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Interview no. 1255

Estela V. Cervantes

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Biographical Synopsis of Interviewee: Estela V. Cervantes was born November 11, 1924, in Del Rey, California; when she was five years old, her family moved to Irapuato, Guanajuato, México, which was her mother’s hometown; her family was well-off, because her mother had businesses, and her father owned a lot of land; Estela had four siblings, all of whom were born in México; she was formally educated with nuns through the fifth grade before attending a government school; in 1941, she married, and by 1943, her husband, Jesús, had joined the bracero program; as a bracero, he labored in the fields of California, Oregon and Washington, picking apples, cantaloupe, cherries and grapes; Estela and Jesús went on to have a total of seven children, and they eventually settled in the United States.

Summary of Interview: Ms. Cervantes talks about her family and what her life was like growing up in México; she describes meeting her husband, Jesús; he was born in Irapuato, Guanajuato, México and raised in the small nearby town of Copalillo; his parents were campesinos, and he and his three brothers also worked in the fields; in 1941, Estela and Jesús were married; two years later, in 1943, he left to Mexico, Distrito Federal without telling anyone; Estela later learned that he left in order to enlist in the bracero program; he had heard about the program through his friends and went in the hope of providing a better life for his family; as a bracero, he labored in the fields of California, Oregon and Washington, picking apples, cantaloupe, cherries and grapes; while he was gone, she stayed with her in-laws; he wrote often and sent money home, but his mother kept everything; while he was a bracero, Estela lived in Fresno, California for a short time; she goes on to discuss their life together after the program as well; Estela and Jesús went on to have a total of seven children, and they eventually settled in the United States.