

Coral Way Elementary School Bilingual Program  
**Tatiana Palma**, March 15, 2008  
36 minutes 30 seconds  
Interviewed by Richard Ruiz  
Recorded by Bess DeFarber in Miami, Florida  
For University of Arizona, Louise Greenfield  
Special Collections and Archives  
Tucson, Arizona  
Transcribed by Jardee Transcription, Tucson, Arizona

**Ruiz:** This is an interview for the Coral Way Project, and it is March 15, 2008. It's about 1:15 in the afternoon, and we're in an interview room in the Historical Museum of South Florida, so we're very happy that they were able to accommodate us. My name is Richard Ruiz, I'm with the University of Arizona. Also in the room is Bess DeFarber, who is also from the University of Arizona and a graduate of Coral Way. Why don't you go ahead and state your name.

**Palma:** Sure, my name is Tatiana Palma.

**Ruiz:** Why don't you go ahead and tell us what years you were at Coral Way.

**Palma:** I think it was maybe 1968-69. My parents had moved down from New York at around Christmas time, and that was my first encounter with Coral Way Elementary. So I joined the program midyear and entered into that situation rather coldly. I was really the fish out of water. I had come from public school in New York, and frankly I felt like the queen bee there, because they handled these whole situations quite differently. One of my teachers caught wind of the fact that I spoke Spanish. Every Spanish-speaking student that entered the classroom, I became a peer tutor for. So that was a very unique situation for me to have had in the past. And then I was thrust into this world of bilingual-bicultural education very quickly in December.

**Ruiz:** What grade was that for you?

**Palma:** Sixth grade for me.

**Ruiz:** Were you in the English group or the Spanish group, do you remember that?

**Palma:** To tell you the truth, I don't know the distinction of that at all. I just knew, going into it, and my parents really never discussed the specifics with me, and they've both deceased, that it was a bilingual program, that's all I knew, and that I would learn more Spanish, which they were thrilled about, because Spanish, of course, was our language at home. But I didn't know how to write it, and I didn't know how to read it. And so my parents felt very strongly, my mother in particular, that it would be a wonderful plus for me educationally and culturally.

**Ruiz:** But you already did speak English too?

**Palma:** Oh yes.

**Ruiz:** So you were bilingual already.

**Palma:** I was already bilingual, yes, in terms of my verbal abilities.

**Ruiz:** What school did you go to before?

**Palma:** I was in Queens at Public School 49 in Queens. I was in New York.

**Ruiz:** You **came** to Miami.

**Palma:** Yes, I did. We relocated. I had been born in Miami. I was actually at Coral Way in first grade, from what I understand. But I don't remember being involved in any bilingualism at that level. I might have been, but I don't know that for a fact. And then second grade through middle of sixth, I attended grammar school in New York.

**Ruiz:** Great. So what were the languages that were spoken in your home?

**Palma:** Spanish and English—mostly Spanish. I would say 99% Spanish.

**Ruiz:** Who spoke English?

**Palma:** My sister and I.

**Ruiz:** Your parents didn't speak English with you?

**Palma:** No, very rarely did I hear them speak English. It was more for if we were in an environment that was a public environment that prompted them to speak English out of necessity, and of course because of [world place?] language, they spoke English.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember having any media in two languages? I'm talking about TV, radio, newspapers, books, whatever. Do you remember any of that?

**Palma:** That's a very curious question. When I was a young child, I remember print media being specifically in Spanish. Both of my parents were avid readers. I remember a lot of print Spanish at home, but I was never taught to read it. I do remember my mother reading **to** me in Spanish as a younger child, or listening to her read in Spanish. For example, read the Bible. My grandfather was a Baptist minister, and so there was always a Spanish Bible in my home. I remember that very vividly, and my mother was an avid reader. My father used to love the newspaper, and he was heavily into politics. And so he would read every little Spanish political guide he could get his hands on. But again, his academic language, as was hers, was Spanish. So my print exposure in the home was in Spanish, but in terms of TV, I had an older sister, I remember watching TV in English. And at the time, I can't say I remember there was much Spanish programming, and so I wasn't exposed to that necessarily.

**Ruiz:** But you don't remember reading yourself in Spanish?

**Palma:** No, not in the home—not with any intent.

**Ruiz:** And not writing at all?

**Palma:** Not with anything other than maybe a social connection to say—you know, writing a grandmother a thank you card or a Christmas card, something of that nature. Very minimal, very, very minimal.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember when you were going to go to Coral Way in the sixth grade, after you got back, if there was any sense that you got, or that you sensed in your parents, that this place was a special place, with some kind of special historic kind of school or program or whatever? Do you remember anything like that?

**Palma:** I don't remember that historical aspect. I do remember that there was a tremendous emphasis on how important this program was, because it afforded me the opportunity to learn a second language in its totality. I do remember that emphasis. But there was nothing about the historicity of it or anything of that nature, that I can recall as a child. That wasn't discussed with me.

**Ruiz:** So it was important for you and for your family and so on, but not necessarily because it was important in the world somehow, right?

**Palma:** I didn't make that connection at that age, no.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember who your teachers were?

**Palma:** Absolutely. Mrs. Sanchez, Mrs. Mikes, and.... Oh, goodness. I remember the third one, and now her name escapes me, and I've seen it over the course of the last year. Sanchez, Mikes, and ... Sotolongo! That was the [unclear].

**Ruiz:** The long one.

**Palma:** And I think of it in that way, because that's kind of how it rolled off all of our tongues, "Sanchez, Sotolongo, and Mikes" or "Sanchez, Mikes and Sotolongo," Mrs. Mikes being the elder, and the Anglo, as I recall.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember your friends at the time in school?

**Palma:** Yes, I do, and some are still friends to this day.

**Ruiz:** You were only at Coral Way....

**Palma:** Six months.

**Ruiz:** You were only there for a little while, but you still have friends from there?

**Palma:** I do. But ironically, it was a very.... I think that community at the time—and I still am a product of this community, and have lived here off and on for many years—is pretty tight-knit culturally and socially. And so a lot of us that went to elementary school continued on in middle school and high school, and for that reason, a lot of those people that I met at that age actually journeyed with me through middle and high school. And so I maintained those friendships, and I feel very fortunate that that is so.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember, with your friends in Coral Way, what languages you used with them?

**Palma:** English.

**Ruiz:** You spoke only English?

**Palma:** Hands down, English.

**Ruiz:** And were they all English speakers?

**Palma:** No, they weren't, but that was my survival language at the time. I felt like I was thrust into another world. For me it was a very unique experience, because having been pretty much reared in public schools in New York where everything was monolingual English—everything—with the exception of the little bit of Spanish that I spoke with a newcomer, that I was **allowed** to speak with a newcomer. This was totally different for

me, and so I really needed the English to survive socially. The Spanish was a real kick in the pants for me.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember—I know you were only in the program for about six months—if over that span of time, and maybe later, the language used in your home changed in any significant way?

**Palma:** No.

**Ruiz:** Did your parents start to speak more English to you or anything like that?

**Palma:** Not at all. Spanish was always the language of my home, and it was the language that it was anticipated we would speak in the home. It was our home language. And I do remember my sister and I would code switch. My sister was born in Cuba, and arrived in the States when she was six months old. I preferred English, and ironically, I know she preferred Spanish, and yet between us, as siblings, we spoke English most of the time. The majority of the time we spoke English.

**Ruiz:** I know that you commented on this a minute ago: The students apparently in that first generation were assigned either to the Spanish or the English group, but you don't remember that in fact that was.... You don't remember what group you were in, and how you were assigned there and so on?

**Palma:** You know, my inclination is to say that I might have been with the English group, because a lot of the people that I remember, spoke predominantly English. But in my mind's eye, there wasn't a dividing line. Possibly because I spoke both languages I was able to relate to both groups of kids. But I really don't know. I think Mrs. Sanchez was my primary teacher, so I would say, thinking back, I was probably earmarked as a

Spanish kid. But I saw my primary and dominant language, because my academic language was English, as English. I didn't see myself as a Spanish-speaking kid mostly.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember taking any assessments, any tests? Not the test for the school, but like some kind of standardized test or something, in order to evaluate your proficiency in a language?

**Palma:** I don't remember that at all. It may have happened, but I don't remember it.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember taking any kind of standardized tests while you were in the school?

**Palma:** Yes, I do, but I think those were all in English. Just the typical, run of the mill, yearly assessments that would be had prior to [F.K.?].

**Ruiz:** Let me ask you about your school experience itself. As you recall, what was the ratio of Spanish and English used in the classroom?

**Palma:** You know, I'd say it was about 50-50. Hard to say. I remember parts of the day, for certain aspects of curriculum, being in Spanish. For example, I remember specifically having science in Spanish, and social studies in Spanish. And curriculum would change, I would guess it was every nine weeks, but I don't really recall how specifically that was done. But I do remember having specific coursework in social studies and Spanish. I do remember having specific coursework in science and Spanish. So I know there was some attention to curriculum bilingually in that way.

**Ruiz:** Did you also have those subjects in English at some point in that program?

**Palma:** I believe we did. Yes, I believe we did, but it's funny that I remember more of the Spanish. And I think, again, because my academic language, to that point in time, had been English, the biggest struggle that I had as a learner was acquiring the

information in the Spanish language. Because my strength to that point had been certainly in English. And so even though I was a strong student, going into Coral Way, my struggle was not with the academics, it was clearly with the language acquisition component.

**Ruiz:** You had mentioned before that you considered yourself an English speaker ...

**Palma:** Yes.

**Ruiz:** ... because your academic language, all your academic training, had been in English. What about what might be called something like a cultural identity? Was that also English for you, more kind of the Anglo-English, or was it more Cuban-Spanish? How did that work?

**Palma:** You know, it's funny you should ask that. I always identified much, much more with American culture. And I think that was really a selective choice on my part. My parents were very proud of the fact that they had come to the United States to live, and they came way before anything having to do with political reasons. They arrived in the United States in the mid-forties, long before Castro and everything, all the negativism he brought. But beyond the politics of the situation, I realized that I had been born here, my parents were **very** proud to live in America, **very** awesomely grateful for the opportunities they had, once here. And I think because of that pride, I identified much, much more with being American than I ever did Cuban, until many years later. And so at **that** point in my life, I really didn't see myself as Cuban or Cuban American. And I remember the backlash of that culturally for many older Cubans that would say, "But you're Cuban because your parents are Cuban." Well, I didn't identify with that, not at that age.



**Ruiz:** What about now?

**Palma:** You know, I'm very proud of my Cuban heritage, but I still very much say I'm American, because this is my culture, and this is my world, and this is the world I live in and identify with. I was in Cuba once, in 1959, for Christmas. That was the only time I was there. My grandmother was still living there at the time, and we went for the holidays. And I have nothing but a photo of a memory of that occasion, and so I can't identify with a culture that is unknown to me. I've never [lived] there, and I've never wanted to go, for political reasons, quite frankly—which are strongly cultural reasons, ironically. But even though I'm very proud of that aspect of who I am, in terms of my heritage, I see myself as American, and I'm very proud of that.

**Ruiz:** Did you have any other bilingual schooling experiences after Coral Way, in junior high or high school?

**Palma:** I think there was an emphasis, as we proceeded on to middle school to attempt to continue that aspect of a bilingual-bicultural education, say, through Shenandoah. I don't see that as being quite as successful. I remember having maybe one social studies course in Spanish that year, other than that. And maybe part of the science that year was as well, but there wasn't as much of an emphasis or a carryover—possibly because the courses were, you know, at that point your schedule changes room-to-room, and very different structure than what we had at Coral Way where it was all a self-contained room—which, by the way, I have feelings about that now as an educator. I don't think that was the best situation, but that's my observation from it now as an adult.

**Ruiz:** You're talking about the large pod?

**Palma:** It was a **very** large pod, and I thought—even then I remember thinking, “This is a **horrible** situation for kids to learn in.”

**Ruiz:** Why do you say that?

**Palma:** It was just downright noisy. And if there were behavior problems going on in one section of the room—which there typically were—they were clearly, auditorily.... You know, we were **all** aware of it.

**Ruiz:** So there were what, 90, 100 kids in that room, three different groups?

**Palma:** Yes. It was a large room, the acoustics were terrible, as I recall, because we could clearly hear what was going on in all the other areas. I don’t think it was well thought-out in terms of the architectural design of the building itself, for best practice.

**Ruiz:** Interesting. Just one more thing: Those courses either at Shenandoah or in high school, that would have been your choice, right? They weren’t bilingual normally. At least what I’ve heard from other people is that they chose to go into those bilingual classes.

**Palma:** Yes, and again, I think we need to remember, kids have a lot more choices now. At that point in our lives, it wasn’t our choice, it was our parents’ choice. (laughs) Frankly, it would not have been **my** choice.

**Ruiz:** I see. Okay. Do you remember the materials that you used while you were at Coral Way—the books, the handouts, the other materials?

**Palma:** As I recall, I don’t know. I think that was really the day and age where we had a lot of mimeographs and dittos and that kind of thing. I do remember, for example, Mrs. Sanchez using a lot of overheads. I vividly remember that. She used to love to teach off overheads—which now, as a teacher, makes me think very likely she did that

because she might not have had access to other forms of material—I don't know. Or that might have been just her selected medium for teaching purposes. But I remember her using a lot of overheads, and us taking a lot of notes—and a lot of handouts.

**Ruiz:** The overheads were things that she developed herself?

**Palma:** Yes.

**Ruiz:** Or they were preprinted overheads?

**Palma:** For example, if she was talking about things having to do with plant structure, I remember designs going up on the overhead, and she would speak through them. Or if it was math, she would use the overhead in that way.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember any other kind of technology that might have been used in the school, in the classroom?

**Palma:** Not particularly, no.

**Ruiz:** Films, filmstrips?

**Palma:** I have some recollection of filmstrips, but I can't tell you specifically what that was, whether it was in Spanish or English—I don't recall.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember whether you had English books and Spanish books, or if you only had English books? How did that work? Do you remember any Spanish books?

**Palma:** You know, honestly, I specifically don't remember if there were Spanish books. I'm assuming the books were in English, but I don't really recall. I can't pinpoint that in my mind, to say to you that I had a book in Spanish. I don't remember that specifically.

**Ruiz:** But if you would have had, let's say, science and Spanish, your book would have been in English, and then there would be some translation—is that the idea? Or how did that work?

**Palma:** You know when we did the coursework, let's say in Spanish, I just remember handouts for some reason. I don't remember a tangible book. But maybe there was. I just don't recall that aspect of it.

**Ruiz:** I should have probably asked you this earlier, but can you give us a sense of your day when you were there? How did that work?

**Palma:** You know, I was kind of overwhelmed by the size of the group, and I remember all of us sort of being hauled into this pod, walking down this hall. And we were sort of.... You know, you could think about it, in a sense it was somewhat of a special situation because we all knew this was a brand-new building, and it was a pod that was separate from the school. But yet somehow, looking back on it, it almost did feel like a laboratory situation. We **were** separate from the school. I never quite understood that, but I didn't question it as a child. I just knew it was a whole separate function of the building. And the building had lovely grounds, by the way, but we weren't in it much. Beautiful gardens, for example. And I don't remember being in that environment too much, other than maybe for the cafeteria. And then as we walked through our day, and everyone would go in, I remember classes being structured according to your teacher. For example, if you were with Mrs. Sanchez, you were with Mrs. Sanchez for whatever it was she taught, whether it was science.... And then either we moved or the teacher moved. That specific aspect of the day I don't recall. But somebody moved: either it was us as kid, or they as teachers. It might have been us, because I remember Mrs. Mikes just being in one given area of the room. So it might have been us as kids that moved around, according to subject, throughout the day.

**Ruiz:** If I don't remember, you remind me to ask you about besides the physical arrangement, why you thought it was not a good arrangement, but we'll get back to that in a minute. Can you tell me a bit about if your parents were involved in any kind of school activities, open houses, meetings, anything of that sort?

**Palma:** Well, I remember when we first enrolled, because it was midyear, both of my parents came with me to the school. I probably missed out on open house and all those other early-year functions for that reason. And I don't remember too many other functions throughout the year that would have involved parents, because again, I came at midyear. But that being said, if there were parent functions, likely it would have been my father who would have attended with me, because his English was a bit stronger in terms of receptive and expressive language in English, than my mom. But I don't remember there being many parent functions, as of, say, January to June.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember any kind of community kinds of functions, where the community came into the school—open houses or picnics or parties, or general meetings for the community, or anything of that sort?

**Palma:** I remember a year-end party that they did for the kids, and I think the theme might have been "Up, Up, and Away!" which was a big song around that time. I just remember it being like a sendoff sort of, end-of-the-year, graduation party sort of thing. That's all I remember about an end-of-the-year function, but I do believe that was primarily for the kids. I don't think the parents were involved in that, unless maybe through PTA. I don't think my parents were specifically involved in that, that I know of. There might have been other parents that were.

**Ruiz:** And that means that you probably didn't see parents in the classroom at all.

Parents didn't come to the classroom?

**Palma:** I don't remember parents in the classroom at all. As teachers and caregivers, I just remember the three teachers.

**Ruiz:** Do you remember any other adults in the classroom while you were there?

**Palma:** I can't say that I do.

**Ruiz:** Okay, let's talk a little bit about your attitudes, impressions, whatever, of your participation. Can you remember how you felt about being in this program—when you were in the program, how you felt?

**Palma:** Well, my initial feelings were very emotional ones. And I say that because I've taught children with ESL backgrounds and needs, and learning English as a second language, but I felt like an ESL child in that environment. And I felt that way, because even though I spoke Spanish, my academic language was certainly in English, and suddenly I was thrust into this world that **demanded** that I not only speak it, but that I understand it, that I read and I write it. And so I really had a tough time with that, because it wasn't my strength, and I was a very **good** student, up until that point in time, and I really felt that I was struggling academically, but it wasn't because of the academics. And I was smart enough to know that, I realized that it was because of the language component. And so that piece for me was very, very difficult to justify in my mind and say, "You know, you can do this." And I vividly remember going home crying and in tears many days, and being very frustrated, and almost to the point of being angry with my mother, specifically, for **forcing** me into this model, which to me was not natural. And it wasn't natural because it's not what I knew, it's not where I had come

from before. It wasn't the academic world that I'd been involved in. And the academics were very different for me in New York. I mean, I was involved in public school, but I remember going, for example, to field trips that involved the museums in Manhattan. What kid gets to do **that**?! I remember reading the stock market [reports] as part of our math. And so even academically I felt like I was so much more ahead, but yet when I got to Coral Way, there were so many aspects of the academics that I really struggled with—again, because of the language piece.

**Ruiz:** How did your parents react to your displeasure or frustration or whatever?

**Palma:** You know, I really think with a lot of just persistence and insistence that I stick it out, and that one day I would thank them, just as I would for the army boots that I wore as a kid because I had flat feet, let's say. It was just that kind of, "You've just got to have thick skin about this. In the end it will prove itself right and best for you." And I trusted them, and I knew where their heart was at, and what they wanted in the long term for me, but at that point in time, I felt like they didn't understand my struggle, and so I was very frustrated that year. That was really a very, very difficult year for me—aside from the fact that as a sixth-grader I was coming into a whole new state, a whole new culture, trying to make new friends and develop that social circle for myself. I think had I grown up in that environment, it would have been much more natural for me. But it was an extremely abrupt social and academic change, so it was tough.

**Ruiz:** So did you eventually thank your parents?

**Palma:** Yes, many years later, when I got my first job. (laughs)

**Ruiz:** So your attitude changed, or your feelings changed about having participated in the program. You clearly had those feelings **then**, but looking back on it, was it a good experience that you appreciate now, or are you still ambivalent about it?

**Palma:** You know, I have very positive feelings about the whole bilingual-bicultural educational aspect of that level of instruction in my past, but it doesn't take away the fact that it was a very difficult time for me—socially, personally, emotionally, academically, mentally, all of those things. And there's a lot of emotion tied into that remembrance, for that reason. But I see the value of it now, as an adult, and I'm very grateful for that experience, because it did allow me to become **so** much more aware of not only the cultural aspects of my past, but the rich heritage in terms of language. And that was just priceless to me later on as an adult, seeking employment—and almost finding out more about who I was as an individual.

**Ruiz:** During your struggles in the school, were there people who helped you through it—teachers, the administration people, counselors, other students, parents, family members—do you remember?

**Palma:** You know, I have to say it's almost like I didn't want my peers to know that I had that level of weakness, because I was struggling to make friends and survive socially, let's say. And so I don't know that my peers knew how I felt. Maybe I expressed that feeling to a few of them. I don't really say I recall having done that. But I was the new kid on the block. In fact, I remember that kids would laugh about certain words that I would pronounce with a New York accent. I remember very vividly reading a sentence out loud one day and saying the word "dog." And they'd say, "Say it again!" because I said, "dawg," or "dauwer" [i.e., door]. And they would laugh, and they would think it



was funny, and they'd have me repeat it. (laughs) So it was a real tough time in terms of just accommodating to the whole culture I was in.

**Ruiz:** You had talked a little while ago about how now, looking back, you thought that that particular arrangement was not pedagogically sound. Can you expand on that just a little bit?

**Palma:** Sure. The room was a large room, but at the same time it didn't allow for a lot of physical mobility for the kids. I really felt there was little space for us to move, other than once we were.... You know, it was kind of like a cattle call and everybody would go to their desks. And you pretty much had.... It wasn't a room that accommodated well to movement. And it was a structure of instruction where kids were at their desks pretty much for most of the day. And so children that had a struggle with that behaviorally, well, you know, as I said, the kids in the other packs would know about it right away. There were about, I'd say, 30 kids, maybe more, in a class, so there easily could have been 90 or more children in the room at a time. The sound level was sometimes a disturbing factor. I, for one, am somewhat auditorily distracted, and I know we all have learning styles that are quite different, so I'm sure a lot of people struggled with that kind of teaching environment for that reason. I don't think it was the best for the teachers, because they could hear each other teach, and sometimes we were aware of that as well. And so it might have been a struggle for the teachers. I would bet that it was—I can't imagine it wasn't—and it certainly was for us as kids as well. And it was a **terribly** cold room. I remember it as physically being a **terribly**, terribly cold room. And then you'd walk out to this Florida heat, and it was like being in the mid of winter and all of a sudden just rolling out to 80-degree weather. And I remember it as being a dark, humid

room. I don't remember it as having a lot of windows, and so to me it was a sad environment somehow. I don't think it was a good pick as a room.

**Ruiz:** You're talking about the physical environment and the way in which the room was organized.

**Palma:** The physical environment.

**Ruiz:** What about the bilingual aspect of this?

**Palma:** You know, again, because you could hear so much other instruction going on in the room, I don't know that it was the best organizationally to have all of these kids in the same mix. It might have been easier to move them throughout the day, so they facilitated amongst instructors, and maybe that was the thinking going into it. And plus you keep them together as a little pack. But it might have been better to consider maybe classes that were side-by-side and they just rotated.

**Ruiz:** Let me try this a different way: Let's say that your class had been the only class in that big room, and that you were getting instruction the way you were getting it, or that maybe the teachers would come in, as opposed to your rotating out. I guess I'm trying to understand if you think this dual language or bilingual model of teaching children, the idea of teaching children a second language as well as a first language, is that a good thing generally, or is it something that is just flawed in itself? It wasn't just the physical environment, but it was also the teaching model that was bad?

**Palma:** No, the teaching model I think was sound. I think what was a **lousy** pick was the structure of the room and the composition of the kids and the teachers in the **same** room. That would be my critique. But I think the aspect of the bilingual-biculturalism certainly is a sound principle. And frankly, those of us that participated in the program,

and friends that I have, that, say, were monolingual English, some of them hold jobs to this day that they **vastly** depend on their Spanish skills that they learned at that point in their lives—Spanish speaking and understanding. So certainly it proved itself well in terms of the.... The outcome of the program I think had tremendous value, and I daresay if we followed through with a lot of people's lives that were involved in this program, and years that followed it, you know, so many people came out with very strong professional lives, that have impacted this community and beyond. So was it valuable? Was it necessary? Sure! Was it good? Absolutely.

**Ruiz:** You are now bilingual-bicultural, and **biliterate** as well, right? You read and write in both languages?

**Palma:** Yes.

**Ruiz:** So it sounds as if it was a very effective program for you, at least in terms of that.

**Palma:** Yes.

**Ruiz:** I think this is probably my last formal question: I've been asking people their most enjoyable kind of thing that happened at Coral Way; their least enjoyable kind of thing. You've probably already told us a bit about the least enjoyable, but you can expand on those too, if you want. What are the **kinds** of things that you really enjoyed about Coral Way? What are the things that maybe you were less appreciative of?

**Palma:** I think what I enjoyed most was—it really had to do more with the social aspects—very little with the academic at this point. But I enjoyed the friendships that I made there, that have been with me through the years. And I don't know if it's because we all had a common thread culturally, to some degree, it was just a way to bind us together, and we had a common thread, if you will, in terms of community, in terms of

culture. And maybe for that reason parents got to know other parents, and kids got to know each other a little bit better. We went to each other's homes, celebrated each other's birthdays and that kind of thing. So because it was that kind of community, I think the social aspects that brought people together were very important. You know, certainly academically I'm very grateful for that opportunity and that experience, because even when I had a degree in hand, I couldn't get a teaching job. My first job out of college was working for a state senator, and the only reason I got that job was because I was bilingual. And so it had nothing to do with my formal education, it had everything to do with my language skills. So I'm grateful for that, and I think in large part Coral Way, and other programs that followed, had a lot to do with that.

And as far as the negative aspects, I think maybe if they had looked a little bit more closely at the physical environment, to make that as pleasant for the kids as they could have, would have been, and could have been, a better situation academically, to set the tone for a more positive learning environment—for the teachers **and** the kids, because I think they were learning too, the teachers were.

**Ruiz:** Well thank you very much for your time. We are constantly looking for information from people and other information that you might have. If you have any more that you can think of, you can get in contact with us. We'll give you our cards. You know how to contact us.

**Palma:** Okay.

**Ruiz:** If something occurs to you, just let us know. If other names of people that you can think of we might want to talk with, you can let us know. Or if you can find documents, artifacts, this museum is **very** interested in collecting that, in large part

because they have virtually nothing from Coral Way, in spite of the fact that they have files on schools. So just let us know, and we're fairly easy to get ahold of.

**Palma:** You know, something comes to mind, too, as far as the teachers. I do remember Mrs. Sanchez very, very well, and I remember her interest in providing this kind of instruction for the kids. I really think in my mind's eye she was probably the most instrumental force behind this program. And I don't know that to be true, but I remember her involvement with the kids, even beyond school. I remember her tutoring, for example, my sister. And so it speaks to her love of education and children. And I think to have an educator that had that sense of pride for her culture and concern for a population of children that really needed instruction, and to work with parents and families in her community, speaks volumes of her love for this program. And I'm certain she was probably very instrumental in getting it off the ground.

**Ruiz:** Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]