

4-1984

## Interview no. 656

Luis R. Lujan

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Luis R. Lujan  
INTERVIEWER: Georgina Mendoza  
PROJECT: History of the University/Class Project  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: Ca. April 1984  
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted  
TAPE NO.: 656  
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 656

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

El Paso native; attended Austin and Cathedral high schools, El. T. El Paso; joined the Navy, was a recruiter for Anapolis; worked with Admissions office at Stanford University; currently with Development Office at U.T. El Paso

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Biographical data; experiences as a student at U.T.E.P.; experiences working on the East Coast and in California; returning to El Paso and working at U.T.E.P.

Length of interview: 50 minutes Length of transcript: 22 pages

Luis R. Lujan  
by Georgina Mendoza  
Ca. April 1984

M: Are your parents from the United States? And if they are not, how is it that they arrived here?

L: Well, both my parents were born in the states. My dad was born here in El Paso, my mother was born in Valentine, Texas. Their parents were born in Mexico--on my mothers side in Chihuahua and Lon my fathers side, in Parral. Their families moved here.

M: Your grandparents, did they stay in Mexico, or did they themselves come to the United states?

L: No, they themselves moved to the United States.

M: And, approximately, do you know what year?

L: That was probably back in the twenties.

M: Have your parents ever told you how is it that they came to the United States, by train or by...?

L: No, not really. The conversations usually focused on just the fact that they came over to the States, the difficulties of adjusting once here. They didn't really go much into detail about talking about how it was where they were before, but just the transition in coming to the States.

M: Did they ever talk about what was it that brought them to the United States?

L: Yeah. It was opportunity, better way of life; seeking, kind of like the the old pioneers.

M: So you yourself are from the United States. You were born here.

L: Yeah, I was born in El Paso.

M: You were born in El Paso, raised here and lived here most of your life, or all of your life?

L: Most of my life. I did move out after I graduated from UTEP for about a period of about eleven years, and I just returned in '81.

M: Okay, just recently then. What was your parents' educational background?

L: Well, see, my parents, my mother got up to about the tenth grade and then she stopped going to school. At that point my grandfather had died and she was the oldest, and she stopped going to school and started working to assist the household.

M: And your dad?

L: My dad, pretty much a similar situation in that he got to the sixth grade, and being one of the oldest, the two eldest of the family, stopped going to school and started working. And he had odd jobs and has been working since and never gone back to school.

M: Did they ever tell you about the times when they were in school? For example, what they went through while going to school. What it was like for them?

L: Really not too much. It seems to be a sensitive subject, particularly with my dad. I think he carries a lot of bitterness in not being able to continue, because he does tell me that when the decision was made for him not to go back to school, it was arbitrarily made and he really didn't have a voice, and he spent a couple of days crying and rebelling and trying to justify why he should continue.

M: So he had to leave.

L: So he had to leave, so I think he really did enjoy it.

M: So for example, what was more or less your relationship with them, in the sense that was it a friendship relationship or was it more like the son and the father?

L: It was more of a father who is out there making a living and the son who is trying to keep out of trouble and doing the best he could

in school, and always trying to make a favorable rapport. We for the first couple of years, up till I started school, we lived in the Second Ward and we had a lot of our family in the area, so some of my memories are just going a block or two and visiting and aunt or my grandmother.

M: So what was it for you when you got out of the Second Ward?

L: Well, it was a gradual progression of change.

M: A positive change, you mean.

L: Yeah, we could see that there was a different atmosphere; but not necessarily positive, it [was] just different. We had lived in Second Ward and then we moved to what now is Interstate 10. It used to be a cluster of housing there. We lived on a street called Manzana, I remember that very well, and it was pretty much I think like projects. I recall a lot of blacks who lived there and a lot of my friends were blacks. And I started school at Guardian Angel, and we lived there for about a year, a year and a half, and then we moved up towards Cliff Street and went to Morehead school and then to Saint Patrick's.

M: So what stood out more in your family, like traditions, the culture, being Mexican American? I don't know if you had the real traditional Mexican way of life that they do in Mexico or was it more changed, more revised?

L: I recall, you know, always hearing... I mean the music always seemed to be a big part in the family. My dad played and continues to play the guitar, he would sing a lot when they would have their friends over. They would get together and do that type of thing, and so we grew up with Mexican music. We had the family get together, the piñatas and that kind of thing, going to barbecues

where they prepare a cow's head and that kind of thing, family outings.

M: So all your family would get together and have a good time.

L: Yeah.

M: Would it be more of the extended family?

L: Yeah, I think that was pretty much, those types of things stand out in my mind, family outings. I think during the week both my parents were working, so basically we were raised by our grandmothers I would say.

M: What kind of occupation did your mother have?

L: She worked for a long time at a meat company, Swift. She was working there and then went from there to working with one of the grocery stores, it was Furr's, in the packing [department]. She worked there for a very long time. My dad was working with Southern Pacific Railroad and then they had a big switch of personnel, and they had offered him to keep his job to move over to California, which he didn't want to. Well, the story goes, he at first didn't want to, then he said, "Well, it's a good deal," but my mother didn't want to leave El Paso, and so it was decided that they would stay here. And he went and finally just started working with the city, with the sanitation department, and he's been there since. He's been driving a sanitation truck.

M: Did your parents talk about the hard times? For example, your mother, at her job, the differences, lets say salary. Or more or less what was her salary at that time?

L: I'm not to sure what their salary range was at the time, but I don't ever recall her complaining or looking about and saying, "Here's something that's unjust," 'cause I've asked her about that. When I was away from El Paso for 11 years, I think you develop a different type of awareness. And I would address that, and for a

long time, even now, I think I'm seen as some what of a radical in some of the ideas I expressed. Just the term Chicano for example, my parents have said, "What's wrong with you?" That has a negative conotation to them, so in the course of talking about those things, I would ask, "Well, can you tell me how it was at work, how did people treat you," that kind of thing, and they'd say, "It was okay, they didn't treat me any different than they did other people." But that's their impression I guess. I think like in my case, you almost have to be in a different type of environment to look back and say, "Yeah, I recall now that maybe that wasn't really quite \_\_\_\_\_."

M: So, how many were in your family?

L: There's five boys, I have four younger brothers.

M: Four younger brothers.

L: Yeah. I had another brother that was born before me, but he died, so I inherited the eldest position.

M: So, you took most of the responsibilities for all the rest of your younger brothers.

L: Yeah. For the longest time, really the family consisted of three brothers. The first three [are] three years apart, and there was a span of about 10 years and then we had our fourth brother born, and then another span of about five or six years and the youngest was born. And by time they were coming up in age, most of us had already left the house, gone into the service, and it was a very difficult situation, [in] particular for my mother, because she had really at [a] later part in our schooling, she decided to stop working, and I think she found herself wanting to make up for lost time. So she really tried to make a bond with us, [but] at that point we were really all involved with school or working and

probably did not receive her as well as she would have liked us to. And I think probably that her and my decided, "Well, let's have some more children, these guys are giving up on us." So there was a big lag there.

M: Between your brothers?

L: Between the first three and the other two.

M: So, did they see you as the role model? Did they follow your footsteps?

L: Oh, yeah! I tell you, I don't know if that was a blessing or a curse. (Chuckles) But that seems to be typical, I think, of the eldest in just about any family. My youngest brother is 13 right now, I'm 34 years old, so that gives you an idea of the span and difference.

M: So for example, when you were growing up, what was most important to you? I don't know if you can recall as you were growing up what stood out most for you. Sometimes you don't see reality until you get out.

L: That's an interesting question. As I recall I think I would enjoy some of the school activities. I developed some friendships at different parts of my schooling, different years of my schooling, and I still socialize with friends that I met in the third grade, for example, who've stayed in the area, kept in touch. So I guess probably the friendship bonds that were developed have still kept. We used to do the usual things that everybody liked to do.

M: You didn't have any incidents that you recall that really stand out and that perhaps you might never forget for the rest of your life?

L: Oh yeah (laughs), I recall when I first started school. Going to school, this was at Guardian Angel, there was a railroad track we



had to cross and I was walking with a friend. And there was this... she looked to be seven foot tall girl that was walking behind us. I'm sure she wasn't that tall, but she appeared that way, being in the first grade and all. She was black and she started talking to us and asking us where we were going, and if we were going to school and so forth, and I started to feel very uneasy. And then I turned around and I saw that she had picked up one of these rocks that you see at the railroad tracks -- big, black, awesome--and had hit my friend on the head with it. He took off running and I took off running and she threw one at me, and it did hit me, and I got a big gash on the back of my head. So [ ] to make a [ ] long story short, that was very traumatic 'cause we could never figure out why she had done that, why she had singled us out. So I went home, and obviously my mother [ ] was [ ] just getting ready to go to work, and she didn't go and she said, "We're going to get to the bottom of this, we're, going to go to school and find out if she's there and what's going on." So I had to pick her out of a line-up. I think she had gone to, I think maybe the name was Beall school, primarily a lot of blacks at that school, and it was close enough to Guardian Angel, so that was very traumatic, that was strange. And going to school, eating in the cafeteria, I recall was a little uneasy, taking the burritos, and then seeing people pull out fried chicken or a thermos and soup or something, or would get the school food, and it just felt a little bit out of place.

M: Did you intermingle a lot with the students at school, other than your friends?

L: Probably not. I think I tended to just pretty well be selective, I suppose.

M: Was it predominantly Mexican American?

L: It was predominantly Mexican American?

M: Were they precisely people with money?

L: No, they were pretty much the people who lived in the immediate neighborhood, who lived in the area, so that we not only saw each other at school, but after school we'd go and play together, 'cause they lived across the street or next door and that type of thing.

M: But you did enjoy your school years?

L: Yeah, I would say that I did, all things considered.

M: And did you participate in activities at the school?

L: Lets see, in grade school, I participated some in track, was in the scouts for a while. I suppose, when I went to Saint Patrick's, that's where I started mingling or interacting with people other than Mexican Americans, because prior to that it was Second Ward, Guardian Angel, or Morehead, and it's predominantly Mexican American. And going to a parochial school, I noticed that there was a greater difference, and I developed some friendships, and it wasn't until later that we went our separate ways.

M: Your [next] school was Saint Patrick's?

L: Yeah, Saint Patrick's. I was there from third grade through [the eight grade].

M: And then after high school you pursued a college degree right afterwards.

L: Right. [I] went to two different high schools, went to Austin for freshman and sophomore year and then transferred to Cathedral for junior and senior year, and then came directly to UTEP. This was in '68.

M: And how was it here when you arrived here?

L: It was scary.

M: In what sense?

L: Just the size of it, 'cause that was one of the reasons that I transferred to Cathedral, 'cause I thought Austin was too awesome and big, walking down the hallways, changing classes and that kind of thing. It seemed a little bit out of control and I was not doing as well. I just hadn't had my mind set to be going to a large public school. And it was also partly due to the fact that we'd moved there, and so it was a new area, new neighborhood, new school, new faces, and everybody that I had grown up with was on this side of town. So, I lived over there, but I socialized over here, and they'd go on that side. But it was just the transition.

M: For example, when you were at Austin, what were your teachers like? Did they see the students in a positive aspect?

L: Well, I recall when you go up as a freshman and they ask you... they had at that time three different college routes, or academic routes. One was vocational and the other was regular high school and the other was the college route, or something like that. They asked me to make a choice and I said, "Well, explain to me a little bit more about the differences." And he said, "Well, this one, you can take auto mechanics, you can learn all about it and it be able to work right after you finish school, go back to a job. And this other, you take the basic courses, requirements." And I opted for the college route, and the counselor seemed a little surprised, and he said, "Well, do you know that you want to go to college, are you sure you're going to go to college?" And I said, "No, I'm not sure, but if I do decide four years from now, at

least I would have had the courses." But I thought that was unusual in that I was in the position to persuade him that I should take that.

M: But they didn't really, actually make the decision for you.

L: I think that if I had not said that, if I had not asked that he tell me about the college route ... 'cause I remember him saying, "Well, I don't think that you should." And I went to the main office and I needed to get somebody's signature, 'cause he didn't feel that I should continue. I guess based on whatever records he might have been looking at, he felt, "No I don't think that's the right route for you." And I said, "Well, if I don't make it, then I can always go back to this one, right?" He said, "Well, yeah, but why waste your time and all that stuff?" "Well, I'm not going to.." He gave me some paper and I had to go to the main office and they signed it there, and so lo and behold I became a college route student.

M: I am also interested, how was it when you attended [UTEP]?

L: Again I found myself trying to fight the system.

M: What were the differences that you saw among your peers, the professors?

L: I didn't feel singled out individually but it was like, "You're here and here we are and we are going to put you to the test. You're on your own, see if you're going to make it or not." Orientation as freshmen, going to Magoffin Auditorium, filing in and and seeing all the deans up on the stage and the president talking, and somebody, I forgot who it was, made a comment that, "Next year at this time one of you isn't going to be here. Look to the side of you, one of of you isn't going to be here." So, that was my orientation and introduction to college life. You looked at your neighbor and said, "Well, is it going to be me or you?" And that kind of set

the tone, and I think people would say, "Gee, I can't really trust this person 'cause they might say or do something to make me be the one to leave."

M: Was it predominantly Mexican American?

L: It was mixed. I met new people from other schools. The friendships then started to depend on the classes I would take, trying to find study groups and people like that. I didn't really get involved here. I continued working, I would schedule my courses depending on my work schedule.

M: So, you weren't really involved in activities or clubs?

L: None at all. I did some intramurals. It wasn't until my senior year that I just stopped working and just enjoyed the leisure of going into the library, or sitting out there on the lawn reading a book, and that's when [I] really started to see then what college life could be, and had not been for me.

M: Other than that, you didn't see, for example any injustices among the groups or discriminations?

L: Yeah, I think there were injustices. I think that going through it, being here, and I think it's still true, people who live in El Paso, you just become so attuned to the way things are done that that becomes the norm. It isn't till something drastic or that touches you personally, that you might label it as an injustice. So I think there were things built into the system, that maybe not directly might have discriminated, but at the same time didn't really make it that much easier. Or wasn't helpful to those people, the Chicanos, who needed an extra help, an extra... a role model or someone to feel comfortable to go to and say, "Gee, I'm not sure if I should stay in this course." There were courses that I know

I should have dropped, but I felt that by dropping them the system was going to come down on me and say, "Okay, your time is up, you're out." For me personally there wasn't really any direction and I didn't feel confident to go out and seek the help. I felt that I just needed to grab it by the horns, you might say, and hold on as long as I [could].

M: How about, for example, grants to help the Mexican American, the Chicano, enter the university? And how much was there available for them?

L: I think there were grants. I would hear more about loans. I remember lots of my friends would get loans from the local banks and I just kept away from that. Seeing my family struggle with monies and struggle with loan payments, a loan to me was a bad word, a four-letter word, and I just steered away from that, and I worked about 35 hours a week at odd jobs.

M: So you paid for your college?

L: I paid for my college, and it wasn't until my senior year that I realized that there were what they called grants and that these were free monies if you qualified, depending on income and family. And it was really a shock, because I could have received those the entire time I was here. I just never went to that office to make an effort, and it wasn't until I saw a friend of mine and I said, "Well, how do you do it?" Because he was in [a] difficult financial [situation]. He was working to help at home too, and he said, "Well, I've just been getting a grant and that makes a big difference."

M: Well, like for example, now, I see the difference in that a lot of services here offer a lot of help for Mexican Americans, for minorities, and anybody who wants it can get help. There seems to be a division,

there is the Mexican American group and there is an Anglo group, and there is another group, and at that time was it more like an assimilation process as a Mexican American?

L: I think so, I think there was more of you had to blend in with the way things were done, with those people that were doing it that particular way. It wasn't, "Well, I'm going to hang out here with my group." That started to happen in the early '70's, right before I graduated, like in '71, '72. There started to be more of, "Hey, we are different and we shouldn't feel that being different is bad. Why don't you try to be more like us rather than us always trying to appease you guys?" That type of awareness started coming through, and I recall many of us felt, we agreed with them in a philosophical sense but we were kind of torn, 'cause we had already made some friendships that way and a lot of people started to present it just as black and white, it wasn't so much of, "Let's look at these differences and accept these differences." But it was an interesting period of time.

M: Do you recall any demonstrations?

L: Yeah, I recall walking out of class and seeing the University Avenue blocked off with buses, police in riot gear and storming down the street, and lot of my friends, turning around and saying, "Well, what are we going to do?" We had seen this on television, but never thought it would be here in El Paso. That was the time when MEChA was blocking the entrance to the Administration Building, basically trying to make a statement. They said, "Somebody listen."

M: But as far as you participating in them, you really didn't?

L: In the active part?

M: Yes, in the active part.

L: No, I didn't. I did in the sense in getting together with some of the people and we would talk about strategies, and there were differences there a lot of times in what people wanted to do. Some would say "This is the way to get their attention," and others would say "Well, no, I think there's a better way. I think if we get some support from this faculty person or this other faculty person, that might be the best way to get the administration's attention." And so everybody was concerned about the same thing, but we were differing as to how to approach it. And so there was factionalism even within ourselves, among the Mexican Americans, Chicanos. It was sad because that's exactly what the system wanted to see, it was a minority within a minority, because as soon as there were people in front of the Administration Building there were some others out there that weren't there. So they would say, "These guys don't have the support." But it was just differences of the approaches, how to solve the problem.

M: So, there were Mexican American organizations here at that time. MEChA was one of them.

L: Yeah. MEChA was the most popular one and the most vocal. There were some professional organizations like the engineers, they have a long history here. Some of the social clubs.

M: How did they see MEChA, or Mexican American groups that were very vocal?

L: I think some of us were hesitant about embracing MEChA because of the feeling that they were not necessarily conveying all of the concerns of interest that we might have had, or the way they conveyed it. And you looked around and you heard MEChA and you saw how people reacted, and I guess there was a tendency of not wanting to



be identified with this group of bad people, supposedly, which was totally false. I remember in my Political Science classes, taking a lot of courses, they were just bringing them in, you know, culture awareness, politics, Mexican American this or that, and we would look at each other and say, "You know, we don't have to take this, it's the other people who have to take this course." (Laughs) 'Cause we knew it was there, we knew it was happening, but it was a class on Mexican American culture. And I learned a lot, but after a while it struck us that the people that should be learning about it were not listening. And we could talk among ourselves all we wanted and discuss about the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and "Yeah, that was wrong, I wish I had known that, what's the real basis for it," but then in trying to convey the injustice of that to others, they'd say, "What's wrong with you, aren't you Americans?" (Laughs)

M: So your views have changed a lot since then?

L: Yeah, I think that I've seen the injustices, I've become much more aware, and I credit that primarily to moving away from El Paso.

M: Tell me about that.

L: I lived on the East Coast, and growing up in El Paso and being used to the environment that El Paso has, it was very much an alien place. There were no brown faces, there were no Mexican stations or music that you would turn the radio on to, billboards, just a lot of things that you take for granted, you just realize, "Hey, this is a different world." And I started to embrace those things. I made a special effort to use Spanish in the family. At work, with people, I talked about my culture. People were more curious as to what I was, if I was Filipino, or Indian, or Hawaiian. I would

say, "No, I'm Mexican, this is what it's all about." So in making that effort, in clinging to that, going to the libraries and picking out books and just making a special effort, one felt threatened that you was going to lose or find yourself just so assimilated that before long you wouldn't care to cling to that important part of your heritage. So that ironically came about, just finding oneself in an alien environment.

M: So you were away from El Paso for how many years?

L: For about 11 years. I lived on the East Coast for about four years and then moved to California. And that was an interesting experience, because having lived on the East Coast I was just so hungry to be back in a Mexican American environment. And I couldn't get located here, so I worked in Stanford University for about five and a half years. And it was a very active Chicano community. But once again all they knew about me at the time was a Mexican American coming from Maryland, and so it took a long time for them to say, "He's an okay person." (Laughs) They had these stereotypical... So that was frustrating 'cause I wanted to just jump right in; but I couldn't do that, they just wouldn't have anything to do with me. It was a gradual process, when they realized that I grew up in El Paso.

M: What are the changes from the Chicanos down there to here in El Paso?

L: Over there, the word Chicano is accepted. You have politicians, you have priests, you have just people using that as a term which is very much what some people would feel comfortable saying is Hispano. I think that's more accepted here now, but over there Chicano would be a term we would use. And we got to the point where we just automatically referred to ourselves as that, and so

when we would visit El Paso and say, "We had a really nice Cinco de Mayo, all the Chicanos were there," they would look at us, and say, "What's wrong with you?" 'Cause to them, they pictured these people with bandanas.

M: Well, I think it was very hard for me to accept the word Chicano.

L: But it was a cultural awareness [there]. If you were to imagine the local LULAC'S, all the business [and] bankers, people getting together in three piece suits, and feeling free to say, "Chicanos," that would be the difference. LULAC wouldn't say that, [they'd say] Latin Americans.

M: How about for example as far as being active, the difference in Mexican Americans from California to here in El Paso, would they voice their opinion or were they more passive?

L: No, much more active. I think there were still gaps there in terms of the system, but they were seen as a legitimate group with legitimate complaints, and sincere efforts, at least in my experience, to try to solve those things. You always had people who didn't want to deal with it or have anything to do with that type of thing. We had more, for a private institution, we had more Chicano faculty and staff there and administration than we do here at UTEP, and that was really a shock. When I came back as an administrator now, and looking around, we really should be the leaders, we should have ten times as much.

M: While you were up there, what was more, I guess, as far as the year, what year were you up there in California?

L: I was there from '76 through '81.

M: Was that a period of, for example, among the Mexican American community, I'm trying to say for example, demonstrations or riots,

or, what stood out most.

L: No, they didn't have any riots, they may have had them about the same time that we had them here at UTEP, in the early '70's. There was still political activity and a lot of task forces and groups looking into issues, such as admissions and scholarships, which I was working in at the time. I worked in admission and in recruitment for minority students, putting together special brochures and literature, and trying to get Chicanos to go up to Stanford. That was one of my primary tasks while I was there.

M: So were you involved in some kind of community activities, or political activities?

L: They were limited primarily to educational related. We'd do forms for the community colleges. There were some organizations, one group called RACHE, it was kind of a professional group for Chicanos in Education, administrators and and faculty. I think it was called Raza Administrators and Chicanos in Education, or something like that.

M: And you were a member of it?

L: Yeah, so there were things like that, and it was primarily to maintain a focus on the concerns and to develop links between the secondary schools, the community colleges and four year institutions, both public and private, and so we tried to maintain lines of communication.

M: Outside that, within the community were you involved in political activities, or social for that matter.

L: No. I think most of our activities were limited to the campus.

M: But you yourself, were you involved in any outside activities, or community activities, social events?

L: No, it was, I think we lived, we rented a house for the first two

years in California, and it took us almost that time to get to know the place, so there wasn't a real incentive, and we really didn't make an effort to go out there and get involved.

M: How about here in El Paso?

L: Here in El Paso, it's been much more the case. I've been involved with different advisory boards and community groups, things of that nature, and that was deliberate on my part. I felt like I wanted to be on them.

M: Now this mainly among Mexican Americans?

L: Uh, lets see, it started out that way, it's branched off into other, like health organizations, like the March of Dimes, for example. I've worked on some committees with the Concilio, some committee over at the Community College related to recruitment and to fund raising, which the area I'm working in right now. Recruitment because of my past life.

M: How about your work experience? Start out from your first job.

L: My first job was working at Fort Bliss. It was the summer after my 10th grade, my first legitimate official paying job, and I was running a press, a duplicating press.

M: And then after that?

L: And I stayed with that job for summers, henceforth. And then, let's see, I had a variety of jobs. I used to sell hot dogs at Der Wienerschnitzel, full time, one year in high school; worked as a work study student here on campus, set up displays at the museum, tours at the museum here on campus. I was a math grader for one semester. Really I'm still confused, math has never been my forte laughter, but maybe that's why I only lasted one semester. They transferred me to another position. But just really anything that I

could find. And then finally, I found a job downtown in a print shop, and I stayed with that, and that paid my college.

M: So then after you got your degree in your profession you started working in your profession.

L: No. After I got my degree, I worked in the summer at St. Joseph's Hospital as a counselor and orderly, in what they call the Adolescents Ward, for runaways and drug abusers, and that was interesting.

M: What is your degree?

L: My degree is in Political Science with a minor in Psychology.

M: With a minor in Psychology.

L: Yeah, and I had visions of going to Law school.

M: And then you pursued a Master's degree?

L: Well no, I graduated from college and then I was going to be drafted, so I had a choice either to be drafted into the Army or enlist. And I opted to enlist in the Navy. And I spent one year as an enlisted man and then when they saw my paperwork, I recall the chief that was there was Mexican. [Pause] [He] noticed I had a degree, and started to encourage me to apply for officer candidate school, which I ultimately did, and then went through officer training. I got a commission in the Navy, so while in the Navy I started as an Officer. That was most rewarding. It was one of the more difficult things I've ever gone through, but also one of the most rewarding, which kind of set the pattern for my career at that point. 'Cause then I ended being stationed at Annapolis, which was doing counseling and guidance and recruitment for the Naval Academy, which then was the springboard to Stanford University and working in admissions there, and then those two combined a springboard to

come back to El Paso, in this capacity, fund raising.

M: So you've been here since 1981. Do you plan to stay here?

L: I don't know, I think about that.

M: Why?

L: I think when I moved here in '81, that was my impression, that this is it, I've worked all this time, I've been away all these years, I somehow had paid the dues, now I'm going to come back and reap the rewards. But things haven't worked out quite as well as I would have liked to. So I'm kind of reopening that part of my mind to not close out opportunities if they present themselves.

M: Now you said something about law school. Why didn't you go that route?

L: Well, I did try, I made a sincere effort while in the Navy, 'cause they have a program and they pick up your law school with additional obligated service, but primarily my score on the LSAT was a discouraging factor. I think if I might have re-taken it I might have done better, but at that point I just decided to opt for something else.

M: How did you meet your wife? Or, are you married, maybe I should ask?

L: Well, we are in the process of a divorce right now. I met her, she's from El Paso, I met her right after high school and we knew each other all through college, and really didn't date probably seriously until the last two weeks of college. We've been married about ten years, [we] have three children. My oldest son, Luis, is 10; and I have a daughter, Andrea, who is six; and another son, Daniel, who is five.

M: Does your wife work, or does she basically stay home?

L: She basically was at home during our marriage, and went back to school in '80 while we were in California. She went to a community

college and then applied for a transfer and went to Stanford and she had one year left to do at Stanford when I got this job. so that was kind of a transition for us. We all came back here and it wasn't really decided whether she was going to go back and finish her degree at Stanford or maybe finish it here at UTEP. It was decided she would go back, I stayed here with the kids and she went back to school for a year in California and got her B.A. in Spanish and English Literature. And which is most comendable, and I think we all tried to support her. We didn't get the understanding from our families, but it was a decision between her and I, but it did put a strain in the relationship and we recognized it could, but didn't know to the extent that [we'd divorce]. So she finished her degree and she came back and we just had difficulties.

M: So your children are still in school?

L: Yeah, [my] children are still in school.

M: If you could be 16 years old again, how would you relive you life?

L: I would venture to say I'd do the same thing. Every part of my life, whether it's been decisions or traumatic experiences, you weigh the best options that you have at the time and you go with your heart and your gut, and I wouldn't want to change anything.

M: That's good. Well, thank you very much, I've enjoyed hearing it.