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Interview No. 1601

Esteban Chavez

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Esteban Chavez

Interviewer: Manuel Sanmiguel

Project: Bracero Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: May 16

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1601

Transcriber / Summary: Mayra L. Avila

Esteban Chavez was born in Colonia Esperanza, Chihuahua, Mexico and grew up in Juarez; he recalls his father crossing the river daily to work in the fields, with his earnings he bought land and grew cotton and wheat; Mr. Chavez attended school until he was eight years old because his father needed help; he recalls the school had no chairs or desk, he rotated weeks with his brother so they could attend school. Mr. Chavez recalls that in 1943 he tried to go as a bracero but was rejected because of his age; once he turned eighteen he was contracted along with his two older brothers; he recalls it taking two days to sign his contract, consequently they slept on the floor near the train; he recalls the health check by Mexican doctors, having their hands inspected, and being disinfected for lice; he recalls working in El Paso, making .40 cents a pound, and driving large machinery; he remembers fifty men sleeping in a barrack, using the river to bathe, and not having a bathroom; he explains that he and his brothers rotated cooking and would spend a total of four dollars a week on groceries; he recalls illegals would work alongside them and were paid the same amount; he points out that immigration agents were not brutal but respectful; he explains how he brought his family to the United States and became an American citizen; he explains how he worked in the train tracks near Texas Western College, and hearing the explosions from the mines.

Length of interview 57 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a