

Narrator: Luis Ybarra

Interviewer: Benjamin Treutler

Date and Place: November 3, 2001 at the Ybarra house at [REDACTED]

BENJAMIN TREUTLER: This is Benjamin Treutler interviewing Luis Ybarra on November 3rd, 2001. So, if you could tell me a little about your background and how you got to Lincoln Place.

LUIS YBARRA: OK, I was born in 1957, May the 6th and, uh, my parents came from Mexico. My dad came here in 1924; my mom married my dad in 1951, I think. And I've been a Granite City resident all my life, so my family's been here since 1924.

TREUTLER: Were you born in...Did you grow up in this house?

YBARRA: Yes I did. Matter of fact I grew up – this is [REDACTED] – I grew up here, and I moved away for a while for a few years with my brother. I got married in 1993 and I've been living here since.

TREUTLER: That same house that you

YBARRA: Same house that I was born in or more or less.

[Luis' wife informs him that they were married in 1994.]

TREUTLER: [laughs] OK. Now you say that your grandfather came here in 1924

YBARRA: My father

TREUTLER: Oh, your father did

YBARRA: Yes.

TREUTLER: Why did he leave Mexico?

YBARRA: Well, there was, there was a little trouble. The revolution was going on in Mexico, and my grandfather - there was some trouble with either a general or some high-ranking officer in the Mexican military that wanted a price on his head. And he had to leave. He found out about that through, through the high-ranking official's wife, who was a friend of my grandmother, who said that his name was on a list to get hung and so he fled Mexico.

TREUTLER: Do you know why that his name was on that list?

YBARRA: No, I don't. I really don't. Maybe my older brothers and sisters might know but I don't know.

TREUTLER: Now, so is that how your, your parents met?

YBARRA: No. No, my father came here, like I said, in 1924, and he, he married a girl from around this area, which isn't my mother, so he was married before he met my mother. And, in 19 - I don't know when they got divorced, I really don't. But he married my mother in 1951.

TREUTLER: How did he meet your mother?

YBARRA: My mother was friends of his cousins in Mexico. So through, through the cousins they met.

TREUTLER: So they knew each other for a while before he left Mexico?

YBARRA: No, because there is like 9, 18, 18 years difference in ages between my father and mother. So, when he would go back to Mexico on whenever vacations or whatever after he became a citizen here, he,

he would go to his cousin's house and my mom knew his cousin, you know, as a friend. And that's where he met my mom.

TREUTLER: And then later they got married in Mexico and moved up to

YBARRA: Yes, yes.

TREUTLER: He liked the area so he brought her back up to here?

YBARRA: Yes. He worked at the American Steel in Granite City for 46 years.

TREUTLER: What did he, what did he do there?

YBARRA: He was a crane man.

TREUTLER: What is that?

YBARRA: A crane man is a, when they, whatever they make – I think they was making wheel, train, the bottoms for train wheels or something like that – the crane man would pick up molten steel, 50 tons of molten steel and pour it into a mold. It was an important job to, to American Steel because in 19, 19, when the war, when the World War 2 broke out, he was drafted, and the American Steel - I don't know if they fought it or rejected it – but he was drafted five times and they said that they only had like four crane men, like three or four crane men, at the time that could do the job cause all, all the men were gone, you see, nothing but women in the, in the plant. So they said that he would serve his country better operating the crane than going into the service.

TREUTLER: OK. Was he a crane man the entire time he worked there?

YBARRA: He was a laborer at first. He worked his way up to the crane man, yeah.

TREUTLER: Did, did he ever talk to you, or did you ever know growing up, how much money he made, or if it was

YBARRA: Hmmm

TREUTLER: Like, not like specifically but, like... Well, when you were growing up living with your, you know, on your father's income supporting was he, was it enough to support the whole family?

YBARRA: Yeah, it was enough to support the whole family. I mean, we had a car, I mean a used car, nothing

TREUTLER: Was that uncommon for the neighborhood, or?

YBARRA: Lot of families didn't have a car when I grew up around

TREUTLER: So then he probably made

YBARRA: He made a decent living. I mean, you know, I mean I can remember times when Christmas was kind of sparse or however, whatever the word you want to use. But, uh [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Did your, did your mother work?

YBARRA: No, she was a housewife.

TREUTLER: So, did she, did she, socialize a lot with the other mothers?

YBARRA: Not, not really. Not really. Just with family.

TREUTLER: Now, how many, brothers and sisters do you have?

YBARRA: I've got, there's 8 of us all together, well, one, one sister died. Let's see, my, my father had five children before he met my mother. And, after he married my mother, there was three of us.

TREUTLER: So, living in this house, there were three kids and two adults? Or?

YBARRA: When I was growing up?

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: Actually, there was two, two brothers from a previous marriage, myself, a sister and a younger brother.

TREUTLER: So, five kids and two adults?

YBARRA: Uh-hmm. In a shotgun house.

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: Two bedrooms.

TREUTLER: And then, so your dad obviously made more than everyone else if you guys had five kids and a car and a lot of people didn't have

YBARRA: Well, like I said it wasn't a new car, it was a used car

TREUTLER: But it

YBARRA: There's a, there was families that didn't have a car period. And I can remember a time that we didn't have a car, too, so.

TREUTLER: When your mom was, was home, what would she do when she was home all day?

YBARRA: She would cook and, wash clothes, just normal housewife things, you know?

TREUTLER: What kind of food would she cook?

YBARRA: Mexican foods.

TREUTLER: Like?

YBARRA: Beans, tortillas – she made, she made great tortillas. She was, she don't make them no more cause she's old and she can't really, her arthritis bothers her, but she did make some good tortillas, enchiladas, tacos, posole, which is hominy. I don't know if you've ever heard of hominy, yeah?

TREUTLER: Corn or flour tortillas?

YBARRA: Just flour – she didn't like corn. I liked corn [laughs].

TREUTLER: [laughs] It's more work to make the corn ones.

YBARRA: Yeah. Unless you cheat and go to the store and buy the flour

TREUTLER: Yeah, you grinding corn by your

YBARRA: Yeah, grinding corn –

TREUTLER: hands

YBARRA: that'd be the hard, hard way to do it.

TREUTLER: Now did she ever, coming from Mexico and she was 18 years younger, did she ever feel out of place?

YBARRA: That I wouldn't know. That I wouldn't know, no. I, I didn't never sensed that.

TREUTLER: So she always seemed like a normal family?

YBARRA: Yeah, yeah.

TREUTLER: Now, do you know any information about your family before like from Mexico?

YBARRA: In Mexico?

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: A little bit. I knew that my grandfather had like a, a cattle ranch, sorta. You know. I don't remember how many acres – a lot of acres – but they was, they was considered wealthy in Mexico, my, my grandparents. They wasn't the common – Mexico's poor to begin with, but back then it was, it was worse, you know, because of the, the revolution.

TREUTLER: Ok. Now, growing up in this house, where did you go to school?

YBARRA: I went to St. Joseph's school, it's a Catholic school, for

TREUTLER: Where

YBARRA: eight years

TREUTLER: Where's that?

YBARRA: It's, it's on Edison. I don't know the address; it's on Edison Street in Granite City. It's no longer a school.

TREUTLER: What is it now?

YBARRA: I think it's a Catholic charities or something like that.

TREUTLER: Did your siblings also go to the

YBARRA: Yes

TREUTLER: Same school?

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: So was there, there's a public school, or there was a public school at the time, right?

YBARRA: There was a public school in West Granite called Washington School. I did go to Kindergarten there.

TREUTLER: Why did your parents put you in the Catholic school?

YBARRA: To grow up with a Catholic education, you know, background, you know.

TREUTLER: Was there, did they not like the public school, or was it too far or?

YBARRA: Actually, St. Joseph's was farther.

TREUTLER: Really?

YBARRA: St. Joseph's was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile where, where Washington was $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile.

TREUTLER: Now how did you get to school?

YBARRA: They'd drive us to school – my, my father or my older sister when he wasn't working. He'd work swing shift.

TREUTLER: So what was your life like when you were growing up, as a, as a kid, living in this house like after school?

YBARRA: After school? I'd come home and watch the Three Stooges. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: And then, after that was over, we'd go out to the corner, which we called the clubhouse. It's the Community Center on Neidringhaus. But we'd just play and hang around there.

TREUTLER: What would you, like, play? What would you guys do?

YBARRA: They got a gymnasium. We'd play basketball or out in the back we'd play baseball. Down the street on Olive, there I go pointing again, on Olive Street there's, there's, there used to be a ball diamond there and we'd play baseball there, too.

TREUTLER: Ok. Now were there a lot of kids growing up around here?

YBARRA: Yes, yes there was. A lot. A lot more than now, I think.

TREUTLER: Now I know that there are quite a few different ethnic groups here. Was the neighborhood integr – well – integrated like? Or were some streets all Macedonians?

YBARRA: No, it was all mixed, all mixed. I mean across the street was Hungarian people that we grew up with. Matter of fact Phillips – I don't know if you remember hearing his name – he, he was a, he played for the Boston Celtics. Andrew Phillips.

TREUTLER: Hmm. He lived across the street?

YBARRA: Uh-hmm.

TREUTLER: Was he the same age as you?

YBARRA: No, he, he died, I think this summer. He was probably about 70 years old.

TREUTLER: So he was older than you.

YBARRA: Oh yeah.

TREUTLER: Now being a, an entire, like entirely immigrant neighborhood, did you ever leave the neighborhood? Wh-when we took a walking tour of the neighborhood, we learned that there were a lot of different bakeries and shops all up and down Neidringhaus because, without, most of the people didn't have cars, and they were used to walking everywhere and just being a real close neighborhood and a lot of them wouldn't leave the neighborhood.

YBARRA: Right.

TREUTLER: Did you leave the neighborhood a lot?

YBARRA: Not really. I mean, you know, like when my dad came here, he didn't have a car, you know. He didn't get a car probably till the late 40s/early 50s, I guess. And, yeah, like you said that all the bakeries and everything was here in Lincoln Place on Neidringhaus. When I was little, I can barely remember a bakery. I, I just, a faint memory of a bakery being on, on Neidringhaus, on the corner.

TREUTLER: So those are all taken, taken down?

YBARRA: Well, no, not necessarily because I remember there, there was a restaurant called The International – International Restaurant. It uh, I think it was Hungarian owner who owned it. There was a Laundromat, there was two hotels. At one time, we had three confectionaries in Lincoln Place; stores, not just confection, a store, I guess.

TREUTLER: How, how was that as a kid? [laughs] The three candy stores in a

YBARRA: I take it back, four

TREUTLER: Four candy stores?

YBARRA: Four, yes. Four. Two of them was, had groceries and everything, and the other was like a confectionary.

TREUTLER: Which is like all candy, pretty much?

YBARRA: Well, we call it confectionary, but it's they had, they had, canned goods and stuff, also.

TREUTLER: Oh, ok. Now, so when you did leave the neighborhood, what was it, what would it be for?

YBARRA: Either to go to the show downtown Granite City or to Woolworth's.

TREUTLER: There wasn't anything like a, there wasn't a movie theater on, in Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: There was in the 20s and 30s there was one, my dad spoke of one. But when I, I grew up I never knew that there was one.

TREUTLER: Ah. So how did the other kids get along? How did all the kids get along? Not, how did the neighborhood kids get along with each other?

YBARRA: We got along good, I mean, you know, it was like, kid from West Granite would come and, you know, it would be a little battle, you know, it was a little rivalry between the West Granites and the Lincoln Place. But, we got along good, you know, we'd take care of our own. We'd play baseball and stuff

TREUTLER: Any

YBARRA: Football

TREUTLER: Any, you know, major...you're going to find rivalries and fights in every group of people – More, would you see that more here? Less here?

YBARRA: I would say less, myself. I mean, I can remember times, you know, we'd get mad at someone who was an Armenian, say "Hey, oh you this or that Armenian," or whatever. But, you know, the next day saying, "Come on let's go, let's go to Blubby's to get a soda." Blubby's is a, a pool hall on, on the main drag of Neidringhaus. So, you know, no, we'd, we fought, we'd fight, but the next day everybody'd be friends.

TREUTLER: So everyone was, it was a real tight knit

YBARRA: Yeah, it was a tight knit. I'm, like I said, everybody, everybody from Lincoln Place, if when you'd go outta, outta the neighborhood and someone'd say "Hey, you're from Lincoln Place," and you'd just, it was just like you'd met a friend, even if you didn't even know them. [laughs]

TREUTLER: And this was not just kids your own age, but like

YBARRA: Everybody, everybody, everybody, right.

TREUTLER: And you said that you didn't like the West Granite City

YBARRA: Yeah, it was, yeah West Granite is, is a different breed, you know, of there wasn't much, that I know of immigrants there. There might have been, but, as far as I know of, no, I never heard that.

TREUTLER: Now what did when they...when you guys would interact, how did that, like, what would happen? Let's, you know, let's

YBARRA: Fights, lotta fights, lotta fights.

TREUTLER: Any, well, what I, were there any, like

YBARRA: [jokingly] Murders?

TREUTLER: No

YBARRA: Not that I know of

TREUTLER: Like racial or like anti-immigrant or anti-specific eth

YBARRA: Oh yeah, yeah, there, there was some of that, they'd, they'd call us Spics and all that, you know, it's

TREUTLER: Do you think that was, well, why do think that was?

YBARRA: I don't know. [laughs]

TREUTLER: Well, do you think it was because you guys

YBARRA: Just something to say, you know?

TREUTLER: That it was just like you guys a different neighborhood plus you were

YBARRA: I don't think they liked our tight, tight knitness we had, that Lincoln Place had, I think they didn't like that.

TREUTLER: Do you think that the other neighborhood was more “I guess we’re in the neigh, same neighborhood” type of atmosphere?

YBARRA: Maybe, maybe. Yeah, I just think that they I think they was jealous of that

TREUTLER: Yeah

YBARRA: Cause they weren’t as tight.

TREUTLER: Now, you knew all these kids, but you went to the Catholic school

YBARRA: Uh-huh

TREUTLER: Did a lot of the kids go to the Catholic school?

YBARRA: Some did, there’s a lot of families, a lot of families that went to the Catholic schools.

TREUTLER: And, some, though went to the public school, too, right?

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: And that

YBARRA: Good friends of ours that went to public school, also.

TREUTLER: And that didn’t make a difference

YBARRA: No

TREUTLER: Who went where? Now, sometimes you hear about recent things, where kids get taunted or picked on because they don’t have, they don’t go to the right school, or they don’t wear the right clothes, or their not, you know, their shoes aren’t the greatest – did you ever see anything like that? Growing up?

YBARRA: Not really, not really, nah. I can’t think of an incident at all.

TREUTLER: And it didn’t, like you said, didn’t make a difference where were the kids were from, as long as they were from Lincoln Place, you were friends with them?

YBARRA: Hmm-mmm, yes, yes. Everything seemed to flow back then, you know [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: It ain’t, it ain’t like that now.

TREUTLER: Well, what’s...you chose to, to come back, or to

YBARRA: To stay

TREUTLER: To stay in Lincoln Place, in the same house, why?

YBARRA: Why?

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: OK, when my wife and I got married, my dad gave us this house. He was, he's got, he had a heart condition, so my sister took him to live with them, which, they live be, directly behind us on, on Olive Street. And she, he lived with them and I wanted to stay near him, cause he was sick, you know?

TREUTLER: Uh-hmm.

YBARRA: And make sure he's taking all his medicines and all that.

TREUTLER: So that's why, it started out as a as a care

YBARRA: More or less, yeah

TREUTLER: and

YBARRA: I mean I wasn't there constantly with him, but I'd make sure he had all his pills that he need and I'd take him to the doctor and all that.

TREUTLER: But that, you started tell me, you started living in this house again as a necessity.

YBARRA: As a necessity because we had nowhere to live – he gave us this house.

TREUTLER: And then, now I see that you have, you have kids

YBARRA: Uh-hmm.

TREUTLER: You chose to have kids in this neighborhood because? I mean

YBARRA: Well, I, it's more economics than anything else, probably because we, we put a lot of money into this hou – we, it used to be a shotgun house – we added another room in the back. Two, two rooms as a matter of fact. Re-regutted the whole thing and put a new roof, you know, we got a lot of money in it, so that's another reason we're staying here.

TREUTLER: Do, now when you were growing up, did you think the neighborhood was, was safe?

YBARRA: Mmmm, yeah.

TREUTLER: You could go the two or three blocks to Neidringhaus and hang out with your friends

YBARRA: Mmmm, yes, yes we can

TREUTLER: Never any problems

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: Do you think that's the same way today?

YBARRA: Mmmm, not really.

TREUTLER: What do you think

YBARRA: It's to me, now, I don't know the generation today, but to me the kids are just more, I don't even know what the word to use or so. They don't really respect nothing, you know?

TREUTLER: Do you think these are not, are there a lot of people who are like you, 2nd generation Lincoln Place residents? [pause] Yes?

YBARRA: Yes

TREUTLER: Oh, ok

YBARRA: I thought you wasn't done with your question

TREUTLER: Well, it's a two-part question

YBARRA: Sure

TREUTLER: And do they, like, and so this neighborhood is like some of them are 2nd generation, some of them are new people into the neighborhood, do you think those are the people that are causing the

YBARRA: The, yeah, well, see the Lincoln Place is running down bad, you know, it's running down. And when you get nothing but run down houses, you're gonna get, you're gonna get people that can't afford housing, and usually, you know, 9, 9 out of 10 times, are the, are the people's gonna be troublemakers and drugs and, you know, whatever, right?

TREUTLER: Yeah, that's what

YBARRA: That's my opinion, you know

TREUTLER: That's what I was getting at – the people who have lived here their whole lives, like you, their kids, you don't think, are the problem

YBARRA: No, it's, it's the newer ones

TREUTLER: The

YBARRA: That just

TREUTLER: The new arrivals?

YBARRA: Right, right.

TREUTLER: Do you think that there's a, as you were saying it's run down, do you think there's a way to revitalize the neighborhood?

YBARRA: I-I guess by not leaving Lincoln Place, you know? You know, I-I bought the property next door from my brother-in-law, and we're, you know, trying to make things look nice. And there's a lot of people trying to rejuvenate the, the looks of their house and all that, and, and that helps, I think, you know. But, when you get people that don't care with the drugs and, you know, and we had, at one time a little gang trouble

TREUTLER: Oh really?

YBARRA: There's probably gangs right now that I don't know about.

TREUTLER: Now, we took the, the walking tour of the neighborhood, or pretty much Neidringhaus, up and down, and there are a bunch of abandoned buildings

YBARRA: That attracts gangs, right there

TREUTLER: Yeah, and other like just

YBARRA: Did you see the graffiti that they put on there?

TREUTLER: There, yeah, there's graffiti, too

YBARRA: Yeah, ok, yeah

TREUTLER: Now, some, some historians would say well, this is an historical place because it was, at one time, you know, something important, but now it's run down, but it should stay up.

YBARRA: No, no, I don't agree with that. I agree if it's abandoned, and it's an eyesore, just take it down. It, it's attracting, it's attracting kids to do mischief, mischief things, you know, being mischievous, you know?

TREUTLER: Do you have any, like ideas? Now, you said that you've rebu, like you built up your house, you're trying to make the neighborhood nicer with your families

YBARRA: Umm-hmm

TREUTLER: Living here. And you said that other people are doing things, too.

YBARRA: There are other people, yes.

TREUTLER: Like what? What are other people doing?

YBARRA: They're, they're putting side, across the street the guy, he redid that house. It was an eyesore, and he redid it. The guy on the corner, across the street from us, same thing. The lady across, same thing, the owner. Everybody's slowly putting money into it, and, and you know, that it, it can happen if everyone does it, you know?

TREUTLER: Do you think that, if the neighborhoods, get like if the houses get nicer, the it will attract more businesses?

YBARRA: You know what, you know what I think's, might happen, and, and I hope it does, I, I guess, what do you they call it The Edge? The River's Edge?

TREUTLER: I'm not sure.

YBARRA: The Army depot?

TREUTLER: Oh.

YBARRA: They opened up a new golf course there. That might stimulate, you know, people into putting money into their houses, to make it worth more.

TREUTLER: Th-That's really, it's right across the street, it's right across

YBARRA: The highway, route 3

TREUTLER: Route 3, from Lincoln Place.

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: Now what did that, that used to be an Army depot?

YBARRA: Uh-huh.

TREUTLER: What would go on there?

YBARRA: I don't know. When I was a kid they used to have soldiers there, I know that.

TREUTLER: And now it's just

YBARRA: It's more or less, it turn into an Army warehouse. I can remember them bringing helicopters, all shot up and beat up when Viet Nam was going on.

TREUTLER: And now it's like, commercial park

YBARRA: Yeah, commercial

TREUTLER: Area with a golf course. Now on, I like, like on, on Neidringhaus where it used to have all the different shops, the, the locations are still there, there are some buildings that are, I mean, there are abandoned buildings and buildings that are still occupied, so it's not all houses, anymore. Do you think, build, would, as, would you be in favor of having businesses come back on the

YBARRA: Very much in favor. I can't think, trying to think of that girl's name. I think it's Whittaker, maybe, I don't know. She just opened up a restaurant on Neidringhaus. Used to be a duplex house, and she revitalized it, and put money into it. Really did a good job, you know?

TREUTLER: What kind of

YBARRA: Stuff like that's good

TREUTLER: W-What else would you like to, what other kind of businesses would you like to see?

YBARRA: Whatever, whatever they can bring. Whatever, whoever can afford to. I'd like to see, I'd like to see a convenience store.

TREUTLER: Convenience store, like a

YBARRA: Yeah, with gasoline, you know, like 7-11 or Huck's or something.

TREUTLER: Something with a gas station

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: And a convenience store?

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: You said that when you were growing up there were Laundromats

YBARRA: Laundromat

TREUTLER: Little, well convenience stores, I guess – they didn't have

YBARRA: Ma, yeah, Mom and Pop Stores, you know?

TREUTLER: Like, now, there are a couple bars on the street

YBARRA: There's three left

TREUTLER: Three. Does that, is that something that's you'd want to see more of? Less of? Does it not make a difference?

YBARRA: No, not really. As long as they're, n-not causing no trouble, I don't see nothing wrong with it.

TREUTLER: So, do you think it they put

YBARRA: In fact, I know all the three owners of em, so more power to them if they can make money.

TREUTLER: Yeah. Do you think that, I'm just trying to think of other businesses that could go there.

YBARRA: Yeah, I don't know.

TREUTLER: Cause like what you were talking about when you were growing up, how the stores would have can goods and stuff like that, well that's all been replaced by

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: Convenience stores.

YBARRA: Uh-huh.

TREUTLER: So if you put a convenience store, it kinda takes care of all those things.

YBARRA: Little Mom and Pop stores, yeah. It's hard to say, you know?

TREUTLER: But you wouldn't, you'd be, you'd like to see this neighborhood back to how it was when you were growing up?

YBARRA: Yeah, sure would.

TREUTLER: Do you have a lot of pride in this neighborhood?

YBARRA: I would say so.

TREUTLER: Is that one of the reasons why you didn't leave?

YBARRA: That, you know, that's another reason, yeah. I mean, the main reason was my father, but yeah, that's a, you know, I could sure say that.

TREUTLER: Now do you think that other people in the neighborhood feel the same way you do?

YBARRA: I know there's a lot of people feel the same way I do because I've talked to them, yeah.

TREUTLER: Is there any kind of organization with the neighborhood?

YBARRA: At one time, somebody had something to revitalize Lincoln Place, and I'm trying to think who had it. I-I thinking Kathy Andrea or some, somebody named Andrea.

TREUTLER: Do you, I mean, the community center is right down the street. Do people congregate there at all? Or is that

YBARRA: The young, the young kids congregate there

TREUTLER: Which is

YBARRA: Which is good, you know, that's good for them to do that. Cause I used to do that.

TREUTLER: But there's no place where the adults can get together, though?

YBARRA: I guess they can go there, too, if they wanted.

TREUTLER: But, there isn't anything

YBARRA: Nothing that attracts them there, no.

TREUTLER: Do you think that if there was something that people would show up?

YBARRA: Yeah, I'm sure.

TREUTLER: So if there was a

YBARRA: A coffee house maybe, I don't know

TREUTLER: A coffee house? Do you think it would

YBARRA: Could be, I don't know.

TREUTLER: When we took the tour of Lincoln Place, we learned that there were coffee houses on Lincoln Place that repl – there were bars and coffee houses as another way for people to come in and sit down and spend money. A coffee house, do you think would, would work here?

YBARRA: Yeah, I think, I think it would.

TREUTLER: Now, like a, a coffee house

YBARRA: With donuts, you know

TREUTLER: Is where people like to go and just sit and talk

YBARRA: And just chew the fat, yeah [laughs]

TREUTLER: Do you think that that would happen more? People in this neighborhood

YBARRA: I think

TREUTLER: Like to sit and talk? And

YBARRA: Yeah, I think they sure do, because it's, it's, you know, like we had a yard sale here a few weeks ago, and a lady on Olive came over, and we don't even see her, what once, once every once in a blue moon, right? And her neighbor, which I have seen her all my life, first time I ever talked to her, you know?

TREUTLER: So, the neighborhood's got, and you would, if I'm using the wrong words here, but I think you're saying that the neighborhood has a lot of potential, it's, you know, the people are real close, even if they don't know it. Like how you said you met your neighbor even though

YBARRA: I mean, I've seen her all my life, ever since I was a kid, and, and this I ever spoke to her – I mean I didn't have no reason to before, I guess.

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: I don't know.

TREUTLER: So, you think this neighborhood could be back to it's old self?

YBARRA: It, it's possible. You know, I think it's real possible if, you know, more people. You know, a lot of, when a lot of people moved out, that's when all the other, you know, some of the criminals came in.
[laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Wh-when you said a lot of people moved out, was there like a time when pretty much everyone just decided to

YBARRA: No, because it's been happening. And it's, it's an ongoing process, you know?

TREUTLER: Do you think this neighborhood has, I mean, it's got potential, you think, but do you think it has a positive future? There's, I mean, I think there's a difference

YBARRA: Yes I do, I-I really do. Because, like I said, I'll get back to that River's Edge, I think that's gonna really make a difference. With, because, people's gonna go golf, and they're, you know, gonna go to the nearest, you know, "Let's go get a beer, let's go get a steak, let's go get some coffee, let's go get some donuts," and, and if we can cater to that, you know, that, that's business for us, or whoever.

TREUTLER: And then, with that business, would

YBARRA: Stimulate more, yeah.

TREUTLER: So, did, did your family ever have a business?

YBARRA: My uncle was a businessman, yeah.

TREUTLER: What did he have?

YBARRA: He had a few bars, probably about three or four bars.

TREUTLER: Was that in Lincoln Place, or around?

YBARRA: I don't think he had one in Lincoln Place, per se, but I think that he had one on Washington Avenue, he had one on 20th and Park, and one in Madison, and one in St. Louis.

TREUTLER: Now, what, I know we're jumping all around here, what, what do you currently do?

YBARRA: I'm a surveyor for Madison County Highway.

TREUTLER: And have you done that for

YBARRA: 23 years

TREUTLER: Now how does that

YBARRA: I'm getting old. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Did you, did you choose the job because of the location? What

YBARRA: My job is, I work in Edwardsville, out of Edwardsville, and I work throughout the whole county, I didn't choose it, it was more or less handed to me.

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: Because a guy by the name of Johnny Valencia, who's also in Lincoln Place, he moved back, too, matter of fact. And he was in the Air Force and he had something to do with Man Power or, or something to get jobs for, for Mexicans or, or, you know anybody that needed one. And he just happened to call me one day, and asked me if I'd work there, and if he would do me the favor that I'd work there, that I'd stay at least a year to make him look good.

TREUTLER: And then you stayed 23 years?

YBARRA: Yeah. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] So

YBARRA: So, it was good now.

TREUTLER: So then, that's an example of how tight knit

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: Lincoln Place is

YBARRA: Yeah, exac, exactly, that's exactly a good example because when I was going to school, you know, Johnny Valencia was, or is, he's retired now, but he, he was in the Air Force, and he would look after his own Lincoln Places, his, his family, but you know, you go out stepping outside and you're friends, you know. My dad was a friend of his, and we're all knit, like you said, you know. I guess mainly you could say that the Mexicans are closer together than the Mexicans and the Armenians or the Mexicans and the, and the Hungarians, or whatever, but still, we were still friends, you know?

TREUTLER: Now your, your wife, if she from Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: No, she's, she's from Madison, but her father grew up in Lincoln Place.

TREUTLER: Where, what was his name?

YBARRA: His name is Bill Moore, he lives in, I want to say Batchtown, it's not Batchtown – it's up north 100 miles.

TREUTLER: What's that? It's M-O-O-R-E?

YBARRA: Yes

TREUTLER: Ok, now do you know when he, did he grow up in Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: Yes in the, I want to say in the 40s, I guess.

TREUTLER: Did your, your mom, your wi, I'm sorry, your wife wasn't born here, but they, he moved out, her father moved out

YBARRA: Her father moved out and went into the Marines, and when he came back met a girl from Madison, Joanne, I don't remember her maiden name. I don't remember.

TREUTLER: It's not important. And then they lived in Madison and then you met her, and then you came back. Did she ever, like what are her thoughts of Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: My wife?

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: She likes Lincoln Place.

TREUTLER: Do you think she

YBARRA: She don't like the, the, the gang problems, stuff, you know because she's a probation officer and she knows where all these who, who's on probation and all that, so she knows, she knows the neighborhood, and she don't like, you know, but she can't do nothing about it, you know.

TREUTLER: Why do you think that you guys can't do something about it?

YBARRA: Well, I mean, sure we can, sure we just stay together and keep staying, you know, and

TREUTLER: Do you think, I'm not trying to put you in this position of becoming a neighborhood leader, but it seems like you've got, you see Lincoln Place as a place where you want to raise your kids – in a safe area. You have ideas on how to make Lincoln Place a better place, do you think somebody could organize this neighborhood? You? Maybe somebody?

YBARRA: If I had the money, I sure would [laughs]

TREUTLER: Do you,

YBARRA: You know?

TREUTLER: Do you think it would take money or do you think

YBARRA: Yeah, it would take money, it would take money, more, you know. Everything takes money.

TREUTLER: [laughs] Well, I mean, if you pass out fliers "Meeting at Lincoln Place, Meeting at the Community Center," do you think people would show up?

YBARRA: We did for a while, I mean, we've, there was an organization starting for, for Lincoln Place and it, it just fizzled out.

TREUTLER: But there was interest in it?

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: Ok. Now you had mentioned that Johnny Valencia had lived here, left and came back.

YBARRA: Mmm-hmm

TREUTLER: And you had lived here, left and came back.

YBARRA: I really didn't leave. I mean, I just moved two blocks over, a block over.

TREUTLER: Oh! So you would

YBARRA: I've been here all my life, in Lincoln Place

TREUTLER: Oh, ok, so

YBARRA: Out of this house, I meant.

TREUTLER: When you, where did you live in

YBARRA: On, on [REDACTED]

TREUTLER: Now, ok, so

YBARRA: I was born on [REDACTED], and, in the hospital, but, but I lived at, on [REDACTED] till about 1980-something, late 80s, and then I moved with my brother on [REDACTED] until I met my wife, and then we came back.

TREUTLER: Ok, I was confused by that, ok. Do you think a lot of people are moving back into the neighborhood? Or just?

YBARRA: I wouldn't say they're moving back. Well, I-I know John Valencia and Eddie Asadorian moved back, I can't think of anybody else, really.

TREUTLER: Ok. So, how many people from the original neighborhood, when you, what you would call the original neighborhood, are still left? That you still know about?

YBARRA: That I, that I, oh, I don't know. Oh. Different ages, I know that. My nephew, my, I got, I got two or three friends that are still in Lincoln Place, my brother, my sister, older people that I don't even know where they live, but I know they're in Lincoln Place, you know? [laughs]

TREUTLER: Now, has this street, the make-up of this street changed?

YBARRA: Oh yeah.

TREUTLER: Are the people that live next to you to people that lived next to you when you growing up?

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: Or how is this?

YBARRA: The person who lives next to me, his name's Louie Miller, and he's been here, well, his mother died, and he came back after she died. So, he grew up there, and he came back – he's another person who did.

TREUTLER: And across the street, is that the same?

YBARRA: Different people.

TREUTLER: How about, when you were growing up, which houses on this street were like the kids' houses that you would hang out in?

YBARRA: Across the street, on the corner, no, not on the corner, catty-corner, down the street a couple houses.

TREUTLER: And are all those, are most of them are gone?

YBARRA: They're gone, yes.

TREUTLER: Did, do you know why they left?

YBARRA: No, I don't.

TREUTLER: They left at all different times, though?

YBARRA: Different times.

TREUTLER: Ok.

YBARRA: The Phillips, like I mentioned a while ago, was, they died, they was old people – they died. And then Andy, the, the basketball star, moved to California, so.

TREUTLER: While we're talking your neighbors, we're gonna go back to when you were younger, like how was the, like, what would happen between neighbors? Like, on a, at night, would you guys all, like, go to each others houses, adults and kids? Or would you mostly stay in your house, or how did that

YBARRA: Depends on the ages, you know, like, when we, when we was younger, my sister lived next door, so we'd go over there, and we'd stay over there until it was time to go to sleep, you know, 9 o'clock whenever our bedtime was to go to school the next day. But as we got older, we'd hang around at the, the community center, which we called the clubhouse.

TREUTLER: Right.

YBARRA: And 10 o'clock was our, well that's what time they closed, so had to be home at 10 o'clock.

TREUTLER: Now how about the, the adults, when you were a kid, the adults. How would they interact with your parents? Or with each other? Would they

YBARRA: My dad would used to go to the, the, I can't think of the name. The ARF club – the Armenian club down the street. It's an apartment building now. And he'd play cards there, or go to Sim's Place on the corner of Neidringhaus and play cards or pool or something.

TREUTLER: What was Sim's Place?

YBARRA: It was like a cigar store, it was a pool hall/cigar store type of thing.

TREUTLER: A club? Place to hang out?

YBARRA: Mmm, wasn't a club it was, it was his business, and he lived upstairs. The, the place right now it still exists as a beauty salon or something like that.

TREUTLER: And how about your, your mom, did she interact with other people?

YBARRA: Just, like I said, just with family, because, she, she, she didn't have friends around here as far as that she grew up with cause she's, you know, she came from Mexico.

TREUTLER: So, growing up, did, did you speak Spanish or English?

YBARRA: I spoke Spanish before I spoke English

TREUTLER: And then, what age did you learn English?

YBARRA: Probably 3 or 4, probably.

TREUTLER: Did, with kids all other countries, did they all speak other languages, too?

YBARRA: Not really, everybody really spoke English by, by the time I was growing up. It was rare that even friends that, Mexicans, there was like 3 or 4 households that their kids spoke Spanish and we was one of them.

TREUTLER: But

YBARRA: Everybody else was too Americanized [laughs]

TREUTLER: Spanish and English

YBARRA: Yes, Spanish and English.

TREUTLER: Right, and then, like the, the Macedonians didn't speak, or

YBARRA: To their kids, no, and when I grew up, no. Nobody spoke, well, the Armenians spoke to their kids in, in, in their language, I remember that.

TREUTLER: And everyone else was just like an Americanized?

YBARRA: Yeah, right, right. I guess their parents had been here longer then, you know, like the Mexicans in the 20s probably came here.

TREUTLER: Was there a, so you had, we had talked about the tight knit of the neighborhood, and you had kinda mentioned that the Mexicans were tighter with the Mexicans, were there a lot of

YBARRA: Well, that's, that's with every group.

TREUTLER: Right. Were there a lot of Mexicans in the neighborhood?

YBARRA: Yes, yes there was.

TREUTLER: Like on the street, or just the whole neighborhood?

YBARRA: The whole neighborhood.

TREUTLER: Like was it a, I'm not sure, was it, like, a large percentage of the neighborhood? Or was it

YBARRA: I would say when I was growing up, there was probably, the most, I would say of the ethnic groups was probably the largest was the Mexicans, and then the Armenians.

TREUTLER: And then you

YBARRA: When I was growing up

TREUTLER: There was never any time, of like, the Mexicans were...I'm trying to think of the right, like one group getting together as a group, probably kids, and making fun of other kids, just because of their

YBARRA: Not when I was growing up

TREUTLER: This was like

YBARRA: I don't remember that, I-I know that my dad spoke of stuff like that when he first come here. They would never associate with the Armenians or with the Bulgarians or the Hungarians, you know. But then later on, everybody seen, you know, you gotta get along. [laughs]

TREUTLER: Well, the re-reason I mention is because this was like in the 60s when you were growing up

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: Racial problems in the United States, but

YBARRA: Yeah, there was no blacks in Lincoln Place, in Granite

TREUTLER: But

YBARRA: Th-that's, that's, you know, I don't wanna say that they're, they're the cause of anything because it's, we're all, all our ethnic groups have their own opinions, or whatever.

TREUTLER: Right. But, I'm, like, in the coun, in the United States in the 19, when you were growing up, it wasn't very, you know, racial harmony, you know, it was all – there were some problems in the United States, but you didn't really see any of that in Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: No, no we, we'd hear about, we, the only thing you heard about was with, with blacks, that's what, you know. And I'm sure that they had that, you know, Mexicans had their problems with each other or, or the other minorities when they first come here, but when I was growing up, I didn't see none of that.

TREUTLER: Do you think that's because there weren't really, there weren't any – well, I don't know what you would call it, but non-immigrants, I guess, in the neighborhood? If, if the neighborhood is full of immigrants from all different countries, so

YBARRA: There was very few that wasn't, that, that I know of, that I knew of when I was growing up.

TREUTLER: Do you think that's why there was the racial harmony that there was in the neighborhood?

YBARRA: Yeah, I, I would say probably so because, I guess, you know, I don't remember nothing – no fights, no, no, not like that. Nothing racially.

TREUTLER: So, do you think that's, do you think that's happening today in Lincoln Place? That there's – or do you think that there are, that there are racial problems?

YBARRA: Hmm, I don't, I haven't seen none.

TREUTLER: See the, even though the, the make-up of the neighborhood has changed, you think that there's still some of the same values from the old Lincoln Place, as you would remember it?

YBARRA: I'm sure there's still values, yeah, you know.

TREUTLER: Like,

YBARRA: And even though they don't respect them, there's still some that aren't touched, you know.

TREUTLER: Do you think that this neighborhood had different values from other Granite City neighborhoods?

YBARRA: As far as

TREUTLER: Well, like the, the non-immigrant neighborhoods, let's say that. Like, do you think there were different values, different like customs, different things that were

YBARRA: I-I do, I, the only thing I can comment on that is I-I I've seen what I've seen, as far as, you know, respect for your, for your elders and your parents. Lincoln Place had more of that then outside Lincoln Place, I can rea, I can truthfully say that, and

TREUTLER: What

YBARRA: That I've seen

TREUTLER: Yeah, that's what I was, that's one of the values

YBARRA: Yeah that's

TREUTLER: Do you think, is that probably because of the cultures of the coun, of the

YBARRA: I-I don't know, I –I just know, I just know that if you see someone, you know, like myself – my age or maybe even a little younger, and, and if they would see an old person that would need assistance, I'm sure that everybody would, would, would oblige to, to their assistance, but, but if, you know, we'd say "Hey, is so-and-so okay?" And everybody would inquire about somebody.

TREUTLER: So it was a, it was a tight neighborhood where everyone cared about each other on all age levels, is that, would you agree with that?

YBARRA: Yeah, yeah.

TREUTLER: That, even

YBARRA: And I'm not sure it wasn't that way, in, in, in the beginning when my dad came here.

TREUTLER: Do you think it was

YBARRA: Cause he

TREUTLER: The same or different?

YBARRA: No, I think it was different. I think that when Dad came here, like I said, I know that, that he would talk, that, that the Mexicans would stay, as a group together. The Bulgarians, the Macedonians, the Armenians and, and then later they got in, in, you know, they, then they would get together.

TREUTLER: Ok, now what do you think changed that from the different immigrant groups sticking together to everyone just kinda becoming one group? In Lincoln Place.

YBARRA: I don't know. I don't know how to answer that, I don't know.

TREUTLER: Was there a defining moment, or did everyone just live here long enough that they're like

YBARRA: Maybe it was that, maybe they lived here long enough that they knew they had to live with each other.

TREUTLER: The groups that lived here, it was Mexicans, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Armenians – was there another one, or is that it?

YBARRA: Far as I know, few Italians maybe.

TREUTLER: Few Italians?

[phone rings]

TREUTLER: So, those groups normally don't all associate with each other. Maybe when they were, when everyone first got here

YBARRA: Yeah, I'm sure they, I-I know they didn't. I know my dad would always speak of that.

TREUTLER: And that after, ye-yea, a couple year, a few years

YBARRA: A few years

TREUTLER: Together they're just "We're all

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: Together."

YBARRA: Like I said, he would go play, he would go play cards with the Armenians in, in their club, you know?

TREUTLER: Did, did, the Mexicans have their place to hang out, or?

YBARRA: Yeah, we have, we have, we called it Mexican Honorary Commission. It's been a club since 1926. My father was a charter member of that club. He was, he was a treasurer, at one time of that club. Him and five other guys formed that club.

TREUTLER: What, where is this located?

YBARRA: It's on Spruce St. 1801 Spruce.

TREUTLER: So, it's just a couple blocks, a block over?

YBARRA: A block over

TREUTLER: What

YBARRA: Two blocks up

TREUTLER: What would they, what would this club do?

YBARRA: We socialize and try to keep the Mexican heritage going. We have dances and fiestas and celebrate a lot of things, you know, M-Mexican tradition.

TREUTLER: Now are there

[Begin Side B.]

TREUTLER: So, there's a, there's a Mexican club

YBARRA: Uh-Hmm

TREUTLER: And there's, there was the Armenian club – is that still around?

YBARRA: There was, there was an Armenian club, like I said, that's an apartment building now. They moved out to Pontoon Road.

TREUTLER: In Granite City?

YBARRA: In Granite City.

TREUTLER: Is that for, now your, the Mexican club, is that just for Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: No, whoever wants to be-belong to the club. We have members, my brother's a member and he lives in Branson, see?

TREUTLER: Oh. Now, so there's the, the Armenian one is still in Granite City, the Mexican one is still in Granite City, is there, was there a club for each ethnic group that lived in Granite, Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: In Lincoln Place? I don't know if there was, like, for every ethnic group, but I know that there's an Italian club in Madison. Who else, who else, Croatians, Croatian home in Madison. I don't know of any Bulgarian club, Hungarian. Matter of fact, our club, the Mexican Honorary Commission, used to be the old Hungarian home, they used to call it the old Hungarian home. They, they called it the old Hungarian home – it was their club, but they just disbanded, and, you know, we just bought that building for like a dollar or something.

TREUTLER: [laughs]

[Luis's young son is heard making noises]

TREUTLER: The, so, even though there's these separate clubs, you said your dad played at the Armenian club, did people come from the other ethnic groups and come to the Mexican dances

YBARRA: Sure

TREUTLER: And

YBARRA: Sure, sure they did, sure they did, yes.

TREUTLER: Do you think that, with the mixing of cultures into the neighborhood that everyone got a sense of everyone else's culture?

YBARRA: Yes, because well, in our dances we've had Armenians dancing in our dances, in our fiestas. So, yeah, they're getting a taste of their cultures, you know?

TREUTLER: That's been that way since you were

YBARRA: Well, I can remember going to the, I-I call it the A.R.F. club when I was little cause the, cause it said "A-R-F"

TREUTLER: Hmm-mmm

YBARRA: A period, F period. And I'm not sure if that stands for the American Revolution something, I don't know. Armenian Revolution? But I, we would, they would have their little bands playing with like a, either a sitar or I don't know what kind of music, really funny type of music, and they would play there like Fridays and we'd go in there and buy sodas and they'd "Get outta here," and chase us, you know? Cause we was kids, you know?

TREUTLER: Oh. But, so, you couldn't, you really couldn't live in Lincoln Place when you were growing up and avoid other culture, cause it was

YBARRA: No, no, no

TREUTLER: It was there.

YBARRA: No, no, right, that's right. We, I can remember, we'd have Lincoln Place reunions, and Armenians would sell their baklava and their, their pita breads with lamb in em, I mean that just, really good stuff. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Did, these are things that you probably wouldn't encounter if you hadn't really grown up in Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: I'm sure you'd encounter it somewhere, but more so here.

TREUTLER: Pita with lamb and baklava

YBARRA: Oh yeah

TREUTLER: Are not common

YBARRA: No, I mean, you, if you go to Chicago – Taste of, Taste of Chicago, you know, they got all the ethnic groups, foods. But this was authentic. [laughs]

TREUTLER: Did your mom ever cook for other people, or? Cause you said she was a really good cook.

YBARRA: Yeah, she would, she would cook for the club sometimes, we'd have, when we'd have our meetings in the Mexican club. Everybody takes turns, if they want to, to cook for the meetings and have a meal. She'd cook quite a few times.

TREUTLER: Who was the, the best, the best cook in the neighborhood?

YBARRA: The best cook in the neighborhood? [watch beeps] I gotta say my mom. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Did

YBARRA: No, but there was a lot of good cooks. Mrs. Phillips across the street, the Hungarian, I'm sure she was, by far, better than my mom. My mom would admit it to, but she'd make the best sausage. She'd make stuffed turnips from her native land. [laughs] Best cook ever.

TREUTLER: So, when we took the walking tour, with all the different, with the bakeries, like two on each block, you know, it seemed, and the, all the other, like the restaurants and bars, and everyone had had their own ethnic food, and then, you're talking about how the neighborhood was full of these ethnic cooks. Did, do

YBARRA: That could be a way to revitalize Lincoln Place – Have a Hungarian shop, food, Mexican food, Armenian food, and you know, that would be, that's a good idea. Did you just come up with that?

TREUTLER: [laughs] So, you were trying, trying, you were being fed by the other parents, the other kids parents? Is that how you

YBARRA: Being fed?

TREUTLER: Well like have dinner at someone's house, like how would you

YBARRA: That, you know, I-I don't remember having dinner at too many friends houses. Not really, so.

TREUTLER: So, how would you, how did you know that Mrs. Phillips was a

YBARRA: Ok, well, she would, we'd, we would send over some Mexican food and she'd send over some Hungarian food.

TREUTLER: Did that happen a lot?

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: With your family?

YBARRA: It happened, it happened a lot between our families.

TREUTLER: With, how about with our neighbor, other families in the neighborhood?

YBARRA: Oh, Same thing with the neighbor that lived next door – Francis Miller. She was, I don't know what she was – Yiddish, Jewish, I don't know.

TREUTLER: And you would give her food, and she would give you food?

YBARRA: Yeah, right. She'd, she'd cook good, too.

TREUTLER: So you kinda got like a taste of the neighborhood.

YBARRA: Hmm-mmm

TREUTLER: Did you see other families do this? Not just with you

YBARRA: Oh yeah

TREUTLER: But with each other?

YBARRA: Yes. With the Garcias down, down the street, they would, they would do the same thing with other, with their neighbors.

TREUTLER: So you, after, do you think that, that really helped the sense of community?

YBARRA: I'm, I'm sure they did, Yeah. I'm sure they did.

TREUTLER: Maybe that's what, maybe that's what changed everyone's minds about each other back in the 20s and 30s.

YBARRA: Yeah, you get sick of beans or sick of tortillas, you say "Hey, I want something else." You know? [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] "Hey what's that smell coming from your kitchen? Let's trade some food?"

YBARRA: That's, could have been, you know, you never know.

TREUTLER: Maybe that's why all the restaurants started popping up, too.

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: Hmm

YBARRA: Could be. I

TREUTLER: Do you think that, that doesn't happen any more does it? Trading food back and?

YBARRA: Barbeques. [laughs] If you go to someone's house, "Hey let's have a barbeque." [laughs]

TREUTLER: Nothing traditional?

YBARRA: No, no, nothing traditional. No.

TREUTLER: Do you think, so you th, if the, if there were ethnic restaurants here, you think you would go to them?

YBARRA: Oh yes, definitely.

TREUTLER: Wh, your wife came from a different neighborhood

YBARRA: Madison

TREUTLER: Not even in Granite City. Have you talked to her about her experiences growing up in a different neighborhood?

YBARRA: She, you know what? She, she lived in Lincoln Place. Cause I've known her for about 15 years, before we got married. My sister used to rent to her, on, she used to live on Olive.

TREUTLER: Mmm

YBARRA: So she rented to her, maybe a year or two. I've, I've known Phyllis for at least, 15 years or more.

TREUTLER: But like, are her experiences growing up different than yours?

YBARRA: I'm sure they are, I haven't really, we never

TREUTLER: You didn't really talk about it?

YBARRA: We never talked about it, no.

TREUTLER: Do you think that. Well, what would, what do you think, I don't, do you think that Lincoln Place is a typical neighborhood? In

YBARRA: I would like to think not. I would like think that we was extraordinary, you know, cause

TREUTLER: Well, why?

YBARRA: Why? Because we was close-knit. If I'd have a tr-tr, problem with somebody they'd say "Hey, hey so-and-so Joe, let's go, I, this guy's giving me some trouble," I wanna say something else. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] You can, if you want to.

YBARRA: "Someone's giving me some shit," you know? But, no, it was taken care of very fast.

TREUTLER: And you

YBARRA: Yes. Someone's messing with a, a Lincoln Place girl, "Hey, you know, let's go get em." It was more like that, you know?

TREUTLER: You don't think that, that happens in, or that happened in

YBARRA: I don't think, what do you mean?

TREUTLER: That, that, that well happens

YBARRA: Now?

TREUTLER: Happened in other neighborhoods at the same time?

YBARRA: Oh sure, I'm sure it does, I'm sure it does, but you-you wanna think of your own being extraordinary.

TREUTLER: I

YBARRA: I'm sure it does. I know it does, it's got to.

TREUTLER: I mean, I grew up in a different neighborhood than, obviously, than Lincoln Place, and I think that, you know, this neighborhood is a lot, is really different. And you wouldn't know that by, cause you've never experienced anything else.

YBARRA: Lived outside, yeah.

TREUTLER: But, I think that

YBARRA: How. Another, excuse me, but another reason, another, to show you how close we was, if we pl, at 12, maybe 11, 10, we'd go play baseball, we'd all chip in and we'd buy a big soda – I don't remember how many ounces that was. The bigger ones, probably like, probably about 30/40 ounces, or whatever. We'd, we'd all chip in, and say 8 or 9 of us would all drink from the same bottle, you know? [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: That many, and that's how close we was, you know?

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: Didn't matter who, "Hey, don't, don't slobber that, don't do this," but we'd still drink it, you know? Still share it.

TREUTLER: No one, no one cared about

YBARRA: No, we didn't care. We didn't care.

TREUTLER: Everyone was. Like the kids in your neighborhood that were your age, were like your brothers and your sisters, did you think that, say it like that?

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: One Lincoln Place family?

YBARRA: Yeah, I would say that, they would probably say that, too. Lincoln Place stuck together, I can remember going camping one time, and alls we took was beer. For a weekend, alls we had was beer, we took 13 cases, there was 7 of us guys. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: 13 cases of beer and about 3 o'clock in the morning, we was hungry. And nobody had any money, we'd scraped up all the change we had. We's, we's camping out at Cahokia Mounds, out that way. And we scraped up all the money we like – like \$1.39, I don't remember. And we went to Scully's Truck Stop. I don't know if you're familiar with that?

TREUTLER: I'm not.

YBARRA: It's, it's across from that new raceway in Madison. We scraped enough money, cause that was open 24 hours. Back then, nothing was open 24 hours but a truck stop. We scraped enough money to buy a monster burger and the person that, the kid that had the most money got the first bite. [laughs] And what was funny is he had the biggest mouth, you know?

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: He can open his mouth big, and he, he took the biggest bite. And I was the one that had the second, cause I more money, I-I think I had 20 cents into it. [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Did, when, when did this

YBARRA: We all shared it, though.

TREUTLER: H-how old were you when

YBARRA: Probably about 17, 18. I was driving, I know that, I just had my license, and

TREUTLER: These are all kids from Lincoln Place?

YBARRA: Yeah, yeah.

TREUTLER: Did, like, after you graduated high school, what did, what did you do after that?

YBARRA: I went right straight to SIU. I was gonna be a, I wanted to get into commercial art, but they didn't really offer that, so I guess I was going for a teaching degree, you know, to be an art teacher, but I lost interest.

TREUTLER: Did, did you find a lot of Lincoln Place residents go to SIUE?

YBARRA: Mmm, there was a few, not many, not, not many.

TREUTLER: What did a lot of the people your age do when they graduated high school?

YBARRA: Lot of the people my age probably don't even live here.

TREUTLER: They, they moved away before they graduated?

YBARRA: They moved away or, or, or went, went to college somewhere else, or something.

TREUTLER: They just kinda left and never came back?

YBARRA: Yeah, some of them.

TREUTLER: Were there, was there a lot of people work at the steel mill?

YBARRA: Yes, there was a few

TREUTLER: They would go from high school right to the

YBARRA: Hmm-mmm

TREUTLER: Did you think that you didn't want to, you didn't want to do that?

YBARRA: No, no, I didn't want to. My dad never wanted me to. I remember him saying "It's a hard way to work if your gonna do swing shift and be a laborer." And

TREUTLER: Do you think your dad sacrificed a lot?

YBARRA: Yes he did, he sacrificed a lot for us kids.

TREUTLER: I mean

YBARRA: I can remember at one time, I needed my tuition money, he, he cashed in a cougarant, he had a cougarant, he cashed it in to, to pay for my tuition. I was going on, on the, on a grant, being a minority, I got a grant to go to school, but at one particular time, I needed the money and he cashed in his cougarant for me.

TREUTLER: Did, like did he, was he working overtime, or was he?

YBARRA: He wasn't working; he was retired by the time

TREUTLER: I mean like when you were

YBARRA: Growing up?

TREUTLER: Like you said, he was working swing shifts

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: And he was working, like, so he was working a lot.

YBARRA: Yeah, he was working a lot.

TREUTLER: Did you, did you see him a lot, or did you

YBARRA: When, when, when I was little, yeah, when he worked nights, we'd come home and my mom would make us "Shh," be quiet, you know, because he's asleep. And he wouldn't have, he'd wake up bout 9 o'clock, go to work, be there at 11, you know? And we had to be quiet, you know, I mean, cause when he spoke, we listened. [laughs]

TREUTLER: Now how much, he was 18 years older than your mom.

YBARRA: Hmm-mmm

TREUTLER: Do you think that made a big difference in, well, how much older than, than, than you is he?

YBARRA: My dad was 50 when I was born.

TREUTLER: So do you think that his age played a part in his, well, like how you all had to be quiet when

YBARRA: No, no, I don't think his age had that. It, it was respect. It was a respect, we respected my dad.

TREUTLER: That was, yeah. From the, what we talked about before, just like the, whole the neighborhood value system caused the,

YBARRA: Yeah.

TREUTLER: Was part of that respect.

YBARRA: Yeah, respect, I mean, if I was down the street and my dad's friend would see us doing something wrong, you know, he'd, he'd reprimand us himself, say "What are you doing?" And then if my dad'd catch wind of that, we'd get it again, you know? [laughs]

TREUTLER: So like the, all the kids were brother and sister, all the parents were parents of everybody

YBARRA: Yeah, yeah.

TREUTLER: Kind of thing.

YBARRA: Yeah, yeah, it was more, yeah, you'd get yelled at by all these, the old Armenian ladies would always yell at us.

TREUTLER: [laughs] That, that stuff doesn't really happen in neighborhoods today.

YBARRA: It does, you said?

TREUTLER: Does not.

YBARRA: On, no it doesn't, you get sued, now!

TREUTLER: Right.

YBARRA: I'll tell you a funny story, too. We had some neighbors living here. There was a house next door that my dad had bought. And the neighbor boy was cussing my dad out, and my dad was sitting down, he had a flyswatter in his hand, he was swatting flies, and my dad got mad and he chased that kid with the flyswatter, and the kid ran up a tree and my dad climbed the tree and spanked him with the flyswatter.
[laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: Needless to say, he ended up in court, though.

TREUTLER: Oh really?

YBARRA: Yes he did. And if it was today, he'd probably went to jail. Well, they did arrest him, and the arresting, the policeman that come to arrest him was Mr. Phillips' son who lived across the street – the Hungarians, you know?

TREUTLER: Yeah.

YBARRA: And he said, he goes, my dad was named Salvador, he called, they called him Sam, "Sam, I have to take you in." He goes, "I won't handcuff you, and you can drive your car, but I have to take you in," so, he followed him to the police station. He didn't want to go through the formalities of a proper arrest, because he respected my dad, you know? Nowadays, there's no such thing as that.

TREUTLER: Right.

YBARRA: If you're arrested, it's don't matter if it's your dad, I guess, you slap handcuffs on, right?

TREUTLER: Yeah, I think so.

YBARRA: Back then it was a, back then it was a, like I said, respect, and he went to court and appeared before a judge, who I think was an Armenian that we knew. And the judge more or less slapped him on the wrist. And the lady, the people next door was outraged over, you know? [laughs]

TREUTLER: [laughs] Wh-what year was this? Do you remember?

YBARRA: It was 60s. It was 60s.

TREUTLER: Any, that caused problems between you and the family next door?

YBARRA: Yes, it did, it did. Until one time, it was, it was sorta like a feud. These people's like, they was Tennesseans and they wouldn't talk to us, and they was like that before this event, too, you see. And what, what, what made us good neighbors after that was they would, they was saying something to my mom, and my mom passed out, she fainted. And then the lady brang some flowers over.

TREUTLER: Oh.

YBARRA: And then, from that day on, they was real good neighbors.

TREUTLER: So, these were, they were non-immigrants, they were

YBARRA: Right.

TREUTLER: So do you think that was a

YBARRA: Yeah, yeah.

TREUTLER: That played a part?

YBARRA: Yeah [laughs]

TREUTLER: What we were talking about before, how the...how old was the was the kid?

YBARRA: He was, he's two years older than me and I was, I'm trying, I'm trying to guess how old I was, probably about 8. He was probably about 10.

TREUTLER: So where there problems between you and him, and your brothers and him?

YBARRA: Yeah, we'd get, we'd get into fights, and my cousin would straighten him out, because he's older than me, bigger than me. Yeah, I'd get the shit kicked out of me.

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: But my cousin was older than me, come take care of him. So, everything was cool after that.

TREUTLER: So, like, the dynamic of this neighborhood is really interesting, because, like you have all these different groups from all over the world, really.

YBARRA: Right.

TREUTLER: Europeans and Mexicans, meet in this tiny little neighborhood, where there's, you know, four blocks square.

YBARRA: Right.

TREUTLER: And they can co-exist where everyone is cool with everybody. Everyone's culture just mixes together, if someone else comes into the neighborhood, who's not an immigrant

YBARRA: And who, that's who they was, see.

TREUTLER: Right. Is completely an outsider, and it just, that's really, that's, that's so much like a phenomenon, like I don't think would actually happen anywhere else, it just happened here. You'd think anywhere else, people would

YBARRA: It's not, it's not to where we said, "Hey, you don't belong here," it wasn't like that. It was like, you know, they started this shit, you know?

TREUTLER: Right.

YBARRA: And we don't do that to people from Lincoln Place, that's how we felt.

TREUTLER: Right, like, well, I mean, you said, you know, they were from Tennessee, and you kinda, you knew that they weren't, they weren't immigrants and

YBARRA: Right.

TREUTLER: And how, you weren't like

YBARRA: Hillbillies, they was hillbillies.

TREUTLER: You weren't like, you, I think the neighborhood at the time would probably just try to, you know, inc, make them part of their own.

YBARRA: Try to incorporate them, yeah, we, we tried.

TREUTLER: Then, ok, so are there any other stories about or about?

YBARRA: Yeah, there's one that I left out. This is something would, had told me a long time ago. There was a man down the street by the name of Bartolo Campos, he was, he was older than my dad, and he, he had an unusual job, or whatever you want to call it, in Mexico. What he would do was, have you ever heard of the bandit called Pancho Villa in Mexico?

TREUTLER: Yes.

YBARRA: He was a, he was a bandit. He used to print his own money.

TREUTLER: [laughs]

YBARRA: And, it was backed by his guns. So, when he'd go into town, him and his men, he'd, they'd have his own money, and they, and they would spend it in town backed by his guns. They'd have to spend it or they'd get killed.

TREUTLER: Right.

YBARRA: And Bartolo Campos was one of the persons that, when Pancho Villa left that town, well, that paper, that money was worthless, you know? He would buy it, you know, pennies on the dollar, but pesos, you know, you know what I mean?

TREUTLER: Yes.

YBARRA: He would buy it so cheap that it was just given to him. Cause it was of no value to the, to the merchants.

TREUTLER: Right.

YBARRA: So, he would have this bag, bags full of money and where, wherever Pancho Villa would go, he'd go into that town and spend it. So, that's a little

TREUTLER: So he was like a bandit on top of a

YBARRA: Well, I wouldn't say he was a bandit, he was smart, I mean, you know, that's something smart, something really

TREUTLER: Entrepreneurial

YBARRA: There you go.

TREUTLER: Illegal entrepreneurial sort of, little

YBARRA: It's illegal, but, ye

TREUTLER: Now that was something that you said that your, your father had told you about. Were there lots of stories that he would, were there like

YBARRA: Oh yeah, I'm sure. I wish, I wish I would have recorded these myself, and, and, or written them and all that, but I'm sure that my sister and my brothers can elaborate on more of that, than I could.

TREUTLER: Well from my understanding, like, the, the Mexican culture and traditions are like an oral history themselves, where you pass stories down from generation to generation, is that

YBARRA: Well, they, they, they've got it recorded, also. You know.

TREUTLER: On top of recorded, like the, the story about the neighbor

YBARRA: Yeah

TREUTLER: Or the things like that, kinda hard to make a connection here, but, like, the, in the Unite, like Americans, don't really have a, a oral history, where Mexicans have like orals, like stories that are told, everyone knows them, do you know what I'm saying? No?

YBARRA: Well, like a folklore thing?

TREUTLER: Kind of. Did you, like, maybe, maybe I learned this incorrectly, but I thought that that's was part of the Mexican culture.

YBARRA: What's that? The passing of the stories?

TREUTLER: Like the, yeah.

YBARRA: Sure, yeah I'm, yeah it is, I, you know.

TREUTLER: Did your dad tell, and your mom, too.

YBARRA: No, not too much, not too much of that, no. A little bit. And if they did, I forgot it.

TREUTLER: Yeah. So, is there anything else that you'd wanna include that, that we forgot to talk about, or that you wanted to

YBARRA: I can't think of nothing.

TREUTLER: So, in, what would you say, what would you say about this neighborhood in a couple sentences? Like what would you, if you were telling somebody about Lincoln Place, what would you tell them?

YBARRA: I'd, I'd tell them that when I grew up, Lincoln Place was one of the finest neighborhoods, even though it was run down, you know. It was, it was fine – it was the best.

TREUTLER: And then?

YBARRA: With, because of the people, you know? The people made it the best, whether you had a leaky roof or whatever, if you was poor, it just, it was the people that made it, you know. And them people are gone or died, or moved out, and there's not many of us left.

TREUTLER: Do you think, do you think it can get, we talked about this before, do you think it can get back to where

YBARRA: It'd be

TREUTLER: You, it was the best?

YBARRA: Nice, it could, nothing's impossible, I mean, it could, you know, a few businesses and all that.

TREUTLER: Ok, well, thank you for your time.

YBARRA: You're welcome.