

Coral Way Elementary School Bilingual Program

Leti & Leticia Lopez (student and mother, respectively)

March 12, 2008

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Interviewed by Richard Ruiz

Recorded by Bess DeFarber in Miami, Florida

For University of Arizona, Louise Greenfield

Special Collections and Archives

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(At about Min. 31:20, Leti's mom, Leticia, joins the interview.)

Ruiz: This is an interview with Leti, at her home. It is about seven o'clock in the evening in Miami. It's March 12, 2008. And this is, again, an interview with Leti. My name is Richard Ruiz. I'm a professor at the University of Arizona. Also in the interview is Bess DeFarber, who is at the University of Arizona Library.

So let me start by first asking you to say yes or no—we have to do this formally, to make sure that you consent to being interviewed and recorded.

Leti: Yes.

Ruiz: Okay, great. I'm interested first in a little bit of personal information with respect to your relationship to the program. And then I'll ask you a little bit about what you remember about the program. And then I'll ask you about some of the impressions or maybe the attitudes that you came out of the program with. So first of all, with respect to some of the information about you as a student: What language or languages were spoken in your home when you were a student?

Leti: English and Spanish. At home, the elders spoke Spanish, my mom could speak English, but I spent a lot of time with friends who spoke English only.

Ruiz: Did this ratio of English and Spanish change at all as you went through the program?

Leti: Oh, absolutely.

Ruiz: So how did it change?

Leti: Before I started the program, I would tell you that I was mostly, maybe 90% English, and I would get by with 10% Spanish, just to speak to my great-grandfather, or any elders that were at home. But when I went to the program—which was in fourth grade, the latter part of fourth grade—it took me a while to adjust. So I would say it took me until, like, the latter part of fifth grade, but then I started to speak a lot more Spanish at home, and I had friends that I could communicate to in Spanish, which I didn't have that, when before I went to Coral Way Elementary. So yes, that program really changed my language usage.

Ruiz: What about the language used by others around you in the home? Did that pretty much stay the same?

Leti: It probably increased, but not by much, because I would still have had to speak Spanish to my grandfather and stuff.

Ruiz: Okay. Can you tell me who your teachers were when you were at Coral Way? Do you remember your teachers?

Leti: I remember Mrs. Sotolongo. I remember Mrs. Mikes [phonetic], Mrs. Sanchez, and I'm not sure if there was a Mrs. Leon [phonetic] or not. I don't know if I had her.

Ruiz: What years were you there at Coral Way?

Leti: The last part of fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade.

Ruiz: So before that you went to another school?

Leti: I went to Milam [phonetic, maybe Medowlane?] Elementary in Hialeah, which at the time had never seen—I was the only Hispanic kid. As a matter of fact, very few Hispanics in Hialeah at that time. It was very, very Anglo.

Ruiz: What about your student friends? Were they Spanish speakers, English speakers, both? How did that work?

Leti: In Coral Way?

Ruiz: Yes, when you were at Coral Way.

Leti: When I got to Coral Way, I was attracted to the English-speaking children. My whole behavior and culture was really more of an Anglo than a Hispanic. So I hung around mostly with the Anglo children. And that changed as we progressed.

Ruiz: Really? How did that change?

Leti: When I got mainstreamed, because I hung around the Anglo kids so much, when I got mainstreamed to where Spanish became like a main language for me to learn, I started hanging around with kids that spoke more Spanish, and had the more Spanish culture and the feel. Even if we spoke in English, our culture was very Hispanic, and things changed in **my** life.

Ruiz: Was that true outside of school too?

Leti: Yes, both.

Ruiz: So you had more friends like that outside of school.

Leti: Yes. Actually, my long-lasting friends come from that era. And most of them are now Hispanic.

Ruiz: Do you remember how you were assigned to one group or another? You were assigned, apparently, to the English group, right?

Leti: I think I was one of those strange cases for the school when I got there, because I knew a little too much Spanish to be with the English-speaking children only—or mainly English. And I didn't know enough Spanish, in terms of being able to read and write it, and absorb it quick enough to be with the Spanish-speaking children. So what they did is, they actually put me in a class with English-speaking children. It was wonderful, because what they did is, they made me, like, their tutor. So I helped them with their reading and their language, and so it made me feel like I knew something. So it encouraged me to get better.

Ruiz: So a bit like a peer tutor kind of situation.

Leti: Right. The books were too simple for me, but at the same time, I was able to help them get through it. And so since it was the last part of fourth grade, I guess they didn't want to shake the boat there too much.

Ruiz: Okay. And let's see, I guess we can talk a little bit now about the classroom itself, and how you experienced that classroom. Do you remember what the relationship was, or the ratio was between Spanish and English use, and how it was used in the classroom?

Leti: I don't recall a lot of it. I can tell you that always the Spanish teachers seemed stricter and harder, for some reason. They always seemed like they were gonna be **tough**. And you're going to interview one tomorrow, so I know she probably made the biggest impact on me—in a good way—but she was a tough teacher, a real tough teacher. The English-speaking teachers—and maybe it was just because it was so much easier for me, I really had to exert more effort to learn, to do the Spanish stuff, than I did the English. English, I love the language, I love to write it, I love to read it, but it took that extra effort to do things the same in Spanish. But nonetheless, I'm glad I did.

Ruiz: In terms of, again, the relationships among the two languages in the classes, do you remember something about that?

Leti: I remember a switch. At least in sixth grade I remember a switch, because we were, like, in a big room, where there was a partition, and there was one teacher on one side, if I recall correctly, and one teacher on the other side. And so you would learn your Spanish time with the Spanish teacher, and then you'd learn with the English teacher on the English side. But I can't quite remember, because since I continued the program, I know that in Miami High, when I continued the program, I learned things like history and science in Spanish. But I'm not quite sure if I'm confusing that memory with the Coral Way memory, so I can't guarantee you, but it seems to me like I did remember learning maybe geography in Spanish, or one of the other subjects in Spanish, that you normally would learn in English. And so I do believe that there was, like, a split where maybe the ratio was 60/40 or 70/30, but it was a pretty good ratio where you got enough Spanish.

Ruiz: So you had a Spanish teacher who spoke only Spanish, and you had an English [teacher] who spoke only English.

Leti: Yes.

Ruiz: So that's the way in which it was broken up.

Leti: Yes.

Ruiz: Do you remember the materials, the textbooks or the other materials, that you used, if they were also in Spanish and English, or if they were translated, or if they came that way as books? Do you remember anything like that?

Leti: No.

Ruiz: Do you remember reading in both languages?

Leti: Yes.

Ruiz: So what is it that you remember reading? Were they books that you were reading, or were they materials that were handed out? How do you remember....

Leti: I'm thinking that if the Spanish-speaking teacher was teaching us in Spanish, we had to be reading in Spanish as well. But I can't really now tell you that I remember a book, per se, because like I said, since I continued the program, I know that in Miami High—which is a much shorter memory span than elementary school—I know that in Miami High my history book was in Spanish. It was intolerable! It was very difficult to read. But I don't remember that far back if the material or books that I was reading.... But I know that I had homework in Spanish, and I had plenty of things to write in Spanish. I would just have to believe that I was reading something in Spanish, and it had to be material in Spanish.

Ruiz: So you were reading and writing in both languages pretty much from the beginning, from the time that you started going there, is that right?

Leti: Coral Way? I remember reading—see, they **had** to have books, because I remember reading to the fourth graders, the Spanish books, and helping my American friends with their Spanish. So I do remember having **some** materials in Spanish. Now, I don't know if they were just reading books, but....

Ruiz: Okay. I guess I'm interested also in your family's relationship to the school. Do you remember if your parents were involved in any kind of on-school activities, or school activities: meetings, PTA meetings, or coming into the classroom or anything like that?

Leti: No. It was very easy for parents just to let loose and let the kids do what they needed to do, and unless you were in trouble, your parents weren't in school. I don't

even remember a lot of open houses or PTA meetings per se. My mom worked two jobs, so it was very hard for her to go to any of that. But she embraced the fact that I was learning another language, definitely. She never had any hesitation towards that at all.

Ruiz: She embraced the fact that you were learning **what** other language?

Leti: Spanish. Because when I was in Milam [Meadowlane?] Elementary, everything was in English. There wasn't even one Spanish course at that time, so you didn't learn **any** Spanish.

Ruiz: That's a nice attitude to have. Do you remember if there was very much interaction of, say, the local community around Coral Way on the school grounds?

Sometimes they have open houses, or they have meetings of the community, other kinds of things that happen to make the community interact more with the school or with the students. Sometimes students put on concerts for people in the community. Anything like that, do you remember?

Leti: No, I don't remember them doing a lot of that, honestly. But maybe it's just that I wasn't involved in that. I don't remember. I don't even remember maybe, you know, on *El Veinte de Mayo* we might sing the Cuban hymn. I remember singing the Cuban hymn at **something**. So they did recognize that there were Hispanics there, but I don't think they made much of a big deal about it. It was **natural** to have this, like, melting pot. At least it was for me. I don't know about anybody else who experienced it. Like I said, for me, when I got there, it was sort of a culture shock in the sense that I didn't understand **my** own culture—not the other culture, not the Anglo culture. That one was easy for me. It was the Hispanic culture that was not easy for me. And so I don't remember a lot of

big events that we did, but I do know that within your neighborhoods, too, almost every child that you were associated with went to the same school.

Ruiz: Do you remember, in terms of maybe some of the delivery of the instruction, if there was any use of technology, films or filmstrips, or anything of that sort?

Leti: They used the whatchamacallits.

Ruiz: Overhead projectors?

Leti: Overhead projectors, all the time. They used overhead projectors.

Ruiz: But no films or filmstrips or anything of that sort that you remember?

Leti: No.

Ruiz: Sometimes to illustrate or to give people a sense of cultural tradition or whatever, sometimes people use films. Sometimes they don't.

Leti: Yeah. I can't remember those films, honestly. I'm thinking back, but I can't remember. But somebody may have.

Ruiz: How did you learn the Cuban hymn? The teachers just taught the hymn to the students, is that the idea?

Leti: Yes, we learned to.... I hope I'm not making it up, but I do remember singing. I know I didn't learn it at home, because my family moved here and they felt that this was the better move, and we were able to bring all our family, so I have a different condition than most Cubans that came here and left family behind, and stuff like that. We brought all our family. We were very fortunate that way. So we weren't ones to sit there and drill on politics or anything like that. So I do remember singing the Cuban anthem at school, and it was probably taught to us because there were so many—that represented probably the majority of the Hispanics. But I'm sure that, by the same token, they tried

to represent other Hispanics, because my husband's Colombian, he went to the same school I did. And I don't think he ever felt misrepresented. But they always felt.... I must say that even within either.... I can't talk for the Anglos, but I'm sure that for other Hispanics, they always felt overpowered by the Cuban sentiment, because it was the majority. It was the majority.

Ruiz: Let me ask you now about your impressions of the experience. I'll ask just initially kind of a general question about how you feel about your participation, or how you felt, then—if you can remember how you felt then about your participation in the program.

Leti: I felt proud, I really did. I thought I accomplished something I had never been challenged to do. It was frustrating, and it was tough. I remember. I didn't want to learn in Spanish. It's not what you want to do. It was a harder thing to do, and it wasn't always the easiest. No, it was not the easiest. But I felt challenged, and I just.... I don't know, maybe back then we just weren't that demanding either. We accepted it. It's a curriculum, and you do what you're supposed to do, and that was our school, and if that's how they taught, that's how you learned. And that's it. I don't think we had a choice, and we certainly couldn't voice it if we did! We did what we were supposed to do. But I took pride in what I did.

Ruiz: So do you feel as if the school helped in your development as a student, and maybe it would have been different if you had gone to, say, an all-English school? Can you imagine that?

Leti: Yes. Absolutely not. I mean, I feel like the school was the best thing that could have happened to me. Learning in two languages is incredible. Not just the two

languages—two cultures, too. It helps you to be very diverse and very tolerant. It's a great experience, I think: whether it's Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese, whatever you choose. But I don't think we should be stuck to one language. I think it's wrong, you know, to just learn one language. I wish I had learned more, I really do.

Ruiz: You said something about being frustrating and so on. Can you remember what [were] the most enjoyable, and also the least enjoyable, experiences that you had, the kinds of experiences that were least enjoyable and most enjoyable?

Leti: Hm. (pause) You know, when you're a kid and you have to go to school, there's a lot of non-enjoyable things. But you know what? I have always loved to be challenged, and I rose to the occasion. Having to learn Spanish fully, that was challenging to me. But the more I did it, the better I got, the better I felt about myself. The fact that they mainstreamed me from fifth to sixth grade, and I was now considered Spanish as a main, where I was put with the Hispanic kids. To me, that was a reward. It said something, and I felt very proud of that. I loved the school, I loved the teachers there. They were tough, like in any other school. I have children now, and they've been through school and they've had some good teachers, they've had some bad teachers. I can say I had some pretty good teachers, both on the English and the Spanish.

Ruiz: Do you remember attending any extracurricular or after-school kinds of activities?

Leti: I was a patrol.

Ruiz: For the street?

Leti: Yes, for the traffic. Another one of those things you feel proud of, you know. You get to tell people when to cross the street, when they're not allowed—except my husband never paid attention and just did what he wanted to. But no, I was a patrol. Other than

that, we'd go home and we'd create our own activities. And there was plenty of homework and stuff to do. One of my very good friends, who is American, Linda, and I would sit and do homework after school. We'd create our own extra-curriculum.

Ruiz: I was just wondering whether there were things like, I don't know, Spanish club, chess club.

Leti: Uh-uh, no.

Ruiz: Nothing like that?

Leti: Not that I can recall.

Ruiz: That's often sometimes a big part of what children like in school, is the extra things that they do outside of school [i.e., outside the classroom], or sports. Did they have any sports?

Leti: We had a **great** P.E. teacher. I can remember him. He was tall as can be, Mr. Epperson [phonetic]. How can you forget? My husband has every award, every presidential award known to man, when it came to the athletic program there. But beyond the presidential—you know, training for the presidential [challenge] back then—because I don't even know if they have that anymore.

Ruiz: [unclear 22:43]

Leti: Yes. But other than training for that, and doing that, those meets, there really wasn't any other—I don't remember sports. But I don't think many elementary schools have sports activities either.

Ruiz: So I assume from what you said before that you can read and write in both languages?

Leti: In both languages, absolutely.

Ruiz: And you attribute that to having gone to Coral Way?

Leti: Absolutely. If it was not for Coral Way, I probably would have never ventured to go there, to do that, I believe.

Ruiz: You're not a teacher, and you're not in that profession, but do you have any opinions about this model that is used at Coral Way, this two-language model, and the way in which they organized it for instruction? Do you think it's a good thing, or do you have any ideas of how it could be made better?

Leti: I'll tell you what, my oldest daughter, who is thirty-one years old now, went through the whole curriculum, from kindergarten through sixth grade—was it fifth grade then?—might have finished in fifth or sixth, I don't know, because I can't remember. Let's see, because she went to Shenandoah sixth and seventh, yes, and I pulled her out for eighth. Okay, so maybe fifth grade. And she learned the same way, and she's totally fluent, English and Spanish. Now, did she love it? No! Did she want to learn it? Not at the time. But if you ask her today, she will tell you that it's so important. Now obviously, if you're a child that is challenged educationally, that can be hard, because now.... You know, it's always easier in the language of comfort. In my case, and I'm sure in many children's case, because we live in the United States, our language of comfort is English. We're comfortable reading it, we're comfortable speaking it, **but**.... So it makes it, you have to put that extra effort to learning English. Now, if you're challenged educationally, you have a difficult time learning. I don't know that the bilingual program is right for you. Because you have—some kids need to learn in just one language and absorb it and get the information and be able to move with it. And some kids need that in order to be able to move on academically. So I don't believe it's

for everyone, but if your child **can** do that, I think the benefits are awesome. There's great benefits to gain from that.

Ruiz: Great. If anything occurs to you that we haven't touched on, or I haven't thought about asking you about, you can either tell me now, or you can communicate with us later, but for now, that's really all the questions I have. I don't know if you have anything else that you'd like to say.

Leti: Well, [I] probably want to tell you that I chose to continue the bilingual program. So beyond Coral Way, when you got to Shenandoah, you could either choose to stay in, or choose out. I chose in. When I went to Miami High, it was the same thing: you could choose in or you could choose out. I chose in. So that's what the impact of Coral Way Elementary did for me. And here I was, a total *gringita*, as I call myself, walking into a school where, like I said, culture shock, differences of people.... It was more not the language, because I understood the language—it was the culture that I didn't understand, and that I got to appreciate ever so more, because we moved to where we did, and because I went to Coral Way, and because I met the people I did, and made the relationships I did. And from Coral Way and Shenandoah, probably I still have a **big** pool of good friends, all scattered all over the United States, but that are there.

Ruiz: One of the things that we are trying to do is to track down some of those people, so if you have names, either now, or names later that we can perhaps call or contact, we're willing to go almost anywhere to find these folks. So it doesn't matter where they are, if they're local or if they're somewhere else, that would be great. And we can leave you contact information for us. You know how to get ahold of us anyway.

Leti: Sure. Well, I gave you **Tony Asion** [phonetic], and he is in North Carolina. He has now been promoted to executive director for a program called *El Pueblo*. He's another one that was a—he worked in a gang unit over in Denver. He's done a lot. He's very, very, very adventurous, someone you'll probably want to speak to on that subject. And then on the American Anglo side, I'll get you **Danny Levenson's** [phonetic] e-mail address so that you can send that to him. I spoke to someone today, but he went through the program briefly, and one year behind me. I thought I'd surprise you guys and get you Mrs. Sanchez's contact info., but I didn't—you guys already had it. But **Justo Risposo** [phonetic], who's in Miami, is also—I'll ask if he wants to participate. And let's see, who else do I know? Some of them are just from Shenandoah, but I will continue checking around, because you know how it is—one person tells another person, and little by little you can get a chain started, and you can get a nice group of people. But for right now, you have Maria Andreo.... And I've contacted some other people, but they actually went to Shenandoah, and not to Coral Way.

Ruiz: That would be great. And also if you have any more of the.... If you find any more of the memorabilia or whatever, that would be great too.

Leti: Oh, okay.

Ruiz: Another thing we should tell you is that these are going to be inventoried and stored in such a way that people can get ahold of them—researchers who are interested in knowing more about the history or whatever—and they'll be available through the library, but they'll also be available.... We're working with the South Florida Historical Museum here in town, so that they can also have access here, more locally. One of the things we've found is that in fact they have, as far as we can tell, **nothing** on Coral Way.

They don't even have a file on the school. They have files on a lot—I don't know if all—but they have files on a lot of the schools in Miami, but they don't even have a file on Coral Way. So we're going to start to see if we can develop some of that.

Leti: How peculiar that something as big as that almost looks like it was shoved under a rug so that it wouldn't make too much noise or something.

Ruiz: It's hard to say, but we'll try to see if we can start to develop some of that.

Leti: Okay.

Ruiz: Well, thank you very much for your attention.

Leti: My pleasure.

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~31:20 minutes

Ruiz: Okay, so this is an interview, again, at Leti's house. It's March 12, 2008, and it's about 7:40 in the evening. My name is Richard Ruiz. I'm one of the principal investigators for this Coral Way project. And Bess DeFarber, the other principal investigator, is also in the room. So what I'd like you to do now is say your name into the record, so that we can make sure.

Leticia Lopez (Mom): Sure. My name is Leticia Lopez.

Ruiz: And you were a parent of a student at Coral Way, correct?

Mom: Yes.

Ruiz: Of three children?

Mom: I have three children, but I don't remember, did Orlando go to Coral Way?

Leti (Daughter): Yes. Yes, he did.

Mom: I know you did, and I know Felix did—my youngest son.

Daughter: Yeah, Orlando did too, Mom.

Ruiz: Can I ask you about the relationship between the people in the family, with respect to language, what were the languages, or what was the language, that was spoken in the home at that time?

Mom: Okay, in my house, due to the fact that my grandfather was living with us—he didn't speak English—my husband understood a little bit, but was in the process of learning. I was the only one that spoke English, because I came to school here in the United States. So I would say that 90% of the time, we spoke Spanish. It was easier for me to communicate with the children in English, because of the fact they were going to school, so it was.... You know.

Ruiz: So when you spoke to the children, was it mostly in English, but sometimes in Spanish?

Mom: I would say that most of the time it was Spanish, because if it was a conversation with them alone, I might jump into English; but if it was a conversation that other people in my family were there, I didn't want them to feel that I didn't want them to know what I was telling the children. So we spoke Spanish.

Ruiz: Do you remember, as they went through the program, if that changed? In other words, if you started speaking to them more in one language than another, or if it stayed pretty much the same during the whole time?

Mom: Well, I would say that I spoke Spanish more often than I spoke English.

Ruiz: But that never changed over time, it was basically the same?

Mom: Well, now I would say that I speak English most of the time, because it changed the parents. When my daughter became a mother, the children will understand English

better. Her husband understood English perfectly well, because he went to school with her. So, you know, it depends on who was around.

Ruiz: What about other kinds of things in the home—reading materials, books, magazines, TV or radio in one language or another—do you remember how that went?

Mom: Well, TV was always in English. Reading, I would say in both languages, whatever the book that was recommended, language came in, so I could say both—I'm talking about myself. My children preferred the English language.

Ruiz: Do you remember if your children could read in Spanish **before** they went to school?

Mom: No, because they were five and six when we came here in 1960. So no, they didn't go to school in Cuba, so the first school they were in, was in the United States. And the school they attended didn't have the Coral Way program.

Ruiz: The first school that they attended?

Mom: Their first school was in Hialeah, and it was just English.

Ruiz: So after they started going to Coral Way, they had at least some homework or other kinds of things that they started reading?

Mom: Yes, and I appreciated it so much. I really wanted my children to keep the language of their ancestors, plus I believed that as many languages you learned, the better, the more educated. I wish they could speak three or four languages, not just two. But at least they speak and read in Spanish.

Ruiz: When they went to Coral Way, they were placed in either the Spanish group or the English group, I think. Do you remember that?

Mom: What I remember is I attended too. In other words, they never left the English classes. They only have one class in Spanish. But, you know, we took it about a few years back.

Ruiz: Do you remember if they were tested in terms of their language proficiency, to find out where or how they might be placed?

Mom: Yes, I believe so. I believe so.

Ruiz: Did anybody ever ask **you** about that placement, or anything of that sort? From the school, did they come and ask, “Where should we place your daughter?” or “What is the language proficiency of your children?”

Mom: No, I don’t remember.

Ruiz: Do you remember being involved in any kind of activities in the schools?

Mom: Very little, like some PTA, something like that, yes. You know, some kind of [unclear 37:43] with the school I would attend.

Ruiz: Were you ever invited to come to the school by a teacher or the principal?

Mom: Not really, no. Not that I remember. To be honest with you, it’s such a long time ago....

Ruiz: Do you remember the teachers that your children had?

Mom: No, I don’t.

Ruiz: So there was relatively little contact between the....

Mom: At that time, yes.

Ruiz: Do you remember if there was very much, or if there were any activities between the school and the community that sometimes would happen—maybe an open house or some kind of information meeting?

Mom: I believe we had the open house, yes.

Ruiz: Did you ever attend any of these?

Mom: Yes.

Ruiz: Okay, what about your own interaction with any of the administrators or any of the staff of the school? Did any of that happen?

Mom: Not really, because usually the schools call the parents either to tell them that their children are brilliant, or they're not doing their homework. I was not in that position. (chuckles) So my children were good—you know, good grades. But I mean, they weren't geniuses or anything like that. At that time, the school didn't keep that contact that they keep nowadays.

Ruiz: Yes, it's a very different thing now.

Mom: Yes, it is.

Ruiz: People feel as if that's a very important thing.

Mom: It is.

Ruiz: So tell me, these last few questions have to do with your impressions and your attitudes about this experience of the school that your children had. How do you feel, or how did you feel at the time, about your children's participation in this kind of program?

Mom: Oh yes, I loved it! You know, I really.... I was **very**, very happy, and very excited, because, you know, that gave my children the opportunity not only to speak the language, but to spell, and sometimes [learning] the verbs, you know, some of that. So I really, really appreciated it. I thought it was wonderful. And I understand they're improving that even more nowadays. You know, I was very happy with the school. Every time I hear somebody speaking about the school, they say nothing but the best. I

have a friend whose granddaughter is attending the school, and she said she has improved so much, and she's attending that program, and they're very happy with the school.

Ruiz: You talked about the language, and that being very important too. Was it ever important for you that they know something about their culture or their identity or any of that sort of [thing]?

Mom: Extremely important. You know, those are their roots, and you should never forget your roots.

Ruiz: So that was then. You still have the same opinion and attitude about the school?

Mom: Oh sure.

Ruiz: About their participation in it, and all of that?

Mom: Nothing but the best, to be honest. Nothing but the best with that school.

Ruiz: And the school—as you know, because you lived through it—is a school that uses two languages to teach children. How do you feel generally about that kind of model for teaching children?

Mom: I think that's fantastic! I think that's fantastic.

Ruiz: Do you think it's a model that can be used generally in schools, or is it just for a particular population of students?

Mom: I really wish it would be taken by every school. You know, because there's such a big population of Spanish people. And we have so much contact with the Spanish people—maybe even more than European people. And it's very important that they understand the language, and that they can fluently speak it. That's the way I feel.

Ruiz: One of the things I asked your daughter was what she enjoyed about the experience. And I'd like to ask that of you as a parent, too. Was there any direct contact

to the point where you enjoyed some kind of experience in the school, or through your children, if you enjoyed something?

Mom: I was very happy all the time they were in that school—very, very happy. Extremely happy. Everybody was so good—the program, the man that used to help the children going back and forth. He was fantastic! I really was so happy with the school. And I believe that my daughter couldn't be working where she works if she wouldn't have been able to do the—you know, to progress in Spanish. She works at a Spanish newspaper! You know, if she didn't have that fluent Spanish, she wouldn't be able to work there.

Ruiz: So there was nothing that you didn't find enjoyable, that was a problem or whatever?

Mom: Oh! nothing! nothing! nothing! Everything was fantastic. I was very happy with the school—very, very happy. We lived very close to the school, so she could walk back and forth. Like I say, the supervision with the kids, the whole program, the teachers—**everything** was fantastic about that school.

Ruiz: If there's anything else that you can think of, either now or later, we will leave you our contact, so that you can let us know or whatever. If anything else occurs to you that you didn't say, that you think might be important for us to know about, please let us know. And if there are other people that you can think of—whether parents or students or whatever—that we haven't already kind of gotten contacts for, we'd appreciate it if you could let us know.

Mom: I really think that that program should be mandatory. I mean, what harm could it do?! Tell me! What harm could it do? And so much good. So it should be available

to.... See, I have another couple of grandchildren that didn't have that advantage. One of them, he's already sixteen years old, and when the children are not prepared for that, they feel embarrassed. They understand, because they hear so much Spanish in their family, but it's like their lips are closed because they don't want to make a mistake, they don't want people to laugh at them. And that's something, you know.... So why shouldn't that be in every school, when we have so much population of Spanish people? And I'm sure that every parent would be very happy if their children could take that type of program—every one of them.

Ruiz: Well, thank you very much for the interview.

Mom: Thank you!

[END OF INTERVIEW]