

Socorro County Historical Society, Oral History Tapes

Mrs. Miguel Sarracino interviewed by Sue Little

Tell me where were you born? I was born here in Polvadera. *Tell me, didn't you have a brother that we all know a great deal about?* I should say - Dr. Abeyta and that's he in the picture. *Did he go to school here in Socorro?* Oh yeah, he went to high school and then to School of Mines in 1914 and then he went to the Navy for five years as assistant pharmacist in the Navy and he went in different ships, I can't think of the name. And then he went to Pachuco, Mexico to study engineering because that's what he took at the School of Mines, but he became a doctor. *What kind of a doctor?* A specialist in eye, ear, nose and throat - he could do everything, but he specialized in that. *Tell us about the picture, because I think that's quite an honor.* A student, of? , Dr. Matthews, he taught school for 35 years, doctor, my brother, you know. Ten years ago he said - one of his students - he said Matthews told to his fourth grade that he wanted to put it in Flint, Michigan and he wrote seven doctors. *Did you get a copy of the picture?* Yeah, I have it now - a copy. *And didn't you give one to the School of Mines - to Tech?* I gave big one - it's in the bank, but I thought you said a small one. I have small ones like --- *Oh, I see, well let's go back and talk about you. You didn't live here in Polvadera when you were growing up, where did you live?* Up at Evergreen Dale by the mill, Grandpa had a big home and we lived there. *What kind of a mill?* Flour mill. *And how did it get its power?* Oh, with the water. *A water wheel?* Uh-huh. *I wonder whatever happened to that water wheel. Do you know?* Well the City is using the water. *Oh, but they don't use the water wheel any more.* Oh, no, for many years they haven't. *Wouldn't you like to have a water wheel.* I sure do. I don't see why the son didn't keep on that property there so they just left -- *And you lost it all?* Uh-huh. So the City took over. They had a big tank, I remember, made of rock and lime. *I talked to Clarence Hammel and he told how they used to wade in the water and slide down the hill in the water.* I knew Mr. Hammel for years. *Well, where did you go to school?* I went to school at the Convent - Socorro. *Were you a day student?* No, I boarded there - we used to come into (---) school you know and go in the summers at home in Evergreen and in the winter had the school you know for the whole term. *Do you remember what you studied at the Convent? Did they do anything like cooking and sewing?* I still have these that my sister hand painted. They don't do that anymore. I still have some. *Tell me about the school - how many of you is still here? Did you tell me Mrs. Snodgrass, and who else is here?* There were about 30 or 35 and just three are still living. Me and Mrs. Torres and Mrs. Zimmerly. *Why did you come back to Polvadera after you lived up there?* Well, my father remarried. *How long was your father living alone?* Ten years. *Why did he wait so long?* Oh, my grandfather didn't believe in second marriages, and then he have to run the mill, you know. He used to kneel on his knees and actually the rocks there to sharpen it - to grind it. *That was the Baker mill? And your father remarried and you returned to Polvadera. Where did you live here?* With my grandparents. *How long did you stay here?* Until I married. My husband was from Mogollon. Mogollon was quite a mining camp there, you know. Today it's a ghost town. *Well, when you came back here to live, I want to know about your shopping. Where did you buy your groceries?* We went to Socorro - we did most of our shopping at Chambon's. *How often did you go shopping?* Once a

month. *And how did you get into town.* We went on a wagon. *How long did it take you?* A whole day to go and come. *Well, now when you went in, what kind of things did you buy?* We bought flour - coffee mainly - bacon - we had our own eggs and meat too, but mostly our meat would be raised. *And you had a garden and chickens.* Oh, we always had chickens. *Well now, when you first came back here, did you have electricity? When did electricity come?* In 1920. *And that meant you had no radio?* Never. *How did you amuse yourself?* We used to get together with the neighbors to sing, you know, I played the piano too. *Do you still play?* Oh, I still play some, but I don't have a piano. My mother used to have a piano and we learned the piano - my sister used to play better than I do. *Well now tell me about the roads that you were going into town - where was the road then?* It was a dirt road - pretty bad. Even in a wagon it was terrible shaky. In the winter time we used to go covered with a blanket. *Well you said you had chickens and cows and hogs and you took care of all of that yourself, didn't you?* Well, mostly. *What kind of farming did they do out here?* They planted alfalfa - wheat - mostly wheat - corn - chile. They plant lots more chile now than they used to. *Well, I think they use more chile here than they do in old Mexico, much more.* Well, what's the difference in the farming now? The difference in the farming is that the government gives money to the farmers and they had equipment years ago and you couldn't farm much because they plowed with the horses. They used to make a living. Now with a machine you can plant acres and acres. *Well, a dollar was worth much more then. I forgot to ask you about your water - where did you get your water?* Wells, everybody had wells - you don't see wells here no more - other people have electric wells. *Do you still use your well?* New wells - we had about two or three already. *Why did so much of the farming have to stop here - were you in the flood area?* In nineteen hundred and four we had a big flood and then in again in I don't remember. *Did it ever get your house or just your fields?* From this side of Lemitar - never. *What do you think is the difference in the farming today and the good old days.* Oh, I think it's better - they have equipment to do farming, you know. Much better just like everything else. *I'm interested in this house of yours, when was it built?* Nineteen eighteen. *And it's made of what?* Adobe. *Did you make your own adobe?* We can make our own but we paid to have it made. *I'm interested in that dance hall.* Well I would like for you to see it. There's some pictures painted inside, you know - water colors inside. Sometime you call during the day and you can see it. *Who painted the pictures?* A man from old Mexico like the one that painted that picture here - they're big pictures. *And you still use the dance hall today? What are the special fiestas that you have there?* The ninth and tenth of August. *At San Lorenzo. How is it different today than it was several years ago?* Why years ago all the people would go in for a dance inside the hall. Now they have to pay for the dance before they go in. *didn't you tell me that any sort of soft drink used to a big event?* Yeah, but now everybody has 'em. *What kind of events do you have there today?* Oh, we have dance showers - I mean shower dances what you call wedding dances, and a lot of people come. *Tell me, when you lived in Socorro did they have a mayor - what kind of government did it have? Did it have a sheriff?* Maybe I better tell you - we used to come to Socorro every two or three months. *Did Polvadera have stores when you were here.* My grandfather had a store. *What kind?* Oh, a grocery store and clothes and a bar. *But you even went to Socorro ---. How did the dance hall get started? Did you all build it?* Well, my grandfather died -- we had square dances here and the people came to dances. And he had the adobes made. *Well, I guess we get*

more money now, but it doesn't go as far. There's a lot of credit now - you can make a very good housing. As you look back, what do you think are the biggest changes? The biggest change are the schools - good schools. You told me about wanting to go to college. I wanted to go to college, but I didn't have a chance to. And then my father had children - eight by a second marriage. Tell me about the way you used to wash your clothes. To tell you the truth, I never did wash clothes. My grandmother always did have help. They worked for a dollar a day - the whole day. Did they take the clothes to the river? No, years before I was here they used to go to the river to wash clothes. The old opera house? Did I go to a concert there - yes. Estella Greenwald used to be married and they used to have concerts there and I remember we used to sing the golondrina and dance, you know. Estella Greenwald was a day schooler at the convent. Were you permitted to go when traveling shows came to town? Not much, once a year a circus would come, but not to the opera house. Every year for plays for the convent - we used to practice a lot when they had the concert at the end of school, you know. Did you ever have any street fights here? Not many. Polvadera was very peaceful. It's nice to go to a big city but it's hard to live in a city. How long have you been in this house? Oh, since 1918. My grandmother had a big house - my uncle lived there and on the highway along here there was two people would do work, you know, and the two front rooms are made of adobes. All of these old houses should be preserved. If they have vigas, you know. We went to Mexico city and rented a place there in the Hotel (Reyes). What I like from Mexico is plenty of water. Lots of water under Mexico. Well, thank you very, very much for talking to us.