

**Narrator:** Linda Hernandez Garcia  
**Interviewer:** Emily Coffin  
**Date and Place:** Interviewed on October 31, 2001 in the home of Mrs. Garcia at  
[REDACTED]

**Begin Tape 1, Side A**

**Emily Coffin:** Can you tell me about some of the earliest memories you have of living in Lincoln Place?

**Linda Garcia:** Well I lived in my life...I've lived all my life, except for 3 years, and that's when I was born in St. Louis and we moved here. So I've been here a long time. O.K. It seemed like a lot of changes.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** You know. But what I most remember about Lincoln Place is that I've always called it a 'Little United Nations'. Because we had all nationalities and all nationalities always had such differences, you know. They had their own ethnic things for every nationality. And yet in spite of that we always got along. It wasn't that everybody liked each other, no that doesn't ever happen in real life. You know, but if there was any need of any kind, there was always people that you could go to, knock on their door and say "I need help", and they would help you. That's what I noticed most about... As the times went by we were losing all that closeness. You know when I was a, a kid, young girl, whatever, all of us would, you know, go through the alleys and make short, short cuts to go to this house and that, you know, and that house. And nobody locked their doors, nobody. You opened your windows and you slept like that, you know. And there was never no fearing. I would not dare do that now. Never. It, it is a very strange, environment down here, that it had never been. Our times were that there was a tavern almost on every corner. You know. Everybody worked for a living. They worked hard. You know. They were railroad, American Steel, but General Steel, which they used to call Commonwealth. And those were the

standard factories that people, you know, worked in. We...Mexicans that would come over, would land down here because there was a lot of Mexicans down here. Now I'm not talking about Hispanics, you know. They were...mother and dad were Mexicans. You know, pure Mexicans. And they always landed down here because they knew there was somebody that would always help them. And the same way with all the other nationalities like Hungarians, Armenians, Bulgarians. Just about every nationality that you can think of we had down here.

**Coffin:** Did the, did the Mexicans, did they work at the steel mills and everything? Is that where they worked, as well?

**Garcia:** Yes, uh huh, because my mother was a widow and she was raising 3 girls and we used to cook for the men from American Steel. You know we were kids. I have 2 other sisters, and we were kids. We'd come home from school at lunchtime to take their lunch to them at the American Steel. You know. And...but that's generally where. And of course, in the fields, you know, was prominent then like it is now, you know. I, I really all, I, How shall I put it? I was a family of, of a mother who had 3 girls to raise. OK?

**Coffin:** Uh huh.

**Garcia:** And we really didn't go out too much because we never had that kind of money. And there was no money anywhere. You know, anywhere. So I, more or less, my family, was more or less isolated. YOU KNOW, because my mom was real protective of us because we were girls.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** And, she had boarders, you know, and she did ironing. But when the men would come and sit around the table to eat, we had to go to the bed...bedroom, because we were not allowed to hear their, their talk. You know, they were not allowed to cuss. But still they were loud.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** You know and they drank beer, you know. That was their, you know, thing. And uh, there was always a lot of drunks around because of all the taverns.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** You know and... But the majority of the men all drank but they did take care of their families. And there was a couple of them that didn't but then that's part of society, I guess you'd call it.

**Coffin:** Sure. Were her boarders Mexican or were they any nationality?

**Garcia:** Well they were mostly Mexican, you know, because they couldn't speak English and she couldn't either.

**Coffin:** Oh, I see.

**Garcia:** You know. And she never wanted to learn, either. You know. She said, "I'm Mexican and I'll die being a Mexican and I'll never speak English." But she sent us to school. But at home we spoke Mexican all the time. We were not allowed to... only to do our studies, that's all. But everything else was, you know...

**Coffin:** So you cooked authentic Mexican dishes and everything, I assume.

**Garcia:** Everything, uh huh.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** And see she was an epileptic, also, you know. So she never went out any anywhere. But if anybody wanted to see her they would come to our house to visit, you know. And to see how she was doing and stuff.

**Coffin:** Sure. Was your dad living when you moved to Lincoln Place?

**Garcia:** Yes, uh huh. He got shot when we had the Chain of Rocks carnival that used to be over the bridge. You know. He got shot over there when I was 3 years old. And then 1 year later my brother, who was 17, drowned when we had a levee out here.

**Coffin:** Oh my goodness.

**Garcia:** He got caught up in a whirlpool. So she had a hard life in raising us girls, you know. But everybody was protective of everybody, not just of us, of everybody.

**Coffin:** Sure, sure.

**Garcia:** You know, everybody took care of... you know. They'd see somebody do something wrong... They'd not go 'I'm gonna tell your mother'. No, there was not that. They would take you by the shoulder and take you.

**Coffin:** Take you? (Laugh)

**Garcia:** (Laugh) You know. Then you know you'd get it.

**Coffin:** Oh yes. (Laugh) Did... were your neighbors Mexican, or were the, were all the ethnic groups mixed?

**Garcia:** They were all mixed.

**Coffin:** They were all mixed?

**Garcia:** They were all mixed. You know. They, like I say...Everybody just knew everybody. You know. And, and it's like...you know, like day and night, the changes.

**Coffin:** Oh, I'm sure.

**Garcia:** And you used to know everybody that lived in the block. You know.

**Coffin:** Who were your favorite neighbors? Do you remember your favorite neighbors? Or did you like them all the same? Or...



**Garcia:** I really...I, because I was the youngest...I had to do a lot of the funerals. When we had funerals, you know. So I, I was the one that took the food. I was the one that had to go and clean the house because they brought the body to the house and all this kind of stuff. You know. So I really...I just... Everybody was just my friend and I could depend on everybody to, you know, to help me. So I didn't really have any... As far as girlfriends...they were all Mexican. You know, girls. And they were in the same boat that we were. But they had fathers where we didn't. And everybody had to... We used to have a relief off... oh what do you call it? A feed store?. Right over the railroad tracks with the beginning of the American Steel. And when the trains would go by they'd...some of their corn was overloaded the cars. And we all get a little wagon... We'd all get up there, or over there, and pick corn out of the coal. You know. And we'd come home and grind it and make tortillas and, you know, that was how we, you know, got along. You know. Then we had a lot back here, over on Niedringhaus and Chestnut Street. Was a big lot. Some man, he owned it. He let us all farm. And we all farmed out there. We had corn and, and just everything. And we all divided it all up. You know.

**Coffin:** Sort of like a neighborhood garden; more than just an individual family garden?

**Garcia:** Uh huh. Yes. Everybody did go and water it and you know, take care of it, hoe it and all that stuff. You know. And that was the fun times, you know. Because we could... They wouldn't holler at us so much that if we were working. Pretending that we were working, you know. But...

**Coffin:** Where did you go to school? You say your mother sent you to school?

**Garcia:** I went to Washington School. And that's down in West Granite, a few blocks down. And then I went to Central School. That was downtown, where the township office...I don't know if you know where... and then, from there, then they sent me to the High School. You

know. And at that time, you know, as I'd tell my kids, "I used to walk down there and you guys can't even walk". You know. And, yeah, yeah...

**Coffin:** That's how you got around? You really did walk everywhere?

**Garcia:** Yes. We walked everywhere.

**Coffin:** Were there sidewalks?

**Garcia:** From time to time, you know. They'd put in a few, you know. But there was a lot of cobble stoned. But that was only from American Steel back, where they used to have the streetcar to go to St. Louis.

**Coffin:** Oh you did?

**Garcia:** Uh huh. And there's some of the cobblestones there that they missed. But that's... And then, on the corner where that dairy is, we used... that's where the carnivals used to come every year. You know. Then we had a carnival...

**Coffin:** Did it have rides and games and stuff like that?

**Garcia:** Just like they do now. You know. But it was big. You know. And that was our savings, if we had any. For the carnival was coming... the carnival was coming.

**Coffin:** How much did it cost to ride a ride in those days? Do you remember?

**Garcia:** Gosh, it'd probably... nickel... dime. You know and then finally when the buses came they were nickel, dime, quarter. You know.

**Coffin:** Did it cost to ride the streetcar to St. Louis?

**Garcia:** Yes. I think that the, the... If I can remember, I think it was like 15 cents to go to St. Louis.

**Coffin:** Was it an electric streetcar or...?

**Garcia:** Yes. You know it had one of those wires that just... you know.

**Coffin:** Uh huh.

**Garcia:** And it would go all the way to Washington Avenue. But it'd go over the McKinley Bridge and then they had a turn off and that's where the station was and everybody got off there. You know.

**Coffin:** So did you go to St. Louis a lot?

**Garcia:** No. No that... When, when we did that, that was a treat. I have a godmother and godfather that lived in St. Louis. You know. And he also worked in the railroad... on the railroad. So he... we'd go to his house on one weekend. And then he'd come... they'd come on the other weekend, you know. And that was our time together, you know, because they lived in St. Louis and we lived here.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** And... but it was... you know. I never had a very... Nothing eventful really happened as far as I was, my family was concerned. Like I say, because we just lived from day to day like everybody, uh, did. You know.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** You know it wasn't anything. Oh, and uh, uh, the big, big thing was when one of the families, and I can't remember which one, that had a television. Oh my, that was a treat to think that they had money to buy a television. And then it was a little bitty thing, you know. It wasn't a... and everybody was so, "Did you hear, so and so's got a television?", "So and so's got a television." And then there was no air conditioning of course. We had screened doors on the windows we were lucky. You know, and then... but that was the biggest things. You know that turned things around.

**Coffin:** Sure. Television and...

**Garcia:** Yes. And, but other than that...you know. I, we, never got to go to dances because she, my mom, was real strict. You know. She never let us belong to any clubs. She did, the Mexican Honorary Commission. But then they always had dances. You know. And then my godmother had 3 girls that sang. They were beautiful and played guitar. You know. And they'd come over to our house to change into their costumes. But we couldn't go.

**Coffin:** You couldn't go?

**Garcia:** No, we couldn't go. And then if we got to go, then...at that time they used to have chairs around the hall, you know. And we used to have to sit in those chairs and if somebody asked us to dance we'd...All we'd have to do is look at my mom and the look that she gave us said yes or no. And that was, you know...Most of the time it was no because this one was drunk and that one...(laugh) You know, my goodness...you know. What a thing to have your daughter dance with a drunk. Those were the times that people really paid attention to what your children did. You know. At that time...and we knew, boy, when there was a fiesta, the girls would come. We'd be so excited because they'd put their make-up on and their beautiful outfits and everything, you know. And they'd practice, you know. Then she'd say, "No you're not going to it this time." "O. K." So we didn't go. We didn't go.

**Coffin:** How much older were your sisters than you?

**Garcia:** They're...let's see...my oldest...I think there's 2 and 3 years apart.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** I'm the youngest. You know and we just...the good times were (laughs) is when we'd listen to the ball game, believe it or not. Because we had to go bed at 9 o'clock no matter how old we were or what. We had to go to bed at 9 o'clock because we had school, especially if we



had school. Well, we'd hide underneath the bed, you know. And we'd muffle up a sheet, put the radio in there and we'd listen to the...to the ball game.

**Coffin:** ...to the ball game?

**Garcia:** You know. And she'd come in, you know. Boy we'd hear footsteps and boy, that radio would go off. You know. (laugh) Then we were scrambling to try to find it back again, the knob back again, you know. That was fun because we thought we were really doing something. But she knew what we were doing. But you know...

**Coffin:** Oh yes. Was it the Cardinals at that time, or the Browns?

**Garcia:** Yes, the Browns.

**Coffin:** The Browns?

**Garcia:** The Browns. Yes. I can remember so many time getting underneath that bed to watch the...

**Coffin:** ...listen to the baseball game.

**Garcia:** ...listen to the baseball game. You know. Cause we didn't have no money to go to the show. You know. Ten cents was a lot of money when you had 3 people. That was a lots, a lots of money. You know.

**Coffin:** Did you get to work, like part time jobs or summer jobs or anything to make some money or... Did you get an allowance?

**Garcia:** When we were young? No. We were...course, we'd...the only money that we made was like when my mother had boarders. You know. She had 25 boarders, and we would wash and iron, you know and help her. And that's where we would get our money. You know. And, and that was a hard job.

**Coffin:** I bet it was. Twenty-five boarders at one time? Did you own a big house?



**Garcia:** No. It was just a small house like this, but they would...you know. We would wash clothes outside.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** Cause we didn't even have a washing machine. You know.

**Coffin:** So what did you use to wash the clothes?

**Garcia:** What did we use? We'd make our own soap, lye soap, you know. And wash board. We'd be outside just going...and then we had to iron them. Twenty-five cents a shirt. That's what she used to charge. And I remember those days. Wow, they were hard days. But she inspect them after we ironed them and if they were not without one crease, we had to redo them. She'd throw them at us, you know, "Don't you know how to do anything yet?" and there we'd go. Start all over again, you know.

**Coffin:** Do you remember what the first things were that you ironed? What did you practice on before you actually got to do a shirt?

**Garcia:** Most of its all white shirts.

**Coffin:** All white shirts?

**Garcia:** Because the Mexicans were all ladies men. You know. They were impressing the ladies so they wore white shirts all the time. Just you'd think like they were fashion...thing, you know. And so they all had black pants, you know, and white shirts. And starch had to be just so...the cooked starch had to be just so. And...

**Coffin:** None of that spray stuff?

**Garcia:** Huh uh. Huh uh (shaking her head back and forth). Had to be the ARGO starch. You had to cook it, and get it just right. You know.

**Coffin:** In those days, didn't, didn't widows remarry? Was it, was it...

**Garcia:** No.

**Coffin:** No?

**Garcia:** No they didn't. You were... You had one husband and that was it! You know. That was it! And she never, ever made any attempt to marry. And, she never went out with anybody either because she always felt that if she did, that would be a bad example for us. You know. Which I don't know where she figured that out at, but that's how they all did. You know.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** You just didn't. You know. And then when they started... then you knew who was who and (laughs) then you knew who the floozies were, and who's this and who's that. You know. And it was a lot of gossip. You know. "Did you hear that so and so went out with so and so?" The usual stuff, you know. But, you know, that's life. You know.

**Coffin:** Did you go to church?

**Garcia:** Oh yes.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** St. Joseph's Church. It was on State Street and now it's Holy Family.

**Coffin:** And you walked there?

**Garcia:** Yes.

**Coffin:** Did you have a car?

**Garcia:** Oh no.

**Coffin:** No?

**Garcia:** Never owned a car. Huh uh. And you know, we'd go to catechism on Saturdays; church every Sunday. You know. And that was basically, like I said, you know, not much movie business.

**Coffin:** No?

**Garcia:** No. But we didn't miss it because we didn't know what it was.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** You know. It's not like kids today. They seem to know everything. You know...to go everywhere. But we didn't. You know. And if you owned a bicycle you were rich. You know. And which we never owned, either. You know. We were just one of the families, one of the poorest families...you know. But she was so protective of us that you know, she wouldn't allow...you know, any of her boarders to...Oh we would talk to them and stuff. And they would bring us fruit, you know, because they knew we were kids, you know. And they'd bring us candy and stuff. But other than that, that was all, you know. Then the one time they would tell her, you know, "Oh, Lucy is getting so pretty" you know, "she's growing" and you know. She told him, she said "just remember that..." You know. They didn't have to say anymore to her cause they knew... You know.

**Coffin:** Right. Yes. How about your clothes? Did you make your clothes? Or, did your mother make them?

**Garcia:** Well we had hand me downs from other people. You know. And there was clothes that we made. You know.

**Coffin:** Did most people make their own clothes?

**Garcia:** Most, most people did.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** You know. They weren't seamstresses but whatever they... The flour sacks... They used to have flour sacks that were...had flowers and stuff on them, you know. They pretty, pretty nice, you know, ...and when you don't know any different. They were pretty.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** You know. We thought they were. You could dress up. You know.

**Coffin:** Did ladies wear hats?

**Garcia:** Yes, some. Some. You know.

**Coffin:** Did your mom wear a hat to church every Sunday?

**Garcia:** My mother didn't go nowhere.

**Coffin:** Oh, she didn't go anywhere?

**Garcia:** She didn't go anywhere because she was an epileptic.

**Coffin:** So just the 3 girls would go to church?

**Garcia:** Uh huh. But she made sure that we went. If we were dying we were going to church.

**Coffin:** Did an adult have to take you or walk you down or was your oldest sister old enough to escort you?

**Garcia:** We'd all...a whole bunch of us would go all together. Kids, all go together. Cause some mothers would take them and some mothers wouldn't. So we'd all go together. Usually it was 9:30 [a.m.] mass because that was high mass. You know. And then we'd see all the pretty ladies with all their pretty clothes and their hats and gloves and...you know. We went somewhere. You know. We were excited, even if you see it every Sunday. It was the only thing that we had.

**Coffin:** Sure, sure.

**Garcia:** You know.

**Coffin:** Did you like school?

**Garcia:** Did I like school? Yes, I liked school but I had, I had a, a kind of a rough way to go because my mother was an epileptic. And, she'd get her seizures, you know. And there'd be... I, I don't know, I was the one. The one sister that seemed to be able to feel when she was having a

seizure at home. You know. And I'd bolt out of school and I'd run all the way home. Sometimes I'd find her outside. Sometimes I'd find her on the stove where she was burnt. You know and, and the principal would follow me. You know. And he'd say "Linda, I will bring you home when that happens." I don't have time to wait. I don't have time to wait for you. My mom needs me. And that's how I went through school. You know. My other sisters never felt that, but I did. You know. And then when I went to junior high, uh, they had finally gotten some medication that eased them. You know. So I didn't have to do that quite as much. You know. But in grade school...I did all through grade school. You know. That was really...it was hard.

**Coffin:** Oh, I bet it was.

**Garcia:** You know. To see your mom do that, you know. And...and then...but when I went to high school I only went half a day to high school. And...

**Coffin:** Why was that?

**Garcia:** Because she wasn't able to do a lot of her work.

**Coffin:** So you needed to be home?

**Garcia:** No. I needed...we needed funds.

**Coffin:** Oh, I see.

**Garcia:** You know. So, I would go from noon. I'd go to school until noon and then if there was no bus available, I'd walk to Madison down to Glik's store, that they had down there. And I'd work from 1 o'clock in the afternoon till 6 [p.m.], and then I'd walk back and work at the hospital [St. Elizabeth's Hospital] from 6:30 [p.m.] until 11 o'clock at night. Then I'd come home and get everything ready, you know for the next day.

**Coffin:** Oh, my gosh! How old were you when you when you were doing that?



**Garcia:** When I was doing that? I was like about 15, 16 years old. Then I finally graduated, you know, from high school.

**Coffin:** Yes. What kind of jobs would you do at Glik's and at the hospital?

**Garcia:** Well, Glik's was like a cashier, you know. Wait on customers, the usual things. And the hospital, I did dishes. They had those big sinks. And I was so short, you know, they'd have to get soda boxes so I could wash the dishes. You know. Twenty-five cents an hour. Boy when I took a pay check home that was a lot of money.

**Coffin:** Oh, I bet.

**Garcia:** You know, 25 cents an hour. And then I just, gradually just, finished high school and then I got a job at the depot [referring to the Charles Melvin Price Support Center, earlier known as the Granite City Army Depot]. You know. Where I was a secretary. And it was a good job, but it wasn't for me. You know. I never was happy there as I was working at the hospital. And that's what I choose, to work at the hospital. You know. I was a nurse's aid for many years and that's where I retired from. You know. And I had, in the meantime, I got married, you know. My marriage didn't work out, but I had 5 children. And my youngest son got killed in a car accident at 17. And...I still have my other children. None of them went to college at the time like after they graduated. You know. But after they got a, a job, then that's what they wanted to do and they have, you know, been going to college and doing things and... They all have good jobs, which I'm real thankful for...

**Coffin:** Oh yes...sure.

**Garcia:** ...and grateful for. You know

**Coffin:** Did they live in Lincoln Place as well?

**Garcia:** Uh huh.

**Coffin:** Do they?

**Garcia:** Uh huh. No. I have a daughter that lives with me. And then I have a daughter that lives on Benton. And then I have a daughter that lives out in New Baldwin. And, but we're...and I have a son that lives across the street. And we're real...a real close family. You know and it was just a, a...and now you know I can walk down Lincoln Place and I can look at the homes and I can remember, you know, so and so used to live here. I wonder what they would think if they saw how somebody fixed their porch? And I can remember different things like that you know and it's not...it's friendly and it's nice for people that you know. But lot of people don't want to be friendly and don't want to be like that. So it's kind of, if a you live here and I live there and unless they're in trouble then they know that you're around.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** It's not...like I say...the closeness when I was a kid.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** You know.

**Coffin:** When did you notice that it started changing? Do you remember?

**Garcia:** Oh, I'm saying like a maybe about 20 years ago. A gradual change...

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** You know, especially when somebody died and they sold their home. Then that's when the change would come in mostly. You know. And we still have a community center which is down the street where all the kids go, in fact used to go, when my kids were small. That's where they'd go for recreation.

**Coffin:** But you, you didn't go there?

**Garcia:** No.

**Coffin:** No?

**Garcia:** We didn't go there. You know. But...and the kids still go there, you know. And they play. They do their homework. You know...and stuff like that.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** But other than that it's just been a, you know...just what I consider a good life.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** Even though there was hardships, you know and there was good times. There was sad times just like anyplace in this world. You know. But I do miss the closeness.

**Coffin:** Sure. I'm sure you do.

**Garcia:** But...I belong to the Mexican Honorary Commission. I'm real involved you know with our heritage. Try to keep our heritage with our children, you know, and... I have a lot of fun with that. I've made a lot of friends you know. I'm really well known in the community. You know...because all the time that I worked in the hospital. I'd find that when people couldn't take care of themselves...and I worked the 11:00 [p.m.] to 7:00 [a.m.] all my 30 years at the hospital. And when I'd see and I'd hear that they're gonna go home they don't have nobody to take care of them I'd go from work and I'd go and take care of them and feed them and everything before I'd come home to take a few hours sleep, you know, and have things ready for my kids when they come home, you know. And, and that's what I do now. I'm retired. I baby-sit. And then after I baby-sit, they'll call me and say "Will you come give my husband a bath? I can't." You know and I'll go over and I'll, you know, and I just...I have lived a full life, you know, that I'm satisfied with and mostly because my children have turned out beautifully.

**Coffin:** Oh, sure, you're proud of them.

**Garcia:** Oh yes I am. You know, they work hard. And what else can we ask for?

**Coffin:** That's right.

**Garcia:** You know. And they're in good health...and that means a lot.

**Coffin:** Oh it does.

**Garcia:** When you're in good health. You know.

**Coffin:** It sure does.

**Garcia:** And these kids that I take care of...keep me young. They keep me going. You know, her mother [motioning to a little girl asleep on a pallet on the living room floor], she has a brother. And he's the one that I took care of first. And she was trying to have a baby, and she had 12 miscarriages before she had the little boy.

**Coffin:** Oh my goodness.

**Garcia:** She [again, motioning to a little girl asleep on a pallet on the living room floor] was born with a hole in her heart and it's healed.

**Coffin:** Oh isn't that wonderful.

**Garcia:** And it's healed. You know, and...I took classes to take care of her before I would, you know. I said "You know 911 is nice but there is something else that you can do before 911 gets there."

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** You know. [pause]

### **Begin Tape 1, Side B**

**Coffin:** Well, I've talked to somebody else who had worked at the depot so I guess when the depot came in it must have been a great place for, for employment.

**Garcia:** Oh yes, it was. It was a lot of people that worked there. It was full. And then the GI's that were all stationed out here...

**Coffin:** Uh huh...

**Garcia:** You know it was a busy, busy place.

**Coffin:** Yes. By...by the time it became there were you a young adult that you...went out more and stuff like that?

**Garcia:** Well no because my mom, even then, would not let us.

**Coffin:** Even then wouldn't...

**Garcia:** No.

**Coffin:** How did you, how did you manage to meet a husband?

**Garcia:** Well, you know, how? (Chuckle) I worked out there and then GI's...there was tons of them, you know. And...well we sneaked out here, and we'd lunch hours and you know, stuff and I'd sneak out of the house, you know. And boy when I'd get home she'd...I'd get it. No matter...I was even...cause I didn't get married till after I was...I was 20 I guess I was. So I was old considering...you know. And boy she'd still give me a whipping because I had gone out and you know, and stuff like that.

**Coffin:** Uh huh.

**Garcia:** But it was, it was fun. (Laugh) It was fun no matter which way you look at it. You know. And that's part of life.

**Coffin:** Sure it is. Sure it is. When you were growing up who do you remember being...you didn't, you didn't go to the movies very much, and there wasn't really TV for a while, but who were your idols? You know. Who were the, who were the people that you thought 'wow'?

**Garcia:** I always thought of John Wayne as being the, the top dog.

**Coffin:** Yes?



**Garcia:** You know...and everything. And sometimes Clark Gable...not, not too much. But...I really didn't have any, you know....

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** ...preferences. But you know... And if I got to go to a movie I didn't care who was there as long as I got to go to the movie. (Laugh)

**Coffin:** Did you, did you have much music in your life? You didn't get to go to dances, but other than your cousins coming over...or I don't know that they were your cousins, but your godfather's children. Did you have much music in your life?

**Garcia:** Oh yes. We always had records...

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** ...always had an old record player. You know. And we would dance at home, you know. Nothing else. That's, you know, what we would do. You know.

**Coffin:** What are some of the songs you remember listening to?

**Garcia:** Oh my goodness. There's so many. You know, like, El Rancho Grande, Se Lito Lindo, Guadalajara. Oh I could give you...

**Coffin:** Yeah?

**Garcia:** ...you know, tons of them...

**Coffin:** Do you still listen to those music...

**Garcia:** Oh yes I do. Yes, I do. Especially when I'm by myself. You know what I do? I turn it on and...my son loved the music, you know. And I'll stand in there and I'll talk to him and, and sing. I don't know how to sing, but I sing...

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** ...and cry, and, and I get happy again and...It's...you know...

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** ...it's part... And he's been gone 23 years now, but still...it's sometimes, it's just like...yesterday. You know.

**Coffin:** Yeah.

**Garcia:** You know.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** But...basically...the community has, has, come up, you know and done a lot of good things.

**Coffin:** Uh huh?

**Garcia:** You know...I just, I just feel like it's, it's; we're not losing anything. You know. Because the children are smarter. They like to learn, you know. And I think we had fantastic teachers.

**Coffin:** Do you remember your favorite teacher?

**Garcia:** My favorite teacher? Gosh, I had a lot of favorites. I liked to go to school so my favorite teachers...I had several.

**Coffin:** Yeah?

**Garcia:** You know. But Ms. Tenecott, she was meaner than ...peanut butter. Oh man...I tell you...When she told you to do something you did it or that ruler would...bang! You know. But she knew her business.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** And Ms. Johnson was another one. All those teachers were all mean. You know. But they taught you.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** They wanted to teach you. They taught you and you didn't forget.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** You know.

**Coffin:** Yes. What was your favorite subject?

**Garcia:** My favorite...? I liked to read. You know. Literature.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** I liked to read anything.

**Coffin:** Yes.

**Garcia:** You know. I'm an election judge and I've been that for about 28 years. You know and I just like to do...see things...and...

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** You know. I went to my first ball game...when Mac Mc, Ma,

**Coffin:** Mark McGuire?

**Garcia:** When he made his first home run.

**Coffin:** Wow!

**Garcia:** That's the first time I had ever gone to a baseball game.

**Coffin:** Is that right?

**Garcia:** And I got to go in one of those boxes. those...you know. My son-in-law, he, he had one of those, you know. He's got a good job and he says "Come on". He says, "Let's go to a ball game." I said "Naw." You know he said, "Yes, come on." But he never knew that I had never gone.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** He had just, you know...invited me and my daughter. And his family. And we all went. Gosh I couldn't believe that all this time we've listened to it on the radio, and this is what they were really doing...Run like the devil. (Laugh) You know. It was so exciting, you know. And then when I told him I said "Gosh, Miles." I said, "This is the first time I've been to a ball game." "You're kidding" he, he says. That [pause]

**Coffin:** A couple of more questions I'd like to ask you. We talked about the way all the different ethnic groups have lived in Lincoln Place. When, when you were growing up do you remember...did you, did you share your cultures, or did you work really hard at keeping them separate and distinct?

**Garcia:** No it was all of together.

**Coffin:** It was all together thing?

**Garcia:** Uh huh. It was all together. Everybody just kind of worked together. Because everybody was poor. You know, and everybody shared.

**Coffin:** So that was the one thing you all had in common?

**Garcia:** Yeah. You know. Like...especially because we had a, a big family, the Valencia family. She had 16 children. You know. So this was a, a project. Not activity, a project. But this is a neighborly thing...

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** That...when the mom and dad drank a lot...you know, they didn't have nothing to eat so we'd make piles of tortillas and beans and...you know, rice...

**Coffin:** Sixteen children?

**Garcia:** Uh huh.

**Coffin:** Were babies born at home?

**Garcia:** Most of the time.

**Coffin:** Most of the time?

**Garcia:** Most of the time.

**Coffin:** Did the doctor come there and deliver them or did...

**Garcia:** Yes.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** Uh huh. Yes. But it was all like I say...it was all a togetherness thing. Which a lot of it is gone, like I said. Because of new people...

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** New ways. New things. You know.

**Coffin:** When did you realize, or did you ever realize, or think that Lincoln Place neighborhood was different than other parts of Granite City? When you went to school did you think that everybody came from neighborhoods like this? Or did you think this was a unique situation?

**Garcia:** No we were unique. Because (chuckle) we had a rivalry from West Granite.

**Coffin:** Oh, is that right?

**Garcia:** You know. And if the boys wanted to go with the girls from down here there'd always have to be a fight before...you know, one of those, those things. But...and that was the only thing. And every place else...they were there, but as long as they didn't bother us, they were just there.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** You know. So we didn't see, seek them out. You know...to make trouble or anything like that. Because they didn't live down here so...

**Coffin:** Yes?



**Garcia:** You know?

**Coffin:** So you all just kind of stayed down here and...

**Garcia:** Yes...

**Coffin:** ...ignored them?

**Garcia:** You know. Just...well, we didn't if they'd come down...that would be fine. You know. But we didn't actually go looking for trouble or anything like that.

**Coffin:** Sure. Sure. OK. Can you think of anything I haven't asked? Or anything that you'd like to tell me? I mean. I think we know that it's changed. Are there ways that it's changed for the better?

**Garcia:** Oh yes. I think so. You know. Well mostly because there's more work. You know and more schooling available, for children. You know. Like the scholarships, or anything like that, where ordinarily we were invited to them, but couldn't go...

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** But actually that's really...as I said, I never had a very exciting life. I, I just had a comfortable life, even though I was poor. You know. It was nothing I...you know. I...never had a vacation. Never gone anywhere. You know. Oh, I take that back. When my daughter lived in Texas I went to see Texas for the first time. First airplane ride. Other than that I had never gone anywhere. I never had any desire...for one thing.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** You know. I always thought I didn't have the money so why should I desire something I didn't have...make myself miserable...

**Coffin:** Sure. Did you get your first television after you were married?

**Garcia:** Yes.

**Coffin:** Yes?

**Garcia:** No, no, no, no. I take that back. It was after my sis, my middle sister got married cause her husband bought my mother...

**Coffin:** Is that right?

**Garcia:** ...a television. Yes. We didn't ever bother us that we didn't have one because we knew we couldn't afford it.

**Coffin:** Yes? How long did your mom have boarders? Did she have boarders forever? Or did she finally stop having boarders?

**Garcia:** Well she had to stop because there again, that changed. They found where they got married, you know. They moved in the neighborhood, but they moved. You know. And they just kind of, just pulled away. Cause they didn't need her as much as...

**Coffin:** Didn't need to, to board out anymore?

**Garcia:** Yes. You know. And then restaurants were becoming, and the tavern was serving food and they could afford it because they were working.

**Coffin:** Sure.

**Garcia:** Things like that...you know.

**Coffin:** Yeah. Sure, OK. All righty! Well thank you very much.