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## Interview no. 1509

Hector Barragan

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Hector Barragan

Interviewer: Edmundo Valencia

Project: Hispanic Entrepreneurs Oral History Project

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: February 9, 2009

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Transcript No.: 1509

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Hector Barragan founded the Pipo Academy of Hair Design in El Paso, TX; he is from Segundo Barrio in El Paso; he began cutting hair after leaving Segundo Barrio, learned it from his parents and brothers that were barbers on Colon St.; His mother is from Puebla and father from Chihuahua; describes working with his brothers and learning importance of sanitation and technique. Mr. Barragan recounts working for well-known barber Mr. Alonso Cole and the mentorship he provided in technique and the business aspects of running a barbershop and barber supply store; states Mr. Cole's consistency and salesmanship made him a successful businessman; describes Mr. Cole's sponsorship for barber school in San Antonio and financial support he provided him in starting his own barbershop business; Mr. Barragan mentions how his wife assisted him with his English language skills and her role in helping him establish his barber college; details his long experience getting accreditation for his school and a man named Jonathon that assisted him with it; mentions local beautician school owner and chairman of accreditation in El Paso Al Ratner's efforts to prevent him from getting accreditation due to fear of competition; recalls his school opening in 1976 and shortly thereafter Mr. Ratner went out of business; frustration that the city would recommend students to Mr. Ratner and later to El Paso Community College instead of him; goes over effort to secure loans thorough organizations such as the Small Business Association due to not initially receiving grants. Mr. Barragan talks about his current reaccreditation, grants for expansion and explains why he thinks the city refers students to EPCC instead of him; elaborates on his relationship with the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce; explains how barbering is a skill and not just a commodity which separates it from other businesses; goes over the daily processes of his business the people that currently manage aspects of his business; concludes with need for management training as your business expands.

Length of interview 49 minutes

Length of Transcript 26 pages

Name of Interviewee: Hector Barragán  
Date of Interview: 26 January 2009  
Name of Interviewer: Edmundo Valencia

This is an interview with Hector Barragán on January 26, 2009 in El Paso Texas. The interviewer is Edmundo Valencia. This interview is part of the Paso Del Norte Entrepreneurs Oral History Project.

EV: Okay Mr. Barragán, when and where were you born?

HB: I was born here in El Paso at 508 ½ South El Paso Street. That time my mother had a midwife called Petrita, and I was right there—I was born right there at that address across the street from the Colón Theater in Segundo Barrio.

EV: Right on El Paso Street?

HB: Yeah, 508 ½ South El Paso.

EV: In what year was this?

HB: That was 1935. October 23, 1935.

EV: And did you grow up here in El Paso?

HB: I grew up here in El Paso. I grew up at the Second Ward. My father died in 1943 and then we moved up to Dallas and Wyoming. And then in 1950 we moved to 1101 California, and then I got married, and I moved to this address here, 3500 Montana, and I've been here since 1955.

EV: Who were, or who are, your parents?

HB: My parents?

EV: Yeah, what were their names? Are they still alive?

HB: My father's name was Mauricio Barragán, and he was from Chihuahua. My mother was born in Puebla and she got married here in El Paso with my dad, and I don't know too much about their history because my mother became an orphan and my and my father had a brother, but I don't know what happened to him. We lost track of him, and then my grandmother died during the epidemic back in the thirties, the early thirties, and so did one of my sisters. Back in the thirties, I was just barely born and I remember some commotion about that going on when they died.

EV: Yeah, so you were kinda born right after that really bad time, the depression, right?

HB: Yes, during the depression, yes. The depression was still going on a little bit because I remember that they used to give us stamps to go buy food. They didn't give us stamps to buy groceries. We were limited to what we could buy, and that's why Juárez was real handy because see, we ran out of sugar with the stamps that they would allow us five pounds of sugar, then we would go across the border and I would always go with mother, and then we would buy sugar over there and bring it over here because we were limited about—to a lot of things that we could buy. Even loaves of bread—we couldn't buy loaves of bread over there, we had to go across the border, buy the bread and bring it over here.

EV: And I'm sorry, I didn't get the name of your mother?

HB: My mother's name was Rebeca Moreno Avila.

EV: And what were their occupations?

HB: What?

EV: What were their occupations?

HB: My father was a barber and my mother was a beautician.

EV: So right from the beginning you were—

HB: Yes.

EV: —into this.

HB: Right from the beginning. And at one time there were thirty-two of us cutting hair here in El Paso—nephews, brothers, sisters, nieces.

EV: The whole family.

HB: The whole nine yards.

EV: So I'm sure your parents were operating at some sort of business?

HB: What?

EV: At the time. They were operating some sort of business—

HB: Well, were actually all working for one thing or another. When I got started cutting hair was in, when we moved from the Second Ward over here I was about fourteen [or] fourteen and a half [years of age] and I wanted to cut hair, and I would cut hair around the neighborhood: to Henry, to Chito, to Louie Arenas, and all the guys that I used to hang around. And my mother would straighten out their haircuts, till she got mad and she said, "No, I can't help you anymore, you have to go with your brother to help you out. And at that time my oldest brother Oscar, was working at Del Camino over here on Alameda Street when the barbershop

was there and the Del Camino used to be there. And I used to go over there and he used to teach me all the time. And he's the one that got me a job with Mr. Cole. I used to go work on Sundays with him, and he liked me quite a bit that he's the one that sponsored me to go to barber school. So right after I got out of barber school in 1955—when I graduated in January of '55 from high school, I went to San Antonio, got my license, come back and he gave me my first job as a barber, too. But I had been working for Mr. Cole since I was very young when we moved right here to this neighborhood because he had also a supply house, and I used to help him run it. In fact I bought all my equipment from Mr. Cole.

EV: Oh, so the supplies were related to the barber—

HB: Barber, yes.

EV: The barber profession.

HB: Yeah, he had nine barbershops—eight or nine barbershops here in El Paso, and my two oldest brothers worked for him.

EV: I'm sorry, Del Camino—what was that?

HB: Del Camino? Del Camino was a motel—

EV: Oh, that motel.

HB: One of the first motels on Alameda Street.

EV: And right around there, there was the barbershop where your—

HB: Across the street was a shopping center, and the barbershop was there. And that's where I used to go practice all the time.

EV: And what was the primary language that was spoken at your home, like when you were young?

HB: At that time was Spanish.

EV: Spanish.

HB: Yeah, and it was hard for me to get along because I started school late because I had to be six years old before September, so I was seven when I got started, and it was very, very hard for me because I couldn't speak Spanish or write, or spell right, or even read. So I had a lot of problems with English speaking—with spelling, reading, and writing, and literature. And it was real, real hard for me. I never went past English I throughout high school. I stayed in English I all from the eighth grade all the way to being a senior.

EV: And, so you improved your English when you went to the barber school? That's when you—

HB: Yes, I started improving a little bit more when I was in barber school, and when I got the accreditation for my beauty school, is when I really started picking it up a lot better. My wife, someone that could help me a lot. She helped read, she helped me study, she helped me do most of the things here, as I was getting along.

EV: And what is the present name of your company?

HB: I started right here. When I got out of high school I was working for Mr. Cole, and then when I moved from Mr. Cole, I went to work with my brothers at the Flamingo Barbershop, and there was five of us over there, working. There was four of us brothers and Joe Rivas. And I decided that I wanted to break away from them, so I came over here and put this shop here in 1966. So I put this right here

and I used to just work off of this two rooms here only, and we used to live in the back, so it was very easy for me, but at first it was hard. I gave it a good shot and I started producing. Because I wanted to learn to style hair. I was the first stylist in El Paso, and I had gone through a lot of training and a lot of other things that I wanted to do and I wanted to do something different. I found out that there was a company in California that was teaching people how to style hair and everything, so I went over there and I picked it up real fast. And I came over here and I just started styling hair. I decided to put this styling shop here. Then I got job with Redken Laboratories, and I stayed with them, well, twenty-five years, lecturing on how to cut hair with Redken Laboratories.

EV: You mentioned that you wanted sort of to break away from—

HB: From the family.

EV: The people you had worked—from your family.

HB: Yeah, and I wanted to come—

EV: That, in addition, or what else will be the factors that made you decide to go in business by yourself?

HB: Well, I already had four kids and I needed to make a little bit more money. And my father-in-law gave me the opportunity to buy this house here, and I figured well, if I could live over there I don't have to pay anymore rent. I'll just keep on paying it, the building and everything. It turned out to be a little rough at first, but then after the first month it started picking up, and I had close to fifteen workers here at one time working for me here. But the only problem is that since styling was just getting started, every time somebody opened up a barbershop or a beauty shop, I knew I was gonna lose some people because they would come and offer them—they'd claim that they were gonna give them a better job, which they



didn't. And I lost a lot of good workers. I lost a lot of, lot of good workers, but I never gave up.

EV: Were they also trying to open up their own businesses, or they were trying to work for other people?

HB: No, other people got wise and they said that they—they were not even in the business, they would open up shops and they go over there and they would start working for them. And they're still doing it a little bit. Not as much as then, though.

EV: If I got it right, you mentioned that you were one of the first—

HB: I was the first hair stylist.

EV: Hair stylist. The first hair stylist.

HB: I was the first hair stylist in El Paso.

EV: So you are a pioneer here in El Paso.

HB: I'm a pioneer, yes.

EV: For styling.

HB: Yes.

EV: What did it mean, at that time, to be a stylist? How did it break away from the traditional barbershop?

HB: Oh, it's because people started wearing longer hair and the hippie years were coming in. So I got my license in 1955, and then things started changing. And it didn't really start catching on for long hair till the seventies, till the hippie era. And, well, I was one of the first ones that I could do short hair, long hair and everything because most of the barbers, all they knew how to do was just short hair. See, like right now, most of the barbers, right now, all they're doing is short hair, so after all this years it's coming back again to how I first got started—flat tops and fades and everything like that, see.

EV: So in a sense you saw it as an opportunity to grow, to take some market that was not being attended?

HB: Yeah because Jay Sebring was very strong in California. Jay Sebring was very very strong. He's the one that got killed with Sharon Tate and all that when those people—

EV: Roman Polanski, his house?

HB: Yeah.

EV: He was there?

HB: Well, he was there at the party when they killed them, yeah.

EV: Jay C. Green?

HB: Jay Sebring.

EV: Bring?

HB: Jay Sebring, yes. And then right after he got killed, a lot of companies started breaking out, but Redken Laboratories was already in there somewhere. I like Redken Laboratories because they were the pioneers of the hairstyling, too because they're the ones that actually brought out most of your better products. They were all acid balanced at that time.

EV: And continuing with that, what were the economic conditions in the region at the time?

HB: Well, better than what it is now! It wasn't bad. I was able to accomplish a lot of things. Like I said, I had about fifteen workers here, at that time. And I was able to probably save some money too, then later on move on forward. And I could see that it was a need for a school, so I tried to open up a barber college at first, and it was very, very, very rough for me to put a barber college. So then I decided to put a beauty school instead, and the beauty school, I put it up in 1976 and then it took me five years after that to get it accredited because the chairman of the accreditation used to live here in El Paso, and he really didn't want me to—he didn't want me to put another beauty school here because it was—I was a practice—I wanted to have a school and I would be the only one owning a school that was still practicing my profession. And I knew what I wanted. I knew what the industry needed. I knew what we were lacking here in this area, and I put it to use, and I put all that to work. And he had two schools here in El Paso and as soon as I put one up, boy, he got really mad at me because he had to shut down one of his schools. And I put it right—about two, three blocks to where his big school was, and he was pretty sore about it.

EV: Did you encounter any other major obstacles in the start-up phase?

HB: Not really because I didn't have any credit or anything at all. And I remember that SBA was loaning out money for different things, and Charlie Evans used to work for a finance company, and he's the one that loaned me the money to get

started here on Montana Street, and then he used to give me a lot of tips, and I'm still cutting Charlie's hair. And he told me, "Why don't you go, if you wanna put a beauty school, why don't you go to SBA? They can lend you up to about \$100,000 and they probably—you'll lend it, you'll qualify for that." So I did go to SBA and I qualified to buy the school and got enough money to buy the equipment, and I did that, and all of a sudden I got ten students in there right away, and I paid off that school in less than ten years. And I paid it all off.

EV: So from 1976, and by 1986 more or less you—

HB: Yeah, I was almost all paid off, yes.

EV: And, I'm sorry, I didn't get—where was the school located?

HB: The school is located at 3000 Pershing, right over here, about five blocks from here, so it was easy for me to go from here, to over there, and back.

EV: And what would you consider that were the factors that helped you grow the school?

HB: What was the what?

EV: What were the factors that helped you grow your business?

HB: What helped me with my factors, that I had a lot of experience and, in fact, one of my first teachers that started out with me, Hester Parker, she's still working with me. She's still with me, and she helped me out a lot. And I enrolled in my own school, and I was the first graduate from my own school.

EV: Were you the only one teaching the classes?

HB: I used to teach haircutting, mostly. That's what I wanted to do, and I'm still doing that. I still teach haircutting, and that's been my goal to learn exactly how to cut hair. I have studied it very intensely. I've really gotten into understanding the structure of the hair, the round parts, the flat parts, the concave areas, the convex areas, and all that, and I can explain to the students that it's just like an artist; you have to prepare your canvas first before you start putting all kind of colors on it. I got that when I was learning a little bit about art even though I was very, very lousy in it, but I learned some of those—the movements of the head, the rotations of the head, and how to really get involved with different lines to project your angles of the hair so that your haircuts will come out better, and how to check your haircuts good.

EV: What art classes did you take?

HB: What kind of—?

EV: Were you taking classes? Did you take some sort of art classes, or was it on your own?

HB: No, no, I took a lot of classes. I took classes from my brother and I used to go watch him cut hair and everything. And I couldn't get anybody around this area here to explain haircutting to me. I went all over the country. I went to Vidal Sassoon's classes, I went to John Dellaria classes, I even had special classes from different cutters and everything. And I really didn't find a good school till I went to Pivot Point back in 1965, '66 right before I opened up the beauty school. Right after I opened up the school—I think it was 1967—that I went to Pivot Point in Chicago, Illinois in Evanston. And at that time, it was costing me about oh—at that time it was costing me a little over \$2,000 to \$3,000 a week to go to school over there for one whole week. And I did that for fifteen years straight to go study over there.

EV: For how long the periods—

HB: The studying program over there? The studying program over there was a week, and they came from all over the world. And we used to share a lot of ideas and a lot of knowledge within ourselves, and we could see who was good and was not, and who was learning, and who was, you know, who you could talk to. So we did a lot of networking between ourselves there. And I was just only interested in haircutting. I wasn't interested in color yet, or perms or anything like that. It wasn't till I started learning how to cut hair, myself, better and everything because see, over there they teach you the gravity and the forces of hair, and the angles, how if you cut an angle a certain way how it's gonna look when it falls down. If you put it or hold it a certain way how it's gonna be able to lose weight, and how to gain weight to make it look—illusions of hair.

EV: So you were really interested in mastering the—

HB: The art of haircutting.

EV: The art of cutting hair.

HB: And I'm still at it.

EV: It never ends. And what role has your family played in the growth of your business?

HB: What?

EV: What role has your family played in the growth of your business?

HB: They've supported me. They supported me quite a bit on my business here and— but I feel that it was just between my wife, and myself, that did it. Yeah, they had

their families to take care of, and they supported me up to a certain point, but it was just mainly myself and my wife.

EV: Is your wife also in the—

HB: In the hair business, no. She was very very good with paperwork. She died about three years ago.

EV: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

HB: On January the sixteenth, it was her third anniversary.

EV: So she was more on the administrative side?

HB: Oh yeah, she did all the paperwork. She used to do all the paperwork for the school. Right before she died, my wife had a—we had a re-accreditation that we had to go through, and she didn't have any limitations, she went straight A. And that's hard to do to have a school like that, yes. Because we went through it just recently again. About every five years we have to go through that and we went at it again, and I had four limitations out of about ten different standards, about twenty to thirty criteria in each standard. And we have to go through that every five years, and I had four limitations on my—

EV: What are the limitations?

HB: Limitations is the mistakes that you're doing in the school.

EV: Oh, I see.

HB: Yeah, so I had four mistakes, and they were all my fault too, not any of the teachers', not the school's, it was my fault. Yeah.

EV: So in five years you have to do it again? Try to get rid of them.

HB: And get re-accreditation, yes.

EV: What challenges have you faced growing a business as a Hispanic?

HB: As a Hispanic what challenges have I had?

EV: In the sense of maybe, some sort of, maybe discrimination, maybe banks not giving you loans because you were Hispanic.

HB: No, I don't think I had any obstacles that they have stopped me. When I want something, I go for it. I find means and ways of doing it. I don't let somebody tell me, "No, you can't get it. No, you can't do this. No, you can't do anything." See, it's just like bullfighting. They told me I was crazy and I just kept at it and at it, and went through that, too.

EV: Were you—because in my research I found out that you were a novillero but were you also a full bullfighter?

HB: No, I was an aficionado práctico. I was an aficionado práctico. Later on I became an aspirante, as a banderillero but I never was a novillero.

EV: I see.

HB: I used to be a ham, but it got to the point that nobody wanted to fight with me around the area anymore.

EV: Would you mind explaining what's an aficionado práctico?



HB: Aficionado práctico is kinda like a ham, an amateur wanting to fight bulls— learning now to fight bulls. So you start with becerros, and then you graduate to toretes, and then you fight novillos. And that's as far as I got in fighting, and I had about seventy-six fights like that. Then later on I wasn't getting real happy with the way they were treating me over there, and I wanted to—I just decided to quit. And then they came—all of a sudden—they came in from Mexico City, two of the topnotch subalternos, Mr. Cerrillo and Mr. Carmona. Mr. Carmona used to be a famous picador and Mr. Cerrillo used to be a great banderillero, and they used to fight with Carlos Arruza. And they asked me if I wanted to be an aspirante as a banderillero, and I thought they were joking, and I said, "Yeah, why not?" So they said, Well, you're gonna have to get your beard shaved off. And I said, "Yeah, why not." So they said, Well, can you fight in about two weeks? Do you think you'll be ready? That's when I found out that they weren't kidding. And I was ready. And I fought.

EV: And this was in a corrida in Juárez.

HB: And this was in Balderas. Yes, in Juárez. That was the first corrida that I ever dressed in a suit of lights, but as an aspirante now. And I knew that I wasn't gonna be making up there because I was from this side, but I have to be a matador in order for me to be a bullfighter with them so I could be fighting Mexico. But I knew that they were never gonna admit me to go and fight as a subalterno, a banderillero because I'd be taking a job away from one of the other people, then I would have been a wetback over there.

EV: Right. So the discrimination wasn't here for you. It was—

HB: It was over there.

EV: When you went to Mexico.

HB: Yeah, because I was a banderillero, a peón actually. That's what they call us subalterno, peón de brega.

EV: And also, I read that actually your group or your group of aficionados had a bullfight set up, a corrida—

HB: We have meetings here; we see bullfights. We talk about bullfights, and I formed a bullfight foundation—a nonprofit bullfight foundation. It's called the American Bullfight Foundation. It's called the American Bullfight foundation. I did that. And my hobbies are construction work. I did most of my remodeling here and I'm always constantly doing remodeling in here. The money that I have now I spend—instead of spending it on going on vacation, I spend it on remodeling. I like my hair—I like my business. And I like bullfighting, too. I like it, but I'm not gonna defend it because there's just a lot of people that do not appreciate that, and every head is a different world, and I'm not gonna argue about it. I'll just go do my own thing all the time. That's what I've been doing. All these years, I think about something that I want and I go after it, and I do let nobody change my mind on anything. If I think I can do it, and I want to do it, I go for it.

EV: On the other hand, does your company enjoy any advantages for being Hispanic-owned business?

HB: I don't—most of my students are Hispanic, and they know that I teach good. And my biggest customers of students are Hispanics, and my biggest customers, as far as cutting hair, is 50/50.

EV: Do you rely on people, maybe, from central area, or is it all over the El Paso—

HB: No, no, it's from all over. From Las Cruces, Alamogordo, all—within a hundred miles away; they all come.

EV: Have you expanded beyond the local area?

HB: I did one time in 1962 or '63. I put a second shop over there at Coronado Towers, and I decided that it was too far for me to be traveling back and forth, so I put a manager over there to work on me—to handle that for me. And after she'd been there a week she found a boyfriend and she married him. And then I had to get another one, and I was having a little bit of problems. So when this opportunity of me putting up a school came up, I decided to close that down and just concentrate with my school, which is only five blocks away. I have everything within five blocks.

EV: So you prefer that personalized, I guess—

HB: Customer Service.

EV: Customer service.

HB: Yes. I like to work one-on-one—a lot.

EV: Does your business belong to any of the chambers, maybe El Paso Chamber or the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce?

HB: My wife used to handle all of that, and I think she did. When she passed on, I cancelled a lot of the things that I had. I plan to get back into it. I plan to get back into, at least, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

EV: Would you consider yourself a leader or a role model in the Hispanic entrepreneurship in El Paso?

HB: I think the community thinks that I am a leader. I think a lot of people think that I'm a role model to a lot of people, and a lot of people think that I'm an SOB too

(laughter). I don't consider myself anything. I do, I get up, I go to church, I come to work, and I do the best I can every single day.

EV: It's your work ethic that—

HB: Yes. I go to church every day and I try not to let anything bother me whether it's cold, or I'm sick, or anything. I just get up and go, and it's helped me a lot.

EV: Looking back on your business, what would you have done differently?

HB: What would I have done differently? I wish I could have learned—taken a course in management or in marketing, or probably even gone to college to understand how to run a school better, how to run a business better, and things like that. I would've studied a little bit more about that, but I was too involved in learning how to just do hair, that's it. And I figured well, you just learn how to do hair good and you can please the customer, then you don't have to worry about the money, all it'll come to you.

EV: What advice would you offer a Hispanic starting a business today?

HB: *El que tenga tienda que la atienda* (laughing). Yeah, just do—get as much education about what they wanna do. Get as much education about what anything is to do and get involved in something you like. Get involved in something you like and just go for it. Don't let nobody change your mind on anything. There's a lot of negative people out there, lots of negative people. They won't let you do, they—you gotta do what you got in your heart and it'll go there.

EV: What dreams do you have for the future?

HB: What plans do we have for my future? I wanna build a little bullring, next to it I wanna have a little spa—a little spa for men and women. I already bought the

land, I already started on the bullring, and right around there I wanna have a little chapel so I can go to mass every day and I won't have to—I have everything around there what I want.

EV: And where will you build your bullring?

HB: I've already finished all the rock work. I'm gonna get ready with the steel, and it'll be located on East Montana Street, about that 14700 block on Montana. But it's gonna be set back in between Montana and the speedway. That's where I'll be at.

EV: Are you gonna set up some sort of like the small bullfights, or is it gonna be—

HB: Yeah, we're just gonna have bullfights without piercing anything—not piercing any of the skin—just so we can teach the Mexican people really what their culture is—part of what their culture is. I plan to do a little Mexican culture, Catholics and where we can teach kids how to do arts and crafts from Mexico. I would like to tie in with Mexico if I could. I have a lot of dreams. It's gonna take a long time, probably I won't ever see them finished. I got four of my grandkids that are helping me right now, and they have something called the (Davis Company??). And they're finishing college. Well, the last one's finishing college. And they're helping each other trying to promote this and work with the 501(c)(3)'s that I have. But we wanna try and create a little tourist attraction place over there. I have about seventeen acres over there, and we wanna put arts and crafts, food—Mexican food. Probably somebody wants to go in there and put a Mexican cooking school too—lend them some land. But mainly it's just kinda something like Olvera Street in California—something like that—with arts and curios and all that from Mexico.

EV: I see that you see and you put a lot of emphasis on the education.

HB: Yes. Yes, and we need it a lot, especially in this area because in this area here, people from Mexico keeping coming in, coming in, and it's a stepping stone for them to go elsewhere, and that's why we need a lot of education, especially something to make them feel comfortable because if they're not college material, then they can go with the skills.

EV: Like a trade?

HB: Yes, any kind of trade, like I'm learning how to lay rock right now. I'm learning how to lay rock right now. I did all the construction here on this building here, all the new shop here. I did all that, I got involved. I was the peón. I would hire a maestro and I would do it, and I would get involved with it. I have some good friends that are carpenters, I learned how to do—carve the wood. I did that right there. That's where I learned how to carve wood. That beam right there, I learned—I did that. It took me almost a month, month-and-a-half to do those three pieces of wood. But even that door, we did them here. We did all the carving in here, and it was all natural color at first and I was going through about two, three different colors because people come in here and they said—I'm not a good decorator—they come in here and say, Hey, you should change this and that. And that's what I've been doing. If I can afford it, I'll go ahead and change it.

EV: And at that location would you also might be opening a barbershop?

HB: Over there?

EV: Or just the spa?

HB: No, it will include the barbershop, beauty shop, and everything else. I'll ask my niece if she wants to put a spa over there for women.

EV: In an article I read that the culture of the barbershop, or the tradition, it's sort of dying out. It was interview with—I think it's your brother—he has a barbershop over there by Fox Plaza.

HB: Yes.

EV: And in his opinion, like the culture of the barbershop, it's sort of dying. You mentioned that it's kinda—or maybe it wasn't his opinion. I think maybe it was the opinion of whomever wrote the article. Let me ask you what you think about the culture of barbershop nowadays?

HB: It's just changing. It's just changing, I don't think it's gonna die down. It'll never die down. It'll never die down. The kids nowadays they're after fades, they're cutting their own hair. And the barbers they don't wanna—some of the barbers don't wanna study anymore. You've seen graphics on their heads that they bald them all the way down and then they put different arts and crafts—arts—things on their head. That's what it's coming up to. But that's gonna change later on. They're gonna have to start learning how to cut hair my size or as long as yours or even longer. See, all that comes back. It all comes back. About every twenty years you get a little change; twenty, thirty years you start to changing again. Now you see people with long hair, with short hair, with flat tops. You see all kinds of hair. You even see kids getting all this new wild looks and graphics, and different textures of hair that are popping out all over. See, but as long as you have a nice silhouette and you wanna massacre the inside as long as the silhouette stays there. Then you can do a lot of things to it.

EV: And have you ever had any maybe thought about writing a book on—

HB: I'm still—

EV: Theory for cutting hair or something like that?

HB: I'm still bad about my English and my spelling, and my writing. I'm still bad at that. A lot of people have approached me that if they wanted to do a book on me—yeah because a lot of people have read about me with Charles Gerault, when he came and interviewed me here. He interviewed me for bullfighting, but then he found out that I was pretty good at doing hair too, and a lot of people have come and interviewed me. There was a book, also—I mean, another book where it's mentioned the border barberists, and then I was written up in the "Wall Street Journal" also, and I was written out in some magazines, in the "Reader's Digest." And most of those copies I know that they're there, but I haven't really saved them.

EV: We're approaching to the end of the interview. In your opinion, is the business climate better for Hispanics nowadays?

HB: Is the Hispanic better now?

EV: The business climate, like maybe the appreciation of Hispanic business?

HB: I think so. Yeah, a Hispanic can easily get into any kind of business right now. And I don't see why they don't take that opportunity to do so. What they have to understand also is trying to do a good business plan and follow it. Follow that business plan and I'm sure that they can achieve everything they want. I'm very happy with not trying to—I've never thought about getting too involved with business. I like to have fun and I like to work hard. I work hard and I play hard.

EV: I don't have anymore questions unless you have anything you want to add.

HB: When I was fighting that helped me a lot because I became famous in Mexico as far as bullfighting, and I became famous here as a hairdresser, and then people started finding out that we're—I do both things, you know? There's some people



that I—we see down the street that they know me and they said, I didn't know you used to fight bulls. And I did.

EV: So you were, sort of, your own marketing tool.

HB: Yes. Yeah, my own marketing tool.

EV: Is that—the El Pipo, was that from your—

HB: Bullfighting?

EV: —Bullfighting. Sort of—

HB: Well, I got the name El Pipo from one of my father's friends, Marianito Perez, and he called me Pipo, and he called my sister Pipa, but I stayed with my nickname all along. When I started fighting bulls I said, "My brothers will get mad at me if they see Barragán and I goof up and I mess up. So I said, "I'll just go with my nickname." So I used my nickname when I was fighting bulls because I started fighting bulls before I put my business up. See? So when I got pretty good—and then I put—they told me—I had an architecture friend of mine that I used to cut his hair, Kirkendall—Mr. Kirkendall and he says, "Just go ahead and name it El Pipo, you're already known over there in Mexico. A lot of people already know you. Just go ahead and name it El Pipo." So I put it there, and he's the one that helped me. And Mr. Delgado, from Delgado Signs, is the one that did my logo. He's the one that did my logo.

EV: You'd never venture into maybe opening a business in Juárez? Or having some sort of—

HB: No. No, no, no. I didn't want to expand because I didn't know how. And then these two come over here and they said they wanted to franchise me, but my heart

wasn't there yet. Now if somebody wants to franchise me—well, if they wanna be the sponsors I'll be more than glad to do it. Yeah.

EV: Do you have some sort of a close relationship to any barbers in Juárez?

HB: Oh yeah, I used to teach in Juárez quite a bit and a lot of my students start taking up hairstyling in Juárez. I went and introduced hairstyling in Juárez at the Camino Real.

HB: I used to bring big names like Ben DeCordova, who was barber of the year back in the sixties, and I brought him over here. I brought a lot of hairdressers from California, Arizona, and even Colorado. I used to bring them and do shows there in Juárez so the Mexican people could really get involved in it and everything. There was quite a few hairdressers that started out in—and they're still some there in Juárez that they still have their own businesses. Some have died already.

EV: What are their names?

HB: In Juárez? I have one guy that I know that's still there, is Oscar—Oscar's Hair Design. And then Chilo used to come over here and learn a lot from me, and he used to be a barber that worked at Sylvia's Motel. And then there's Polo. Polo, when he used to live in the basement of 16 of September, he used to come over and study with me, over here, and he's one of the ones that really started going real strong, but I think it was because his son was a lawyer. And he's the one that developed that new big old mansion in Juárez, and then when Polo died, everything went down. But he kinda franchised a lot of shops. And I found out about franchising by studying him, and what he did is he sold—he didn't do it right, and then all of a sudden everything broke down on him.

EV: What errors do you see in his procedure?

HB: What errors?

EV: Errors or mistakes that you would say that made him not successful.

HB: He didn't have a good person that knew about franchising. See? And I've been studying franchising right now and everything, and if anybody ever come and approach me, I'd studying them first too before we cold do that because you're liable to get sued and do a lot of things. People are sue-happy right now.

EV: Yeah. Okay, Mr. Barragán. I don't have any more questions.

HB: Okay.

EV: I just want to thank you for your time.

HB: Thank you for coming and interviewing—

EV: I know you are a busy person.

HB: Yes.

EV: And this is a very important project for future Hispanic entrepreneurs.

HB: Well, I hope I can help them out. I hope I can help them out, and if anybody's interested in my craft, I'll be more than happy to help them.

EV: There will be another opportunity also so that you can talk more about the bullfighting and all that—

HB: Fine.

EV: —history from El Paso and Juárez.

HB: Yeah because I fought with the top fighters in the world from the time of 1957 till 1982, and I still to a little bit, and probably gonna be coming a bigger area now that I open up my little bullring where the tourists can come and play around with the small animal and feel it and see how it is.

EV: That's amazing.

HB: And maybe the Chamber of Commerce will help me with that.

EV: Maybe (laughing).

HB: Bringing in tourists. Yeah.

EV: Okay. That's all.

HB: Okay.

**[End of Interview]**