Interviewer: Lindsay Schmitz

Narrator: Norma Mendoza

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Lindsay Schmitz: Well, I'll guess we'll go ahead and start with some simple questions. First of all, where were you born?

Norma Mendoza: I was born near Wilburn, Missouri.

Schmitz: Are your parents immigrants?

Mendoza: No.

Schmitz: Oh, okay.

Mendoza: No, I come from a long, long line of Americans.

Schmitz: So what years did you live in Lincoln Place? You don't currently live there?

Mendoza: No I don't currently live there no. I moved there in January 1961 and I lived there until about February 1966.

Schmitz: Now, you were active in the Mexican Honorary Commission?

Mendoza: I have been. I am not very active right now but I have been yes.

Schmitz: Okay and what kind of activities does that group do?

Mendoza: Well that group started out as a way of helping immigrants from Mexico and it was commissioned by the Mexican Consulate.

Schmitz: Oh.

Mendoza: That's why it is called the Mexican Honorary Commission. And the consulate wanted to help patriots, ex-patriots from Mexico to get along better to you know as a way of giving them things they needed like, to learn English and to have friends, I guess and associates they could call on and one of the first things they did when they started was to develop an insurance program which a lot of brotherhoods started out that way. So I think people paid like a nickel a week for insurance and if somebody was out of work because of sickness they got a minimum payment through the insurance and I guess it could provide burial expenses and things like that. That was one of the main reasons that the Honorary Commission started but it was …

Schmitz: About when did it start?

Mendoza: It started about 1926 or 7, I forget which year. But it was mainly a group of Mexican men who would get together and meet in the tavern or somewhere they didn't have a hall back then.

Schmitz: So it was also kind of a social organization?

Mendoza: It was more of a social organization. But there weren't a lot of women involved until the war years, I think, because so many men went away to the service. I think they got they women involved. I've seen some minutes where the women were involved as officers. But they still had their meetings at someplace wherever they could, I guess. And I didn't get involved until they began to open up their meetings to the families, trying to get more people. It was sometime during the 60's that they started doing that. They would have a dinner or a meeting on a Sunday afternoon and they would have a dinner and the family would come together as a group and that helped to bring in more members to the meetings. So that's when I got involved and the other purpose of the organization was to try to keep their culture alive and so they would have a dance group and they had fiestas. They still do, two times a year. They have fiestas. There would be a performance by the dance group and the Mexican food and Mexican drink and then usually a Mexican band would play for the dance. They had other activities which are mostly social. They sponsor sports teams.

Schmitz: Probably more social now.

Mendoza: It is primarily social now, I don't think they have had the insurance since I have been a member. I don't know when that went out the (inaudible).

Schmitz: Do you know if their activities changed at all during World War II?

Mendoza: I don't know very much about those years.

Schmitz: Okay.

Mendoza: I think they were having fiestas back then and their social times. You know, they had dances and things because I remember hearing my father-in law talk about it.

Schmitz: Did your parents live in Lincoln Place?

Mendoza: No, no I grew up in St. Louis County.

Schmitz: Okay. So, when did you get married?

Mendoza: We got married in 1960.

Schmitz: And that's when you…

Mendoza: No we didn't move there for another year. We lived in St. Louis County for a year. And then we had a child and so I quit work and we needed a less expensive place to live so we moved to Lincoln Place. In a big home that his parents lived in and they had fixed it into 3 apartments and so we had one of those.

Schmitz: I know you didn't live there when the original immigrants came over but during the years that you did live there, most of the immigrants in the area were from Eastern Europe did you notice that the Mexican immigrants…I don't want to say outcasts, but didn't quite…

Mendoza: No.

Schmitz: With the other immigrants?

Mendoza: No, I didn't notice that at all. When I moved there in 1961 it was still that kind of a community of immigrants it hadn't really changed over much like it has today. But I guess I grew up with a lot of immigrants without really realizing who they were and where they were from but when I moved here it was a very, very obvious change. You know, to me that I was now living with a lot of foreign people. Foreign to me, you know. That they were all very, very friendly and welcomed me as part of the community and I didn't notice any kind of friction between any of the groups. They would tease one another in a good-natured way. You know, they would talk about Mexican time, you know things like that. They would tease each other but they all had kind of a camaraderie

that was unusual and I remember once going to a picnic with, I guess it was the fourth of July, and everybody was going to the park with picnic baskets and stuff and my parents came and I remember him helping one of my husband's friends carry the ice chest out to the car and my dad was kind of amazed because, you know, he moved from his home where he grew up to get work and of course these people had too. But what was unusual is that my husband and his friends had known each other since they were children and here they were grown men with families and my dad said, you know it is very unusual for people to remain this close for this many years. They had known each other for so long. And I realized that it was an unusual place because there was such a cohesiveness that you don't see in a lot of places. I grew up in a small suburb of St. Louis, a small area, where a lot of people knew each other but I didn't notice the same kind of cohesiveness that there was in Lincoln Place and life long friendships and that people still associate with one another after all these years. Even after they moved out of Lincoln Place.

Schmitz: So, I know that they had Sunday School at the Community Center and that the Community Center was a big part of the community. Did the Mexican immigrants also take part in the Sunday School at…

Mendoza: Yes. A lot of people did. It was a mission and the Church that sponsored it saw it as a mission. I'm not sure if they converted very many people but it was a place for children to, I'm not sure if they got fed there or what but they learned things and it was a place for them to be safe and have some social time together and one of the places

was kind of like a daycare. I know when I used one of them when it was still there, it was a daycare when my kids were little.

Schmitz: At the Community Center?

Mendoza: No, no at the Mission. Down at the church, they had a mission.

Schmitz: Oh, okay.

Mendoza: Building, a little farther down the street. But at one time they did have Sunday School at the Community Center. I'm not sure how many people went to that because the Armenians had their own church, right there and the Bulgarians probably had church. They had their own close by, in fact, all the Mexican people belonged to St. Joseph's which was just downtown so everybody had their own church. The Sunday School was kind of like a little separate thing.

Schmitz: So the Mexicans just went to the Catholic Church in Granite City.

Mendoza: Most of them.

Schmitz: Okay, how about Mexican restaurants in Granite City. Did anyone open up any restaurants?

Mendoza: There were a lot of restaurants there at one time. Most of them I don't know a lot about because I didn't live there then. There was only one restaurant left when I lived there and that was The International Restaurant and they had wonderful paprikash which I used to buy.

Schmitz: What was it called?

Mendoza: They called it paprikash it was a stew with hot peppers in it. I used to buy that to take home and because it was so hot sometimes I would add some tomatoes or a can of potatoes to stretch it a little. Kind of tone down the spiciness of it. When, before Highway 3 was built through, there was only Niedringhaus to get to the Army Depot and so Niedringhaus was a very busy street and they had a large contingent of military people there during World War II. It was like a supply base and the only way to get in and out of there was down Niedringhause so they had tavern after tavern lining that street and a lot of different ethnic grocery stores, restaurants, a bakery, a cleaners, all kinds of things that catered to the military as well as the people who lived there and the ones who worked at American Steel. So since that was the only street into the Army Depot at the time it was very busy. Later when Highway 3 was built through there a lot of that traffic that went through there disappeared.

Schmitz: So a lot of the people who worked at the Depot then would come in…

Mendoza: Yes, the military as well as the civilian civil service workers. It was a big place at one time, the Army Depot.

Schmitz: So people would come from outside the community and come into Lincoln Place?

Mendoza: Yes, they worked there and then the military people that were stationed there. I don't know how many people there were but there probably several hundred, maybe even thousands, I don't know. Because it was largely diminished by the time I moved there. There was still a lot of people that worked there, civilian employees there in 1961 but there weren't as many military people stationed there.

Schmitz: Now, the Depot was built during the War?

Mendoza: I'm not sure when it was built, probably during World War II because the Canal, probably about the same time that Canal was built. The Canal was not always there and it was built sometime during the 1940's.

Schmitz: Okay, so by the time you got there in the 1960's did you see the neighborhood start to change as the first generation of immigrants got older and the second generation became adults?

Mendoza: It was gradual, it was beginning probably by 1961 to change. Because, when I moved there, my in-laws, my father-in-law and my mother-in-law, well my father-in-law was still employed, he was still in his career and his peers were, most of them, still working. And so they were, like the second generation, I think, of immigrants. I think, I am not really clear about that but the people who were their children, like my husband and his siblings and, you know, his peers, one of the first things they did was to move out of there. And of course, the parents' generation had goals and ambitions for their children and as you probably heard a lot of foreign people really dig in when they come to the United States and they take advantage of every opportunity that is offered to them and they work really hard and kind of make the rest of us look bad because they are so industrious. And if you look at the people who grew up here you see, for example, the Chief Judge of Madison County Circuit Court is Andy Matoesian, who grew up there.

Schmitz: Oh, okay.

Mendoza: And many of the political people in power, well, not too long ago, Nelson Hagmayer (not sure of spelling) lived nearby in West Granite. Just a lot of people who rose to positions of power and authority came out of Lincoln Place and part of it was that their parents saw to it that they had a good education. They wanted them to succeed, do better than they had done. And a lot of people really did. And they moved out of Lincoln Place.

Schmitz: So even now that you don't live there anymore do you still have ties to Lincoln Place? Well obviously you are part of the Mexican…

Mendoza: I sort of keep a few ties down there. I have a friends who live down there and then the Hall, the Mexican Honorary Commission Hall is there and still have a few of my husband's relatives who live there. Most of the people who I knew really well don't live there anymore, but there's a little tavern down there where they serve tacos on Saturday night if you like that kind of taco. And it's kind of like a gathering place for the people who grew up there. If they want to be sure to see some of their friends then they go there on a Saturday night. (Inaudible) And the Mexican Honorary Commission has a tavern. A lot of the social life…

Schmitz: They have a tavern in Lincoln Place?

Mendoza: In Lincoln Place, yes. And so they talk about going to the Club or going to Ernie's and so those two places are still very active and very much patronized by not only the people who used to live there but probably people who live there now and a lot of the people who work in American Steel.

Schmitz: So now all the different ethnic groups go to all the different places? The Mexicans don't just go to the…

Mendoza: I think they always did. There's another tavern called Sammy's that is owned by an Armenian family, the Negogians (unsure of spelling) and there used to be some other little shops there. There's very few of them left anymore. Very few of the children grew up to want to run the shops that their families owned and so when those people died off their businesses closed. And some people have made an effort, like there's a place down there called Planet Granite which was a hairstyling shop and I think, like a tavern on the other side. I never was in either side so I can't tell you much more than that about it. But they really put a lot of money in that building and tried to make something out of it and for some reason it just didn't go over. They had it a few years and now its closed. So, there are not too many businesses left along that stretch of Niedringhaus anymore. But the people I think never had any problem getting along together, as far as I knew, if there were ever any kind of hard feelings or fights among the different nationality groups, it happened way before I was there.

Schmitz: Some of the interviews that people have done in our class have noticed that actually the immigrants as a whole had some conflict with the outside community.

Mendoza: That's probably true.

Schmitz: Like there were some people from Tennessee and that area…

Mendoza: That's probably true. That's what they called West Granite, the West Granite people, a lot of people from Tennessee, I don't know, Kentucky, wherever. You know

people go to where their kind is, people they relate to, or their relatives and so there used to be a little bit of animosity between Lincoln Place and West Granite. Some of it was good-natured; some of it was probably deep-seeded.

Schmitz: Yes.

Mendoza: And a lot of it probably had to due with the fact that the people who lived in Lincoln Place were immigrants. And sometime, you know, the people from the South are not very tolerant of others. So, I don't know if that's what happened. I remember

Schmitz: So just ethnic or racial prejudice?

Mendoza: Well it could have been, well it would have been more ethnic because there's not a lot racial differentiation. Not maybe the people from the South don't perceive it that way. They may perceive it as racial differences. I don't know. There's no racial difference.

Schmitz: No. No, some of the people we have interviewed have referred to the as "hillbillies" too so,

Mendoza: Or "rednecks" or "hoosier," they called me a "hoosier" but in a good-natured way, I think. My husband's friends would call me that and I'd say, "I'm not a hoosier, but you can call me a hillbilly if you like, because my family came from the hills of

Northwest Arkansas, and I can accept that, but I am not a hoosier." And they'd say "Yes you are, you're not a honkie, or an Armenian, or a Mexican, what are you, you are a hoosier." Anyway, that was kind of good-natured when they teased me or at least I thought it was.

Schmitz: So as a non-immigrant you never felt like an outsider?

Mendoza: I never felt like an outsider there, never. It was a very accepting community, I felt when I moved there. One of the first things that I did after I moved there, because you know I was a stranger except for my husband's family, my husband asked my sister-in-law if she would take me to the Lincoln Place Mother's Club. And so they met in the afternoon, I think one day a month or week, I don't remember how often they met. But she took me there and it should have been called the Grandmother's Club because most of the women were of the older generation but there were several younger ones, you know my sister-in-law's age and my age and that was another way for me to get acquainted with these people. But they were all different nationalities groups, I remember one lady was Hungarian, several were Macedonian. Some were, a few were Mexican, not too many but they were all different groups and they all got along well and they had their little meeting, and had some refreshments and they raised a lot of money.

Schmitz: They were a charitable group?

Mendoza: They were a charitable group they, I don't know what all they did with their money. I didn't belong to the organization long enough to really know what they did. But I know they helped people who were needy if they could and they gave money to the sports teams and to the Clubhouse. If they needed something they would but it and they were able to raise a lot of money. I don't know what you would consider a lot but they could give $50 here and $25 here, things like that. And they would have raffles and make quilts and sell bake goods, things like that to raise money.

Schmitz: So how about, do you remember if any of the groups continued to cook ethnic foods?

Mendoza: Yes they did, and as a matter of fact, some of my husband's age group told me that they felt like all their friends were like their mother and they were welcome in each other's homes and they would eat the different ethnic foods and they were, almost all of them were familiar with the different kinds of ethnic foods. And when I moved there, I would have things like zelnick and starma, it's called and starma is like grape leaves stuffed with rice and some kind of meat. Zelnick is kind of like a pastry made with cheese, but it's not sweet.

Schmitz: And are those Macedonian?

Mendoza: One of them is Hungarian, for sure, maybe both of them are Hungarian, I am not sure. But I learned how to eat that and I would go to the market that was owned by

Macedonians and would buy shish kabob ready to cook. They would have them seasoned and already skewered and I could buy them for about 50 cents a piece.

Schmitz: That's nice.

Mendoza: And I would get the paprikash and I would get the tacos at Ernie's tavern. My husband's cousin lived across the street from me and she would show me how to make tortillas and I would show her how to make some things that I knew how to make that, you know, she didn't know how to cook. American food so we did switch back and forth and in the process she learned English and I learned a little Spanish. And people did that, it was a very nice, tightly knit community.

Schmitz: So did the younger generation also continue to cook traditional food would you say?

Mendoza: I'd say that a lot of them did. Well you know you are talking about my age group, I don't know if we are the younger generation anymore…

Schmitz: [Laughter] Well,

Mendoza: But, yes, I think they did. Other things I had were from people in my age group, I didn't have very many things from the people in the older generation except my mother-in-law.

Schmitz: I know there were taverns and things for adult entertainment, as far as the kids were concerned what kinds of games or entertainment did they…

Mendoza: Well they had the Clubhouse. They played a lot of basketball there. They had…

Schmitz: So that was the place where they would spend weeknights and weekends?

Mendoza: Oh, yes, they'd go down there and they could play in the gym or they had organized activities for them. I don't know what kind. I'm sure they probably had the equivalent of Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts, something like that.

Schmitz: So who coordinated all these activities?

Mendoza: Who did?

Schmitz: Yes.

Mendoza: The Clubhouse was owned by the City, it was part of the Granite City Park District. Now I don't know if it's always been owned by the city, but it is now. The Mission down the street was a Mission of the Baptist Church. The Armenians had their own building where their children went to Armenian lessons and, I think, they had their

own Sunday School too. So they would go to their Sunday School and they would go to classes too to study Armenian. They don't want their children to forget how to speak Armenian and their service at their church that they have out there on Pontoon Road is mostly in Armenian so they have done very well in keeping their culture alive. There was always softball, we had a couple of softball diamonds, they were like sandlot softball diamonds. There was always like a pick-up softball game. Everybody could play that and, of course, my husband introduced soccer and so they would play soccer down on the Clubhouse grounds which wasn't very big, not full size for a soccer field. But he would teach a lot of the kids how to play soccer and, I'm not sure they might have had some activities at the Depot for them. The people who lived there whose parents were military had access to the Depot and the programs there. And they had a swimming pool and a golf course and so if your parent was military, and some of the Mexican people's families were military and they could down go the Depot for their swimming and activities.

Schmitz: So there were several military families in Lincoln Place?

Mendoza: There were a few but I am sure that back before I moved there, there were a lot more. But when I lived there, there were only a few. And they also had a movie theatre on the Depot.

Schmitz: Oh.

Mendoza: So there were a lot of things for them to do plus they weren't too much in the city, I think, some of those kids, including some of my own children, probably used to go swimming in the canal. So you know they did things like that, that were not really acceptable to parents. Kids find things to do.

Schmitz: Right. So could anyone go to the movie theatre at the Depot?

Mendoza: No, no the Depot was more for military people, you had to have permission to go on the Depot for other things. In later years, they had softball diamonds there and soccer fields and they would allow outsiders to come in to have leagues and so forth. When I first lived there it was still pretty tight and there were a lot of civil service people who worked there and a lot of, there was a commissary and a PX so that was the only one in the whole St. Louis area outside of Scott Air Base so you had a lot of people coming from all over the city, from St. Louis if they wanted to shop at the PX or the commissary they had to come there. It was a really strange community in that way.

Schmitz: Yes. As far as the taverns are concerned, did the women go to those also?

Mendoza: I don't think they used to. I think they more or less used to be the (inaudible) of the men but you know the younger generation became more and more demanding and a little more liberated, whatever, and now, I would say there is probably not a whole lot of difference. There's probably still more men in the taverns.

Schmitz: But then…

Mendoza: When I first moved there I don't think there were too many that went to the taverns in 1961. And you know I was at home with small children as most of the people I knew were so we didn't have a lot of opportunity to do things, to go anywhere. Stay home with the kids.

Schmitz: So most of the women did not work outside of their homes?

Mendoza: Let's see. I wouldn't say most of them. I would say that it was probably the other way around, especially when they first came here because they needed the money to survive. I think my own mother-in-law worked in a factory in St. Louis making curtains and I know my husband's cousin did that. And one of his cousins's worked at (inaudible).

Schmitz: That was in St. Louis?

Mendoza: Oh, yes, there used to be good transportation to go to St. Louis, there was a streetcar that came all the way down, almost to Lincoln Place. They could catch the street car by the NESCO plant and go all the way to St. Louis. But I would say that there were a lot more women who worked in my mother-in-law's generation. Probably even my generation just while they were raising small children. There weren't a lot of daycare places when they were little so very few of them worked outside the home then. They

had to stay home with their kids. But you know if you only have a couple of kids, it didn't take long before they were in school and you could go back to work.

Schmitz: Yes.

Mendoza: I think a lot of them worked.

Schmitz: So, when the original immigrant women worked, where did they…

Mendoza: They had to work English was not necessary.

Schmitz: Okay.

Mendoza: So they worked in a factory making clothing or curtains or whatever. You know it was like the equivalent of the men working in the steel mill. They used their labor skills, their skills of labor to make a living. My husband his first job was at Miss Hulling's as a busboy or a dishwasher, I am not sure. He never advanced much farther than that. But, I always tease of because he worked with Ramon Gallardo who owns Casa Gallardo.

Schmitz: Oh, really.

Mendoza: So I say, gee it worked out for him.

Schmitz: I didn't know that…

Mendoza: Yes, he started at Miss Hulling's.

Schmitz: Oh wow,

Mendoza: Yes, there were a lot of opportunities for them but they had to work somewhere where English was not a factor because they didn't speak English well enough, the first generation people didn't.

Schmitz: And what did they do with their children while they were at work?

Mendoza: They would stay home with them until they were old enough to go to school or they had extended families. There would be one generation watching the kids while the other generation was working. I learned some strange things that I thought were interesting when I lived there. One year I participated in a census for my church and so I went around and knocked on a lot of doors that I wouldn't have ordinarily and a lot of people kept their upstairs for show and lived in the basement of their houses. They had their kitchen down there and bedrooms down there and probably the only thing they went upstairs for was the bathroom. I though that was strange because, you know, I never did do that. My basement was the pits, you know.

Schmitz: Yes.

Mendoza: We had a coal bin down there. But you know there was a lot of commonality in their upstairs, you know that was their show area of their home. They had really beautiful, clean, nice basements as good as anybody else's upstairs, I guess. Interesting.

Schmitz: Some of the other people have talked about how they had real pride in their yards, making them look nice.

Mendoza: Oh yes. Nice gardens, and gardens, a lot of gardens. They grew vegetables and things and they had the European style where they had raised beds so that you could walk in between them and I'd say they were maybe two feet high, the raised beds in the gardens. Interesting.

Schmitz: One woman that was interviewed talked about a community garden. I'm not sure when that was but…

Mendoza: That must have been during the war. I don't remember that, you know, Victory Gardens.

Schmitz: Right.

Mendoza: During World War II, you know people were encouraged to grow their own food to help the war effort.

Schmitz: Now, the Mexican immigrants as a group, about how many were there?

Mendoza: How many? There were probably between a dozen and two dozen when I first moved there.

Schmitz: Compared to the other groups do you think they were a little smaller?

Mendoza: It could be, I never really noticed. There's only 16 blocks in Lincoln Place there's not a lot of homes there and I didn't really notice I would probably guess that they were probably a small group. Because the Hungarians owned the hall that the Mexicans now have. They had their own hall, the Armenians had their own hall and they probably had larger groups but I don't know that for sure. I never looked at a count.

Schmitz: So would you say that marriage within a particular ethnic group was important?

Mendoza: Some of the people still had arranged marriages.

Schmitz: Oh really.

Mendoza: Especially the Armenians. In my,

Schmitz: Into the 60's?

Mendoza: In my age group, yes. Yes, I know a couple of people whose marriages were arranged. And maybe they didn't even know their prospective spouse, but their families arranged it. It was very important for them to marry within their group and they did that but there were a lot of intermarriages within the different groups like my husband's sister married a man who was a, whose family was Bulgarian, my husband's brother married a woman whose family was Italian. She was from St. Louis so that was different. Quite a few, I would say that it was more common, than not, to have intermarriage. The ones who really stayed within their own group, were probably the ones who had the arranged marriages. Well that was kind of strange to me.

Schmitz: Yes.

Mendoza: I thought that went out last century or something.

Schmitz: So these were arranged marriages with other people who lived in Lincoln Place?

Mendoza: Well, no, one that I know of and they are still married today, she was from Canada and he grew up here. And so, you know, it was a family thing that they would matchmaker or whatever. It wasn't necessarily the girl next door.

Schmitz: Yes, that's interesting. Well, I guess, finally, one of the last things that many people have talked about is that, many people feel that, as time has gone on, many people feel that there has been a real sense of a loss of community. Would you say that that is true?

Mendoza: I think that that is probably true in that so many of the homes that were owned by the homeowners who have passed are now in the hands of landlords and there is a lot of rental property and transients, people who don't stay there very long. And myself, I was kind of in that category in a way, because I only lived there 5 years. And so all the things that I am telling you, it should be very clear, is from an outsider's point of view. Because I didn't grow up there and there were so many things that I observed while I lived there but I am a journalist so my senses of observation are pretty good. But there were a lot of things that, for example, people felt very safe in that community. I never had to worry about locking my car doors. I always felt that there would be somebody there to protect me if I needed help and I don't think it is that way today. I think people have to worry more about crime and safety and a lot of that has to do with it being opened up. You can now drive straight through from what used to be downtown Granite on Highway 3. And people can come down that highway from anyway. So before there was only that one way to get into Lincoln Place. Well, there was another

way from West Granite but it was not as well known. So it was kind of like a real sheltered area.

Schmitz: Yes.

Mendoza: And that's changed now, because of the highway and the fact that people have died and their heir's sold their property. And there's a lot of rental property down there, I'm sure.

Schmitz: Well now there's very few original immigrants, well not the original, but the original immigrants' families who even live there.

Mendoza: That's probably true because as I told you that was their wish to get their kids out of there. In a way it was like a ghetto, when the immigrants come to an area they are not welcomed everywhere, so they tend to cling together and then it becomes like a ghetto or a barrio or the wrong side of the tracks or whatever. And so your ambition is to get your kids out of there. I wanted to get out of there for one reason when I lived there because the pollution was so bad. That has changed a lot now, a lot of those things that were there polluting the area are no longer there. Like Union Starch that was a terrible pollutant and smell, sometimes the smell was overpowering. And there were a lot more steel mills when I lived there. Now there's only American Steel and so I didn't like living there because of that. That was a big problem to me. But as far as the community I loved that part of it, that was wonderful, I just marveled at it when I moved there

because I had lived in California and I had lived, grown up in St. Louis County and I had family that lived in other parts of the country. It was just a very precious, unusual community.

Schmitz: It was, very much.

Mendoza: And I'm just sad to see it kind of disappear.

Schmitz: Yes, it's very interesting that all the groups were able to get along so well together.

Mendoza: It was and I think they absorbed some of each other's culture at the same time and you can see that when you go through different festivities that they have now. There's still that intermingling of other people coming to enjoy each other's culture. They still do.

Schmitz: Okay, I think that's all I have. Thank you