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Angeles Marti oral history interview by Ana Varela-Lago, May 12, 1997

Angeles D. Marti (Interviewee)
Ana M. Varela-Lago (Interviewer)

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Ana M. Varela-Lago: This is an interview with Mrs. Angeles Marti. Angeles, I would like to start by talking a little bit about your family. Can you tell me, why did they come to Tampa, when did they come here?

Angeles D. Marti: My father came from Santander to Cuba. He stayed in Cuba a few years, and then he came to Tampa. Actually, that's why my dad—everybody thought he was Cuban because he had so many Cuban friends. My mother came from Asturias, from Grado. Born in Grado. And she came, she followed—first came two brothers—and then she and her twin sister came, and then, years later, her younger sister came. We all lived together, very happy. We were, I'd say at one time or another we were mostly about 12 people living—we had a big, big house, and it was a wonderful life. We got along good and, but actually most of our friends were Asturianos. Like, my dad never—nobody ever thought of him being Spanish, like I said, because he did, had come from Cuba at that time.

We had a good childhood and we really, really enjoyed our life. We were very close—like I said—we were, sometimes we were 12 living in a big house; that we had, a nice, big house. And I don't even remember when people say the Depression was so bad. Because for us, it wasn't bad. We were, like I said, somebody always worked. We always had electric lights. We always had gas stove. We never had, you know, just, like a lot of our friends. My dad would say, you know, "If there is somebody in your class or in your school that you know is hungry, take turn bringing them home," and that's what we did. We brought them home and one would eat one day, and one ate the other. Like I say, we were very, very close. And that was, oh, gosh, then when we were, when I was about 16 then we each moved to separate, the three aunts—but we still were very close. We still are a close family.
AV: Tell me about your father. Why did he come to Tampa?

AM: Well, like I say—

AV: How old was he when he came?

AM: How old?

AV: Um-hm, you think?

AM: Yeah, I think he was about—let's see—he went to Cuba when he was about 12—

AV: Twelve?

AM: —13. And then from there, he was in Cuba about—he worked at a grocery store for his uncle. He had a grocery store in Cuba. And then he came here when he was about 18 or 19. I really don't recall.

AV: Do you know why he left Spain? Did he ever say—?

AM: Well, my father was a very—they were very well off. They were well off and they had a matadero.

AV: Oh.

AM: And they had, yes.

AV: In Santander?

AM: Um-hm. But my dad was, if there was anything—he was very giving—and I guess he never liked the way that, you know, the workers were treated or whatever. So he was like a rebel. Always. So that's why his mother sent him to Cuba to his uncle. So. And then from there, you know, he came on here. And like I say, he was a very fair man. Exceptionally man; he was really something.

AV: What was his name?

AM: His name? Leopoldo Diez Villar.

AV: How about your mother's name?


AV: And why did she come to Tampa. She had family here?

AM: Well, like they always say—well, they, she came, two brothers. And this, I don't
know whether you want to put it or not, I always complained to my mother that had I been starving I would not have sent my children over—really, never to see them again because it was—and my mother said, "Well, no, we had to, because things were bad." I don't care how bad things were, I would never had done that! But they all did. All the Spanish, Italian, they send their children here. Now, like I say, my mother at least came, her two brothers were here. And then she came with her sister. And then they all became cigar makers. And they were, actually my mother spoke very little English. Now my dad didn't. My dad spoke, my dad was very smart. And, of course, it wasn't like now where we, they moved into Ybor City and everything was in Spanish, you know, the grocery, the paper, so actually they didn't. And I had an aunt, who was hell on wheels and would not allow us to speak English at home.

AV: Really?

AM: So actually they would have learned—my mother, after, learned a lot with my grandchildren. Because, of course they spoke English. But my aunt [said] (knocks on table), "En esta mesa nada más que se habla español."

AV: So they settled in Ybor City? Your parents?

AM: Yes.

AV: And they were both cigar makers, both of them?

AM: Both. My mother was the roller, and my father was the bunch maker.

AV: Oh. They worked together?

AM: Yes. Actually, at the same—

AV: That's how they met?

AM: No. No, they met—I guess—my father was a terrific dancer. And I guess that's where they met, at one of the clubs; I really don't remember that very well. But he was very well-liked, and all the girls in the neighborhood, young girls, much younger, he taught them all how to dance and he, you know, he was very—he had, like I say, he was Spanish, but you know the Cuban people have that—and he picked it up among them. He was a guarachero, and he was, you know—that's why a lot of people thought he was Cuban. But I always tell my grandchildren today, “I would not trade my bringing up for yours.” You may have had three cars and three bathrooms—we had one bathroom for 12 people and, never had any problems, you know, they just—

AV: How many siblings did you have?

AM: One. I had one daughter. I had one daughter, and three grandchildren. My oldest grandson is 30, will be 31 next month. Yeah. And—
AV: Did your parents belong to the clubs?

AM: Oh, yes, yes.

AV: What clubs did they belong to?

AM: We always came here; this was our home away from home—

AV: The Centro Asturiano.

AM: —but we also belonged to the Loyal Knights, which, I went a lot to the Loyal Knights. Now, my dad, until the day he died, he belonged to the Cuban club, too. Because he felt, you know, it was part of him. His friends—there's only friend left from Artemisa. That's where my father went to in Cuba. And, there's only one left. All of the rest are all gone. Of course my father would have been over a hundred years old by this time, you know.

AV: So, what are your memories of growing up in Ybor City?

AM: Good. Very good. Very good. Like I say, we lived, until we were about 15, and then we each separated from—

AV: Where did you live? Where did you have the home?

AM: Where? When we lived together?

AM: Um-hm.

AM: Okay, we lived on 13th Avenue and 19th Street. It was a big home there that, like I say, it was a—well we had like five bedrooms, one bathroom. But we were, like I said, we were always happy. My father was, the most of all, you know, is happy. In fact, even the family—all of them—they were just so close to him because he was this happy-go-lucky guy. He always worked. That's why I say even when things were bad, bad—sometimes none of them worked but him—and he always was kind of a go-getter. He would go and, in Ybor City they had a place called La Mezquita. They sold blinds and, so he would get them. And he always had a car. My dad always had a car. He has his little car, and he would go around, old, and sell old things. So actually he always brought money home.

So we were, like I say, we were never hungry, we were never—for us it was, and you talk about nochebuenas. Oh, what nochebuenas we had! Oh, it was just wonderful! It was just. Well, we still celebrate nochebuenas. I hate to give it up. Because they're gone. But, it was wonderful. Everybody came, we were 30, 40 people sitting around the table and it was just wonderful!
AV: Tell me a little bit about school. What school did you go to?

AM: Okay, when I, I went to grammar school I went to V.M. Ybor. Which is right there on 15th Street and Columbus Drive, and then I went to George Washington, and then I went to Hillsborough High. I graduated in 1940 from Hillsborough High. That's why I know most—like Angel, you know, we all graduated together. And, like I said, it was, at that time, we were kind of, not really separated from, but we were still—it was that stigma that, you know—Latin. You know, it was not really—but I was always a fighter. So I just never let that bother me. And I was, it was bad at times, because they said, "No, Latino, que—" But a lot of times you, they looked for it.

Because like in, we used to go to Clearwater Beach—oh, another thing about my mother and dad. They worked together. One week out of the summer, we had to go to the beach. Every day. At twelve o'clock my father would say okay, tápala, and we'd go. Of course, we couldn't afford to stay at a house at the beach, you know, it's too much. But, I don't know, it was so different. Life was so different that, of course the young people today you can't tell them that because they'll say, [mocking] "Oh, Ma, you don't know—"

AV: So yes, you were telling me about going to the beach. Was there a problem because you were Latin?

AM: Well, see, when we'd get there to the beach, there's a place, the Palm Pavilion, in Clearwater Beach. Which my sister had—her husband—they had homes at the beach; so, it was no problem for them. But if you went to the Palm Pavilion, and they would take—the Italian people would take spaghetti and all that kind—and actually, they would leave it kind of messy! And then there was a sign there that said, "No Latins or Dogs," you could see the things on there. You know. But like I say, I really never had any problem. Because I always, you know, found my place, I said, Hey, I'm very proud of what I am and, you know. But I am an American first of all. So that was the main thing. And out in Sulphur Springs, which were—the guys used to say, crackers con pelo en los dientes went out there.

AV: Meaning what? Con pelo en los dientes?

AM: *Son lo último de los* Cracker, you know? But actually they would go over there, and, of course, the American girls loved the Latin boys. And they'd go over there and take away the girls and there was always a fight, and, you know. But as the years went by we went, you know, we settled, and—now when I graduated from high school, I graduated in 1940. And I think the year before I graduated—I think it was before the year, I forgot—was the first time they ever had a Spanish-speaking president of Hillsborough High School. His name was Joe Aizpuru. And he still had his Spanish accent, and—although he was born here—but there's not too many people that have kept their accents, como la zeta, like I do. Very few. And it's the funniest thing because my husband was from Guanabacoa, I mean you know, he came when he was very little. But if he said “Cabesa,” it didn't sound bad to me, but I, if I say, “Cabesa,” I gotta go back and say, “Cabeza,” because it does not sound right, you know?
So it just, like I say we, when we were growing up there was. But it was different; if I'd go with my mother downtown—actually, we really shopped mostly in Ybor City. We had, on Saturday nights was the big night. We'd walk around and see the boys, and, you know. But then if we wanted to go downtown; if I would get in an elevator full of people—and of course I had to speak to my mother—I would apologize and say, "I'm sorry, my mother cannot speak English." Which today people don't do that. Which I still think is rude. I think if there's people in here that cannot speak Spanish, speak English—if everybody knows how to speak it. So, you know I had that, I just felt bad that, you know, I was being rude if I spoke Spanish to my mother. But then, like I say, it went on, and then we inter—because nobody, you found very few girls that married Latin, American boys; very few.

AV: Why was that?

AM: Well, the first thing, the first thing that they would say, even, even our culture, "Oh, they drink so much, they're a bunch of drunk—"

AM: Really?

AM: Drink. Who drank more than Spanish and Cuban then? Where we lived in Ybor City, we had one, two, three, four cafes that they'd go, the men would go in there and play cards and drink. Yet, none of the boys that I knew ever became alcoholic. But they did drink a lot, the men did drink a lot; the older men. But there was an, but American husbands made very good husbands. Then they found out that they did make very good husbands, see? My daughter's married to an American and I am tickled pink. I wanted her to because I wanted this thing to end—Latino, Americano, you know? We're all Americans. You know, just don't.

But today even so, I have kind of argued a lot of times; especially when I go to the beauty parlor because there's two or three Cubans that, you know, I call Cubans; not like my ex-husband who was born in Guanabacoa but he was here all his life, but the ones that came with the Mariel and all that, those are what I call Cubans. And whenever they say "cracker," I go, "Hey! Just slow down. My son-in-law is terrific." And all my children, and my grandchildren are married to American boys. But that has always been the thing that they thought—no. Then they found out that they did make—

AV: So when did that start to happen? That people, you know, married Americans? I mean, that Latins got involved with Americans?

AM: Well. I think, let me see, I got my—

AV: Not in your generation, then?

AM: No. No.
AV: Most of the people you grew up with married within the group.

AM: That's right, within the group.

AV: They could marry also Italians, or Cubans or Spaniards.

AM: Oh, yes. But even, even not that a long time ago because, I know this real good friend of mine, her mother had—his mother—had to elope. Because she's Italian and she married a Spaniard, who died right here downstairs because he was Spanish until the end, Asturiano too. I mean they had to elope because they would not let them, because he was Asturiano and she was probably Sicilian, you know. At first they didn't like it. No, they didn't like it. But I say as the years went by, then everybody, like my sister. One sister married—not, like I say, not at home—because there was no prejudice, my dad would say, "You wanna marry so and so? I don't think it's good for you, but if you want to get married, that's your business."

One of my sisters, they're twins, I have twin sisters, married a young man who was completely Italian; both sides. The other one married one, Spanish; era Gonzalez Tramontana, half and half. And actually, you know it just wasn't, that was a long time ago because the—one is a widow, but the other one has been married fifty, about fifty-seven years. But even so her mother-in-law was a little bit, she wasn't too happy, you know. Because some of the older ones, they didn't. But then after awhile they just, everybody just intermarried with everybody and, like I say, I have very good Italian friends. Very good. But actually, I really have more Spanish friends than, because we were in that—we belonged here, we belonged to the Loyal Knights so that, which, you had to be either—[whispers] which was stupid—You had to be either Spanish or, generation. Like my husband—

AV: So you couldn't be Cuban or Italian?

AM: No! I got my husband in and he was, actually his father was Catalan; he was from, era Catalan. But actually you had to be either Spanish or Spanish descent, you know.

AV: I see.

AM: So that, yeah, first we joined that because over here we didn't have La Juventud Entusiasta like we did over there. So that was a young—

AV: Right.

AM: And mostly people that were at the Loyal Knights were either gallegos or montañeses, and actually my dad was montañes, not that anybody knew. Until a few years ago when I told one of my girlfriends, "No, si mi padre es montañes." "What?! How come"—I said, because—My dad was asturiano because at home we were all asturiano. That was my biggest disappointment when I went to Spain.
AV: Why?

AM: I knew. I could speak Asturiano more than my cousins who were there, because they wanted—they don't say, we used to say, "Grao." No way. Now they say "Grado." They wanna be real, you know. And I couldn't, I said, “Nobody knows how to sing El Chalanero here?” Which we sang, you know, one to another. No.

AV: So your family kept the culture—

AM: Here, here—

AV: —more than over there?

AM: —more than over there. That was my, like I say, the only disappointment, because I loved everything—and my cousins were—of course, my parents, my mother of course, and my father had to have agreed to it—and everybody, every month they'd send money. I mean, every single month. It was always—all the brothers, sisters, everybody had to send money. Even when things were bad here, they still got together and very month they would send. And clothes—God, they sent clothes over there! And actually now, I went back, I'm 76. And I was, when I was 18 months was when I came, so actually I didn't remember anything.

AV: So you were born there in Spain?

AM: I was born in Spain. In Grao.

AV: So your parents had gone back to Spain—?

AM: Yes, see, my—

AV: —were they visiting—?

AM: —no, my mother and dad, there was a big strike, cigar strike. So actually, my dad and my mother were gonna go back to stay. Actually gonna go stay. Now my sisters were already born, they had the twin sisters. And actually, I think what happened—it's been so many years that I kind of lost—is that my father, they were actually gonna stay. And then my father had to go to Melilla. Isn't that where you go to fight the Moors or whatever?

AV: Yes. They were sending him to fight in Melilla?

AM: Yes. From. So he came, he just came on to Tampa. And of course he never saw me. He never saw me. I was born. And then my mother came, see? So, you know, it, that's, nobody, it was a bad thing for him to leave, but he says, “No, I'm not leaving my family here and going off to fight something I don't believe in.” So, you know, that's the—So when I went to Spain, like I say, I had to have an operation—it was a serious operation—and I told my daughter, “If I do not die—” I don't fly; see? I hate to fly—“I am going to
Spain. I'm gonna see where I was born.” Because we were always very, very Asturianos—I mean. So, nobody believed me because they thought, oh, she'll never get on a plane—

AV: Get on a plane.

AM: Yes. I got well, and the year following, I went. I had never seen anybody and—it was like I was home! It was, they were so wonderful—I went with this friend of mine, and she couldn't get over it. Because we were in, we went to Andalucia. We started off in Madrid, went all through Andalucia to Barcelona, and on Barcelona, we took a plane to Renedo, no, Ranon.

AV: Ranon?

AM: Yes, that's the name of the airport cerca de—

AV: Oh, in Asturias. In Oviedo?

AM: No, in Oviedo. That's the name of the airport, Ranon. In fact when I came home and I asked Angel, "Hey, is there anything—" you know, because el es Rañon. So, we were seven days in Asturias, in Grado. And Olga, my friend, says, "I cannot believe it. We were there seven days, we didn't spend a penny." They paid for the rooms that we were in, for every meal. I said, “Hey, you know?” They said, "Well, all that you all did for us," you know, "we don't"—they didn't forget. The only objection is that I wanted to go to church. Because we always go to church. And they weren't too happy about it because they still, you know, because my uncle was killed right—taken out, and my cousins were—and one was in jail two years, and the other one a year.

AV: During the war? The Spanish Civil War?

AM: Yes. And my cousin that is now in Madrid, Maria del Pilar, disappeared, and she was gone about a year and a half, and then she went to Madrid—that's where they found her. So actually they have no love yet for—at all. Can you take that off a minute?

AV: Sure.

Recording paused

AV: But you went to church, I mean, when you were there?

AM: Oh, yes, they took me, they took me. Because I've never been and I wanted to go, you know, I wanted to. Yes.

AV: And you had been born in Grado then?

AM: Yes. Um-hm.
AV: Right. So how about the family in Santander, did you go to visit, or that's—?

AM: No. We didn't because—I'll tell you why we didn't go is that because they took us to Oviedo to—but I figured if I go over there, they would want to pay for everything there, because I wanted to go and stay over. See? So we didn't get—we did go to Santander but just, just passing, you know. But I would have wanted to go because, like I say, his family—my father's family—was well off.

And when my mother went to Spain, because my mother went to Spain one time; she stayed nine months. I'll kill her. Nine months she stayed over there. Left my dad here with us. And then the second time she went, she was there seven months. So actually, what she would do, is the money they gave her—because my father had an inheritance—so they gave her and she spent that money over there. See, they were, like I say, well off and they, but I would have wanted to go there. But I didn't. And I don't think I'm ever going back. I don't think it's a—

AV: So apart from that visit, during that big strike here in Tampa, did your parents ever think of settling back in Spain?

AM: No, they didn't. They were, like I said, they were here, their friends were here. And we were in Spain as far as my house was concerned. I mean, we were very, very—so, just—all our friends were asturianos. It wasn't one—you name an asturiano, I know everybody in Tampa.

AV: Okay. Tell me a little bit now about the Spanish Civil War here in Tampa. What are your memories of those years?

AM: Well. Yes. We worked, like I say, we collected. Which was a nickel. We collected every Saturday or at the foot of the cigar factories. We would go, and actually times were very bad; a nickel was a lot of money then. And then we made churros right near the factory. And we, we were like, like some people would come and get the churros and go sell them on 7th Avenue here, but we made them and then, we sold them right there, you know, we did.

AV: How did you become involved in this support, I mean you personally?

AM: Oh, because of course my mother was very active; my mother, my aunts, and everybody in the family was active. So that's how we became, you know, involved in it. Of course it had to do with, in Spain. We walked from the Labor Temple, which was on 8th [Avenue] all the way downtown for them to lift the embargo, and nobody even knew there was a war going on, except us, you know. But, actually at that time I never thought of it as being a communist. We never thought, that el Frente Popular was, you know, and La Pasionaria [Dolores Ibárruri], we didn't, we just didn't.

AV: So how did you think of what you were doing?
AM: You mean, what did I think?

AV: Yes, other people thought that you were a communist by doing that, or—?

AM: No, no, we never—the only thing that was dumb, and I still say it's dumb, is that a lot of the young people—we didn't—because my father never went into church since he came from Spain, because he says in the name of religion he saw a lot of things that weren't right. So that, my father—first time my father ever went to church was when my daughter got married. He never—now, we went. You know. We could go, that was up to us—but he never went. And actually it was bad because there was a lot of people that sent their children to Catholic school. Now my dad would never do that. I mean he wouldn't. And, when this came about, they just, that was it. I mean a lot of them had to. And what he was talking about the other day, what's his name? Frank Lastra. Is unbelievable, Frank, he's, he wasn't like that in school, he was quiet. He, we had a friend, I know who he was talking about, that their father was, they were fascist, like that. And he did get beat up once in awhile. Which was not his fault—

AV: The child?

AM: Yes. But you know, it was just—but they had to take the children out of school. Because if not, they were, you know people. Which, nothing to do because, after all, religion here, we don't pay for the priests. You know. It isn't like Spain that's part of the, over here it wasn't like that. You know. Whatever you gave is what, you know. But—

AV: So you don't think the church here really did anything—

AM: No. I don't know, of course, if the church said anything. I don't recall. Because we used to go to church on Sundays and that was it. We didn't go to the school. But all our friends were going to—they were quite a few friends. But they had to take them out. Because of the stigma; you know because you're a fascist if you send your kids so, out they went. So, it made it bad on the kids because they had been going there a long time, and personally I didn't think it had anything to do with that. This is America, that's Spain over there, you know, just not, were not giving them anything. But, you know how people are.

AV: Yes. How did your parents become involved then, in this Frente Popular thing?

AM: Well, like I say, the Labor Temple, Martinez, he was active in it. And my sister-in-law, Mirta Cruz, she was very active. And then, there were all, in other words if there was something to help Spain, they were of course Loyalists—they were—and we knew that my cousins were in, had been to jail and then the other one had disappeared, and they killed my, Cesar, their father. They don't—believe me, they haven't forgiven them yet for that. Which, you can't blame them, you know. And, you see, like in Spain, I think the women would like to go to church. But they know that the men don't want to. I mean, no way.
AV: Was your mother religious, for instance?

AM: No. They weren't. They weren't religious because, like I say, my dad always thought that in the name of the Church, they did—which I'm sure—what was that great big thing that they had—?

AV: What, the Inquisition?

AM: Uh-huh. You know. And they said, my father said no, because they destroyed the convent—and there were kid, you know, babies in there and there were, you know—which, you see it every day, you know. But you, it's what you believe in and you don't have to believe in them. They're human like everybody else, you know.

AV: Um-hm. So your mother also shared that idea—?

AM: Well—

AV: —with your father, or was your mother—?

AM: —no, my mother, but if we had to go to church, my mother would go with us. My two sisters started school at the Catholic school. When they, but they're only a year or two; see they, they make—I never—now I make communion, but at that time I didn't belong to any of that. And since my boyfriend which, I went out with him for years, wasn't involved with anything I, we just didn't go to church after we grew up. Now, then, my daughter was 16 before she made her—because my husband said, “Well, let her make up her mind.” And she did. She went by herself and she made—that's what she, and my daughter's very religious. I mean, she is. And my son-in-law was Methodist. And my daughter says, “Look, it's up to you. I will not change my religion. If you wanna—”

So he said no, so my sister baptized him, and he is—you know the ones that go in when they're oldish, he's very, very—and I think, I may not be, I don't know if I have the wrong impression, but it does my heart good when I see them all together go to church every Sunday. Except of course the youngest, I mean the oldest, that's Olivia. Like yesterday, we'd take the whole thing all together, and it does my heart good. It may not be, they have a very good marriage, the kids, we have never had any problems—maybe it works and maybe it doesn't, you know? But in our case, it's always been—and everybody said, Boy, Sandra really did a good job. Her husband Albert also, because he's there. So.

AV: Okay, so going back to the things that people did here, what else did they do? They went to demonstrations, they made the churros—

AM: Oh, yes, we did. We had the churros, and we had dances. I remember, like in Palmetto Beach, you know. I remember one year it was, I remember the date, July 1931. We had a big, at Palmetto Beach—which was a little place—but it turned out, it was always packed. I mean they, we had a very good turnout. Well you can tell in the money
that we picked up. You know. And we sold—because things were bad at that time—but everybody, you know, they gave and gave and gave. Till. Yeah, we did a lot of—they had demonstrations over there, near the Labor Temple and all that, you know—make it—but it was, we still lost the war.

AV: Tell me a little bit about the speakers that used to come here from Spain and other parts of the States, do you remember any?

AM: Well, I don't remember that much about it. It isn't that we didn't go, but it just, you know; I was young and thinking of other things, and — Fernando de los Ríos came, and La Pasionaria, she was one of the ones that came. But I really don't remember, you know, what their actually—what they said or what they, of course I knew what we wanted to hear. But.

AV: And how about the women and the young children? They seemed to be working a lot—

AM: Oh, yes. We did, because I was, that was in ’36, I was, I guess—I forgot—that was in ’36. Well it wasn't until about ’37 that we really I think organized. And I'm 76 so that shows you how old I was.

AV: Right.

AM: So, you know. But they were. We were, like I say, we were very close; the whole community was very close. And I can't remember how many Italians were in that thing. One thing about the Italians, they're always winning wars. I'm sure they turned over. In Italy.

AV: Yes, was there conflict between the Italians and the Spaniards?

AM: No, not really. Not really. Not really, no.

AV: So, were they supporters also—?

AM: Yes, well, they gave like, you know. They gave and, like I say, we went from one house to another. I remember collecting on Saturday mornings; going—and for a nickel, gave them a receipt and everything.

AV: Oh, yes? How much would you collect, let's say, in a day? Do you think?

AM: Oh, like on a Saturday morning?

AV: Um-hm.

AM: Maybe fifteen dollars or something—but we went a long ways. We took, you know, all. We only went to the houses that we knew, you know, were —because of course they
can tell you to get out. But—

AV: Did you ever run into any problem?

AM: No, we really, like I say, we went to the houses; we had addresses and we went to the houses that—so, we didn't, never had any problems. The only problems, like I say, we had was with like us and the, the Latin people and the American people that did—it was hard. You had to be tolerant and you had to be—But no—

AV: Were Americans here aware of what was going on in Spain?

AM: No, I don't—because, like I say, we walked—and I mean we walked a long way, down—in fact the parade was shown on, one of the parades was shown on—they didn't know; they were wondering what's going on? Yeah, because a lot of people didn't even read the newspaper. In fact, today a lot of people don't read the newspaper. Not that I blame them for that, but—

AM: What newspapers did you use to read to know what was going on?

AM: *Tribune*. It was—and we had *La Gaceta. La Traducción*. See because my dad read English and he always got the *Tribune*. But, *La Traducción, La Gaceta. La Traducción-Prensa*. Yes. We had—

AV: Did you listen to the radio, too?

AM: Yes. We listened to. And then we had a newspaper that came, *El Diario de la Marina*, that came from Cuba I believe.

AV: But that was a very conservative newspaper.

AM: Yes. My aunt—the one that was stricken with *codornices*, she used to know Diego, who was kind of, like a boyfriend. I was telling her son the other day, “Your mother was a flapper at that time.” So, I don't know what else to tell you.

AV: No, that's okay. Tell me a little bit about—you were talking about the Americans—how did the Latin community here think about—what was their opinion on the neutrality? You know. The whole idea that the United States didn't want to intervene.

AM: Well, of course, you know, we didn't, they weren't happy about it. But actually I don't think anybody was that—in other words, there wasn't any quarrel between them—and actually we didn't mingle so much because, like I say, we lived in Ybor City; just that area. And we went, even though by the time I went to high school, sometimes I'd walk all the way to Hillsborough from where I lived, you know, because there was a—but we kept, really kind of to ourselves in Ybor City. We did our shopping. And they were downtown. So actually—
AV: Right.

AM: Until after 19—let me see, I graduated in '40 or '42—after we were really grown that we started mingling with them. Like, you know the idea you get, "Oh, no, because they drink and they do this"—everybody drinks! And, actually in our house, we were, I think, kind of the exception because we had—I never had a chaperon to go out. Where most of the people—girls my age, they couldn't go out without a chaperon. And in my house they were liberal; my father would say, "Well, you know what's what. You know what to do." You know—so we didn't have any problem.

And then, my daddy and my mother danced. So actually, like every Saturday we were here. They would be downstairs and we would be upstairs, you know. And young people didn't drink—they drank—but not as much as they do now. So we would take them downstairs and my dad would give them a drink. Which really was wrong, now that I think about it. At that time we didn't, see? So, they, after awhile everybody just became together and everybody intermarried—I know a lot of my friends at that time married Anglos a lot. It's just like all these Cubans that came—how many of them have married Anglos? A lot. So, you know, the young people don't think that much of—

AV: Those categories—

AM: Yes.

AV: —anymore. Were there any problems between the people here who supported Franco and the people who supported the Republic, do you remember?

AM: Well, I'll tell you we knew very, very little. I knew one that worked in the factory. I think they called him El Pájaro. But, we really didn't mingle with anybody that wasn't—anybody that we knew was—you know, just. No, no.

AV: Do you remember any incidents, like, I don't know, discussions, or—?

AM: No, but I do remember what Frank was saying the other day, that this kid was hit, which to me was unfair because he can't help it if his father, you know? But. His father worked in the cigar factories and of course he was ostracized; nobody wanted to—you know. But there were not that many—not that I recall. But. Life went on.

AV: Did you work very close with your mother in all these things you did?

AM: Yes. Well, like I say, every Saturday—

AV: She would go with you?

AM: Yes. And my sisters, you know. We would all go and—yes, we were—and like I say at first we were really mostly at the Loyal Knights, because that's where, you know, we had the—in fact some of the pictures here of the little girls with their hands up and all
that—

AV: Yes. Like this one. You are in one of them.

AM: Oh, yes, yes. I was—I don't know who recognized me back here somewhere.

AV: Right here, no, I think it's—are you this one over here?

AM: Let me see. This is Rachel; she's dead already. Young too, Rachel was younger—no.

AV: What do you remember of this picnic, for instance?

AM: I really don't remember that. And I, but I'm not here.

AV: Were they common?

AM: Yes, they had, we had. But actually we had a lot of picnics; we had a lot of things going on—I'm not on that one I don't think.

AV: No?

AM: I don't think.

AV: Aren't you this one?

AM: No, that's not me.

AV: No? Um—somebody told me that you were here; either this one or this one.

AM: Let me see. Oh, here I am. Right here. That kid, that kid—this is me back there, yes. This was in La Columna.

AV: Do you remember the songs they used to sing?

AM: Yes, I remember, yes. A lot of, you know.

AV: So, what were the feelings when, you know, the Republic was losing the war—?

AM: Well, actually—

AV: Do you remember how people were reacting to that?

AM: Of course, you know, you were upset, because your parents were upset, you know. But actually I don't remember that much towards the end of the—Jesus! Back there is Isabelina. This is Isabel Fernandez, the name up there.
AV: Are these members of the Loyal Knights?

AM: Uh-huh.

AV: So this is a Loyal Knight picnic?

AM: Yes, there's the man. Right there. Here's, what's her name, here? That comes here?

AV: Delia?

AM: Um-hm. And Eva. I, you know, towards the end I really don't remember—here's Martinez.

AV: Right, yes.

AM: I'm so surprised that there's not one picture of my sister-in-law. My sister-in-law was so pretty. She looked like Sonja Henie.

AV: Yes, tell me about her—you were telling me before that she was very involved—

AM: Yes, she was involved in all—because, like I say, you know, she had a great belief and she was a good person. But actually, most of the people that came—like from New York and all that? They were not that, they, the ones that were communist? No, they were not that.

AV: No. But she was from Tampa?

AM: Oh, yes. She was born in Cuba.

AV: And she joined the Communist Party here in Tampa?

AM: Oh, yes.

AV: Um-hm. Now, was it hard to be a member of the Communist Party in Tampa—?

AM: Oh, it was hard, yes! The FBI was always, you know, checking and, you know. And in fact, even up to the time I got a divorce, they came up to my house and wanted, you know, to find out—and I said, "There's nothing to find out; I don't know anything," you know. I didn't want to have any problem. I said, "I could tell you one thing, my husband is not a communist." I did—that I knew—but, like I say, she was very good hearted. And sometimes you say well, in theory it's very good. If you work it out the way it is, it's very good. It's just like our Constitution, there's nothing like ours—of course it doesn't go, lo leyeras al pie—You know.

AV: —de la letra.
AM: Yes. But, in theory it was, because people—like my sister-in-law was the type of person, she would give you the shirt off her back and then some of these slimy people that were in it—because there were some that were, that I wouldn't have nothing to do with them! So, you know, she was a good person. And my father-in-law was, would go to anything because he was a very naive—very naive person. Good person.

AV: Um-hm. So was she already involved with the Communist Party in the '30s, or was that, like, a later development?

AM: Well, I think she, they were all involved already at that time, yes. Now, I wouldn't say that he was. Now I don't know about Martinez. Because it was the Labor Temple—and if you were in the Labor, automatically, you know, they would. They did a lot of dumb things like put the flag on top of the—my brother-in-law, who was not a communist (inaudible).

AV: Really?

AM: They'd just do it just, you know. Kids do things. He was a real young boy. They climbed on top of the, cigar factory had the, what do you call? the tank of water?—climbed all the way, put the red flag up on the top.

AV: Oh, they did that? When was that? During the war, or—?

AM: That was—

AV: —earlier?

AM: —let's see, I lived on 16th Street. I think it was, maybe during the war. I don't really remember when it was. Then, you know, my sister married him but he, that, it was nothing, he was not a communist, he wasn't—they were doing it for fun—

AV: He was actually the one who did that?

AM: He went up there, to the top of this thing up—

AV: That was your brother-in-law?

AM: Eulogio.

AV: Oh, really?

AM: Yes. He went—

*Recording paused*
AV: So what else do you remember of the Communist Party here in Tampa?

AM: No, I just remember that they used to come from New York. You know, they used to come and have meetings; but I never, you know—and like I say, I never really spoke too much about it because I didn't want to be involved in any way. But I know that some of the people that were in, they were good people, that really believed in sharing. Now, I can tell you a few who were not—who had money and wouldn't share that money for nothing. Then I would say, "Okay, you believe that? Why don't you share?" No way. You know.

AV: Do you think people here thought—maybe more the Americans than the Latins—that the people supporting the Republic were really—communist, or—?

AM: Communist? I never thought that. I really, now as years go by and I'm older I think, I never, never thought that we—that—I just thought exactly—was democracy. You know? I never, never thought they were. No, just—but I guess the communists figured, you know, they pulled. La Pasionaria—was she supposed to be a communist?

AV: Um-hm.

AM: Yes. So you see, I didn't even think about it—it was just Democrats and that's it, and I'm sure my mother—I don't know about my dad—because my dad, like I say, would give you the shirt off his back, so actually if it was in theory, he would, you know, but—

AV: They weren't political in anyway, your parents in that sense?

AM: No. No, they weren't. No, they weren't. My father was, you know, he got his papers, a citizen. And he very much, he was against anybody that didn't vote. He would have a fit if you didn't vote!

AV: Why?

AM: Because, he says, "That's your right." Don't, I'll quote him, "Don't bitch if you don't vote." You know.

AV: When did he become a citizen?

AM: Well, see, he became a citizen when they, let me see, my dad—because I went with him. Happens that the judge was, his sister taught me in school. I forgot what year; I was already married. And they took it in Sp—no, my mother took it in Spanish—but he took it in English. And my father was a smart person. He was nobody's dummy. But—he was such a good person, that when we went to talk to the judge—Childers was the judge's name; I'll never forget—and he asked my dad a couple of questions, something like that. And my dad got so nervous that his lip started to tremble—I told the judge, "Listen here. I am a high school graduate. I graduated with a good—and I don't even know all those things. He knows, he's good, he's—" So.
But it made me so mad because my dad was so nervous he couldn't answer him. Now my mother took it in Spanish. At that time I think they gave it in Spanish—I don't remember. But, my dad was very America—he did not, he couldn't stand it. Says, "You came here, embrace the country, you do, go by their rules and, you know, wouldn't want to do anything that—and you vote." I have a, one of my sisters who, you have to be after her to vote—I have to call her, "Don't forget that next week you've got to vote!" My dad would have a fit. "You've got to vote. That's your privilege." And then, and I do, I always vote. I don't care; I vote all the time and I'm very loyal, Democrat, always.

AV: You learned your lesson!

AM: Yes.

Side B:

AV: I wanted to ask you, Angeles, why do you think the people here were so supportive of the Republic? People here in Ybor City and West Tampa?

AM: Why? Because it was the thing. You were, you know, a democracy. We lived in a democracy. And we wanted it to be, you know. And, like I say, although there was America, they were very loyal to Spain. They always, you know, we always, you know, tried to help as much as we could. And when they could, they did. Because of course in the first few years they were here they couldn't go anywhere. But then as time went by, you know, they could take trips. And always—I think most of the—the small people, the small villages, it was here that sent the money and it was here that sent the clothes and it was—you know?

So we were supportive because we, like I say, we lived in a democracy, and we wanted them to live—and then after all, when we got wind of what was happening and, like I say, the families were being killed and being put in prison—you know, so you were trying to do all. And then not really, it was no problem to collect money. It was no problem to sell. And actually we were a lot of people helping. You know. Of course, now that I think back—I'm trying to think who besides the Spanish helped. Because I don't remember any Italians being in any of these things. I really don't recall any of them. Like I say, they had a—and even, now that I think, I have a lot of Spanish friends that I haven't seen come up to say, you know. So maybe they were on the other side, and we didn't know it, you know. Which is really, that's their prerogative, whatever they want to do, they, you know. But this—

AV: So what happened after [Francisco] Franco won the war?

AM: Well, of course, everybody was very down, very down and, but as things went back to normal, and they went back to Spain, like my uncle. My youngest uncle, he went back to Spain and he found that things weren't that bad, you know, after awhile, that everything was back to normal then. They just said, "Well, there's nothing we can do,"
and that's it. So.

AV: Did you keep helping your family throughout all those years?

AM: Oh, yes. In fact, I was, my dad died and my mother was retired. And I had just recently gotten divorced with no support or no nothing. And my mother was still sending money. Say, "Hey, Ma, that is enough! We need the money here. At least pay for the lights." You know? But they were very—they always—and they were so funny because, like my uncle—I had an uncle, and his wife, well they were Spanish-Cuban; they came from Cuba. And they would call them, "Don't forget." Well, you know, enough is enough! They had more things in Spain than we did. They had impermeables. They had a typewriter. They, when they went to get married they sent them sheets and pillow cases and—more than I had when I got married.

So they still, up to the—like I say, my mother, I was, it's been 25 years that I separated, and my mother was still sending money. All of them. They all got together to send money. And actually my sister, the one that's married to the whole Italian—she was the one better off—and she would send too. And then I had another cousin that was a maitre here at the Columbia Restaurant. He would always send. So actually we sent as long—like I told my mother, "Enough is enough; they're all grown. They all have more money now." When we went over there I told them I said, "I don't want you to pay for anything." "We'll never spend all the money we have." And here I don't have it!

AV: Ironic.

AM: Yes. So it's just a—but they were real good to them when they went. One year they, when the three sisters went together, and when they got into Grado, they went by train, I think it was. And when they got out, the whole, the whole town was there, I said, "Of course, the goose that laid the golden eggs!" Because they sent clothes and everybody could use the clothes you know. There was too much—

AV: There were a lot of people from Grado here.

AM: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

AV: Right, so.

AM: Grado, or right around. Yeah. Right around. There were a lot. Oh gosh!

AV: Let me ask you this last question. Looking back from today, do you think the Spanish Civil War had an impact on your life in any way?

AM: Not on my life, because I was, like I say, we were very involved, and we were, at home we were very asturiano. I say asturiano because that's where we were—we, so actually, it didn't. Like I say the biggest disappointment to me was when I got to Grao. And I say Grao! Grado. You know, they were, they don't—we sang all the little songs.
There's nothing more aggravating—like last week we went to la paella, and I went three times up there, "Would you please play a pasodoble?" Stop playing b-b-b-bk-buk-uk-tak-uk-um-Cuban music, and African music. You know. But we weren't, because that's—they didn't do that in Grao. They didn't have anything like that anymore. They didn't have, they don't have verbenas, they don't have anything. And that's what I was used to because my mother, again and again, they would tell you what they did and to—we lived it! We lived it with them, you know.

And, like I say, over here, we had so many people that were from Grao. My mother one time; my mother was in a nursing home for eleven years. But not like a regular—we, I went at noon; fed her every meal. And, one time this lady that was from Grao, came in and saw her. And I tell you, it was heartbreaking. She came in and saw my mother said, "My, Nora ¿cuándo vamos pa Grao?" And the whole place started to cry. Because there were a few there that we, you know. We were always together in there. Because people say, "No, a nursing home"—I couldn't handle her at home, I couldn't handle her by myself. But I was there for every meal. I mean I was there all the time. And it was, I can't forget her, "Nora ¿cuándo vamos pa Grao?" Everybody started to cry. So. That was it.

AV: Okay, just to conclude this interview, Angeles, is there anything else you would like to add, or some topic we haven't touched that you think should be included in the tape?

AM: No, I told you about everything I can remember. You know. Just, that's about.

AV: Okay. This concludes the interview with Mrs. Angeles Marti. I want to thank you very much, Angeles, for participating in this project.

AM: You're very welcome.

End of interview