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Interview no. 1536

Richard Castro

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Richard Castro

Interviewer: Homero Galicia

Project: Hispanic Entrepreneurs Oral History Project

Location: n/a

Date of Interview: February 24, 2009

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Transcriber / Summary: Vanessa Pantoja

Richard Castro was born in Del Rio, Texas to two hard working immigrant parents. Castro remembers his mother being a seamstress and working late into the night in order to make her quota. His father owned his own construction business and would give his son business advice of never putting limitations on yourself. Castro was also influenced by his brother who attended college. Even though Castro faced challenges in school, he attended and graduated from Texas State University. Castro became a teacher but did not make enough money, so he had to take on side jobs in order to make ends meet. Castro even became a Del Rio city manager, but left after serving two years to eventually create his own business, which was his ultimate goal. Castro created Richard Castro Real Estate Agency and Construction, which became successful in the mid 1980's even though the country was facing economic hardship. Castro says he knew he wanted to be financially successful when he was a teenager and saw creating his own business as a way of doing this. Castro purchased his first McDonalds franchise in 1983, after being pushed by one of his former co-workers. His first restaurant was located in El Paso on Hawkins and I-10. Castro developed his own business plan of work ethics and a positive attitude which he used at each McDonalds. Eventually, Castro owned a total of 33 restaurants, from El Paso to Big Spring, Texas; he owned the majority of the Permian Basin market. Now, he just focuses on the El Paso market. Castro also trained his employees through each position of management to work their way up to store owners. Castro is very involved in the El Paso community, he takes pride in being involved with youth education programs. He was able to launch the HACER scholarship program which helps out recent Hispanic high school graduates throughout Texas. This program was successful through the business partnership of McDonalds. Castro also discussed the importance of being involved in programs which help children of low income households. Castro also speaks about taking lessons from past employment experiences and doing a person's best to "do what's right" and draw from these experiences to gain knowledge. Castro offers advice to young hispanic entrepreneurs to have a business plan filled with strength, commitment, and hard work.

Name of Interviewee: Richard A. Castro
Date of Interview: February 24, 2009
Name of Interviewer: Homero Galicia

This is February 24, Tuesday. This is an interview with Richard Castro, the president of Castro Enterprises at DBA McDonald's in El Paso. [This interview is part of the Paso del Norte Entrepreneurship Oral History Project.]

HG: Thank you, Mr. Castro, for your time. I appreciate you giving us your experience, and I'd like to ask you if we could begin with telling us about where you were born and where you grew up.

RC: Sure. I was born in Del Rio, Texas, and as you know, it's a small border town. Now it's about fifty thousand. When I was growing up, it was about half of that or maybe less. I grew up in a low to moderate income neighborhood. My family, on my mother's side, migrated to Del Rio from Puebla, Puebla. And my grandfather on my mother's side had passed away. And my grandmother moved with her daughter, which was a little girl at the time, from Puebla to Monterey. And then from Monterey, where she was for awhile, went to Piedras Negras and Eagle Pass, Texas. And there they told her about Del Rio and she went to Del Rio and then decided that they would settle there. So then, she moved my mom and herself to Del Rio. And this was during the time of the 1915s, the 1918s, I guess, because my mom was still a little girl. And so it was probably during the time that women didn't have the right to vote in this country and here comes this about five foot Hispanic woman, single mom, didn't speak English, had a good education in Spanish, with her daughter, who was a little girl to not only to a strange community, but a strange country to them. And she had the strength and the mental toughness to be able to succeed in Del Rio. And she, at the beginning, provided for herself and her daughter by working with families and cleaning, doing the housework, and things like that. Eventually, she was able to buy property, build her house, and in the front of the house, she had an area which she turned into a classroom and she had a *schoolita*. It was called a *schoolita* in the neighborhood, and that's how it was known, *la schoolita*. And she was a teacher and she taught kids how to read, write, and of course, arithmetic in

Spanish. And she did that for, I don't know, many, many years, into the late sixties. And it was through that means that she was able to provide for her property, and an additional property that she bought, and raise her daughter. Even with that efforts, my mother, I think, had a fifth or sixth grade education in public schools. She did have a good education in Spanish through my mother. My dad had similar background. So I went to public schools there in Del Rio. And at that time, there were two districts: The Del Rio School District, which provided services to part of the Hispanic area and the white population, and when I got into high school, I decided to transfer to the San Felipe High School district, which was a predominantly Hispanic school district. And I really enjoyed my time at San Felipe High School and graduated from that high school.

HG: Your father, what was your father like?

RC: Oh, I think that part of my attributes, which is normal right, a lot of our attributes we get from those people that are our first models. And the first models are our family because that's who we're around. And as I described my grandmother, she was a very strong-willed, very strong-charactered individual, and I saw that as a little boy growing up until I left for college. So that was an excellent example. And I remember her standing up to great big huge men and standing her ground, and a lady of huge principle. And my mother was a hardworking individual that worked at home as a seamstress. And there was her little business and she did a lot of the sewing for a lot of the people there in the area. Later in life and when I was around ten [years of age] or so, she went to work for the local pant factory that had located in Del Rio, as a seamstress, and she worked there for many years. And I remember her talking about how she had to make quota because if they make quota they would get a little bonus, and then I could just visualize her just working that much extra harder to make that quota. In fact, as a little boy, I remember seeing her at the sewing machine and if she had a bunch of orders, especially during the time that the football season came around and summer because she would do the cheerleader outfits, and as a deadline got closer, if she wasn't quite done with them, she would work that much harder. She did what she had to, working into the late hours

of the night. And at that time, it was the sewing machine with the pedals. So I remember lying around there, as a little boy, and seeing her pedals go that much faster and quicker and harder and harder, but she would always meet the deadlines. So I think, from her, I learned some of my work ethics and the philosophy of doing what it takes to get things done. And my dad had a small construction company focused on, at that time, on floor sanding and refinishing wooden floors. And as concrete foundations became more and more the custom, he adjusted to floor tile and carpet. And he always gave me advice of reach for the stars, even if you don't quite get there, you'll do well. And so from him I think I learned not to be afraid of change and be willing to try different things in business. And when I put it all together, it has served me well because it has helped me be mentally tough. And I think from my mom I also got that positive attitude. I've always held a very positive attitude. And from all of them I got the work ethics. So when you put a mentally strong individual with a positive attitude and good work ethics, to me that goes a long way to helping make you successful in anything that you try.

HG: I was going to ask you about your family. You have other brothers and sisters?

RC: Yeah, I have one brother that's older than me. And again, when we realize that your immediate family, are your first role models and your first examples, I've given you an example of my parents and my grandmother. My older brother gave me an example of education because he was the first Castro to attend college and graduate. And he graduated in three years. And he worked his way through college. My parents would help as they were able to, but he worked his way through college and still graduated in three years. So that gave me that example and it also set the bar. And he's a number of years older than I am, so as a boy growing up, I mean there was no question in my mind that I was going to go to college.

HG: Where did he go to college?

RC: He went to Sul Ross State University. And my parents were always talking to me about the importance of education and how I was gonna go to college. So with the combination of my parents talking to me about college education and my brother giving me the example of getting a college degree, I mean, there was never a doubt in my mind. It was automatic. I was gonna graduate from high school and go to college.

HG: Even though people told you you weren't—

RC: Yeah, even though I had a couple of people along the way, at the high school level, that doubted that I would be able to be successful in college. In fact, one counselor told me that I was better suited to be in the maintenance profession and another individual told me that I wasn't college material. The satisfaction is proving them both wrong. So there was no question in my mind that I was going to go on and attend college and graduate from college, which I did. I went to college, and first, to a two-year school, and I played basketball and baseball there, which helped some because it was somewhat of a scholarship. And then through the, if you remember, the student loans were starting up around that time, and then there was the help that my parents were able to provide. And I got through my first two years of college, then went to Texas State University and got my degree from Texas State University. At that point, I got married my junior year, so athletics went out the window because I had to work. So I was going to school fulltime, working part-time at the student center on campus, and then I also worked, part of those two years, I worked a second job at a Burger Chef, which I don't think they're around anymore, and then I also worked for a number of months delivering the newspaper to a whole area. And so I was going to school fulltime, working either one or two jobs, being married, and I still finished in four years. So that was a sense of satisfaction, especially when I think that some individuals doubted the ability to do so. And I think that most people, if they apply themselves, and they're focused on their goals and work at it, they'll be able to succeed at whatever it is that they're trying to do. And along the way, we all

have a sense of pride, so one of the things that also pushed me was the pride of being successful or the pride of not failing. And as I saw my fellow students be successful, my thought was well, they can do it; I can do it, too. And at times when I had to do that extra studying into the late nights, I think that was part of the thing that pushed me.

HG: What year did you graduate from high school?

RC: In '66.

HG: And then, what two-year school?

RC: Southwest Texas State Junior College.

HG: Where is that?

RC: In Uvalde, Texas.

HG: And then what other school did you go to then?

RC: From there I went to Texas State University.

HG: In Canyon or—

RC: In San Marcos.

HG: Oh, in San Marcos, okay. And what was your major?

RC: I majored in history and government.

HG: When you went to college, were there a lot of Hispanics?

RC: No, there weren't a lot of Hispanics. There were more Hispanic faces at the Southwest Texas Junior College, and not as many Hispanic faces at Texas State University. There's a lot more there, now, which is good, but when I went, it made you feel good when you saw a fellow Hispanic, even though this was between '68 and '70 and this was during the time that there was a lot of social movement and civil movement, so there was a Hispanic organization. Because I was so busy with studying and working, I didn't have an opportunity to become a part of that Hispanic organization. Even though I would see a number of them at the student center, where I was working, and we had a chance to visit from time to time, especially when I worked at night. But that was my four years of school. My intent in going to college was to go on to law school, but at the same time, I think the realistic side of me said, You better have a second plan just in case you are not able to continue after your four years and go to law school. So I got a teacher certification and sure enough after my first four years of school, I had to get to work and was unable to continue into law school. So my first job out of college was that of a schoolteacher and I taught school for one year.

HG: Where at?

RC: In Eagle Pass, Texas.

HG: And what year did you graduate from college, then?

RC: In 1970, in May of 1970.

HG: And you met your wife while you were still at college?

RC: She lived like a block away from where I grew up. She's several years younger than I am, so I didn't notice her until I was a senior in high school. And all of a sudden, she flourished and got my attention.

HG: So then, after college and you taught, what did you do then?

RC: Well, I taught third grade and I loved it because I love working with kids and youth programs. It's just something that I've always enjoyed. I got really involved when I was teaching, even though it was only for one year. But I immediately got involved with the football program and helped the other teachers that were working with the kids with football, and had a great time as one of the coaches. And we did very well, by the way. It was a lot of fun. I still remember most, if not all, of the kids because they were not only in my classroom, but a lot of the kids that were in fifth and sixth grade, they were on that football team. And when the football season ended, I ended up volunteering with the Boys Club, and at that time it was a Boys Club, it wasn't a Boys and Girls Club, as a coach for their youth basketball program, and then later in the spring as a baseball coach. And then I just continued that involvement. To this today it has never stopped.

HG: After you taught, what did you do then?

RC: For six months I went to work for the Texas Employment Commission, as it was known at that time, because they paid a little bit more. In fact, this is an interesting little story, side story, but when I was in college at Texas State and working two jobs, I netted more than my first paycheck as a schoolteacher. And you talk about being disappointed because I had, of course, was so excited in having graduated and starting my profession, and started teaching. At the end of September when I got my first paycheck as a professional, and looked at the net pay and realized that I had actually netted more working as a short-order cook and delivering the newspaper in that area, net, than what I was making. So luckily, in October, I got a job teaching adult Basic English classes in the evenings. And between my regular teaching job and then teaching the adult Basic English classes, I was able to net enough to pay most of the bills. And my goal at the time was to make enough money on my own that I could cover our family expenses

without the need of my wife's income. And if she worked, great, and if she provided income to the family, that was great, but didn't want to have to depend on that to cover the bills. And so that was the goal. And by getting the night teaching class, I was able to do most of that.

HG: And you worked while you were in high school, too?

RC: No, I only worked part of my senior year in high school. Even though I grew up in a low and moderate-income neighborhood, my parents, through a lot of sacrifice on their part and depriving themselves, which I didn't realize at the time, they were able to provide a very nice life for me, as a young boy and teenager growing up in Del Rio. In fact, I never knew that I had grown up in a low-income neighborhood until I went back to Del Rio as a city administrator and started getting to know all the different areas and then I realized, Well, I grew up in a low-income neighborhood. But my parents provided a very nice life.

HG: So after the Texas Employment Commission, what did you do?

RC: I found out that the City of Del Rio was hiring a city secretary/administrative assistant and I applied for that. And I remember the very first time that I walked in to the city manager's office for an interview, I went to present my resume, oh, it lasted maybe ten seconds. And he told me I wasn't qualified and that they were looking for somebody that had experience in that profession. I guess that was fair, but I thought I would at least get a little bit more time than that. And it was kind of a rough meeting. So I left and went back to Eagle Pass. And I used to get the Del Rio paper, and a couple of weeks later, I saw where the position still wasn't filled. So sometimes, I guess, things are just meant to be because I called City Hall and talked to the city manager and I just identified myself and told him that I just realized that the position was still open so I just was checking on it. And, again, in a rough way he told me that yes it was still open, but that I was not being considered for it and that they were continuing to accept applications. So

that conversation lasted another five to ten seconds. And another two or three weeks went by and they still hadn't filled the position, and this was in the fall of '71, and for some reason I called back and I told him, I identified myself again and told him, "Just thought I'd check with you. I realize that it's still open. I just wanted you to know that I'm still interested." To my surprise, he wasn't as rough during that conversation and it must have lasted a couple of minutes. And he took the time to explain to me they appreciated my interest, but for these reasons, he was continuing to accept applications and looking for, I guess for a different type of individual. Even though he told me that, because he was nicer, I was encouraged. So another number of weeks went by and I called again and he told me, "Yes, it's still open." The conversation didn't last long, but he did ask me what my degrees were in and what I had been doing. And then the conversation ended. Well, like two weeks later, he called me. I mean, you talk about somebody being surprised. He called me and identified himself and was very friendly, and cited my persistence, and asked me to go in for an interview. The next day I was there. And the interview went very well, and he ended up offering me the position. And this was in late November, no, early November, so he said he was going to offer me the position. And it paid like a hundred dollars more a month than what I was getting at Texas Employment Commission, but that it had to be approved by the City Council. So I left, presented it to the council, of course, he recommended it and it was approved. So then, I started that job on January 1 of '72. And then I worked there from '72 until '80. And during that period of time I moved from city secretary/administrative assistant to assistant city manager and eventually to city manager, and ended up being not only the first Del Rian to serve as city manager, but the first Hispanic Del Rian to serve as city manager. And in fact, I was named city manager in May, I think, or June, oh yeah, I guess it must have been in May of '78. And in June, I got word that I had been accepted to law school because I had applied in the early part of the year because I figured I was at a point where I could go. And so, in June I got word that I was accepted to law school, but in my mind, I couldn't, at this point, go to law school because I was the first Hispanic to be named city manager for that city

and at that time there was hardly any city managers. In fact, I was the Hispanic city manager of the largest city. Del Rio, at that time, must have been about thirty thousand, thirty-five thousand, I guess. And there were a few other Hispanic city managers. I think there was one in Fort Stockton, and maybe (Piersol??), and then the next largest city was Dallas, Texas. And so I had the largest city. So because of the connotation and the impression that would have been made if I had been appointed and then left would have been very negative; it would have been, in my mind, like a black eye to the Hispanic community. And I chose to pass up going to law school and continue as city manager. And I'm glad that I did because the experience that I got throughout that tenure as a city administrator from '72 to '80 was outstanding. The knowledge, the friendships, was just very rewarding. So it was a good decision.

HG: How long were you city manager?

RC: From '78 to '80, and I left city administration to start my own business. And that had been my ultimate goal. And in going to law school, I saw that as a way of having my own business, through professionalism. That had always been my goal, to have my own business. And my answer to having my own business was to set up a real estate agency and a building business. So I left the administration, took a few weeks off, and then opened the doors to Richard Castro Real Estate Agency and Construction Company. And it worked out, even though it was in the early eighties and we know that the economy was not in the best shape and interest rates were very high, unlike today that the economy's poor, but interest rates are low. At that time, the economy was poor and interest rates were like 14, 15 percent. But that was the time that I went into it, and it worked out. I developed a very successful real estate agency and building business primarily in residential construction.

HG: Do you remember when you first decided you wanted to be in your own business?

RC: I must have been in my late teens.

HG: And you knew then that you wanted to—

RC: Yeah, I knew that I wanted to be economically successful. I didn't know how I was going to achieve that, but I knew that I wanted to be economically successful. And in my late teenage years, my answer to that was that I was going to do that as an attorney, and that's why I wanted to go to law school. So even though I didn't know how I was going to achieve that goal, that was my goal, and going to college was a means to achieve the goal. So starting my own business was a step toward achieving that goal. So I started the real estate agency and the building business and I found that to be easier because all I had to do was work toward building enough cash flow to keep the businesses afloat. While as a city administrator, I had to answer to the city council, the media, obviously the public and you're constantly living in a fishbowl, which I loved by the way. I mean, I loved that profession and if I had it to do over, I would do it all again. I mean, that's why I continue to be involved in the community and I continue to serve in different boards. I'm just saying that I found it easier when I went into private business as a realtor and builder because I didn't have to worry about all those components. All I had to worry about was satisfying the customer and working toward developing that real estate and building business and creating cash flow to once, keep the doors open, and then once that became easier, to be more successful.

HG: Did you have to borrow money to set up that business or maintain the business?

RC: Oh, yeah. During the course of my employment, obviously you try to set aside funds, so I set aside what I could. But I also, while I was employed, I got my real estate license, learned about the real estate. I had a realtor call me and offer me some property that was being sold, and it was being sold in an area that hadn't been developed yet, that was a little isolated. Because of their background, I

think that because of their background, they didn't see value in it. Because of the way I grew up, I went, looked at it, and saw value in it, and bought it for next to nothing. Then I turned around because it wasn't my homestead, I was able to borrow money on it. I was able to borrow enough money to not only buy it, but to create additional money for myself. So, I paid it off. I borrowed the money, paid it, kept the additional money that I borrowed, sold the lots, carried the paper on it, used that to pay off the note, and then sold the lots at a profit, but carried the papers so I was able to make money on the interest as well. And that was one of my first good business ventures that provided some working capital. So I had that money in the bank. I don't know if I explained it correctly, but I borrowed twice as much as I needed to buy the lots. So, I kept half of it and I had that in the bank. The money that was being produced through the sell of the lots went to the bank. And then as I financed it, that went to the bank on their monthly [inaudible] service to the loans. While I was employed, we had a retirement system. So when I left to start the business, I pulled out all my retirement, which added to my little pot. And then my mom helped me a little bit. When I put it all together, I had some funds, enough, not a lot, but enough to get enough attention of the banker that I went to talk to, that I had already built a relationship with, about interim financing. In the construction business, you use interim financing. And you set up interim financing and as you're building your project, you're borrowing off the percent of the project as it's completed. So, I set up the interim financing for the construction projects. That provided cash flow because the agency wasn't producing anything. The real estate agency, you have to get listings, then you have to sell it, and then you have to close on it. It takes time for a new agency to get productive. But the building business provided immediate cash flow through the interim financing. And then of course, on the sell, you would pay off your interim financing and you make your profit. I got to where I was building one project after another. And then it got to where I was starting the second project before I finished the first one. And then, for a little bit, it got to where I had more than a couple of projects going. They were all providing cash flow and the profit at the end because they were all profitable projects, and I

really worked hard at managing them. So, to answer your question, did I have to borrow money, well, yeah. I had to set up the interim financing with the banks and set up my account with the lumber companies. Because if you set up your account with the lumber companies to where you pay on a thirty day basis, I mean, you can do a lot of progress on your construction project within that amount of time, that you're able to make quite a dent and get your draws and work in that way.

HG: So how many homes did you build and—

RC: Oh, wow, I don't know, but it was a large—I mean, a large number because I did that for several years. In fact, it got to where I was doing custom-built homes that worked out very well.

HG: So you stayed in that industry for how many years?

RC: For several years; I stayed in it very, fulltime, very active for three years, from '80 to '83. And then I bought the first franchise, the first McDonald's franchise.

HG: How did that happen?

RC: Okay, remember I told you I worked as a short-order cook on campus at Texas State University? I use this story all the time in so many talks, but it's true. When I was senior, getting ready to graduate, and I went to get my cap and gown, obviously I was very proud. So the people I had been working with for the last couple of years, we had gotten close. So I got my cap and gown. I immediately went to the student center to show it to them, and as soon as I walked in, I mean, they saw me and they go, Oh wow, there's Richard. Look he's got his cap and gown. They were excited. So, I walked up to them and they were hugging me, congratulating me, and along the line one of them asked me, "So after you graduate on Saturday, what are you going to do?" And I told him, "Well, I can

tell you I'm not going to do another hamburger. I'm not ever going to do another hamburger." And of course, as fate would have it, when I announced that I was leaving city administration, and the media picked up on it and reported it, the next day the individual that owns the McDonald's there in Del Rio, and who had become a friend, and read about it, came to City Hall, and very excitedly. And I remember it was my birthday and the staff was having a little get-together there in the council chamber, and I was looking out the window and I saw this individual park, walk towards City Hall at a fast pace. When he walked in, he was headed towards my office and he turned and we made eye contact. And I got up to meet him, and he told me, "Richard, I understand you're leaving City Hall." I go, "Yes, I am." And he goes, "Well, what are you going to do?" Before I could answer, he told me, "I've got something for you that is really good." I go, "What is it?" He says, "McDonald's." Of course, sometimes people that are in public administration, or in public office, think well of themselves. So here I am leaving city management, city administration, and when he said McDonald's, images of my work as a short-order cook, while a student at college, flashed through my mind and I very politely said, "Oh, well that's great, thank you." And then we went to have some cake and stuff and eventually he left. I proceeded to get my real estate and construction business going. When I would go to the local restaurant there, the local McDonald's, sometimes he would be behind the counter. He would ask me, "Hey, when are you going to start it?" As time went by, I started looking into it. Once I looked into it, I realized what McDonald's really is, and so I immediately at that point became interested. And I went to the restaurant—the individual's name is Frank Mendoza and he had his office down in the basement because that McDonald's had a basement, like similar to the first one I bought at Hawkins and I10. It has a basement. And he had his office down there. So I went down there, I told him, "Hey, I'm ready to start." He goes, "Well, it's about time." And what that means is that you submit your paperwork, if you get accepted, you get accepted as a registered applicant, and you start training. What that means is that you go to the local McDonald's, to a McDonald's, and you learn every crew position. First, you learn how to work the

counter, the grill, the fry station, every station. You work with the maintenance person and you do maintenance, cleaning. Once you've completed all that, you start working with a shift manager. You learn how to manage the shift, regardless of your management background. I mean, I had a lot of management background, but what you're doing is you're learning how to manage a McDonald's the McDonald's way. And so you learn how to manage a shift. And then you start learning, unless, you complete all that, you start learning how to manage the overall restaurant. And while you're working it, of course, you're doing this on your own time, obviously; you don't get paid for it. I mean, you do this in your own time because it's an asset for you. It's a benefit for you. If you're going to be a business owner, you're gonna own this business, you want to learn as much about it as you can. So it's in your interest to do that. So I would go at five [o'clock] in the morning. They would open at six, so I would go at five in the morning. I would go through the opening process. I would work until close to eight so I would learn the breakfast side of it. Then I would go open my office at eight. There was times that I would go at lunchtime and work the lunch rush so I could get experience in doing that. And then I would work at night after I got—because, you know, in business you close when you close. And so, I would leave the office, I would go coach a little league baseball team or basketball team, depending on the season, and after that I would go to McDonald's and I would work the evening hours. And you're going through the McDonald's management training classes and you have to finish the volumes, successfully pass the test for each volume, and then you go to the McDonald's classes at their regional offices. And they have instructors that teach those business classes.

HG: Did they have regional offices there in Del Rio?

RC: It was in Houston, so I would go to Houston. I mean, I did all my training and finished the volumes there, and then I would go to Houston for the formal classes. And then your final class is in Chicago at Hamburger University—beautiful campus by the way—and that's your final class. At that time it was two weeks.

You would go for two weeks and then you would take your exams. If you passed, you passed. If you didn't, out you go. And there's no guarantee during all this time. It took me like fourteen months to go through the whole program because I was really focused on it, even though I had my business, I was still real focused on it. Once I get on something, I want to get it done. It's just my nature. I don't like to put things off, so I got on it. So now, this was my thing and I wanted to get to focus on it and finish it. So I got through it in about fourteen months. And then at any time during those fourteen months, you can get washed out. If they don't feel that you're cut out for it, they'll just tell you, I'm sorry, but I think it's best that this is where we part company and you go do your thing and we'll continue to do ours. In my case, it went well. I finished the formal training and then it was several months after that that they offered me my first site, which is the Hawkins and I10 restaurant, and then I bought it. And as time went by, I continued to grow.

HG: What year was that that you bought your first—?

RC: Nineteen eighty-three. I'm sorry?

HG: That you bought your first—

RC: Nineteen eighty-three.

HG: And then, now how many do you have?

RC: Well, I got up to a high of thirty-three because I owned a number of franchises in El Paso, plus I owned all the franchises between here and Big Spring, Texas. So I owned Big Spring. I owned Midland. I owned Odessa. I owned Monahans, Fort Stockton, Vanhorn, and one in Pecos. And I kept what we used to call the Permian Basin market for ten years. I bought them in '97 and again, it was just a great business venture because I was able to buy them for a terrific rate. I mean,

that market was not a very successful market. In fact, it was a very low volume market, very low sales. And so I was able to buy them at a ridiculous price. I got in there with my folks and we started applying our formula to it, which is (it's??) simply we have to be mentally strong, you have to have a positive attitude, and you have to have the right work ethics. We took that formula and we applied it there and we started teaching that to our folks there, and cleaning up the restaurants, improving the service, enforcing the quality standards, and sending our people to the training classes, which we did ourselves. I have a training manager. So we would do the training. We would do the onsite teaching on a day-to-day basis, and then we would send them to formal schools, which helped develop them into better managers and develop a more professional attitude which translated into a more efficient restaurant. So the volume started growing. Sales started growing. From the time I got there until the time I sold them ten years later, we had more than doubled the sales in each restaurant. So then, I sold them at a very nice price and now, at least for the time being, consolidated and focused on the El Paso market.

HG: How many do you have now?

RC: Twenty-one.

HG: You've also helped other people start their franchises.

RC: Yes. One of the things that I have always believed is that you have to take care of people. And I've always tried to apply that philosophy, whether I was a city administrator or whether I was a realtor and builder. And later as a franchise owner, I always felt that you have to—it has to be a win-win. And if your people feel that they're in a win-win situation, they're going to accept your goals and make them their goals in a more enthusiastic manner. So I've worked with individuals within my organization to become, from crew people to shift managers to assistant managers to store managers, restaurant managers, to

supervisors to director of operations, and a couple of them have gone on to become owners. And Irma Benavidez-Campbell, her married name, was one of those individuals. She started out as a crew person and when I needed a manager in Pecos, Texas, she was willing to go and eventually, I helped her to be able to buy the restaurant in Alpine. And she now owns the restaurant in Alpine, the McDonald's in Alpine. And then another individual, whose similar story, and he was the first individual that was a supervisor in the Odessa area, bought the Vanhorn store through my assistance, and then later bought the Fort Stockton store. And so, he now has two stores. And that's Bill Story. I am aware that a lot of—all our director of operators, supervisors, restaurant managers started out as crew people with us and worked their way up. So I know that we've been able to have a positive impact in their lives by the training, the development, and economically by being able to provide a higher paying position. And by the way, our folks have all the benefits. We provide health, hospital, and life insurance, which I pay 75 percent of the family coverage, all our management people. And we have a 401K program that I match their contribution dollar for dollar, up to 4 percent. And of course, we have all the standard benefits of vacation and sick leave and everything that goes with that. So we've been able to provide a positive impact in their lives in that way. But I also work with people in the community, whether it's through encouragement, through advice, or by bringing them in as provider of services or vendors, or in one way or another try to help them grow their efforts in whatever it is. We have an individual that twenty years ago was just trying to start a landscaping business. He's been with us for twenty years and he does all our restaurants. But what happened when he all of a sudden got the McDonald's account, which was our account, because at that time I wasn't the only franchise owner in El Paso so he got my restaurants, but he got the McDonald's name. And that gave him instant credibility. And by doing the right things and providing the right services when he was able to get additional accounts, he's been able to grow his business and is still in business today. Other individuals, whether it's in the construction industry, the advertising industry, we've tried to work with and help them grow their business.

HG: You got into the McDonald's program, through the minority program?

RC: No, I came into the McDonald's program through Richard's efforts.

HG: But then you became a member of the larger McDonald's associations?

RC: Within the McDonald's world?

HG: Yes.

RC: There is a Hispanic organization called McDonald's Hispanic Owners Association, and the McDonald's owners, or most of the McDonald's owners, are members of this association. The purpose of the organization is to assist McDonald's be more successful and to assist our members to be more successful through enhancing our marketing efforts, through helping people grow, to more restaurants, to helping them relocate, helping them with their operations because you have to meet standards. If you're not meeting the McDonald's standards or the standards—the minimal acceptable operating standards, you're hurting yourself and you're hurting everybody else because the general public doesn't see the McDonald's organization as individually owned. They just see the arches. So if Joe Blow is not doing a good job in operating his restaurant, he can affect Richard Castro down the road. So we want all our operators to be as successful as possible in operations and financially, in every aspect of it. And then we have what we call a second generation program where if we have sons or daughters that are interested in this and want to continue in the business, we'll try to help them become successful owners as well, successful entrepreneurs.

HG: But you are also an officer of that national association?

RC: Well, yeah, I've been involved with it since the mid eighties, first, as a regional representative and then as a national president. I am glad to say that I had a very successful impact on the organization. I've always had very good organizational skills and I think of myself as a good people person. And I brought those two attributes to the organization and I provided a national organization system that is pretty much still in place today, and brought a lot of people and got them involved with the organization throughout the country. And set goals that were important to the majority of the folks throughout the country. So they were goals that everyone was—most people were able to get behind and get excited about. So when I took over that organization, there were only a few members. It had diminished to only a few members. And I took it over at the beginning of the year and, I believe it was '92. By the end of that year, most of the owners in the system had become members. And from January, February to September, when we had our annual general meeting, it was like day and night. And I'm glad to say that because—and then I served until '96, through '96, and we had a lot of growth throughout those years and set a succession plan in place to where it's continued to grow. And the people that have followed me have done a very good job. Some have done a little bit better job than others, but overall everybody's done a good job.

HG: And then you also sit on other national boards outside of McDonald's?

RC: No, not at this time.

HG: But you did before?

RC: Well, I have primarily focused on sitting on and being a part of the communities that I work with. So I've been very active in El Paso. I was chairman of the Public Service Board and served on the Public Service Board for eight years. In fact, I'm real proud of my time with the Public Service Board because during my tenure with the Public Service Board, we successfully were able to negotiate and

get additional water rights from the farmers, which translates to additional water rights from the Rio Grande, which was crucial. And also I'm very proud that as chairman I brought up, and pushed for, the idea of desalinization and as we know, now, we have huge desalinization plants and we're one of the areas that does a better job with desalinization. So that was one of my key projects as chairman of the board for the Public Service Board. I also served on the city planning commission for four years and I was chairman of that for two years. And I've served on a number of boards and continue to serve. Like I told you, I'm a member of the executive board and the board of directors the Hispanic Chamber at this point. I have been on the Boys and Girls Club board of directors here. But one thing that I take a lot of pride in is working with our youth and being involved with youth programs. In fact, youth and education is extremely important to me. Maybe because of the example of my *abuelita* and the *schoolita* that she had and being a teacher and being part of that from the time I was in pampers, probably. There weren't pampers at that time, but. So in 1985 I was successful in launching a scholarship program that targets Hispanic graduated students from high school. It's called HACER and it stands for Hispanic American Commitment to Educational Resources. And I started that program here in El Paso and in Texas. And the way I was able to do that was to get my fellow owner-operators to buy into it, as well as corporate officers, and Ronald McDonald House Charities accepted the idea. And from Day 1, they have provided resources on a matching basis to the markets that started that program. And over the years, it grew to many areas of the country. In fact, we have now reached the twenty million dollar mark in scholarships to Hispanic students. And an offspring of that, an offspring of starting the HACER program, was that it gave a vehicle for other groups to do the same thing. And the Asian community has started a scholarship program targeting Asian students, as well as the African-American community. And now there is a general scholarship program that everyone can apply for. I'm proud to say that that was a direct result of having started that HACER program back in '85.

HG: Under the McDonald's—

RC: Yes, all those programs are under the McDonald's umbrella, which is one of the things I think I'm so proud of being part of the McDonald's system. Everybody can try to wave the flag and talk about things that they do in their communities, but when I look at how willing the McDonald's organization is toward providing and helping, whether it's through the Ronald McDonald House Charities—just that in itself is a success story because how many international corporations and national corporations can say that they have gone through those steps that they've started a charity program like the Ronald McDonald House charities, which has provided millions and millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars for worthy causes, a lot of it having to do with the medical profession. And as we know, they also participate in the education programs throughout the world. And it's not just in one area, but it's throughout the world. To me that's extremely impressive. And we could sit here and talk for days about stories that have to do with the medical area where through Ronald McDonald House Charities grants there's been a positive impact on individual lives throughout the world.

HG: Let me ask you about your children. You have how many children?

RC: I have three sons.

HG: And are they involved or going to be involved?

RC: Well, the oldest was involved for a number of years, but I don't know where he got it from, but he had that niche to want to do his own thing. So he decided to try something else. And at this time, his answer to trying something else was the real estate industry. So at this point in his life, he is a realtor and he is working in the real estate industry. The middle son, from Day 1, knew that he wanted to be part of the family business and what we're doing. So from Day 1 he's been involved and he worked as a crew person and unfortunately, I've probably been

harder on them than the average people, but he worked as a crew person. He worked as a shift manager. He worked as an assistant manager and restaurant manager and he's now supervising several of the restaurants. And he will be, if he decides to, if he wants to, he'll be part of the second-generation program so at some point he can have ownership.

HG: And then your final—

RC: And the youngest is a freshman at Saint Mary's University. There's several things that he's looking to do, so we'll give him some time and see where all that falls out.

HG: El Paso, how did El Paso accept you and treat you?

RC: What makes a community good is its people, and the people of El Paso are so fantastic. When I first bought the first franchise in 1983, and started getting involved in the community, I mean, I loved it. First of all, I come from a border city, so when I got to El Paso, I loved the flavor of being a big city, but still having a small city attitude. And that's changed somewhat over the years, but especially at that time, the friendliness, the willingness of people to say hello, whether they knew you or not. Some of that has gone away as we've grown and, I guess, we teach our kids to be a little bit more careful. And in doing so, the people have become a little bit more formal, but I don't know where anybody could go and find a friendlier community. So that is, to me, the biggest, biggest pleasure of living in El Paso, is the people that make up El Paso because overall we have terrific people. When we look at the crime rate, I mean, for a city this size, it's next to nothing. Then when we see the type of crime that's committed, again, for a city this size, it's minor. And why, because of the people that make up the community. So I am just in love with El Paso. And then, you look at the things that the people of this community provide and it's right up my ally. The great food, the great Mexican food, you can find almost any type of food that you

want. You can find entertainment in the form of a major university. You can find the arts. You can find music. In fact, when my sons were growing up, they all— [I] had them get involved in as many things as possible and then you allow them to choose whatever it is they like. But one of the things I had them involved in was music, and the youngest had the opportunity to get really involved in things like *folklorico* dancing and then music. And consequently, I mean, they all love all types of music, and it's just a lot of fun.

HG: Let me ask you about the HACER scholarship banquet. You put that banquet together. It's a very large event here. How many years have you been doing that and how many people do you attract?

RC: You know, we've been doing that since we started the HACER scholarship program in 1985. And what you're referring to is the reception that we have on an annual basis. And the reception targets the recipients of the scholarships and their families and then we invite the community to attend and help these individuals celebrate their successes, their accomplishments. And we invite, of course, the people that are in the education industry, whether it's people from UTEP, our community colleges, and naturally, the schools that these individuals have attended, as well as the administrators. So we invite the superintendents. We invite the coaches. We invite the principals and the educators to attend and recognize these individuals for what they've done. We also invite a lot of our community people, a lot of our elected people from the city and the county. We just invite people, in general, from all industries because representing in those scholarship recipients are all industries, usually. I mean, there's people that are going to go into the medical field, the legal field, the engineering field, the education field. And you go through that, so it's nice to have people from all industries to be there that they may have an opportunity to visit with and get an insight on. But it's a terrific event that the people that go really enjoy it, because they become part of the recognition of these young folks. Naturally, the recipients are recognized and honored, so they feel good about it, but I think the

people that are the most proud and enjoy it the most are the family members because you can see that sense of pride in their eyes. I can identify with that because, and I'm sure you can too, if your son or daughter is being recognized, I mean, you're going to have that sense of pride for them. So it's a very good event. This year it's scheduled for May, so hopefully you can attend.

HG: You talk about having people gain pride in themselves and that seems to be very important to you as you share. When did you realize that, in yourself, you had to get a hold of that?

RC: That should be part of everybody's growing up and teaching. I think that I developed a sense of pride for family and that expanded to having a sense of pride in everything I do. And if people will take time to include that as part of their teaching, to the young folks, it will benefit them in all areas because if they develop self pride, if they develop pride in family, then as they start getting involved in different things, they carry that pride. So as I got involved in competitive sports, I think that sense of pride pushed me beyond the average individual that is just out there playing. Because we all want to win; there's no question about it, but it seems like there's some people that want to win more. And I think that part of what pushes you to have that extra edge of competitiveness is the pride that you've developed. I know that I've always pushed myself. If I was doing pushups, I would set a number and nothing was going to keep me from hitting that number. And I can remember sometimes I was hurting, but I had to get that number because I put it in my mind. What pushes you to do that? I think, at least in part, it's got to be the pride of not giving up, not giving up. And then you can expand that to pride in culture, pride in country, pride in your community, and it just goes on and on. I think it starts with the teachings, when you are a young person, to have a sense of pride.

HG: Who gave that to you?

RC: Well, again, I would have to point to my grandmother and my parents. And my grandmother, through the example, I mean, she took so much pride in herself. She died at eighty-nine [years of age] and I mean, the image that I will always have in my mind of her, because she created it, was that she was always very neat, she was always dressed impeccably, very well pressed, the way she walked, the way she conducted herself, the way she talked, you know, had just a sense of character. So that's the example that I grew up with, seeing that sense of pride. I didn't know that's what it was, but it just impressed me, that sense of pride in herself, and in everything that she did, and what she stood for. And she stood for the right things. And again, I remember her confronting people that were much larger than her and talking to them eye to eye, this is a five foot tall Hispanic lady. And then, of course, the teachings from my parents, in having pride and being proud of who you are. And I remember my mom and dad telling me you have to be proud of who you are. I've tried to pass that on to my kids, and not only to my kids, but I've tried to pass on to the hundreds of kids that I have worked with through my coaching. I've coached, basically, all of my adult life. Maybe I took a year off here and there, but basically, all my adult life, after I graduated from college, I've been involved in one youth program or another. I don't just teach basketball or baseball, and the Xs and the Os of it, but I've always tried to teach life's philosophies and incorporated that into my teachings and talkings to our young folks. And for the most part, one thing or another seems to stick with them. That's important.

HG: Have you ever had to face the giants out there, in business, where you have been the five foot person having to deal with—

RC: Well, yeah, I mean, all the time, but the key is not facing those people that are bigger than you in some sort of status, whether it's in position, financial or size, it's how you handle it, right? It's how you handle it. And as a young man out of college, I remember having a need to go talk to a banker about a loan and I remember being nervous about it. Grew up in a low or moderate income

neighborhood, was a modest, but proud, environment, now I'm a young adult going on my own to talk to individuals that I had seen as leaders in the community all my growing up years, none of them Hispanic at that time. So I was a little intimidated. So the way I handled it was I told myself, You walk in there like you own the bank. You don't walk in there like you're going in there to ask for a loan. You walk in there like you own the bank and you talk to that officer, the owner of the bank. And I did, and it worked. And I've always followed that. I've always followed that. When I feel somewhat uneasy, I become the owner. At different stages, whether it was my first teaching job, whether it was my first day with the Texas Employment Commission, whether it was my first day at City Hall, or going for that first interview with the McDonald's regional president. It's helped me get into the right frame of mind. So that's been my way, my answer. One thing, when we were talking about the bank, when I was about—it's a little side story. When I was like twelve years old, I was riding with my brother, and we were in downtown Del Rio and at that time the local bank—there was two competing banks, two local banks. That bank had hired a Hispanic as a vice president. And it was close to lunchtime, I guess, and I was riding in the car with my brother. And, his name is Abe, [he] was I guess, getting back from his lunch hour or whatever from wherever he had been, and he was walking on the sidewalk toward the bank door and my brother spotted him. And he goes, "Hey, look that's Abe over there." And I looked. He was like (And I looked toward the building??), "See him right there, going through the bank? That's Abe." He goes, "He's the vice president at the bank." And, (I go, "Okay.??") And he said, "You think you would like to be a vice president of the bank." I told him, "No, I want to own the bank." And I was twelve years old, and I remember that distinctly, and I told him, "No, I want to own the bank." Don't ask me where that came from, but it was just that sense of whatever it is that—

HG: And now, what remains now for Richard Castro?

RC: You know, that's a good question. I will tell you that what's most enjoyable is the climb. All of a sudden when you get to a certain level, it's like, okay. So now, it's easier. So, I guess, now it's working toward making the businesses that I have as sufficient as possible, working with our people as much as I can. Maybe we can continue to make more of our folks owners, as time goes by. From a business perspective, continuing to grow as the opportunities come up. Some will come up on their own. Some I will look for. Continuing to be involved in the community. One thing that I would love to see, I would love to see movies made about Hispanic successful themes. There is not enough of that. There is so many great stories, if we just look at El Paso. I went to Bowie High School when the 1949 baseball team was recognized not too long ago, and what a fantastic movie that would make of the coach and that team, the successes that the coach had, but in particular the 1949 year. Highlighting the successes, focusing on the 1949 year and that team from El Paso, and because it was 100 percent Hispanic, the coach and the players, and everything that they had to go through. They had great successes and great wins, but they also had to endure going to West Texas and seeing signs of, "No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed," and the environment that that brings and the attitude that that has, and still being able to win over that, all the way to the state and winning the state championship. That would make a great movie. The army troop—help me out with this—was it the A Troop or the C Troop? It's the Hispanic troop that served admirably.

HG: The 332nd or something like that.

RC: And a movie about that Hispanic troop would be a fantastic story, not only for the Hispanic community, but more importantly for the young Hispanics coming up. They just don't see enough national figures. They don't see enough national stories. We see a lot of representation representing the white community, the African-American community, but not enough of the Hispanic national representation. I would love to see that. And then, just a couple of examples, as you go through, I mean, we have all these Medal of Honor winners, there's got to

be some stories there that would make a fantastic movie. You can go into the sports arena. You could go into the education arena. You can go into the medical field. Just overall, I would like, I would love to see that being tapped into, and it's being disregarded. I would like to see our national advocacy groups do more advocating and be more assertive. If that's the role that they choose to be in, then wear that hat and be more aggressive. Or with decision makers, I mean, you have to—okay, first of all, we were talking about advocacy. And if you're going to agree to wear the hat of advocacy, then for that time that you have that hat on, you have to accept the role and do it, and you have to forget about your individual desires because you're representing your constituency with whatever those constituents are. In my case, and we're talking about right now, in my role as representative, later as national president, and now as divisional president because I decided to get back involved, and if you're going to represent those members, then you have to be willing to talk, and to the decision makers, present the case for these individuals. And you have to be willing to push, and you can't worry about whether they're going to get upset at you, whether they're going to get angry at you. In fact, if you can set that aside and sit there and look at the people in the eye, and talk to them eyeball to eyeball, and be strong about what it is that you're representing, you will gain their respect because they will realize that you're a person of conviction. And if they know that you're a person of conviction and you're looking to do what's right, you will earn their respect. And the funny thing about it is that as you get that respect, you're more effective because your credibility grows. So then, as you talk about issues that these individuals have that you're trying to correct, a lot of times they'll be more willing to work with you because you have gained that respect and credibility. But if you go there with head in hand and you're asking in too polite of a manner, it's too easy to be told no. So you have to be strong.

HG: You're talking about guts.

RC: You have to have guts. Whether you use the word 'strong' or 'guts', you have to have the courage to meet on an even basis and let them know that you were there to represent individuals and to address the issues and to look for—

HG: But advocacy requires a commitment to the greater good.

RC: Exactly.

HG: A commitment outside of yourself.

RC: Exactly.

HG: And too often, boards that hire people don't hire people with that commitment because they don't have it themselves.

RC: That's true.

HG: And they can't see it. They hire superintendents without vision because they don't have vision. They can't recognize it. So how do you hire people with vision, with commitment? Do you see that?

RC: Well, if you have a principle that you believe in then you're going to have a vision because—I don't know. In my experiences, I have come across a lot of people. Some that are weak and are afraid of their own shadow, and they don't get anywhere; and then by the same token, I've come across individuals that have huge commitment and convictions that they will pass up promotions because what they stand for is not being met. This person probably doesn't have a vision because not everybody's going to have a vision. They're not visionaries. They are only seeing things for the moment and they're not visionaries. And you got to be able to see beyond and not necessarily just the future, but see beyond what's here, right now, and what it can be. But in order to do that, you've gotta have the

principles of what it is that you're trying to achieve. And if you have that kind of commitment, then yeah, you will have the vision of where you're trying to get your organization to, to get the individuals to, whatever it is that you're working for. The term that you will hear me use a lot is being mentally strong, and that can be from guts or courage, whatever. But if you're mentally strong, you're going to be able to handle pressure and you're going to be willing to address issues that are controversial. And a lot of times, people will walk away from something that's controversial or will go along with it in order to avoid controversy. And my thought is, and I learned this as a city administrator, if you do what's right, on the long run it works out. If you do what's right, on the long run it works out. For the moment, you may have fifty people that are pushing for a certain issue, but if you know that what they're pushing for is not right, then you have the mental strength, the courage, the guts to stand by your convictions and do what's right. Once it all settles out, it works out because if you do what's right, on the long run it works out. All of a sudden all those people will dissipate and things start, as time goes by, it'll prove out.

HG: You talk about courage to do what is right. How do you know what is right?

RC: Well, it depends on the subject at hand, right? If we're going to be looking at a subject matter then you're gonna have to have the knowledge of the subject that's being discussed. And as you gather, as you have the knowledge, you formulate your plan in your mind. We're not talking about formalities, you know, if you're not going to have a formal plan, etc., etc., etc., but we're just talking about dealing with issues. You have to have the knowledge. You formulate based off the knowledge, what is right. And then you have to have the courage to stick to what you feel is right. But it's something that in your mind and in your soul, you're convinced that that's right. But you know, you have to have a basis for it, and that basis, in my opinion, has got to be the knowledge. How it's going to impact things? What effect is it going to have, if you do this? What effect is it going to have if you go along with what you're being pushed to do, even though you don't

feel it's right? So you evaluate all that and then you do what you, in your mind is right.

HG: Let me ask, you were awarded this National Hispanic Businessman of the Year by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce three years ago. The question may be hard for you to answer because they gave it to you, but why did they give that to you?

RC: Well, I mean, the stated reason is obviously my success in business, but also part of it is community involvement and giving back to the community and being involved in the Chambers and making contributions through your involvement, through the Chambers. I think that some of the factors that might have convinced them to choose me was: where I came from, having, again, come from moderate means; having had the whereabouts to do what it took to get a formal education to find a way to achieve enough financial success to put me in a position to achieve greater economic success; having the vision and the ability to deal, in my case, with corporate America to get the opportunities; to be able to deal with the financial institutions to get the financing to take advantage of those opportunities, which has given me the growth to where I'm at now in comparison to where I started as a young boy, and then, eventually, as a young man; and then the contributions such as the scholarship program that has touched thousands of lives in recipients and in families; and then, I think, such things as a history of being involved in youth programs through my entire adult life.

HG: Are you known as an advocate?

RC: In a lot of circles, yes. In fact, as you probably know, the local Hispanic Chamber, this year, recognized me with the advocacy award. So, in one way or another, I'm always advocating. I'm always advocating for individual growth. I'm advocating for somebody.

HG: Let me ask you a question, then. What would the goal be? What would you recommend to a young Hispanic who wants to get into business? What should their goal be, to create a business?

RC: That's a fairly easy one to talk about. The first thing is, obviously, they have to have a true desire to go into business because if they have that desire they will find a way to do it. Using my personal experience, my answer to it was real estate and building. And I knew that I wanted to have my own business at some point, so I was always preparing for that by building—how? By building relationships, building relationships with the financial institutes that I knew I was going to need if I went into business, by preparing educationally. What does that mean? Studying for and getting my real estate license, learning the construction business. And then eventually jumping in with both feet and doing it. The desire has to be strong to do that. And I think some folks want to go into business because they think it's glamorous, because they think they're going to make a lot of money. Well, yeah, they can do those things if they're willing to do what it takes. What does it take? It's going to take long hours. It's going to take a very strong commitment. And it's going to take attributes that either you have or you're willing to develop. And the principle one is understanding how to work with people so that they are willing to help you achieve your goal. The rest of it you learn, the organization, the delegation. All the other components, you learn. But you got to have those things in place. Now, we're going to tell a young Hispanic individual that wants to be an entrepreneur you've—I'm going to get back to some of the things that I've already told you. You have to be committed. You have to be willing to work hard. You're going to have to have a lot of mental strength to get you past the hard times. And you're going to have to make sure you have a very huge commitment to a positive attitude because when it goes bad, you gotta truly believe that it's going to get better. And other than that, it's a matter of choosing what you're going into business for, jumping in with both feet, and doing everything that it's going to take to make that venture successful because it's crucial that that first venture be successful because if it's successful,

then you establish yourself. And from that one you can branch off into others. If that first one is not successful, then you're really going to have a hard time regrouping.

HG: Would you add to that purpose what you've been able to succeed in and that is contributing in a large way, in a significant way, to the community that you're in and to the larger community?

RC: Oh definitely, but first you have to be successful. First, you have to make yourself successful. You can have that in your mind and you can have that desire, but the first thing you have to do is work and do what it's going to take to make yourself successful in that first business venture. Once you have achieved that, then you can put your other desires into play, such as getting involved with the community and giving back to the community. But you gotta keep them in perspective and you have to prioritize because if you let it get away from you, and before you are on solid footing, you decide that you're going to be doing all these things because they're fun, you might not be there next year. So yeah, in fact, in all my talks, I always, especially to youth groups, I always incorporate, or I finish by reminding them, by encouraging them, to do what they can to be as successful as possible and to not forget about the community and to give back to the community. So that's very important to me. But the first thing you gotta do is make sure that you've established yourself and then you go off and do the other things.

HG: So, not to ask a redundant question, but you were able to fulfill—I don't know what question to ask, but it's about having to do with fulfilling your dream. Did you have this dream at the level that you've had success or did it have some form to it that it's played out for you?

RC: If you're asking me have I achieved greater success than I thought I would, the answer is yes. You remember what I told you earlier? When I was in my late

teens, my goal was to achieve economic success. That was the goal. And I didn't know how I was going to do it, right. But that was the goal. Have I achieved greater success than I thought I would? Yeah, the answer is yes. It's fantastic. I've been at both ends of it and I can tell you that it's a lot of fun to achieve that success, not just to have that economic success, but because what that enables you to do. And that gives me more pleasure than anything because just having it is a big deal. I mean, so what? It's what you do with it that gives you that satisfaction.

HG: Fantastic, fantastic. Well, your story certainly is worthy of that kind of recognition that you want to see brought to the community. And your story is certainly a fascinating one, and a worthwhile one, and I want to thank you for sharing that.

RC: Oh, thank you.

HG: This is Homero Galicia completing the interview with Mr. Richard Castro.

End of Interview