Andrew Huse: We'll get started real quick, just—I’m here with Charlie and Melba Hero, it’s September 26, 2006. And we’re just going to have a conversation today. First, where were you born, Charlie?

Charles Hero: In Tampa, not too far from the Columbia [Restaurant] on Third Avenue and Twenty-third Street.

AH: Okay, and was that in a clinic then?

CH: No, no. I was—

AH: Born at home?

CH: At home.

AH: Okay.

CH: A midwife. I mean, a midwife delivered me, yeah.

AH: Okay and when was that?

CM: Nineteen twenty-three [1923].

AH: All right. Well, so tell us how you’re related to, to Cesar [Gonzmart], I guess, right? That’s who—that’s your link to the family?
CH: No, no, Adela [Gonzmart].

AH: Oh, Adela, I’m sorry, it goes farther back.

CH: My father’s—

*pause in recording*

AH: —yeah, right? Well, you can’t get that at any other Columbia either, you know?

CH: No.

AH: What’s that?

**Melba Hero**: (inaudible)

AH: No, no, you can’t get the Caldo Gallego.

MH: Oh.

CH: Yeah. Nobody wants it. In Ybor City everybody knew it was a Spanish dish.

AH: Yeah.

CH: When you go other places, they don’t know what it is.

AH: Yeah.

CH: And to get back to it, my father was her mother’s uncle.

AH: Okay.

CH: That’s best how we can relate it, All right?

AH: Okay, and what was your father’s name?

CH: Hermino Hero. [Spells out name] Matter of fact, he was a best man in their wedding when he married Casimiro. There’s a picture on the wall, you seen the picture on the wall there? You see the picture?

AH: The one that’s inside there?

CH: Yeah, you see it there, you’ll see, you’ll see Hero there—

MH: And the marriage certificate and his name is there.
CH: Yeah.

AH: Okay. Now [a] couple of things that Melanie [Gonzmart] wanted to know. Are the roots of your family just Spanish and French? Or are there other—

CH: No, we are—well, my great grandfather was French. That’s the only one. Everybody else was Spanish.

AH: Okay.

CH: So that’s, that’s (inaudible).

AH: Okay. Now what are some of your other common relatives then? And their surnames? That was another question Melanie wanted to know.

CH: Well, we are a very small family.

AH: Okay.

CH: Not many of them, a few cousins, and most of them are gone anyhow.

AH: Yeah.

CH: But I—my mother only had a niece and a nephew. So, that’s (inaudible). There was more people on my father’s side. Because that’s the French side—that’s where the Hero name came in.

AH: I see.

CH: And it’s (inaudible) fix it. I told Casey [Gonzmart] how I couldn’t. Because it, they became—they, when they were in France, there were two brothers, and they you know, in those days, way back in the 1800s, there was a new king, and he had a fight for territory and all…

AH: Okay.

CH: …They were going to put in the good names, but they became pirates. They were pirates to him. That’s a real—(laughs)—Casey didn’t love that.

AH: Okay.

CH: They didn’t know that.

AH: Okay.
CH: And then, they decided to leave, and then they came to Cuba.

AH: Okay.

CH: And one went to Cuba, and one went to Mexico.

AH: Now you, this is the French side then?

CH: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

CH: But they married—now in Mexico, I don’t know, I’m assuming they married Spanish. But the one here that’s my grandfather, my grandfather, he married a Spaniard. He did.

AH: Okay. And then, the Spanish side—where in Spain are they from?

CH: The Basque Country.

AH: Okay, that borders—

CH: You know where the Pyrenees [are]? Yeah. On this side of France, that’s where I am—the Pyrenees.

AH: Okay.

CH: The name is Salavarria, which is definitely a Basque name. The “Ria” is his name.

AH: I see.

CH: His name was Salavarria. See that was my mother’s side.

AH: Okay.

CH: Ria, (inaudible) side, not that much, because as I said, we didn’t have that big a family. Like I said, we only had two cousins, and the cousins we had were on my father’s side. Because, Carmita had two brothers and three sisters—four sisters.

MH: (inaudible)

CH: Amico—

AH: You mean Carmen?

MH and AH: Yeah.
AH: Okay.

CH: She had the (inaudible) and—whose name I can’t remember—that was her brother. But then—she had four sisters.

AH: Okay.

CH: Which would be my, my father was also their uncle. So you know—

AH: Okay.

CH: No, no there wasn’t—no, just Carmita’s mama—

MH: Carmita’s (inaudible).

CH: Yeah, and, and one of them died, and you know Ciela died, when she was young, she did. It’s hard to—

MH: —sister—(inaudible)

CH: Yeah. That was on the Hernandez side.

AH: Okay. She also wanted to know about—if you guys know anything about Cesar’s first wife, Fantasia?

CH: Very little. Just what he told me, but he never—for some reason, didn’t say much about it.

AH: What did he tell you?

CH: Well, he got married in Cuba. That much I know. And then he had, of course, Cesar, Junior. And I don’t know what happened, but they—but she lived here in Tampa for quite a while. She died here in Tampa.

AH: Oh, Fantasia did?

CH: I’m pretty sure she did. I know she lived here while I was a baby.

AH: Okay.

CH: But he never said too much about it. If there’s one thing about it—he did, he never said too much about it. And we were very close, we—never broached the subject, I never saw (inaudible), I can’t tell you much on that side.

AH: I see.
CH: But she was—much older than him.

AH: She was?

CH: She was, she was older, yeah.

AH: Okay. And Melanie also wanted to know if you know anything about trips they took together?

CH: You mean, us?

AH: The trips they took together—I’m assuming that’s Cesar and Fantasia?

CH: No, that I don’t know.

MH: Oh, that? We don’t know.

CH: I’ll tell you, he didn’t tell me much about that, I don’t know.

AH: Okay. Now—

MH: How do you know they had taken any trips together?

AH: Yeah, I don’t know—I’m just going by what she wrote here.

MH: Yeah, okay.

CH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AH: Now, one thing I find interesting, and Melanie also wanted to know more about, is Cesar’s relationship with Casimiro and Carmen. Now, it seems like, seems like Casimiro—he, he had some doubts about—

CH: Exactly.

AH: And then—

CH: That’s right, that is correct.

AH: And then, so, so tell us a little bit about that.

CH: I really, I know that he wasn’t very happy with it because—I don’t know, he—it wasn’t his choice for her husband.

AH: Yeah.
CH: You know, in that—it happens a lot between a family, you know?

AH: Yeah.

CH: But later on I guess, he really took over because he, I guess when he got to know them it went a lot better. And then he died, and took over the business. But in the beginning he was, he wasn’t very happy with them then. He was very, (inaudible) you know? They thought he was—Cesar, you had to know Cesar when you went out, like on a trip—he was a, I mean, this guy had probably (inaudible) I’ll tell you that.

AH: Oh yeah?

MH: Oh yeah. They were very good people but—

CH: We had such fun together—

AH: Now tell me about that, why is that?

CH: I guess because when we went traveling, he let his hair down, you know what I mean? Forget about the business and all, we enjoyed! We saw, we took pictures, we went here, and we bought things, and you know—I mean we took one—Richard doesn’t know that one. We took one trip to Mexico one time, when they were making the restaurant in St. Augustine.

AH: Okay.

CH: And we had bought furniture, because a lot of Spaniards taught the Mexicans how to make the furniture.

AH: Yeah.

CH: And we went over there, all over the (inaudible) looking for it. As a matter of fact, I’ve got some lanterns, lights in my house, I keep them there.

AH: Okay.

CH: And it was funny, when Richard came to the airport, he couldn’t believe it. That plane just kept bumping; the stuff he had to go get—“I got to get a truck!” (laughs)

MH: The chairs (inaudible).

CH: Chairs! (laughs) It was funny; we had to laugh about that. And then he went and bought a big—as a matter of fact it’s sitting in the museum. A big thing with a big mirror—
AH: Yeah.

CH: He bought that in Mexico.

AH: Okay.

CH: We were together when he bought it, and he saw it, said, “Oh my god! We’re going to buy this thing!” They bought—liked to buy antique.

AH: Yes.

CH: And, they wouldn’t ship it. They wouldn’t ship this, and we’re in Mexico, and there it was in this place; I got the—“No! You know, we’ve got to take it apart!” It’s that simple—so it finally showed up [after] about a year, you know? Wasn’t it?

MH: Maybe two years?

CH: Maybe two years. (laughs)

AH: Two years?

CH: (laughs) Yeah!

AH: So they had to take this thing apart and ship it, piece by piece?

MH: Yeah.

CH: Yeah! (laughs) It’s humongous!

AH: Oh yeah, it’s pretty big. So he was always, he was kind of always shopping then?

MH: Yeah.

AH: Always looking for—?

MH: All our trips were shopping for things.

AH: Okay, so you guys shopped too?

MH: Yeah (laughs)

CH: My wife does shopping. That’s the whole thing. (laughs)

AH: So what are some of the other places that you went to? Mexico—

CH: Spain.
AH: Yeah? You went to Spain a lot?

CH: Three or four times, no?

(Interruption)

CH: We, as a matter of fact, we were driving down this road in Spain, just getting dark, you know? We passed by a place that had all kinds of displays outside where they sell all kinds of memorabilia, Spanish goods, you know? He said, “Let’s stop here, let’s stop here!” So we stopped there. All the stuff that we bought, they had it there but a lot cheaper. We started buying stuff. The owner got to know us and he very happily willing. He had is own little dungeon, where he had his wine— (laughs)

AH: Okay, yeah, like a wine cellar?

CH: He took us in there he said, “Look, look, you bought enough, let’s drink wine!” (laughs)

MH: “Don’t buy, don’t buy anymore, come and drink with me! (laughs)

AH: So what, after that you guys just sat down and had some, had some wine with him?

CH: Yeah, yeah.

MH: We sat down.

CH: We did.

MH: After we bought almost the whole store!

(all laugh)

AH: Well that’s rare, you know. Here in the United States you never hear someone tell you to stop buying, right?

CH: Nope. We went to a city not too far from, from—Pyrenees—we curved to Spain and went around. We saw this big fancy hotel, [built] way back in the eighteenth century. Got these pictures all the way about, the past king, the other king, you know, yeah? She decided to come up with a big camera, you know, a movie camera? He had it. We [were] wandering the road, nobody’s there yet. He’s taking pictures, and this man comes over there and he said, “What are you doing here? Are not in the hotel?” And he said, “No, we’re just looking. He said, “Sir? If you’re not in the hotel, you don’t belong here.” So I told him joking, I said—
AH: So he got kicked out of the hotel?

(all laugh)

CH: And [I said to] Cesar, “Man, I’ve been thrown out of better places than this! Cesar said, “Not me!”

AH: Yeah, I guess you’re not doing too bad if you get thrown out of a place like that.

CH: Yeah, we were on Germany. We went to (inaudible), a big gambling casino, (inaudible).

AH: Okay.

CH: And they’ve got another old hotel, probably from the sixteenth century—

MH: The one Hitler used to be in.

CH: Yeah, when Hitler—yeah, went there, yeah.

AH: Wow.

CH: And so he just would be very curious. And see, Cesar was always finding out something, you know?

AH: Yeah.

CH: He goes asking the people that were there when we were there, “How much does it cost to have a room here?” He said, “Sir, if you have to ask, you can’t afford it.” (laughs)

AH: Wow, that’s expensive.

CH: It was expensive! (laughs)

MH: You never found out how much it was?

CH: No! He didn’t know.

AH: So you—when you took these trips you, Adela came along too?

CH: Oh yeah.

AH: Okay.

CH: Oh yeah.
AH: Yeah, I’ve seen lots of family pictures on these trips.

MH: You know? What happened to all the pictures we took?

CH: Maybe (inaudible), she has them?

MH: I must have some place for him. I don’t know.

AH: Yeah.

MH: I don’t know where.

AH: So, let me see. Beyond the travels here—Okay, so what about Cesar’s relationship with Carmen? If, if things were a little testy at first with Casimiro, how were things with Carmen?

CH: I think it changed after a while because he, you know he was—she was always the kind of girl who was very polite, and treat her right and all that. And he kind of fit in with her after that you know?

AH: Okay.

CH: You know, it takes a while to get— (laughs)

AH: Yeah.

CH: It was fine.

AH: So would you say things got smoothed over with her?

CH: I would say that.

AH: Before Casimiro? It took a while for Casimiro, right?

CH: Yeah, it was, she was, she did it first I’m sure. Casimiro didn’t do it very well. You know, if he knew Cesar like we know him, [and] you see him in business, he’s very uppity. You think the guy’s showing off or whatever. But when you travel with him, it’s sort of different—day and night.

AH: Yeah.

CH: It’s no pressure on it.

AH: So he’s not, as much the showman when he’s traveling?

CH: No, no. He’s just, a lot of fun. Believe me a lot of fun.
AH: Okay.

CH: That’s what we call him— (laughs) We’d gone with him crossing from Germany into Spain, or from Spain or France.

AH: Okay.

CH: And they, the orchard, you know. You say you’re going to see the orchard—and all of a sudden he had to pee. So he goes over and is pissing, and I’m taking pictures. [Cesar says,] “Oh don’t do that!” (laughs). Off of the road, you know— (laughs) We laughed and joked about that, you know? We were going down the highway, and Adela sees this—we’re going up the mountain, sees this restaurant, and says, “You know, we should stop there. It’s about lunch time, and you know, they probably have good food. You know this place [is] a Mom n’ Pop. Go in there.” Then we sat down and we just got some wine, and they had a wine that we had never seen. It was so purple, it looked about perfect.

AH: Oh yeah?

CH: So Cesar right away, he wants to buy the wine from this guy. He—and this was Mom n’ Pop ownership; they owned the restaurant. And he says, “No, no we only grow this for ourselves. If you want to sit here, it’s okay, you know?” So we ate there, and before we get done eating, every truck driver in that thing goes like this, (inaudible) And the food was delicious! Oh my god! But we got sick—we got diarrhea!

AH: Now—

MH: And we tried to bring the cook there over here.

AH: Oh yeah?

CH: Oh yeah.

MH: (inaudible)

CH: (laughs)

AH: Was the, was the—?

MH: The owner.

AH: Oh, he was the owner?

CH: Yeah! (inaudible)
AH: So this was, this was in Spain then?

CH: Yeah.

AH: And where in Spain was this? In the mountains?

CH: Yeah we were heading to—

AH: Like in the North?

MH: (inaudible)

AH: Okay.

MH: Because it was cold out there.

CH: Yeah, yeah.

AH: Okay.

MH: Then we went to Angora, you know where Angora is?

AH: Angora? I’m not familiar.

CH: It’s in the border between Spain and France.

AH: Okay.

CH: Right in the foothills of the mountain. All of a sudden, there used to be a, what do you call it—a guard—a place where you trade stuff between the French and the Spanish.

AH: Okay.

CH: They actually have a guard when you come across who will check who you are.

AH: Yes.

CH: And they have the fresh goods in there, food and treats and all that stuff.

AH: Now, when you guys would travel, I mean it seems like he had the restaurant in mind as he was traveling around.

CH and MH: Oh yeah.
AH: Right?

CH: Oh yeah.

MH: (inaudible)

AH: Yeah, so whether it was an antique or some artwork, or food.

CH: Oh my gosh. Oh yeah.

MH: He wanted to buy anything they saw.

AH: Yeah.

MH: And, and they did. They did buy.

AH: Yeah.

MH: And Adela was the navigator.

AH: The navigator?

CH: Yeah, oh yeah.

MH: She really was the navigator.

AH: Okay. So she—

MH: Whatever she wanted, he gave her.

AH: Yes.

MH: Wherever she wanted to go, we went.

AH: Yeah.

CH: A memory—in a memory she had her—

AH: She—because you had fun no matter what, right?

MH: Yeah (laughs).

CH: We were in Miami together one time…

AH: Now, what now? Back up?
CH: He told me to buy a Rolex watch in Switzerland.

AH: Oh, cheaper.

CH: That’s where they make them.

AH: Yeah.

CH: Well, the funny thing is you can get them cheaper in Tampa, you know?

AH: Yeah.

CH: Anyhow, the year after that, he said, “Let’s go to Miami.” Okay, let’s go to Miami. I said, “What do we get in Miami?” “Let’s go to Miami.” So we went.

AH: Now, now when was this about? Was this in the sixties [1960s] or the seventies [1970s]? Or what?

CH: The eighties [1980s].

AH: Oh this is the eighties, okay.

CH: Now the Spanish trip that you talked about earlier, when was that about?

MH: You know, I don’t remember, but from seventy-two [1972] up.

CH: Yeah. We did a lot of—

MH: We went several times.

AH: Okay. After seventy-two [1972]?

CH: Yeah.

MH: No, seventy-two [1972] we went to the Orient. After that.

AH: Okay.

MH: Yeah, that’s right, we went to the Orient.

AH: Now where did you go in the Orient? We’ll get back to Miami in a second.

MH: Not with them, not with them.

CH: Not with them.
AH: Oh, I see. Okay.

CH: But we went to Miami for the weekend. And Cesar says, “You know? They told me there is a place here that sells Rolex watches, and they’re a real good price.”

AH: Yeah.

CH: So we went in there, and sure enough, (inaudible) had a fantastic price. We tell him we want to buy about six watches. We got for my son, my daughter, you know—good Rolex watches. Anyhow, it came to I think eighteen thousand dollars. So that afternoon, we handed him a check. And all I got is my American Express—will you take it? He says, “Let me see it.” So I guess he goes, [looks at the card]. He started writing up the bill because we had said we wanted to buy some. (inaudible)

AH: Okay.

CH: So anyhow, so he starts adding it together, and getting ready to get his guarantee and everything else. He says, “Hey, we haven’t even heard about that yet. I’m not worried about it, he’s already checked it.” But then they called me, and they asked me—“Did you just come back from Germany? Spain?” And Adela, with her memory, “What hotel did you stay?” She told them, the one hotel, which one we stayed at, so that we could confirm that we were the right people, you know?

AH: Okay.

CH: He says, “I can’t believe that! Forgive me!” (laughs)

MH: Adela had a terrific memory!

CH: Oh my god.

AH: Really?

MH: Really.

CH: Oh yeah.

AH: So what, about where you stayed? Directions, things like that?

MH: Oh yeah.

CH: Names and places.

AH: Yeah, well that comes in handy.
CH: She was like an encyclopedia. (laughs)

AH: Okay.

MH: They were very nice people, very, very nice people.

CH: And (inaudible) he called me over—I’d have, I’d sneak over to the waiter and say, “Make sure I get the bill.”

AH: Okay.

CH: And he didn’t say a word to me. Next thing you know, he’d go in the kitchen, “You give him the bill, you’re fired!”

AH: Okay.

CH: (laughs) He was always doing that!

AH: Now what about entertaining at home? Did you go to their home much?

MH: Yeah.

CH: Not much, oh no.

AH: Now what were some of the big—it seems like some of the big events I know, I’ve seen lots of pictures of Christmas parties—

CH: Yeah.

AH: —so tell me about some of the main, some of the main events of the social calendar with that one.

CH: I’m going to tell you a little story about the houses they owned. I’m going tell you.

AH: Okay.

CH: We were supposed to go to the…

AH: Okay.

CH: You know, we’re here.

MH: No, not in there— (inaudible)

CH: Whatever.
CH: All right, whatever. It was Cesar talking to us first, you know. And then they talked it up, made him sell the house…

AH: Okay.

CH: It turned out that it was set up. A hoax. Cesar was hidden…

AH: They took off with whose car?

CH: The doctor’s car. How he got there, we don’t know, never said a thing. Believe me, I would—you would hear (inaudible). He would tell you that story, that was so funny. And see her screaming, “I want to shoot you!” (laughs) We had a lot of funny experiences.

Server: A knife?

AH: There you go. Here, we’ll take a break.

pause in recording

AH: —this, yeah.

CH: Turn it off, let’s eat first.

AH: Okay.

pause in recording

AH: So, you’re talking about plumbing with Casimiro? You did a lot of the work?

CH: Oh yeah, used to do all the work here. With his cousin, yeah.

AH: Okay, yeah.

CH: We did all the work. The lights and all that stuff. I’d come in. Casimiro was the type of guy, he stayed—he just slept in a chair. But he knew the (inaudible). So he’d give me all the keys for me, to hold. You know a little later he didn’t have to worry so much.

AH: Yeah.

CH: He could…

AH: Yeah.

CH: And, and I think drove her…

AH: Yeah.
CH: You know, he could tell you now how it [was] done. He, if he did it now—he probably heard this story a thousand times. If you go in that kitchen, taste some food and didn’t like it, he’d dump the whole damn thing in the garbage can.

AH: Oh yeah?

CH: You know, or in the toilet. I’ve seen him.

AH: Okay. He just what, threw the whole pot of soup, or, a whole thing of rice—?

CH: Whatever it was. He didn’t—if he didn’t think it was good, he’d say in Spanish, (inaudible) “This isn’t worth a damn.”

AH: It’s not worth a damn?

CH: (laughs) He won’t serve it to nobody—

AH: Yeah. He seemed like he was very strict on the quality control.

CH: Oh yes he was, oh yes he was. And didn’t want you ever to leave the Columbia Restaurant and be hungry.

AH: Yeah.

CH: Always be a big course.

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: Look at the courses we’re eating now, it’s big.

AH: Yeah.

(Interuption with server)

CH: Casimro’s Spanish food like— (inaudible)

AH: Yeah.

CH: He spent his whole life around meat. (inaudible) You want to know what’s going on.

AH: Well you know, that’s one of the things I really like about this Paul Wilder in those ads; each one’s a little story about a little quirk of the restaurant. And they don’t, they don’t try to pretend that everything’s perfect all the time, you know? That running a business is difficult and so they talk about the patio, the fountain—maybe that breaks down, you know? What do they do with chicken livers? That was another thing—
CH: (laughs)

AH: Like, they say, “We just threw them out, but Casimiro of course, he wanted to make use of everything.”

CH: Oh yeah.

AH: So then he came up with, (inaudible), the chef came up with a bacon wrapped chicken livers and everything, and different dishes to use them with.

CH: Right.

AH: So—

CH: Yeah, we don’t throw nothing away in here! (laughs)

MH: Going back, (inaudible) about the chicken.

CH: Oh this I hear—Florentine—a merchant down the street.

AH: Okay.

CH: He could (inaudible) from a chicken, you know. And back there, nobody cared about cooking straight from the freezer.

AH: Okay.

CH: And a crazy little kid goes in over there…

AH: Now what did he see? You said there’s more than two.

CH: Because he (inaudible) leg. He wondered how come so many legs? They say forty chickens. You going to split those up really? He had like one hundred. Oh, but it was in a scale. He was going to sell them chicken feet.

AH: Oh, Okay. I see.

CH: He’s crazy. I was in the kitchen and I heard him talking to him— (laugh)

AH: So it was the feet cut off the chickens.

CH: Yeah, you know, you throw them away.

AH: Yeah.
CH: Well, he—so when the dinnertime orders came, then—nobody told him about cutting feet! The kitchen, how do you (inaudible) a chicken—?

AH: Yeah, yeah.

CH: Only two!

AH: Yeah.

CH: Because otherwise, four! (laughs)

AH: Okay.

MH: And also how they used to steal the filets.

CH: Oh my god.

MH: The whole filets. Take them to the roof and put them in the garbage.

CH: There was this person—

AH: Now what is this?

CH: There’s this door way back here, and would go to the roof.

AH: Okay.

CH: Nobody’s around there, somebody [was] in cahoots. They’d get—

AH: Like someone who works here?

CH: Yeah, totally. Would get the, the whole filet, the lobsters—

MH: The ham.

CH: —the ham, whatever. And would go up on the roof and somebody would meet them there, and they would come and would wrap it up and throw it down.

AH: Oh they’d throw it off the roof?

CH: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

MH: They’d put in the garbage can.
CH: Seal it all up…

AH: Who caught them?

CH: Somebody in the restaurant.

AH: Okay, who was running it then? Was it Casimiro or Cesar?

CH: No I think Cesar was.

AH: Okay.

CH: Yes, I’m pretty sure it was then (inaudible).

CH: (inaudible) told him that, I forgot who told him. But somebody told Cesar.

AH: Oh, took him up on the roof?

CH: Yeah, yeah.

AH: Okay. So they sealed up that door!

CH: Yes (laughs).

AH: And that put an end to that! Okay.

CH: Let me clear this up. In those years before, before the war, we had a coffee shop here.

MH: (inaudible)

CH: So everybody came, they helped us serve us up. I mean it was a, I don’t—nobody would be here. A customer would come later on. Cesar would go up to the roof—(inaudible)

AH: Now, now who’s drinking the coffee?

CH: Whoever. (laughs)

AH: Oh, they would just—

CH: People knew of course they knew about it, and I guess they just went up the other way.

AH: Okay, now where did they leave this coffee maker?
CH: The (inaudible)—right there in the station.

AH: Okay.

CH: And they would go out and there and they would make their own coffee.

AH: Okay.

CH: Jesus Christ, you know that cost a lot of money.

AH: Yeah.

CH: You seen that, (inaudible)—yeah, we sell a lot of coffee; I don’t know what to tell you. We gave a lot of coffee away.

AH: Okay.

CH: So—they took it out and put it in the back.

AH: Okay, put it in the back. That’s smart.

CH: Oh now—what a day. Casimiro was a really easy going man, he really was. A hard worker, easy going man.

AH: Yeah. So did he—seemed like he did a lot of entertaining too at home. He did?

CH: Not too much, not too much.

AH: No, not as much?

CH: No not as much.

AH: Okay.

CH: Now you said, you talked about Carmen was such a good cook. What were some of her specialties? I mean what, what do you remember? Like if she said, “I’m making so and so” you knew you had to be there?

MH: I don’t remember much of that because that was before I got married.

AH: Oh I see.

CH: There’s not much to tell you about food. You know? I’m not a connoisseur of food.

AH: Yeah.
CH: But I, I love food and just know. It’s—I can tell when it’s good. But I never had a meal at her house that wasn’t good!

AH: Yeah, Okay.

CH: I mean if I went by there for something, my father would be there—my father had a very close—that’s the only person he was close to was her. He would go almost every day and would go smoke. My father smoked. If I stopped by to see what my dad was doing, “Oh, come in Charlie, I, I have these”—there’s no way she didn’t know I’d eat something. Whatever she had. She had three sisters that used to come and stay, and they finally lived with her. And she was like a maid for them. I couldn’t figure out how—they’d sit there like a bunch of queens and, Carmita would—she had a heart—(sighs)

AH: Okay. Yeah. Now you also said Adela—she was a very good cook.

CH: Yeah, oh yeah. Adela was.

AH: Anything that stands out in your mind?

MH: Everything—anything—

CH: She could make the best pies, oh my god!

AH: Pie?

CH: Oh yeah.

MH: I had this one special thing.

CH: And the red bean—

MH: —that special rice.

CH: [If] she knew I was coming she would make me— oh I love the red beans!

AH: Red beans?

MH: Red bean soup.

CH: She’d make it and—

AH: Red bean soup, okay.

CH: Oh my god yes. But whatever she cooked it was good, like her mother.
AH: Yeah.

CH: But there’s certain things that—

MH: It’s hard to pick a favorite of hers. Because everything she did was good.

CH: Yeah, yeah. She did—

AH: Everything.

CH: She loved to cook, she loved to cook, yeah.

AH: So, Christmas parties were a big thing for them, right?

CH: Yeah, because we—

MH: That was mostly with the family.

AH: Oh I see.

CH: Yeah, because—

MH: With the family.

AH: With the immediate family.

CH and MH: Yeah.

MH: Christmas Eve every year and they’d have—(inaudible)

CH: Yeah.

AH: Oh really?

MH: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

MH: (inaudible) They’d deliver our gifts.

AH: Yes.

MH: We were the last ones who would get the gifts.

CH: We’d stay here.
AH: Oh. Okay, nice.

CH: Yeah and get the ham, yeah.

AH: Okay.

MH: And then that one time too, but then holidays—

CH: Each one scatters and then—

MH: Goes their own way.

AH: Yeah.

CH: It’s happened to us now. Our kids are grown and—

AH: Yeah. It’s hard to get everyone together.

CH: We used to have a big Christmas at my house. I mean two in the morning!

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: Oh yeah. So we just got a little old.

MH: (inaudible)

CH: Yeah, oh yeah.

MH: (inaudible)—tablecloth—

AH: Tablecloth up?

MH: (inaudible)

AH: Okay.

CH: We had friends and would visit people, over the…

AH: Now when he had the ham, did that kind of replace the mojo? Or did she have the mojo too?

CH: No, she had the hams that she’d make special (inaudible)

AH: Yeah.
CH: Oh very special. We got one every year.

AH: Okay. Because it seemed like for some families—and maybe this is more of a Cuban thing than a Spanish thing. They have the mojo—

CH: Yeah.

MH: I had that every year.

AH: Oh every year you had that?

MH: I had it for Christmas Eve on…

AH: Yes.

MH: They seasoned it like the pork.

AH: With the mojo?

MH: And she’s the one who is part of that (inaudible).

AH: Okay.

MH: And every Christmas she belonged to the Las (inaudible) and we had our party here. And that was a big meal year. We had—the, the—

CH: Yucca?

MH: Yucca. Plant leaves, rice and black beans—

CH: (inaudible)

MH: Rice and black beans, and what—of course a salad. We had a lot of, lot of stuff. And then (inaudible)

AH: Okay.

MH: And our house. A special (inaudible).

AH: Yeah. I See.

CH: (inaudible)

AH: Oaky. Now what about deserts?

CH: Oh, she used to make the best pie, the best cake. Her special, her pie.
AH: What kind of pies?

CH: She made the apple pies—

MH: Tell about the lemon meringue pie—

CH: Lemon meringue pie—oh!

MH: Coconut cream pie—

CH: She used to make those—

AH: Coconut cream?

CH: Yeah, I like them! Save a little piece for you! (laughs)

MH: But my favorite was the—

CH: Oh, the—

MH: (inaudible)

CH: Gitano.

AH: Gitano, yeah. Brazos?

MH: (inaudible)

AH: Yeah.

MH: A gypsy’s own?

AH: A gypsy’s arm?

MH: She taught the Columbia chef to make it, when they opened—in St. Augustine; she was in that kitchen making the meat.

AH: Okay.

MH: We went; they went out of meat. And she and I had to go to a supermarket and buy forty pounds of hamburger meat.

AH: Now this is at, this is at the opening of the St. Augustine?

CH: Yeah.
AH: Okay.

CH: She spent the weekend. And did a lot of work over there! You’d be surprised. It was good, and (inaudible) was scared—I say, we need something. I said, “Let’s go to the hardware. He says, they’re going to get mad, we got to fix—we go tomorrow, you know!” They worked—We got a hotel and we stayed there, I stayed the whole week, about three or four days doing that.

AH: So what was the problem with the plumbing?

CH: No—[just] last minute things.

AH: Oh, just little things.

CH: We had a fountain to hook up, take a look at the place. Had to be complete!

AH: Oh, Okay.

MH: And Adela was in that kitchen all day and she was showing them how to do it and—

CH: And she was in there working!

AH: And you were in that too?

CH: Oh yeah. She’s a good cook too!

AH: Okay.

MH: You know something funny. I never learned to make the (inaudible).

AH: Okay.

MH: As much as she made it, and it was the best (inaudible) in the world.

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: I have never had it good since, you know that? I don’t know what she did to it, but—

MH: Never had it as good.

AH: Yeah, well that takes a lot of love to make something that good you know?

MH: That’s it, that’s it. Takes love. You can love—too good.

AH: Yeah.
CH: I loved her dearly.

AH: Yeah.

CH: I did.

AH: So, what about—you guys have—I hear you’re an accomplished cook yourself. If there’s anything maybe, that was inspired by the Columbia that you make at home? Do you have any favorite recipes that you try to recreate? Or not necessary use the Columbia’s—

CH: She made, she made another thing that, Casimiro put her name on it.

MH: Oh—I can’t think of anything really.

AH: Okay.

MH: Can’t think of anything.

CH: If you would have had her spaghetti sauce, you would—he didn’t want to know where is that. She made the—

MH: Yes, but he say the Columbia—

CH: Yeah, I know, I know that.

AH: And the Columbia, they served spaghetti for a long time, right?

CH: Yeah.

MH: Yeah.

AH: They don’t serve it now, but they used to.

CH: Not anymore they don’t now.

AH: Yeah.

CH: A lot of times they won’t serve it either because—

AH: Well, it seemed like they were trying to please the Italians here in Ybor City too by serving Italian food.

MH: Right.
AH: It seemed liked a lot of Spanish restaurants did that.

CH: Yeah.

AH: Okay. And then, what about this cake, you said—

MH: Oh it’s called Melba’s cake. It’s a very easy cake. It was very good.

AH: Okay.

MH: And she, that was definitely—she liked it, and she put it into her book.

AH: And what, explain it to me then. What kind of—?

MH: It’s—it’s a box cake really.

AH: It’s a box cake?

MH: The box with the flour, and it’s—you put eggs in it and you put (inaudible)—what do you call that—


MH: It’s a cream. You make the cream and pineapple and cream cheese—in English, I don’t know—

AH: And what, what is that, you put that in between the layers?

MH: On top.

AH: On top, Okay.

MH: You make the cake. It’s very easy. And, and then on top you put the cream cheese, you put the pineapple, and you put the Nutella in there. And then put the juice all over, and then, one thing Adela could make good is the meringue.

AH: The meringue?

MH: Oh, she made delicious meringue.

AH: Okay.

MH: And then you put the meringue on top of that, and you refrigerate it for one day. And you take it out, it’s very—
CH: It was moist, it was not dry cake—

AH: Yeah.

CH: Oh!

AH: Very good.

MH: Very good.

AH: Well, you’ve got a big fan here too, it sounds like!

CH: This here in the book, it says, Melba’s cake!

AH: It’s Melba Hero’s cake!

CH: Yeah.

AH: Yeah.

CH: She put that in there because she only wanted—She, I remember (inaudible) she used to make it for her.

MH: Yes.

CH: She never made it—

MH: She made it once or twice. Melanie’s the one that loves it.

AH: Oh yeah? Melanie likes that cake a lot?

MH: She calls it—she loves that cake. I don’t know how she bakes it now.

AH: Okay.

MH: She loves it. And what else? What I really love about the Columbia in those days was the filets. I’m telling you, the steaks—

AH: They had good filets, huh?

MH: Love them, love them. And the lobsters.

AH: Lobsters too?

MH: Yeah, because they’re Australian lobsters.
CH: The Australian lobster tail, oh god.

AH: Good, huh?

CH: Yeah. Ever since I grew up I don’t want to know that lobsters. One’s sweet, one (inaudible).

AH: Now how would you order your steak here back then? I mean, if you want—would you get a Steak Cappacina? Or, or what kind of—?

MH: Just steak filet.

AH: Just the filet, just—and they’d grill it?

MH: Then they came up with that Steak Columbia, that was very good.

AH: Yeah.

MH: But I like my filet better, so.

AH: Yeah.

MH: But the meat is delicious. Or they were delicious.

AH: Now did this have anything to do with Pepin?

CH: Pepin? No, he was, he was a maitre de, and what it was that he has a good memory. And so many people, they used to take him to the World Series, or take him to New York and [meet] all the ball players—and everybody used to come here. All these ball players used to come here. And the thing they used to love—you know, if you knew my brother in law, you know you had to like him. He made all of those friends. He didn’t like me from the beginning.

AH: Oh Yeah?

CH: But if you liked him—one time a customer came in here, and he hadn’t been here for several years, when he took the thing he says, “If you remember my name, I’ll buy you a soup.” He called his name! (laughs)

AH: He had to buy him a soup? Okay.

CH: He bought him a soup, that’s right.

AH: Yeah, well it seems like if you were betting against a Columbia waiter’s memory, you always lost, right?
CH: Oh yes!

AH: Yeah, because they remember everything!

CH: Yes, they really did. They never wrote anything down.

MH: That’s one thing about Adela, what a memory she had! What a memory! She could remember anything.

AH: Oh yeah.

MH: Anything.

AH: Well, maybe it comes from all of the music education and memorizing music.

CH: (inaudible) smart, you know you’ve got to remember charts. If you’re not smart, forget it! But she was a smart woman, and knows (inaudible). She could play a hell of a piano too.

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: Oh man. Good piano.

MH: The piano, the violin.

CH: Cesar was the violin.

AH: Yes.

CH: You ever see him play the violin? Cesar with it?

AH: No, no.

CH: Oh, you missed something.

AH: Yeah, I missed—I missed. I didn’t move here to Tampa until you know, later, so—

CH: Well, he died, yeah.

MH: I don’t know how many years he’s been dead. How long has it been that he’s been dead now?

AH: Didn’t he die in either—
MH: About eight years maybe?

CH: More than that—

AH: Oh, it’s got to be more than that.

CH: Eleven years.

AH: I thought yeah, he died maybe in ninety-four [1994]? It was ninety-two [1992] or ninety-four [1994].

CH: Something like that, yeah, I forgot.

AH: Right in there. So it’s been over ten.

CH: You know the funny part is still have (inaudible) who were hosts that hadn’t seen him years when he died. And (inaudible) he was very, very sick, I want to see him, you know, talk to him. So we went over there and he goes, “Look who’s here! Charlie and Melba!” He looked at us and smiled, and he died. Just like that.

AH: What?

CH: Right. (inaudible) he died.

MH: All I can think, that then he—

CH: Those were the last words in the world.

MH: —he died that night. We were there.

AH: Now, back up though, okay—

CH: Cesar, his house.

AH: At his house.

CH: Yes.

AH: Okay.

CH: He was very, very sick.

AH: Yes.

CH: Was really on his deathbed.
AH: Yes.

MH: We went to see him every day.

AH: Okay.

MH: Every day.

CH: A little late that day, I still heard that he was waiting for us. We got there and Adela says, “Look who’s here!” He says to her (inaudible) [in Spanish]. He used to always sing in Spanish to her.

AH: So what did he say?

CH: [In Spanish]. How pretty.

AH: Okay.

CH: And he died right there. And Adela, when she died, I was with her myself.

AH: Oh yeah?

MH: Now when she died, but we were there right before she died.

CH: When I gave her the wine, she died that night.

MH: Oh yeah.

CH: (inaudible)

MH: But she died that night, Charlie. She didn’t die when we were there.

CH: She lived her life. And they were all (inaudible), said, “Look, I want to go see her.” I told Adela, “You know what? When you die, I want to have some of your wine.” She got a little smile you know. She got a little you know. She could barely put it to her lips. So I held the wine to her lips, and she smiled, “That’s a nice wine.”

MH: You went to (inaudible) her into a—

CH: At that time I almost was always there. I was by myself at the time.

AH: Okay. And then she died that night?

CH: Yeah.

AH: Yeah. Yeah, it’s hard to see good friends go, you know? Good family.
CH: That’s the trouble.

AH: Yeah.

CH: The longer we get them, the more good a friend we lose.

AH: That’s right.

CH: Cesar, you know what Cesar’s thing was though? He’d always tell me, “Charlie if you’ve got five good friends, you’re lucky.” And it’s true!

AH: Yeah.

CH: Think about it.

MH: (inaudible)

CH: Think about it you know. He’d always say that. Some times you were down to three. Or one like you! (laughs) When I’d take him to the doctor I’d turn to him, take him to the hospital—

MH: You want some coffee?

AH: Oh no, oh no.

MH: You want coffee?

CH: Yeah. (inaudible) Getting back to the story I was telling in Miami, when he take me there.

AH: Oh yes!

CH: To show you how he was and what he could do—he’d drive eighty [to] ninety miles an hour. And he had jumpspeed.

AH: You were coming back from Miami?

CH: We were coming home. And he had jumped (inaudible). It’s a stretch of—there’s nothing but cows. We’re going and I see a highway patrol in the distance. I said, “Cesar, that’s a highway patrol there!” He said, “Yeah, but he’s going the other way.” I’m looking and I said, “No, he’s coming back.” It was the most—because we were there, and he’s a little politician. He talked himself out of the ticket! They didn’t give him a ticket!

AH: How did he manage that?
CH: He just started talking!

AH: Okay, he got out of it!

CH: He says, “I’m going to see my son’s wife, is going to have a baby, we’re trying to get there in time!”

MH: Which was true!

CH: Yeah, it was the truth, that was the truth.

AH: Okay. Who was having a baby?

CH: Casey’s wife.

MH: First—his second wife.

AH: Okay.

MH: She was having Casey, Casey—

_Side 1 ends; side 2 begins._

CH: It’s good to have people. Like she said, because in fact that we all had very small families, you know. They had not a big family either.

AH: Yeah.

CH: Okay? A few uncles that all died, and just—the one uncle that used to run the coffee mill, when he heard about him—

MH: That was Adela’s favorite uncle.

CH: Yeah.

AH: That he did what? He ran the coffee mill?

CH: He used to make the coffee over here—

AH: Oh yeah, who was that, Chacho?

CH: Chacho, that’s right, Chacho.

AH: Yeah, tell me about Chacho.
CH: Oh, I love Chacho because he had [lots of things] to like about. We hit it off just like brothers, I mean, we—nice guy.

AH: Good guy, huh?

CH: Yeah, I mean one time he got through hitting that bottle, you know—

AH: Yeah.

CH: I guess you heard that!

AH: Yeah!

CH: Okay.

AH: And what he’d burn the coffee and stuff, right?

CH: Yeah, well let me—One day, I was coming by him by the coffee and I see a fire coming out!

AH: Okay.

CH: The bad thing is, he’s on the floor! I drug him out to the sidewalk, or he would have died right there!

AH: Oh, he was on the floor in the coffee!

CH: I said, “Run! Get out! Your coffee’s burning!”

AH: So you dragged him out of there? Oh, man.

CH: So, right after that, not long after that, he says, “I’m going to quit drinking,” he said.

AH: Okay.

CH: Every time he’d see me, “Charlie, one month! Charlie, two months!” And he did. He quit completely. You know what we used to do—like a lost weekend, he used to hide the bottles or leave it in the car, and nobody would see it!

AH: Okay.

CH: (laughs) So Casimiro, says, “Don’t let my brother get no more liquor, because he’s drinking too much!”

AH: So he was spending too much?
CH: Well, he was getting the coffee—he didn’t know when to borrow and he couldn’t get the drinks.

AH: Yeah.

CH: He’d take the whole thing, you know. So Casimiro said, “Lock it up!” Made him—So he did lock it up. (laughs) So what did he do? He would go down the street and buy it, so he wouldn’t get in trouble. (laughs)

AH: Okay, yeah.

MH: (inaudible)

AH: So how, how long did—sure—how long did he quit for?

CH: Oh, until he died.

AH: Oh, he quit at the end, he just quit?

CH: Oh yeah, he did quit. After I found him like that, lying in that fire, he told me, “Charlie, I’m going to quit drinking” and he—cold turkey. Cold turkey—

AH: Okay.

CH: He just quit.

AH: And how long was that before he died? Do you remember?

CH: Oh, at least ten, fifteen years, I mean—

AH: Okay.

MH: Quite a long time.

AH: Okay. Wow.

CH: He didn’t drink at all, every time I—we would see each other, he used to take the coffee beans to my house.

AH: Okay.

CH: He’d give me coffee. Only had to make it up. He had a secret formula—coffeemaker Columbia. That—it was good. I don’t know what he did.

AH: Yeah.
CH: It was the grain, you know.
AH: Oh yeah.
CH: Everybody used to come buy coffee for that reason.
MH: And Adela—he would blend Adela’s special. He would blend her coffee special.
AH: Something just special for Adela?
MH: For Adela.
CH: Yeah, but we must have got the same thing—
MH: Delicious.
CH: —because I was getting the same coffee at home!
AH: Okay.
CH: I know I was.
AH: So what did—what was different about her blends?
MH: I don’t know, I mean—
AH: It just, just had a different blend, huh?
MH: Mix?
CH: A mix.
MH: He blended (inaudible) I never knew what it was—
CH: He had the cocoa beans and he could—
MH: —And Adela claimed that she didn’t know how he blended it.
CH: It was—we would talk about after he died.
AH: Yeah.
CH: To [try] to have it for the Columbia. I wonder what this is? He should have had it written somewhere. It was all mixed.
AH: Yeah.
CH: You know, it’s different beans from different places in there.

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: Same as tobacco. And he had a blend of it—he (inaudible) Columbia (inaudible)

MH: And you know Adela too, she would make the coffee and I don’t know whether Richard and Casey were around. She taught me, she said, “You know, when the coffee is boiling, you let it come up one time, then let it go down. Let it come up the second time, let it go down. Let it come up the third time, then you take it out and (inaudible) it.” That was her special.

AH: Okay. What do you mean when it came up? You mean—?

CH: Before it boils over.

MH: When you boil Cuban—yeah.

AH: Yes.

MH: Have you ever seen them make the Cuban coffee in a pot?

AH: Yeah.

MH: Okay, then you pour the coffee in there, it comes up.

AH: Okay.

MH: Right away. So you take the pot out, and let it go down, and then you put it back down.

AH: And you pull it back up.

MH: It’s quick, you know.

AH: Okay yeah, yeah. So you just bring it right back to a boil and back down again.

CH: Yeah, yeah.

MH: Three times.

AH: Three times.

MH: Three times.
AH: That probably made an extra strong coffee, right?

MH: I don’t know what it did.

CH: She made it strong, she made it strong.

MH: It was delicious.

AH: Yeah, and her blends—did you prefer her blend to the regular blend here, or—

MH: I prefer hers, but I—

AH: Yeah, hers was the best, huh?

MH: Yeah. Her blend was different. I don’t know what to say, it was different.

AH: Yeah, Okay

MH: But how she did it I don’t know. And I don’t think she knew either. She always said she didn’t know.

AH: Yeah.

CH: We used to go there for the Superbowl, you know? We’d go to her house in time to start watching the football game and all this stuff.

AH: Okay.

CH: We’d do that too. For years we’d do that, until they got sick.

AH: Yeah.

MH: And Saturday night whenever they didn’t have company or anything, they’d always call, “We’re by ourselves—”

CH: “Please come!”

MH: “—come have dinner with us!”

AH: Okay.

MH: We’d get dressed and come right here, see the show and eat dinner and then go home.

AH: Oh they’d just invite you over here to the restaurant?
CH: Oh yeah. We won’t go—he would, had to be here every week!

AH: Yeah.

CH: Here because I want to pay! You know, I’m not the kind of guy that wants to—

AH: Yeah.

CH: Some guys are, “Hey—”

AH: So that’s why you’d fight over the check all the time.

CH: (laughs)

AH: Yeah.

CH: I’d tell the waiter, he’d tell the waiter, “Don’t you give—” (laughs)

AH: So what else have we missed anything? Have we missed anybody?

CH: I took him to Donatello’s when it first opened, Donatello’s?

AH: Okay.

CH: I like it. I says, “Please, on me, okay?”

AH: Okay. You wanted to pay.

CH: Yeah. So he said, “All right.” But I knew—but me, I said, “It’s my turn to pay, I don’t care what you want!” So they came by the house first and she brought me a meringue pie—

AH: A cream—

CH: — A cream pie. She said, “After we eat, we’re going to come back to your house, we’re going to have a dessert.”

AH: Okay.

CH: So they had a drink there, you know, I think, she had—he, Cesar didn’t drink much. He had a bit of wine.

AH: So Cesar didn’t—?

CH: No beers or nothing. Adela had one drink.
MH: He didn’t one time—he (inaudible) deliver (inaudible).

CH: No, but he never drank much, he never drank much…

MH: (inaudible)

CH: Yeah, yeah—the lamb chop, the lamb—

AH: Rack of lamb?

CH: No, the other.

MH: Veal?

CH: No—What do you call it? It's very—we have it, it’s a (inaudible) once in a while.

AH: (inaudible)

CH: No, it’s not mutton, I was in (inaudible); I was in England, I ate mutton—

AH: Yeah.

CH: Smell that thing for a mile away, that damn mutton!

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: Anyhow, it was kind of in—I forgot what it was, and we didn’t have a drink with it, so I was wondering about the drink. We didn’t have a desert. We just had dinner and a—At that time, this was a long time ago.

AH: Okay.

CH: He says (inaudible). Which is true!

AH: Yeah.

CH: That says something, to this day, he, I don’t know how he got away with it!

AH: Oh yeah, it’s expensive!

CH: You know, we had spaghetti—it’s cheaper and it—when it first opened with just, with her friends. And her little Italian restaurant, that’s just have some nice spaghetti. Said look, let’s get one dish so we can taste it, you know and take it—it’s huge! We had a taste, us all! I mean it was eighteen dollars and we could get that!

AH: Yeah.
CH: Anything was—(laughs)

MH: Now we’re talking years ago, you know—

AH: Oh yeah, yeah, this is probably in the eighties [1980s] or—

CH: Yeah, when it first opened. It was only open a week or two.

AH: Okay. Yeah, no I—to this day, when I go out to eat, I will not order pasta. Because they—it’s—they charge you so much!

CH: Yeah, and it’s so cheap. And if you ever ate her pasta—ah—god, the sauce! My granddaughters wanted, they wanted Melba’s—

MH: They want to patent it!

AH: It’s that good, huh?

CH: She’s in LA [Los Angelos], she’s—

MH: (inaudible)

CH: She really (inaudible) I got two nieces, I mean two granddaughters, that went over there. One of them was older, and she works in a hospital now. She was—got a big job in the hospital. And the other one is going to school there. So they get together once in a while, they—she says, Abuela, Abeulo, you know? To make it short? My first granddaughter couldn’t say Abuelo, she used to say “Uelo” or “Uela” so now when we go, [we’re] like the kids. We’re “Uelo”, short for Abuelo, and Abuela.

AH: Okay.

CH: “Uela, I had your spaghetti—Oh, what that good!”

AH: So what’s the secret?

AH: It’s just good.

MH: I don’t know. It’s just—I never follow a recipe.

AH: Oh no?

CH: She would just put this and put that, she tries another flavor—always good! Of course she puts it in pot and simmers for hours, you know, it’s got a—

AH: Oh, a long time, huh?
MH: Three or four hours usually about that, yeah.

AH: Yeah. You can’t rush something good like that.

CH: No, no, you’re right. You don’t get the heat right, then nothing. It’s [got to be] cooked, if you taste and it’s raw you can’t eat—

AH: So what do you use to kind of temper the acid in it then, since there’s no heartburn—?

MH: Bicarbonate soda.

AH: Oh yeah?

MH: A little bit of bicarbonate (inaudible) soda, and sugar.

AH: Is this the same as baking soda?

MH: No.

AH: Okay, it’s different, bicarbonate.

MH: Well no, it is baking soda.

CH: Yeah, yeah, it’s baking soda.

AH: And then what, you just use a little spoonful?

CH: Yeah a little bit just—

MH: Well, you know when I’m making the sauce—

CH: She makes four or five—

MH: —I make three or four gallons.

CH: So you got to make enough, everybody in the family wants some!

AH: Oh yeah.

MH: So I put at least a tablespoon if not more of that, and then sugar.

AH: Okay, and how much sugar do you put in for a big pot?
MH: Well, at least half a cup?

AH: Okay.

MH: I’m telling you because I don’t measure, I just put—

AH: Oh sure. And then do you use meat to—

MH: Pork.

AH: You use pork? What kind of pork do you use?

MH: The leg—

AH: Okay, like, what, the loin, or—

MH: The loin yeah.

CH: Puts the whole thing in there to use it.

AH: The whole thing.

CH: Oh yeah.

MH: And then I take out—when it’s done I take out the loin and slice it, and put it in another. And then add onions, garlic, green pepper, and olive oil. And you fry that and put it on top, and put it back in the microwave just for about fifteen or twenty minutes so it kind of saturates it in there.

AH: Oh yeah. So then you serve that separate from the sauce then?

MH: Yeah. We have meatballs. That, and meatballs and pasta.

AH: Meatballs in the sauce?

AH: Okay. So the meatballs stay in the sauce?

MH: Yeah.

AH: Okay. And you make the meatballs with— What do you use, pork and beef?

MH: Pork and beef, yeah.

AH: Okay. And you use any veal or no?

MH: No.
AH: Okay.

MH: Just pork and beef. That’s it.

AH: Pork and beef, okay. And you brown them first or do you just—?

MH: No, I don’t. I used to years ago, but I’ve made everything easy now.

AH: Well and I think like—

MH: I make it; I go in and just pour it in.

AH: It seems like it would make it—keep it softer when you, if you didn’t brown it first you know? And make it nice and soft?

MH: Not really, it’s—

CH: It’s soft.

MH: Not really you—I don’t know what it is, but I mean, when I used to fry mine, brown them or—they didn’t come out any softer than when, than now.

AH: Okay.

MH: It’s just easier.

AH: Just curious, because—

MH: But first I used to fry them. Then I started just putting them in the oven a little bit, and then put them in the sauce. And then I said, “Just try it just by itself.” While the sauce is boiling, and it is hot—

AH: Oh yeah.

MH:—and I put them in there.

CH: Seeing that (inaudible), it reminded me of a trip in Spain when we were with Cesar and Adela. They took us to the winery, you know. They know everybody of course.

AH: Yeah, Torres? Yeah.

CH: And (inaudible). Then we went there for dinner, and everything else. I was so impressed, because the farmer would bring in the grapes—because they had a, these stainless steal tanks. And they were squeezing the grapes; you’d see—have you seen that?
AH: No.

CH: Where the juice goes in and separates it?

AH: Okay.

CH: And it makes a mass if they can put it in and fertilize it. They’d come with these trucks and we’re up in the back of that thing right? And they got a computer, this program in the middle of the grapes you know? For different places? Because they wanted to take the acidity. Certain wines have to have so much acid.

AH: Okay.

CH: Okay. And what impressed me the most was, if a farmer tried to sneak in some other grape, they could find out because they could tell. You know what they do with that wine?

AH: What?

CH: Champagne.

AH: Oh, they’d make Champagne?

CH: The best wine is, for the wine—the best grape. Same thing as this—

AH: Your waste product. Interesting.

CH: I never knew that, that—

AH: I never knew that.

CH: I never knew until I learned that. I learned it then, I learned it then on that trip. They told me, “Yeah, that’s what they do with it!” And I said, “Oh.” And they had, underground, well, they had a big— We’d go in there, with all these big kegs of wine, and you know—they had this year and that year and marked you know. And they’d ship it out and just bottle it, you know?

AH: Okay.

CH: That’s why I told you this, if it’s 1998 vintage is a vintage. So when you see in a bottle, it’s right.

AH: Oaky.

CH: I had a good story about that in Germany.
AH: Oh yeah?

CH: (laughs) We were flying through Germany and I was a radar special and I had guns and the radar. So we were taking care of (inaudible) Shooting planes down, you know, protecting the tanks you know.

AH: Okay.

CH: And we used to go and this, this is in no man’s time, in the (inaudible), you see.

AH: Yes.

CH: We had a liner running wine. I didn’t know a thing about wine, you know. Everybody’s a kid, who the hell knows. Red wine was red wine and cheap was sweet! And anyhow—this, this is a different story, if you want to cut it off—

AH: Oh, it’s okay.

CH: You want?

AH: It’s all right.

CH: Anyway, so we get over there, And we’d sneak in the town, to get the best villa, the best house that wasn’t torn up. And we’d go in the basement; they always had can goods, and bottle foods, fruit. They might have a chicken in the yard, that would lay an egg; and boy, fresh eggs. You could see rations, or de-ration. I mean to tell you, we’d sneak in town, I’d send three volunteers or four. I was the sergeant in charge. I never had—I only had volunteers. They got to the point where they had to (inaudible), you know I wanted to go with them.

AH: Okay.

CH: You know (inaudible).

AH: (laughs)

MH: Tell him about the wine.

CH: Yeah, I’m getting to that part of it. So we get in this town and get this—

(Interruption from waiter)

CH: So, we start, “Let’s go and see what’s around town, it’s getting a little dark. I told the guys, be careful, now, don’t make any—they’re probably the Germans on the other side, you know, they got the eighty-eights.” So we get back inside there, I said, “Look, get me
some (inaudible).” You know we got this phones for us that we used to plant wire, now there’s a— But [what was] important, we all go to get the coordinates, “here’s where we are” and so forth and so on, you know? I said, “Now let’s go sneak in. When you come back on the radio, I’ll report. People out there, you can’t put the flashlight on—got them eighty-eights.” (makes sound) Just, good thing he walked away. Ruined my jeep, that’s the third jeep I had requested, “Take it and give me another one!”

AH: Okay.

CH: Anyhow, so then he got (inaudible) He said, “Don’t, nobody, not even light it.” But then I say, “You know, I smell something.” So we go in the backstreet there, we go in—there’s a big beautiful glass (inaudible) I’m saying glasses and all (inaudible). Beautiful place. And they had these big humongous kegs. And this kid from Tennessee was one of my, was one of my—my corporal, my next in charge.

AH: Yeah.

CH: And he was cunning; he said, “Oh my god!” It was the moonshine from the mountain, you know! All of this good booze—He opened the spicket, I said, “Don’t do that, we got—it could be gas—no, let them have some of that wine!” So he started—we got these big bottles and put the—the house we were in you know. And we had wine and food and all that. So the next morning real early, here comes the group that’s going to set up a hospital. A MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] unit. And they come through there and they knew we were there because they were (inaudible) And you know, we said, “Here.” And that’s when I got that gun from the German—that’s where I got the gun here, the thirty-eight that I got. And I told him, I told the guys, I said, (inaudible) “These are medics!” So we took them over there and showed them the wine. Well, to make a long story short, everybody that came, they had to go see the wine. And then everybody was drunk and was drinking the wine.

AH: (laughs)

CH: The Colonel came by and he had a damn fit. He made us take those, rubber, small—made us chop them up!

AH: Oh no!

CH: (laughs) It’s funny, he was barefoot in the goddamn wine!

AH: (laughs) So he got to go barefoot in the wine anyway.

CH: That was a good excuse and meanwhile then, they went from house to house and had all the (inaudible). I put my little bullet, I’d have them (inaudible). Course we was there, maybe thirty-six hours, then we had to move again.

AH: Yeah.
CH: Because we were moving fast, we had to move.

AH: Oh yeah.

CH: Set up our equipment to protect us. The worst thing was, the buzz bomb, that was—shooting buzz bombs. Because we had the Air Force. But they had to buzz bomb. They come over here and then I had to—

AH: Yeah.

CH: And I had a map and I’d tell the Air Force, you miss one, let us know [if] they come and bomb right here. That’s where I went. Where that one goes, that’s what I got to go do. That’s the way you got to be behind the lines.

AH: Okay. So you were in the Third Army then?

CH: Not really.

AH: Oh no?

CH: I was in the artillery, but I was detail—what they call “detail service”.

AH: Okay, so you were attached to that unit.

CH: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

CH: It might be this one day—but no, but I was always with the Third or First Army. Travel with them, go into the war.

AH: I see.

CH: That wine, I never can forget that wine!

AH: Oh yeah, that’s something that would just attach in your memory!

CH: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

AH: Now, I’m running short on time, but I did want to see if there’s any memories here at the Columbia that you want to share. You have any special occasions or anything that you remember? A special show by Cesar or a dinner you had with them or a dinner you guys had together? Was there romantic?

CH: We enjoyed so many I really do—
MH: Everything was special as far as we’re concerned.

CH: Yeah, fantastic. We had such a good time together. We got, I can’t pin one down.

AH: Yeah, yeah.

CH: It’s hard to do.

MH: We have three children, and when they all got married, the Columbia catered, and that was fantastic, they did such a job for all three of them. Beautiful, really, we kept the guest—

AH: Yeah.

CH: Cesar says, he himself, will go in that kitchen [and will say], what’s going to go over there, and that—(laughs).

AH: Okay.

CH: Oh yeah.

AH: So he managed the whole thing special for you.

CH: Oh yeah. He made sure that it was just—because see, when the girls get married, you, the father, the thing is the father pays the—but when my son got married, I said, nope, I want them all to have the same. So we all had the same, same thing.

AH: Okay.

CH: Same thing for all three.

AH: That’s great.

CH: And the Columbia did a fantastic job. Everybody that went to our wedding, boy, they had nothing but praise there.

AH: Yeah.

CH: Oh yeah.

MH: You know when we got married, it was during the war too, and you know—

AH: Okay, what year was it?

MH and CH: Nineteen forty-five [1945].
AH: Forty-five, Okay.

CH: Not—I came out of the service.

MH: Sixty-one years now.

AH: Wow, congratulations.

CH: Excuse me, you know, when we—the reason why I was home, I hadn’t a (inaudible) in two years. Because I had been in detached service so much that I talked so much about radar, they picked me special from the whole ATOS—me and my guys to come back to get people ready for the—

AH: Japan?

CH: Japan.

AH: yeah.

CH: So, that all, my whole (inaudible) stayed there. Just me and one guy, that’s all. Priority status to get back to the state immediately. We came home and then we (inaudible). Then go home. Well I’m home, we got married, they dropped the bomb.

AH: Okay.

CH: (inaudible)

AH: Yeah.

CH: And then they built—say, I’m out of the Army now, I went to (inaudible), they gave (inaudible) and I come right back.

AH: Well, that was nice timing then.

MH: What I was going to say too is that my—our wedding day was here.

CH: Yeah. Right here.

MH: Right here in this room.

AH: So what, you had, you had the wedding right here?

CH: Well sure, that was in the Army, we just did—it was very short.
MH: We could have—we didn’t even know we were going to get married, I mean, he came, we got married then—

AH: Okay, so you guys knew each other before you left—

CH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AH: So then he came home—

MH: (inaudible)

AH: Oh I see. Yes.

CH: Lawrence, Lawrence gave us a bottle of perfume and gave us tickets to take a plane to Miami. But we couldn’t get a plane—Lawrence says, “You’re going to go by plane,” so he gave us the tickets to fly.

AH: So that’s where you had your honeymoon was in Miami?

MH: Yeah in Miami.

AH: Okay. Wow.

CH: Miami was a big thing in those days, you know?

MH: And have gave us that perfume, bottle of perfume.

CH: Yeah (laughs).

AH: Oh yeah, yeah.

CH: Use that—He was great. Let me tell you. I can’t complain—I’m not really—Casimiro was because he married my cousin, you know.

AH: Yeah.

CH: But when he just thought it was him and his two sons, I mean, I mean, just this close together. I used to be in their house, they’d be in my house, they were raised on the same block.

AH: Okay.

CH: Third Avenue.

AH: Yeah. Wow it seemed—
CH: Good family, yeah.

AH: —seemed like yeah, great friends, huh? Friends and family.

CH: Oh yeah.

AH: Can’t ask for better, huh?

MH: For years on our anniversary we came here.

AH: Okay.

MH: To you know— It was just (inaudible), that’s it.

CH: Anniversary we’d come.

AH: So when you got married was there—?

CH: No it was—

MH: We got married in a poor time.

AH: Okay.

MH: Well, he was leaving, I mean it was so fast.

AH: Yeah.

MH: And I didn’t know we were going to get married. They didn’t know we were going to get married (laughs).

CH: “Let’s just get married real quick!” (laughs)

AH: Oh you just, you just said it, just on a lark and you decided to do it?

CH: Yep.

MH: Years later we had our marriage blessed and we had our—

AH: Okay.

CH: On our (inaudible) anniversary. We had it blessed at the church and—

AH: Okay. But so after the courthouse you came here to eat?
CH and MH: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

MH: At night.

CH: At night.

AH: At night, yeah.

MH: Because we got married in the morning.

CH: And the next morning, the same day we went to Miami.

AH: So, no chance that you remember what you ate, huh?

CH: No, that’s—

MH: I know she had bourbon and (inaudible). I know she got drunk on a cocktail—

AH: (laughs)

MH: One cocktail, and that was it.

CH: One cocktail she wanted to get the drinks coming by—

MH: One drink.

AH: One cocktail was enough?

MH: One cocktail.

CH: She was hitch-hiking the plane and the train!

AH: Okay.

CH: (laughs)

AH: (laughs)

CH: I said, “What do you think I’m getting married to, one drink?!”

AH: Hey that’s—a cheap date, you know?

CH: Then we go to Miami and she gets the god damndest sunburn you’ve ever seen!
AH: Oh yeah.

CH: So for the honeymoon, for—

MH: (laughs) I had blisters on me—

AH: Oh no! Oh no.

CH: She’s very, very, very fair skinned!

AH: Yeah.

CH: And she got them—

AH: Oh, that must have been painful!

CH: Oh my god, she had blisters all over—(laughs).

AH: Wow.

CH: I had to wait for my honeymoon! (laughs)

AH: Yeah, right? (laughs)

MH: You didn’t wait too long, so don’t say that!

(all laugh)

AH: Well, apparently you guys did all right, here were are sixty-one years later—

CH: Sixty-one—it will be sixty-two next July.

AH: Well, congratulations, that’s great. Well it’s—

MH: It is, but not very many people.

AH: Oh no.

MH: Nowadays they don’t stay married.

AH: And you guys seem very happy together, you’re, you don’t argue and stuff all, all the time.

CH: Oh yeah, we argue! (laughs)

MH: We argue but— (laughs)
AH: Well, sure—

CH: Let me tell you something, if you don’t argue, you’re not going to be married that long.

AH: Yeah. You have to work those things out.

CH: Exactly.

MH: And we argue.

CH: The only trouble is that I get in it too often.

AH: (laughs)

CH: She does too!

AH: Well that’s how marriages last though, right? I think Cesar even knew that, right? (laughs)

CH: (laughs)

AH: If Adela wanted to do something, he’d go do it! Well, thanks so much for being here today with me. And—

MH: It’s so nice.

AH: And thanks from me and thanks from Melanie and Richard. They really appreciate it.

CH: I hope she has—if I think of something, I’ll let her know, so you can put it in or whatever.

AH: Yeah.

CH: You know, but—there’s so many things that—

AH: Oh, I know. It’s hard to sort it all out.

MH: Maybe, if we looked through some of those pictures we’ll remember.

CH: Yeah, remember that way. We did so many—in Mexico, we had so much fun, because we went all over Mexico and, just Guadalajara. Whenever we’d go to Guadalajara—
AH: Okay.

CH: There’s a square there, you know. That’s where they bought that mural, not far from there.

AH: Yeah, yeah.

CH: And there’s these beautiful lights and lamps there, all over the place. Oh my gosh! Look they’re really pretty! I wouldn’t mind having some! So Casimiro, he talked to somebody, they said, “Oh, they make them up in the mountains. You know this guy, there’s plenty up there. They make them for you and all that stuff.” So we took the car and we went there and—I still remember dozens of them.

AH: Yeah.

CH: And they had them all laying—Cesar said, “Well, we’re going to take some of those to St. Augustine. He says, “And you’re going to take some home.” (laughs)

AH: Yeah.

CH: That’s where I was. So we took a bunch, that’s what I’m telling you and—car loads of this stuff. So there was not, I got him in my front yard and my back yard to this day.

AH: Okay, wow.

CH: It’s been there since he opened it—St. Augustine, I think—how long as that been? Twenty years? Twenty-five years?

AH: Oh yeah, probably close to twenty-five.

CH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know my daughter works for the Columbia, I love her. Have you met her?

AH: I don’t think so?

MH: Lorrie.

CH: Well she worked, she worked for Delta Airlines for thirty years. She took the early retirement when the stuff was going on. So she didn’t have a job in between, so she talks to Richard. He knows her, she said, “Look, I want to give you my resume, will please—if you have a contact with me and see what I got?” So he read the resume and—man, he totally—what’s his name? (inaudible) Anyhow, he says, “Man, this is what we need at the Columbia. I don’t know if we can make room, but whatever.” Anyhow—so he, he tried to get a job anyway he could you know, as a friend. She didn’t know him because she had been doing it for thirty years, what she’s doing now. She knows everybody.
AH: Yeah.

CH: And she knows people because that’s what she did for Delta. You know so.

AH: Okay.

CH: Yeah, she’s in Fort Myers now, where is she?

MH: She’s in Fort Myers today.

AH: Okay.

CH: Of course in that restaurant, she goes to single meetings and all that stuff, that’s her job.

AH: Oh yeah, okay.

CH: And she knows—they her from Delta, “Oh hey—!” Anyhow—

AH: That’s great.

CH: She got desperate, no job—she went to work for AAA [American Automobile Association].

AH: Oh, okay.

CH: That’s a lousy outfit to work for.

AH: Oh yeah, that’s too bad. No, we’re all set thank you.

pause in recording


CH: This young man came here with a friend for dinner—a girlfriend, I don’t know who it was. But I haven’t, I don’t know why I was doing some work in the kitchen; I went down and saw him. And I see a waiter chasing this guy down, saying, “Hey you need it worse than I do!” He left a quarter tip! (laughs)

AH: Oh! (laughs) So the waiter gave him his quarter back! (laughs)

CH: He says, “You need it worse than I do!” (laughs)

AH: When was this about?
CH: Oh, it’s been twenty years at least, twenty-five years ago.

AH: All right yeah, so that was probably in the eighties [1980s] or the seventies [1970s]?

CH: Oh yeah, yeah. Way—let’s see, I’ve been retired, I’m eighty-three years old. I’ve been retired since I was sixty-five. So figure—it was at least probably ten years before that, so—

AH: Yeah.

MH: Twenty something years ago.

CH: Twenty some odd years ago.

AH: Well, you guys look great for your age too, I gotta tell ya.

CH: Don’t smoke, and only moderate drinking. Little bit, never a lot. Those are the two—Do you smoke?

AH: No, no I quit.

CH: Good! Don’t ever smoke.

*end of interview*