

## TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

ALBERTO VILLARREAL

This interview was conducted as part of a series on the Mexican American in Minnesota.

Albert Villarreal, was born shortly after the Great Depression, and spent his early years moving from town to town, getting his formal education in relatively disjointed segments. He worked at a variety of jobs as a young man, and for a period of several years before the fact, aspired to join the Albert Lea Police Department.

His employment as a member of the police force has led him to developing interest in training police attack dogs and serving as an interpreter in the courts. He is happily settled and established in the Albert Lea community.

This is a transcript of a tape recorded interview edited to aid in clarity and ease of comprehension for the reader. The original tape recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.

INTERVIEW WITH AL VILLARREAL

JULY 12, 1976

INTERVIEWER: GRANT MOOSBRUGGER

Moosbrugger: This is Grant Moosbrugger interviewing Officer Al Villarreal, also known as Valariel, in the Albert Lea Police Station. Today is July 12, 1976. Do I have your permission to interview you for the Minnesota Historical Society, Officer Villarreal?

Villarreal: You do.

Moosbrugger: Thank you. Maybe you could start off with a little background. Could you tell us when and where you were born?

Villarreal: I was born April 23, 1933, in Blue Earth, Minnesota.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell us a little about your parents and if you have any brothers and sisters, and in what order you come in the family. Are you the oldest or the youngest?

Villarreal: I have two brothers and three sisters. I have an older brother and a younger brother. My sisters are younger than me.

Moosbrugger: Are they all living?

Villarreal: Yes. I have a sister that lives in Minneapolis; a sister in Reno; a brother that's a school teacher in Northfield, Minnesota; and a brother that's retired from the service. He is living in Texas.

Moosbrugger: Are your parents still living?

Villarreal: Yes. They live here, in Albert Lea.

Moosbrugger: When did they come to Minnesota, do you know?

Villarreal: My dad came from Monterrey, Mexico in the early twenties. My mother is originally from Kansas City, Missouri.

Moosbrugger: Do you recall hearing what brought them to Minnesota?

Villarreal : No. I really don't know.

Moosbrugger: So you don't know if it was relatives or friends that were up here?

Villarreal: Well, my mother came to Minnesota. My grand-father moved from Missouri. At that time, they were working in the fields.

Moosbrugger: Your older brother, was he born in Minnesota? I'm just trying to figure out roughly what year your folks might have come to Minnesota.

Villarreal: I think he was born in Texas.

Moosbrugger: Your married sister in Minneapolis, what's her married name?

Villarreal: Her name is Caroline Navarette.

Moosbrugger: Navarette? N-a-v-a-r-e-t-t-e? Okay, thank you. Your other sister is also married? What is her married name?

Villarreal: Sarah is married to Stanley Suiter.

Moosbrugger: Suiter. S-u-i-t-e-r? And where do they live?

Moosbrugger: They live here in Albert Lea. I have a sister named Cruz. She is married to Gordy Anderson, who is a musician, in Lake Tahoe and is also a teacher.

Moosbrugger: Where does your brother live?

Villarreal: My brother in Northfield is a teacher. He is also the head coach.

Moosbrugger: Is he with the Northfield schools?

Villarreal: Yes. High school.

Moosbrugger: What subject does he teach, do you know?

Villarreal: I don't know.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell us a little bit about your history, where you grew up, where you went to school and any experiences you had?

Villarreal: Well, I didn't go to school in Blue Earth. We moved from there shortly after I was born, I guess. I started school in Richmond, Missouri. I also went to school in Mason City, then to school here in Albert Lea, and back to Mason City, where I finish school.

Moosbrugger: You finished school in Mason City, Iowa? What age were you when you moved from Blue Earth, Minnesota? You'd mentioned you had spent some time in Blue Earth, when you were growing up?

Villarreal: Mostly here in Albert Lea and Mason City. I was born in Blue Earth and moved from there when I was just a little kid.

Moosbrugger: I see. So you were born in Blue Earth, but spent most of your time growing up in Mason City and Albert Lea. Do you remember anything significant that you would consider unusual, different, or interesting about your high school and grade school years?

Villarreal: No. I don't believe it was anything outstanding. I was just a regular student.

Moosbrugger: When you got out of high school, what were your ideas on what kind of work you wanted to do? Or did you go into the service?

Villarreal: No. I was married too young, so I never got into the service.

Moosbrugger: How old were you when you got married?

Villarreal: About nineteen. I just worked here: in our packing house; foundry work; construction; shipping clerk for a furniture store and factory; and also for a hospital.

Moosbrugger: What was your wife's maiden name?

Villarreal: Isabel Perez. P-e-r-e-z.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell us about your children, when they were born and what their names are?

Villarreal: My oldest daughter is twenty-four years old and she's married and lives in Clear Lake, Iowa. Her name is Linda Estretch. Rosaline is twenty-three, and she is married to Gordon Hacker. She lives here in Albert Lea. I have a daughter named Debra. She is living and working in Winona. She's twenty-two. Albert Junior just got married this summer. He's twenty-one and he works for

- Villarreal: the city. He works for the Park Department. I only have one daughter at home, now. She is sixteen. Her name is Cynthia, and she is the youngest of my children.
- Moosbrugger: How did you come about deciding to get on the Albert Lea Police Department?
- Villarreal: I have always been interested in law enforcement. I put in an application when I was twenty-one and didn't make it. Then when I was twenty-eight or twenty-nine I applied again, and I made it that time, that was about 1960. I have been on the force now for almost sixteen years.
- Moosbrugger: Do you belong to any civic clubs, social groups or church groups?
- Villarreal: Mostly P.T.A.'s, and the Catholic Church. I don't belong to any other clubs. We used to have what they called LULAC Club, a Mexican Club. I belonged to that for a while, until it finally fizzled out.
- Moosbrugger: In your social life, have you other friends of Mexican descent? Or would it be just coincidental and your friends of mostly other nationality groups?
- Villarreal: No. I have equal amounts. The population of Albert Lea is roughly twenty to twenty-one thousand. It's safe to say that I know just about all the Mexican people that stay here year round and some that migrate back and forth. I know quite a few of the people that work in Hollandale too.
- Moosbrugger: Are there ever any fiestas or social life, that are more interesting or more understandable to people of Mexican descent, that goes on around here?
- Villarreal: Well, September sixteenth is Mexican Independence Day. We have a fiesta every year.
- Moosbrugger: Do you have a parade or a fiesta, what do you actually have?
- Villarreal: Well, not so much now. When we had the LULAC and Azteca Club, they did a lot more. My dad was the one that organized the Azteca Club years ago.
- Moosbrugger: That is no longer active?
- Villarreal: No. That kind of died out. We went into the LULAC, because that was quite

Villarreal: a big club. It was nationally organized.

Moosbrugger: What year would that have been that the Azteca Club died out?

Villarreal: It must have been about 1963, somewhere in there.

\*\* The remainder of this interview is inaudible. These were the first clear nine minutes. There was a total of fifteen minutes recorded.

Mexican-American Oral History Project  
Minnesota Historical Society