Oral History Interview with Ramon Partida Sr.

*New Voices: Nantucket's Diverse Immigrant Populations*

Interviewed by Nancy Newhouse and Lucinda Young, translated by Maria Partida on October 10, 2013 in Nantucket, MA

Transcription by Sarah Helm and Jacob B Horton
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To enhance the articulation and accuracy of the transcript, editorial content has been included in brackets. As an example, [SP] indicates an unverified spelling. Descriptive information has been included in curled brackets. {Laughter} is an example.

This interview is conducted in both English and Spanish but, at this time is only transcribed in English. Spanish language is noted in curled brackets where applicable.
ABSTRACT

Ramon Partida grew up in a dangerous area of Mexico where lawlessness was normal. He began working at eleven years old, a habit that has stayed with him. Ramon was married in 1970 and four years later began migrating back and forth to the United States as a seasonal laborer. Father of nine children and grandfather of many more, Ramon was working and living in an all-male, all-Spanish-speaking work house in Toppenish, WA when the volcano known as Mount Saint Helena erupted. He had received working papers and was stationed at a king crab processing plant in Alaska when the Exxon Valdez oil spill cut short his employment contract. Eventually he and his sons found their way into the employment of Ken Powell, a stone worker on the island of Nantucket. Ramon had been a builder for much of his life but Nantucket offered labor and pay enough for his children and grandchildren to make a home. At the time of this interview he still travels between Sinaloa where his wife and other family still lives and Nantucket where he works with his children’s landscaping business. In Mexico he and his wife provide meals and services for the local community, including meals, child care and assistance in emergency situations. In this interview Ramon’s daughter Maria translates for Ramon and provides some of her own memories and impressions of life in Mexico, and life on Nantucket.
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Session One

Interviewers: Nancy Newhouse and Lucinda Young

Interviewees: Ramon Partida Sr. and Maria Partida

Session One

Location: Nantucket, MA

Date: October 10, 2013

[00:00:00.00] Nancy: Newhouse: It’s October 12th and it’s about quarter of nine, it’s 2013, and I am Nancy: Newhouse. And I am here for an interview with Ramon Partida Cardines. And Maria is here as well, Maria is Ramon’s daughter. And the purpose of this interview is to hear some stories from Ramon about his experience in - the work he did Mexico and stories about what it was like for him when he first came to the United States and the different types of jobs he did here. So would you like to ask your dad to start about his youth?

[00:01:10.01] Maria Partida: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:01:26.13] Lucinda Young: Let's start with the first. Don't ask him to do the whole thing at once.

[00:01:30.14] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:01:33.09] Lucinda: Yeah. What was his childhood like?

[00:01:34.29] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:01:36.05] Ramon Partida Cardines: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:01:38.03] Maria: He can’t remember because he was too young {laughter}.

[00:01:41.07] Nancy: Well, he went to school.

[00:01:42.16] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:01:44.05] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:01:51.04] Maria: He went to school until third grade.

[00:01:53.24] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:02:01.29] Maria: He got out from school and he started to work. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:02:08.21] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:02:09.21] Maria: He was eleven years old, when he started to work.

[00:02:14.04] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
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[00:02:17.21] Maria: He was working with horses and he got rolled over, I mean he was - they drag him.

[00:02:25.16] Lucinda: He had an accident?

[00:02:27.06] Maria: Yeah. The horses - he was too young.

[00:02:30.04] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:02:36.16] Maria: His parents.

[00:02:38.15] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:02:44.12] Maria: They gave him hard work so that he could go back. Quit and go back to school.

[00:02:49.09] Lucinda: To teach him a lesson.

[00:02:51.24] Maria: Teach him a lesson.

[00:02:53.03] Lucinda: Sounds like he didn’t like school.

[00:02:54.28] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:02:57.15] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:03:13.05] Maria: He did like it, but it was hard because of the rules of the teachers. How they used to –

[00:03:18.07] Lucinda: Strict.

[00:03:19.10] Maria: Yeah, very strict. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:03:23.25] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:03:32.01] Maria: The principle in school he would hit him with a broom stick and would break it over their heads. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:03:43.04] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:03:46.17] Maria: Because he was a mean person.

[00:03:50.04] Lucinda: Yeah. We have teachers like that here. We used to. That's a universal {laughter}

[00:03:57.05] Nancy: And then did he go back to school after working with the horses?
[00:04:00.11] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:04:02.06] Ramon: No.

[00:04:03.14] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:04:08.07] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:04:19.06] Maria: They took him to a church school.

[00:04:25.01] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:04:35.02] Maria: When he arrived, his father and him arrived to school with the principle. It was a church, so I mean it was a priest, or he was a teacher in charge. His father, Gregorio Partida, he told the teacher, “He’s all yours. The only thing I am worried is his eyes. Anything else, you in charge.” Meaning that he can hit him, or do anything to him to make him learn. The only thing he would protect -

[00:05:11.24] Lucinda: Don’t touch his eyes.

[00:05:13.19] Nancy: Protect his eyes.
[00:05:14.21] Maria: His eyes. That's it {laughter}.

[00:05:17.27] Nancy: Dear me. How long did he stay there?

[00:05:22.23] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:05:24.16] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:05:26.04] Maria: Not even a day. He quit. Not even a day.

[00:05:29.07] Lucinda: {Laughter} That didn't work.

[00:05:31.11] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:05:32.19] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:05:40.09] Maria: Then he quit. He left school and he never came back.

[00:05:45.08] Nancy: And so did he go home?

[00:05:49.08] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:05:49.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:06:16.14] Maria: Okay, so a few days before that he would skip school. Pretend that he went to school and he quit school because he didn’t like the teacher. So everybody would think that he was a school but he was {Speaking Spanish}.

[00:06:33.24] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:06:45.05] Lucinda: He went to a lake and went swimming {laughter}?

[00:06:49.23] Nancy: We're not supposed to laugh at Ramon.

[00:06:51.29] Lucinda: If we were here, it would be going to the beach. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:06:56.22] Maria: {Laughter} He would to go to a lake and swim, every day until school? {Speaking Spanish}

[00:07:01.10] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:07:07.08] Maria: Some kids wouldn’t go to school at that time.

[00:07:10.15] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:07:13.14] Nancy: There wasn’t a rule where you were supposed to be at school during school hours.

[00:07:17.13] Nancy: So it says that he got married in 1971. He had stayed at home all that time? Between playing hooky and leaving school {laughter}? That’s what we call it, playing hooky {laughter}.

[00:07:31.04] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:07:41.15] Ramon: Si.

[00:07:42.14] Maria: Yes

[00:07:45.15] Lucinda: Did he grow up in a little village or in a city? What kind of environment was it?

[00:07:51.20] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:07:58.14] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:08:00.01] Maria: It was a town.

[00:08:01.27] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
Maria: It was a pretty good sized town. Back then it was very hard, it was very hard. They had a hard time living.

Lucinda: Making a living, does he mean?

Maria: Yeah, making a living. Everything was harder. (Speaking Spanish)

Lucinda: There wasn’t work?

Maria: (Speaking Spanish)

Lucinda: Crime?

Ramon: (Speaking Spanish)

Maria: There was lots of work.

Ramon: (Speaking Spanish)

Maria: Back then there was a lot of crime, a lot of deaths. People dying, killing themselves and others.
[00:09:20.11] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:09:28.09] Maria: He lived the time where - {speaking Spanish} - where rich people would not like someone and kill them. Or pay someone else. Or just do it themself and nobody would –

[00:09:39.20] Lucinda: No law and order.


[00:09:42.20] Nancy: Um, talk about, when he, would he tell us when he met his wife?

[00:09:47.13] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:09:49.27] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:09:59.18] Maria: They were from the same neighborhood.

[00:10:02.22] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:10:16.00] Maria: They would always see each other. I mean, everyone knew everybody and they knew each other. She would always go past the house with a - {speaking Spanish}? it’s a horse that's pulling a carriage. So that’s how he would see my mother. And going by, with his father.
[00:10:40.12] Nancy: He was 21 when he got married?

[00:10:45.06] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:10:46.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:10:48.09] Maria: He was 21.

[00:10:50.11] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:11:11.20] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:11:14.21] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:11:33.20] Maria: He got married in 1970. Then he had Josephina, the oldest, and then Greg - Gregorio. In ‘74 he decided to come here the first time.


[00:11:53.18] Lucinda: To the United States.
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[00:11:54.15] Maria: To the United States. But he couldn't make it the first time. He spent a
month trying to cross the border but it was hard and he didn't have any money to pay the coyotes
- the person who is in charge to -

[00:12:10.00] Nancy: To transport them across the border? What did you call him?

[00:12:13.05] Maria: Coyote {laughter}.


[00:12:17.10] Maria: That was very tough. One month and he went back and then three months
later he tried to pass again and he did. He had family here but he never called anyone to ask for
money and help. So he went back, came back, and three months later he was inside the United
States. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:12:43.11] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:12:53.13] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:12:55.00] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:13:07.26] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:13:08.24] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:13:10.25] Maria: By the time he would try to leave and try to pass the border, he would be like trying to survive. Fishing or fixing whatever they got.

[00:13:25.15] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:13:30.22] Maria: He would ask work anywhere he stopped. He was, he would be like asking for work and doing anything he could do while they’re [unclear].

[00:13:41.29] Nancy: Now when did he start working? Now, it says the first time he came he worked with chickens?

[00:13:48.11] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:13:56.15] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:14:01.01] Maria: He started selling watermelons in Los Angeles, LA.

[00:14:07.25] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:14:14.05] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:14:18.24] Maria: He worked for two months and he went back to Mexico.

[00:14:21.17] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:14:33.19] Maria: Then the following year he went back to Mexico. No, he stayed in LA working with the watermelons. Then he went back home and a year later he came back. While he was home he made - he had Chuy. Jesus {laughter}.

[00:14:52.20] Lucinda: Ahh, okay. Came home to have another one.

[00:14:53.28] Maria: Yes {laughter}.

[00:14:56.15] Nancy: All the more reason to get back to the U.S {laughter}. So alright, then his jobs in Washington - what was he doing there?

[00:15:04.25] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:15:06.04] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
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Maria: Then he went back after a year. He went back to Washington State the first time and he started - he kept working there with hops. Hops? The hops farm. For making beer and stuff.

Nancy: What, sort of, does that entail? I mean what was his actual work? When you say that he was working with the hops, what did he do?

Lucinda: At the hops farm.

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Lucinda: Does it grow from seed?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Lucinda: It’s like cuttings.

[00:16:15.04] Nancy: Like the beach grass almost.

[00:16:16.18] Lucinda: So it’s planted.

[00:16:19.09] Maria: And they made sure they were like in wires. They get tied. I’ve seen them.

[00:16:28.15] Lucinda: Yeah I have too. They actually tried growing them out at Bartlett’s for a while. You know, at the Cisco Brewers. I think it’s more for show, you know, to show where beer comes from.

[00:16:39.01] Nancy: Every time your dad went back and forth, did he have to pay people? Was it easier to go home? To get across the border home into Mexico?

[00:16:48.04] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:16:54.28] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:17:09.26] Maria: Every time it was getting much easier because he knew people, he knew even the way to pass and stuff. And back then it was like cheap, it wasn’t too expensive. They charge him like two hundred dollars to cross the border.
[00:17:30.13] Nancy: To help him cross? Okay. So going home, did he have to pay to go home?

To be led back across? Or he knew how to do that?

[00:17:43.02] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:17:45.04] Ramon: No.

[00:17:45.26] Maria: No.

[00:17:47.19] Nancy: It’s just because they know people want to get out of Mexico to come for

the work I guess.


[00:17:55.03] Nancy: Was that a job that your father continued to do working with the hops? Or

what else did he do?

[00:18:03.00] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:18:05.10] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:18:14.00] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:18:17.00] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:18:25.26] Maria: He would come to the same farm and work there.

[00:18:29.20] Nancy: And that was in Washington State?


[00:18:31.06] Nancy: Okay. Now did he see Mount Saint Helena? Was he near that? The volcano?

[00:18:36.23] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:18:41.00] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:18:44.23] Maria: Yes, he knew it, and the date of the eruption he was there. He was fishing.

[00:18:51.12] Nancy: Oh, talk about that, tell us about that, I wanna know, I wanna feel like I was there.

[00:18:57.00] Lucinda: How close? How close was he?

[00:18:59.00] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:19:01.14] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:19:10.03] Maria: Like about twenty or thirty miles away.

[00:19:13.00] Nancy: So could he smell the ash. Or did he hear it?

[00:19:14.00] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:19:18.00] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:19:30.28] Maria: He was in the rain when it started. Like the thunders and that sound of it’s about to rain.

[00:19:40.09] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:19:45.05] Maria: And then instead of rain it started like ashes coming down.

[00:19:48.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:19:57.16] Maria: He wasn’t driving that day but they were on their way and the person driving said, “What should I do? I can’t see nothing.” So they said put the windshields so we can see.
[00:20:07.12] Nancy: The wipers, use them.

[00:20:08.29] Maria: The windshield wipers.

[00:20:09.23] Nancy: And so did that help?

[00:20:10.17] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:20:12.09] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:20:29.17] Maria: They were going and then they decided to come back. But it’s closer by where Josephina lives in Wapato. So when they were by the city, by the town Toppenish, all the lights turned on in the houses because it was dark.

[00:20:55.17] Lucinda: So the power was gone, is that what he said?

[00:20:57.24] Nancy: Well it was so dark because of the ash.

[00:20:59.20] Maria: Yes, the people turn on the lights.

[00:21:01.28] Lucinda: How far from where they worked?
Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: About fifty to sixty miles away.

Lucinda: To the east, right?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: To the North.

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: They lived in the valley of Yakima and that happened to the north, like towards Seattle.

Nancy: When your father was working with the hops, where did he live? What were the living conditions? And eating? Did he make some good money?

Maria:
[00:22:16.25] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:22:20.22] Maria: They used to eat good.

[00:22:22.10] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:22:27.00] Maria: They used to live about seventeen. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:22:29.15] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}


[00:22:34.22] Nancy: Seventeen men in one house, alright. And did they have to cook for themselves?

[00:22:39.01] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:22:41.12] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:23:33.10] Maria: Well, this place where he was living, it was one house with seventeen men. They would always have the refrigerator full of groceries. Full of everything and they would get turns. Groups of seven men cooking once a day for everybody. This place would be like a house
that other people from Mexico would come the first time, stay there until they find another place to live or work.

[00:24:14.12] Nancy: So it was a haven, really. Your father and the other men received other people to come stay there.

[00:24:21.05] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:24:25.13] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:24:31.04] Maria: Yes, that’s where they would come.

[00:24:33.23] Nancy: The word got out. There must be quite a grapevine.


[00:24:36.29] Nancy: In other words, a way to network. You know, that you are telling - that people know to come there.

[00:24:44.02] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:24:45.17] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
Maria: Yeah, everybody would have a family member and they that there was a good place where they could find a bed or a space to live for a while.

Nancy: And Alaska, talk about Alaska, what you did there. How did you end up there?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: That year he was already - he didn’t need to go back to Mexico and pay a coyote to come back because that year, in eighty-six, he got his papers.

Nancy: But Alaska was before that. 1985, you said. The year before? Alright, so he had papers then?

Maria: Yeah in eighty-six. Okay, I got mistaken there.

Nancy: That’s okay. Alright so then he could go anywhere he wanted and he chose to go to Alaska?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
Maria: He was already legal. So a cousin of him, and a friend, had already been there a year before.

Nancy: Working in Alaska.

Maria: Working in Alaska. So they asked him if he want to go there and he did, so they took him.

Nancy: Your father is an adventurer.

Maria: {Speaking Spanish, laughter}

Nancy: No fear.

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Nancy: And did he love Alaska?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:26:43.23] Maria: It is very beautiful.

[00:26:45.08] Nancy: Where in Alaska?

[00:26:46.05] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:26:48.09] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}


[00:26:52.21] Lucinda: Dutch Harbor.

[00:26:53.03] Nancy: Dutch Harbor.

[00:26:54.16] Lucinda: What was he doing, what kind of work did he do?

[00:26:56.29] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:26:58.00] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:27:02.23] Maria: With king crabs, working with the king crabs.
Nancy: What were you doing with the king crabs though? Emptying them out of the traps or were you fishing?

Lucinda: I thought he said he was killing king crabs.

Maria: Yeah.

Lucinda: They catch them?

Maria: Yeah, they catch them, they brought them to warehouse and - {speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: Okay. He would be cutting the crabs but he would hold them from the -
[00:28:15.17] Nancy: Claws?

[00:28:16.29] Maria: Claws. And with a -

[00:28:21.03] Nancy: Mallet?

[00:28:23.00] Maria: No. An axe?

[00:28:26.11] Lucinda: Hammer?


[00:28:30.01] Maria: He would lean into and would cut in half. And there was a -

[00:28:36.06] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:28:37.14] Lucinda: Conveyer belt?

Lucinda: Conveyer belt.

Maria: And that would bring each one into -

Lucinda: So it was a processing plant.

Nancy: Yes, yeah. Oh, okay so an the axe was stationary and they'd go like that, or they'd cut it in half and then they'd put it -

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: It was a process. It would be a process. He would come, cut it in half, and then other person would be cleaning it. And then to the freezer, and then - I mean to the boxes - and then to the freezer.

Nancy: Did he wear gloves?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:29:29.21] Nancy: Oh, phew. Good. No accidents?

[00:29:32.01] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:29:33.16] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:29:37.00] Lucinda: Sounds pretty boring.

[00:29:37.19] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:29:42.01] Lucinda: Like, repetitious.

[00:29:43.10] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:29:48.05] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:30:18.29] Maria: It wasn’t boring, it was fun. They would make it fun because they would try to compete with each other. To don’t let anybody else do better or get more than the other one. So they made it fun. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:30:36.24] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
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[00:31:01.06] Maria: One day somebody ask him. There was one claw of crab, it was about five to six hours already that it had been caught from the crab and it was just sitting there in the table. And someone tell him, “Would you put your finger inside the claw and see if it catches you - if it holds you?” And he was like, “Well it’s been there for five to six hours. It's dead.” So he did put his finger in there and they open it, and he put his finger in there, and it did.

[00:31:40.05] Nancy: A pincher got him. The claw. He wasn’t dead.

[00:31:44.06] Maria: He wasn’t dead. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:31:49.19] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:32:06.08] Maria: {Laughter} Now he’s thinking that probably changed the –

[00:32:09.29] Nancy: Oh! They switched crabs.

[00:32:12.09] Maria: They switched crabs and it was a live one, like recent {laughter}. So now he’s thinking.

[00:32:19.24] Nancy: How’d he get it off?

[00:32:20.14] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:32:21.02] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:32:22.10] Maria: They did, he couldn’t.

[00:32:23.28] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:32:28.12] Maria: Yeah, they had to do it because he couldn’t do it by himself.

[00:32:32.03] Lucinda: Was that a seasonal job of start and an end?

[00:32:35.12] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:32:39.19] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:33:06.13] Maria: That year that he was there, there was a boat. A ship that -

[00:33:11.13] Lucinda: The Valdez.

[00:33:12.27] Maria: Uh-huh.

[00:33:14.07] Lucinda: The Valdez.

[00:33:18.13] Maria: The oil tanker. So everything was contaminated with fuel.

[00:33:21.29] Lucinda: Oh, they closed down the plant?

[00:33:23.28] Maria: So they did close the plant.

[00:33:24.27] Lucinda: The Exxon Valdez, that’s what it was.

[00:33:27.16] Nancy: Yes, yeah, that was the oil tanker owned by the company.

[00:33:31.25] Maria: Yeah, well that year it happened so there was no work for a period of time so everybody had to go back.

[00:33:38.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:33:42.00] Maria: The contract was for six months.

[00:33:44.02] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:33:44.11] Maria: And they only worked four months.

[00:33:47.18] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:33:55.10] Maria: Oh, they could renew their contract. So that means it was year round.

[00:34:01.13] Nancy: Did you, did your father help with any of the clean up? Did they get another job or did he just go home?

[00:34:06.21] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:34:10.22] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:34:20.02] Maria: They told him they were gonna go. They promised them they were gonna pay him $200 a day to go and clean up.

[00:34:28.21] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:34:33.18] Maria: But then they said the government was going to do it.

[00:34:36.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:34:39.17] Maria: And the government was who hired the people and cleaned it.

[00:34:44.02] Lucinda: So he didn’t work there?
[00:34:47.26] Maria: No, he didn’t.

[00:34:49.11] Nancy: Then I see that in 1986 you went back to Mexico. You had 9 children at that point, and built his first real house there?

[00:35:03.11] Maria: {Speaking Spanish} In what year? Eighty-six? {Speaking Spanish}

[00:35:17.01] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:35:20.00] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:35:23.27] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:35:38.10] Maria: He did build his first home. Because the first time, the first house he had it was only one room. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:35:51.14] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:36:01.09] Maria: Seven kids, plus two. Nine.

[00:36:03.06] Lucinda: What year were you born, Maria?

[00:36:05.19] Maria: Seventy-nine. I lived that.
[00:36:07.09] Lucinda: Seventy-nine. So you were a little girl.

[00:36:09.01] Maria: I lived that.

[00:36:09.17] Lucinda: You were living in that house.

[00:36:11.16] Maria: Yeah, that house was only one room. I can remember. One room, four by four. The bathroom would be in the way back outside. I remember I was always so scared because we had to go at night to the bathroom and then these big, huge frogs, or - oh my god, I was so scared of hitting them while I was walking. I remember that very, very clear.

[00:36:44.22] Lucinda: Did he raise your family in the same village he grew up in?

[00:36:49.06] Maria: No. We all were born in one town - one state - and then we all moved to a different state.

[00:37:00.10] Lucinda: Okay.

[00:37:00.12] Maria: That happened - well it happened because his sister got married and moved to that state, Sinaloa. And there was this huge hurricane [unclear]. And it destroyed a lot of homes and it was horrible. So they were looking for his sister. So they just couldn't live out there and he went and look for his sister and find another place. And he decided to move.
[00:37:40.10] Nancy: To bring all of you there. Did he find his sister?

[00:37:43.07] Maria: Yeah, he found his sister. And she was good but it was a very sad episode there with all the people, the damage.

[00:37:53.11] Lucinda: So the town where you grew up - where you were born - got damaged during this hurricane?

[00:37:59.01] Maria: Not that, but where -

[00:38:01.11] Nancy: The other state.


[00:38:04.05] Lucinda: Okay.

[00:38:06.00] Maria: There was not much work so my father was looking for his sister but he found his sister and he found work in the North. So that's why we all moved. We end up living in Mazatlán for a few months then we moved to a different place where there was the train. There was a lot of seeds collecting from around and then bring it to the train and then the train would - it was like a station of work. So he found work there. Well, about that house, I can tell you. It was - four by four.
Lucinda: Four meters by four meters.

Maria: Yeah. Brick. Then the rest would be wood. Pieces of this, pieces of that. Like, nothing -

Nancy: Whatever was available.

Maria: Yeah, anything. Plastic, wood, he would go and get a piece of tree, and make it neat, put it in a corner.

Lucinda: Was there a new corner every time there was a new child {laughter}?

Maria: He was always, always building stuff. I remember one time. We were all little, Arturo was the only one who missing.

Lucinda: He wasn’t born yet.

Maria: Because was born here in the United States. But I remember one time it was so hot. Every year it is extremely hot in the summer. He would build like a cage - big, huge. At the beginning I said, “Well he’s gonna buy - grow some chickens and make a living out of it.” But not, it end up being our bedrooms.
[00:40:12.25] Lucinda: So it was colder at night?

[00:40:13.28] Nancy: So it was outside and cool.

[00:40:15.03] Maria: It was outside. It was two cages. It was around - {speaking Spanish}

[00:40:21.19] Lucinda: So you had to live in a cage?

[00:40:22.03] Maria: We had to sleep in there.

[00:40:25.10] Nancy: It was just like our playpens.

[00:40:26.18] Maria: Yeah. Well we did have a - he made us one. And I remember another story. He would make a table that at night would turn into a bed {laughter}. I don't know how.

[00:40:42.12] Nancy: He’s very clever.

[00:40:43.15] Maria: {Laughter} He’s laughing.

[00:40:48.14] Nancy: And then your father went up to Washington and they did cherry picking?

[00:40:54.27] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:41:02.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:41:09.23] Lucinda: Apples, pears, cherries.

[00:41:13.18] Maria: Cherries, apples.

[00:41:16.16] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:41:22.21] Maria: Yeah that’s when he started changing. He wasn’t doing much hops, but he was doing more cherries, fruits.

[00:41:29.23] Nancy: What job of all the jobs that your father’s done, what did he like the best? What was his favorite work?

[00:41:36.16] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:41:39.26] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:41:47.28] Maria: The stonework.

[00:41:49.21] Nancy: The stonework. Now when did that all come about?

[00:41:52.01] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:41:54.20] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:42:03.09] Maria: It was here on Nantucket.

[00:42:05.29] Nancy: Oh, in Nantucket he started.

[00:42:07.23] Maria: Well he started in Mexico.

[00:42:12.08] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:42:18.09] Maria: He started working here in Nantucket with Ken Powell the first time.

{Speaking Spanish}

[00:42:25.25] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:42:36.09] Maria: Well he made his first stone wall in a school back in Mexico. Trying to even the -

[00:42:46.23] Lucinda: The grade.

[00:42:47.00] Maria: The grade. Making a wall.
Lucinda: So someone must have taught him.

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: His grandfather taught him. His mother’s father, he was a - {speaking Spanish} a builder. But they don't do houses, back in Mexico, out of wood.

Lucinda: There all out of stone or cement right?

Maria: Yeah, bricks.

Nancy: So that must have been a good business, though.

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Nancy: Building stone houses - did he do that?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:43:50.23] Maria: They would, they would make.

[00:43:54.25] Lucinda: [Unclear]

[00:43:55.10] Nancy: Adobe. Like, adobe, yeah. I wanted to ask you, what do you love best about Nantucket?

[00:44:07.19] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:44:12.02] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:44:25.23] Maria: There’s a lot of work. It’s a very beautiful place.

[00:44:28.16] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:44:33.19] Maria: It’s a place that has a lot of beautiful stuff.

[00:44:36.17] Lucinda: Do you guys go to the beach?

[00:44:39.01] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:44:39.18] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:44:42.14] Lucinda: Do you go fishing?

[00:44:43.14] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:44:50.02] Maria: He doesn’t have much time to go.

[00:44:52.18] Lucinda: He comes up and they put him to work.

[00:44:54.23] Nancy: He works, he works, he works.

[00:44:56.13] Maria: He’s trying to go back home, he has a ticket Tuesday. But they’re still thinking to keep him longer because there’s some work to do down in -

[00:45:08.00] Lucinda: Did your dad teach Greg?

[00:45:09.16] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:45:13.09] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:45:20.04] Maria: Yeah they’ve been always together. {Speaking Spanish}

[00:45:24.04] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
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[00:45:28.14] Maria: {Laughter} He thinks so.

[00:45:30.10] Nancy: Could your dad talk about what he and Greg did for the Habitat for Humanity?

[00:45:41.05] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:45:53.20] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:46:03.06] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:46:13.14] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:46:20.11] Maria: It’s very good because it’s -

[00:46:22.23] Nancy: Louder, please. It's very good?

[00:46:27.24] Maria: It's very good because it’s something nice to give your time and work for somebody that needs it.

[00:46:35.14] Nancy: And what did they do exactly, what work did they do?

[00:46:39.16] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:46:42.12] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:46:55.10] Maria: They built up a stone wall about fifteen to twenty feet long.

[00:47:05.03] Nancy: But that’s giving your time and your talent. I think you’re an artist. Your father’s an artist, the work he does.

[00:47:11.27] Lucinda: That’s art, the stone walls.

[00:47:13.10] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:47:22.15] Lucinda: I wonder if he likes - I'm imagining he might like the stone wall work the best because he's creating something that’s going to last.

[00:47:31.07] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:47:44.05] Lucinda: [Unclear] your family.

[00:47:50.14] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:47:54.17] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
Maria: He feels good when clients come and they like the work he’s done. That’s what he enjoys more.

Lucinda: In the years that he was coming up and working in the Northwest and back and forth to Nantucket, would he go home and work? Also work in Mexico?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: He goes and works around the house. He’s always building something, doing something, taking this, putting that. And he also has a little lawn that he - next to the creek - where he grows vegetables.

Nancy: Does he fish here, in Nantucket?

Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

Maria: {Laughter} Not much here because here you have to fish with a line. Back in Mexico he uses a big net that he throws and he catches a lot of fishes. It’s easier and he enjoys that.
[00:49:41.02] Nancy: Tell your dad that they used to that in the ponds here. They had the nets and they would catch eel. And - wait, what is that? Herring. They'd catch Herring in them.

[00:49:55.29] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:50:02.26] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:50:09.00] Maria: He’s caught some here on the island. How do you call those long ones?

[00:50:18.22] Nancy: Bluefish.

[00:50:20.04] Lucinda: Eels.

[00:50:20.19] Nancy: Eels, oh the eels, yes. And what does he do? You make soup?

[00:50:24.15] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:50:26.11] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:50:46.22] Maria: {Laughter} He has never eaten one. But here he was told that they could eat them. So he prepare it, cut it, cook it, and he found out there was no tortilla’s to eat it and he
cannot eat without tortillas. He went to the stores to get some. When he came back there was none. Everybody had eaten.

[00:51:07.06] Nancy: The eel was all gone?

[00:51:08.14] Maria: Yeah. So he didn't have a chance to taste it {laughter}.

[00:51:12.01] Lucinda: Have you had eel? I've never had eel.

[00:51:14.02] Maria: {Laughter} Never.

[00:51:14.24] Nancy: But I know a lot of people are fishing the eel out of the ponds now. I do know that.

[00:51:20.15] Lucinda: Well, they use it for fishing for bass.


[00:51:26.02] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:51:27.25] Maria: {Laughter} He still - {speaking Spanish}

[00:51:32.04] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
[00:51:35.01] Maria: He has heard it. {Speaking Spanish} He’s gonna talk about the work he does back home, about civil protection.

[00:51:53.29] Nancy: Oh civil protection. Tell us, what does that mean?

[00:51:57.17] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:52:00.23] Nancy: It's dangerous, isn't it?

[00:52:02.19] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:52:05.21] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:52:28.18] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:52:29.23] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:52:40.15] Maria: {Speaking Spanish}

[00:52:42.19] Ramon: {Speaking Spanish}
Maria: Civil protection back home, it’s not part of the government, it’s not a police job. It is more volunteering.

Nancy: Oh, like neighborhood watch {laughter}.

Maria: Yeah.

Nancy: For your area.

Maria: Yeah. He says it’s similar to a firefighter.

Nancy: A firefighter. A volunteer?

Maria: Volunteer. He would - there would be an accident. He has been where there was a car that -

Nancy: Flipped.

Maria: Flipped. And there are some dead people there that they have to go and help, see what they need. If there are some dead people they have to go and find the -

Nancy: Stretchers or bags that they put them in?
Maria: No. Where they bury them.

Nancy: Oh.

Maria: The box.

Nancy: Yes, the casket, we call it.

Maria: The casket, yeah. So they would have to go help people what they need. If there’s a flood, they would go and help people get out of the places and put them in a safe place, get something for them to eat. Like in the Holy week, in Easter here, people would always gather and go to a river and cook, swim, fish, stay there. But sometimes there’s people that die because they’re not being careful, and kids just drown, people drown and they’re there to make sure everything is safe. It’s a safe environment so everybody can have a good time. If there’s a person who has been drinking and they would get him, put him to jail or bring him to the police. Making sure everything is safe for people. One time he told me a story. He would bring his car from here and give it to the people so they can put it to work. So he has his own car-truck. I think he bought it from one of the firefighters here. So he bought it, he liked it, he bought one of those sirens.

Lucinda: He took it to Mexico?
Maria: [Laughter] Yeah he took it, put it in the truck, put it to work. And one time he was with a police officer and himself and there was this guy who just drove by so fast. So he grabbed the car, follow him and tell him to stop, try to be slow and careful. This guy would be like mean and would pass him. And the police officer - it’s hard to work with them because they don’t do their job as their supposed to. Sometimes they don't care. They don't want to be put in danger.

Lucinda: Is it dangerous where you live in Mexico?

Maria: [Speaking Spanish]

Ramon: [Speaking Spanish]

Maria: Right now, any place in Mexico is dangerous.

Nancy: Yeah, that’s true. Because of the drugs?

Maria: The drugs. I just heard the person - an old friend, he lived next to your house. My friend woke up, she walked in the kitchen and he’s dead. He asked to stay the night there because he felt like somebody wanted to kill him.

Nancy: And they did.
[00:57:00.27] Maria: And they did. But it seems like he was seeing stuff too. He was using drugs or something. Or he was already messed up. And it seems like he did it himself but the way he did it, it looks like somebody else did it. So there's always someone that comes and -

[00:57:22.20] Nancy: Well, you’re not sure who the enemy is.

[00:57:24.03] Maria: Yeah.

[00:57:24.22] Lucinda: I’ve heard - I don’t know if it’s true but you'd know. I’ve heard that Mexicans that come up here and work and then go back tend to be the targets for being robbed.

[00:57:37.25] Nancy: Because they think you have money, probably.

[00:57:40.11] Maria: They think - yeah. And there’s people that stay back home, there’s no work. I don’t see the way they can survive. I don’t see how they survive, year by year. If I go back I would be like, “My goodness! I need to go back to Nantucket because there’s no work here.” I don’t understand how they survive. And they do target people that come from here.

[00:58:10.21] Lucinda: Doesn't that make it dangerous for your dad when he goes?

[00:58:14.24] Maria: But the type of work he does back home helps a lot because people know him and they know that he's there to help. He's not a person that is always being mean or comes home and -
[00:58:34.00] Nancy: He's not a threat to anybody.

[00:58:36.05] Maria: Yeah. They need his help. They knock at the door like he’s the -

[00:58:42.14] Lucinda: The mayor.

[00:58:43.10] Maria: Yeah. They knock on his door and they ask him for help. “Oh, my daughter is sick can you bring us to the hospital?” Because some people don’t have a car. My house where, well the house where he lives in, and my mother - looks like an orphanage. There’s so many kids from all over -

[00:59:06.11] Lucinda: They take in - they help people.

[00:59:08.12] Maria: Yeah, they always having breakfasts at their home. At lunch time, at night - everybody gather’s at my mother’s and father’s house to have some fun time. And they cook. They don’t mind. I mean, my mother's always cooking.

[00:59:28.20] Nancy: They share what they have. That’s very nice.

[00:59:33.19] Maria: My mother has a sister - she’s a nun - and she goes like, “First you have eat and give your family members what to eat. Because you never know.” My mother comes and she
brings a different way of living and viewing life. Because she would, “Okay there’s one bread? Okay let’s cut it half or in fourths.”

[00:59:59.06] Lucinda: Did your mother ever spend time living or working up in the states or was she just busy raising the brood {laughter}? 

[01:00:06.11] Nancy: She had to be here because Arturo was born in the United States. {Laughter} So she was here.

[01:00:11.15] Maria: Yeah, Arturo was born in ninety-two. And a year after we arrived to the USA. Washington State, he was born.

[01:00:20.03] Lucinda: So did your dad bring the whole family up? To Washington?

[01:00:23.15] Maria: Yeah, the whole family. My mother wants to work back home because probably my father wasn’t having a good moment. Or there wasn’t enough work. So my mother did have to work, once, in Mexico, in a warehouse. I remember. She would wake up, four or three in the morning. Four in the morning, cook something so she can leave for us to eat, go to work, come back at eleven at night, wash clothes and look around the house. Go to sleep for about two, three hours, wake up, get things ready for the next morning.

[01:01:15.04] Nancy: Do it again. I'll bet your father did not like that.
Maria: He did not but my mother had to do it because that’s a way she felt good.

Nancy: Yes, yeah, of course.

Nancy: She wouldn’t be like, “Give me more money! I don’t have any. I don’t care, just find money and send home.” It’s not.

Nancy: She’s a giver.

Maria: So we did have some time were we would not see my mother. I do remember once that she would come and bring - like on Sundays, when they had only half day work - she would bring like a funny bare cream [unclear], I mean lotion. That’s what we like. And lots of tomatoes. We would grab them, wash them, and put some sugar and eat them.

Nancy: That’s how we used to eat it. I’m from Texas. Everybody laughs at me when I tell them our dessert was tomato slices with sugar.

Lucinda: Never heard of that.

Nancy: See? Well I want to thank you so much. I could listen forever but I think we better get on with our day. And your father probably has to build another two or three stone walls today {laughter}. 
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[01:02:25.16] Maria: Oh yeah. He’s not sure if he is going back or staying this year.

[01:02:28.22] Lucinda: I was curious - one thing I wanted to ask. What is it like for you Maria - and Greg and Chuy - who live here when your mom is so far away? I mean your family is - well I guess lots of, even American families don’t live in the same place.

[01:02:50.06] Maria: Well we try to keep very close. Call my mother, send money. But it is hard. When everybody’s birthday comes and we all, like, “Oh, today's my mom's birthday!” Well, we all know it is my mom's birthday. We all know when it's my father's birthday. But when it's my sister's or myself, everybody is like connecting everybody, making sure everybody calling everyone. But it is hard to have my mother and sisters so far apart. It’s very hard, very sad when they’re sick and you can’t be there. When we call her, she’s always like in a good mood - talking and making us laugh. One time she was very sick and she would try not to -

[01:03:55.17] Lucinda: let you know?

[01:03:56.06] Maria: Yes. But it was hard because she was in pain. That felt the worst.

[01:04:06.10] Lucinda: That's horrible.

[01:04:07.17] Maria: So it is hard, it is sad, but we always hope to see us again, and be together. And our best wishes is to be - to imagine to have my mom and my dad, and all of us together.

[01:04:25.09] Maria: And then the grandkids. That I can imagine back home. Not here, but back home. And so my kids, and our kids can live a little bit of what we used to live.

[01:04:40.10] Nancy: To know you, and your home, and how you grew up.

[01:04:42.28] Maria: Everything’s changed, everything’s so different.

[01:04:45.24] Lucinda: I bet that will change in your lifetime.

[01:04:47.05] Nancy: I bet it will too.

[01:04:48.02] Lucinda: I think it will.

[01:04:49.03] Nancy: I hope so. My hope is that it does for you.

[01:04:51.29] Maria: Yeah, it will.

[01:04:52.18] Lucinda: We might even have a Mexican-American president someday.

[01:04:56.04] Maria: Imagine! Well, we have the African-American -
[01:04:59.07] Nancy: It's very possible, yeah. In your lifetime, for sure.

[01:05:04.13] Maria: Yeah well things have kind of changed for good. And they will because nobody wants to live a life where they’re afraid.

[01:05:13.05] Nancy: No.

[01:05:13.27] Maria: No. I think everything’s got to change for good and it will {laughter}.


End of Session One
Papa: Ramon Partida Cardenas

* 1950 born
* 1959 last year of school 9 years old.
* 1960 started to work @ 10 years old. (horses)
* 1971 got married, electrician in the metro in Mexico City.
* 1974 had 2 kids. "no nails".
* 1975 came to USA first time - chickens, California, Washington back and forth Mexico.
* 1980 Alaska - Warehouse.
* 1985 Build first house "real house".
* Already had Josefin, Greg, Jesus, Ramon, Maria, Teresa, Mercedes, Esperanza, Margarita.
* 1992 Nacio Arturo En USA.
* 1994 Linden, Wa. "
* 1997 First time in Nantucket.
* 1998 KENT PO KPL STONE WORK landscaping.
* 1999 Went back to Wa. came back to Nantucket.
* 2000 Maria got married Arturo was here.
* 2001 Partida family "beginings" Mike Flanigan
* 2002 Sep. started company with Greg.
* STONE WORK.