

Name of the interviewee: Rosaura Segura
Date of the interview: August 1, 2018
Name of the interviewer: Steve Velasquez
Length: 104 mins.

Transcript audited by Velasquez on March 25, 2020. False starts and repetitive verbalizations ("um") have been removed for overall clarity.

SV: Okay, today is Wednesday August 1st, 2018; my name is Steve Velasquez. I am here in Napa Valley in St. Helena with Rosaura Segura, who is being interviewed for the Mexican Americans in Napa Project.

SV: So, good evening.

RS: Well, hello. (laughter) How are you tonight?

SV: Oh, I'm doing well, thank you. So, just to get started, could you, for the record, give us your full name, please?

RS: Rosaura Segura.

SV: Okay, and can you tell us when and where you were born?

RS: I was born in Los Haro, Jerez, Zacatecas in 1959.

SV: And 1959, in Mexico. Can you tell us the name of your parents?

RS: Enrique Segura and Amalia De Loera.

SV: Loera. And [00:01:00] they were also born and raised in Los Haro?

RS: They were. My dad left Los Haro in early 1941 -- '41, '42 to come to the States as a bracero.

SV: So, what did they do in Mexico before?

RS: Agriculture.

SV: Agriculture?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: Okay, so he came in '41 as a bracero?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: Do you know where he came -- those first --

RS: Not at the beginning. I know that once I spoke to him and he said he traveled all over the States. But the first time I am not totally sure where he went to, but he mentioned the Carolinas, New Mexico, Georgia. So, it sounded like he had contracts all over the place in the States.

SV: Okay, do you know if he was just agriculture or if it was railroads?

RS: He mentioned something about railroads. [00:02:00]

SV: Oh, interesting, okay.

RS: Now I'm sorry I didn't get the full story, but he did mention railroads.

SV: So, he came in '41. Did you have brothers or sisters?

RS: I had one sister and four brothers.

SV: And are they older or younger?

RS: I am five of six.

SV: You are number five of six. So, you have older siblings.

RS: I have four -- three surviving brothers -- my sister passed away in 2008 -- and a younger brother.

SV: Okay. So, they may have noticed him being gone as a bracero.

RS: Yes.

SV: Yeah? Do they -- do they --

RS: The oldest ones --

SV: The oldest ones.

RS: -- the oldest ones most definitely did.

SV: Do they -- do you recall having them tell you what that was like?

RS: No.

SV: No. What about your mom?

RS: Your mom had a very tough life. She raised all [00:03:00] of us, all six children. And, of course, when Dad left, she was under the care of her brothers, to help her kind of, you know, with agriculture or what have you. But, yeah, it wasn't an easy life for her. I remember my oldest brother going to college, because my father originally wanted to give us an education, his children an education, but -- and so -- you know, but he needed money for books or tuition or -- and there wasn't any, then she would have to go out and ask to borrow money until Dad would send *el telegrama*.

SV: *Telegrama*, yeah.

RS: *El telegrama*. And then, she would pay off her debts. But, [00:04:00] yeah, it was tough for her, what I saw and --

SV: From what you saw.

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, when -- how old were you when you -- we'll circle back but how old were you when you came to the United States?

RS: I was eight years old.

SV: Eight?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: You were eight. So, you do remember your father being gone.

RS: Very much so. And most of it -- I remembered when he came back. It was kind of, like, very happy days when he showed up and when he was there. And, yeah, Dad wasn't fiction. He was a real person, so --

SV: Yeah. So, do -- so, you remember him coming back. Did he bring presents? Did he bring gifts? Did he --

RS: He did.

SV: -- bring stories?

RS: I will never forget -- and it's stuck in my mind and I can still see it: a book [00:05:00] that he brought for me, back, and I remember the cover. It's *Cinderella*, Walt Disney

book. And that's all I remember, that -- you know, the front cover. And I remember Cinderella. (laughter) And her blue dress. (laughs)

SV: And the blue dress, of course, with the stars, or the birds --

RS: Right. (laughs)

SV: -- whatever, circling, yeah. Well, that's fun. (laughter) So -- and so, your mom was single-handedly taking care of everybody.

RS: Right.

SV: Right?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: With your uncles helping. Were your uncles also -- they must have come in and out. They must have also been going to the United States, is that correct?

RS: Yes. But for some reason, they never stayed. It's like, they came, and they worked, and it was kind of, like, not their cup of tea. And so, they would go back, and [00:06:00] three of them -- let's see, my [*del Manuel, my del Pepe?*] -- and they came but they went back and kind of settled back home. But my [*del Ensalo?*] came up -- I want to say around the same time my dad did. So, he settled here in the States like my Dad did. And then, later, after we came, the younger brother came, and he also settled here and brought his family. And so, they're here in the Valley.

SV: They're here in the Valley. Yeah, so, tell me a little bit more about your family history and their connection to the Valley and their connection to bracero work. I -- yeah, go ahead.

RS: Back in -- the way I hear the story -- and the things that my dad [00:07:00] told me, when he settled here, he worked for Beringer and later on, he ended up working for Charles Krug.

SV: And those were the early years.

RS: Fifties. Well, no, the -- his -- almost, like, his last years as a bracero.

SV: Okay.

RS: He used to say that, you know, there were no brown faces. There were very few first generation Mexican people.

SV: Working in the vineyards.

RS: Working in the vineyards. There were other families, but they were, like, second generation that came from, you know, Mexico or other places, but directly from Mexico. They were the first ones that settled here in the Valley. And [00:08:00] so, Ray's Bar, which is Ana's Cantina right now -- I mean, you know, that was the place to go. To go to the movies, I used to travel all the way to Healdsburg. And if they want a Mexican whatever, they would go all the way to San Jose. So, it was a very different life.

SV: Yeah. So, do you know when your father and/or your uncles first came to the Napa Valley Sonoma region and what they did?

RS: My dad was -- came -- either -- between '54 and '55. And they were doing fieldwork. That's what they did. [00:09:00] And, as I mentioned before, he was working for Beringer. But then, once he got employed by Charles Krug, with the Mondavi family, they offered housing, and so they lived onsite. They had housing for them, so --

SV: All of your uncles?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: Together?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: And there are four or five --

RS: Right.

SV: -- of them.

RS: Yeah.

SV: And so, he did that for several years, right? Just him and his uncles --

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: -- working here, then going back to Mexico for --

RS: Right.

SV: -- for a little bit and --

RS: For a month --

SV: I mean --

RS: -- or maybe -- yeah, month and a half.

SV: Okay.

RS: So, that was a -- yeah, that was a little bit -- so, we were fatherless for the rest of the year.

SV: Yeah. Do they come back around -- at the same time?

RS: Yes.

SV: All the time? And when was that?

RS: It would be around October or November -- [00:10:00]

SV: Okay.

RS: -- they would come back, and they would leave -- early January. They would come back to the States.

SV: Okay, so they spent Christmas and all that with you guys.

RS: Yes.

SV: And then, back to the States to work.

RS: And back to the States to work.

SV: At Krug.

RS: At Krug.

SV: Or Beringer. So, then, what is the story -- how did your mom and the rest of your siblings end up here? Do you know how that happened?

RS: I'm thinking that my dad's contracts were going to be over and he was offered the choice of going back home or getting his residence. And the Mondavis were a very important part of that whole process, because they facilitated [00:11:00] my dad getting his permanent residence. And he got his residence in '64 --

SV: Nineteen sixty-four.

RS: -- '64 -- yeah, '64, '65.

SV: Okay.

RS: So, after he got his residence, he saved money and then he brought my sister and one of my brothers in '68.

SV: Okay, okay, and so, then what did you and your mom --

RS: We came in '72.

SV: Okay, wow.

RS: And when he brought my sister and my brother, then they got out of the housing that Mondavis were providing and so they rented a house.

SV: Oh, okay, and where was that house, do you know?

RS: The house was on Pope Street. It's what is now the Beckstoffer house. [00:12:00]

SV: Okay.

RS: Yes.

SV: Interesting, okay.

RS: In '72. And I remember we lived -- it's a two-story house. We lived at the -- at, you know, the main part of the house. The owner lived in the second story and --

SV: [Was he a?] Beckstoffer? Or, no --

RS: No.

SV: -- oh, okay.

RS: No, Beckstoffer bought it in -- recent years. No.

SV: Okay.

RS: The owner of the house, it was [Don Jose?]. I remember -- [Brenda?] remember Don Jose. He was a Spaniard and he offer the house to my dad, you know? "Buy the house. I want to help you. Buy the house from me." And my dad said no because his name was pulled out of a hat to -- on a sweat equity housing program.

SV: Okay.

RS: And [00:13:00] by that time, they were already working on the houses.

SV: Okay, so we'll come back to that because that's kind of important to circle back to it.

RS: Okay.

SV: So, this was -- so, Don Jose, who was also working with Krug? No.

RS: No.

SV: No, oh.

RS: Don Jose just owned the house. He was retired --

SV: Oh, okay.

RS: -- and he was up there in age and his children -- because of his age, his children wanted him closer to them and they lived in San Francisco.

SV: Okay.

RS: So --

SV: Was trying to offload the house.

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, Mondavi -- well, I would like to come back to stories of your father and Mondavi if there are any, if you know of any. But I also want to go back and get your impressions of coming to Napa for the first time and seeing the house. Do you have any recollection of that [00:14:00] initial, like, arriving and seeing Napa and the house and --

RS: Yes. So, we cross the border in San Ysidro. That's where we got our passport stamped, but -- and so, we spent -- I can't remember if it was one or two nights in Tijuana. I experienced a shower for the first time ever. So, that was the first time -- that one. It was exciting. I didn't want the water to stop. (laughs) And so, when we crossed the border and we got our passports and, you know, the -- because we had made the trip from Los Haro to Guadalajara to I don't know where, but it was a long bus [00:15:00] ride. And so, it was another long bus ride from San Ysidro to Napa. And I remember my brother and I asking, you know, "Are we there yet?" Just -- over the hill, we're past the hill, "Are we there yet?" That other hill -- I don't know how many hills we (laughter) went over. And so, when we came to the little town, you know, they said, "We're here." And the Greyhound bus station was located on the corner of Adams and Railroad. We came down -- the bus and they said, "Okay, the car's waiting for us." There was a shiny black car, the Galaxie 500. [00:16:00] And my little brother and I were the most excited ones. Like, "Is that our car?" "Yes, that's -- we're going home in that car." And so, we were very happy.

And then, we drove to Pope Street, which is not that far away. It's, like, two blocks. And they said, "This is the house." We had never seen anything like that: a two-story house with stairs. We had never seen stairs. And so, we went into the house and just the walkway and the doors to the rooms and the big living room and it had, like, books. And the kitchen, we'd never seen a kitchen like that. So, yes, it was very exciting. Everything was new. I'm not sure how my sister felt about us coming because, you know, that was her house. [00:17:00] And she had sofas and we had never seen a sofa. And so, from time to time, my little brother and I used to jump on the sofas and that didn't make her any -- happy. And, you know, she was the one in charge of the kitchen and making the lunch for the men that went to work.

And so, there, for a while, my mother didn't know what to do, you know? Going to the store was an experience. And I remember they said, "Go to the store and buy milk." And I said, "Okay." I go to the store and buy milk. And all I remember was the red carton. So, I went to the store, I brought the milk back, and my sister's, like, "Well, what did you buy?" I said, "Milk!" It's, like, "This is orange juice. That's not milk." Didn't know English. I didn't know (laughter) anything, yeah. And another time, they send me to [00:18:00] the store to buy -- I can't remember what they wanted but it was in a can. And so, I brought back chilies, canned chilies. They weren't picked. They were just peeled, and they were canned. And they said, "Well, this is not what we wanted but that's okay," it'll serve their purpose. (laughter) I had never seen eggs in a carton, so -- and so many eggs, you know? "Go buy" -- "a dozen eggs." "Okay, I'll go buy a dozen eggs." So, it was, yeah, it was exciting but, at the same time -- at the beginning, it was exciting. Then, I started to go to school, then there was a totally different world.

SV: Where did you go to school?

RS: The St. Helena Elementary School.

SV: Salinas.

RS: I should have started at middle school, but my dad said, "No," you [00:19:00] know, "she doesn't know anybody. Little brother doesn't know anybody. They can at least hang around together until they make friends." And it was towards the end of the school year, so --

SV: Oh, so you kind of repeated --

RS: Yeah. Yeah, there were not very many Mexican students or Spanish-speaking students at all. My sister packed me a lunch to take to school. Peanut butter and jelly. I didn't like it because I didn't know what it was. She didn't explain, because, you know, she was busy, too. She had a job, she had --

SV: Right, and she must have been a teenager, right? Like, a --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- older teenager. So, yeah, she wouldn't --

RS: Like, early 20s or late teens.

SV: Late teens.

RS: Yeah. And she had a big job. She had her job to go to and then kind of helped with, you know -- she [00:20:00] did get help. But still, she was in charge of making the lunch and the dinner and all that good stuff. She was a very hard-working woman.

SV: So, your brother and your sister who came in '68, where did they work, you know? Do you remember?

RS: I think my brother was working for what is now Markham. But it was some kind of co-op back then, and he was there for a very long time, I think. He could have been working for Krug but, you know, he didn't do very much fieldwork.

SV: Okay.

RS: He got a job in the cellar and in the wine -- as opposed to the field, so -- [00:21:00] and my uncle, my mom's sister's husband was working there, as well. So, it made it that much easier for him to get that job. And I don't remember where my sister was working.

SV: Okay. So, going back to your brother, is that where the Napa Valley Winery is now that has all the --

RS: He came from the co-op to -- when --that was sold, he went to the Napa Valley -- oh, my goodness, what do they call it? Oakville --

SV: Yeah, it's on Oakville and 29.

RS: Anyway, yeah, he went to that facility.

SV: He went there. So, has -- because I met him several years ago. Is he still working there?

RS: He's still there.

SV: He's still there.

RS: Right, he's still there.

SV: So, he's been there --

RS: For a long time.

SV: -- since 1968. [00:22:00]

RS: No.

SV: Or at least from --

RS: Remember, he was --

SV: -- 1970.

RS: Remember, he was working at the co-op, for Markham.

SV: Oh, oh, okay, okay.

RS: Okay? And then, once Markham was sold, the co-op was sold, and there was Markham -
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SV: Okay.

RS: -- he went to the Oakville facility.

SV: Okay, okay.

RS: Don't remember the name of it. It's Napa Valley something, but --

SV: Yeah, Napa Valley wine --

RS: Co-op.

SV: -- co-op or company or something like that, yeah. Wow, so the -- so, we're talking probably early mid '70s.

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: Okay. Okay, so you went to school. So, paint me a picture of Napa Valley and the school situation in 1972. What was it like for you going to school, you and your family?
[00:23:00]

RS: We used to walk to school because it's -- you know, it's not very far. It's, what, block and a half from Pope to elementary school. They did have people who -- bilingual people who would help newcomers like we were learn the basics about the language. I remember the flash cards, you know? They would have the Spanish and the English, and they taught us sound and pronunciation and to read and how to read those words. So, little by little, that's how we kind of got -- not totally immersed into [00:24:00] the English but -- it was difficult, you know? I was a smart student but I kind of shot down because, one, it was a -- the culture shock. And I used to tell my mom, "Let's go back home" and she'd say, "Well, this -- we are home, where, you know, where your dad, your sister -- we're all together. We're a family. We are home." And I said, "No, I want to go back home!" And so, you know, we never had all those -- when we go on break, all those things to do: the swings and the monkey bars and all those games to play in recess. So, it was different. It was totally different. [00:25:00] I know that, you know, Dad would kind of test us. So, "Are you guys learning anything?" I know how to say, "Dad, (laughter) Father, good morning." But, you know, just the basic --

SV: So, you mentioned other families. Did you meet other Mexican kids, and do you remember their names?

RS: My dad was very good friends with a Portuguese family and so was my sister. They used to work in the fields together. Their last name was Gomes, G-O-M-E-S. Nancy? And they happened to live [00:26:00] on Church Street, almost kitty-corner from Pope. So, we were close enough. So, to this date, I'm very good friends with one -- especially one of the girls. With all of them but one of the girls, we went through elementary, junior high, high school, and then through life. And, like I said, we're still very good friends. I remember when the Cejas first arrived. And then, there were the families that -- you know, that their names were also picked from the hat. There were the Gallegos, the Gutierrez, the [Gijon ?], the Cejas, the Sandejas, [00:27:00] the [Olguins?]. And because we lived in the same neighborhood, those are the families that I remember mostly.

SV: Mostly. And they -- all the kids went to the same school.

RS: To the same school, yeah.

SV: So, there was a handful.

RS: Yeah, yeah.

SV: A handful.

RS: No families -- or a lot of, you know, single Mexican men that lived -- but hardly any families other than the de Haros from our hometown. They lived on the other end of town, but --

SV: Do you remember when you started to see more and more families coming in? Or when did you realize that there were more and more families coming in?

RS: It wasn't until -- after IRCA was passed.

SV: Oh, okay. [00:28:00]

RS: You know, when there was a shortage of agricultural workers -- and so, they decided to make people who could prove agricultural work for three years or 90 days in one year or

that they'd been here since '82, then that's when everything started to happen, when the families started to come.

SV: So -- but, well, at that time, you were late high school?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: Yeah, okay.

RS: Yeah.

SV: What about businesses? Do you remember any --

RS: Nope.

SV: No?

RS: No. Definitely not in St. Helena. Calistoga, we had the movie house. My God, I [00:29:00] can't remember what it was called, where -- you know, we could go to the movies, to Calistoga, as opposed to going all the way to Healdsburg.

SV: Right, yeah. That was -- yes, I know who you're talking about.

RS: Senora Derea? owned it.

SV: Yeah.

RS: But I can't remember what it was called. Anyway, yeah, there was probably one store in Napa, a Mexican store, La Pulga. They used to -- you know, vegetables and all that. But it wasn't -- it definitely wasn't what it is now. You know, you go there now, and you can buy your [*elotas?*], your --

SV: Oh, yeah, anything --

RS: -- anything Mexican.

SV: -- and everything.

RS: Yeah.

SV: Yeah. So, let's circle back to -- you mentioned the sweat equity and people pulling names out of a hat. Can you tell me a little bit about what that was [00:30:00] like, what that was, what the sweat equity was?

RS: Sweat equity, it was an FHA program. I don't remember how they came about that land. I don't know if it was donated or -- I don't know anything about the land. But FHA let people borrow money to build their own houses -- and, of course, under supervision -- and professionals. And so, people would come and do the nailing of their walls after work. And they did most of -- you know, everything, from -- except the electrical and the plumbing. But everything else -- they build their houses. And it's like anything else, you know? There was a big opposition from the neighbors, "Not in my [00:31:00] backyard," you know? "We don't want to see all those cars" -- in front of their yards or the clothes hanging from, you know, the --

SV: So, what part of Napa are we talking about? What part of the Valley are we talking about?

RS: St. Helena.

SV: St. Helena.

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: -- and bas-- so, it's sort of west of the -- yeah --

RS: Highway 29.

SV: -- west of Highway 29.

RS: Highway 29.

SV: Lower -- in the lower southern half of St. Helena.

RS: Correct.

SV: And so, what year was this?

RS: Well, I know that the houses were finished in '72, because that's when -- late '72, that's when we moved in.

SV: Ah, okay. So, you already --

RS: So, they started [these?] --

SV: But that wasn't the house of Don Jose.

RS: No.

SV: No, okay.

RS: No, that wasn't the Beckstoffer house, no.

SV: Okay.

RS: That's where we lived up to when we moved into [00:32:00] the house -- [00:32:07]

[END OF SEGURA 1]

SV: Okay, so we're picking up where we left off. We were talking about sweat equity.

RS: Sweat equity.

SV: So, the houses were done in '72, before you got here, as far as you know.

RS: No.

SV: No.

RS: No. We moved into the house late '72. We got here early -- March of '72.

SV: Okay.

RS: So, we got to see some of the hammering and measuring and --

SV: And so, your father was involved with the hammering and the measuring as well as your uncles --

RS: My -- dad and my sister -- she worked a lot in that house. You can edit this, but my brother was a pretty boy, so, no, he did some but not --

SV: Okay.

RS: -- not a lot. (laughs)

SV: So, what -- and it's not this house we're currently sitting in, right now.

RS: No.

SV: No, no, okay.

RS: It's the house on Kennedy Court.

SV: House on Kennedy Court, which is just a few blocks away.

RS: Oh, about a block, block and a half.

SV: From where we are, right now.

RS: Yeah. [00:01:00]

SV: And it's -- does it still belong to the family?

RS: Yes.

SV: Okay, okay. Your brother? No.

RS: No. We're working on the details, because Mom passed away --

SV: Oh, so it was your Mom's --

RS: -- and [placed it?] --

SV: -- okay.

RS: -- so, and -- right, without a will. And so, we're going through the probate --

SV: Oh, okay.

RS: -- process.

SV: Okay, so, all right. But essentially, your mother -- and you guys grew up in that house.

RS: And the neighborhood.

SV: And that neighborhood.

RS: Very good, very nice memories of the neighborhood.

SV: And so, that neighborhood had, like any other neighborhood, large single-family homes -
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RS: Uh-huh.

SV: -- four bedrooms, something like that.

RS: Mm-hmm. There was one house that has five bedrooms. And see, there is the four-bedroom model and the three-bedroom model. And then, there was that one exception [00:02:00] that had five bedrooms. A different floor plan.

SV: Yeah.

RS: So --

SV: And then -- so, you mentioned drawing -- name out of a hat. What was that about?

RS: It was kind of like a lottery. People signed up for the program but there was only -- oh, my goodness, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine -- like, 14 houses -- 14, 16 houses. And so, out of those names, there was, like, a lottery and all the names were put in there and, you know --

SV: Draw a name.

RS: -- draw names.

SV: Draw names.

RS: So, we were very lucky. We were very fortunate.

SV: Yeah, yeah, so -- and then that just left everybody else. But there weren't -- so then they were all Mexican-Americans who were part of this program that you know of?

RS: Yes, all Mexican-Americans -- [00:03:00] the project that nobody wanted, because "not in my backyard." There were one, two, three, four -- four families that were, like, the second generation. And then, we had one gentleman who was from Costa Rica.

SV: Oh.

RS: And his wife was from Puerto Rico.

SV: Oh, okay.

RS: So, first chance they got, they sold the house because they didn't -- they were not very happy there. (laughs)

SV: Were they also in the wine industry if you -- do you remember?

RS: I don't remember.

SV: Yeah.

RS: I don't remember where [Don Luis?] used to work. And his wife was kind of like a housewife. She stayed home.

SV: Yeah, okay, all right. But everybody else was in the wine industry that you know of?

RS: Either they worked in the fields -- most of the dads worked in the fields. My sister, by that time, [00:04:00] she was working for a factory that made curtains, weaved curtains. And so, a lot of the neighbor girls did that, too. And so, they used to commute, you know, to Calistoga, because that's where the factory was.

SV: Oh, that's where the factory was.

RS: Mm-hmm. And then, later on, some of the older girls got jobs in wineries: the bottling line or whatever.

SV: Seasonal or -- and then, eventually --

RS: No, it's full time.

SV: Full time, okay.

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, pretty much everybody in Kennedy Court was a full-time --

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: -- full-time employee.

RS: And industry workers --

SV: In [this?] (inaudible)

RS: -- in the wine industry.

SV: Yeah.

RS: Grapes or wine.

SV: Grapes or wine. Was -- so, by this time, you're in Kennedy Court, you're in -- this is the '70s, late '70s, '80s.

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: [00:05:00] More families are moving in, the wine industry, obviously, is taking off. What do I want to ask about? It's -- I want to ask about, like, wine in the home and people, persons that others looked up to in terms of the industry and working and sort of moving up. Was there -- any of those discussions? So, there's two questions. Wine in the home. I mean, was it a big deal or was it just a job? And then, two, do you know or recall your father's -- or your uncles talking about particular -- maybe it's a vineyard manager or an owner or another employee that was, like, oh, this guy knows what he's talking about. If we want to move up, we should follow [00:06:00] this guy.

RS: I don't remember those conversations, because at home -- my dad wanted to go back home. He wanted to work, and he wanted -- he made investments in land, so -- you know, with the hopes that -- he wanted to go back and do his own thing at home. Grow his corn or his beans or whatever the crop was. There, for a while, he was growing peaches. You know, here's the money --

SV: [Okay, but?] --

RS: (inaudible) [make some?] peaches and --

SV: [You learned?] that here?

RS: No, in -- back home. Back in Mexico.

SV: But was he already grow-- did he know how to do the peaches?

RS: Nope, not that I recall, because all he did was grapes here, or vineyards, so -- but, no, I don't remember [00:07:00] them having that vision, you know, of "let's buy land here and grow our own grapes." It was never mentioned. And neither did my brothers. One of them was, you know, working in the cellar, started working in the cellar and now he's

at the line mechanic. The brother right after him started -- out of high school, started working with my dad and he did vineyards for a long time. And then, he graduated to tractor driver and then from tractor driver, he went into the cellar. And so, that's what he's still doing right now. I think he is -- oh, my goodness, I think he just went into his 47th year working [00:08:00] there, so --

SV: Oh, wow.

RS: -- yeah. And just recently, they are, like, "Who is this guy and what is he doing there? Can we" -- so, they tried, and they couldn't -- yeah. (laughter)

SV: Well, a lot of institutional knowledge right there --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- that would be lost --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- right? Yeah.

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, then, it was essentially a job for your father --

RS: Right.

SV: -- right?

RS: Right (inaudible) and, yeah, he -- like I said, his dream was to go back home and do his own thing, be his own boss, be his own man.

SV: So, was your mother, then -- what was she doing during this period, the '70s?

RS: My mother was the most hard-working woman I know. She was at her home cooking and making lunches and [00:09:00] washing dishes and then cooking again and -- so, that was her routine.

SV: Yeah, okay, that -- hou-- yeah.

RS: I remember --

SV: Keeping the house --

RS: Yes.

SV: -- together.

RS: I remember times when, you know, "Let's make lunch." And my dad always believed in giving -- in helping his family. So, I remember one of his brothers living with us and, you know, he didn't like it. He went back. He didn't like the work that he was doing, so he went back. But I remember a lot of his nephews staying with us and, you know, giving them a chance until they got, you know, their feet on the ground and got their own place. I remember three cousins that lived with us. Girls. [00:10:00] One of them got married and stayed and two of them went back. They, you know -- for whatever reason. And so, two of the cousins -- they're double cousins because they were my mom's nephews, but they were also my dad's nephews. And so, it's, like, they asked me what their relationship is. It's, like, "We're cousins. [*Tu los?*] *hermanos primos*. You know, not *primos* [*hermanos?*] (inaudible) (laughter)

SV: Yeah. (laughter)

RS: And so -- and I think they were there till they got married and moved on. And so, till the end of my mom's days, she had a very special relationship with -- especially with one of them, you know? And my mom was always very quiet. And if she had a problem, she never talked about it.

SV: Oh.

RS: Communication was not very big in our house. [00:11:00] But somehow, with him, he could talk about anything and everything and he was kind of like her confidant. And so -
-

SV: Right. So, you guys -- then, socially, it was just family, right?

RS: Oh, mm-hmm.

SV: Family with the occasional neighbor.

RS: Right.

SV: Okay.

RS: Well, even with the neighbor-- it was, like, a big party, because everybody knew each other.

SV: Yeah.

RS: You know? And we were kids then and we used to play and ride our bikes and it was just a wonderful neighborhood. And just till recently, you know, Fourth of July was -- it was, like, almost like a block party. Everybody had their own *carne asada*. But we were on the street and then we would buy the fireworks and light them, even though they're illegal.

SV: (laughs) Right.

RS: And then -- but they wouldn't come and stop us. [00:12:00] But they -- I remember the fire department people showing up and just making sure that everything's under control, that we're not going to burn anything. (laughs)

SV: Right, yeah, especially -- yeah, especially these [few years?]-

RS: So, yeah, it was -- yeah. If we went to dances, my mom's sister and her husband, Tía [Juanita?] and Tío Chano, they had only one child. They adopted -- Oscar's parents. And so, you know, they used to like to go out and they'd -- to dance. And once in a while, my sister and I would, you know, go with them. But it would be Santa Rosa. It would be the wedding, you know, that would take place at the Native Sons Hall, the only place.

SV: Native Sons Hall.

RS: The Native Sons Hall, the only place that [00:13:00] we could go party.

SV: Why is that?

RS: Because that was the only social place. There wasn't anything else, you know, like a big hall or -- that was where everything happened.

SV: That's where everything happened, okay. And then, you mentioned the movie theater that came in the '70s, yeah.

RS: Yeah, like mid '70s.

SV: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RS: La -- La Ca-- oh, my God, what was it?

SV: Yeah, well, we'll remember. I have --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- it's [in my?] -- I have it somewhere. So, then let's jump out of high school. Then what did you do?

RS: I got a job when I was in high school, general ed. Well, I was in high school -- [00:14:00] this is how school was. There was nothing but vineyard workers. And there

was the vineyard workers and the owners of the vineyards. And so, I remember, in my English -- was it my English class? I think it was my English class -- discussion and, you know, "Would you ever have dinner with a Mexican?" And they said, "No!" And the *Americano* said, "No! Why would you have dinner with a fieldworker?" So, that stuck with me. I wanted to take French and my counselor said, "Why do you want to take French?" I said, "Because it's a beautiful language." And he says, "But you'll never use it. So, stick with Spanish." I go "But I know Spanish. I know my [00:15:00] grammar. I know my" -- "I will put you in Spanish." So, Spanish I was. Fast forward, '89, I was -- I went to the Antilles, Martinique, French, and I'm going -- ugh! (laughter)

SV: All right.

RS: I thought about him and his (inaudible) it wasn't his mother's fault but -- (laughs)

SV: But it might have been (laughter) it might have been. And so, do you remember the -- other of your friends have the same experience?

RS: Yeah, pretty much.

SV: Yeah.

RS: And so, work experience -- because, you know, why do you want to get educated if you're going to get out of school and get married and be a housewife and -- so, they sent me to Wells [00:16:00] Fargo Bank. I applied, I got the job, you know, filing and so on and so forth. And so, I did that right out of high school. I got a job as a teller and then I moved up to operations. But then, by then, I had a boyfriend. And I'm going, oh, my God, the prophecy's coming true! (laughs) So, yeah, I got married in '82. And banks were centralizing, they were moving a lot of their operations -- works into centers. And that time, when I got married, I moved to Healdsburg. And so, I was closer -- to get a job in Santa Rosa. I was in Santa Rosa for -- [00:17:00] in the operation center. Well, Healdsburg didn't work out. I came back to Salinas and I got my job back and -- but more in the management position. But, yeah, there was somebody else there who really didn't like me. And so, manager -- my manager was very nice. Job opened up at Sutter Home Winery and they said, "Give her the job or else she's going to get" -- I was about to get fired from my job. And so, they did -- they gave me the chance and they gave me the -- a tasting room manager job, not knowing anything about wine. (laughs) But Sutter Home was where they have their tasting room now. It was a barn, kind of like a barn, an old building. [00:18:00] Very small family operation. I walked in there and it smelled like a barn. They were making five varietals: Sauvignon, Chablis, I don't know. Sauvignon, Chenin blanc, they had the Zinfandel. They didn't have the -- or the White

Zin was just taking off. It was very hard because my predecessor was just doing her job and, you know -- but there was no organization. And so, when they asked for an inventory, it's, like, I don't know. And so, I was taking inventory by hand, counting t-shirts [00:19:00] and wine glasses until I said, no, it's -- there's got to be a better way. So I automate it, the tasting room. And they told me that it started making money when I got there. So, that made me feel very good.

SV: Okay, yeah, (laughter) and so, this was in what year? That would be --

RS: That was in '85, '86.

SV: -- '85, '86, okay. Automated. All right, so you did that for how long?

RS: Until '89.

SV: Okay. And then what?

RS: And then, I started my own business.

SV: Okay, so was Sutter Home -- did that open your eyes to this or --

RS: Well, that's when everything was happening with IRCA and the applications and people needing help with, you know, filling out -- and it did kind of open my eyes to [00:20:00] that because -- and it must have shown on my face that I wasn't very happy doing what I -- I was doing it well but that wasn't kind of, like, my cup of tea. I missed the client relationships, the one-on-one with people, the -- I'm more of a people person than, you know -- so, I remember the vineyard manager -- and that's what he was, the vineyard manager. They didn't have very many -- they didn't own very many vineyards back then. He said, "Hey, you know, I need somebody who speaks Spanish. I need to do the" -- oh, my God, what were they? You know, where they -- that was the proof that an agricultural worker needed to --

SV: Oh.

RS: -- to apply for a permit. And so, he said, "I -- help me with that." And so, he cleared it with my supervisor. And so, I was doing both and I felt much better. He says, "You

know, you get to talk to our employees and [00:21:00] tell them how important this is and what a great opportunity it is to do that.” And that was fun. You know, there was -- a couple of the workers that said, “Ah, nah. It’s all lies -- puras mentiras, no van ha pagar - - , you know? We’re not going to pay. We’re not going to” -- and I said, “Oh, well, you know, what are you going to lose? It’s only the fee to file.” And so, to this day, you know, they come in and they thank me, you know? “If it hadn’t been for you” -- so, that felt a lot better than, you know, and even though the --

SV: Than selling t-shirts.

RS: Yeah, but -- and the Trincheros are very nice people. And to this date, we have -- you know, if they see me in the street, they say hello and -- on a first-name basis. So, we developed that kind of relationship.

SV: So, essentially, this is helping them grow and the whole industry grow --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- at this point.

RS: Yeah.

SV: At this point. [00:22:00] So, you were doing both of these jobs through ‘89? Or at -- ‘89, you started doing --

RS: In ‘89, I branched out, you know? I said I got to do something. And so, I kind of set up shop. And a lot of people asked me -- I said, “So, are you taking, you know, a break from the job?” And I’m going, “No, I quit. I’m not going back.” “Why? What if it doesn’t work out?” And I said, “Well, there must be something else.” And ‘89, I had already met Monsignor Brinkell. And he said, “Okay. Okay, I’ll help you.” I set up my own office. But then, [00:23:00] you know, I had met him and we would talk. And by -- and during that time, the affordable hou-- not affordable housing but -- yeah, affordable housing started to be needed because there were so many families and people coming in because of IRCA. And he was working with industry people, wineries and vineyard owners and tried to -- setting up something. And he said, “You know, we need somebody to do secretarial work, come and work for me.” And, you know, he said, “When your business works out, then you can go.” But he didn’t believe it was going to take off.

SV: And so, the business you set up was to help people file their paperwork at the --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- so then they could take it to the recruiters or, I mean, the vineyard companies or --

RS: Well, actually, that --

SV: -- whoever.

RS: -- after that, that [00:24:00] way was the actual immigration forms --

SV: Oh, okay.

RS: -- to send out to INS --

SV: To send out to INS, okay.

RS: -- and for the permit and -- yeah.

SV: Okay.

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, then you were working with Father Brenkle, who is well-known in the area for --

RS: Affordable housing and social justice.

SV: -- social justice stuff, help -- setting up more camps and getting more affordable housing for the --

RS: Right.

SV: -- for workers, and especially the seasonal workers but also the full-time --

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, you're working with him doing both of these things.

RS: Right, and then -- and he said, "You know, you can set up shop here." It was a little office and then, all of a sudden, it went like this and he said, "Well, Rosa, you know what? You don't have time for me. You're going to get some -- another office, right?" And I said, "Well, I guess so. (laughs) Yes, Father, I am -- yes, that's what I had been thinking." (laughter) [00:25:00] And so, I moved back to the place where I had started, and it was very difficult because it was on Main Street.

SV: Main Street, Napa -- or --

RS: St. Helena.

SV: -- St. Helena.

RS: Mm-hmm. And it was in the back of a travel agency. So, when field workers came through the main entrance, they were not seen kindly. And not necessarily by the owner of the travel agency but her clients. And there was no parking through the alley, and so then, I moved into another place, which was a little bit -- worst. I mean, there was parking, but it was a chiropractor. And so, yeah, you still had that --

SV: That --

RS: -- type of foot traffic.

SV: Yeah, yeah. [00:26:00]

RS: So, I finally ended up on Main Street, south of town. My own entrance, my own parking, and I was there for a long time.

SV: A long time.

RS: And that worked very nicely for us.

SV: And so, currently, still --

RS: Still doing that.

SV: Still doing that, okay. And so, when did you -- so, this takes us up to the -- '90, '91, something like that?

RS: When I set up my own business, it was good, and it allowed me to save money. And it put a down payment on a condo. And so, I bought my own condo. [00:27:00] I bought it in '89. But it was only \$75,000 back then. (laughs)

SV: But still --

RS: And then, I moved out of the condo. I got this crazy idea, again, of -- was it love? Was it -- no, no, but, you know, I moved in with my children's father and then eventually, we got married. And so, I was renting the condo. And then -- and we bought a house together. We sold the condo -- I sold the condo and it's, like, you know, we need to do something, because if we don't [00:28:00] invest it, it's going to be gone before we know it. We couldn't afford Napa at that time, either. So, we looked in Lake County and we bought a lot. And so, we planted a vineyard.

SV: And this is in what year?

RS: Oh, I bought it in '99. We bought it in '99. Yeah, the end of '99. We planted part of it in 2000 and the rest of it in 2001.

SV: Okay.

RS: Was 20 acres.

SV: Twenty acres. So, who planted it? Did you guys get a vineyard management company? Did you guys [just do?] --

RS: Enrique had started his own vineyard management company in 2000 and he was just starting. So, he had a handful -- I think we could [00:29:00] count his -- the employees he had back then -- and so, he did all of the planting, so we didn't have to hire anybody. We saved money there, so --

SV: So, did he have -- I want to ask about experience planting. (laughs) Experience managing vineyards. How did that -- did you guys have any experience doing that --

RS: No.

SV: -- other than him managing this -- but it seemed like a short period of time.

RS: No, and everybody said, "Don't do it." Everybody said, "Don't do it. What are you going to do with the grapes?" "We'll sell them." "Who to?" "I don't know." "Well, that's exactly it. You know, you're going to have a crop and what are you going to do with it? Get a contract first and then" -- "No, we're just going to do it." (laughter) Yeah, and so we did it. [00:30:00] I think the first and the second harvests, we custom crashed because we didn't have a contract. And so, we sold the bulk wine. We were very lucky that we were able to get rid of it. (laughs)

SV: Yeah.

RS: Or else -- (laughs)

SV: You --

RS: -- that would have been a very sad story.

SV: Do you know who -- so, a bulk wine company bought it or did somebody --

RS: One of our first clients was a winery out of Hollister.

SV: Okay.

RS: And then, we'd sell a little bit here, a little bit there. I think Markham bought some bulk wine. Another client bought, you know, X amount of gallons. Not a lot, but at the end, we were able to -- we started [00:31:00] making wine in '86, only because we had the grapes.

SV: In '86.

RS: That was the first --

SV: Oh, but I thought you bought it in '99.

RS: That's when we bought the land. It was bare land. We planted in 2000 and 2001.

SV: Okay, but you started making wine in '86?

RS: Mm-hmm. First -- because the vines don't start producing until about four, five years later.

SV: Right, yeah, but this is -- so, you --

RS: Or was it '88 -- when did we --

SV: You said '99 is when you bought --

RS: The land.

SV: -- the land and you planted in 2000. But you started making wines in '86?

RS: Oh, sorry, (laughter) 2006.

SV: Two thousand six, okay. (laughs)

RS: I'm going what's wrong with you, Steve?

SV: (laughs) I'm, like, did I miss something? (laughter) Okay, 2006, yes, that -- [00:32:00]

RS: That makes sense.

SV: That adds up.

RS: Yeah. That makes sense.

SV: So, you had some early clients, you were able to get rid of --

RS: The bulk wine.

SV: The bulk of it.

RS: Yeah.

SV: What were you planting, before we get too far?

RS: Sauvignon blanc.

SV: Sauvignon blanc, okay. The whole thing.

RS: The whole thing.

SV: Okay. Why -- just so we know, why was it the Sauvignon blanc [in the?] (inaudible)

RS: The soil was proper for that type of grape. Sandy loam, clay kind of field. Red grapes wouldn't have done very well in that type of soil.

SV: Okay. What was it before? Was it an -- it was empty? Like, a --

RS: They were grazing cattle there.

SV: Okay.

RS: So, it was very well fertilized. (laughter)

SV: [00:33:00] And, actually, I don't know, is that good for the grape?

RS: Yeah.

SV: Okay.

RS: Yeah, it was good.

SV: Okay, I don't know that level of detail, (laughter) the best fertilizer for the grape. Okay, so 2000 -- I'm -- so, 2006 is when you started making your own.

RS: Uh-huh. And that's when we started -- we also started getting clients for the grapes, so --

SV: So, they came to you.

RS: Right.

SV: You didn't have to hustle --

RS: Right.

SV: -- contracts.

RS: Right.

SV: Okay. So, what made you guys decide to make your own wine rather than just selling it all?

RS: Because we had the grapes and there was one of things that, you know, you just -- that time, you would start seeing Mexicans producing wine. And I believe the Cejas started in 2001.

SV: Yeah, something like that. The same with the Robledos and Cejas and [00:34:00] Renteria.

RS: Renteria and Mi Sueno , Rolando, right?

SV: Yeah, yeah, but -- yeah.

RS: And so, you know, a lot of those things -- they're doing it and maybe we can do it, too. But they had more knowledge. I mean, you know, grapes was one of those things that, you know, okay, we'll jump into it and something will happen. Wine is another story. It's that much more difficult. And so, yeah, we found out. (laughter)

SV: So, it was a very difficult experience for you, that first --

RS: Was -- it was very difficult. But (inaudible) -- well, we kept, I think, a case or two of, you know, those first vintages and the first label. And the [00:35:00] first label was my idea. It was, like -- they said, "Why?" And I said, "Oh, because I want -- I believe in magic, you know? I believe in magic. And so, a wizard is magic." (inaudible)

SV: We should probably mention the name of the ...

RS: Encanto. Encanto Vineyards. And so, they said, “No.” And I said, “But look at Harry Potter. He’s making millions and millions and millions of dollars. You know, if we treat it right, then maybe we have something, you know?” But we lacked the knowledge of marketing. You know, people will help you but only so much and, you know, they probably have their own -- they were -- had their own challenges in selling their own wine, so --

SV: So, did -- who were you guys -- did you guys -- and all these families, were they -- were you guys talking to each other? Was anybody helping each other? Or [00:36:00] just in general, the -- in the wine -- no.

RS: Not really, no. Not when we started. But, you know, 2010 -- and most of the wine producers at that time were from Michoacán, you know? Rolando from Michoacán, the Robledos from Michoacán. The Cejas are the only one-- well, actually, no they’re from Terra Caliente in Michoacán. And so, Michoacán government got a whiff of all this, Michoacán wine producers. And they came from Michoacán, Enrique my ex-husband. And so, they said, “Well, you know, there’s” -- they invited us to Morelia for an event. [00:37:00] And to, you know, make the world -- or Mexico know of the wine producers and to see if there was any possibility of exporting our wines into Mexico and create a market. But, no, the taxes and -- made it impossible, you know? Then -- and only a few have done that. And I’m not sure that they’re still in the Mexican market. So, yeah, that’s how the Mexican-American Vintners Association got started, during that trip.

SV: During 2010.

RS: Right.

SV: After the meetings.

RS: Right, right.

SV: Yeah.

RS: And so, you know, the union -- we’re stronger being united and working [00:38:00] in the same field, trying to create an open market as to -- as opposed to just one.

SV: Just opposed to one, yeah.

RS: Yeah.

SV: So, you were part of that initial gathering along with --

RS: Right.

SV: -- Ceja and Robledo and Rolando from Mi Sueno.

RS: Right.

SV: And who else was there?

RS: Let's see, it was Alex Sotelo.

SV: Oh, Alex Sotelo.

RS: Fernando Candelario, Danielle Robledo, the Robledos, the Maldonados. Did I say Rolando?

SV: Mm-hmm.

RS: There was 10 of us. There's five. Renteria wasn't there yet. Oh, my goodness, why am I blank? [00:39:00] Maldonado, Ceja, Herrera, Robledo, Candelario, Encanto. I don't know, there was 10 of us. I can't remember the rest.

SV: Okay.

RS: And so, because I had this money background, I was named the treasurer. (laughter)

SV: Your money -- because you were the only one making money at the -- (laughter) at one time in your life before --

RS: Managed money.

SV: Ah, managed money. So, do you remember those initial discussions of that meeting and how, like, it's -- the organization, which was the Mexican-American Vintners Association --

RS: It was the (inaudible)

SV: Oh, no, it was the Napa --

RS: -- at the very beginning --

SV: -- Mexican --

RS: -- at the very beginning, it was the Napa Valley Mexican-American --

SV: Napa Valley Mexican-American --

RS: -- [NVMAVA?] --

SV: -- NVMAVA. (laughter) So, do you remember those initial discussions about what the organization should be doing or what it should not be doing?

RS: I -- you know, I don't think we ever figured it out. [00:40:00] In the mission statement, it was to support, you know, support the wine producers and to offer some type of education for upcoming -- or for people that would be interested in following our footsteps and being a part of the organization. And we wanted to create a sense of pride and, you know, that it is possible. It is not an easy road. But, then, you know, who had it easy migrating from Mexico, coming to culture shock and going through the language barriers? You know, our lives have never been easy. So, you know, when we conquered those challenges, then we can do anything.

SV: Do any--

RS: If we really want to do it. So, that was the premise, you know?

SV: Yeah.

RS: And especially supporting each other.

SV: Yeah. And by supporting each other -- [00:41:00] how?

RS: Example, for us -- Encanto, when we were very small. Not known at all, so - but, you know, we -- chances would be that if we were pouring right next to Ceja, they would remember that little label that was next to Ceja, you know? And so, that was a great support. Or, you know, next to the Maldonados or next to whomever. But that was good, the name recognition. That's how the name recognition came about. And supporting in that, you know, in that way.

SV: Right, right. And so, you guys joined forces as a group to do pouring events --

RS: Oh, correct.

SV: -- around -- in Napa and around California.

RS: Around California, as well --

SV: Yeah. And so, now, fast-forward [00:42:00] 2018, between the 10 of you that started, how many are -- we should say this is -- it's a loose organization, correct?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: There's -- you can come in and out as you see fit, is that correct?

RS: Yeah. Yeah, I suppose you could say that. You know, Encanto's still there. I'm not part of Encanto anymore but, like, I'm an associate member because of the vineyard. And, at the beginning, it was, you know, the discussion was, "Well, we're Napa Valley and we want to be nothing but Napa Valley." And we did get phone calls from the Napa Valley Vintners Association. You know, "Why are you [Napa?]" -- "Well, because we're in Napa Valley." "But we're here already." "Well, yeah, but you're not Mexican." "Well, why can't you be part of us? Why do you need your own organization?" And we said, [00:43:00] "Because we're proud of who we are and what we are and we're making headway and it's okay," you know? And even though some of the members -- Herrera, Renteria, Ceja, they're members of the Vintners Association. But, yeah, they had -- well, "You have Robledo in there, right?" "Yes." "They're not from Napa." "Well, that's okay." (laughs) And so, you know, we kind of thought about it and it's, like, well, it can be Napa Sonoma Mexican-American Vintners Association. So, that was the second name. And then, we had people from Mendocino County that were interested in the association. Well, how are we going to get them in here, you know? If they're not producing, they're not Napa Valley grapes. And I said, "But they're Mexican." [00:44:00] Well, you know, that was a discussion around the table, then -- so, right now, we're more inclusive, you know, to winemakers from California or wherever there may be -- and there have been a lot of inquiries from, you know, Mexico or other states that want to be a part. So, even though we're, what, eight years old, we still haven't figured out how that would -- you know, what would we require or what they would want from us, what could we do -- from the people from New Mexico, you know? They can't come to the meetings. And we talked about charters and -- chapters, I'm sorry. But I think that that's still, you know, part of the discussion. And the growing pains never stop.

SV: Of course. (laughter) But it is growing.

RS: It is growing. [00:45:00]

SV: So, right now, in August of 2018, there are roughly how many --

RS: Fifteen.

SV: Fifteen.

RS: Fifteen members.

SV: Throughout California?

RS: Mm-hmm.

SV: And there are more who are not kind of formally associated with --

RS: Right.

SV: -- right?

RS: Right.

SV: And probably, maybe, would you say five or 10 more who are --

RS: Yes, who are very much interested in what we do and would like to be our members.

SV: So, that's pretty good. And so, July of 2018, there was an event. What are the largest events for the MAVA organization?

RS: The LA event, the ultimate -- East LA Meets Napa, that is the biggest one that most of the [00:46:00] membership attends. There's an event in San Jose that some of the members attend. Not all of them. And then, there's our event, where we get people from, you know, all over California, we can say.

SV: [And that?] --

RS: They have followers and so they come to it.

SV: The MAVA events --

RS: The MAVA event.

SV: -- which is the fall event, or the late --

RS: [No, it's?] --

SV: -- summer, early fall.

RS: Yeah.

SV: Yeah.

RS: Summer. This month, in August. So, it'll be on the 18th.

SV: Right. And that's been going on for a few years, not the entire run.

RS: It's going to be our eighth, so it started --

SV: Oh, okay, so it's --

RS: -- in 2010, we had our [baptism?]. That's when we --

SV: Oh, okay.

RS: -- we had our first event.

SV: You had your -- and that's not counting the one in Mexico. It was a --

RS: Yeah, no, no, was a --

SV: It was a separate event.

RS: That was the organized one --

SV: Ah, okay.

RS: -- with the organization [00:47:00] with the name of Mexican-American Vintners of --

SV: Yeah, and where was that?

RS: It was at Maldonado Vineyards.

SV: Oh, [yeah?]?

RS: That was a beautiful event.

SV: I didn't -- I actually did not know that, it was at Maldonado's. I thought it was somewhere else.

RS: Yeah, it was at Maldonado's.

SV: And about how many people came to that event, do you know?

RS: It was about 300.

SV: Wow, that's pretty good.

RS: So, that was a very good showing.

SV: Yeah, wow. So, how has the association and the group and the membership and -- how has that helped everybody? Has it? Can you guys see, for what you do and for what the other people are -- can you see progression? Can you see something happening? I mean, I know it's --

RS: On an individual basis or as an organization?

SV: As -- both.

RS: Both? On an individual basis, yeah. [00:48:00] More exposure. As a group, and even -- our countrymen or our *paisanos*, you know? It'll never happen. You got -- it's going to disappear pretty soon, because unfortunately, our culture is not known to be supportive of each other, you know? It's, like, the -- is it the crab story or analogy, you know, you're going up and pull it -- pull the other crab, don't let it get to the top, so -- but, you know, I think that eight years and 15 members, we've shown a lot of unity and we get along, you know? And it may be a Cabernet, but they're different styles. Everybody has their style of making --

SV: Everybody has their style.

RS: And so --

SV: And everybody has a slightly different story -- [00:49:00]

RS: Correct.

SV: -- so, that's what's interesting. Let's shift -- I mean, I would like to talk more about MAVA, but I want to get -- before it gets -- we get too far along, I want to talk a little bit more about your role as the vineyard owner, right? Are there other women vineyard owners, Mexican-American vineyard owners that you know of?

RS: No, not that I can think of. I'm sure there are but I don't know of any.

SV: Don't [know of?] any -- [00:50:00]

RS: You know, the ones that I know, it's in conjunction with her -- their husbands and --

SV: Right, right.

RS: Yeah.

SV: Yeah. What about other Mexican-American vineyard owners who don't make their wines? Are there enough of them? Are there --

RS: Why are you asking all these questions, Steve? (laughter)

SV: There must be a few.

RS: There's Rios. Remember Manny Rios? (inaudible)

SV: Oh, Manny Rios.

RS: Manny Rios.

SV: Right, Manny Rios.

RS: Yeah. He was making wine for a while. Then his brother, Ralph, was, you know, helping him with the marketing. But life happened to Manny, as well, and so now he owns vineyards but he's not making wine yet. I've heard that it's coming but not yet. And so, he sells his grapes. [00:51:00] Who else in the Valley? There's a gentleman in Carneros, Carlos Madrigal.

SV: Oh.

RS: He sells grapes. We bought his Pinot noir grapes a couple of years. Hernandez. Oh, my God, what's Hernandez's name? He grows grapes and he sells them. I know that he bottled some but it may be for family. It's, like -- and he places it here and there but not in big --

SV: Not in big --

RS: -- not in big --

SV: Not to make -- big statement.

RS: Right, right. I can't remember his name. His wife's name is [Nomi?]. [00:52:00] And so, I know that he has a vineyard that's Nomi's vineyard and it's --

SV: Okay.

RS: And I'm not sure what he grows, if it's just Cab or anything else. Right now, I can't think of anybody else.

SV: Okay, what was I going to ask about that? Oh, business. So, just to get a sense, is it -- it must be safer to grow the grapes and to sell them than it is to make wine and sell it.

RS: I'm happier growing grapes than selling wine. (laughter)

SV: But can you give us a sense why?

RS: It's a lot of work. And, you know, somebody else -- somebody asked me once, "So, how big is your vineyard?" And I [00:53:00] said, "It's a lot of work." And I said, "Well, but, you know, it doesn't make a difference if you own an acre or if you own 100. It's the same hard work." And so, growing grapes is not easy. My first year was quite an experience. And I'm still learning. There's nothing like being there and watch the grapes grow and learning when it's time to spray -- even though I have Jose, who was with us since we planted, you know? He knows the vineyard way better than me or Enrique knew it. And so -- and, you know, he decided just to continue helping me, even though he works for Enrique, too.

SV: Oh, okay.

RS: But he helps me, so --

SV: Okay.

RS: So, yeah, [00:54:00] but no, it's interesting. Definitely interesting.

SV: So, Jose is your vineyard manager.

RS: Manager.

SV: And so, your crew, it's not coming through Enrique now,. It's your crew.

RS: Yeah.

SV: Like, your --

RS: Right.

SV: -- and your crew is about how many?

RS: I'll just --

SV: It ranges from --

RS: -- I'll say I have, like, four --

SV: Like, full --

RS: [Year?], but come succoring and leafing, it can be up to 10. And during harvest, it could be four crews, you know? Four or five crews.

SV: So, how does that work in your case? Do you go out and find them, or they come to you? Do you have --

RS: I have learned -- I mean, I've learned -- now I know a lot of the people up there. But the first year, Jose was very helpful in, you know, in getting the crews together and showing me where to go for [00:55:00] the trucking and the equipment rental and now I just make a phone call. I don't have to stress, because, you know, I'm familiar with all those companies. And say, you know, I'm going to be picking, can -- send me three tractors and --

SV: So, when do you start to make those phone calls?

RS: Yeah.

SV: Now?

RS: When?

SV: Yeah, when?

RS: Right now. And it's --

SV: Right.

RS: -- that's a good time.

SV: Okay, well, to set it all up --

RS: Set it all up.

SV: -- and get it all on their schedule. Is it getting harder now to get equipment and to get people?

RS: People more than equipment. And was it last year or the year before? You know, I had a group of people -- that's when I hired my first contractor to do my harvest. And everything was going well until one good day, Jose calls and he says, "People [00:56:00] left." And I'm going, "What do you mean, people left?" He says, "Yeah, the crews left." Their supervisor came in and said, "We got to go." And he pulled them out and I had to deliver grapes. Winery was waiting for my grapes. So, they had a contract with Kendall-Jackson. And so, Kendall-Jackson said, "My grapes need to be picked." So, they pulled their people to go to Kendall-Jackson, even though people didn't want to leave because it was -- mine was a good harvest and, you know, and theirs was not as plentiful. And so, it

was going to take them that much longer to pick a ton than it would at my place. But, you know?

SV: And they were already under contract with --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- you?

RS: Mm-hmm. But they still --

SV: They still --

RS: -- left me.

SV: So, what [00:57:00] did you end up doing?

RS: (laughs) I called everybody I knew and -- but by the time the [wine was in?] -- it's too late. You know, "Even if you send us grapes, we can't -- we won't take them." So, that set back my harvest but it gave me an opportunity to, you know, make those phone calls and those contacts that were very useful for the following harvest, so --

SV: Wow.

RS: One bad makes a good one.

SV: Right. It was every bad -- you learned something --

RS: Yeah.

SV: -- something new.

RS: But, yeah, it was -- very stressful year. (laughs)

SV: Yeah, I can imagine. I can imagine. What was I going to ask about that? So, this is kind of a question that connects MAVA [00:58:00] and the groups with some -- I guess some of the issues of finding enough workers. Is MAVA addressing this issue at all that you're aware of?

RS: It's been talked about because some of --

SV: Maybe we should talk about some of the issues, finding the workers for people who will be listening to this. It's because of issues along -- the border policy and migration.

RS: Border policy and --

SV: And the housing, cost of living --

RS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

SV: -- and, I guess, competition.

RS: Competition.

SV: Yeah.

RS: Yeah.

SV: Are there -- those are the three --

RS: Right. Border policy, there's more security at the border, [00:59:00] more dangers trying to cross through the *cerros* or the desert, more expensive both ways. And so, you know, I've heard \$8,000 per person or even \$10,000 if you want to try to make it through the line instead of the desert. You're risking your life and so on and so forth. People can't afford that. So, if they went back home, it's going to be that much more difficult to come back. And so, some are opting to stay there. Housing, there's no housing. And even

though, you know, we have the farm worker centers here in St. Helena or here in the Napa Valley, it's not [01:00:00] enough. So, you get the people who used to commute from Stockton, Sonoma County, Lake County, but there's a lot of vineyard development going on in those counties. Lodi, Lake County, you know? The pear orchards are disappearing and you see beautiful vineyards. The walnuts are disappearing and you see vineyards. And so, you know, those wages are going up in Lake County. Lodi gets the workers from Stockton, you know? And even if it's a dollar more, it's worth their while because they don't have to spend money on the commute. And if they all commute together, it's still going to cost them. And -- [01:01:00] per person. And they get to sleep maybe one more hour or maybe two more hours, you know, as opposed to coming all the way to the Napa Valley.

SV: Yeah, which was three o'clock in the morning --

RS: Right.

SV: -- type of thing, yeah.

RS: And so, they'd rather be closer to home. Sonoma County's also going gangbusters, you know? And there's the friendly competition or other competition between Napa and Sonoma. And so, it is getting that much more difficult to get labor. Laborers are learning to, you know, ask for their value. So, you know, they show up but if you don't pay them a dollar more or 20 bucks more for the ton, then they'll say, "We'll go to the next one, because they're willing [01:02:00] to do it." And so, it's good for them, because, like I said, they're, you know -- good that they know their value, that they're requesting it. It's bad for those grapes that have to be picked (laughs) and for the vineyard owner and more stressful for the vineyard -- the contractor who can't deliver what you promised. And so, there's all those things that go on. In my business, I've had a lot of inquiries about H-2A. "Can you help us?" "No, not especially if your guys have been here," you know? And I -- know enough people who have tried to get their guys in here with an H-2A, [01:03:00] but they don't talk to them clearly. So, when they're going to cross the border and, you know, they have their papers and it's, like, "Have you ever been to the States?" "Yes." Well, okay, you can't -- you know, you can't go back, because the bar kicks in.

SV: Right.

RS: The 10-year bar, so --

SV: Right.

RS: -- so, there you go.

SV: Yeah.

RS: They may make it back, you know? They may come back because they have their job. I mean -- but --

SV: Right.

RS: -- it's going to cost them that much more.

SV: Right. And we're talking for seasonal --

RS: Right.

SV: -- the fall, late summer.

RS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

SV: So, then, how is MAVA addressing some of these issues [that you are, you know?] --

RS: They've tried to organize and see if they can do their -- organize [01:04:00] to try to get the H-2As here, okay? Because most of them are farm labor contractors, as well, or vineyard managers or whatever. So, it behooves them to keep trying. Now, I've heard not MAVA but the grape growers saying that they may need them now but, you know, if it's not there, they're going to mechanize. But they're talking about five years from now, seven years from now, and what do you do in the meantime, you know? So, I think the Valley and the whole wine industry, or the grape industry find themselves in a very unique position. Be interesting as to what it is that they [01:05:00] decide to do.

SV: Right. And Mexican-American owners and vineyard operators are kind of --

RS: Caught in between.

SV: -- caught in between, yeah.

RS: They're caught in between.

SV: Yeah, so it's not [any?] --

RS: And so, you know, I -- politics and -- because I kept thinking, you know, I only have 16 acres planted and I go through that, I can't imagine a grape grower who owns 100 acres or 300 acres or, you know? So, I heard a politician last year say in one of her presentations, you know, we got to do something about that and farm worker housing. Because I've heard of people working in Colusa. What's [01:06:00] that county? Marysville, you know, that area, and then making the commute into these valleys all in one -- you know, to -- they pick there, they'd come here and maybe sleep two hours. That's not healthy for anybody.

SV: Yeah.

RS: That's putting a lot of people in danger.

SV: Yeah, yeah, sure is.

RS: You know?

SV: Yeah.

RS: So --

SV: Wow.

RS: So, yes. Very interesting times that we're living in. And I don't know, somehow I don't see the Napa Valley going mechanized. I don't know. I could be wrong.

SV: Yeah.

RS: But --

SV: But that's a discussion --

RS: -- that's a larger --

SV: -- for later.

RS: Yes. (laughs)

SV: We've been at this for a while, so I just kind of wanted to wrap up with, like, one more question about how you see yourself -- your role as a [01:07:00] Mexican-American vineyard owner. How do you see yourself -- how do you see your role in this community here in Napa, and the community here in Napa of Mexican-Americans and the community of wine -- vineyard in general?

RS: Oh, my goodness. I'm a very hard-working woman. (laughter) I'd rather not think about it and just do the job but at the -- but, you know, on the same token, it's, like, people didn't think I was going to be able to do that and, you know, and it hasn't been easy. But it's very rewarding, you [01:08:00] know? I have had some issues. You know, it's a learning experience. I had a couple of instances where, yeah, there's a lot to learn with employees and, you know. And sometimes distance has its challenges, you know, where -- goodness, yes, I need to deliver those checks. And it's, like, oh, okay. Have to leave this to go and deliver the checks, so -- but, you know, I -- it's good to know how hard they work and what they do and to value, you know, all that they do for me. So, I try to do my best.

SV: Okay. Well, we've been at this for a while. Is there anything [01:09:00] else you want to add before we wrap up about any sort of topic we covered? Family, community, industry?

RS: We'll talk about -- if you -- when you come back, (laughter) right?

SV: Right, right. (laughter)

RS: We'll talk more about the farm worker housing.

SV: Okay, which is a -- which now is, in 2018, is a big issue and it's been an issue, actually, since the 1970s, (laughs) which hasn't resolved itself, right? It's --

RS: Right. No, but, you know, it's just that I keep thinking: how can vineyards sell for such horrendous, offensive amounts of money (laughs) and how can buyers not think about what that entails? How can they -- you know, and is it just [01:10:00] to own the vineyard in the Napa Valley and not really considering the people that are going to work in the vineyards?

SV: Right, right.

RS: So, I think that somehow that needs to -- that needs some light shed onto --

SV: Right, yeah, I think so.

RS: You know? So --

SV: I think so. Okay, well, I think we will wrap up now. Thank you for your time and your -
-

RS: Thank you.

SV: -- for sharing your stories and everything you've done.

RS: Well, thank you. [01:10:37]

[END OF SEGURA 2]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

