wing and separate from those that would go to the old executive office building. So I arrived at the appointed hour and gave them my name. And they let me in to the White House complex. I made it to the reception desk, right inside the West Wing. And they were expecting me and had a staff assistant come down and greet me.

In the lobby, waiting in the West Wing, Mayor Deedee Corradini. I had not even checked into my office yet and she was waiting for me. I'm not sure that Salt Lake City's ever had a more tenacious advocate than Deedee Corradini.

GT: She's quite the lady.

MI: And we had never met.

GT: Is that right?

MI: Never met her. And so it was an opportunity.

GT: Yeah, that's probably right because she would've emerged on the landscape here while you were at NEA. And she came up rather quickly.

MI: Yeah. So at any rate, we had good discussions. It turns out she didn't travel from Salt Lake City to Washington solely for me. She had come in for a meeting of the big seven organizations of local and state elected officials. And so the leadership there—she was already on track to become president of the US Conference of Mayors. So, they were involved with some other meetings. And she used it as an opportunity to peel off and introduce herself to me.

GT: Did you see where Ralph Becker just assumed that role?

MI: Yeah, but he was the National League of Cities President. She was at the US Conference of Mayors President. But yeah, good for Ralph. He called me not long ago. And he's announced he's running for a third term as mayor. I don't expect he'll have any problem with that, do you?

GT: We'll talk off tape.

MI: So, at any rate, that's how it was that I began. The very first day, I also had a meeting with Vice President Gore. And I've got a picture of it and it's in the collection. It's the one with him roaring laughing. Again, I can never really remember exactly what I said that made him laugh but probably something like, "Gosh, I can't even believe I'm here."

GT: Do you recall what Deedee had on her agenda?

MI: Yes. Deedee's agenda was primarily around the Olympics.

GT: Okay, I assumed that was—

MI: Yeah, that was the big case. Not only that. At that time, Gateway was a dream. They really wanted Gateway. They needed some brownfield development money in order to do the necessary environmental work there to make that possible. And boy, she was all over that.

GT: They were also looking for transportation money at that time.

MI: Yes. And of course, at that time, the Trax, the train deal was also a big issue with them too. So those were the three primary issues that I recall her engaging me about. In addition to wanting a chance to get to meet me and cultivate that Salt Lake City connection.

GT: She's good at that.

MI: She sure is. And she and I developed a great relationship over the years that I was at the White House. I have a lot of admiration for Deedee and have some good memories too. At any rate, that's how it started.

GT: In the first couple of months that you were there, what's the most challenging aspect of the position?

MI: Well, one of the most challenging aspects, I think, was building a team. Again, I arrived at the White House with the team having already been selected, and three deputies that had been passed over for the position.

GT: And they'd been there a while?

MI: Yes. And were not happy to see my arrival, their rhetoric notwithstanding. And, it took some time to really develop that team. Now, the way I approached it was really concentrating on the first ninety days in rallying our intergovernmental affairs core team

of nine, plus extending that team into the departments of agencies where there is an office of intergovernmental affairs in nearly every department or agency, an office of intergovernmental affairs. Well, there were nine of us at the White House, all of them political appointees, but when you consider the hundreds of constituents we were responsible for, mainly all local and state elected officials, in addition to that, all sovereign Indian nations, tribal governments. That wasn't enough, so we also had all US territories. So all of that was our responsibility. We had to, by definition to do well, I felt, extend our reach into the departments and agencies, make allies of those intergovernmental affairs offices and resources and staff, in order to really Maximize our assets, marshal our assets to do two things, and that was the second thing.

I really felt it was necessary to build a common Mission, determine what is the Mission of intergovernmental affairs? What are we supposed to be doing? What are we supposed to be doing? I defined that as two things, two key ingredients. The office of intergovernmental affairs exists to one, build support for the President's policy initiatives among our constituents. Secondly, to respond to the concerns of our partners in government, that being a responsibility and an attitude, that we needed to take serious every day.

I explained to our team – by the way I met with my team every morning after the senior staff meeting. I met with them at around nine o'clock in my West Wing office. It was a standup meeting, where I would open, "What are we doing? What's our Mission?" And repeat it. Building support for the President's policy initiatives and responding to the concerns of our partners in government. I don't mean to suggest that we're doing those

equally every day, but let me tell you something, if you're not doing some of both every day, you're not serving this president well.

Having a common Mission was the first step. The second step was getting organized. Okay, who does what? Who's doing what? Okay, there's nine of us in this office. We've got to get organized. We've got all these other folks outside this office, we've got to get organized. Who's doing what? Hey, I know, how about building an organizational chart?

GT: They didn't have one?

MI: No.

GT: You got to be kidding.

MI: Common sense is so uncommon, Greg. I've found that to be true in Washington.

My guess is it's true in other places as well. Get organized. Get focused on a common Mission. Get organized, second. We actually built a chart that we could share with our constituents. Okay, you're a mayor, these issues, whatever, like this, boom, this is your person. This is their phone number. This is their cell number. This is their fax number. This is their email address. Call them. That'd be all on one chart. Governors. Okay, all of you guys that have issues that are representing governors, boom, this is who you call. All of you that are dealing with state legislators, this is who you call. Organized it.

GT: Seems quite sensible to me.

MI: We had a special assistant that we had on loan from The Commerce department that handled all US territory issues. And we also had a deputy director of the office that dealt with tribal governments. And so the rest of us split up—We had to have multiple

assignments. It wasn't enough—No, you don't have just mayors. You've got mayors, you've got city council members, and you also have county officials. [laughs]

At any rate, get organized. This is all the first ninety days. Get organized. The third piece of this came over a much longer period of time. And that was get the right people. [inaudible] all my people.

GT: There are three directors that you have in here that were from where?

MI: Well, they had been involved in the first campaign of the President. There was Lynn Cutler, who was a former county official in Iowa. There was Fred Duvall out of Arizona that was very close and very engaged in the vice president's campaign, Al Gore, who by the way just lost the governorship race in Arizona, this past November, Fred Duvall. He was the Democratic nominee. And gosh, the third one, honestly, I can't think of the name right now. — [Emily Bromberg]

GT: East or west coast?

MI: She was east. Yeah, very east. But at any rate, eventually, these folks begin to leave, and, giving me an opportunity to select and drive a selection process for new people.

So for me, it was get yourself focused around a common Mission, get yourself organized, and get the right people. I believe that you can get as organized as you want to and if you've got the wrong people, no organizational chart's going to work. If you've got the right people, they'll make any organizational chart work. [laughs] So those are very important.

GT: So, who in your equal colleagues housed in the West Wing, who reached out to help you?

MI: Well, assistants to the President who were most helpful to me?

GT: Yeah.

MI: Thurgood Marshall, Jr. is one that I'd certainly star with. Thurgood was the assistant to the President and cabinet secretary, meaning he was the one that really was the liaison from the White House to all of the cabinet secretaries. And that was a very important... He was right across the hallway from me also, so it was really easy to get access to—

GT: How old was he at that time?

MI: Oh, Thurgood Marshall, Jr. was probably... I would say in his forties. So, he's still in Washington with a big law firm. Of course, Maria Echaveste, who was the assistant to the President for public liaison was also someone that I thought of. And perhaps the one that I developed the closest relationship was a member of our White House team that was just one rung lower, and that is Janet Murguia, who was the deputy assistant to the President for legislative affairs. She also had an office—we shared a common—The intergovernmental affairs office and the legislative affairs office shared a common reception area in the West Wing. She had a very small office there but very close to me, so we also... And that's a relationship that's continued to flourish, even after the White House. Now ten years she has been president of the National Council of la Raza, and is a client of Ibarra Strategy Group. So that's another one. So those are folks that I thought of as...

GT: It would seem to me like your day would be filled with an agenda of meeting people.

MI: Yes.

GT: All day long.

MI: Yes. We were a part of the outreach of the White House. We had public liaison, which was thought of as the outreach to the public. You have cabinet affairs with the outreach to the secretaries in the cabinet. You have the office of intergovernmental affairs, which is the voice of outreach to local and state elected officials, territories and tribal governments. And you have legislative affairs, the outreach to the United States Congress. So we were really in the outreach component of the White House. And you have the policy side, which we really had a role in bringing policy ideas to the domestic policy council. And we certainly would always want to advocate that our constituency's point of view be considered in the policy making process. But of course in the end that was the purview of the domestic policy council advisor to figure how all that happens.

GT: And I've got a couple of questions and then I think we probably should stop. I'm real interested in your evaluation of the mayors that you worked with. Who stood out?

MI: I came to respect mayors perhaps more than any other office in my time at the White House, certainly than any other elected position.

GT: Why?

MI: One, they're the closest to the people. Two, they cannot hide. People know where to find them. They know their phone number most of the time. Thirdly, seldom do they have enough resources to address all of the needs required. They've got to figure it out to do the best they can. I also felt they were officials that by and large were so grateful and appreciative of the opportunity to be listened to, grateful for the support that you could provide, understanding—

GT: Probably just darn happy you'd meet with them.

MI: Understanding. And I'll tell you, I did my very best to meet with everyone that wanted to meet with me among the mayors. I can't say that I could meet with every city council member or that sort of stuff. But the mayors are leaders of their community.

GT: So who stood out, at least in the first year? Let's just pin it around that first year.

MI: Well that first year, I mean, there were some terrific leaders. I mentioned Mayor Corradini and she really was a standout. Because Mayor Corradini wasn't all just about Salt Lake City, it was also about the Olympic movement. And that was something that transcended the city alone. But I enjoyed working with her.

GT: I think in a very interesting way she got the concept of that quicker and deeper than most people around her did. And I think that if you look at what she's done since, with the WSJ - USA decisions on women ski jumping and things, she continued to carry that with her. And I've been impressed with that.

MI: Mayor Jerry Abramson, of Louisville, was another. He called me very early on to let me know how glad he was that there was new energy. He was really pleased about that. Ironically, Greg, guess who was just named the new director of intergovernmental affairs at the White House for President Obama? Jerry Abramson. Small world. Be good to everybody. And at any rate, a real standout in Louisville. He's an institution there. Mayor Daly certainly. Mayor Menino. Mayor Willy Brown of San Francisco. All of these just outstanding leaders. Mayor Wellington Webb of Denver, outstanding leader that I enjoyed working with.

GT: Who caused you the most problems?

MI: Well... Let me hasten to also add Mayor Rendell of Philadelphia, Ed Rendell, who later became governor, and chair of the Democratic National Committee.

GT: Probably one of the toughest cities to deal with.

MI: It is a tough city.

One of the biggest challenges I would offer is that the mayors that have their own relationship with the President and trying to contain that for the President. It can be challenging. Ed Rendell, terrific supporter of President Clinton, and an absolute hammer on demanding what he wants. A good example of that was the Constitution Center because that was being constructed and is right near Independence Hall. That was an idea of Ed Rendell. Ed Rendell would not miss an opportunity, never miss an opportunity to ask the President for help with the National Constitution Center, even though the National Parks Service basically said, “We don’t build. You guys have got to raise the money to build this yourselves. We’ll come in and run it for you afterwards. We don’t build.” Well I tell you what, when it was all said and done, Ed Rendell got a federal grant to get going on the National Constitution Center. And Ed Rendell said to me, “Mickey, when this is done, I want you to contact me and I’m going to give you a personal tour of the National Constitution Center that the President helped build.”

Years went by. Of course I left the White House. Ed Rendell went on to become the governor of Pennsylvania. And I called him. Actually my staff called his staff. A couple months after that, there stood Ed Rendell, waiting at the front door for Mickey Ibarra, the governor walked me through that entire Constitution Center, so proud of what they had built there to celebrate the founding of our nation, moreover to study and discuss the major principles of democracy that our Constitution represents, in a very imaginative, creative sort of way. So if you’ve not had an opportunity to see that Constitution Center—

GT: I haven't been to Philly in quite a while.

MI: I think you'd really enjoy seeing that presentation.

GT: I've been in Philly a lot for a period and then when I came to the library it didn't happen so much. But I'd love to see it.

MI: So Ed Rendell will always... We went up to Philadelphia one time and he trapped us in their big convention center place there, the big arena actually, the basketball—I don't recall the name of it then. Boy, he was pushing Philadelphia for the site of the 2000 Democratic convention. [laughs] He took us in the suite there, the President. He was working it. Well, it turns out we ended up choosing Los Angeles. That's where Al Gore was nominated from. And the Republicans picked Philadelphia. So he had a convention [laughs] but it wasn't ours.

GT: Mickey, I'm going to stop. We've been going almost an hour and a half. And I know you have a busy rest of the afternoon. Thank you so very much for coming and being here on the Siciliano Forum and the time to interview.

MI: Thank you. I enjoyed it.

END OF INTERVIEW

MICKEY IBARRA

Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by

Gregory C. Thompson

25 June 2021

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Ibarra Oral History Project

U-3583

**American West Center
And
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah**

THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH MICKEY IBARRA CONDUCTED BY GREG THOMPSON ON JUNE 25, 2021.

GT: We're here, it says to me recording in progress, did it say that to you?

MI: It says, "This meeting is being recorded."

MI: Yeah

GT: Good.

GT: Good. And then when we get through, I will take that and put it into my... I'll read... note it on my laptop and in a cloud so we can move it around and get it transcribed. I'm going to put a push on it. So why don't we just lead right in. And as we had talked about earlier, and I said yesterday, or the day before, let's start, I'd like to start with the how you came up with the idea of creating Mickey Ibarra & Associates or the forerunner. And I want, I want to walk through this entire period: 20, what, 20 years? 21 years?

MI: We're in 20th. We're completing our 20th year of business.

GT: Yeah. And, and I want to focus on your observations. The clientele base, how you built it? I really want to know how it was put together. And then I want you to tell me about the star events that you held, have held in this 20 plus year experience. Sound okay to you? Yeah. All right. Let's go for it.

MI: I'll see how much I can remember.

GT: The following is an interview with Mickey Ibarra. On June 25, 2021. This is a continuing series of interviews being conducted with Mr. Ibarra, which will be coupled with his archives at the J. Willard Marriott library special collections at the University of Utah and documenting Mickey Ibarra's career, the interviewer is Gregory C. Thompson. We both are operating on Zoom for this interview. Mickey, it's nice to see you today. And thank you for agreeing to sit for this interview. I would like to start where we left off last time we did an interview, talking about

the transition from moving from the Clinton administration located in the White House to what was next in your career line, on a long and star ridden career.

MI: Well, thinking back 20 years ago, you know, as the Clinton administration wound to a close in, at the end of 2000 and into 2001. I think my time at the White House will be the only time where I know exactly when I left my job, at exactly noon on January 20th, year 2001, of course, is when our time came to an end at the White House with President Clinton. But prior to that I had been given much advice about how it is that I should start planning for my own transition from public service back into the workforce. Options were available, including the potential of returning to my previous employer, the National Education Association, which I had left nearly four years previously to join the president in 1997, at the White House, but you know, I ended up in the end, Greg, considering and deciding not to try to put together my plan, so to speak, or try to secure employment or make a decision during those closing months of the White House. And it was very simple as to why. Because I was absolutely too busy, too consumed with the day to day close down, if you will, and the transition to a new administration. And dealing with of course, also the disappointment that we experienced at that time, because we had hoped that Vice President Al Gore would be the next president. That didn't turn out to be true, although he won more votes than...

GT: Yeah.

MI: George W. Bush, we've been reminded recently that that, that's not enough. So at any rate, I really took very close counsel with my brother David Ibarra, who has been a successful member of the business community virtually his entire career. And again, we're only 11 months younger from each other, so we basically had an equal number of years. He's always in the private sector, me to that point, always in the public sector. - or nonprofit sector as well - and

David's encouragement to me made the most sense in the end. And that was "Mickey, you've proven yourself to have some ability for success in the nonprofit arena. You haven't proven anything in the for profit arena."

GT: Yeah.

MI: Now is the time for you to make that leap. And get yourself a position with your own business to continue to do what you love to do. And that is to advocate for, for others. So I decided to make that decision really, overcoming my own fear of failure. It was very hard for me to give up the notion that, okay, where is my? Where is my leave? Where's my salary? Where's my insurance policy?

GT: Yeah, yeah.

MI: All those things that, that for a kid that grew up poor and scrapped himself up to a decent position. That was very hard to do to let go of all of that security. But....

GT: Yeah, I, I understand that very, very much. I've been in the same position. And it's amazing how hard it is.

MI: Yes,

GT: Mentally.

MI: Yeah, it was, it was tough. And yet with David's encouragement, I made the leap to to organize Mickey Ibarra and Associates, Inc. And when I communicated to the National Education Association (Who, by the way, did offer me an opportunity to return.), I indicated that I was going to try to do something I never thought imagined. Imaginable. And that was to open my own business. And the NEA once again, so good to me, indicating, "Well, if you're going to open your own business, then we're going to be your first client."

GT: Oh, wow. I didn't realize that had happened. I like that.

MI: Yeah, and that was such a relief, Greg. Oh, my gosh, you know, I had my first client. That means I could pay my mortgage and get, get a start. So...

GT: Yeah.

MI: ...the reality is in January of 2001, after leaving the White House, I opened my own business in the comfort of my downtown Bethesda condominium. It was just me and my first ever laptop. I can't believe... I can remember this, but it was at Gateway. Gateway doesn't even exist anymore.

GT: Is that right? Mhmm.

MI: I took my laptop and, and I just kind of felt that that was the the safest thing to do, the reasonable thing to do. And it really was an experiment, Greg. It was, could I gather a handful of clients? And would that prove to be more rewarding professionally and personally, than a single employer for the first time in my life.

GT: So Mickey...

MI: I would, I would give it a year.

GT: Yeah. So Mickey, what did you articulate as your mission statement to which you would communicate to your potential clients?

MI: Well, certainly it really centered around a model that still exists for our company. And that is providing superior service, for success. Mickey Ibarra, my career has always been as an advocate. And what I realized, Greg, is that simply opening my door to an office, a for profit environment, was very similar. I continued as an advocate for clients. Just like I had been an advocate for students as a teacher, for teachers as a member of the NEA staff, or the White House, as a member of President Clinton's senior staff. So what I became was an advocate. That's what I really, really marketed our company as. As an advocate for those having business

in Washington and other places with local and state elected officials that needed help and strategic advice and advocate assistance before the Congress, before departments and agencies, before the White House. I offered myself as someone that could provide that assistance. And one of the unique offerings of Mickey Ibarra and Associates... By the way, Mickey Ibarra and Associates was one of the very first Latino owned advocacy firms in our nation's capital. And so what we were able to offer, very unique was, okay, at that time again, this is early 2001. The Latino community was being discovered. And it was being discovered, not only by the nonprofit community advocacy organizations, but also by corporations. As our population grew, as our consumer power grew, if you will, companies were starting to pay attention and willing to hire Mickey Ibarra to assist them in developing a strategic engagement plan that would really develop a mutual partnership with our leadership community to enable them to do better, as they did the right thing too: including us. So, that offering: a Latino outreach assistance, as well as the other advocacy services we provided, and particularly, not only an emphasis on Latino outreach, but also state and local. I served as the director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House, responsible for the President's liaison with all local and state elected officials. That provided me a very unique platform, access and relationships that clients were looking for. So...

GT: How did you, how did you build the access element for that local and regional service capacity?

MI: Well, having served as the liaison for the White House for the president, that meant that I was responsible for engaging all of the governors and the National Governors Association, all of the mayors and the United States Conference of Mayors, all the city officials, from city council to auditor to treasure all of that through the National League of Cities, and also with the city managers, the International Association of city managers and state legislators, the National

Conference of State Legislatures - all of those responsibilities for bringing the President's policy priorities. And secondly, listening to the concerns of our partners in government to ensure that the White House and our federal government was being as responsive as we possibly could to assist them in governing. But all of that led to a host of opportunities to build relationships that were mutually beneficial. So in some regards, Greg, I had a great opportunity for four years to do all of that.

GT: Yes.

MI: Then simply, the challenge then was to transfer those relationships, if you will, maintain those relationships on behalf of clients that that needed help in accomplishing their goals.

GT: So in, at 2001 was Deedee still the mayor of Salt Lake City?

MI: Well, what it was is that... No, at that time... You know, I'm trying to think of what her term was there, because I was transitioner of... I worked with.... Yes,

GT: Yeah.

MI: She was up she was not the, the, the mayor then, because then Rocky Anderson follows.

MI: There's some errors.

GT: So take us through the way I was asking that because I couldn't remember that. That changed date.

MI: She was mayor in 1997,

GT: Yeah

MI: when I arrived at the White House. It's a story that I may have shared before. I walked into the West Wing of the White House for my first time looking for my office, Greg. And they're set in a waiting room, Deedee Corradini.

MI: Yeah.

MI: The mayor of Salt Lake City to welcome me to my own office.

GT: So they... walk us through for as an example of... sorry about the phone that the landline works around here a lot. My wife's also here working. The... Kate, use Rocky and Salt Lake as an example of how you would reach out and connect and began to lay out whether you could do for Rocky in Salt Lake City.

MI: Yeah, the two mayor's that I've worked with most closely, certainly, as you mentioned is Mayor Deedee Corradini, there to greet me as I arrived at the White House. And then I first transitioned in with Rocky Anderson. Let me just mention that in the many mayors that I've met, many, many issues that we dealt with over four years, I can think of no more terrific advocates for the city of Salt Lake City than the mayors that I worked with Mayor Corradini, as well as Mayor Anderson. My God, they were all over it all the time, working together. What? What did they want? What do mayors want, okay? Mayors are looking and competing for dollars. I would just point out the, one of the great accomplishments is the light rail system that serves the Salt Lake City Valley today. Well, that was a major initiative that required significant federal engagement to make all that possible. Now the backdrop, of course, was the Olympics here that we were preparing for, for 2002. So that gave Salt Lake City a major advantage and a hook that, that we in the Clinton administration certainly supported and I was honored, honored, to be invited by President Clinton to represent him at the dedication of the Utah light rail system in front of the then Delta center, being joined by the governor as well as senator Bennet of Utah. But that was one example. Another example that I can point out to you that was again a conversation that Deedee Corradini and I had was around the whole Brownfields redevelopment area. That now resulted in the shopping and residential area there on the west side. What is that? What am I trying to think of... the something? What is it?

GT: It's The Gateway.

MI: Thank you,

GT: City, city gate? No. Gateway, Gateway...

MI: Isn't that the Gateway?

GT: Yeah.

MI: Well, when I first saw it, my first trip to Salt Lake City, Deedee Corradini met me at the airport and took me right there to the brownfields. She stood right there and she talked to me about her vision for that place. And, again, that required a major federal lift to clean that area up. It had been impacted by the railroads, and so on and so forth for 100 years. And it took some big effort to clean that area up. That's a second example. And, of course, the very unique example that I can point to with my experience with Salt Lake City and your mayors and other elected officials in Utah. And that was, of course, the Olympics, the preparation for the Olympics. Well, it was clear that the Clinton administration would be long gone, before the Olympics occurred in 2002. Mitt Romney and many others understood that it was going to be the Clinton administration that delivered or not to help those games be successful. And I think Mitt Romney in his book, Turnaround,

MI: Yes?

MI: The story of the Salt Lake Winter Olympic Games, gave the Clinton administration and the White House task force for the Salt Lake games that I was co chair of along with Thurgood Marshall Jr.. Mitt Romney gave us our due in terms of helping Utah, Salt Lake City be prepared for those Olympics. By every measure that was one of perhaps the most successful Winter Games in the history of it.

GT: Yeah, yeah.

MI: By the way, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that maybe Salt Lake City gets a chance.

GT: A lot, a lot of movement on the way. we're, we're pretty certain that we're going to be named the US city. battling for the right. Coming, I'm on the edges of some of that. So I'm looking in a little bit to see what's going on.

MI: So that's another good example of the light rail, the Gateway development project,

GT: Aye

MI: as well as the preparations for the Salt Lake Winter Olympic Games. Those are three examples that the White House, the federal government was very engaged in partnership with Utah, local and state elected officials.

GT: So you essentially continued to perform in that way, as Mickey Ibarra Associates, Inc.

MI: That's when, when a company, when a company had business, or an interest or a problem in Salt Lake City, I was in a position to assist, at least getting the conversation going.

GT: Yeah.

MI: What I saw as my responsibility, was simply to open the door. You know, conversation is important, dialogue is important. And establishing that and trying to get to a place where we embrace a common goal, then we can figure out how we're going to get there together.

GT: So, in that first year,

GT: Yeah?

GT: from January of '01 to December of '02. What was your clientele base looking like at the end of December?

MI: Well, we had a... Of course, I mentioned that we started with the National Education Association, which makes perfect sense. I mean, I spent a good deal of my career as a teacher, as well as 13 years plus three years in New Mexico, that's a total of 16 years with the National

Education Association, as well as its New Mexico affiliate. So education certainly was one area where I offered my services and the NEA certainly helped me achieve that. I mean, secondly, there were corporations that were of interest and one of the early contracts that continues today is Verizon Communications, a very major corporation. And they retained Mickey Ibarra for several endeavors. One was, you may not recall, but there was a major battle involved with Telecom. And the cable companies and telecom became cable companies too.

GT: Yeah.

MI: There was lots of rules and regulations that were serving as an obstacle, an intended obstacle, to slow down the Verizons and AT&T's of the world, of gaining access to providing the kind of television programming that exists today.

MI: Yeah.

MI: So there were early battles clear back there in the early 2000s, that I was a part of, on behalf of my client, Verizon, again, advocating for fair treatment, and equal treatment of our communications company, who is trying to get access to the wires to the rights of way required in order for them to hook up customers.

GT: It would imply Mickey, that you were creating communication lines into the FCC organization and trying to facilitate communication.

MI: Yes.

GT: Of course, the whole legal battle was being played out in the courts, but...

MI: We were, you know, battling on a whole number of fronts, including... By the way, Greg, as an aside, guess who the general counsel was? My contract was with the General Counsel's Office of Verizon. And guess who the general counsel was.

GT: I have no idea.

MI: Former Attorney General Bill Barr.

GT: Really? How was he to work with then?

MI: I had no contact with him.

GT: I say... yeah.

MI: But I could not believe that. But anyway. And then

GT: I, I learned something Mickey, I didn't know that about him.

MI: You know, relationships. It's a small world. It's good to remember that. And in addition to assisting in the cable wars, if you will, secondly, also assisted Verizon with strategic alliances.

Like many corporations, they were realizing the Latino community was a major, major component of their customer base, particularly as it relates to mobile phones, cell phones, Verizon wireless. And they were embarking on a effort to build stronger relationships with the Latino advocacy community. The National Council of La Raza, the League of United Latin American Citizens, American Legal Defense and Education. But, all of those organizations, Greg, I have relationships with and brought those relationships to Verizon, to assist them in establishing a partnership that was mutually beneficial. So that's...

GT: Let me extend that just a little bit. Maybe... You, over the times we have met, you've talked about your, your development and work with Central and Southern American governments. What... Was your experience with Verizon, did it take you into negotiating with governmental units outside the United States on their behalf?

MI: No, my responsibilities, my scope of services were confined to domestic.

GT: Domestic, uhuh.

MI: And in fact, that's an important distinction. Mickey Ibarra & Associates from the very beginning... And now by the way, in 2010, is when we transition from Mickey Ibarra &

Associates to the Ibarra Strategy Group. But in February of 2010, so almost halfway in to the experience in the private sector. But we always have really marketed ourselves for domestic advocacy.

GT: Okay.

MI: You've never, I've never had to register, as a foreign agent or anything like that. That was intentional. It was intentional. And some of the reasons for that have been in the news over last several years. Yeah.

GT: So, talk about... Continue evolving the organization for us, Mickey, and talk about how you continue to spread the breadth of your client base.

MI: Yes. Well, we, again, had the opportunity of... The reality was this. I realized that where the money is, where the potential for the greatest revenue and reward for our advocacy was in the private sector. So that is where I really paid the most attention. We always have had nonprofit clients. PBS is one, we've all, we've had for many years. The National Council of La Raza which today is known as UnidosUS. I've represented LULAC as well. So we've had a non-client, a nonprofit base and, and including, most recently, the PBS, public broadcasting. So we've had that, but, we really paid attention to growing our business in the corporate arena. That's where our greatest potential for revenue growth in the company would exist. And so we had an opportunity to work with a number of companies including Verizon, including the Hudson Group, Hudson, you may have run into we are finally, finally ... at the Salt Lake City airport.

GT: Yes, you have been telling me that story right along as it's developed, and I was gonna ask you about it. So you've covered it.

MI: They're very happy. And of course, they were very impacted. As all retailers were at airports. Yeah, they're starting to, you know, claw their way back now. But they're very pleased

to have a platform and, and a footprint now at Salt Lake International Airport, which didn't exist until the new airport was, was opened up. So you know, Hudson group is another big one that was very helpful to our growth as a business. We also had a number of others. Let me grab my cheat sheet here. Walmart was another big company that stepped forward, and they'll work with us. We've also had another major one that we dealt with was Community Loans of America. But the idea was it for us to really focus in on the corporate sector, as where it is that we can be of most help. And the primary service we provided - not the exclusive service - the primary service we provided is Latino engagement. Latino, and I never thought I'd live long enough, Greg. Never expected to live long enough, where people would pay me to introduce them to those that I know.

MI: Yeah. Yeah. Interesting.

MI: It was a, what a country.

GT: Talk to us, Mickey, about how you developed your staff to support this expanding operation.

MI: Well yes, as I mentioned...

GT: Walk us through that.

MI: Yeah, I started in 2001, with me and my laptop, no employees, not one. And the idea was that I'd do this as an experiment for a year and see how it goes. Well, at the end of that first year, I realized this could work. This could work. It was working and if I would get out of my pajamas every day, open a downtown Washington office, surround myself with good people that can help service a growing client base, it was going to work even better. So that's exactly what we did. But right downtown, you've been in my office at 1140 Connecticut Avenue, and I began building a staff that could service an increasing number of clients. And I'm very, very pleased that over

the years, we've had the opportunity to give so many young people an opportunity to be employed in a sector that for so long, has really been shut. Not open...

GT: Yeah.

MI: ...to our community.

GT: Yeah.

MI: So, you know that the thing that I find most is we have our young, particularly our young Latino graduates, because they're looking for a job. So many of the positions in government affairs, oh, we want five, six years experience. Well,

MI: How can you get five years, six years experience. Nobody's gonna give you a job.

GT: Yeah.

GT: Yeah.

MI: So, I think one of the things that we really stood out was giving our young people an opportunity to prove themselves. Give them an opportunity to learn about the advocacy business and to help our clients and our organization be successful. So I've had a terrific run. And in fact, just this week, on Tuesday, I had coffee with Elizabeth Rodriguez, my very first senior associate.

GT: Really?

MI: Was hired back in 2000 and... I believe it was 2003. So again, and then, of course, I wouldn't have predicted at the time, Greg, that I would receive, that I would benefit and receive so much satisfaction from building a business platform that could give job opportunities to our young people that have gone to college have prepared themselves for a professional career. And of course, we extended that opportunity, not only to employees, but also to interns. And that's where we come in with the University of Utah, the Hinckley Institute of Politics. I was really introduced to this opportunity by virtue of Kirk, what's Kirk's last name?

GT: Oh, yeah, uh...

MI: Kirk.. Jowers. Jowers. Okay, well, in 2007, Kirk and the institute recognized me as a fellow as a Hinckley Institute Fellow. That was a year long experience that I enjoyed with them and became familiar to them with the Hinckley Institute of Politics internship program in Washington. We began a relationship there in 2007 that exists today. I have Gustavo da Silva with me now who's serving as the 26th , intern from the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics.

GT: Amazing, amazing record, Mickey.

MI: And we've just selected the 27th , and Greg, I'll mention the 27th intern... intern will be Salma Rios, who begins on August 22, and we've notified the Hinckley that she'll be my final, my final intern.

GT: Is that right?

MI: That's right, because, again, the business has been... changing for the last several years. I've been in transition, and that continues.

GT: One of the things that strikes me in listening to you articulate this, Mickey is that, in so many ways, you were the perfect candidate to take on the private sector initiative, as you did, because a lot of what you have said this morning, is said by an experienced educator and teacher. And the way you have framed all of this is, you have stated it as a teaching experience that's built upon a learning experience for those who have not had opportunity. And that seems to be the core. Every... at every point, you've made that, that statement and issue and it. And of course, you're an educator. I mean, you're, you know, you're a natural educator.

MI: And what I didn't realize was that transitioning to the business that I have, still provided me a platform to teach.

MI: That's right.

MI: Through the opening the door to young people, in some cases to get their first professional position. I mean, I hired four or five of my interns full time. Oh, and secondly, to give an opportunity to interns to get an education. I'm proud of the fact that I'm told consistently, that the Ibarra Strategy Group, our intern experiences are among the top of the entire program and is sought after. I'm also proud of the fact that our interns are from the Latino community, and that speaks well to the university, reaching out and involving and opening the door for these kinds of opportunities to, to a more diverse candidate pool, as well. So it's been a great teaching experience, to be clear, of being in business as well. I did not anticipate that when I opened the door. But it's been a very enjoyable experience.

GT: It's an... What you have said, this morning is an important educational lesson to the community at large for the, for the private sector. And I too, have found this through my activities of my career. Educators know how to communicate. Good educators know how to educate, and how to communicate, and how to frame the discussion in a way that it reinforces those elements. And I'm often struck by how many times I don't see those characteristics on the table, in discussions with the private sector representatives. It seems to be missed, in my view, a missed characterization, characterization opportunity. And the ones who do it. And do it well, are the ones that are the big top success stories. When you let... When you dig down into those individuals and why they have been successful taking their corporations and operations where they have, it's because - you can see it, you can see this, you understand it. You can see they are a teacher at heart. They understand... some by instinct, some by training. But it's important and your conversation this morning is threaded multiple times with that.

MI: Oh, the hiring, I would offer hiring as an example. Young professionals, I would also hire the commitment to the internship.

GT: Right, yeah.

MI: You know, remembering, I arrived in Washington, DC, in 1976, as the recipient of a Washington intern program, opportunity provided by Brigham Young University. BYU, who by that time already realized that I was declared, that I was going to be a teacher.

GT: Yeah.

MI: And they assigned me to the National Education Association. Do you think I could have ever imagined, Greg, years later, I would end up there as a political education specialist?

GT: Yeah.

MI: But at any rate, that internship that I had, as a senior in college was so impactful to the development of my professional career, I wanted to make sure that the Ibarra Strategy Group provided that same opportunity to other young people who might be impacted, favorably as well. And that's what we've done. And that's a very good feeling. And then thirdly, oh, ended at this. In addition to hiring, in addition to internships, as the 30 year mark of my experience in Washington, which began in 1984, I called timeout to write a little book, a little book.

Mickeyisms: 30 tips for success. And it speaks to what you just mentioned, my desire to share what I've learned along the way. Shame on me if, I go to my grave without doing everything I could do to share what I learned along the way. These 30 little tips took me 30 years to learn all of them. It'll take the reader less than 30 minutes to read 'em. That's a heck of a head start. And with Gustavo's help this week, we have documented that 4000 of these books were printed.

GT: Really?

MI: All but 179 have been distributed. So that's been a really fun experience. And then... And not an academic experience. I don't pretend to be, you know, this is not a leadership 101 course perhaps. But in addition to that, of course, then engaging with the Latino Leaders Network and producing the larger volume of Latino Leaders Speak,

GT: Right.

MI: ...another vehicle intended to share our leadership lessons, stories and so forth, now with a curriculum guide. And I'm just pleased that today we, yesterday we announced that the 14 chapters from our book and it's been developed into a curriculum guide.

MI: Oh.

MI: By The, California Global Education Project are now... Have been translated to Spanish. So my introduction of the book and 14 leaders, chapters selected from the book for the curriculum guide are now also available in Spanish today.

GT: Good. Congratulations. Yeah, great achievement. Mickey, I think we should stop here.

MI: Okay.

GT: Recording, and thanks to you, and to Mr. da Silva , da Soy, Syl, Sylvia. And let's have a few minutes to chat.

MICKEY IBARRA

Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by

Greg Thompson

12 December 2022

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Mickey Ibarra Oral History Project

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**American West Center
and
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Special Collections Department
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THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. MICKEY IBARRA ON DECEMBER 12TH, 2016. WE ARE JOINED BY VALERIA JIMENIZ, V-A-L-E-R-I-A J-I-M-E-N-I-Z. I'M GREG THOMPSON, AND WE ARE CONDUCTING THIS INTERVIEW IN THE MARINER ECCLES ROOM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH, IN THE J. WILLARD MARRIOTT LIBRARY, IN SALT LAKE CITY.

GT: Thanks for joining us, Mickey. We've been doing a series of these interviews, making our way through your life and your life experiences. When we stopped the last time, we were right at the point where you were to be sworn in during Bill Clinton's second administration as a White House staff member. I would like to start with you telling me about going into the White House. We've talked about how you got there, but it might be good to go back for a few moments to get some connectivity between interviews.

Then walk me through, detail by detail, and I'll ask you more questions; but what I'm after is trying to understand your sense of the moment as you became an official on the White House staff. If I recall correctly, you got a call asking whether or not you were interested. Who was the call from?

MI: Erskine Bowles. He'd just been announced as the new chief of staff for President Clinton, and he would be replacing Leon Panetta, which is a very well-known Washington name out of California, from the Monterey area. And it turned out that Erskine Bowles had set up a transition office in the old executive office building. He began work on forming his team prior to assuming the responsibilities of chief of staff. But the call came out of the blue. It was totally un-anticipated. It was Erskine himself, and he said, "Mickey, I'm here at the old executive office building visiting with folks before I assume my new responsibilities. Would you be willing to

come over here and talk with me?” But there was no hint that he was interested in interviewing me for a job.

GT: Do you remember the date, by chance?

MI: It was very soon after the president’s inauguration to his second term, so I would say it would have been the first quarter of his second term in 1997.

GT: So, it was after he was re-inaugurated into the presidency.

MI: Yes. He would have already begun his second term. And of course, I had served as a senior advisor for the Clinton-Gore campaign of 1996 and had returned to the National Education Association NEA. At my request, they were kind enough to give me a new assignment outside of government relations. They named me as the new manager for international relations at NEA. So, I was into that new responsibility when this call came from Erskine Bowles. I said, “Of course I can meet with you.” He said, “Could you come down right now?” And I said, “Absolutely.” I dropped everything.

GT: Where was your office for the National Education Association?

MI: Right at the corner of 16th and M Street, 1201 16th St., NW. But I dropped everything, walked the three or four blocks to the old executive office building, and they were prepared for me. They took me to his transition office, we sat down, and we began to talk.

GT: What did he ask you?

MI: He made it clear that the president wanted more diversity in his senior White House staff and reminded me of the president’s commitment to have a White House that looked like the diversity of America. I knew from my experience with the White House and the campaign that Latino leaders in Washington were feeling underrepresented at the senior levels of the White House. There are many positions, but there are only a few at the top, and they were articulating

their desire for more. I believe this translated into Erskine Bowles thinking about tweaking his staff, as he took over at the very start of the Clinton's second four-year term.

And as a result, he just asked me if I'd ever thought about coming to the White House. He made it very clear that he had done some of his own background checking on me, and I remember one statement he made that really struck me. He said, "You know Mickey, I've talked to a lot of people about you, and I can't find anyone in this town who has anything bad to say."

GT: That's a pretty strong statement.

MI: He said, "In Washington, that's quite an achievement."

GT: It certainly is.

MI: That was back in '97; I'm sure that's no longer the case. But he said, "We really need to have more diversity. I'd like you to consider joining us at the White House." And I said, "What did you have in mind, Erskine?" I had not met him previously, though he acted like he knew a lot about me. He said, "Well, I'm looking for a deputy assistant for public liaison. What would you think about that?" Well, I knew who the director of publicly liaison was, and I'll tell you, I felt like ... well, I had a couple of things happen: one, I'd never really considered working at the White House, and I didn't expect to be asked. I loved my job at NEA. So I told Erskine, "I really enjoy helping the president from outside the White House, and I think I can still help him. But I don't think this is for me. I'm now the manager of a new area, and I like it."

So, he said to me, "Well, that's all I have right now, but what would it take to change your mind?" And I guess this is where my knowledge of the White House really came in handy. Again, we were starting the fifth year of the Clinton administration, and I said, "Well, I'd want to have a top job."

GT: Does that surprise us? (laughs)

MI: I think maybe a little bit. It surprised me that I had my wits about me enough to say, “It’s going to take a lot for me to leave NEA, because I love NEA.”

GT: Well, you had to weigh in your own mind whether the job in the White House had more influence than the one you had with the National Educational Association.

MI: There was personal satisfaction in there also. I was really enjoying my new job in international relations and was preparing for a trip to Africa with Education International.

GT: Yeah, we talked a little bit about that.

MI: . So, I wasn’t inclined just to jump and let go of all of that. Besides that, there were some very basic security interests there as well. When you’ve had nothing, and you’ve scratched your way to the top of an organization that provides you with a good salary, a good retirement program, healthcare for life, then to leave all of that ... I found myself at age 46 really feeling reluctant to let that financial security get away from me for another job where I might wake up one day, walk into the office and hear, “We don’t need your services anymore. You serve at the pleasure of the president, period.

And of course, the other factor was fear. I mean, I remember getting flushed and red in the face when he said, “We’d like you to come to the White House. The president would like you to join us here.” I thought, “Could I really do that? You’re asking me? There have to be so many more people who are better qualified than me.”

GT: It scared you?

MI: Oh yeah, that fear of failure, because it’s not only you who’s failing; you realize that when you’re at the White House, you have a responsibility for the entire country, and that was daunting. I wasn’t sure that I was ready to embrace that challenge. So, I bought some time by saying, “I’m not interested in being a deputy. If a top job is available, maybe. But I love the

president, and I'll do everything I can to help him outside of the White House. You can depend on me, and I really appreciate you thinking of me." And I did. I left that meeting assuming that would be the last time I would ever hear from him, and I was okay with that.

GT: Did you have any second thoughts?

MI: Yes, I had second thoughts, although again, I was walking back to an organization I loved, and a job that I really had avoided taking responsibility for in stepping up.

GT: Did you have this discussion with yourself about being too conservative, and being too cautious?

MI: Yes. It was about the fear of failure and being immobilized by it.

GT: Right. That's what I hear in what you just told me.

MI: Yeah. And secondly, there's selfishness involved. It's about you. Well, this is more than you working at the White House. It's about everybody.

GT: Plus your family.

MI: Your family, plus considerations based on all of those other basic needs. And again, I never expected to hear anything more about it. But low and behold, a couple months later, I got a second phone call around April from the deputy chief of staff. Erskine had assumed the position and put in his own deputies; so, this call was from Sylvia Matthews—now Sylvia Matthews Burwell, B-U-R-W-E-L-L—who is now the secretary of health and human services for President Obama. But her title back then was deputy chief of staff. And she said, "Mickey, Erskine asked me to call you, because you said you might be interested in a top job, and we have a top job for you. When can you start?" I said, "What job is that?" And she said, "Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. We want you to come and join us to be our chief

liaison with all of the local and state-elected officials in the country, the US territories, and the Indian nations.” I said, “Wow, can I think about it overnight?” And she said, “You can.”

Not long after that, I got a second phone call from the current director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House, Marcia Hale. She said, “Mickey, I understand you’ve been offered my position. I’m leaving here soon. What do I need to tell you to convince you to take this job?” I don’t think she was all that happy about leaving.

GT: Is that right? Do you think she was pushed out?

MI: To some degree, yeah. She wasn’t really well-regarded as ... well, she simply didn’t have the personality to interact with so many big egos and so many different kinds of people.

GT: Did you actually meet with her, or was it just a phone call?

MI: No, I knew Marcia, but I didn’t meet with her. We had a phone call, and there was really very little she could say to persuade me.

GT: You already had a pretty good idea of what this position was all about because you had dealt in that role.

MI: Oh yeah, and I had experience that made sense. Education is an intergovernmental responsibility, and that’s what I was all about. I knew mayors, legislators, and governors, and all of that. So, it made some sense although—

GT: You probably hadn’t dealt as much with territorial leaders and the leaders of Indian nations.

MI: No. And of course, I would inherit a team of eight political appointees. The entire team was already in place. Again, we were in our fifth year. I was coming in to take over as the head of the office. I later discovered, that because they weren’t willing to make the choice between three deputies, they made the choice for me. (laughs) But also, of course, I’m not blind to the fact

that it also helped them. I believe I was qualified, and I was Latino, and they were looking to diversify the White House. And none of the other three deputies would do that.

GT: Were they all white?

MI: Yes, two women and one man. So, I said, “Give me 24 hours.” I walked right from my office to the top floor—the executive level of the NEA—and knocked on the door of Don Cameron, the executive director of the NEA. I said, “Don, can I have a moment?” He said, “Yes, please come in.” I said, “I just received a phone call from the White House, and they’re offering me the job as assistant to the president for intergovernmental affairs. What do you think?” And I was not prepared for what came next. He said, “Mickey, we love you here at the NEA, and we want you to stay.” Then he pointed his finger down the street at the White House and said, “Do you really think they love you over there? When they’re done with you, they will chew you up and spit you out like used gum?”

GT: He really didn’t want you to go.

MI: I was astonished. I was really taken back.

GT: Did you think he would kind of anoint you and send you on your way?

MI: Yes. I thought he’d stand up and cheer and say, “Mickey, what a great opportunity. And to have one of our own from the NEA right inside the West Wing of the White House. Yes Sir, go for it!” So, I was really taken back. But by the time I got back to my office, I knew I was going to take the job.

GT: Why?

MI: Because I realized that we in the Latino leadership community cannot continue knocking on the door of opportunity, then refusing to step inside and step up when the door is opened.

GT: Was it your evaluation that the Latino community, wasn't being aggressive by accepting [those opportunities]?

MI: Well, at that time, there weren't a lot of opportunities. So, if not me, then who else? I was the obvious choice to do this job. So now, I had to step up and do it.

GT: Were you offended by Don's comments?

MI: Somewhat, because I love President Clinton, and I realized that that's not an easy job, and it's not a secure job. I realized I'd be sacrificing my security. Don Cameron was always very good to me, and I appreciated that; yet, I just kind of felt at that moment that it was time to move on.

GT: And who was Don Cameron again?

MI: He was the executive director of the NEA. He's the one who told me, in essence, "Don't take that job. Stay right here." But I have to tell you, the person I credit most with preventing me from making the biggest professional mistake of my life is Erskine Bowles. He would not take no for an answer.

GT: Was he constantly coming back to you?

MI: Well, he didn't dismiss me because I didn't take the first job that he offered me. He said, "Okay, you wanted a bigger job, here it is. So, when can you start?" He called me out. But there was one more call that I made before I accepted the job, and that was to Henry Cisneros. Henry, as you may recall, was the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and former mayor of San Antonio. I talked to him about what Erskin had offered, and of course, he encouraged me to accept the job, and to do it right away. He realized that the administration was attempting to find Latinos who could be successful in big jobs, and we had an obligation to step up.

GT: Henry was pretty savvy, as I remember. I remember reading about him and following some of his work.

MI: Yes, he's still very highly respected. But at any rate, I returned the call and agreed to accept the position on one condition: that I still be allowed to complete my mission to Africa that I had already prepared months for, before reporting to the White House. And they said, "How much time do you need?" I said, "A month." And they said, "Okay, we're going to do the press release." You have a copy of the press release right here in your archives. So, we completed our trip to Africa—to Ethiopia and Djibouti—then I reported to the White House on June 6th, 1997.

GT: I believe we talked a little bit about the trip to Africa. If not, we can pick it up later, because I want to stay on this. So, you came back from Africa and showed up at the White House steps. Walk us through that first day.

MI: Well, I got through the West Wing gate, and I remember walking down the long driveway, past the press pool, into the West Wing reception desk. And sitting in the reception area awaiting my arrival was Mayor Deedee Corradini of Salt Lake City.

GT: Did you know her very well?

MI: I did not.

GT: You must have been out of the state during her rise to power.

MI: Yes. But boy, there she was, and she joined me as I went and found my office for the first time. Then she sat down and began to tell me her story. Of course, she congratulated me—she was very gracious—but it was very clear that she was there to advocate on behalf of her constituency in Salt Lake City for the Olympics, for the light rail system, and for the Gateway Development. She wanted to brief me on all of that, on the federal support that she had requested, and also to seek the assistance and support for my hometown.

GT: She was pretty hard to ignore, wasn't she?

MI: She *was* hard to ignore. (laughs) I will say this: Salt Lake City had a terrific advocate in Deedee Corradini at the federal level.

GT: They sure did. I worked with Deedee a lot, both during that time, and then after she came out of office. We have her archives here, as well as the Ski Archives that we've built. It's an Olympic collection. And we honored her not long before she passed away. I enjoyed working with her, very much.

MI: Yeah, I did as well. In fact, there's another note I keep in our collection. When I was notified of her passing, I had one of the staff go to the collection to find me a picture of Deedee.

GT: I remembered your request.

MI: And sure enough, there's a picture of Deedee Corradini in the east room of the White House, standing there as president of the United States Conference of Mayors, speaking to her colleagues. And there I was, looking at her on the front row. She was something else. She was a pistol.

GT: We had a lot of fun working with her as the executive officer for the Development of Women's Ski Jumping within the IOC framework, and women's ski jumping coming into the Olympics.

MI: Yes, she was such a big advocate and was successful. But anyway, that was my introduction to DeeDee. She was great.

GT: The first person through the door.

MI: And I met her later again that afternoon. The reason she was in Washington wasn't simply for me, but also for a meeting she had scheduled with Vice President Al Gore, and what she called The Big Seven. I showed you pictures of that. It was a meeting with the president of

the US Conference of Mayors, with the National Conference of State Legislators, the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities, the International City Managers Association ... all of those were scheduled for a meeting with the vice president that afternoon. I arrived just that morning and then chaired that meeting the same afternoon. That's a great example of the fast pace set in the White House. You have no chance to hesitate. You just jump right in and get it done, and what a first day.

GT: You probably knew that first day that there had to be somebody that would make all of the appointments for you.

MI: Yeah. That was Suzanne Dale. She was my first White House West Wing assistant.

GT: How long was she with you?

MI: She was with me for a year and a half or so before she moved on. She did a very good job, and she's now very successful in a local government organization in the Seattle area.

GT: Was she a Washington kid?

MI: Yes. She was just great.

GT: Take us through your first month at the White House so we get a sense of what was going on.

MI: This is where I wish I had a calendar in front of me so that I could remember more of what went on. I remember that to prevent myself from getting overwhelmed, I quickly stopped and took a step back to take a look at our office, and I remember meeting with all of the individuals on our team. There were eight folks that reported to me, including three deputies, which wasn't an ideal situation, because they were the three deputies who had been basically passed over for the position I received. That wasn't a good experience. Although, in retrospect, I give credit to all three, because we got over it in one degree or another, remembering that this

never is and never should be about us; this was about the president and ensuring that we did our very best with our responsibilities to him, and to the American people.

So, we had to really rise above that, and I was very determined to set the example for doing just that. So, what I set out to do was to reorganize our office in that first month and to come up with an organizational chart. There were three things I wanted to accomplish that first month: one, I wanted to get focused. What was our mission in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs? I wanted to define it and focus on it like a laser beam.

GT: Did you feel like they didn't have an adequate definition?

MI: I don't. I think if I asked that question to eight different people, I would get eight different answers, unless they were in a group together.

GT: Did they have a strategic plan?

MI: Not specific to the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; but it didn't take us very long to really center in on that and identify that mission, and to focus on it. It was really quite simple. I tell folks, "I specialize in simple. Complex, not so much." First and foremost, it was to promote the policy initiatives of the President of the United States. That's what we were there to do: promote the Clinton policy initiatives with our constituents-local, state, tribal, and territorial.

Secondly, it was to respond to the concerns of our partners in government, and that was as much of an attitude as it was a responsibility to our partners in government. Never could there be a day where we split our time 50/50 between promoting and responding. However, if we weren't doing some of both each and every day, we weren't serving the president well. We needed to do that. After the senior staff meeting at 9:00 every morning, I would start every team meeting in my West Wing office by repeating our mission statement. There is so much to deal with that it's impossible to overstate the volume of activity you're dealing with every single day.

And without tethering yourself to your mission and your focus, you're in danger of losing that focus and thereby becoming less effective than you otherwise would be. Remember what you're there to do and let the other stuff go away.

GT: Was that hard for your team to accept?

MI: Well, over time, I believe they came to accept it. I would argue that our office was thought to be one of the best-operated and efficient and effective offices in the White House. I felt very proud of what we were all able to accomplish. You have to do three things: one, get focused on a common mission. What are we here to do? Promote and to respond. Second, get organized. "Well, there are only nine of us in this office, so let's put things on a chart and not keep it a secret. Let's share this with our constituency so they know who to call. Who's our lead for mayors? Who's our lead for state legislators? Who's our lead for governors? Who's our lead for tribal governments? Who's our lead for US territories? And who are the leads for the organizations of elected and appointed officials?" That's all in the Ibarra collection; but we actually came up with the first organizational chart for the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and that's when we were into year five.

So, get focused, and get organized. And third, get the right people. It doesn't matter what the organizational chart looks like; if you don't have good people, the organization is not going to work very well. But if you've got the right people, they can make any organizational chart work pretty good. That took time. But by the time we all left the White House, none of the original team was there.

GT: Is that right?

MI: That's right. They'd all moved on.

GT: They were all gone.

MI: Yeah.

GT: Let's talk about that a little bit, because that can be an extraordinarily challenging situation, and it can become a negative component to try to manage. How did you [manage that]?

MI: Well, people tire out. They say one year at the White House is like dog years—it's like doing seven years anywhere else. And there's some truth to that. These jobs are 24/7. It was the only job I ever had that I knew exactly when it was going to end. On January 20th, 2001, our time would come to an end. And we weren't going to get one second of that time back; so, we went all out. But no one was expected to last eight years, and they didn't. So, part of that was just simply the regular attrition, if you will, of the position, which is very high stress, very consuming, and very impactful on your entire life. And remember, I came in on the 5th year, so we had folks that were tired out.

GT: You're right. They were ready.

MI: So, encouraging them, but to also finding other spots for them too. There's more than one spot, but the reality is this: the most challenging positions are at the White House. Nearly every agency and department of the government has an Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. In fact, another big initiative that I undertook was to engage our colleagues in intergovernmental affairs across the agencies to really bolster the amount of personnel resources we had at our disposal to push the wagon in the same direction.

GT: To be able to take some of your key people and place them into those agencies.

MI: Yes. I started meeting with them every other Monday at exactly 4:00 PM in the old executive office. I would convene the intergovernmental affairs directors of the administration.

GT: Had that existed before?

MI: No. At least not meeting every two weeks.

GT: So that was your creation.

MI: And guess what our agenda was. One, promoting the policy initiatives of the president, and two, responding to the concerns of our partners in government. “Let’s talk about both of these. What are we doing? What’s going on?” So, at any rate, I got the opportunity over time, and I was really very pleased that the president’s chief of staff office really took my lead in restaffing my office, so I ended up with folks that I felt very confident with and good about.

There was a second variable though: not only knowing that this was the fifth year, and people were tired out, but there was also the president’s impeachment. That was a seminal moment and acid test about who was in, and who needed to move on.

GT: So, there were people who were afraid he wasn’t going to survive, and therefore, they wouldn’t survive.

MI: Yes, absolutely. I had a deputy assistant to the president tell me that they would not put their neck out there to protect their own political reputation. I was disappointed and astonished. I believe that was the only time I had to take something like that directly to the chief of staff. I had lost total confidence in this individual, and we just had to move on without him. Of course I’ll tell you, as disappointed as I was—and we all were—with the impeachment, it was a happy day when I woke up to the Washington Post headline that said, “President Clinton Exonerated of All Charges.”

But it was a tough period. It was a vetting-out period, and of course, it went on for two years. But at any rate, that first month was about getting focused, getting organized, and starting to examine personnel.

GT: At the end of that month, were you pretty overwhelmed with what you were facing?

MI: Overwhelmed? No, but fully challenged.

GT: Were you able to break it up into smaller pieces so that, in your mind, you could manage it accordingly?

MI: Yes, and that came into the organized part. You can't do it all. You have to identify your resources, utilize those resources, and put them to work. Don't try to do it all. You can't do it all. So, by organizing ourselves, we had an opportunity to get more done, and to keep from being overwhelmed.

GT: So, from first month to the 40th month ... you served about 41 or 42 months, right?

MI: Yes, nearly four years. I started in in June, so I served for three and a half years.

GT: Did you see change in what you were trying to accomplish, and with what you did accomplish?

MI: Well, without a doubt, President Clinton accomplished a lot. And having said that, we're not blind to the fact that we wasted a lot of political capital on the impeachment and defending our right to remain in office. Otherwise, we all would have been out the door.

GT: So in '98 and '99, you were also moving into being a lame-duck administration.

MI: And yet, there was a new infusion at the time which was like a breath of fresh air—the Salt Lake 2002 Winter Olympic Games.

GT: Right.

MI: Wow, what a refreshing, new priority, to move from impeachment to preparing and being a part of the Salt Lake Games, and to welcome Mitt Romney, the new head of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee to assist with dealing with the Olympics scandal right here in Salt Lake City.

GT: We had some of that scandal show up here at the U. It came in the form of scholarships, but even in this agency right here, we would get calls from Tom Welsh. It happened more with

the Eastern European leaders. They wanted to come and do research on their background, and on aspects of their families, or whatever. And we were just flat out told, “Make it happen. Do everything you can to ensure that they get what they need.”

Of course, they were working with the Church History Office and all, but it was interesting. We just did it, because as far as we were concerned, they were patrons of the library like anybody else, and we provided the same kind of service to them that we did to the rest of the University, and the general community. But the first couple of times it happened, red lights went off. I mean, I’m used to people calling and saying, “Will you help Joe get whatever he needs?”

MI: But “make it happen” is so different.

GT: But we understood what was on the backside of that request. It was an IOC vote, and you knew darn well what was going on.

MI: In Mitt Romney’s book, I was very pleased with his recollection of our meeting, and our engagement from the Clinton White House. He chuckled, because he understood that both he and I knew about dealing with scandal. We formed a very strong partnership that culminated in what I think was a flawless convening of the international community here.

GT: Let me ask you a question kind of out of sequence. You were out of office by the time September 11th happened. Did they call you to go back in in any way? Because the real question moving forward was whether or not to hold the Games. And the library was in the middle of that discussion, because were a part of a security component for the Games to be opened and closed.

MI: The U was the venue for both the opening and closing ceremonies, right?

GT: Yeah, and the Olympic village was right up the street from us. So, were you brought in in any way to be part of that discussion?

MI: No. I don't know what the engagement was with the officials that replaced us, but I suspect they were significant. And I also believe that the success of the Games, and the decision to proceed with the Games, even following the 9/11 attacks, was in part a testament to the solid foundation and preparation that we had achieved here in Salt Lake City. This was our first major international event since 9/11, and we were ready for it. And that is still a source of great satisfaction.

GT: I would agree with you. My assessment of that whole thing was that by the time the Games came, the local house had been put in order, meaning we were past the scandal, enough so that people were comfortable in moving forward. And being on the edges of some of the planning that was going, the planning was very deep and solid, and there was almost no way to back out of. It. The transit system was in place, or being put in place, housing was in place, as well as the way the institution was to interact with the IOC, and the USOC, and all of that. It was solid—it really was. And construction was well under way.

MI: The security plan and the Olympic village—

GT: And all the venues were closing in on being complete. And in reality, when I looked at it post-op, there was almost no way to say no. We had to go forward, and everybody felt they could make it happen. We wound up dealing with a little bit of security, both here and in the community, and it was interesting to watch that. But it was a fun time.

In just a minute here, it will be noon. Are you okay on time?

MI: We haven't put Valeria to sleep yet. (laughs)

GT: You're not waiting to go to a final or anything, are you?

MI: No, she's with me for today and tomorrow, and that closes out her internship. We're off to the Hinckley Institute next, right?

VJ: Yeah.

GT: Okay.

MI: But one thing ... is there a spot where I won't be disturbed too much? I have a. A 30-minute phone call at 1:00 that I'd like to take, if that's okay with you.

GT: Yeah, you can do it here. That's fine.

MI: Okay, thank you. Then we'll leave here after that.

GT: I'll let Judy know that you'll be in here until after one o'clock.

MI: And then after our call, we'll go to the Hinkley.

GT: So, one of the things I'm interested in in hearing is what actually came to your desk while you were in the White House. What was the duty of your assignment, and what was the actual reality of what you did? I'd like to go across the components, because I've been around enough on Indian reservations, and communities—rural and so forth—to know that those are different worlds.

MI: Well, this is where the collection of my White House calendar and photographs will be so invaluable, because it will bring back so much.

GT: Yeah, that's all right. I just want you to reflect on what strikes you about your time there.

MI: Well, as an aside, let me just mention one of the things that really struck me at the White House that I was unprepared for: my dependency on White House interns.

GT: Really?

MI: My gosh. If folks realized the importance of interns on just functioning at the White House, they'd be astonished. We always had several interns with us in our office, and by and large, they were just outstanding young people that we really depended on. But I'll tell you, what

I often dealt with on my desk had to do with events. Events were very important components of the White House focus.

GT: What kind of events?

MI: Both internal and external. Much of our messaging from the White House was to create events both at the White House, and around the country, that would call attention to a policy priority. Building support for the president's policy initiatives often included events at the White House and externally. Our responsibility in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs was to marry the advance offices outside the White House with our elected officials. We were the keeper of the relationship with the mayors, governors, and the state legislators. We knew who it was we needed to work with.

So often, when our White House colleagues ran into challenges, guess who they would call? "Hey, we've got a mayor here that just doesn't get it. We need your help. Can you assist us?" Most times, we could do that over the phone, but sometimes, we'd have to get on a plane and go try to mediate. So, supporting and promoting the president's policy initiatives are often done through events, and events are about people. Many times, elected officials are a part of that.

Much of what drove us was events. I came to understand that events were our friends in forcing decisions to be made about the budget, policy, schedules, and all of that.

GT: In what way?

MI: Well, the president only has so much time; so, there was a whole separate meeting of scheduling what was most important, and what we were trying to seam up for that particular month.

GT: Under your direction?

MI: Well, not under my direction, but as a team member. Remember, I was only one of the outreach offices. My job was to oversee the outreach to local, state, territorial, and Indian. But my colleagues in the Office of Legislative Affairs, whose job was the outreach to the House of Representatives and the US Senate, shared a common reception area with us. And across the way, there was the Office of Public Liaison, and their responsibility was outreach to all of the groups and organizations, like ethnic, environmental, senior, veteran, and on and on. And there was also an office right outside my door, the Office of Cabinet Affairs, and their job was to keep our cabinet folks on point. (laughs) But we were all in these scheduled meetings.

GT: So this was the round-table team that you were part of.

MI: Yes, exactly—to try to put all of our resources together to focus on achieving a policy on behalf of the president. So, that was often a major focus of the day: message and delivery, which was often done through events. Of course, we communicated in many ways. We communicated through the Internet, and we communicated through the media. The press office was always a part of those meetings too.

GT: And the Internet part of it—the social media part of it—was only really beginning to take shape.

MI: In comparison to today, it was in its infancy.

GT: But it was coming; it developed, and by the time you left office, it had changed dramatically, compared to the time you went in.

MI: Yeah, when I went in earlier, it was nearly non-existent. But at any rate, so much of my day was dealing with that. And secondly, a big part of my day was spent responding to our constituents', as well as phone calls from mayors. They'd say, "Haven't you heard about this? I

can't think of a city that's more qualified for us. Could you check on what's happening for us? What's going on over there?" (laughs)

GT: For something like that, did you have a person within transportation development that you'd get a hold of and say—

MI: Yes, the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Like, "Hey, I just got a call from Mayor Webb. He's concerned about XYZ. Can you check with your folks over there and find out what's going on, and let me know?" Sometimes I'd ask him to get back to them; but if the mayor called me directly, normally, I'd get back to the mayor myself and close the loop. It was the same with governors.

One of the great examples I can recall was Mayor Ed Rendell of Philadelphia. Mayor Rendell was on a mission from day one to get federal funding seed money to build a constitution center in Philadelphia within a stone's throw of Independence Hall. We didn't have any place in America that celebrated our constitution and told the story of its creation. Independence Hall didn't do that. That's where it happened, but it really didn't tell the story. Well, Mayor Rendell would use every opportunity when he was at the White House, inside the White House, or with the president, to ask for his support. And it was ongoing.

GT: The ultimate result of that is pretty staggering. I was there a few months ago, meeting at Temple, and I spent time on Independence Plaza.

MI: It's just astonishing.

GT: Yeah, it's great.

MI: And the National Park Service told us it couldn't be done. They said, "No way. We don't fund those kinds of projects. Forget it."

GT: I think they're pretty proud of it now.

MI: Well, Rendell wasn't going to take no for an answer. President Clinton wanted to help, and we found a way to do it. So, Ed Rendell, who then became Governor Rendell said to me, "Mickey, whenever you're ready, you call me, and I will give you a personal tour of the Constitution Center to say thank you." And sure enough, years after I left the White House, I finally got to do that. I had my folks call his folks; and sure enough, when I arrived at the Constitution Center, there stood Ed Rendell to greet me.

GT: Was he governor then?

MI: Yes. And my admiration of Ed Rendell just increased even further. He was a man of his word. He was so proud of that Constitution Center, and he should be. It's an accomplishment of a mayor who would not take no for an answer, and who had a strong relationship with the president.

GT: So, what else struck you in the first month as very unusual, and that you hadn't quite expected as part of the job?

MI: The importance of social activities at the White House. To this day—and it's been over 15 years since I left the White House—people don't come running up to me and say how they remember our budget battle, or how we balanced our federal budget, or our fight for healthcare, or how we reformed our welfare system. What they constantly remind me of is that invitation they got to a holiday reception, or the photograph that the president signed and sent to them.

GT: Do you know where I've watched that work out? With Rocco Siciliano, during the Eisenhower administration. He was there. But you go into his home, and still ... I mean, this is well beyond half century later, and he has these images like that all over his wall.

MI: I was so pleased to finally meet Rocco.

GT: I should have put that together earlier for you, because now his health is beginning to fail.

MI: It was the Hinckley Institute that put us in touch, because he does this annual forum, and they had an event over at the president's home. They invited me, and I got the chance to meet him.

GT: Yeah, I remember when you came to that.

MI: It's a small world. My mother is a Siciliano by marriage. But Valeria wouldn't have any idea who Rocco Siciliano is.

GT: Right. He was the first Italian to graduate from the university—the first Italian from the valley community, period—to graduate. He lived on 13th South, across from Liberty Park. His parents were immigrants, like everybody of Italian descent that came from southern Italy.

MI: They were from the small community of Calabria.

GT: He had a career much like Mickey. He became the head of a major component of the White House, and I think he was actually the assistant deputy in Labor and Commerce. He didn't stay long in commerce; that was under Nixon's second term, but he bailed and got out early, because he saw where it was going. But anyway, he's another story of someone who grew up in Utah and reached the height of success.

MI: He wrote a book that was published by the University Press called *Walking on Sand*. But it's kind of an interesting thing. Take a look at it. But at any rate, my mother's second husband was Rocco Siciliano's nephew. My mother's name is Bonnie Siciliano.

GT: So, when you come into office, you were faced with a congress which had become Republican.

MI: Oh, yeah. We lost the House of Representatives in '94.

GT: Could you sense that it was harder?"

MI: Oh, yes. You asked earlier about surprises. Well, one of the biggest surprises to me was the level of partisanship that we experienced at the White House. Frankly, I was horrified. I expected that most would embrace the notion that we had one president at a time, and that when a president does well, America does well. We all move together through compromise, negotiation, and agreement. I believe you could say that during the Clinton administration is when so much started to unravel.

GT: Certainly, Newt's movement contributed.

MI: Yes. And the impeachment was certainly a part of that. In my view, it was a political, partisan overreach, and an attempt to make a sin into a crime to remove a president.

GT: Yeah, that was part of the strategy.

MI: At any rate, it failed, thank goodness. But I do believe that we still suffer from the remnants of all that. And astonishingly, I believe that President Obama suffered through eight years of higher partisanship than Bill Clinton.

GT: That's also my view of it.

MI: And let me just take another leap here. I believe that this high level of partisanship has also translated into anger among the American people that has triggered the desire for change that had overridden concerns about electing a president with no experience, and all the controversy surrounding that; but so many Americans—I won't say the majority, but at least enough Americans to elect a president—want change. And that means blowing up Washington. I think we've reached that point, and that's been a surprise to me.

Another surprise was the level of ... what's the word? Heat? I wanted to find a little softer word than heat, but maybe a loathing, if you will, directed at the Clintons.

GT: Do you think that was because they were so popular?

MI: I don't know. But I was astonished in 1998 or '99 to discover that heat. I would talk to people, and they would just start acting goofy, like they were out of their minds.

GT: What do you think led to that? Was it his Arkansas background? Was it the level of outgoingness and popularity that they had with a certain segment of the society? Or was it their overreach as a couple? Where did that come from?

MI: There's not one answer for that, to be sure. I think there are pieces of all of that, including those that came together systematically to do all they could to diminish the Clintons at every turn, in order to paralyze them politically. They were fearful of their policy agenda. I mean, we lost on health care. And Obamacare, which is under threat now, is a much different plan than what we put together. It was much less comprehensive. But I do think that there was a whole group of people that just really had a problem with a Southern governor who was, in their minds, maybe too supportive of the African American community.

GT: Yeah. Too diverse.

MI: They were tired of hearing about the need to diversify the White House. I think it was all of that.

GT: I think along with that was his marvelous ability to articulate his position. I mean, he has this wonderful capacity to get up and give a speech that some of us would spend a month trying to write, but we would never get there. He can deliver a speech so well.

MI: His content and delivery, that's true.

GT: And he's probably one of the most influential presidents we've had in that sense.

MI: And that's one of the tragedies of the impeachment, because my gosh, how we could arm up our enemies the way we did, and diverting the attention of the American people, and Congress. All of that was, in large measure, our own making.

GT: And the long tail of it exercised its last little wiggle in November 2016.

MI: I think there's a connection there. We saw it play out. Like, "No more Clintons. Please, no more. And I'm not sure there's ever been a person, male or female, who's ever been more qualified to be president than Hillary Clinton. This wasn't about qualifications. This campaign was not about that, but we tried to run it on that, and not enough people were buying it. Although I hasten to add that the last time I heard, Hillary had received two and a half million more votes than Donald Trump.

GT: I've heard a figure slightly higher than that; but certainly, the popular vote was not with the president-elect.

MI: For the third time. Or was it the fourth?

GT: Certainly, it was true with Gore, and it was true with Bush.

MI: I think Gore was only the third time in American history where the popular vote has not corresponded with the electoral college. We witnessed two of them within the last 16 years, really, which I think is also a concern. It's an indicator of the division within America.

GT: That's right. Well, at any rate, what else strikes you about that first couple of months you were in office?

MI: Nearly every day it was a surprise. I remember literally thinking to myself, "My God, what am I doing here?" I almost had to pinch myself. Remember, it went long beyond the first two months; but I think of things like my parking slot. Everything's done by rank. It's like you're in the military. My parking slot was literally right outside the door of the West Wing.

I remember leaving my office, most often at 10:00 in the evening, and I would take the time to look back at that beautiful scene of the White House, the mansion, the West Wing, the backdrop of the ornate old executive office building, and I wanted to pinch myself. Like, "Oh my

gosh, am I really here? Can this really be happening?” I always wanted to stop and look. The days in office were always so full and so chaotic. I’ve never watched a full episode of The West Wing, but I’ve watched a few clips where they seem to get the pace of the White House pretty close. But those last few moments before I drove home, I found that it was always worthwhile to stop and consider everything that [had happened].

GT: How long did it take before you felt comfortable? That you felt like the shoe wasn’t going to come down on top of you, in terms of always having to look over your shoulder, wondering what was going to come next?

MI: Well, in the political sense, being sensitive to the political environment that I was working in was always important to me, and I think that was an asset I brought. I wasn’t blind to all of the moving parts at the White House, and I certainly wanted to make myself aware of those things. And yet, I felt that my best offense was remaining true to the focus of our office. As long as we were demonstrating our ability to promote the president’s policy initiatives each day and responding to the concerns of our partners, we were going to be just fine, and I was going to be just fine.

My real focus was really trying to do the very best job possible with the constituency we were assigned. And through that, I developed a very strong comfort and confidence level, in terms of growing into the position, and it didn’t take a whole lot of time to do that. Once I accepted the position, I also embraced the notion that there was no way I was going to fail, and nobody was going to outwork me. That became a 24/7 obsession. My colleague, Janet Murguía, who’s the president of the National Council at La Raza now, was the deputy assistant to the president for Legislative Affairs, and we shared a common reception area. She had a very small office right outside my door, and she related a story recently that I enjoyed. She said, “It didn’t

matter when I arrived at the White House. I don't care how early it was, or what day it was:

Mickey's light was always on."

GT: How do you spell her last name?

MI: Janet Murguía, M-U-R-G-U-I-A. Her twin sister is Judge Mary Murguía. I ran into her at the Phoenix airport last Monday. She is now on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. I was with her and her family in Phoenix when she was sworn in in 2000 as the first Hispanic ever to serve on the federal bench from Arizona. And now, she's on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Obama promoted her.

GT: Well, I think I'm going to stop there. We've been going for an hour and a half. But the next time we get together, I would like to focus on the constituencies. We can look at it through their eyes, and the array of what they bring. We can talk a little more about how you responded to and solved problems. Let's try to get a complete picture of that. And then, at some point in this series, I want to ask you to hard look back and say, "Here's what all of this meant to me, what it meant to my organization, and what it meant to the White House." Those are the kinds of things I want you to think about, because at the end of the day, when you finish your memoirs, I want an interpretation of that whole experience.

MI: Like what it all meant. What was it good for.

GT: Yes. That's the historian in me. (laughs) So, thank you very much for being here, and being a part of this.

MI: Thank you Greg. I appreciate you. And here's the material I'm going to leave behind. But I appreciate you thinking about those photos. When I get those photocopies front and back, we'll go after it.

GT: Yes, we'll address that. (Greg turns recorder off)

DAVID IBARRA
Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by
Greg Thompson
17 August 2022

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Ibarra Oral History Project

Tape No. U-

American West Center
and
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah

THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID R. IBARRA ON AUGUST 17, 2022. WE ARE CONDUCTING THIS INTERVIEW AT MR. IBARRA'S STUDIO, IN HIS BUILDING COMPLEX [IN UTAH], AND THE PERSON DOING THE INTERVIEW IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON.

GT: This is probably the first interview of several that we'll have in a series, and David, I would like to start with asking you a little bit about your background. When were you born?

DI: I was born February 28th, 1952.

GT: Tell me a little bit about your mother and your father.

DI: My mother was a young woman from Salina, Utah, a young, white Mormon gal. My father was from Oaxaca, Mexico. He came to Utah as part of the Bracero program, which brought workers from Mexico to the United States to replace the young men that were serving in the military. Dad was assigned to Spanish Fork, UT, to pick fruit. He met the young Bonnie Bird, my mother. She was about 16. Dad's age is questionable, as to how old he was. It seems to change every time he tells the story, but he was in his mid-20s. (laughs) And they ended up getting married and had my brother, Mickey, right away. And I followed 11 months later.

GT: Your mother's name was Bonnie Bird. And your father came under the work program in 19...

DI: It would have been in about 1948, I believe.

GT: So, it may have been before the federal program, and the legal program.

DI: Yes.

GT: Did you get a chance to meet any of your relatives on your father's side over the years?

DI: In 1984 or '85, I got to go back to Oaxaca for the very first time and meet my dad's relatives. Other than an uncle that was in Sacramento as a foreman of a tomato farm. And other than that, I had not met any of the Ibarra [family]. You know, the roots.

GT: Your father's family was mixed, part Native American and part...well, Spanish?

DI: My father was 97% pure Zapotec Mexican Indian. I know about the 97%, because I had... What was that one program, where you send in a sample and get your DNA? Yeah. And so, that's why I know it's 97% Zapotec Mexican Native Indian.

GT: And he was a native language speaker.

DI: Correct. His first language was the Zapoteco native language.

GT: Spell the tribal name for us, please.

DI: I couldn't spell it for you.

GT: I can't either.

DI: Boy, you just made me sweat. That's the worst thing in the world—I can't spell worth a hoot.

GT: Well, we'll look it up and insert it. I must say, the interview I did with your father was one of the most delightful interviews I've done over the time I've been [doing] this. Tell me a little more about your mother's background. Where did she go for schooling?

DI: Well, what happened was that my mother's parents got divorced when she was a young teenager. She always said that if her mother got remarried, that she would not stay home. So, when her mother got remarried—she called her father Bill Bird. I think that was his name—and I met him once or twice when I was an adult but didn't have any relationship with him at all. But she left, and went with him, and entered foster care, which happened to be one of the families that we were in foster care with—Ila and Cecil Smith.

GT: Threading your youth is an interesting journey, and a bit of a challenge,

DI: A little messy. (laughs)

GT: As we move forward, trying to keep track with you is a bit of a challenge; but you had a sibling, and your sibling was older than you.

DI: Mickey was 11 months older.

GT:: I'm interested in your remembrance of that period—basically, from when your memory develops up into high school, or when you go to Sacramento. And I just want you to share with us how that development played out for you, and some of the people who were helpful, and some of the obstacles you faced.

DI: Well, what I can tell you is that I don't often go back and visit that little boy. (gets emotional). It wasn't fun. But what I recall is this... I know from interviewing people that there was trouble in our home prior to me becoming a year old, and that my mother would end up dropping us off at Ila and Cecil Smith's. And then, weeks would go by, and sometimes months. And when they divorced, Dad had been drafted and gone to Germany. And the real memory that I have—I must have been about two—was not at Ila and Cecil Smith's anymore. That was a voluntary surrendering of us, that I now understand, is how we got there from their daughter. She shared [the story] with me, because I've always wondered, "How did we end up away from our mother?"

Floydeane Matson, who was Ila and Cecil Smith's daughter, shared with me that one time, they went to Salt Lake—I was not yet two years old—to visit Bonnie, an aunt, and Mickey, I and. She knocked on the door, and nobody answered. They heard some babies crying, and so they went in. And Floydeane told me, "I could remember that just like yesterday, because I was so scared for your mother, because my mom was mad." They went in, and nobody was home.

They opened a bedroom door, and there was Mickey playing with some toys, and me crying in a crib. But no one was home. So, they waited for a half hour, or an hour. And Ila Smith angrily got up and said, “Get the boys. You get Mickey, I’ll get David.” And she wrote Bonnie a note: “If you want your boys, I have them. And I’m in Lehi. You come and get them and explain to me where you were.”

Floydeane shared with me, that was the start, and that we were there about two weeks before my mother came to get us. And then, she started dropping us off, and weeks turned into months. And then, she was actually taking care of us until I was about two. My mother and Ila got into an argument—something to do with some health care issues. And mom got angry and called foster care, who came to pick us up, and took us out of the Smith home, which broke their heart. Foster care took us to another home.

I can remember, Greg...it’s really funny how I can only remember being scared. (gets emotional) The first night, I wet my pants. And the new foster care provider got mad at me. I thought I was going to get in real trouble. But he called foster care and said, “Get these boys out of here now.” I thought later, “That can’t be true.” But I recently got the foster care records. I looked it up, and that’s exactly what happened. And the foster care person said that he believed the family in Bountiful objected to having what she referred to as brown babies in their home. And the fact that I wet my pants, or wet the bed, yeah. He said, “Pick them up immediately.”

So, they took us to Midvale, which was the Gomez family. Sally and Joe Gomez. They were living in some railroad housing that was actually four box cars. There was cold running water running to one box car, and two [box cars] were put together—that was the kitchen and the front room. And they had coal stoves in there, and electricity; but there was an outhouse about

ten yards away. And I remember as a child, I was afraid to go in there. And that was the third foster care home.

Now, Greg, I didn't believe that story. No way could they put us into a home that was a box car. But last year, one of the children who was there passed away. And I went to her funeral, and the son of Sally and Joe Gomez was really delighted to see me. And I said, "Were those box cars?" And he said, "Yes, let me show you the pictures. So, he got me some pictures of how they put the two box cars together, and then, the little hallway to connect them. The boys slept in one box car on bunk beds, and the girls slept in another with a divider. And then, the Gomez's room was behind the kitchen, and then, the kitchen. And there was a big, galvanized tub that hung on the wall; and Saturday night, she would heat up the water and pour it in there. And I always told my brother, "I think that's why I'm the darkest of us all because I was the last to take a bath." And I could never see the bottom of the tub of when I got into the water." (laughs)

But the earliest memory is of my mother... You know, I used to go back to this little game I played with myself. I said, "Somehow, I'm going to have to heal this hurt. And nobody's going to help me. I've gotta do it myself." I laid in a quiet place, and I told myself that I wanted to take my mind back to my earliest hurtful memory. And then it popped up. There I was, standing in the doorway with my brother, and I can visualize exactly what we were wearing. And two women were standing in front of me, and the one woman had given us a gift. And then, as she was leaving, I didn't know who she was. But she bent over and hugged me. And I remember how uncomfortable it was because I didn't know her. Why wouldn't she let loose? And I distinctly recall smelling cigarette smoke. And she had real deep red lipstick. And I knew it was my mom. (gets emotional)

GT: Oh wow.

DI: And her sister, Aunt Beth, had come [with her] to see us in foster care. And then, I did not see her again. So, what I used to think of is, “Who drops their kids off, and then doesn’t ever come back?” Then I taught myself to stop the frame of the memory. And then, then I walked in as an adult. And I looked down at that little boy and said, “Hey David, this is me, and I’m you in the future. And I want you to know we’re okay. Everything turned out for a purpose, and there were some benefits from all this experience. But we’re okay. I can’t spend my time with you anymore, because otherwise, those feelings will come back; but I want you to know we’re okay. and you didn’t do anything wrong. (gets emotional) It just happens; life is messy.” So, that’s kind of the exercise that I went over to get through it.

So, we were in the Gomez home for three or four years, until kindergarten or first grade. And then, Mrs. Gomez got sick. They had to find some new place for us. Well, meanwhile, my dad was coming to visit us. Dad didn’t always do the right thing, but he did the best he could, and I always recognized that. So, I kind of created him as my fictional hero—my Superman. You know, he’d bring all the wrong presents. They were always the wrong size. He’d bring ten-speed bicycles when we were, like, five, and we’d have to wait four years before they would work. (laughs) But he said, “Always the best. I want the best for my boys.” And the biggest Easter basket that was meant for a family—he’d bring two. And that was him working through his part of this.

But he always came to see us. And when we moved, Dad wanted to take us, but foster care wouldn’t allow it. [Recently], I went back into the records and validated that “Mr. Ibarra, [my dad], did come in, and he raised hell.” They told him he could not have us, because he was a single man. So, the next week, he came back married and got us. And it lasted ten months.

GT: How old were you at this point?

DI: I had just entered first grade. But [my dad's] marriage didn't last long. It lasted long enough to produce a daughter, and then a second daughter ten months later. So, he ended up creating the second part [of the family]; and then, I remember him taking us to a department store in Sugar House to buy us some Easter clothes. Dad always wanted to buy us nice Easter suits and stuff. I don't know why, because he didn't take us to church or anything; but that was just in his head. He just did that.

So, he took us and told us he was buying us something. And then, all of a sudden, from afar, I saw this a couple—both of them heavysset. The woman screamed, “Cecil!” And she started running, and I thought that she was gonna tackle me. I didn't know this woman. She bear-hugged me, and I can remember those big ham hock arms. She was hugging me, almost choking me, and crying. And I go, “Who is this?” It was Ila and Cecil Smith. Now, I don't believe that was an accident. I think that my dad had set that up, because he knew that he wasn't going to be able to provide a home for us.

The next week, we went to visit them in Provo, UT. My dad said, “We're going to go see them.” And I remember thinking, “Why do we have to go see them?” I knew I didn't fit, but we went. And I can remember sitting under this cherry tree, and my dad was talking to Ila Smith. Cecil was always in the background; Ila Smith was the boss of the house. And they were going back and forth, and we were over there playing with a couple of their other foster kids. And then, Dad called us up, and he told us we were going to stay. I said, “God, Dad. You can't leave me here. What are you thinking? Dad, don't do this.” Dad cried. He said, “I have to. It's going to be the best for you.” Ah man, I was just a mess.

And Dad had a 1960 Thunderbird convertible, and I can remember him driving down the street. I broke loose, and I chased him down. I came around the corner, and there was the

convertible parked. I thought, “Ah, good. He’s waiting for me.” I ran up, and my dad’s head was in his hands like this. They were on the steering wheel. And his head was bowed against the steering wheel. I said, “Dad.” And he looked up, and that was the first time I saw my dad really crying. And I thought to myself, “Oh my hell.” It broke my heart. There he was, my hero, crying like a little baby.

And I remember the first thing I said. I said, “Hey dad, no, no, no, no, no, no. It’s gonna be alright. This is gonna be alright. I’m gonna like it. Don’t cry. Man, wipe those tears up. Put the top down, and soon you’ll have a beautiful woman next to you.” I think I was seven years old. And off I walked back. He said, “I’ll take you.” And I said, “No, no, no. I’m fine. I’ll walk back.” I turned around and walked back, and that started our time at Ila & Cecil Smith’s home at 2491 N 750 E. I have no idea why I just remembered the address of that house where we lived.

(laughs)

GT: So it was a formal foster relationship?

DI: No. Dad made the agreement with them outside of foster care. So, we were in foster care as a state program from the time we were with the Gomez family. The rest was an arrangement. Dad promised them that he’d leave us there, he’d never take us back, and that they were guaranteed they’d get to raise us. And so, then it started.

I went to school. I was very quiet at the time, and I had an emotional thing. I wouldn’t talk. I was seven years old, and the only person I would talk to was Mickey. If somebody asked me a question, I’d whisper to Mickey, Mickey would tell them. So, we went to grade school, and that connection for the first year... I was not doing well, because I wouldn’t talk. And if I got upset sometimes, I would go into the restroom and lock myself into the commode. And they’d have to go get Mickey out of class to come and get me.

And so, Ila and Cecil Smith went to their stake president, Ben E. Lewis. I think Ben Lewis became vice president of Brigham Young University. But he was the stake president and very well thought of. And The Smiths were very LDS-committed, and that's where we started going to the LDS Church. Well, Mr. Lewis, with his connections, said that it would be necessary to separate us so that I could come out of my shell, and so Mickey wouldn't always have the responsibility of being more of a guardian to me, rather than a brother. So, Mickey got into Brigham Young High School, (a school that was 1st through 12th grades) and was just doing very well. He was on the sports teams and later became president of his class.

I was at Joaquin Elementary, and I was not doing well. I think I still have a touch of light reading disabilities. They said it has something to do with dyslexia that wasn't found earlier. So, words sometimes get scrambled for me, particularly if I'm tired. And then, if I'm not tired, it comes back. Sometimes I can spell, sometimes I can't. But it really embarrassed me that I couldn't read very well. As they'd go around the class, and you'd stand, up and you'd have to read, it was just torturous.

But I wasn't doing well. And then, I got to fifth grade, and I can remember the spelling tests. We got 20 words and I'd get, like, 18 or 19 wrong. Kids would laugh at me. But Mr. Francis was more than a teacher. He noticed the emotional difficulties I was having. He'd stay after school and work with me. He said, "I'm going to work with you. We're going to get this right." And then, come Friday, I'd get 18 or 19 words right. But it was memorizing. I never could learn the sound of words. So, I just memorized them. He also introduced me to sports.

But I remember one time, on the first test, everybody was laughing. And Mr. Francis—who was just a hero of mine, Sam Francis at Joaquin Elementary, and taught there forever—stopped everybody and said, "Hey, how many words do you get right on the first test? David has

to learn 18, and you have to learn four. And you want to laugh at him?” And he gave me some confidence. He got me involved in football. I was a tremendous athlete. I was better, faster... And then, something happened about that time that... You know when you’re going to get emotional and you can feel it?

[Even] still, these days, this is a topic that I don’t like to [talk about]. I’ve been asked to speak in public. And now I do, but I don’t know when I’m gonna get caught up on a sentence, and Little Dave comes back to life, and I can feel him. Then I get emotional for a minute, then it’s gone, and it’s fine. But at any rate, I learned that when people laughed at me, it didn’t feel good. But if I knocked them out, they weren’t laughing at me anymore—they were looking at the kid I knocked out. So, I became the most fierce fighter in Provo. Greg. everybody was afraid of me, and I was really good. So, you know when something went wrong...

One time, there was an incident with the bishop’s son, and something happened, and I got called the “N” word, which was common in Provo. There weren’t a lot of kids of color. I remember an incident at church. Something happened, and the bishop got down on me, and his son did something. So, the next day at school, it was easy: I just met him out there on the playground, or on the grass, and beat the hell out of him, and threw him in the dumpster, and told him he couldn’t come out till the bus came. And I was doing stuff like that, constantly trying to protect my own feelings.

Well, at about 14, after being told by the bishop, when I had came by his house to walk to mutual with his daughter Karen, he told her to go into the house. And then he said, “I want to talk to you.” And I said, “Okay, what?” And he said, “You can’t walk my daughter to mutual anymore.” I said, “Why?” And he said, “We believe in the separation of races, and we’re White.” And remember it caught me off guard. And it hurt me. And so, to defend myself, I did

the same thing. I didn't hit him, but I pushed him and told him to (F) off, and I ran home. And I knew I was going to be in trouble for what I had said, and I did push him. I put my hands on him.

GT: So you were 15?

DI: I was 14.

GT: What year was that?

DI: That had to be about 1965. I ran home, went right in my room, and slammed my door. Ila came in, and I was crying. I was mad-crying. That's a different kind of crying than hurt-crying, because you can't hit anybody. (laughs) So, I'm mad-crying, and she came in and said, "What happened?" I told her, and I remember Cecil coming down. He was kind of a mountain man. He said, "What the hell? I haven't seen anything like it in all my born day. Judas Priest." (laughs) I can remember it just like it was yesterday. He was mad. But Ila said, "I'm so sorry." She patted me. And I finally said, "You know Mom, I don't care what the Bishop thinks. But I do want to know what you think. So, tell me. What do you think?" She said, "I support the Bishop. You have to stay with your own." And I said, "I can't be here anymore."

GT: So that was the prompter to...

DI: Yeah. I called my dad and begged him. I said, "You've gotta get me out of here." They were already talking about sending me to the boy's school, because of the trouble I was in. And when I beat the hell out of somebody, the principal, or the bishops—the adults never asked me what the kid said to me, but it was all related to race. I was darker, I didn't fit in. And so, I became a bit of a bully. If anybody looked at me crosswise, I automatically thought they were looking at me because I was dark. So, I'd just reach over and smack them.

I can remember my algebra teacher. Mrs.—I'll leave her name off as well—talking to Ila Smith, because they were neighbors. She came over to the house and said, "He says he wants to

go back to his dad's." I could hear her. "You have to let him go. He's no good. He's not a good person, he's no good. Let him go. You'll be better off." And I said, "Well, I'm either going to get the okay, or I'm leaving." So finally, Dad let us come and visit, and I worked him and worked and worked him and worked him. Finally, he agreed with conditions.

GT: So, both you and Mickey?

DI: Yeah. And meanwhile, Mick was in his school. He was doing good, but he knew I was in trouble and. And so, Dad said "Okay." But then he looked at Mick, and he said, "On one condition: there's no way you guys are splitting up. You've never been split up. You're not splitting up. I remember Mickey saying, "I don't want to go. I like it there. I'm doing well there." But my brother always, sacrificed for me. And I can remember him saying to me, "Well, okay. If you're going then I'm going with you." And he knew I wasn't going to make it in Utah. He knew that I was headed for the boys ranch, and probably prison, had I stayed there. And I believe that would have probably occurred. I was angry.

So finally, after some talks, the Smiths agreed, and they boxed our stuff up in cardboard boxes, shipped it to Sacramento, and put Mickey and I on a Greyhound bus, and off we went to Sacramento when I was 14 years old. But out of the two of us, Mickey and I, both of us have ended up affected by our childhood, it is easy to see. Neither one of us have been successful in marriage. We've not been married for over 15 years, and I know that has something to do with it. The consequence of never having a female figure as a mother, and all that. But I always look at it like, "Well, maybe I can't change that so. I'm going to concentrate on things that I'm good at." And I've got a great life. I've been very successful in many things. And who knows one day I may find happiness in a marriage.

But I think Mickey got hurt more than me. He didn't have the ability to be scared, or to cry. He always had to watch out for how I was feeling—and I took up all that emotional space—because he wasn't a three-year-old. He was a three-year old guardian. He was not like my big brother; he was the person I looked to for comfort when I was scared, or if I'd wet the bed and thought, "What am I going to do with these clothes? How am I going to hide it?" He was the one I went to. He didn't have the freedom to deal with his own feelings.

I think Mickey and I channeled things to find a benefit. There is benefit in what we went through. If I hadn't experienced great sadness, I wouldn't be able to identify and see when someone else is feeling the kind of feelings that I felt. So, I'm always conscious of seeing that; and when I've seen it, I've always tried to fix it. Everybody that knows me says, "David, you give too much away. You're so easy. What's wrong with you?" Well, it's that little boy coming to life and saying, "Hey, if you've got it, give it."

GT: That's where it comes from.

DI: Mickey's the same way, but I think Mick's never been able to have the time to really analyze our childhood the same way as me, and I've always thought he ended up a little bit more hurt than I did.

GT: Tell me about high school in Sacramento.

DI: I get there in 9th grade. And I can remember the first day I was getting ready to go, and I was a tough kid. I thought, "Okay, how am I going to do this?" 'Cause I was so embarrassed. I can't stand new settings, even today—social settings. I'm just a little awkward. I'm uncomfortable until I get to know somebody. I didn't even want to go to receptions. But give me a crowd of hundreds of people in China, or wherever I'm invited to give a keynote speech, and I am so comfortable on stage. But I'm not in a personal setting. So, back to my first day in 9th

grade. I figured, “What am I going to do?” Now, the area we were living in was a tough area. It was South Sacramento.

GT: What part? .

DI: We were living on Florin Road. It’s a mix of Black, Hispanic, Asian, and white kids. So, I said, “Well, who’s the toughest kid?” And I’ll never forget—his last name was Bradley, a big Black kid. I said, “Okay. At lunch time, I’m going to go kick his ass.” I did, and that’s how I made my name. Everybody left me alone. And then, I went on to the football team, and I was the best at what I did. I met the person who ended up being my best friend, Fernando Arroyo. He was the quarterback, and I was the quarterback coming in from Utah. And on the first play, he and I got into a fist fight. So, I became a running back. He became the quarterback because he was clearly a better quarterback than me. And we are best friends to this day.

GT: How hard was it to gain the acceptance of your fellow players in that initial setting?

DI: Well, that happened right away, because of one thing: they recognized I was good. But one of the things that *I* didn’t recognize, that it took me a couple of months to figure out, was that I was no longer unique. Everybody was brown. So, the thing that I was concerned about didn’t exist in Sacramento. It took me a little while to figure that out.

There was still some of the dating thing, where a dad would get upset if... I can remember my first girlfriend, Debbie. Her dad did not like a Mexican kid coming over, but it was not all that big of a deal, or severe. I was in a place where everybody looked like me. And it took a while—frankly, way into my adult years—to get rid of the angry me. I still had that anger pop up, and I was fighting often. It wasn’t until I played football and became Most Valuable Player that things began to smooth out for me. My first year in high school, I was really, really good. I was on basketball team and ran track. But then I had a knee injury, which ended football. I didn’t

do well in school. I graduated with a 1.8 average. I remember my junior year, my dad was always on my case, because Mickey was a straight A student. You know, I used to have to check to see if Mickey's feet even hit the ground. He would float through the air. He was so perfect, according to Dad. And I love my brother, but it was hilarious.

I remember one time I said, "Dad, what do I have to do for you to leave me alone and stop always comparing me to Mickey?" And he said, "Become the junior class president." And I said, "Okay." Mickey had been senior class president. And I said, "So if I become the junior class president, you're going to leave me alone?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Okay, done. I will be the junior class president."

So, I entered politics. I went and got my friends, and I waited for the other two [boys running for office]—thank God they were male—to went into the boy's room. I followed in after them and let them know they weren't going to run anymore. I convinced them in a very David Ibarra-stylish, very direct way, that they weren't going to run. And so, I ran unopposed. I became president of my class. I won. I went home to my Dad, and he was at the kitchen table. I said, "I'm the junior class president. Are you gonna leave me alone?" And Mickey told had him what I did. He said, "You did." And I looked at my brother and said, "Why did you tell Dad that?"

And I remember that I went to my room because I was in trouble again. Dad said to Mick, "What are we going to do?" And Mickey, with his sarcasm, said, "I don't know, Dad. He's just a savage." (laughs) To this day, we laugh about that.

But I did a lot of things like that. And frankly, I try not to miss a high school reunion. I'm going to go to one in October, because Greg, I now spend more of my time apologizing to people for the way I acted. But I was popular, and I did have a lot of friends; but I wish it had been different.

GT: How was your senior year?

DI: my senior year, Mickey was gone. And I can remember Vice President O'Neill calling me into her office and congratulating me for taking all this extra credit, and for having a job-related school credits. I used to get up at six and go to work at the Army depot. And then, I could miss my first class, and show up, and I got credit for it. Well, I got so much credit for it that she asked me to come in to her office in January, and she handed me this paper. And I said, "What's that?" And she said, "You're graduating, get out of here." So, I got an invitation to leave early. (laughs) But they did give me the diploma.

GT: Did it strike you, in the way I'm assuming they meant it, that they were anxious for you to exit?"

DI: Yeah, they wanted me out of there.

GT: For your sake and theirs, probably.

DI: You know, they had every right to want me out of there. I was just doing all kinds of goofy things. I was a hateful young man. Heck, I can remember an algebra teacher kicked me out of class. I said something to him as I exited, and he kicked me in my rear. And I remember falling down the stairs, and I ripped my pants. But most of all what I could see was the kids in the bungalow looking at me laughing. I couldn't have that. So, I walked back into class and said, "You didn't have to kick me. I was already out of class. He said, "Got out." And I said, "It's not that easy now." And bam. I beat the hell out of him.

GT: Really?

DI: And they brought the guards in our school. They had a police officer there all the time, 'cause we had riots, and things of that nature. During Martin Luther King's death, they closed our school down. So, the principal called the police, and they came. They called my dad, and he

came. Dad was really calm. He looked at me, but he was really calm. And they said, “Did you hit your teacher, or not?” I can’t remember his name. I said, “Yeah, I beat the hell out of him. I had him down and I beat the hell out of him. You all know that I did. He kicked me, and I beat the hell out of him.” So the officer said, “Well, stand up.” I said, “Okay.” “Put your hands behind your back. You know the drill.” I had done that before. They’d taken me to jail more than one time.

He handcuffed me and was taking me out. And then my father said, “You take him to jail. He deserves it. You’re taking the teacher to jail too, aren’t you? He’s got to go to jail. You’re taking the teacher to jail for striking my son, aren’t you?” The officer didn’t pause for a bit. He looked at the vice principal and said, “Yes, we will have to take the teacher to jail too.” They said, “Time out,” and they had a little conference. And School Principal said, “Okay Mr. Ibarra.” In those days, you could make a deal. “We’ll let David stay. He’s out of class, but he’s not out of school.” I thought, “Wow, smart!” Then my dad got home, and he said, “You’re lucky I called our attorney first.” But he kept me from going to jail.

GT: That’s amazing.

DI: And then, they assigned me a tutor, which was a guy by the name of Adolphus McGee. I’d flunked the first half of algebra. I couldn’t get it; but Adolphus came in, and he was the assistant football coach and was a professional athlete. He taught me algebra in a minute, and I got an A on the test. So, I got to stay and play football. But that’s the kind of stuff that I had done.

So when it came time to get me out, of course they were gonna send me out. Heck, I was a troubled kid. No doubt about it.

GT: And your next move was...

DI: Well, Mickey had left, and my dad had gotten remarried, and I was 17 1/2. I didn't know what to do. And I couldn't go home because Dad had gotten married, and frankly, I didn't like her. So, I grabbed my stuff and put it in my car. I lived in my car for three weeks, and I was figuring out, "What, am I going to do? I've got to get a job, I've got to do something." I didn't know what to do. Vietnam was raging, and my 18th birthday was coming up in February. So, a friend of mine—my girlfriend's brother was the sergeant for the reserve recruiter. So, I filled out your paperwork to get into the reserves. And my friend got my paperwork on the top of the pile.

So, I was able to get into the Air Force reserves. I went through boot camp in San Antonio, TX. And then, I went to tech school in Wichita Falls, TX. But it gave me six months to kind of figure out what to do. During boot camp I polished shoes for all the rich kids, and I would stand in for them during dorm guard duties—all for a fee. And then, I would send my check home to my girlfriend and let the checks all build up.

When I got home, I had enough money to get an apartment with two of my friends, Wayne Demes and David Hill. Then I thought, "Now I'm going to go to college. And in those days, college was free except for your books. This unique idea of providing junior college education for everybody was already there in the '70s, in Sacramento. So, I entered Sacramento City College, and I applied for a job at Wells Fargo Bank. That was a program that President Nixon had put together for kids that came from humble beginnings. And I remember it was \$1.65 an hour. I thought, "Wow, that would be good!" I ended up doing well and was a teller in the morning. But then, I'd go to class, and I had to take all the classes where I didn't pay attention to while in high school, reading and writing. I didn't get credit for the first five classes, I took in college, I just had to pass them so I could stay.

But I took speed reading, and then I took a class on Mexican history, where I learned about the Zapotec Indians. And afterwards, I really got that sense of pride. These were fierce people and I thought, “That’s me.” And then I applied for a job where I thought, “Oh no. I’m tired at the end of the day, I’ve got no money. I need \$200.00.” It was at Farrells, Ice Cream Parlor Restaurant as a dishwasher. I got the job, and my second week there, in walks Bob Farrell, the owner. He had 25 restaurants at the time. He walked right up to me, he put out his hand for me to shake. But I was cracking up, because I was like, “I’m the dishwasher.” So, I just slapped my hand in his. It was all grimy, and he shook it, and wiped his hand off. He said, “You have the most important job of anybody in this restaurant.” I said, “Sir, I’m the dishwasher.” (laughs) And he said, “No, you don’t get it. Come with me.”

We went to the ice cream parlor seating area. Farrells was popular. There was a line around the building to get in. And just as we walked in, one of the waitresses stood up and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please. Over here, we’ve got Alex!” She grabs Alex, puts him on the chair, and says, “On the beat of the drum, everyone join with me and sing Alex the birthday song!” And away they start singing. And Mr. Farrell said, “Look at Alex. What kind of business are we in, David?” And I said, “We’re in the ice cream business.” He said, “No, no, no. Look at Alex. Look at his grandparents. Look at his parents. Look at him. What kind of business are we in?” I said, “Are we in the memory business?” “Yes. We create memories of families together that will last a lifetime. That grandparent will live in Alex’s mind for the rest of his life.”

And he went back to the dish room, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and said, “Let me show you how to do this right.” He showed me why the spikes on the dish racks, were two inches apart, and how the Hobart machine worked. And he said, “We have real China, and real

silver. It's your job to make sure this plate is clean. See that dried lettuce and this glass? See that lipstick? Make sure that doesn't get in front of Alex's family, because that lipstick's not theirs. If it did, what kind of memory will they have?" I said. "A bad one, Sir." He said, "You're protecting the memory. See you tomorrow at 7:30 AM Saturday. We're having an all-store meeting." I was thinking to myself, "That's my only day off. I've got to go to a meeting?" And in those days, you didn't get paid for the meetings, but you showed up for the meetings.

I went to the meeting, and he opened it by saying, "Everybody stand up." Everybody stood up. "Okay, give us the Farrell's purpose statement." We looked around like, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Let me lead you. 'Ferrells features fabulous food and fantastic fountain fantasies for frolicking, fun-filled, festive families.' Now, say it with me. Say it again. Say it louder. You never open this restaurant unless you get in a circle and you say that. People are walking in expecting to have fun. I want them to leave with a smile, and a little dose of happy-itis. That's our purpose."

Greg, that's the greatest lesson I'd ever had. I thought to myself, "Wow." And as everybody departed, I didn't want to look like a kiss-ass, so I waited till the very end. And I walked up and I said, "Mr. Farrell, can I ask you a question?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "What does it feel like to know what you want?" He smiled and said, "Glorious! Until you know what you want, nothing happens. Hold on." He went out to his car, came back, and he handed me a book. And he said, "I come to this store about every two months. If you read this book three times, I'll spend an hour with you, David, and I'll become your mentor. And I will help you get whatever you want." "Wow, okay."

The book was, *Think and Grow Rich* by Doctor Napoleon Hill. It was hard to read. It was written in 1937. I read it and read it and read it, and I was prepared when Mr. Farrell came back.

I asked him the questions I had. He thanked me, became my mentor, and was my mentor for the rest of his life. We were close. I left college and joined the Farrell's team fulltime. I wanted to belong to something. And for the very first time, I had a family. It wasn't traditional; it was the Farrell family, and I belonged to it. And so, I worked hard, and by the time when I was 28 years old, ten years later, I was the youngest franchise owner in America and bought the Farrells in Salt Lake City, and I came home.

GT: How large was the Farrells in Salt Lake City?

DI: I can remember I had to pay \$5000 a month for the lease payment. It was about 5000 square feet. It was big.

GT: So, that would have been 19...

DI: We opened it in 1972, and I was part of the opening crew. I bought it in 1978, and it was right next to Weinstocks.

GT: I haven't thought about Weinstocks in a long time. (laughs)

DI: Yes. Then, I later I opened three more restaurants in Fashion Place Mall. And man, I was valued at above a \$1,000,000 before I was 30, but I lost it all by the time I was 34.

GT: Let me take you back just a little bit to when you were in high school. What kind of jobs did you have?

DI: Well, President Nixon had some tremendous programs for under-privileged youth, and I was able to get a job at the Sacramento Army Depot just as soon as I turned 16. I worked harder than any of the folks there. I mean they used to take me in the bathroom and say, "Slow down." No one was going to outwork me. But I worked at the army depot all the way through high school. And I got permission to miss one class and show up at 6:00 AM at the army depot. I remember buying a Honda motorcycle, and I had two sets of clothes, because it can rain hard in

Sacramento. I'd have to drive the motorcycle to the army depot. Then, I changed out of the wet clothes into dry clothes. And then, I'd do the same thing at my locker, they gave me at Luther Burbank High School. I could change clothes there as well.

GT: It's a pretty incredible story of hooking up with Mr. Farrell. As I have listened to you in various settings, I can certainly see threads of your philosophy, and management beliefs, and foundation come through from time to time. I find that really interesting. Tell me about being a manager, and a business-owner.

DI: Well, I remember one of the first lessons that I got in my mind was that it took two things to be successful: capital plus talent. Those equal success. And I knew I didn't have any money, because all I had to do was look at my checking account of zero. So, I knew I had to make a name for myself in the talent area. I worked really hard, and by the time I was 19, almost 20, I became a trainer for new store openings for Farrells all across American. And Farrell's leadership was a division of Marriott. They'd say, "Hey, we've got trouble in Hialeah, FL. We need to send somebody. The opening is going all wrong." And I remember somebody saying, "Send that Mexican kid." I can remember most would get offended, but I was delighted. I was noticed.

GT: It was an identifier for you.

DI: Yeah. So, I just kept working and working. Then, I heard them say, "Hey, send that Mexican kid to Atlanta. Send that Mexican kid to Chicago." And then, for the first time, "Hey, send David Ibarra. He always gets it done." I can remember that at the earliest age, I had to be known as a finisher. I had to understand what the purpose was, and what the actions were that would deliver the desired end result, and to "never give up." And there was more than once, Greg, that I was there late at night with tears rolling down my face, wanting to give up. But no

way. I was not giving up. This was my chance, this was my degree. It might be the University of Hard Knocks, but this was where I was going to learn, and this could be my only chance.

So, I was driven by fear until I was able to make that adjustment and say, “Boy, it’s a lot sweeter when you’re driven by joy—the joy of serving, the joy of helping another person grow, the joy of always giving... I’ve always set a block of time that I call “time tithing.” When I see someone like me, and they have enough courage to approach me like I approached Mr. Farrell, then I never say “no.”, I say, “Absolutely. I’ll see you at this time.” And I offer my “Time tithing Block.” of time. This rule helps me pay attention to the other blocks of time, so that I could stay in my zone, in getting things done.

But I’ve always been recognized as one of the best executors and innovators. And I concentrated on it at my earliest memory in defining who I was going to be at Marriott. I became a store manager before I was 20 in one of the toughest places, Cerritos, California. That was a horrible store; but one year later, it was number six in the country in profitability. I became a district manager at 21 years old. I was almost 22. I became a director of training for the western United States. I left Farrells. I thought I was going to be let go. They’d come in and let a whole lot of people go. And I thought, “Well, I was on a plane. They didn’t get me.”

So, I boxed up and went home. And got a call from Dick Ramsey, who was in charge of human resources at Marriott in Washington DC, and he said, “Where are you?” And I said, “I’m at home.” And he said, “Why?” And I said, “Well, I thought you just didn’t see me because I was on a plane.” “No, no, no. You’re staying.” And I said, “No, I already called Arby’s.” They were after me to run 120 stores. Well, Arby’s isn’t so nice, but 120 stores sounded good. So, I said, “I’m leaving.” And he said, “You have to have an exit interview.” And I said, “I understand. When would you like me to have the exit interview?” “Tonight.” I said, “Tonight?”

It's 8:00 PM." "Tonight." "What time?" "11:15." "Where?" "At the airport. Gate such-and-such." "Okay. Who's going to be giving me the exit interview?" "Richard Marriott."

So, he came and had the folder of my dreams. I wanted to have my own business by the time I was 30. And he said to me, "David, I understand that Farrell has really taken a turn for the worst, but your assigned store have always been excellent and profitable. Why?" And I said, "Well, we're not in the restaurant business, we're in the memory business, Sir." And I explained to him the story about Mr. Farrell. And he said, "Will you stay six months? If you stay six months, I tell you what I'll do. I will loan you the money to buy Farrells in Salt Lake City, your hometown." And that's how I got into business.

GT: Is that right?

DI: Mr. Marriott arranged for me to get that loan from Marriott. I had to turn over my 401K, and they loaned me the money to get into business. That was 1978.

GT: So when did when did Marriott acquire Farrells?

DI: They acquired Farrell's in about 1973.

GT: I've spent quite a bit of time with the Marriotts. Well, recently, more with Dick because he comes by. And I worked in a building named Marriott. And it was after—

DI: Well, when he came to give that speech at the Marriott Library, I waited till afterwards, and I walked up to him. And he said, "Yes, I do remember you, and I remember the deal." Mr. Marriott's father took him out of real estate and put him in charge of the restaurant divisions. So, I had the opportunity to get influenced by Richard Marriott and his father.

One time there was a dispute at Torrance, CA. It wasn't my store, but they sent me, because the other district manager, obviously, hadn't done his job. There was going to be a union vote, and Marriott, frankly, felt like, "We treat people well. Why would they want to be

represented by third party?” So, they sent me, and I’ll never forget. I had keys, and I got there early. I was sitting, looking around. And this big, old black car pulls up. And out comes an elder gentleman with an oxygen tank, and another person following him. It was Mr. Marriott Sr. He came in and said, “David, I want to talk to you. What happened to us?” I told him the Farrell story.

And then, he walked around. He looked under the table to see if there was gum. And this guy had to have an oxygen tank, but he still was the most detailed leader I had ever seen. And those things impacted me, Greg. I mean, it was like, “God, you keep sending me these jewels for lessons that are a part of my arsenal today.” Then I got a call. “David?” “Yes?” “Is Mr. Marriott there? Don’t let him drift off.” The guy with him was his physician in case he had a heart attack, ‘cause he’d had a heart attack before.

I was very thankful I had gone with Farrells and gotten my formal education from the Marriott Corporation. Every position that you were promoted to came with a series of educational classes that you took at the Marriott Learning Center in Washington, DC, on Marriott drive.

GT: Yeah, Marriott drive. People spend a lot of time out there waiting to meet with those folks.

DI: Yeah. And what a story! I mean, everybody’s personal stories are so important, but he and his wife, Alice, bought a A&W root beer stand after he returned to D.C. after completing a LDS Mission. And then, think of the Hot Shoppes. Where did that name come from? It was recipes from Latin America. And somebody said, “So, you’re opening a Hot Shoppe?” “Yeah, that’s what I’ll name it, Mr. Marriott said.”

GT: So, Farrells was really an extension of Hot Shoppes?

DI: No. Farrells was a family of Marriott restaurants. Many people don't know this, but in the '70s, Marriott was the third-largest restaurateur in the country. They had Farrells, Bob's Big Boys, Roy Roger Family Restaurants, Phineas, Hot Shoppes, and the in-flight services. And it was Mr. J. Willard Marriott Jr. who decided to sell them, and doubled down in the hotels. And that's how Marriott got out of the restaurant business, and became the largest hotel chain in America.

GT: When did they develop airline catering? Was that in that earlier period?

DI: They did airline catering right after the Hot Shoppes. So, it was A&W, the Hot Shoppes, and then airline catering.

GT: Well, it's an interesting family, and it's fun to hear your side of the Marriott-slash-Farrells story.

DI: It was incredible—very disciplined, and exactly what I needed. You had to wear a white shirt, and my hair could not touch my collar. I remember when one Marriott leader came in, and I was conducting a meeting when there was a break. He said, "Hey, let's go for a ride." And I said, "Okay." Well, then we were pulling into a barber shop. (laughs) I got a little bit trimmed—a little more than I wanted to.

GT: So we've been going a little while. This might be a good place to stop.

DI: Whatever you choose.

GT: We can pick up at a time when we can get together again.

DI: Whenever you choose.

GT: I didn't have to work very hard. (laughs)

DI: (laughs)

GT: It was pretty fluid.

DI: Yeah, it's easy when it's coming from inside. It's in the memories.

GT: I'll look forward to continuing our discussion. And thank you very much for today's interview.

DI: Thank you, I appreciate it.

DAVID IBARRA
Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by
Greg Thompson
8 September 2022

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION
Ibarra Oral History Project

Tape No. U-

American West Center
and
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah

THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID IBARRA ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2022. THE INTERVIEW IS BEING CONDUCTED IN MR. IBARRA'S STUDIO IN SALT LAKE CITY. THE INTERVIEWER IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON.

GT: Good afternoon, and thank you for doing this, David.

DI: Well, it's a pleasure. And good afternoon to you.

GT: This is the second in a continuation of interviews. I would like to take us back into what we were talking about earlier, David, and ask you to give us an overview of relating your definitions of success, and how you gained success. I'm really cued by a recent publication that you wrote, that was published on your experiences, and how to apply your definition of gaining success. And if you could, I'd like to do it again in the setting that you were in, in the company that you were working with, for starters. And then, we'll take a few other leads off that.

DI: What I can best share with you is what I was feeling. When I started at Farrell's Ice Cream Parlor at 18 years old, as a dishwasher, having ended a football career that I was very good at. Prior to injuring my knee, I was headed for college for *sure* to play football. And I knew somebody would figure out how to make me pass, so I could carry the football. I hadn't prepared myself well as a student. I got injured, and I lost my purpose. I had no destination, and I had no backstop, either. I didn't have anybody that was going to help me financially go to college.

GT: Did you think you were capable of playing pro football?

DI: I didn't think that far ahead, but I knew I would play college football at a bigger university. I had always thought it would be at Sacramento State, or the University of Utah. I felt that I was that good. But then, I got injured early and lost my speed. I had two knee surgeries. The first time that I had knee surgery, they flew out a doctor. I can't remember his name—he was a well-known surgeon—that I had been told worked on some S.F. 49ers players to do my

surgery in Sacramento. But the second time, they sent me to the general hospital, so that kind of said my football career was over.

But as I looked at it—and I was already coming out of a situation where I ended up in Sacramento at 14—I wasn't set right. I wasn't in a positive state of mind. I was in a negative state of mind, meaning fear-based. Everything I was doing was out of fear that I wouldn't get another chance, and the fear of what was going to happen to me. Then, all of a sudden, I didn't have a career. Everybody else knew what they wanted to do. And when you think about a teenager, and they don't know what they wants to do... When your 18, and you don't know what you wants to do. Others say, "I'm going to this college to do [this]." And you don't know what you want to do. And you have to take care of your own rent, your own food. You're on your own at 17 ½. – now that is scary.

I had gone into the service for six months as a reservist to kind of give myself a reset; and then, I came back out and thought, "Okay, what am I going to do now? I don't know." So, I went to a junior college and got a job. I was a bank teller in the morning, on a program that President Nixon had created for underprivileged kids like myself, at Wells Fargo Bank. But I still didn't have enough money to pay the rent, and go to school. So, I got a dishwasher job. And what I remember, Greg, is always being afraid, and always hiding it by being mean to anybody who even looked at me wrong. (laughs) "You'd better not!" That was my protection mechanism.

The brain model, understanding of how our brains work, was taught to me in Napoleon Hill's work. However you seed your subconscious... Your subconscious does not know the difference between right or wrong it only job is to make your thoughts come true- Good or bad. So, understanding that I was where I was because of what I thought... That simple thought came

into my head. “Well, then what’s in this book I must master. I’ve just gotta put positive thoughts in my head. I’ve got to become a believer, instead of a disbeliever.”

So, the first step to success was managing my thought. The second was. “What’s my purpose?” You’re not gonna develop your life purpose at 18 years old; so, it became, “Set a goal, or an objective.” Mine was to get through junior college. “So, okay, [I’ll] do that first. And in that experience, I’ll figure out what I want to do.”

The third was, “What skills do I have, and what skills don’t I have?” The one skill I recognized that I really, really had was something that others *talk* about, but I don’t know if they even know what it means. I wasn’t the smartest, as far as formal education, but I understood people, and how things worked, good and bad. And once I understood this brain model, and how to use it, I could always go back and say, “Well, when did you start? Tell me about your thoughts.” And there was always that connection. The thought created the end, so you earned it—good or bad. So, I was in control of earning the good.

Then, once I understood my skills and what I wanted to do, I thought, “So now, I build a curriculum at the junior college based on the skills that I think I have, and some that I could improve on. And the ones that just didn’t interest me, I’m not gonna do any of those.” I did not have I would team up with somebody that had *those* skills. I was going to hone *my* skills natural skills. I had to develop myself as a talent, because success is a combination of capital and talent. I looked at my bank account, and I realized I didn’t have any capital; so, I had to be the talent partner.

At Marriott, I was going to outwork everybody. I would come in early, and I would stay late. They used to [say], “Hey, send that Mexican kid to this location. Send that Mexican kid to

do that. Who's that Mexican kid?" And then one day, I heard them say, "Send David Ibarra."

Now, I had earned my reputation of being a talent member, and my career started to really grow.

But then, the other thing I got was that fourth step: Nothing happens until an action is put into motion, followed by another one, and another one, and another one. Even today, when anything goes wrong in my life... Life's messy, and it's not always going to go right, So, when it doesn't, immediately put an action into motion in one role of your life—family, faith, community, health, or wealth. Put an action into motion, followed by another one, and another one, and another one, and it gets you out of your mess.

And then, for the five things that I believe are core, is that an action put into motion without the proper meaning isn't going to have the impact. So, I had to have a readiness mindset, and I'd do an exercise in my mind, visualizing what it was that I wanted as if I already had it, and the things that I was going to do today. And so, when the action came due, I was executing it not only with the lyrics, but the music as well. So, it had the impact that I wanted, and I started to grow. Those five things created and improved a sixth benefit that I got from the five core principles of success—my personality changed. I was making decisions based on joy instead of fear. The anger left me, and I was smiling a lot. People got introduced to a different David Ibarra.

GT: What's interesting to me is that at the point of recognition, as you were moving forward—and this was over a period of time—you had to be pretty darn sharp to recognize that there was change at each one of these points that you just articulated. From 18 to 22—that's pretty hard to do. You just don't have the bandwidth to work with. I find it very interesting, as you describe it. I'm thinking about what triggers each of those to move forward, and to go. It's your instinct. Obviously, that's part of it, but it's also the experience of having a positive reaction to your actions.

DI: You're certainly right, but there was something that I read in Napoleon Hill's work, and I shaped it simpler, so that I could understand it, and share it with anybody I worked with: Our experience on earth is pretty simple, and it doesn't last long, if you believe you came from somewhere and you're going somewhere. It's probably less than a day trip. Anybody can get through a day. And so, I viewed it as I needed to listen to understand how the game of life was set up. That Dr. Doubt can whisper to you, uninvited, with doubt and fear, and I believe Dr. Doubt is the adversary himself.

If you have a purpose followed by action and you get lost... Before I would go to bed in the form of a prayer, I'd ask for the answer, and it would always come to me, in my subconscious, of what I needed to do next. Now for me, Greg, that was just really simple. I thought, "Well, that's simple. I'm going to get connected with the answers as long as I'm in search of them; and then, it's up to me to reject to reflect, the whispers of Dr. Doubt." I don't have to listen to those whisper. I don't have to have somebody tell me I'm not worthy. I don't have to have somebody whisper in my ear that I don't belong at the table of success. I don't have to have somebody tell me, "Hey, David, you don't dress right because you can't afford to." I can just smile and say, "You know what? I'm going to win because nobody's going to outwork me."

And then, I started talking about my positives, and it always worked out. I became one of the youngest district managers in Farrell's history at 21 years old. I never graduated from college; but what I *did* do was every time they gave me a promotion, and a New job description, I did something odd: I *read* it. (laughs) And everything that I didn't know, I went to a junior college next to me wherever I lived, and I took those classes, whether it was accounting—introductory and intermediate—or contract law. I'm sure I've got enough college classes to

graduate, but they're just not set in a traditional format. I took them based on the skills that I needed. I knew that I could learn anything. The better I got at it, the funner it was.

And I got this idea that in this life, there are two assets: the wisdom and knowledge we learn, that I get to take with me wherever I go, and the things we accumulate. Well, you're the steward of the things you accumulate while you're here, though they get left behind to get used by someone else. When you leave this life, so don't take them too serious. What you should take serious—is the asset of knowledge. And I just really enjoyed change, I've enjoyed challenge, and I've enjoyed anything new, like when our economy is changing, or the way that things are going now, like what we're doing with this post-pandemic stuff.

It's been the best years of our business career, and I think it's because we really invite it. When you look at a temporary failure, or a stop, or adversity, it's just time to adjust. And if you adjust, you'll be the first to the finish line. You get what you earn, and I just love it every day. I love getting up every day. I go through this exercise to be ready every day. I knew I was going to talk to you this morning; so when I got your text, I was already prepared. It's a way of life that most don't lead, but we can all be taught to lead. We don't have to be victims. We can be victors.

GT: One of the points you make in our conversation here, that I've followed for a very, very long time, is that point of role modeling before anything happens. I've used that a lot. If I'm going in to meet the boss, I role model it. I know what I'm going to be told, and I know how I'm going to answer. I did it this morning. I was getting ready in that way for this session. I always do that with this.

But in and looking at myself, and in what you're saying, I find a lot of common ground in what you're describing, and it has helped shape my career. And I love hearing, "I love every

day.” For me it was same. I saw it as a big game. I had to win the game. And I played the game every day. And I had the big goals, and the little goals—

DI: Just go forward. (laughs)

GT: The game came at me in variety of ways, and it was meeting that spread of challenges that made it so exciting.

DI: You know, what’s really interesting in my life is that it really changed in my 40s, when I found my life’s purpose. Before, I had goals, I had objectives. I had to make money, I had to have a career. I wanted to own something. I wanted to be my own business owner. All of that was good, but it wasn’t my life purpose. When I found my life purpose, then this shift from fear to joy really took place. I get up in the morning, and I recite my life purpose.

GT: So, define for us the change that happened at 40.

DI: Well, at 40, I realized that not everybody had learned what I learned. And I as I’ve looked at people, I’ve always been able to feel how others feel when they’re on the outside looking in, or when they’re uncomfortable, or they say, “I wonder if I’m going to make it.” And as an employer, I discovered many adults were struggling to be a provider. So, it just came to me that my life purpose is to work with *employed* adults—not unemployed, but employed adults—who get up on Mondays and go to jobs they don’t like. Suffocating in unhappiness and slowly committing spiritual suicide.

I learned that if I could change that work experience through the employers that I mentor and coach and help them understand that there are two components to success, capital and talent, the development of talent will separate them from the pack, and they will send home a different father, mother, husband, partner, and neighbor. And if we can change two households in the neighborhood, we can change the neighborhood. If we can change two neighborhoods, we can

change the city. If we can change two cities, we can change a state, one person at a time. And that's the responsibility of business owners, to change the life experience.

That is my life purpose. That's why God put me on earth. That's why I experience sadness, so that I can understand what happiness means. That's why I experience fear, so that I can understand joy. And there's an opposite to everything that we do. So, look for the greater benefit as quickly as you can. And it's gonna be the biggest lesson of your life.

GT: So, let's go back and continue walking through those early years, as you were developing this. And then, you were applying it, and you had enormous success. And as I understood from our discussion last time, you got to a point where something changed. What was that?

DI: Well, first of all, I wanted to add something to the enormous success I had in one role. We have five roles in our lives: family, faith, community, health, and wealth. My fear caused me to be all in wealth and career. I was going to provide for my family. My children would always have a great vacation every year. No one was going to look under the Christmas tree and see a little present wrapped in funny paper. Nobody was going to be without a car on their 16th birthday. I went overboard, and in the process, I became unbalanced. So, something suffered. I don't get an A in all the categories of my life. Success is accomplished by a combination of family, faith, community, health and wealth. I definitely get a D or two, and I get a C, and I get an A in some areas. I wouldn't consider myself an enormous success yet, but it's not over.

GT: Have you come across individuals who you thought deserved high grades in all five areas?

DI: No.

GT: I was just thinking I haven't either. I don't think I know anybody. It certainly wouldn't be me.

DI: You know, when we look on Amazon at “life balance,” there are 3000 books available. That tells you that perhaps somebody is selling something that doesn’t exist. What I learned in my 40s and 50s is that I was going to be out of balance, but that I was not to be out of balance in any one of those roles for too long. I could be out of balance to fix one of the other roles, but I shouldn’t stay there very long... And if you ignore one of the five, you better be prepared to pay the penalty of it, because there are rewards, and there are penalties. If you ignore one altogether, which I’ve seen a lot of folks do, you will pay the penalty of bad relationships with your children, with your significant other, or what have you, and that’s not a rich life. Being rich isn’t just about money. I get an A in that. In family, I don’t think I get an A. In faith, I know I don’t get an A. In health, I get an A. In community, I believe I get an A. So, I’ve got a couple of areas that I still need to work on.

GT: So, as you moved forward in the ice cream business, you came back to Salt Lake, and you established the franchises here in this area. What happened there? At some point, there was change.

DI: Well, you know, the positive point of view that I bring in from business is what I learned from Mr. Farrell—and it really served me well—is the power of theming. To start with a belief. “This is what we believe: people are going to walk into Farrells expecting to have a good experience. Farrell’s features fabulous food, and fantastic fountain fantasies for frolicking, fun-filled, festive families. Everyone comes in with a smile, and leaves with a smile, and a little dose of happy-it is.” I’ll remember that till the day I die. (laughs) It was a theme. You look at Chick-fil-A: “We’re going to out-care every.” They do \$8 million per location, while McDonald’s does \$2.2. There’s a reason. Why is it? Because some people theme.

I was big on theming, and talking about the actions, and how they make the end-user feel. I've run into people that worked with me back when they were teenagers, that have shared with me how that impacted them. They were really impacted by me, the way that I was impacted by Mr. Farrell.

So, everything went very well, and I outworked everyone. But then, a disaster occurred. I'm thinking, "Boy, here I am. I'm a millionaire, on paper at least. And it couldn't get any better." And then, they called me into Fashion Place mall's office. I was the vice president of the Merchant Association—of course they're going to call and share with me what plans are before they share it with the rest of the merchants. And they had this model on the table, with a silk scarf over it. And I look at it, and I think it was Walker Theaters, or something like that, that was in the mall, was gone, and it was a food court. And then, I looked to the corner to where my four restaurants were, and they were gone. And they announced to me that none of my leases were going to be renewed, and that they would offer me first spot in the food court. But I wasn't a fast-food operator.

And so, sometimes you find out that your train is on the wrong track, and I couldn't avoid it. It ended up causing me a complete financial collapse. I can remember the day that I bought Farrells, I sat in there all night long, feeling the tables, the chairs, and looking, and walking through it, thinking, "This is mine. I earned it." And I remember the last day, touching things. And having every employee come in and me, telling them, "Take anything you want off the wall, a plaque, or whatever memorabilia. You can line up one at a time and take whatever you want, based on who was with me the longest." And then, I was sitting there, and it was over. And then, I was going back to my house knowing that I was broke. Not even broke—I was *really* broke.

I didn't know there was sub-broke until I found out that I had no money, and I owed the IRS. (laughs) That's sub-broke. I prayed that night and night and said "God, just make me broke. I'll take care of the rest. I don't want to be sub-broke." (laughs) I got home, and I was sitting on a couch, thinking, "Okay, what am I going to do now?" Tears were rolling down my face. And then, I felt a little hand, and it was my step-son, Cassidy, just rubbing my back, for whatever reason. I didn't hear him. He came and sat next to me. And it occurred to me, "Wait a minute. It took me ten years to get into business by myself, and with that wisdom I got, I'll be able to do it in five years now."

So right away, I thought, "What industry needs theming, along with what I learned at Farrell's, and the other restaurants I had? What is the worst customer experience in America, according to surveys that are done on trust level?" It was the car-buying experience. I thought, "So why don't I look at getting in the car-buying experience—new car franchise sales—and teach them how to have the transaction so it feels like a fine dining experience?"

So, I went to work as a salesperson for six months, writing a white paper. And then, I went to a second place for six months, and then finance for six months, and wrote how the car buying experience could be improved. I was getting ready to turn it into a manufacturer. I went to an automobile dealer that I knew, showed it to him, and asked for his suggestions. He said, "There's a franchise that's being terminated, or threatened, in Salt Lake City. Go visit them." So, I went and visited Mike Day at Henry Day Ford. It wasn't a well-run organization, for sure. He was in the hunt for a talent developer, and he gave me the dealership to use as a lab. In short order, we turned it around in a few years. And by the time we were finished, we were showcased as one of the best-run dealerships in all of America.

GT: So, let me take you back a little bit. Did you have thoughts of reestablishing your franchise food outlets in different locations? The way you're describing it, you just walked away from food, period.

DI: Well, I just didn't have the money to do that. In each of the entities, the leasehold improvements, cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. And you don't get any money back for the cement, or the fixtures, the electrical outlets, and all the walls you built. You get used restaurant equipment, which isn't worth very much. I attempted to put together a pub, but I was just too far behind. I couldn't make it work. So, I realized I needed to do something different.

Then Sam Battistone, who founded the Utah Jazz with Hatfield, was in town, and I was selling cars. He walked into a Jaguar dealership I was at, and he said, "Oh Dave, how are you? Are you buying the Jaguar too?" I said, "No, I'm trying to sell you one." And he said, "What happened?" I said, "No, Sam, I'm doing what I want to do." "No, no. What happened?" He said, "I bought a restaurant chain, and I'll gladly use you as a district manager." And I said, "No, I'm doing what I want to do." I'd realized I couldn't leave Utah because I had a young son. He was three years old, so I wasn't gonna leave. I was going to be in the same town, although I wanted to go to Oregon and take that job. (laughs) But then I thought, "No, I'm going to have to do it a different way, because I'm not leaving." And so, I stayed, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. And it's been fun improving automobile dealerships around. At first, we turned Henry Day around, and then, we sold it. Then, I went into business for myself.

I'd go to automobile dealers and tell them, "We're going to change the way you do business." They'd looking at me like I was crazy. But today, it's like every automobile dealer in America is trying to change. Tesla, and others have come along, and the experience is different.

They know they have to change. We're probably the most experienced change merchants for what needs to happen. And so, we're very busy and prosperous.

GT: So, go back to Henry Ford, and walk us through what you did to make that the success that you did.

DI: Well, we had about a 40% increase in business in 30 days. How? Before I took the job, I'd go across the street and park. And I saw that Mr. Day left at 5:45. And that store should have been open till nine. Everybody else left at 6:45. So, I just simply showed up. I didn't leave till 9:00 every night. So, we automatically had about a 40% increase, because we were present. But then, I asked him to take over the new car sales. And I wanted to hire everyone and retrain them.

I hired people wanting to belong to something special, and we did salaries, not commission-based pay. We said, "We're going to pay you for the knowledge that you bring." And it made it easier for people to say "yes" to a career, and to say to their wives, or husbands, that they had a salary—that it wasn't based on commission. Just some of these basic things that I learned at Marriott. We were going to pay based on a balanced scorecard of the voice of the customer, profit, process, and personal development. It was a career, and we did very well at it. And within a few years, it became one of the most profitable and well-run stores in the West. It was a lot of fun, and a lot of hard work.

I never, ever tried to sell things. I tried to develop people who liked other people, and sales just occurred. When you identify a need and satisfy that need, people say "yes." And you make sure that your human contact is excellent all along. People say "yes." So, I took the ten steps of waiting tables and rewrote it into the ten steps of selling a car; but it doesn't have to get controlling you don't to take somebody's keys and not give them back, and all these crazy things

you hear that have occurred. It's listening to a need, showing a vehicle that satisfies the need, and just having a pleasant personality, and things happen.

GT: The auto dealership business finds change pretty hard. So, in this process, I'm assuming that you were saying to yourself, "You know, I could take this show on the road and really spread it.

DI: It was my dream. I had a contract with Mike Day, the son of Henry Day, and it said that I would run the dealership for ten years, until I would trade places with his son, when he turned 28. I trained him to take my place, so I could leave. But if he sold it along the way, I would receive two years of my highest compensation as a severance. He ended up selling it to Ford Motor Company when they tried to get into the retail side of the business. But it got me two year's worth of pay, which seeded the money I needed to go in business.

So, the good Lord was watching out for me, and I got all kinds of great opportunities. I can remember working that first year, where I had only two clients, and then grow to ten. It took forever to get to ten but getting to 100 happened pretty quick after I got to ten. Getting to ten was the hard part. And now, we've worked from Honolulu to Pittsburgh. I was one of the few Americans invited to speak at the Chinese Automobile Dealers Association Convention with 6000 dealers in Chengdu, China. And it was just fun.

When I was standing on the stage, I used to be scared; and then I remember. I say, "You know what? Share your experience. Share the gift of how you feel, and say it in such a way that they know that everything you're sharing with them you have done yourself." There are so many consultants out there that will tell you ideas. There are so many people that write a book who have never run anything, from a Dairy Queen to a 7-Eleven. They write a book, but they've never run anything. I happen to be someone who spends most of my time running things and

improving things. And I like to speak and write books about 30% of the time. It's not about getting a bigger audience. Not for me, but for the purpose of sharing the knowledge of, "How you become the switch-master of your own thoughts and learn to pivot the positive on a dime.

GT: How long were you focusing on the auto industry? When did you start to branch out beyond that?

DI: It was the auto industry until about five years ago. And then, it dawned on me that it wasn't the auto industry that I was in love with, it was the development of people. So, I went back and visited the Napoleon Hill Foundation, and everybody in this building are now Napoleon Hill-certified instructors. I thought, "I'm going to buy a Think and Grow Rich Napoleon Hill license for a country." So, I bought all of Central America. Then, I bought Mexico. Then, I bought China. Then, I bought Singapore. Today, I'm the largest Napoleon Hill seminar leader in the world.

GT: Define for us what Napoleon Hill is.

DI: Well, Napoleon Hill wrote the book, *Think and Grow Rich*. It's a book that I received as a youngster at 18 years old. And think of that kid, scared and somewhat mean, heading nowhere, who gets this book. And executing the book content changed my life. And for me to be the world's largest seminar leader for the knowledge in that book! I became a disciple of Doctor Hill's work. His work was assembled by interviewing 500 of the most successful people in his time, from Henry Ford to Rockefeller to Edison, and on and on. What did they do alike? What did Andrew Carnegie, the first billionaire, do?

And then, to be able to write that in my own words—in my new book that will be out March 4, 2024, *Living Ready: Beyond Thinking and Growing Rich*—and to imagine that this will

be my second book. To think that I could really write a book. I was not a very good reader when I got out of high school. Anything's possible.

So now, I'm in the business of wanting to work with anyone looking for, "How do I get control of my life? And how do I get control of your thoughts? And how do you create your own end?" All of us have the capacity to get whatever we want.

GT: As you're moving forward to the point that you were just defining, talk about meeting the five or six basic elements, in kind of a chronological sense, of the history of David Ibarra, over the last 20 years or so.

DI: Well, in the first part of Doctor Hill's work, he called it "a positive mental attitude," which is his 12th principle. And you know, people will look at me and say, "How do you dare change Doctor Hill's work?" And I'll be so bold to say, "I've done more work with individuals, one-on-one, than probably anyone, in the workplace." And until you manage thought, you don't even start.

So, that became number one. It occurred to me that with everything that happened to me, I could say, "Woe is me, woe is me." Or I could say, "Wait a minute. What was I thinking that caused the seeding of my subconscious to make it so?" And 30 years ago, I visited a doctor in Mexico by the name of Jose Antonio Calzada that was working with terminally-ill people from the U.S... I had an associate that was terminally ill, and he asked me to go with him. During that visit Dr. Calzada drew the mind model that's in my book, the 80%, subconscious and the 15% conscious, and 5% imagination. And he said, "I can help you, but only if you can pivot to positive." And then, I recognized that that's also what Doctor Hill's researcher was saying. But he said it in a way that was simple to understand.

And so, I took the two works together and added my own to make it something everyone could understand in a simple way. In health, if you don't have a positive state, your immune system is going to fight depression, anxiety and fear. It's leaving its post to protect you from a cancerous cell, or what have you. And Dr. Calzada explained, "I need your immune system to assist me in healing you."

So, Principle One was formed, and I went back to everything that had ever happened to me. Every dumb thing I ever did came with a thought that preceded it, and that caused me to do it. And the subconscious does not know the difference between right or wrong—it's only going to do what you tell it to do. So, tell it to do good things. Don't tell it to do bad things.

Then, the second part was when I started shifting to, "I want to have a labor of love. What do I like to do?" My purpose began to develop. So, now that I had the ability to understand the management of my thought, and the power of thought with a purpose, then I had to define what my skills were, instead of what my skills were *not*, so I could create a specialized talent team working together in harmony—two or more brains working together in harmony.

Now we enter the genius zone where great things are happening. No one person has all the skills to get what they want alone. We don't do that well. When I assist corporate, clients I help people build their board of directors. And I ask, "Why do you have this person?" "Well, this person is very successful, that person is very successful." I ask, "In what? Do you think that your board should be a representative of skill sets?" As a matter of fact, on the nameplate of every board member, it ought to have the talent that he's bringing to the table, whether it's financial or marketing, so that when the individual speaks, and you're on that topic, you can let that individual take the lead, instead of everyone talking about every topic, even the ones they are not skilled in. That is a board of directors in harmony. We don't normally do that.

So, that's something that we offer—helping to shape board of directors, helping to shape teams—that I learned by just understanding what I'm good at and what I am not good at. I'm never going to be good at structure. It will look like I'm structured, but I'm a visionary. And sometimes, I would shoot before I aimed. And so, I brought in a NYU graduate that had worked with Andersen consulting in Sweden. And that person is going to make sure that before I do anything, I say, "Wait, research this." And he's going to research it, and I'm going to get some Excel spreadsheets, and I'm going to know whether the idea is sound or not.

I had to learn to respect the skills I didn't have. I didn't have the patience to do what he does, but he probably doesn't have some of the skills that I have either. But together, we make a pretty good team, and we have about four others that joined our team, which makes us really special. Together, we're in that genius zone; although apart, we're pretty ordinary.

GT: I think that what you're implying—and I'm reading between the lines here—is that Corporate America doesn't do that well. And so, therein lies one track of success for you.

DI: Many in Corporate America and government are not connected with the feelings of the human experience. You would think they are, but they're not. And those that get connected to how you feel become like Chick-Fil-A. They dominate. And when you dominate, you have all the people that you're dominating in the other businesses claiming foul. (Laughs) Well, they earned it.

But along the way, I had to learn, "What skills do I have? What don't I have?" But then, the biggest thing I learned was from a mentor I had at Marriott. He said, "Don't forget: you spend about 10% of your time in a plan, 10% of your time organizing it, and 70% executing it and 10% adjusting it. Nothing happens until the action is put into motion." And once I got that

simple formula in my mind and tried it, then every time something went wrong, I'd quickly start executing actions. And everything just has a way of working itself out.

And the icing on the cake was just going through this exercise of getting ready to take action, to throw a fastball. (laughs) I didn't want to lob any of my actions. I wanted it to be precise. But those five things make up the first five chapters of my new book, and they're what I learned over 40 years.

GT: By the way, I've enjoyed this today. It has been fun to listen to you walk through it and describe it as a lifetime career for yourself, essentially. I'm not quite sure where to go from here, but the sense I have for the set of the interviewing process that we're doing... Bring us along on the personal side of your life a little bit. We've moved all the way up to the contemporary of how your career has developed, and the components of that. Let's see if we can fill that out a little bit with [the personal side].

DI: You know, as I look at the start... We all come to Earth, and we don't get to pick the positive or negative setting of the family in which we land. But even though we don't get to choose where we begin, we sure as heck can choose where we end. It took me a while to figure that out, and it took me a while to figure out that everything that happened to me was really a blessing. It was not a sad story. My childhood of being given up at the age of two... That sadness taught me to see the feeling in other people.

I've got this habit, and I normally don't say this publicly, but with most people who know me, if they say something like, "Hey, I like your tie." Or, "I like your watch," chances are I'll just give it to them, because I like it when somebody feels good. If I hadn't experienced *not* having, I wouldn't get the joy of having, and knowing that it doesn't mean much to have something. You can give that away, because it's only a thing.

I got a lot of blessings by problem solving. “How am I going to do this? How am I going to do that?” My heavens, I had a master’s degree in problem solving before I was eight. (laughs) The love of a brother, it’s a different kind of love to me. I don’t have the same kind of love that most people have for their siblings. My brother is connected to me and always will be till the day we leave this earth.

Do I have some things that I wish had been different? I wish I’d been successful in a marriage, and I haven’t been. But I’m not done yet. (laughs) So, I look at all of the things that have happened... I mean, heck. I met Bob Farrell as a dishwasher! I didn’t have a formal education. I had to develop a talent. There’s always a positive to the negative, and you just got to look for its greater benefit.

If my life ends tomorrow, I want everybody to know that I would leave with a smile on my face, and with no regrets. This has been a great experience, and I’m thankful for the things that were set forth early. I didn’t feel like it then. I learned later that there was a reason. I’ve got this ability to see what people are feeling, and it’s almost like I can see a glow on their head of either red light, or green light. Go or stop. If they’re not feeling like they’re included, I can see it. And that’s a gift that has served me well, and I would have never learned it unless I had been on the outside looking in for the first quarter of my life. So, during my last quarter, I want everybody inside; nobody on the outside looking in.

GT: Where do you think it goes from here?

DI: Well, I got this figure in my mind of beyond a million. I want beyond a million people to be exposed [to the idea] that you can become the switch-master of your own thought, and you can learn to manage thoughts, to seed your subconscious, to get what you want. I’m going to keep talking to people, and I hope they talk to 100 people, and that those people talk to 100

people, until we can touch a million people with the principles of living ready. And then, my work will be done.

GT: I think you've given us a very good sense of development; but also, looking back with each stage, and bringing it forward. I don't know what time it is, and I don't know what your schedule is, but this is probably a good stopping point for today. It's been fun.

DI: Yes, I enjoyed it.

GT: Thank you very much.

DAVID IBARRA
Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by
Greg Thompson
7 February 2023

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Ibarra Oral History Project

Tape No. U-

American West Center
and
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah

THE FOLLOWING IS A CONTINUATION OF A SET OF INTERVIEWS WITH DAVID IBARRA BEING CONDUCTED AT HIS STUDIO IN SALT LAKE CITY ON FEBRUARY 7, 2023. THE INTERVIEWER IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON THIS SET OF INTERVIEWS IS BEING CONDUCTED FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH'S J. WILLARD MARRIOTT LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, WHERE IT WILL BE HOUSED AND AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

GT: Good afternoon, David. It's great to be with you. This is a continuation of a set of interviews that you and I have been conducting concerning your life, and we have completed two. We will continue on a chronological development of your life and experiences. So, when we stopped at our last interview, I believe we were talking about you acquiring a license for presenting and producing the Napoleon Hill program. As I recall, you indicated that you had purchased the license for the Americas. That would be the three continents of America, right?

DI: Actually, Mexico, Central America, and the Latin Caribbean, along with China and Singapore.

GT: Okay. I was able to acquire a copy of Hill's work, *Think and Grow Rich*, and I went through it. So, I got a little better idea. What I would like you to do today, as we start off, is to talk about what getting that license mean, and what it gives you the freedom to do and to present. I'm interested in how you turn that into a revenue flow for supporting your enterprises, and what you strive to see people get out of the presentations. And then, as we go along, I want to talk a little more in depth about your own creative ideas, added to what Mr. Napoleon Hill had to offer, and our senior member, Carnegie, in the generational evolution I see you taking.

DI: Right. Well, first of all, I started with *Think and Grow Rich* by Dr. Napoleon Hill as a gift given to me, as I shared earlier, when I was a dishwasher with Farrell's. I read it and read it and

read it every day, until I became a disciple of the work, and in my management style. I used the 17 Science of Success Principles in creating the culture of the businesses that I was responsible to run. And interestingly, the individual that was in charge of the vision of Marriott was Richard Marriott. And so, I had an opportunity to interact with him while I was using these principles to create a different culture in the businesses I was responsible to run.

Now, something interesting happened. We had lower turnover, and we were able to stay closer to the purpose, to the mission of the themed restaurants that we were running. Dr. Hill's principles just became more powerful to me. And when I started running an automobile dealership... Automobile dealerships have a trust level of only 8% in this nation. How in the world could we make that 90%? We started with teaching the principles to every single salesperson that joined us. Every single service advisor who was with us. It took two years, but in the end, we went from 80-unit sales to over 200. And we affected turnover to where it was almost nonexistent.

Again, it worked; but more than that, we helped people gain revenue, meaning they became consistent wage earners that took home the bacon, so to speak, to their individual homes. It changed them. They looked at family, their family role differently. They looked like a different dad when they went home, a different mom when they went home, a different neighbor. And I really began to be a stronger disciple of Dr. Hill's work. And then, finally, when I opened my own business for consulting, insurance, and performance improvement, we decided to certify every single person through the Napoleon Hill Institute.

Now I didn't know what that was about because I was always only a disciple of the work; but I decided to formalize that, and there were three courses. So, they started with an entry course, then a mid-level course, and then a master course: how to train so every single person

that is affiliated with the Ibarra companies is also a certified instructor through the Napoleon Hill Institute.

On the final one, it dawned on me: “Wait a minute. The Napoleon Hill work has been aged. It needs to be modernized, In a speech he gave in Chicago around 1962, Dr. Hill encouraged all the disciples of his work...You hear me say “disciples” of his work, not as the individual Dr. Hill. He was a researcher, the success principles are what he researched. What he found were common things in very successful people—what they actually did. And he created the Science of Success Principles based on his research of 20 years. So, what would happen if I could modernized his work? And I noticed the material at the Institute was very true to Napoleon Hill, but he had encouraged us to keep it modernized, to change the order in which principles are used, if you had the wish to add to them he authorized it. It was his challenge to us to keep it relevant,

GT: As well as a challenge.

DI: Yes. He challenged us. So, I took that challenge, and I decided, “You know what? I’m going to buy Central America.” It was available, so I bought it. Then, the Caribbean and Mexico was available, so I bought those licenses. Then I thought, “I want to be the world’s largest licensee. Hmm, what do I have to buy to do that?” Well, China was available, so I bought China. Also, Singapore, but it’s an English-speaking nation. So, I also bought it. And then, I wrote *Stop Drifting* based on those principles, and we had some good success. We created a leadership course based on it.

And then I thought about the next book and approached the Napoleon Hill Foundation about it. I also talked to them about doing a documentary film: *The Power of Thought: Live Ready*. And that’s out on Amazon Prime right now. And then, I asked them, “How about

allowing me to write the book? I'll write the book and donate all of the royalties to the foundation." It changed my life. But I said, "We're going to modernize it, and we're going to shorten it. It's going to be more like a Tom Blanchard approach. You know, like *The One-minute Manager*. Something that everyday people can understand, in a language they can understand. So, I wrote that book, and it'll be out March 4, 2024. It's finished.

So, we created this business model, and we started it. We have the seminars in Mexico and Central America every month. We're building momentum. But those licenses are live, or in person, which is an old model. We need to move to digital. And hence, I wrote my own book, *Live Ready: Beyond Think and Grow Rich*. And then I thought, "We'll have seminars based on that worldwide, and we won't be restricted in any country, because it will be based on the work that I've done as a disciple of Dr. Hill's Work." And we've created a platform where we own all the streaming code. It is like a streaming platform that will present all of our seminars, our movies, and the other things that we do. What we intend is ten chapters, and we're going to have ten on-line seminars to match each chapter. And we're going to some documentary films based on the Live Ready Principles.

GT: Were there legal issues you were dealing with in the relationship with the Hill Group?

DI: Oh yes, there were. And there were some negotiations at first. They wanted to be live only, and we did it as more of a... You know, people could tune in from a computer, but it was a course that was done live. I think that they are very great people to work with. Don Green is just a disciple of Dr. Hill himself. But basically, when we came right back to what Dr. Hill said and challenged us to do, it was very easy for us to all fall into the idea of embracing something new.

The Napoleon Hill board at the Napoleon Hill Institute has been wonderful to work with. They've contractually entered an agreement with me to do ten documentary films. They are the

approvers of the content to make sure that it stays true to Dr. Hill's principles. They reviewed my book prior to publishing to ensure that it stayed true to Dr. Hill's principles, and it's really been a labor of love. And now that I've made my wealth, I can spend the next 15 years of my life just doing what I love, and that's to teach these principles to everyone that wants to take control of their lives, by taking control of their thought, and pivoting from negative thought to setting their state of mind to a positive joy state. And "like attracts like" with every thought in our minds. It's a pattern, good or bad. You receive penalties, for feat thoughts and rewards for Joy thoughts. And we're the only animal on Earth that has the ability to be in control of our own thought. Man, what a better world it would be if we could have people operating from that positive state.

So, that's my mission. That's my purpose, and that's what I intend to do for the rest of my life.

GT: Your enthusiasm for it is catching. You have been operating in this setting that you have created for how many years now?

DI: Well, we bought the first license about ten years ago, and we've added to them until we became the world's largest. You know how I love saying that? I keep saying it over and over again. Now, we built the platform—meaning the streaming platform—for us to modernize how we deliver knowledge in a mass way. That was quite an investment on our part. And then, we've created a children's program to match what a parent would learn. The next question I'd ask them is, "What would have happened if you'd have been taught this as a three-year old? Or a four-year-old, or five-year-old?" Wow. Well, we have a program that matches our Beyond Think and Grow Rich seminars, and that's called, "Yes, Our Kids Can."

GT: How difficult was that to develop, and what did you do to put it to?

DI: It was incredibly difficult, but it was developed by Lionel Sosa out of San Antonio, who was a Harvard Fellow. And he did a study at Harvard in 2007 and asked, “Why is it that some kids who experience generational poverty break through and become very successful, but the majority don’t?” Only about 12% do. And the studies show that there was a mentor, or a teacher, that helped be the spark plug of the belief, “I can.” So, Lionel came up with the nonprofit, Yes, Our Kids Can.org. He said, “What would happen if we got it into preschools? Into kindergarten, first grade, second and third grade?” And he developed the curriculum. It was his life dream. Lionel wrote the book, *Think and Grow Rich, a Latino Choice*.

So, he is a fellow disciple of Dr. Hill’s work. They had the curriculum in the San Antonio School district with 10,000 kids utilizing it, and moms teaching moms, teachers teaching teachers, superintendents teaching principals how to use it. Then, COVID broke out; they lost their contract, and there was a different Superintendent. Two years went by, and Lionel said, “I’m not going to start from Ground Zero.” So, I was over here, licking my chops. I waited the year and a half that you needed to wait to approach them to buy their assets.

When that time period passed, I approached a Lionel and Kathy Sosa, and I bought the assets from it, and we broke it apart. Instead of having it for schools... I really don’t have the appetite to work through government and school districts. I want to go directly to moms and dads, taught by moms and dads that are certified in the *Beyond Think and Grow Rich* curriculum, And *Yes, Our Kids Can*. So, we broke it apart and bundled it. Our first program coming will be a mobile app platform you can buy on the Apple Store, or Google. And it’s, *Story time with, Senior Lionel*. He’s a cartoon character, and he’s telling ten stories. And guess what stories? How do you live in a positive joy state of mind setting, but in children’s language, which he’d already done.

So, we just broke it apart, put it together in a different way, and added some things to it. The original idea was not mine, although I did sit on their advisory board. We're both Napoleon Hill disciples, and I am delighted to add it to our mix. We can start with age three, and I also want to do it for senior citizens. So, we can say from age three to 10?

GT: It's an interesting program, and an interesting development of the program. Obviously, you were surrounding yourself with people who had the capacity and capability with preschool learning, and post-first-grade learning, I guess. I've hung out in education a bit, with teaching. And I can see the components that you're talking about, and the tenants that have the possibility of change.

DI: Well, you know when you have a mom or a dad that has a child who may be shy, and maybe not believe, and you can have a morning song you do together, and a nightly song. You can do a game together that instills how to become a believer. What better gift for a parent to give their child than the gift of principles guiding principles?

So, it'll be available on an app. At first, I think we're going to target it somewhere around \$7.95 per month, so everybody can afford it. And then, it'll have some bundle add-ons, where you can max out, I think, at about \$10.95 a month. Our aim is to get this in front of 1,000,000 rooftops in a very short period of time.

GT: And your way of reaching out in that for networking will be what?

DI: Well, in every one of our seminars, we're going to talk about when you should start, and we're going to introduce it to children. There's not a parent that doesn't want better for their kids. And we are going to use digital marketing, where those parents looking for the gift of creating character and belief in their children's life's, they're going to see us.

GT: And you're starting that program right away.

DI: Yes. It will be released the same day as my new book — March 4, 2024

GT: I know we probably haven't dived too deeply into this, but it's sure interesting to hear you describe it, and the successes that you've had with it. When I left the last interview, I was thinking quite a bit about, "What *is* this that we talked about?" So, thank you for going through that. Did you say you've been involved 20 years in developing this, or this phase of what we're talking about?

DI: This, I would say, has been ten years. We did this in our spare time because we had our insurance company to run, and we had our tech company to run, and those were the staples of how we made a living. So, I would just simply take the profits from it and invest in stuff like this, because that's what made me happy. It was my hobby, like collecting stamps, or coins, or race cars, or what have you. This is my thing. This is what makes me tick: how you can give somebody the gift of an education that doesn't always have to come in a formal way. It can come in the way that we're offering it, and when it should start. And to me, giving somebody the gift gain belief...there's nothing better.

GT: You have a parallel preschool educational opportunity that I see you following, and picking up to be part of that initiative. It will be fun to come back and talk to you in a few years and see how that has moved forward.

DI: Well, I'll tell you what. I don't keep secrets very well, particularly when I get excited. But one day, I see that we will have *Yes, Our Kids Can* certified preschools that give the gift of creating believers in those children while they're at preschool. Give schools the curriculum to keep a child interested in creating belief systems that will stay with them. Nobody can take it away from them their entire life.

GT: So, let's step forward a bit. On your calling card, you list four organizational units that make up the David Ibarra Companies. Would you walk me through those and tell me what they're about? What your intent is, and how they have developed under your leadership.

DI: Well, we started the Ibarra Business Group in 2000. We created small casualty insurance companies to be owned by automobile dealers individually, and it was a new concept 23 years ago. Instead of buying from an insurance company, why not be your own insurance company? We handled the chartering in the Turks and Caicos islands. Through treaties, they're able to be a reinsurance company. And we do all of the background work, and the structure, to run those—and now, representing Portfolio company—which is the largest reinsurance development company in the nation. We became the third-largest agency within their network. As a matter of fact, during the third week of March, we will be honored in the Bahamas as the third-largest agency. So, that was our bread and butter.

GT: And I see this coming off of your days of working in auto dealerships, and the development of the concepts that you were articulating earlier.

DI: Right. As we moved to eLeaderTech, Ink, the dream for me was, "How do we create giving somebody the path to success?" So, in that company we built software—software that didn't take the place of human interaction, a representative to a guest, but enhances their ability to identify somebody's needs, and satisfy those needs with our human contact. We have a series of six different software programs within that company. Also, inside that company is where we host our leadership course, *How Do You Create a Modern-day Dealership?* And *What is Leadership*, which is the ten rewritten principles of *Think and Grow Rich: The Science of Success* principles by Dr. Napoleon Hill. — *Live Ready* — *Beyond Think and Grow Rich*.

How is it that you on-board? How do you see what some would call an employee who doesn't honor a human being and move that to someone that honors a team member, and is an associate creating talent equal to capital? Because success can only happen with capital and talent properly merged in harmony, that creates the end result of an extraordinary culture, not an ordinary culture. So that's what we housed in eLeader Tech Ink..

The third brand was David Ibarra Enterprises. And since I had all of these automobile contacts, some of them wanted to sell their dealership, or see what the value of their dealership was. And we decided that we would get involved in brokering automobile dealerships. And very secretively, if you wanted to know, I could tell you exactly who, and how much they would buy it for. And then if you decided not to, no harm, no foul. Nobody in your organization would know you considered it, and we moved on.

We have sold approximately 50-plus automobile dealerships as a brokering company, and I kept all my public speaking engagements in that company. We are going to merge this company with eLeaderTech soon. We're going to drop the brokering part. I can't do everything I want to, but I'm going to concentrate on two things. Insurance with the Ibarra Business Group and talent development, and that's going to be in the eLeaderTech side, which we've added the *Think and Grow Rich products, Beyond Think and Grow Rich, and Yes, Our Kids Can*. Our speaking engagements, our book sales, and our movies, which will start the Pivot to Positive Studios for our documentary films along with our software.

The last one is, I got taught early on to work hard and never give up. Do the right thing, and always give back. And one of my promises to myself was when I found the way for me, which wasn't easy, I was going to share that with everybody who would listen. Getting a college education just was not in the cards for me. I didn't have any money. I certainly got a lot of

college credits. I was always attending a community college class in any gap that I had on a job description from Marriott. If it said I had to review contracts, I took contract law. If it said I had to review financials, I took accounting classes until I knew a financial statement, inside and out. Also, human resources.

I took every course on anything I didn't know, and then I worked hard. But it would have been great if I'd have been able to take three years—because it would have only taken me three years—to get a four-year degree, because I work harder than everybody. (laughs) That's kind of a little bit of humor, but it can be done. What if I could have had the baseline of having a college education and only concentrated on that, without having to think of work and surviving? So, I decided to start the Ibarra Foundation in 2004 to offer a college education to kids who were just like me when I was their age. I wasn't well prepared, and I didn't do well in school. Heck, I graduated from high school with a 1.87 average. I just did enough so I could carry the football. And if I could play football then, that's what I was there for.

GT: Life was good.

DI: Life was good. Well, obviously, I found out that was a flawed plan when I couldn't play football anymore. I had to go back and take a lot of classes that I didn't get credits for. But what would happen if we could just give somebody the opportunity to not worry about paying for their education? We've given a lot of scholarships through the University of Utah. With those, we gave four years. You tell me what you want, and we'll prepay it. We'll prepay the junior college. And now, all you need to worry about is doing your part—showing up and getting an education.

We've done that for over 130 students. We've helped them graduate from college, and I'm really proud of that. We've spent... I wouldn't want to tell the dollar amount, but it's getting very close to that big number. And we love it. But that's what we do in the Ibarra Foundation.

Just this morning, I was on Good Things, Utah, where Western Governors University and I announced that, through our foundation, I contributed \$100,000. And Western Governors University matched it to create a \$200,000 fund for Mexican American students preferred, or Latino students. And I wanted this in honor of my father, a migrant worker from Mexico. Our countries butt up right together, and we can do things to improve our relationship. I think that would be a good thing for both America and Mexico.

How do you get the Ibarra Foundation scholarship? It cannot be based on grade point average. I didn't want it to be, "Who was the A student?" I don't care if they're an A student or a C-minus student. Can they show they may have made mistakes in the past, but they have gained the desire to change going forward? Those are the ones that I want to have these scholarships to. I want to be involved with the ones that have decided to start and have a burning desire to change their lives. Those are the ones I want to have the Ibarra Foundation scholarship, because that would be a kid that was just like me.

GT: What are some of the most difficult obstacles you have identified and overcome as you've moved forward through these various levels of activity?

DI: Well, in my own personal life, I think it was believing that success was intended for me. Believing that I deserved not only a place setting at the table of success, but that I deserved the head at the table. I didn't believe that, and sometimes it showed. Once I replaced fear as the motivator of, "I *have* to do it, I have to work harder, I have to be there. I can't go home until this is done, because I'm the one that that my family is depending on." That's not a real joyous experience. When it moved to, "I'm working because I love it, and the joy of what I contribute to the guests I serve, and the associates and team members that work with me on a common goal or purpose," then all of a sudden everything changed.

Our subconscious is set up with beliefs, and frankly, most of them aren't good ones. Rewiring your subconscious to get rid of old settings is not easy; and then, to create patterns that you only replace with *good* direction to your subconscious. Your subconscious does not know the difference between right or wrong, joy or fear. It just does whatever you tell it to do.

That wasn't easy for me, and I found that up until I was... Well, even now sometimes, I will come across a block that is preventing me from going forward. It's a miswiring of disbelief. The reticular activating system of the brain that brings in information—it sorts it. It will only match it to what you already believe. Well, if your belief system is not based on accurate thought, you're not going to go forward. Questioning why you believe something and going down the journey of self-discovery is the greatest journey you can take in your life, but it's sometimes not very pleasant, because you find out that you have some settings that definitely need to be rewired. I certainly had mine.

GT: You mentioned that in your Dr. Napoleon Hill Institute Program, you were interested in developing a subset program for senior citizens. Tell me about that. What are your thoughts?

DI: Well, very specifically, when nature takes something away from us, she replaces it with something of equal or greater value. So, as we lose our youth, she gives us wisdom. In our country, we have this silly belief that when somebody hits 65, they're all washed up. Move aside for somebody else. Well, that's when you know more. Now, I have greater wisdom than I ever had. I will be 71 years old at the end of the month, and I'm gonna put myself on the bench? Hell, no! I'm not putting myself on the bench. I worked my entire life to have this kind of wisdom, and we ought to tap into that wisdom in our senior citizens. I see a connection between a senior citizen and a preschooler. If our senior citizens don't have purpose, how does the fourth quarter

of their life end up? Not very joyous. We can do better than what we're doing right now in our country.

GT: So, being one of those people who just recently retired from a 55-year career, I have thought about this a lot—exactly what you're saying. I have watched a number of other people, and how they have managed that last fourth of their life. Obviously, it quickly becomes very apparent that having the ability to think out beyond the box of what your previous life and career were, and what kinds of involvement, and at what levels of intellectual-ness there may be in it, mean a lot to extending your life. It intrigues me.

I'm really interested, as you talk about this particular program. I'm sure you've experienced this, but because I fit in this category now, everybody asks me, "How's retirement?" And of course, what they're really saying to me is, "How are you enjoying lollygagging?" I don't lollygag—that's not me. [When I worked], I ran 17 - 18 hours a day, usually at least six days a week. And so, shifting, and going through some of what you are describing, myself, has been very interesting, and I'm not fully there yet. But I tell people, "The best thing about retirement is that I don't have to go to the damn meetings." (laughs) I have more time to do what I really want to do.

But it's been an interesting experience, and it's laced with many of the thoughts that you have been talking about. And if my experience is any indication, I think the program you're describing should be a blazing success.

DI: Well, I'll tell you this. I'm going to come back to you and talk about this, because the next book is, *Winning the Fourth Quarter of Your Life*. You know, my father was 97% Zapotec Indian. And the indigenous people that inhabited the Americas had it right. When somebody

became an elder, they were a wise man, and they were sought after by the braves and adolescents becoming men, for the lessons of life. And stories were passed verbally.

GT: And they and they also took care of the earliest generation in front of them.

DI: Yes. And so, as I look at it, we can create *Beyond Think and Grow Rich* certified instructors who could give of their time to junior high to high school students who are learning these processes, and why not give the joy, the love of your life, to somebody younger? Somebody who is just starting, so that they can get what you got, in half the time, or in 1/4th of the time? You know, I was 50 before I really started to feel more joyous state of mind than a fearful state of mind. Wouldn't it be great if you could achieve that by 15? And why not? We have an army of mentors of coaches to inspire, and to create self-mastery in another. We've just got to organize them and utilize it.

GT: Could we hold for just a minute? (recording pauses) So, David, in the midst of all of this. you decided to run for mayor of Salt Lake City three years ago. Is that correct?

DI: This is correct.

GT: I watched you move into that realm of campaigning, and fundraising, and so forth. I'd like for you to tell us about your experience: why you chose to run for mayor at the time you did. That was a very interesting time, nationally and locally. What were your thoughts about how you would motivate your clientele, or the voters, to vote for you?

DI: Well, I was not motivated to run for mayor just for the title. Frankly, I've had bigger titles; I didn't need to be mayor. It certainly wasn't about the income. I would have intended to do that at no cost and donate that income to foundations. I just believed that as we looked at the potential of folks that were running for mayor, that their leadership, capability, knowledge, and

experience was incredibly dim. Most had never led a big initiative, or a large group of associates, and our city showed it.

I believed the homelessness issue had grown to a point that it was going to be the number one thing that would destroy what Salt Lake City had been in 2002, when we had the Winter Olympics and invited the world to come. They left just in disbelief at how clean and safe it was. Someone even referred to it in an article as “The Perry Como City.” I like that. If that’s clean and safe—Perry Como—then cool. We had lost that. I believed we had lost the city. I think that three years later, it’s gotten twice as bad. We have people living in tents and streets. We cleaned up Pioneer Park and spread it throughout every neighborhood within Salt Lake City—certainly the downtown area. Our city isn’t livable, walkable, or safe. I saw that our policing was inefficient, and I knew that with my leadership experience, we could change this in four years

Now, Greg, I had never intended to be a mayor for over four years. This would have been my last year as mayor because I’m not a politician. I wanted to fix it, then turn it over to somebody else to maintain it. I have the things I love to do, but as a give-back, I wanted to offer my talent and experience, to our city that couldn’t afford to hire someone like me. But folks, obviously, didn’t choose that. It was unappetizing to them.

I think during that time, my opponents wanted to turn me into the business guy who did not care about people. I got punished for having achieved too much. My story was, “Oh, boohoo. He was a foster child, he was a dishwasher. No, he’s a narcissist and arrogant.” They were talking about somebody else who was, at the time, President of the United States, and comparing everybody who had succeeded, to him. Well, some things happen for a reason. As it turns out, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I guess I was not supposed to win, because during

that three-year period, I had some successes that, frankly, wouldn't have occurred had I been mayor.

The bad side is had I been mayor, I am sure that we would be on the last part of fixing our unsheltered population, and we wouldn't have allowed tent cities to prop up. We would have created choices and accountability. We would have had a sanctioned encampment area as Ground Zero. We can't tell people how to live, but we can tell them they can't live in your neighborhood, on the public green space in front of your house. We could have had a safer city, and we would have had a different chief of police, for sure. But I didn't win, though it was a good experience.

GT: So, let me back up. Who did you turn to for advice and assistance, as you were thinking about running for mayor? And who did you bring together, as you were working towards announcing that you were going to be running?

DI: The first person I turned to for advice—and it was at the Conference of Mayors—was Mayor Fischer from Louisville, KY. He was the president of the Conference of Mayors. Certainly, I spoke to him. I wanted to find out... You know, when you have a problem, find several people that have solved it. In San Antonio, they've solved the problem of their shelter-resistant population that had tents. You don't see tent cities in San Antonio anymore. They have A Haven for Hope. It's a campus in one place that is just extraordinary. 15,000 people have gone through it to create a better life for themselves. Salt Lake City could, but we didn't.

So, I met with him. And then, I was also in a meeting in Boston with former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa from Los Angeles, who had just lost his bid for Governor of California, when I got the call that my father was sick. And as it turned out, he died a week later, and I needed to come home. But Antonio Villaraigosa was the main person that I was having a

dialogue with about running. I also met with Lionel Sosa out of San Antonio, who was the ad man for Ronald Reagan, and for both of the Bushes.

And then, of course, I definitely leaned on my brother, who basically told me, “Don’t do it.” (laughs) But then, once I did, it he became all in and was the greatest fundraiser that I could have hoped for. But I didn’t have the name recognition, and I didn’t run the campaign that I should have. I should have maintained the way I am. I should have offered me the way I am. I think that sometimes, I tempered myself. That’s not what a campaigner, or a person running for office, should do. You have people making decisions for you. And the only regret I have is that I wasn’t a more “pure” me.

But with all that being said, it was a great experience. I’m glad I offered. Everybody has the right to make their decision, even if they’re wrong. (laughs) I live a great life, and I’m not sorry for that time or the money that I spent. I still have a passion about this city. Recently—and I can tell you this because it won’t be public by the time it comes out—I’ve just created a documentary on savingsaltlakecity.org. I spent \$160,000 of my own money showing the destruction and the deterioration of this city. And frankly, no one should be able to stand up and give themselves an A plus for this city—for showing a city that doesn’t exist, and not showing the problems that Salt Lake City has.

It’s no longer a Perry Como city, for sure. We are now equal now to Seattle and Portland. If you divide those that are shelter-resistant into the population of 194,000 people who are residents of Salt Lake City, we’ve arrived at the level of dysfunction that other cities have. I want to expose that to the entire state of Utah, because *this* is Utah, and Salt Lake is the capital of Utah. Whether Salt Lakers like it or not, they’re a part of Utah, and whether Utah likes it or not, Salt Lake City is a part of Utah. Our capitol city should be safe and walkable. People should

want to raise their kids here. They can't raise their kids here. Businesses are leaving because of the experience of people sleeping in their doorways. I have people right next door every morning that shoot up heroin right in plain sight. That's not Salt Lake City, and I want to expose that to the entire state.

So, we've created and finished four commercials. And I'm not advocating any candidate; this is me exposing what SLC has become—we can't deny it. And the first part of changing something is to admit that we've got a problem. And Houston, we have got a problem! The moment we recognize it and expect solutions from our leadership, meaning the city leadership, we can move forward. I'm still going to be in the area of community service. And while some will say, "That's being very mean of you, David," no. That's being very honest.

GT: Why do you say, "Mean of you, David?"

DI: Some will say I'm beating up on Mayor Mendenhall and Chief Brown; but I would say that leadership is leadership. We've got to call them out on mismanagement, and we definitely have that in our city. All I'm saying to the state of Utah has to expect more out of the leadership to solve this problem. It can be solved. But I decided to do this prior to anyone else announcing they were going to run against her. So, this is not a campaign for another candidate. This is an informational campaign from me to all of Utah that will be aired on commercials every month until the campaign is over. Get this mayor to change and bring forth solutions or elect a different mayor. It doesn't matter which; we've just got to have change.

GT: When you were running for mayor, how did you see the state legislature in the mix?

DI: You know, House speaker Wilson and President Adams have just been great. We talked about homelessness, we talked about solutions, and I believe that it would have been a good working partnership, because I think they would add trust in our ability to do our part. There is

no doubt that there's a disconnect between the legislature and city administration. There's no trust there. And so, there's not a combined program done together, which is going to be necessary.

You know, we look at billions of excess in our state budget; we look the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—they don't have to worry about a budget, so-to-speak. So, the money is available to solve this solution, but the leadership to solve it is not available right now, and we've got to figure that out. Wayne Niederhauser being appointed as the director of homelessness is an A plus, and I can see that most of the solution is probably going to be generated more from the state, and less from the city.

The one thing that we know for sure is that if *we* don't do it ourselves...well, it's just like the inland port. If we didn't turn in that plan—which we didn't—then the state turned it in, and now the inland port is managed by them. It should have been a city program, but it's not. And I think we may find the same thing in having to solve the homeless situation. And what I'm saying, to anyone who will listen, is that if that's what the state needs to do to solve this... People are suffering. People are dying. People are losing their neighborhoods, their businesses. It's time for leaders to stand up, no matter what side they're on.

GT: What do you think about the issue of the state legislature continually reducing the capacity of the city, and its mayoral official, in controlling its own destiny?

DI: Well, I think part of it is out of necessity. In many cases, the city has proved that they were incompetent, in Mayor Biskupski's issue, that the inland port has been a city initiative since 1972. When Speaker Hughes asked for the plan to be turned in, it wasn't. So, he turned one in, and the one he turned in wasn't very advantageous to the city of Salt Lake. But we had our chance. I would like to have seen us hit the restart button; but instead, we spend our time arguing

about what you can't do to us, instead of what we ought to do for the residents of our capitol city, and the state in general.

So, we lost that opportunity, and we continue to lose that opportunity, because some of the elected officials in the city don't want to be part of the state. But we are part of this state. You know, I'm a Democrat. I make no secret about that. I was an appointee of President Clinton to the Air Force Academy Board of Visitors, but I never thought, as a center-left Democrat, I wouldn't be invited to be part of the state Democratic Party. I don't view that I left the party; I think the party left me now. I'm still registered as a Democrat, but frankly, it's a different party than the one I knew.

GT: I think perhaps we'll leave it with that, and we'll talk about picking up tomorrow.

DI: Perfect. Sounds great, thank you.

GT: Thank you very much, David. I enjoyed the time with you.

DAVID IBARRA
Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by
Greg Thompson
8 February 2023

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Ibarra Oral History Project

Tape No. U-

American West Center
and
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Special Collections Department
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THE FOLLOWING IS A CONTINUATION OF A SET OF INTERVIEWS WITH DAVID IBARRA AT HIS STUDIO IN SALT LAKE CITY ABOUT HIS LIFE, HIS LONG, SUCCESSFUL CAREER, AND HIS MANY ACHIEVEMENTS AS AN ENTREPRENEUR, A BUSINESSMAN, AN EDUCATOR, AND A SERVICE-ORIENTED INDIVIDUAL. THE INTERVIEW IS BEING CONDUCTED ON FEBRUARY 8TH, 2023, AND THE INTERVIEWER IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON.

GT: David, you've talked about the [Napoleon Hill] Institute and the programs that you've developed for teaching people how to become motivated, and to motivate themselves, and to become assured of themselves, and ultimately—hopefully—successful. Now, how do you measure success for a client that is taking the class? And how do you measure success for you, the teacher, and for the Institute program?

DI: Well, let me start at the beginning. When I first got involved with the Napoleon Hill Institute—the *Think and Grow Rich* principles, or the *Science of Success* principles—through my mentor Robert E Farrell, I was battling with the fear of poverty, of not having a place to live, not being able to pay for my school, and just always feeling like I was out of breath. How was I going to support myself? I was 17 ½ when I went out on my own. I had no idea what my purpose in life was, or what my occupational pursuit was. Most 18-year-olds right out of high school know where they're going to college, what they're going to do. But me, not knowing was scary.

I chased solving the fear of not having money. I was going to assemble what I considered to be wealth, and that was achieving an amount of money in the bank unencumbered—at least over \$1,000,000, if not more. And I went about the mission to do so, and to me, that meant being successful and rich. And once I achieved it, I was looking at these principles that I profess to be a disciple of, and the fear blocked the joy of what being rich meant. Wealth and being rich are two

different things, and no one can define what rich is for me, for you, or any student taking our class. We have to help them define it for themselves.

So, I went back and looked at this, and there are really five major roles in our lives that I believe in. Family and friends are number one. What is it that you want to experience in that role? What would make you feel rich? Write it down in a paragraph. Then, faith. We come from somewhere, we're going somewhere. What is this life experience about? What is infinite intelligence, whether it's our Heavenly Father, or it's Buddha? What is this all about, and how do you want to live your life in a spiritual way, connected to all things? If you could define that, and achieve that, you would be rich in that category.

The third is community. We all live together. It seems like some people live in a neighborhood and they don't even know any of their neighbor's names. We're losing what it means to be a community. What do you want to contribute? What would your contribution to the community mean to you in a paragraph? And if you could achieve it, you would be rich in that category.

Health. You have nothing if you don't have health. Our body is a mind-body. Whatever happens to the mind affects the body, and whatever happens to the body affects the mind. We're one unit, and since we're going to live in that unit, our spirit, our soul... Boy, you could get so much more if you maintain sound health. So, I help our students and myself define what is sound health in order to be rich in that area. And then, the final one is wealth. With wealth or income, what do you need to sustain yourself, to be happy?

I view those five things as a combination to your safe that, when you get that combination right all five areas, opens up, and that the happiness, consciousness, is inside, and now you're rich. So, it's different for every single person; but it's so important to understand that

this is not a program entirely about money. Having money will not guarantee your happiness. But having none will prove to be very inconvenient. We have found through careers, and work, and working with companies, that if we can help with the other half of the success equation—that capital is the first development of talent, and people are the second—you can achieve whatever it is you want to in your business purpose. But with the talent part, when they achieve the ability to earn what they need, then they're released from the shackles of imprisonment of the fear of, "I'm not gonna be able to bring enough bacon home to the family." And once they do, they can become present in family, friends, faith, community, and sound health. And then, they're living a rich life.

GT: Good. I have one other question. You are presenting your programs around the world, and that implies that you are presenting the programs in the language of that setting, and that geographic location. Tell me how you go about managing that.

DI: Well, first of all, every one of the students start off with wanting to achieve. "How can I become empowered?" And you hear about that empowerment, and somebody can't even explain what it is. Empowerment is the ability to control, to become the switch-master of your own thought and learn to pivot to a positive life setting right now. When you do that through our first course, and you want to get more in depth, you can take the second course, where you can learn these principles. And if you can't explain them in about two minutes, you don't know them.

But the principles—*The Cycle of Success*, or *The Success Principles*—are two parts. The first part is the cycle of success, which is a state of mind. You're in charge. Second, what do you want? What's your purpose? Third, what are your talents? What do you have? What don't you have? No one has all the talents and skills to achieve what they want on their own. How are you going to build a specialized talent team? And for faith-based actions, nothing happens until you

begin to execute the plan. It's just a plan of thought until it becomes executable, and then executed.

And then, five, to execute those in a readiness state of mind. We teach this readiness level so that every action you execute has the meaning that's the cycle of success in Dr. Hill's work. The second five come almost effortlessly when you achieve the first five. The first of the second is a pleasant personality. You're going to have a pleasant personality when you are finished with these. Looking at adversity, it's simply an adjustment. It's a milestone in your life: sound health, utilization of time and money. When you're on target, you utilize your time and your money differently. And the last part of the second five is the promise of building patterns that are successful, and always being rewarded for those patterns. If your patterns are negative, you'll always be penalized for that. It's the law of habits.

I just gave the whole course in about two minutes. If someone can't explain the first five when they're talking about any one of the first five... I want them to summarize all five. You're building it within yourself. You're becoming a disciple of the process yourself, and you're teaching the individual the gift of control of this cycle of success in the first five. And then, they'll get the benefit of the second five. Dr. Hill said something to me that was incredibly powerful, and I believe that Jesus did the same thing: You cannot become a disciple until you teach it to others. So, you go through our course, and then, it's your obligation, to commit to live a life as a disciple of this work and share it with as many people as you can. And it will grow organically on its own. I privately have a million people I want to personally touch, and if I can touch a million people, I believe the ripple effect of that will be a billion people.

GT: Buried in the statement you just made is kind of the answer to my question, and that is that you see the way to deal with language differences across the areas you have responsibility

for, for the franchising of your program, coming with the success of the first group in that language. Let's say it's Chinese spoken in Singapore, and that multiplies itself out so that you don't really import people with language skills. You develop people that have some language skills in the essence of the program.

DI: It's interesting, when we started this program, I kept getting an e-mail from an individual by the name of Alfredo Gonzalez. He wanted to be involved. I said, "I'll contact you when we're ready to open the program." And frankly, so many things just fell through the cracks, but I kept getting contact from him, and I kept getting contact from him. So, he took the course, then the second course, and now he's the director of Mexico. And we believe in every specialized talent team. The promise to each other is the sharing of wealth for everyone.

If we start a class, we believe that 10% of that class will become disciples, and some of them will start in English. But they know Mandarin. So, they're going to go back, and they'll want to be in charge, or they'll go to Colombia, or what have you. So, they can become a director and give the class in that language.

One of the advantages we have in doing it digitally is that we have a studio, and partners, that can put it in any language we wish, so we can switch it over anytime we want, in the written [script], like in our movies. "We're going to have use AI technology as well."

So, there are a lot of ways we can do this, and we don't see ourselves partnering with too many people. I believe that we've got to do this in a more organic way, so we can stay true to our principles. Some people just look at it like we share our revenues. We call it "specialized talent team sharing," and the formula sounds very much like multi-level marketing. But with ours, you earn as long as you're active. You get a certain percentage, of what you sell and or teach.

We believe that we can get somebody to do this part time and maybe make a car payment, or make a house payment. But if they to join us and have this as their career, certainly they can do that, if they want to be wealthy and make X-amount. Will I ever stand on stage and tell you that you need to have a Ferrari next to you, and you need to have that every time? There are several people I see doing that. I look at them as living lost lives.

GT: In your networking capabilities, do you have common meetings for leaders of the programs in each of the geographic locations?

DI: Yes. After you get done with the second level, you can become a host-ambassador. A host-ambassador simply calls people and shares what they went through. And they have a director that brings all of the ambassadors together, and we teach them how to interact. We teach them how to sell our selling points and make their introductions. We also let them know that with 80% of the people they get involved, it's for their *own* growth.

This is not an, "Everybody needs to sell our soap." No, no, no. Who is it you know that needs this gift? When they're ready to receive it, give it to them. Get them enrolled. And yes, you do get a percentage of it. But it's about the gift. If they want to become a disciple, there's only one way. You have to teach it yourself. And in order to teach it yourself, and to become a disciple of the work, there's a teacher's curriculum on how to teach. And if you can't teach, you can't be on stage or on screen

GT: I think that answers my question. So, as a concluding part of this interview series, you've been sharing an awful lot that leads into this question, or perhaps replaces this question, but is there a statement you would like to make, for the purpose of this interview, as you look back over your career, and what it has developed into, as to what it has meant to you? What do you look forward to for yourself, personally?

DI: Well, in looking over my career, Greg, every now and then, when I'm lying in bed prior to going to sleep, I have to pinch myself. You know, I've had met presidents of the United States. I never thought I'd see the day that they'd be seeking my advice. Whether it was about the Air Force Academy, or about their business, their capital, their talent development. And I have 80 to 100 clients all across the country, and not one of them wasn't already a bonafide millionaire before they walked in my office to talked to me. So, I am a coach to what many would consider our nation's elite. And man, this from a kid in foster care, and a dishwasher... Sometimes, I have to pinch myself, that I'm their advisor.

When I ran for mayor, they always referred to me as the Latino business owner. One time, I asked the Salt Lake Tribune, "Why do you do that? You have never asked me about my business." So, they did. They thought my business was about the Latino community, but I reminded them that I have never had a Latino client my entire career, and only one African American client. My clients are mainstream: white, male, mostly. Republican. (laughs) They come into my office and see my pictures with Bill Clinton. Many of them are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. But they see my liquor cabinet and my cigar box. I'm a brown guy. I consider myself a Catholic—although I'm not active in any religion—and a Democrat. And they still do business with me.

But it's been a lot of fun. As far as what I get out of it in my life, it's the ability to serve others in a way that they can also serve others. And to get to a point that a business owner and an individual can understand that the richest things in your life are the people around you... It's not the capital in your bank; it's the talent, and the development of talent. And when you have that reputation, you never have to put up a help wanted sign. I mean, just the sign itself. Or when

somebody comes in and says, “My employees....” I say, “Who? When we don’t understand the power of talent, we’ve got work to do.”

And as far as this piece of work is concerned, where you’ve interviewed me in connection to the Mickey Ibarra papers, I look at the opportunity of all this information being gathered, and saved, and housed in the Marriott library... I got my beginnings from the Marriotts. Richard Marriott is the one who talked to me and convinced me not to quit Marriott—to stay for six months. And he personally loaned me the money to get into business.

GT: Is that right?

DI: So, when I saw him at the library, he walked up and said, “Yes, I remember you.”

GT: I was going to ask you what Richard Marriott contributed in that set of topics you were just mentioning. So, I think you made it pretty clear what he did, and that he is an individual. I’ve worked with him some, and I’ve worked with Bill Jr. I also got to work with Bill Sr., and Allie, and Richard. They’re different, but they have a similar philosophy. And in Richard, you see that sense of how he defines his organization, and how he provides leadership.

DI: He’s a very different leader, for sure. I am told—and I believe—that he’s the most financially successful of all the Marriotts. He’s so unassuming, but he’s very bright. He is the one that orchestrated the sale... He and his brother decided to put everything on the line and sell the Restaurant division. They were the third-largest restauranteurs in the country at the time, behind McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken. They sold everything and doubled down on hotels. And then, they decided to get into the licensing business. They don’t own or run most of their hotels. They license and train for a yearly fee. That’s why there are so many Marriotts in the same town.

GT: And, of course, they've done a great job of layering those properties so they're attractive to a multiple set of individuals in the community.

DI: But getting back to the Mickey Ibarra Papers, having his story in the library... There are tons of stories just like the Mickey Ibarra papers in libraries. And to think of just taking once or twice a month to go to the library... There's knowledge [just] sitting there. I'm so delighted that the University of Utah is housing the Mickey Ibarra papers, and that that knowledge, learned over a lifetime is available, and can be shared in only days and weeks. That's powerful.

GT: Well, thank you so much for sitting for about five or six hours of interview time, David. It's been wonderful to work with you.

DI: Well, thank you. And thank you for the work you do, and to the University of Utah.

GT: Thank you.

FRANCISCO NICOLAS SANTIAGO IBARRA

Washington, D.C.

An Interview by

Gregory C. Thompson

13 December 2011

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Ibarra Oral History Project

U-3164

**American West Center
and**

**J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department**

University of Utah

THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCISCO IBARRA ON DECEMBER 13, 2011. THE INTERVIEWER IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON. THIS IS THE IBARRA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, TAPE No. u-3164.

GCT: The following is an interview with Francis Nicolas Santiago Ibarra.

FI: Francisco.

GCT: Do you go by Francisco?

FI: I go by Francisco, yes.

GCT: All right. We're doing this interview on December 13, 2011 in Washington, D.C., in Francisco's son's office, Mickey Ibarra's offices. We have present with us, in addition to Francisco, we have Mickey and Dale Snyder and I'm Gregory Thompson from the University of Utah conducting the interview.

Francisco, tell me about when were you born?

FI: When was I born?

GCT: Uh-huh.

FI: Well, I was born in 1929, September 10. One of my older brothers claims that I was taken to get registered later. So I might be a few months older or maybe a year or two, I don't know, but that's in that past.

GCT: Okay. But your age is eighty-five now?

FI: No, I'm eighty-three, eighty-four, between eighty-three and eighty-four.

GCT: How many brothers and sisters did you have, Francisco?

FI: I had five brothers.

GCT: No sisters?

FI: No sisters.

GCT: Where were you? Were you the youngest? The middle? In age with your brothers, were you the middle one?

FI: I was the last to the youngest, the next to the youngest.

GCT: Okay. Do you remember your parents? Who were they?

FI: Yes, I do remember my parents.

GCT: And what were their names?

FI: The name was Fatino.

GCT: That was your father?

FI: That was my father.

GCT: Do you remember your mother's names?

FI: My mother's was Agripina.

GCT: How do you spell that?

FI: [spells] Agripina.

GCT: Wonderful name. It's a beautiful name. Did you know your grandparents at all?

FI: Yes, yes, I do remember my grandparents.

GCT: And do you remember their names?

FI: My mother's father, Braulio Ibarra.

GCT: Okay. And his wife, your grandmother?

FI: My grandmother was Andra.

GCT: Then did you know your grandparents on your other side?

FI: My dad's...I don't know at the moment.

GCT: That's all right. Don't worry about it. We'll come back. Do you remember your grandfather's name?

FI: Yeah, Jose.

GCT: And the last name was Ibarra?

FI: No, the last was Santiago.

GCT: Okay. That's where you get the...I understand. I get it. Where were you born in Mexico?

FI: I was born in a village up in the mountains of Sierra Madre in Oaxaca, Mexico.

GCT: Was that mining community?

FI: Oaxaca is the state. Oaxaca is the capital city, the name. The region where I was born was called Sierra Juárez. Sierra Juárez is way up in the Sierra Madres. The reason the name, the name is because one of the presidents of Mexico was born there, that's what they call the whole region now, Sierra Juárez.

GCT: What did your father do?

FI: My father was...it depended upon the seasons. In the wintertime he was a man of agriculture. He had fields of potatoes. He grew potatoes.

GCT: Did he grow anything else, any other crop besides potatoes?

FI: Mostly potatoes. I don't remember any other crop because I was too little. Then in another season he was a lumberjack. He would cut trees down and take them into...

GCT: So he was a logger?

FI: Uh-huh.

GCT: Did he have his own little saw mill?

FI: There was no saw mill, just a hatchet.

GCT: Just by hand. Lots of hard work.

FI: Then other times, I remember we would move down to the valley. We'd come down from the mountains and we'd go to the valley and grew corn. My father, he grew corn.

GCT: In different years?

FI: Uh-huh.

GCT: They'd do it every year?

FI: It was in a different...

GCT: Time.

FI: Yeah. Down in the valley. Anyway, that was mainly what I remember. He may [unclear]. And he had spoke of Zapotecs.

GCT: Oh, did he?

FI: Zapotecs.

GCT: So, Indians. Are you of Indian tradition in your background? Are you part Indian?

FI: Yes.

GCT: You're Zapotec, part Indian as well.

FI: I don't get that.

GCT: In your ancestry, you're part Indian?

FI: No, I'm not part Indian. I'm full-blooded Indian.

GCT: You're full-blooded.

FI: Yeah.

GCT: Oh, my goodness. So, Zapotec. So both your mom and dad were Zapotec?

FI: My father and my mother also, they were Zapotecs. In the state of Oaxaca we have sixteen different tribes; of the sixteen different tribes they speak sixteen different languages, dialect.

GCT: But the Zapotec were probably the largest, were they? Were they the largest tribe of the sixteen?

FI: Zapotec, uh-huh.

GCT: Were the largest tribe of the sixteen?

FI: The largest tribe in Oaxaca is Zapotec, the Mixtec, then Mazatec, then on and on. I don't remember all the others.

GCT: So do you remember growing up, when you got big enough, were you working in the fields helping your dad?

FI: No. As far as I remember it, when I was little we used to get together with the family and my dad had, I was only like four years old, but with the whole family we would be sorting potatoes. There were about five, six different types potatoes. [unclear] It was our job. But then, my father was...it's very hard for me to say that, but my dad was very, how would I say, machista, with my mother and didn't treat her very good. He was basically, you know...

GCT: Was he kind of abusive?

FI: So my grandmother learned about what was happening in the marriage, so she sent my mother's brother to take me, to take my mother away from my father. So then my mom, [unclear], but then before, my grandmother told her to take only one child: "I don't want a bunch of kids here." Only one child come with her. So she picked up the one that was next to me and took her. I was only about four years old, three years old—I was

four years old, and was left there. So my father, right away he already had a girlfriend, I guess, you know. We had another mom. The lady that he began to live with told me to call her mother. Anyway, I remained there when my father—and my stepmother, who did not treat me very good, my step-mother was not very good—[said]: “From now on, you call this lady, Mother.” Anyway, so then I remained there. Then five years later my mother came back from the city, Oaxaca, to kidnap me. Is that what you say? Take me away.

GCT: Uh-huh. Took you away. And did she?

FI: But I remember when I was little, she told me if anything ever happens, I’ll be back to get you. She said, “I will be back, I will be back.” So I had it in my mind.

GCT: So you were nine when she came to get you?

FI: About nine, about nine years old. So then she came over—it’s a long story, but we don’t want to go into it.

GCT: Well, let’s get a little bit of it.

FI: It’s a long story, but anyway, she came back and took me back to the city where she worked [unclear] so I could go to school, a good school. So then she took me to live with my grandmother, her mother, because she was working as a maid, you know, as a maid for a family. That’s the way of the custom in Mexico, right?

GCT: Uh-huh.

FI: Not treated very well over there with my grandmother by my uncles, you know, so I told her that I wanted to go back to my dad. Then she says no. “I’m going to find a way that you can come over and join me and maybe you can go to work for the same family as a houseboy.” So then she did, which made me very happy. Then she took me

over there and I became a houseboy for the family. They told me what my chores, what I had to do. But, anyway, then from there I finished the sixth grade and graduated from the sixth grade. But I have a very, very, very hard time in school because my Spanish was very broken (laughs), so the kids would make fun of me. They made fun of me. But, anyway, eventually I worked very hard during the late nights and I became the number two student of the whole class.

GCT: Did you really?

FI: Anyway, graduated with flying colors and then my mother said, “You know, son, I don’t have any money, I don’t make enough money”—she was making eight pesos a month as a maid. So she said, “I’m going to send you to Mexico City with one of your uncles on your father’s side. He’s a colonel of the army in Mexico, so he can be able to start you in military school.” So I went to Mexico City and spent two years—two or three years, I don’t remember—but anyway, about three years. Then my uncle, for him so convenient, probably, he kept telling me, “There’s no scholarships and openings there, no openings, no openings,” so they had me there as a houseboy. When Mother learned what was happening, she sent one of my uncles that was passing by there from United States, he came over to work, seasonal work, and picked me up and took me to back Oaxaca.

GCT: I see. How old were you then? Were you eleven or twelve?

FI: About fourteen, about thirteen years. So I went back to Oaxaca. And I had to find a way to get educated anyway, so what I did, I got me a job—(laughs) that young—I got me a job as a security guard, a security guard at some construction that was going on there, at the nighttime. Then in the daytime I went to school to become a rural teacher. I was in the second grade to become a teacher because you had to be four years. In the

United States during the Second World War, they needed, they requested millions of workers to pick up the crops. Then I came here.

GCT: Then you came...

FI: A Bracero. Then I came over as a Bracero. Then after that...I want to make it short; it's a long story.

GCT: That's all right. We've got time.

FI: I'm going to break it up.

GCT: How old were you when you came to the United States?

FI: Fifteen years old.

GCT: And they would let you in the program at that age? Or did you have to fudge a little on your age to get into the Bracero program?

FI: Yeah. Oh, yes.

GCT: Did you have to add a year or two to your age to get in?

FI: Oh, it's a long story (laughs). I was too young. I remember you had to be twenty-one or eighteen. The first thing that they would require was to see your hands. If your hands had any callouses, then you were a worker, an agricultural worker, because they just wanted you to go to work. My hands, since I worked, [unclear], they were not good. But then somebody told me, "Oh, no, no, no." He said to me, "All you've got to do is just go to the river and get some sand and rub it and rub it up."

GCT: Rough up your hands.

FI: So once, twice I [unclear], I finally went back over there with my hands.

GCT: You passed the hand test?

FI: Yeah. So then I went over there and that did that. They said okay.

GCT: Where did you come in? Where did you go on the border of Mexico and the United States? Did you go to El Paso?

FI: Which border?

GCT: Which town?

FI: Juárez.

GCT: Juárez.

FI: Yeah, I came through there and they brought us over and I landed up in Spanish Fork.

GCT: In Utah. Did they bring you up by bus? Did they bus you up? Or did you come in a truck? Or how did you come?

FI: We came by train. There were thousands of us. Anyway, we came in ended up in Spanish Fork. But I'm going to make it short, because it's a long, long story.

GCT: Well, don't make it too short here.

So when you get to Spanish Fork, did they have a place for you to stay?

FI: Oh, yes, they had already built up camp, tents. They had tents and they had cots for all of us. Then five o'clock in the morning they woke us up and put us on the trucks and took us away, out to the fields to pick tomatoes and beans and beets, topping beets.

GCT: Was it hard work?

FI: Very hard work.

GCT: Sun. Lots of sun? Hot?

FI: Yeah. So, anyway, then it started snowing. Then we have to move over to southern California, southern California and we worked on something else there.

GCT: Were you still picking crops in southern California?

FI: Yes, uh-huh, they were different, lemons and lettuce and different things. Then I want to make it short because it's a long story. Then after that, eventually I came back to Utah and started to work for Kennecott Copper Corporation, in mines.

GCT: What year was that, Francisco?

FI: That was in 1948.

GCT: Forty-eight. So you had been in the States three years when you started with Kennecott, about three years?

FI: Yeah.

GCT: Where did you live then? Did you live in Bingham?

FI: I lived in Bingham and then my job was the blasting operation, demolition technician. Then the Korean War came along.

GCT: Forty-eight, forty-nine?

FI: Yeah, the Korean War came along and then later on toward the end of the war then I got drafted and went to...

GCT: What year?

FI: Nineteen fifty-three, I believe.

GCT: So, towards the end of the Korean period.

FI: Instead of being sent to Korea, I was sent to different places first. First to Fort Ord, California, where I took my infantry training. Then I went over to Fort Huachuca, and was in the signal corps over there. Then I was shipped over to Germany, Frankfurt, Germany.

GCT: Did it seem real different to you?

FI: (laughs) Yeah. On my way back...

GCT: How long were you in Germany?

FI: It was about a year and a half.

GCT: Did you like it in Germany?

FI: Yes, I did.

GCT: Were you well received by the people? Did you like the people in Germany?

FI: Yeah.

GCT: Friendly people?

FI: Yes, very nice. The Germans were very nice people. Then after that, while I was there I visited Rome and London and went to Paris (laughs).

GCT: You saw Europe.

FI: All over Europe. Anyway, what a difference from the village (laughs).

GCT: Yeah, where you grew up, when you were a young kid.

FI: So then I came back and I got discharged from Camp Chaffee, Arkansas.

GCT: Do you remember what year and month?

FI: When I was discharged?

GCT: Yeah.

FI: I was discharged in 1957.

GCT: So you were four years in the service?

FI: No, it was about three years.

GCT: Two or three years.

FI: I was in Germany and discharged from Camp Chaffee and came back to California. No, I came back to Utah, back to the mining company. Then I kept on

working there in the daytime and in the evening I went to beauty school. I went into cosmetology, not to beauty school.

GCT: What attracted you to that? Why did you choose that school to go to?

FI: What was the attraction?

GCT: Yeah.

FI: My goal was to become a commercial artist because I like to draw and paint. That was my goal to become a commercial artist, but there were no course during the evening, unless I had to go to BYU. But I couldn't because I was working in the daytime. The only thing that was opening, they only courses that were given in Salt Lake was beauty culture and electronics and computer. Since I wasn't educated enough for electronics or computers, I decided that it was more what I like, the cosmetology, beauty culture. So I went through the GI Bill. Through the GI Bill I went and it took me about two years to complete my course.

GCT: Was it hard?

FI: Yeah, it was hard because in beauty culture you have to learn all the diseases of the body and you learn the [unclear] and bones. So, anyway, I worked hard, I worked hard. But while I was working at the mine there, I kept on studying and finally graduated with flying colors from beauty culture.

GCT: What was the name of the school? Do you remember the name of the school you went to or where you took your classes?

FI: Hollywood Beauty College.

GCT: Was it good training?

FI: It was very good training.

GCT: Did you like the creativeness of it? Was it kind of artistic to you?

FI: Was it kind of artistic?

GCT: Yeah.

FI: Yes! It was very...I liked that very much, very, very much I liked that later on. So then I graduated and (laughs) then I started eventually with a friend of mine, we started up our own beauty salon in Murray, Utah.

GCT: Murray?

FI: Murray, Utah. We opened our beauty salon there. I was no longer working for the mining anymore.

GCT: Were there still refineries in Murray? Were there still mining community families?

FI: The community, it (laughs) I don't know how to say this. It's part of Salt Lake City.

GCT: Yeah, I know that. But was it a good mix of people and easy to work with?

FI: Oh, yeah. Fortunately, our location was in a space where they had mostly elite people, so we had very good business.

GCT: Do you remember where your salon was?

FI: Yeah, Frank's [unclear] Beauty Salon.

GCT: Was it on State Street? Or where was it? Do you remember where it was located in Murray? The address?

FI: No, I don't. I would say a short distance from State Street, about a block away.

GCT: East or west? Was it towards the mines?

FI: Uhh...Murray, it's only about ten miles (laughs).

GCT: And pretty small.

FI: Yeah. The mines are about thirty-five miles from Salt Lake. So anyway, then unfortunately I was going through a divorce, so I decided to move back to California. I moved to California and worked for a while until I got my license in California. I got my license in California and I worked for a company there, big company, they had twenty-one hair stylists.

GCT: In Sacramento?

FI: In Sacramento.

GCT: Kind of downtown? Was it in downtown Sacramento?

FI: No, it was Southgate Shopping Center. At that time, they were one of the best shopping centers there. Then they liked my work very much, so they made me a styling director. I was the head of all that.

GCT: Francisco, how much were they paying you when they made you head of the unit?

FI: How much were they paying?

GCT: Yeah.

FI: I don't remember that. It wasn't very much in those days (laughs). Then I remained working there for some time, maybe about a year or two, two years, I guess. Then I opened up my own. I had so many customers, so I decided to go on my own. So I went over there and find out about a new shopping center and talked to the owner and I had to wait about six months before the shopping center was completed. I got the set up I wanted and the electrical work.

GCT: How many chairs did you have? Did you set it up so you had some employees working for you?

FI: Well, let me finish, let me go through. So, anyway, when they were opening up, and the owner liked me very much and he said, “You know, I have a chance to give it to somebody else, but I want to give it to you because I know you’re just starting and I want to help you out.” So, okay. But, fortunately I had it set up large enough in case we would succeed. Fortunately, yes, it did. We started up with three operators. And then we went up to five, then we went to seven, and then we went up to ten. And it was good. Anyway, I remained there for almost thirty years, twenty-eight years. Almost thirty years. Then I became, I don’t know what they call it, [unclear], my bones from my arms they were not working right any longer. So, anyway, there was no way for me to continue so I had to give up and retire.

GCT: Did you own the shop? Was the salon yours?

FI: Yes, uh-huh. The name of the shop was Mona Lisa House of Beauty (laughs). I’d advertise the whole page, Yellow Pages, too.

GCT: What year did you start Mona Lisa?

FI: It was in, I believe, 1965.

GCT: So in 1995 you retired?

FI: Nineteen ninety-four. I retired, yes.

GCT: Did you keep ownership of the beauty salon? Or did you sell it?

FI: I sold it.

GCT: Was it profitable when you sold it? Did you make good money?

FI: I had to undersell it and make a good profit before, but then by the time I got sick and all that, but I still sold it anyway. Then after that, well, I put about three years where I couldn’t move my arms. So I had surgery on my arms.

GCT: Had surgery on your shoulder?

FI: Uh-huh.

GCT: Did the surgery work?

FI: The surgery? Yes. They reason, they told me, that it was no longer functioning right was because I had run out of...oh, how do they call it? You know the juice that we have? The cartilage.

GCT: You'd worn it out?

FI: Worn it out; you worked too hard in your life, he said. So, anyway...

GCT: So you've been retired now about sixteen years?

FI: Yes. Since '94. But then after that, I went to, when I got a little bit better on my arm—I forgot to mention this. The reason mainly that I could no longer work was because my hearing became, you know...I think it happened from the service.

GCT: Oh, did it? Not the mine, but the army?

FI: Yes, the service, yeah. I was probably a disabled man, you know what I mean?

GCT: Yeah.

FI: But then gradually, gradually began to lose my hearing completely. That was why, that was the main reason why I had to retire, because my hearing went completely lost. Then I went to different doctors for my hearing and they couldn't do anything for my hearing. I have two hearing aids and still couldn't hear, so eventually I had to get out. Eventually I got a...

GCT: Implant?

FI: Cochlear implant.

GCT: Yeah.

FI: And then for some reason it didn't work on me. I still can't hear absolutely. I can hear...I don't know how to explain it. I could hear, but I could not understand them. I still can't understand words.

GCT: Hard to understand.

FI: Very, very hard. I'm still having therapy after having the operation about seven years ago.

GCT: You do remarkably well, Francisco. You hear well.

Tell me about, what was it like living in Sacramento? Did you like Sacramento?

FI: Yes, I did.

GCT: Easy to make friends?

FI: Yes, it was easy to make friends.

GCT: When you came out of the army and you went back to Utah, did you first go back to Spanish Fork? Or did you go back directly to the mines, Kennecott?

FI: No, when I went back to Utah I went to the mines.

GCT: To the mines. So you lived in Salt Lake Valley.

FI: Can I have a break now?

GCT: You want a break? Yeah, let's do it.

FI: Yeah.

GCT: Hard work.

[END OF RECORDING SESSION #1]

GCT: Francisco, you mentioned along the way that you got a divorce.

FI: Uh-huh.

GCT: So somewhere you got married. Tell me about where you were and who you married. Did you get married in Utah?

FI: Yes, I did get married in Utah.

GCT: What was the lady's name that you married and where did she live?

FI: The lady's name was...[unclear], but that's a long story.

GCT: But I want it. I want you to talk about it because it helps me give background to Mickey and David. Okay?

FI: So what was that again?

GCT: Who did you marry? And where were you? Were you in Spanish Fork? Were you in Provo? Were you in Salt Lake when you met?

FI: I was in Salt Lake City when I married.

GCT: How did I meet her?

FI: How did I meet her? (laughs) A friend of mine was a professional boxer and I liked boxing, so him and I, we were pretty close and he had a girlfriend by the name of...well, anyway. Beth. Beth was his girlfriend. Beth had a sister and her name was Bonnie. So he said...well, part of it's good, being together, I began to date her sister.

GCT: Her name was Bonnie Bert?

FI: Bonnie Bert, right. Bonnie Bert. Then we got married.

GCT: What year did you get married?

FI: Nineteen fifty.

GCT: Okay. So that was before you went in the army?

FI: Yes, before. So 1950, we got married.

GCT: Where did you live after you got married?

FI: Here in Salt Lake.

GCT: Were you in downtown Salt Lake City?

FI: Right in Salt Lake City.

GCT: So how long before you had your first child?

FI: About 1951.

GCT: That was Mickey?

FI: That was Mickey.

GCT: Nineteen fifty-one.

FI: Mickey, and then...

GCT: When did David come?

FI: He was born in 1952.

GCT: Fifty-two. So they're a year apart?

FI: Yes.

GCT: One year.

FI: Yeah, 1952.

GCT: So 1953 you go into the army, right?

FI: Yeah, by that time my wife and I, we'd already broken up.

GCT: You had separated?

FI: Uh-huh. [unclear] was about six months, nine months.

GCT: Really? So what did you do with those guys? They were young. They were a year and a half and a half a year old, so when you separated, did their mother take them?

FI: What happened to the boys? I wanted custody of them, but they wouldn't give me custody. So anyway, she...I don't know. I guess she was, after that some time she put them with the state because she was planning on getting married again.

GCT: I see. So they went in the state foster program?

FI: Then they were placed in a foster home.

GCT: Do you recall what home they were placed in?

FI: Ila Smith and Cecil Smith.

GCT: Cecil and Ila Smith.

FI: Uh-huh.

GCT: And would you see the boys pretty often in this time?

FI: Yeah. Definitely. I hate to remember [unclear]. I try not to remember those things.

GCT: Hard.

FI: Anyway, I was going to go over and visit them and then when I went in the army, then when I came back, I kept on thinking about a way that I could get my kids back. So what I decided was to get married again. So I did. I got married again.

GCT: What was the lady's name that you married?

FI: The lady's name was Maria Visser.

GCT: Spell that last name.

FI: V-I-S-S-E-R, I guess. She was from a family from Holland. [unclear] But there had been only, they'd been here...they came over here...emigrated from Holland over here.

GCT: Were they LDS?

FI: Yeah. They were sponsored by the church.

GCT: Did that allow you, then, to get custody of your boys after you got married?

FI: Yes. I did get custody of the boys then. That was the reason why I got married (laughs).

GCT: Had you gone to Sacramento yet?

FI: No, I was in Utah. Eventually when my wife began to have her own children and then it wasn't a very good, my marriage wasn't going very good anymore because my, the kids, the other kids and her own kids and my own kids, so then they were placed again in a foster home.

GCT: Still in Utah?

FI: Yeah. And then that's when I got a divorce. That's when I went to California.

GCT: I see.

FI: That's after I broke up with her. Then while I was in California, then for a while time went by, and then I decided to send for my boys, take them away from the place they were, from the foster home.

GCT: How were they doing? Was it hard for them?

FI: They were doing good. According to the reports, you know, they were doing good, but I wanted to have them with me.

GCT: Were they anxious to come? When you went to get them, were they anxious to be with you in California? Did they want to stay in Utah?

FI: I guess they have a hard time to decide because they were already used to it.

GCT: How old were they? Were they in junior high or high school?

FI: Mickey was fourteen, fifteen years old.

GCT: Uh-huh. So he was in high school.

FI: High school, yes.

GCT: And David was in junior high school?

FI: David was, well a year younger. They both came over to California and then David started up in junior high in Sacramento and Mickey went to high school. Burbank High School.

GCT: In Sacramento?

FI: Yes, uh-huh. Then after that...later, Mickey after he graduated, well, I want to say so much, but...

GCT: Say it, say it.

FI: Anyway, Mickey impressed me a lot, well both of them, but Mickey impressed me a lot because when he was in high school, sixteen years old, and he was the president of his class, he was giving all the speeches to the class and, wow, I can never forget that, Mickey being a leader of his class. Then in sports he was extremely good because he was the star on his team.

GCT: Did he play football?

FI: Yeah, football.

GCT: And basketball?

FI: I don't remember the basketball, but football I remember because I used to go to the games over there. "There's another touchdown by Mickey Ibarra." "Another touchdown by Mickey Ibarra." Oh, that speeded up my heart.

GCT: Did he get a scholarship to go to school, to go to college because of football?

FI: I think so. I don't remember. But he went to BYU and he graduated from there. He went to BYU. Then after a while...I'm going to make it short because it's a long story.

GCT: (laughs) We've got lots of time. So Mickey's off to BYU. What happens with David?

FI: Anyway, he came to the BYU and...

GCT: Mickey.

FI: Then he went to service, Vietnam. He was in the Vietnam War.

GCT: Yeah, Vietnam.

FI: He went on to get [unclear] education at BYU on the GI Bill. Then after that, he came back and became a teacher. Then fortunately, he ended up teaching in the same place where I started working, in Spanish Fork.

GCT: Really? In Spanish Fork?

FI: Yeah, he went to teach over there in Spanish Fork.

GCT: Did he teach high school?

FI: Yes, uh-huh. Special education. Anyway, I believe for about six years. Then after that he went to work for the teachers [unclear]. Then after that, then he helped, he was on the campaign for re-election of Bill Clinton. Then after that, he was named director of governmental affairs. He was also a senior advisor of education to the president.

GCT: I see. So he had two roles, two jobs with the President, two assignments.

FI: Yes. So then...that's a long story.

GCT: Talk to me about David. What happens with David? He's in junior high school, okay?

FI: David, uh-huh. Mickey left, and then David became the leader, became the president of his class.

GCT: He did too?

FI: At Burbank High School, he became a leader. Then after that he...

GCT: Was he an athlete, too, Francisco? Was he a good athlete?

FI: Oh, definitely. They had a big discussion about that between brothers. He didn't want to go because he was afraid he would not be as good enough as his brother and it held him back. But Mickey talked him into it, anyway. Here, he started on the team and, boy, he came out.

GCT: Football?

FI: Football, again.

GCT: Did you teach David to box?

FI: No. There was not enough time for me to do that. There was not enough time because I was so busy. Anyway, after that, David went to work for this company, Farrell's, Farrell's Ice Cream; they have a chain over there. Boy, he was very good. He was very good over there. He was so good that they kept him, gave him promotions from ice cream scooper to trainer and then to the manager and then to regional manager. Then to take care of Los Angeles. And then after that he moved to Salt Lake City.

GCT: What brought him to Salt Lake City?

FI: I cannot remember.

GCT: Did he get married?

FI: Yes, he got married.

GCT: To a California girl?

FI: Yes, she was Californian. His wife was studying to be a psychologist. She became a psychologist.

GCT: What was her name?

FI: Alicia.

GCT: What was her maiden name? What was her last name?

FI: Duran [spells]

GCT: She was from Los Angeles?

FI: No, she was from Sacramento. They got married in Sacramento.

GCT: Did they have kids?

FI: No, they didn't have any, didn't have any children. So then they moved to Los Angeles. Then after that they moved to Salt Lake City and then David opened up his own, well, he was managing Farrell's. Then eventually he bought Farrell's.

GCT: He bought it out?

FI: Yeah, he bought out (laughs). He had thirty-two personnel, managers and waitresses and so he, then he also opened up pizza, a pizza parlor.

GCT: What were they called? Do you remember?

FI: I can't remember the name of the pizza. But then he opened up a Mexican restaurant, Numero Uno; that means number one.

GCT: Number one.

FI: Yeah, a Mexican restaurant. That was the name of it.

GCT: Where was it located?

FI: Where was it located? I believe in Murray. I think. I believe so. And then he opened up a night club and brought in entertainers.

GCT: What was it called?

FI: The Meeting Place.

GCT: In Murray?

FI: In Murray, uh-huh. Boy, he got married.

GCT: Again?

FI: Yeah, he got married.

GCT: A second time?

FI: Yeah, second time.

GCT: What was her name?

FI: The name of the second life was Merilee.

GCT: What was her maiden name?

FI: I don't...I forget the name. It seems like it's Dailey.

GCT: Did they have children?

FI: No. She had one child, but they didn't have any children.

GCT: Did you remember what the child's name was?

FI: Yeah. Cassidy Dailey.

GCT: Is that a girl?

FI: Cassidy's a man. You remember the movie?

GCT: Hopalong Cassidy. So now...

FI: Then...on, no. Before that he married another lady by the name of Patty. Pat.

GCT: Do you remember her last name?

FI: I don't remember that name. But, anyway, then he had a child.

GCT: With her? With Patty?

FI: Uh-huh. Nick.

GCT: What year was that? When was Nick born?

FI: I don't remember.

GCT: About how old is Nick now?

FI: He's about twenty-seven, something like that. Nick. That's his son. Then he eventually got divorced with Pat and then married Merilee; that was number three. Then married Merilee. Then after that...

GCT: Is he still married to her?

FI: No. He's...he's in Costa Rica now. He opened up a...

GCT: His public relations business in Salt Lake?

FI: Yeah, Salt Lake.

GCT: His public relations business, lobbying business.

FI: I forgot to tell you that eventually, of all the businesses that he had, the restaurants, the Mexican restaurant, the pizza parlor, and the night club and everything, he went broke. I mean, he got...he started up in cars. Then he got so many and he was very good at that. And then eventually became a general manager of a Ford dealership in Salt Lake City.

GCT: Was that Wiley Ford?

FI: Hmm.

GCT: I can't remember all of the dealers.

Unknown female: There was Wiley. There was one out on...Henry Day?

FI: Henry Day. Yeah. Henry Day Ford. General manager there for ten years. Then he had other things going on, like teaching managing. Eventually he opened up his own

business. Now he has his own building and teaches business manager...no, management consultant. Then he has an outlet in Costa Rica. So now he goes back and forth. Once a month he goes to Costa Rica to take care of his business.

GCT: So are you going to go to Costa Rica for Christmas with him?

FI: No (laughs).

GCT: (laughs)

FI: I'm going to remain in Sacramento, because my other kids are in Sacramento.

GCT: Tell me who are they? What are their names?

FI: One of them lives in Las Vegas. My youngest lives in Las Vegas and his name is Nick. He's a paramedic.

But I forgot to tell you about my other girls, my other daughters here in Salt Lake City. My second wife had three...

GCT: Is this Patty?

FI: No, this is Maria. I had my daughter Rebecca. Rebecca Ibarra, that's her name. She's a teacher in a junior high school or a high school—I don't remember—in Salt Lake City. Also, she has a master's of education.

My other daughter with Maria, she's an accountant by Denver, in Colorado.

My other son, his business, he has a business in carpet.

GCT: Where is he?

FI: In Midvale, Utah.

GCT: What's his business called?

FI: Poor Boys.

GCT: What's your son's name?

FI: Kenny.

GCT: Now let's go back. I want to go back to Mickey. We got David pretty well taken care of.

FI: David, he has a business in Costa Rica, so he goes back and forth. Then he also bought a house up on the hill in Costa Rica. Beautiful, beautiful home up in...

GCT: So you've been there?

FI: Yeah, I go there all the time. I've been going there in February.

GCT: So you like it?

FI: Okay. My other son in Las Vegas. He just had a baby. Then my daughter in San Francisco, she's an attorney, a defense attorney in San Francisco.

GCT: What's her name?

FI: She actually, I call her my daughter, but she actually was my step-daughter. She was only three years old when I married her mother.

GCT: What's her name?

FI: I addressed her always as a daughter. And she works in San Francisco as an attorney, public attorney.

GCT: What's her name, Francisco?

FI: Her name is Norma. Then my other, I also had another one. That son is Carlos. Carlos, he's a computer science engineer.

GCT: Where?

FI: In Sacramento.

GCT: Who does he work for?

FI: He works for the state, the state of California.

GCT: Does he.

So let's talk about Mickey a minute. So Mickey goes to BYU?

FI: Yes.

GCT: Does he graduate from BYU?

FI: He graduated from BYU, and then...

GCT: He went to work.

FI: He went to work as a teacher for six years. Then he went for the [unclear].

GCT: Right. So now when he was teaching, did he get married in that time? In Spanish Fork, did he get married?

FI: Spanish Fork.

GCT: Did he get married?

FI: Marry? Yeah. Let's see (laughs). I'm trying to remember. No, no.

GCT: He got married somewhere there, huh? Do you remember when he first got married?

FI: He got married in 19... Uh... I should have prepared for this (laughs).

GCT: No, no, no. So did he get married in the 1970s?

FI: No. My mind is...no he got married.

GCT: He was out of school when he got married?

FI: No, he got married in Sacramento. He got married in Sacramento in 19...70.
Yeah.

GCT: Did he get married right after high school?

FI: Yes, after high school he got married. Their daughter is twenty-seven years old.

GCT: What was his wife's name?

FI: Norma, yes.

GCT: Do you remember her last name?

FI: No, I don't remember.

GCT: What's his daughter's name?

FI: Lena.

GCT: She lives in California?

FI: No. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona. She married an engineer over there and they have two children. You know, this is all mixed up. I hope we can put it together.

GCT: (laughs) We can. We got it.

FI: Too much.

GCT: Did Mickey get divorced, then?

FI: Yeah, he got divorced from his first wife. Then he got married in Sacramento to Francis. Then he got a divorce, I don't remember, about three years ago, I guess.

GCT: She was with him through the White House years?

FI: Yeah. Anyway, let's get back. It's all mixed up. I hope you can put it together.

GCT: So I've got a question for you. Are you pleased with the way your boys have turned out, David and Mickey?

FI: Oh, yes, uh-huh. Anyway, let's go back to Mickey now. Anyway, then when President Clinton won the election and then he became a director of governmental affairs, anyway, he was in charge of all the governors of the United States. Anyway, I'll never forget that when my first visit to the White House to meet the president. He came over and then him and Al Gore, the vice president, were giving a speech over there for all these congressmen and VIPs, all these politicians, all these, he was giving a speech about

the best [unclear] of the United States and was giving a watch to the best mayors of the United States. After he had finished his speech, then he said, “Now, I’ve got a very important message to make.” He says, “My father happens to be here from Sacramento, visiting my house for the first time. Francisco Ibarra.” So I stood up. Oh! Almost tears came out of my eyes. Then these congressmen and all these people they came over there and shook my hand, walked by and shook my hand. From that village over there to here in the White House. Then he shook my hand and I went over there. Ted Kennedy wanted to meet me, so I went over there. He wanted to meet me and we had a short conversation there. He was interested when I came over to work during the Second World War. Anyway, we had a short conversation. Then he said, I’ll never forget, he was telling me, he said, “Please don’t get lost. The media will be over so we can take a lot of pictures, just you and me.”

GCT: Did you get your picture taken?

FI: Yeah. Ted Kennedy. He was a wonderful man. So we took pictures with Ted Kennedy. Then when it came for me to meet the president, when that was over, then when I came to meet the president, I went over there and then the president says—I’ll never forget what he said—he said, “I’m very proud of your son. He is doing a marvelous work for me. God bless you and your family.” Then he called me “sir.” He shook my hand. [unclear] For me, that was the American dream. The President. Then he stood up and called me sir.

GCT: Did you like Bill Clinton? Was he friendly?

FI: Very friendly, yes.

GCT: Easy to talk to?

FI: Yes.

So that was the president. Then we went over there to meet Al Gore. Then Al Gore, I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Do you know what?" No, he didn't say "do you know what." He said, "The President and I, we are very proud of your son. As a matter of fact, he runs the White House" (laughs). That's Al Gore.

MI: Sounds like Al Gore.

FI: Then after we went to Al Gore, then we went over to...what was Mario Cuomo's son?

GCT: Andrew?

FI: Andrew. Then he says, "Oh, you tell me that Mickey is your son?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You know, to me, you two look more like brothers" (laughs). Andrew Cuomo.

MI: Politicians.

GCT: Oh, yeah.

FI: Andrew Cuomo. He was so nice. Then we went on then, we went over to the Christmas party, I think it was.

MI: Holiday receptions.

FI: Yeah. There was a party over there and I was sitting right next to the Speak of the House. Wow! So all these important people.

GCT: What year was this, Mickey?

MI: That was the year dad came, I believe, for the reception in 1999.

FI: That was my visiting the White House for the first time. Then I went over there a few times. I was joking with him, I said, "Even the dogs know me over there" (laughs).

MI: Two and four-legged (laughs).

GCT: So, Francisco, I'm about out of tape. I'm coming to the end. I want you to tell me, when you look back on your life, are you amazed at it? Are you pleased? Are you excited?

FI: Oh, I'll tell you, it was very exciting, all this success and all my family. I'm so happy, very happy to be around this long to see them. Definitely, definitely. I'm very proud of them.

END OF INTERVIEW

BONNIE SICILIANO

Salt Lake City, Utah

An Interview by

Greg Thompson

29 May 2014

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THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH BONNIE SICILIANO. AND WE ARE CONDUCTING THIS INTERVIEW ON MAY 29TH, IN THE AFTERNOON, IN MRS. SICILIANO'S HOME, IN SALT LAKE CITY. THIS IS GREGORY C. THOMPSON CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW. AND THIS IS PART OF OUR DOCUMENTATION CONCERNING MICKEY IBARRA AND THE IBARRA PROJECT.

GT: Bonnie, tell me, where were you born?

BS: I was born in Salina, Utah.

GT: Oh boy. Do you mind if I ask what year?

BS: 1934.

GT: Okay. And who were your parents?

BS: My mother was Lily Jeffrey. My dad was Earl Bird.

GT: Okay. And, do you know, were they native Utahans, or had they moved?

BS: No, they were native.

GT: Native Utahans. And were their parents immigrants or had moved to the state of Utah? So it'd be your grandparents.

BS: I don't know. But I know that originally they were from England. But I don't know that my grandparents were.

GT: Great. So did you grow up in Salina?

BS: I was there until I was seven.

GT: So had you started the first grade by then?

BS: Yes, I'd done kindergarten and the first grade. We moved to Salt Lake and I went into the second grade.

GT: I see. Do you remember what school you went into?

BS: No, but it's torn down.

[both laugh]

GT: Gone anyway. And what did your father do?

BS: He was a sheep shearer.

GT: Really? Oh my goodness.

BS: He traveled.

GT: So he was, in the spring and the fall, he would be traveling quite a bit.

BS: Yeah, he was gone most of the time.

GT: Was he?

BS: Uh-huh.

GT: And did he travel through Utah, Nevada, and Idaho?

BS: Wherever there were sheep I'd imagine. I don't know. He was gone a lot. And all these big promises, you know, "When I get back I'm gonna buy you a bushel basket of new dresses and a bushel basket"—you know one of those. Everything was "a bushel basket."

GT: And did it happen?

BS: No. My mother used to say, "Don't listen to him. You know he's never going to do that."

GT: So, we were still in the Depression when your family moved to Salt Lake City. And your father continued to be in this sheep shearing—

BS: When we moved, my mother and dad divorced shortly after, I don't know what year, but when we moved to Salt Lake.

GT: So you were mostly raised by your mom?

BS: Um-hm.

GT: And did your mom work?

BS: Yes.

GT: What did she do?

BS: The earliest thing that I remember, when we were in Salina she cleaned houses and wallpapered for people. And when we moved to Salt Lake, she worked at Sweet's Candy. And then after that she worked for Continental Trailways.

GT: Was she a ticket master.

BS: She cleaned the buses.

GT: She cleaned the buses, oh.

BS: She worked hard her whole life.

GT: And did she do that for a number of years?

BS: Years.

GT: So, you started into the second grade in Salt Lake City. And did you go through the same elementary school through the sixth grade?

BS: No.

GT: You moved around?

BS: We moved around. We lived in an apartment when we first got here. And then probably a year, I think I was only in that first school just one year. And then we moved over to third north and sixth west area. My mother bought a home.

GT: And the school there that you attended might be the Northwest Elementary School, or did it have another name? Do you recall?

BS: I don't.

GT: There's an elementary school that's located close to that address that I think is a rebuilt version of an earlier school there. I don't know if there was probably another elementary school in that same area. But West High was in place in your memory there, because that would've been on third west.

BS: Yeah, we moved around quite a bit. My mother bought homes that needed fixing up. She fixed them up herself.

GT: Is that right? So she was a carpenter and an electrician and a plumber?

BS: And worked a full-time job. And then a lot of times taking in ironings.

GT: My goodness. So you remember your youth as probably a fairly difficult time. Some financial challenges?

BS: Well, no.

GT: Your mom was really good—

BS: Well, yeah, my dad never paid his child support, unless he got caught. And then he'd always have enough money to pay it right then. And it wasn't the fact that he didn't have it, he just didn't do it. And I idolized him. All three of us girls did. He had no boys.

GT: And how many siblings did you have?

BS: Three sisters.

GT: And were they older, younger?

BS: Two older, one younger.

GT: Do you recall their names?

BS: The oldest one was [Faye]. The youngest one was Carol. Both of those have passed. And Beth is the one that's just two years older than me.

GT: And she's still living?

BS: Yeah. She lives in Las Vegas.

GT: So, do you recall where you went to junior high school?

BS: No, but it was when we lived on third north and sixth west.

GT: It was there in that area. And then did you go on to West High?

BS: No. We were over and I went to South High.

GT: You went to South High. And so you must've lived—did you live east or west of State Street?

BS: East. We lived between fourth and fifth south on Garfield Avenue.

GT: Okay. Not too far away. Do you have fond memories of your high school experience?

BS: No, not really. It was just something you had to do, so you did it.

GT: Were you also working by that time?

BS: No.

GT: And what about your sisters, did they?

BS: My oldest sister got married, probably when she was 16 or something.

GT: Did she graduate from school?

BS: I think she did. I don't know. I didn't, and I know my other sister didn't. I don't know if my youngest one did or not.

GT: And you didn't?

BS: No.

GT: When did you leave high school?

BS: When I was in tenth grade.

GT: In the tenth grade. And did you leave that to go to work, to get married, or what prompted leaving school?

BS: Well, I was in foster care.

GT: And how long had you been in foster care?

BS: I went in foster care when I was 11. So I was in foster care in Lehi, Utah.

GT: In Lehi, Utah. And that was state supported foster care?

BS: No. When my mother and dad got divorced, they asked each one of us who we wanted to live with. So my sister's, of course, wanted to stay with my mother. I wanted to stay with my dad. And so, anyway, we had to go to court because he had no way of raising me 'cause he was gone all the time. So, he said, well, his idea was that he'd put me in boarding school. And the judge then, Judge Clark I think his name was, he said, "I think it'd be better if you go into foster care."

GT: Was it church oriented foster care?

BS: No it was state, the foster homes. My dad had to pay for it, and he had to pay for everything they got me. I was not part of the state—what do they call it?

GT: Well, a ward of the state.

BS: Yeah, no I was not.

GT: So you were almost boarding with the family then, weren't you?

BS: Yeah, well, they had other foster kids.

GT: How was the experience?

BS: I liked it.

GT: Do you have fond memories of it?

BS: Oh yeah. My foster mother, the first one I had, after I got mad at them I went up to my grandparents and lived with them. They used to say, "Any time you wanna come, you just call us and you can come." But of course the state had to take care of me moving. But anyway, they told me that he would advise that I go into foster care. I had to guarantee that I would stay there one year. If I didn't like it after one year, then I could go back to my mother's.

GT: Do you remember the name of your foster parents?

BS: Yeah, Ila and Cecil Smith.

GT: And was it a difficult time? Was it hard?

BS: No.

GT: Did you get homesick?

BS: No. I was close and my dad came probably every two weeks and gave me money.

GT: And so, that gave you a sense of independence and freedom?

BS: Oh yeah, if I wanted something and they wouldn't do it for me, then I'd call up my case worker and she'd come and get me and get me the new coat that I needed. And of course I got in trouble for that because she had turned in a coat for me under one of her kids that wasn't a foster kid. And so she got caught doing that. And that didn't make her too happy.

GT: You had an unusual upbringing, Bonnie. It's quite an experience. So after the first year you left the Smith home?

BS: Oh no, I stayed there until I was only... with the grandparents I was 16, because that's when they made me come out. They got a new government who went in and said, "The foster home's are for the kids that need it, not for people like me."

GT: So at 16 they kind of booted you out of the system?

BS: Yeah. The main reason—and I told my mother when she got divorced, “If you ever get married, I’ll not live with you.” And so I stayed there for, you know—and she used to go to the dances and stuff and she had a boyfriend, which is fine.

GT: Did she get remarried?

BS: Yeah. And she was afraid to let me know. So he wasn’t staying there. So my other sister that’s just older than me said, “I’ll tell you something if you don’t tell mama.” I said, “What?” She said, “Her and [Clayton ?] got married.” “Ah!” I went right in to the phone, called my dad, and said, “I want you to come and get me.” Well, her boyfriend was there that was her husband, he said, “Get off that phone.” He said, “Get off that phone or I’ll kill you.” Of course my dad was listening. I mean, I knew he wouldn’t, I wasn’t scared. Anyway, my dad came to get me.

GT: And you’re 16 at this time?

BS: Mm-hm. And our front yard was probably from here to that door. My dad was out there. My mother said, “Don’t you step foot on my property.” So, anyway, to make a long story short, I stayed with her for a while. Never with him. And so, anyway, I got married instead.

GT: And were you 16 when you got married?

BS: Probably.

GT: Or 17?

BS: Oh no. I had two kids by the time I was 17, David and Mickey.

GT: So you got married before you were 16?

BS: I don’t know [laughs].

GT: Right in there. And, tell me about the gentleman that you met and married... Were you married to Francis?

BS: Oh Frank, yeah.

GT: You called him Frank?

BS: His name was Mickey Mouse.

GT: Mickey Mouse [laughs].

BS: He supposedly was this boxer, and that was what he boxed under, Mickey Mouse.

GT: I see. And where did you meet him?

BS: I don't know. On the street someplace I'm sure.

GT: Yeah? A dance or something?

BS: I wanted to get out of the house so I had to find somebody so I could get out. So we got married.

GT: Did you date?

BS: Yeah, maybe three or four times.

GT: And, now he is a Mexican national citizen. And he was here, was he here working?

BS: When I married him he had a brand new convertible. He worked for Kennecott Copper.

GT: So was he making good money with Kennecott?

BS: Evidently.

GT: He had a convertible.

BS: That's right. I never saw a dime. The time I lived with him I never saw one penny. He bought the groceries, he did this, he did that.

GT: So, let's see, refresh my memory, you said you were born in 1934, so we're talking about, we've gone through the Depression and World War II, and we're passed World War II. We're probably 1950? Does that kind of make sense?

BS: I don't know.

GT: If you're about 16 that would be 1950. So World War II had ended. And Frank was here; he must have had a work permit of some kind.

BS: He came over as a farm laborer. And probably the stories you heard were not the true stories, especially if they were from Frank. He came over as a laborer, working in the field.

GT: And there was a program that the government ran that enabled—

BS: And then he never went back. 'Cause they'd say, "Well you're in the country illegal." "I was not. I had—but I just didn't go back." But he was already through that, working at Kennecott.

GT: Had he been working at Kennecott for a few years?

BS: Oh, I'm sure he did.

GT: Do you recall what he did at Kennecott?

BS: He did the explosions, with dynamite, and then he'd have to run. That's why he lost his hearing.

GT: The powder guy.

BS: I don't know what they called him.

GT: I don't either. That isn't quite the right name. So you got married and within a very short time you had Mickey. He's the oldest, right, the oldest boy?

BS: 11 months apart.

GT: 11 months apart. And then you had David. And that would've been approximately by 1952. I can't remember—I've talked to Mickey about his birth date and David's, but I can't remember what they are. But anyway, it's right in there. And, had you been working prior to that?

BS: No.

GT: So, you're now 17 years old and you have two children, babies. Life must've been—

BS: Wonderful.

GT: Was it wonderful?

BS: Hell no.

GT: Is it one of those memories that you have about—

BS: No, I went back to my first foster parents.

GT: The Smiths?

BS: Uh-huh. And took the kids. They took care of them. And then I got a job, I think it was at Sears when they built that one on eighth south and State Street.

GT: So you worked there as a sales clerk?

BS: Uh-huh.

GT: Now, the kids were down—

BS: In Lehi.

GT: In Lehi. And so would you go down on the weekends?

BS: Yeah, well, first I was trying to—they wanted me to live there too. But there was no way that I could make connections with buses 'cause I didn't have a car or anything.

So then I started to just go down on the weekends and then it got less and less. And then I remarried.

GT: And when did you remarry?

BS: I don't know.

GT: A couple years after that? Were the boys pretty young when you remarried?

BS: Oh yeah, they were still young.

GT: And what happens to Frank? Does he disappear?

BS: He went into the military. He never registered for the draft so I reported him. I don't know if he knows that. Well, I know he does because he got drafted.

GT: For the Korean War? Or that would be the main reason.

BS: And the base that he was on, my cousin was there. And he went in as no dependents, everything, you know. His insurance had to go through a brother of his.

GT: So he just pretty much abandoned you.

BS: Well, we were divorced then. But, see, they were eligible for medical through the—anyway, that's when I found out that one of the kids needed tonsils taken out or something. And we went up to Fort Douglas or wherever you had to go then.

GT: You weren't registered. The kids weren't registered.

BS: No. He said that he had no dependents. So they weren't eligible.

GT: So now, you just had the two children still. And the boys then spent their early years in Lehi.

BS: But anyway, Frank was just getting through with his basic training. My cousin was there too. He got in trouble for lying on his stuff. And he was court martialed and did

not get his leave after... So my cousin said, “Frank said he’s gonna kill you when he gets—’cause he doesn’t get his leave.” The first time I saw him after he came home—

GT: They’d court martialled him out of the Army?

BS: No, no, no. He just didn’t get to go out when he was supposed to. But he came home and was driving his car – I think it was State Street—

GT: In Salt Lake?

BS: Um-hm. And he had seen me. I think I was walking. He’d seen me. He stopped right in the middle of the street, got out. I ran. He chased me. And there was a car dealership. And I’m not sure—they’ve changed all the streets, you know, the way they go now. And there was all these cops there. So I ran over there and there was two cops sitting in their car, waiting for some speeder to go by. And I opened the back seat and jumped in. I said, “My ex-husband’s chasing me. He said he’s going to kill me.”

GT: [laughing] They looked a little surprised?

BS: Yeah, they went over and his car was still running in the middle of the street. So, I don’t know if they had it impounded or what but they drove me home. And I had the kids at that time.

GT: In Salt Lake?

BS: Um-hm. Still.

GT: And you were still working at Sears?

BS: I guess I can’t remember. But anyway, the cop said, “If he comes back and tries to hurt you” – I had a window that had a lamp – he said, “take that lampshade and we’ll know you’re in trouble.” They did that for a long time.

GT: They just kind of kept an eye out.

BS: Um-hm.

GT: Did you have any difficulties with him?

BS: No, not really. Other than his lies. Like, when we'd go any place, my sister and brother in law would be with us. And him and Lee would always walk behind us, and me and my sister would walk in front. He'd always get up and then step on the back of your heel, take off the skin. And I'd said, "Don't do that." He did it all the time, just little mean things.

GT: About how old would the boys have been then? Were they in school by now?

BS: I don't remember. They were with Ila then. They started...

GT: School in Lehi.

BS: Yeah.

GT: Did you bring them up to Salt Lake during any time during their schooling?

BS: No. They never came to live with me. They stayed there.

GT: With the Smiths?

BS: Yeah. And she wanted to adopt and this and that. "You sign over the papers. I can get Frank to do that." And I said, "No, I'm not going to."

GT: Was it hard for you?

BS: Yeah.

GT: Being separated? Now as I recall in talking with Mickey, at some point they wind up going to school in Provo.

BS: Yeah. The Smiths moved there.

GT: The Smiths moved to Provo. And as I recall, it might've been late elementary, early junior high years when they moved to Provo?

BS: Probably.

GT: And you were in Salt Lake at that time, still working at Sears?

BS: No.

GT: You had left Sears?

BS: Um-hm.

GT: Do you remember what you did after Sears?

BS: Well, I worked for the church for a while.

GT: Were you active?

BS: No.

GT: But you worked for them?

BS: Yeah. I got a job editing the movies and stuff, took out too much violent parts.

And then when they'd show them at award shows they'd come back and we'd splice them back in.

GT: So you had the ability to—you'd watch the films, you'd spot the non-wanted pieces, and you would cut them out, splice the film back together, did all that?

BS: Um-hm.

GT: And then you re-did it when the films were—

BS: Yep.

GT: And were the films owned by somebody else, or were they owned by the church?

BS: I don't know.

GT: Where did you do that?

BS: I don't know [laughs]. Salt Lake.

GT: Kind of interesting. I've never talked to anybody that was an editor, splicer for the church and the church films.

BS: Most of the ones that worked with us were returned Mormon girl missionaries.

GT: All women?

BS: Women.

GT: Do you remember how long you did that?

BS: No.

GT: Now at some point Mickey talked to me about David having trouble in school.

BS: Over his color.

GT: Is that right?

BS: That's what he claims.

GT: Tell me about that a little bit.

BS: Well, he wanted to go live with his dad and Mickey did not. Mickey wanted to stay with the Smiths. But they were so close, Mickey had to talk for David 'cause he—So anyway, their dad used to tell them, "Anytime you want to come, I'll send you the money and you can just run away and come down here." He lived in Sacramento. So anyway, they decided to go.

GT: Did they talk to you?

BS: No. They came to my house, Ila and one of her sons. And Frank called me before they got there and said, "You tell them they can't go. They can't come here."

GT: After he'd told them to come?

BS: And he said, "I don't even have an apartment. I'm living with some girl." He owned a beauty shop though. But see, he'd given them this, "When you come down," he

said, “I’ll buy you each a car. I’ll”—you know, so they were all eager to go. Mickey wasn’t. Mickey was—

GT: Older.

BS: Yeah.

GT: Was he about 16, 15?

BS: Probably, I don’t know.

GT: I kind of remember that.

BS: Yeah, it was about that time, ’cause I had my other kids then.

GT: And tell me about your other kids. How many kids did you have after Mickey and David?

BS: Three.

GT: Girls, boys?

BS: I had one girl after the boys, and then two other boys.

GT: So you had four boys and one girl. And do you recall when they were born?

BS: [laughs] No.

GT: Was it still in the ’50s or the ’60s?

BS: [Walks away to get something.] Without this I wouldn’t know a birthday.

GT: Can you tell me what their names were?

BS: Uh-huh. Okay, Mickey was born in ’51. His name is Mickey Lynn Ibarra. Ibarra now but it used to be Iberra [laughs]. And David would be February... David Ray Ibarra, born in ’52.

GT: Okay, so Mickey was born in ’51 and David in ’52. Now, the next child born is your daughter?

BS: Um-hm. My daughter was born in 1954.

GT: And her name?

BS: Was Linda Lee.

GT: And her last name then was Linda Lee...

BS: Siciliano.

GT: Okay. So you had married Mr. Siciliano shortly after Frank took off.

BS: Yeah, evidently. I do have Alzheimer's, I'm not kidding you.

GT: Well, you're doing awfully well, so I'm admiring you remembering all this. And then, so the next child born with Mr. Siciliano was?

BS: He was born in 1957. His name is Jack Terry Siciliano. But my husband's name was Jack. That was his middle name. So when he was about in the seventh grade, there were too many Terrys, so he had to go by Jack. And he goes by Jack today. He never did—

GT: He never did change it.

BS: No.

GT: And then the last son born was?

BS: Todd. Todd Siciliano. I can't remember. I think he might've had a middle name but I don't know.

GT: You don't remember it. He was born when?

BS: Born in '64.

GT: So are all of these children alive today?

BS: Um-hm.

GT: And obviously, from the photos, you have grandchildren.

BS: Best looking grandkids you've ever seen.

GT: How many grandchildren do you have?

BS: I have thirteen great grandchildren. And I have... [laughs] I can't remember my grand. Mickey has one. David has one. My daughter has three. And then...

GT: Do the sons have...?

BS: No. But then they married women that have children and I've taken them in.

GT: So you have five that are natural to you.

BS: Um-hm. And I want to show you this picture... That is a beautiful—

GT: Oh my goodness, look at that. She's gorgeous. And look at that.

BS: This is their first child. This is their second. They tried and tried and tried.

GT: So there looks to be about eight years difference.

BS: Ten.

GT: So, did you correspond or have any communication with Frank after—

BS: No, I went to certain things that went on with the kids.

GT: Did he come to attend those? Would he come to Salt Lake?

BS: I don't know.

GT: He didn't contact you if he did.

BS: Oh yeah, he's been here.

GT: Now, when the boys went out to live with him, Mickey was a senior in high school about, is that right?

BS: I know that he graduated there 'cause at his graduation Frank sat right behind me.

“Would you like to go out for a Coke?” God.

GT: And did David graduate in Sacramento as well?

BS: Well, I don't think he graduated. I think he did something else 'cause he went right into the military.

GT: So he may have taken an exam to get his degree.

BS: He might've graduated but he wasn't at a graduation ceremony.

GT: And so, when you look back over that, does it seem kind of normal to you? Does it seem unusual?

BS: No. But when I had the kids stay with Ila and Cecil, they were my grandparents.

GT: So that was family.

BS: Yeah. David and Mickey, those were their grandparents. I felt that way, but evidently they didn't.

GT: And then, of course when they went out with their father that would've been—did you hear from them much?

BS: Yeah.

GT: They stayed in contact.

BS: Um-hm. But of course then they started getting married.

GT: Went on their own.

BS: I went to all their weddings. So did my husband. Oh, he said, "How come you didn't take them?" And I said, "The reason I went into foster care myself was I wasn't going to live with a stepdad. So why would I expect my kids to live with a stepdad?" And it doesn't seem reasonable now. So anyway, my kids would ask my husband, "How come Mickey and David don't come live with us." He said, "Because I won't let them." But he didn't want them to think it had anything to do with me. He would take the blame.

GT: But you had a long life with Jack.

BS: Oh yeah.

GT: How long were you married?

BS: When did we get married? I can't remember. I know we celebrated 47 years. He died at, he was 69 I think.

GT: Was he about your age?

BS: He was four years older. He was born in 1930. I can't remember the date.

GT: And you said that he was 69 when he died.

BS: About that.

GT: So that would be 1999? He died about 15 years ago?

BS: He died in 1999 'cause he was so anxious to make it to the 2000s. He was very interested in politics.

GT: Was he active?

BS: Somewhat. But he did like especially when Mickey was involved in it and he supported Clinton.

GT: Did you have a good life with him?

BS: Oh yeah.

GT: Well, when you look back, you've had an amazing set of experiences, in some ways not too uncommon for the Depression years. I mean, a lot of things had to happen for people to get through the Depression and manage that. But did you continue to work after you married Jack?

BS: Yes. In fact, one job I worked 34 years. I was a dispatcher. I worked 34 years there.

GT: For whom? Who did you dispatch for?

BS: An appliance store and repair. A1 Home Appliance.

GT: So you were there 34 years?

BS: Uh-huh. And I worked under three generations. It was good.

GT: Do you look back on that with fondness?

BS: Yeah, I loved it there.

GT: Well, anything you'd like to share with me about all of this, any observations?

BS: Mickey and David both turned out better than if they'd lived with me I'm sure.

GT: You think so?

BS: Um-hm.

GT: Well they certainly have been contributing members to the community and have achieved an awful lot.

BS: They have.

GT: I don't know as much about David but I sure know a lot about Mickey. He's had an amazing career.

BS: I know. And when we went to the White House.

GT: Oh boy, I bet that was fun.

BS: Yeah, it was. And my husband was really sick.

GT: Did he go with you?

BS: Oh yeah.

GT: You've got to have been enormously proud of him and his accomplishments.

BS: Oh yeah. And President Clinton was so nice to us. We got to the Rose Garden where a lot of—we were there—the one that he was doing. And the reporters had a thing so they couldn't get down there. And then after he was through then they just let them

run. So anyway, Clinton came over and he put his arms around me and he said, “Everybody likes Mickey. Even the ones that don’t like me, they still like Mickey.”

GT: [laughs] That’s what he said to you?

BS: Yeah. And I got a lot of letters from him while my husband was sick and then when he passed.

GT: From President Clinton?

BS: Um-hm.

GT: Is that right? Paid attention.

BS: And I was able to go to his last radio address. This picture right here, that was his last radio address when this was taken.

GT: And this is Mickey’s daughter, your granddaughter?

BS: Uh-huh.

GT: What’s her name?

BS: Her name’s Lina, Lina Marie. But all this stuff is—

GT: And Mickey has some very nice mementos in his office as well. Well, have you been back to Washington some since the run of the presidency.

BS: Oh yeah. Of course, Mickey stayed there, you know. In fact, it’s only been about a year ago, I think, that he paid for me and my sister to go down and spend a week with him. He had a driver that took us. And he’d kind of plan stuff that we could do. And he drove us and picked us up. All we’d have to do is come out and go, “Okay, we’re ready to go” [laughs]. It was great. We had such a good time.

GT: You know, the first time I visited Mickey in DC, I was attending a conference. And I was over on the other side of the White House. And he had his driver come and get me. And I came into the office. I think we went to lunch actually. But it was so nice.

BS: We got to eat at that restaurant at the White House when we were there. In fact, when the president's there there's a guard at the door. And if he's not, if the guard's not there, the president's out of the office, out of the building. So anyway, Mickey was working late, so he let us go in where we wanted. We went into his office. There was a guard sitting right next to it. And he had a big dog, Buddy, at the time. And there were two. And the other one was over—So there was a ball there, and I don't know what possessed me, I picked up that ball, threw it [laughs]. I said, "Oh, I shouldn't have done that!" "No, we've been doing that, throwing it up the stairs, trying to wear him out so we can put him to bed" [laughs].

GT: Did you meet Mrs. Clinton?

BS: Hillary? No.

GT: Just the president. Well, I've thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Mickey and having a chance to visit with him.

BS: He's a good guy, really, he is a good guy.

GT: When we did the celebrations here that you came to, that's when I got to know David. And I'm going to do some interviews with him next. I wanted to spend some time with you before. Thank you very much, Bonnie, for spending the time with me and telling me the experiences.

BS: Well, I appreciate you coming. But, like I said, I don't remember everything I should probably.

GT: Well, you do remarkably well. And I thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW