

ARGENTINA ORTEGA
La Sabrosita – Richmond, Virginia

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Date: December 10, 2012

Location: La Sabrosita, Richmond, Virginia

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 1:30

Project: Women, Work & Food in Richmond, Virginia

[Begin Argentina Ortega]

00:00:00

Sara Wood: Okay; I'm just going to introduce you and then I'll ask you to introduce yourself. So today is December 10, 2012. I'm Sara Wood for the Southern Foodways Alliance and I'm sitting here with Argentina Ortega or Tina Ortega and we're at La Sabrosita on the Midlothian Parkway—

00:00:18

Argentina Ortega: Turnpike.

00:00:19

SW: – Turnpike, and I'm wondering could you introduce yourself and tell me your name and what—what you're doing right now?

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AO: Yeah; okay my name is Argentina Ortega. I am sixty-two years old and I started with this bakery in August 2005. I was in Holy Street and then having as partners my sons we moved here to Midlothian and here we are.

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SW: And for the record will you tell me your birth date?

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AO: I was born in June 5, 1950.

00:01:05

SW: Can we start by talking about where you grew up and where you're from and what it was like there and sort of like the culture and the food? Can you talk a little bit about that?

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AO: I was born in a little town in El Salvador called Sensuntepeque, Cabanas. And well I was there until I was thirteen and then I moved to the city to study in a nun-school—Catholic School and I used to live in the school. And then I went to the University and I quit the University because there was too many problems about the guerillas and I moved to California. I wanted to go to college to—I came first to study English but then my boyfriend from El Salvador came three months later and my first son was born in California and I got married and I went back to El Salvador and then I—we came back to—my children, my husband, and I came back to live in Houston and my first husband has families over there that has auto parts and he came to work with him and we lived over there for a couple of years. But my first husband didn't like the life in the United States because we barely have time for the family like we do in El Salvador.

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In El Salvador the days I feel they are longer—you have time for everything, everything—even if you live in town you get bored because you have too much time. But it's not like here because the distance, rushing for everything and he likes to have a quiet life. That's why he loves El Salvador. And then I came back to California and we separated and I married a second time and before I came to California I was taking baking classes. I wanted to start first a bakery in my country but we never did it. And then when I came to California when I separated with my

husband I knew there—I met there somebody that I really knew him from my little town. And he owned a bakery and I started to work there and we married. But it didn't last too long the marriage, so I was in California having a bakery for four years I guess—four or five years and then I came here and my son asked me, do you still want to have a bakery? And I said yes; yes I want it and luckily somebody that we knew was selling the bakery because she was—she felt sick. And I bought it. I make a loan and I went to the Chamber of Commerce and this guy called Louis Garcia, he helped me a lot. So I got a loan and I bought the bakery. It was really tiny; it was 600 square feet and I started to work just with a lady that helped me to clean. I bake, I deliver; it was too much. I feel a little bit tired.

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And then later I hired a baker and another lady and I just delivered outside. When I have—at that time I thought it was enough deliveries here in Richmond, I looked to go outside. So I left somebody—I hired somebody to make the deliveries in Richmond and I went outside like Williamsburg, Fredericksburg, Charlottesville—those were the cities that I – Norfolk. And so at that moment when I was going outside I had several accidents because I was rushing too much. And my sons told me you have to look for a driver or you better forget about the bakery because it's not good for you.

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And so I hired that second driver and I stay here in Richmond and just buying supplies and coming to the bakery to see what they need and that's the way we started to grow. Now in a certain time we have four drivers but now we are just with three and we cover several areas in the state. We deliver in Winchester, some stores in Washington, Maryland, Alexandria, Harrisburg, etcetera; so and my sons became my partners.

00:06:33

SW: I want to back up a little bit. Can you talk a little bit about what it was like growing up in El Salvador and can you talk about the influences in terms of the food or just women, you know; I'm not sure if there were women in your life like your mother, your grandmother that had a profound influence on you?

00:06:53

AO: Yeah; in my home we were five children—four brothers—men, and just me. I was my dad's princess [*Laughs*]. Yeah; I was spoiled but at that time once I asked my dad this—my dad didn't need to scream at me, didn't need to spank at me; he just looked at me and I knew what he wanted. And I—he talked very good about me. He said that I was a good girl. That I obeyed; that I paid attention everything he says. When my boys—when I had my children the things were different; I think they didn't listen to me. They were too much hyper and now I know that at that moment we didn't have the culture like here that you know that you don't have to give candies, Coke, too much to the children. I used to have a store when I had my children and they ate chocolates the whole day, candies, Coca-Cola, and I didn't know why they keep awake until then. And so hyper, I was tired, but we didn't have that information at that moment, and once I asked my dad how is it that you just to see me, I knew what you wanted? And I look at my sons and it's no way. And he said it's because you play too much with them because I was like another kid with them. [*Laughs*] That's why.

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And well about—the food, like we have in the—here in the bakery is really most of the items are Hispanics. This is the bread that we grow up with and the way we display it like just not bagged here is because that's our culture. Our people like to take the bread without wrap

because they can pick different and they do like these—they be going to say oh it's nicer and that's the way they pick each item. That's our culture. Even if we pick three and we come back to the first that's the way we like to pick whatever we want.

00:09:30

SW: And can you talk about some of the items that you have here that are—basically from—that you took with you from El Salvador any recipes or any particular items?

00:09:42

AO: Yeah; most of the recipes I have are from El Salvador. As I told you at the beginning I was having baking classes and I took a lot of recipes so that then I have them here. And the oldest like a customer come and they see a bread like to what they want. And so my sons—or I can stop and talk to the customer and say how is it? And they start to explain – how is the bread that they want and we try to catch the idea and make it. That way we have several items that in the beginning I didn't know it but the customer helps us with that.

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SW: I also want to ask you, so you—you left El Salvador at—where did you go in California, which—where in California?

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AO: The first time I went to Los Angeles in exactly January 1970.

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SW: So how old were you?

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AO: Nineteen and I was going to adult school to take English classes. When we finished the course we were moved to the college, but I didn't get to finish. I was almost finished when my baby was born and so I didn't continue studying. But I'm happy to have my children because they support me very much. It's the best thing I have, the best—I—I always say that I feel blessed having my every day with them, still having my every day with them. I feel blessed—that I am blessed.

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SW: And—and why—can you—I know you kind of talked about this earlier but why did you decide to leave El Salvador and go to California?

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AO: Well at the time I was studying in the university I was studying business administration and there were problems already started. The other day I—I met here in the bakery somebody that was at the university years later than me because I studied at the university in 1967.

00:12:00

SW: This is in El Salvador?

00:12:02

AO: In El Salvador.

00:12:03

SW: What was the name of it?

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AO: The University of El Salvador; it was a government university. That university was beautiful, beautiful gardens; they took good care of it. I went in '67, '68 and '69. I came here in '70 and—but that university was a dream, beautiful. The cafeteria with music and good—nice, nice, nice, but then the guerillas came and I think that was how they started hitting the university. The students and—to try to them to convince about their ideas and some were okay and some were not, but the things were not like at the beginning. And I—so that you're coming and I said I don't think I would like that. That's why I asked my family to send me to California.

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SW: And did you have other family members in California or did you—you were the first one to go?

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AO: No; I had a cousin, an aunt, and a friend of mine, also my classmate in the university, she already—she came at that same moment that I came.

00:13:29

SW: I'm wondering back in 1967 was it—were there other women when you started at the University in El Salvador were there lots of women in college or was it rare to be in college?

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AO: No; there was a lot of women in the university but in the career that I picked that was business administration there were just men. We were about five women.

00:13:53

SW: What was that like for you?

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AO: Oh it was okay; it was okay. They were respectful; yeah. At that moment it was nice because most of the guys that came to study administration were guys that were already working—family, the head of their families and they were coming mostly it was night classes. After they leave their job and they wore suits, very elegant, and very respectful. It was nice.

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SW: And were you—were you sad to leave, when you first came to California were you sad to leave your family?

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AO: Honestly yeah; I was sad but I wanted to come. It was something that I wanted. I wanted to come to the states. That—I tell my sons that at that time coming here was like—go to the moon. When you were leaving they make a party. Your friends make a party to give you the best wishes for you and now it's—that's nothing. It's just normal coming to the United States but at that moment not everybody could come; yeah.

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SW: What was that like when you first got to California? What was going through your mind and what were you thinking and feeling?

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AO: It was another world—the comfort—here in the states, it's different; it's different. Now my country you have everything you're having here. You have it in El Salvador, like fast foods, restaurants; there are over there—there are nice malls, beautiful malls because now a lot of—a lot of people from El Salvador is living here and they send their money to their families and their families can have a good life over there. And they—sometimes I feel ashamed of that because people here got—work hard sometimes and they live a lot of them in one room and they sacrifice themselves for their family. I haven't done that—never, but I think maybe I'm not right that over there people have more comfort than the people that come here because they just receive the money and they enjoy it—go to restaurants and have a nice life.

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I hate to say this but I think it's another welfare over there; yeah.

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SW: So okay; and you talked about this and I just kind of want to get a little bit more about it. You—you were studying business administration and then you—when you got to California you thought maybe you'd want to open a bakery. Is that—do I have that right?

00:16:48

AO: No; I just wanted to study and finish my English classes and go to college and study something and live here because since I came the first time I liked the life in the United States. It's freedom. At this time if I compare Richmond with El Salvador, here I go home and I sleep okay. I'm not scared of anything. I drive like when I was making my deliveries, sometimes I used to come back at 12:00—1:00 in the morning and I feel safe. I won't say that here is not dangerous because there is but if you compare it to my country—no, no; over there it's at any time you have to careful where you move because—sometimes you will sleep at home and you know if you're going to wake up—you don't know. You're not neither safe in your home. And that's a shame because I wish I could go back to my little town and visit and I—I am scared. When I go, I go just to the city and I try not to go out too much, just to visit my family.

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SW: Because it's pretty dangerous there?

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AO: Yeah; right now it's not safe.

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SW: What is the name of the town that you're from again?

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AO: Sensuntepeque, Cabanas. Yeah.

00:18:24

SW: I just want to know you know mentioned the difference between El Salvador and Richmond. Can you talk about other ways—first of all, when did you first get to Richmond and how was it different from being in not just El Salvador but being in California or Houston?

00:18:41

AO: Yes; I came to Richmond the first time in '97. I was living in California and since I came I love Richmond. I like that vegetation, the many trees, many plants, and California is not like Richmond. You know that. And the fact that it's the smallest—smaller I mean and you move what 20 minutes, a half hour; that's nothing for me. When I got the first job here was with a decorator.

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SW: Doing – ?

00:19:18

AO: Draperies. I like to sew; even when I retire, I think when I retire I think I'm going to do something knit or sew, but I'm going to do something because I love it. And when I was talking to the lady that gave me that job she said that you have to drive a half hour. I think it's too much. And I said no; that's nothing because in the time that I have a job in Los Angeles I used to drive two hours and a half. I lived in a place called Chino and I drive to Bel Air, farther than Hollywood. It was two hours and a half my driving every day—for one trip, and when I come back another—five hours driving.

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SW: And I imagine the traffic was pretty—

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AO: Oh it was awful. And so when I came here a half hour for me was nothing—nothing. I live 15 minutes from here, right; for me it's nothing. Like if I lived across the street [*Laughs*]; I like that and here it's quiet. As I said, the vegetation it's beautiful. I love Richmond.

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SW: What did you think about the food or the—what did you think about the food when you got here and how—or has that influenced what you do here at the bakery at all?

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AO: The—the American food you say and compare it?

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SW: Particularly in Richmond; yeah.

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AO: Yeah; well when I came it was 2002, to stay definitely and there were a lot of Hispanics. Yeah; so here in Richmond I don't think we missed any of the food from our country. We looked for other foods because just to have a variation but any food that we want to have is here because right now it's a lot of Central Americans, South America, from everyplace here because I see it here in—in the bakery, we have from—customers from South America, Central America, Puerto Rico and Middle East and Africa. We get customers from everywhere; yeah.

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SW: And so Tina just to back up, so—so you went back to El Salvador after your first child was born.

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AO: Yes.

00:21:52

SW: And then you came back to California. Can you kind of talk about how you started—how you decided to start a bakery and—and why and where that was?

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AO: Well the thing is that I came in Houston in 1996. I was—

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SW: From California?

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AO: From El Salvador; I came with my youngest son, Mario. He was sixteen and he has to go to high school over there and we were willing to stay. My sister-in-law, her name is Dalia, she's a nice lady and she would help me a lot. She was helping me a lot but then we were supposed to move—the family. As I said, their dad doesn't like the life in here and he didn't want to move, so we got to go back and then my sister-in-law Dalia she told me why don't you go to El Salvador

and take baking classes and then you come back with my brother, with the children, and then we start a bakery? She was the one who really plant that seed in me. And I did it like that.

00:23:12

I went back to El Salvador and I went to take my baking classes, but in that my husband relation and mine was a mess because he didn't want to move. And I want it, and so I moved to California that I already have the baking classes and it was a coincidence that I started to work with this guy that he knew me since I was little because he's from my town and it was a coincidence that he had the bakery. And I got some experience there because I already knew how to bake but I haven't practiced at that moment. And so I started to practice over there and when I moved here I was a little bit more experienced.

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SW: Was—was your sister-in-law Dalia was she a baker as well?

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AO: No; she has auto parts. I think she has five auto parts in Houston. That was the last thing I knew.

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SW: And what's her last name?

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AO: It's Bartasi Dawson. Her last name is Dawson and her family last name but her husband is Bartasi. He has a—hmm, family from the Middle East, but he was born in El Salvador.

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SW: So you went—you went back to El Salvador and took the baking classes and moved back to California so you were—you went to Chino then?

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AO: Yes; when I was living in Chino but the bakery was in Los Angeles, yeah.

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SW: That's a trip.

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AO: Yes, yes; every day and that was normal in California, drive 40 minutes—that's nothing, nothing. *[Laughs]* That's the way over there.

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SW: And I'm wondering Tina, because this whole project is about women and food and like working really hard to make ends meet you know using food, was it—was it a way to support you and your sons? Did you use the bakery as a way to support your family? Was it a necessity?

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AO: Well here in Richmond, I helped them to come to the states, the two of my sons, but when I was living here in Richmond I didn't support them. They support me because they have a construction company and they were doing really, really, really good. And we come from really

hard-working people. Their dad's family used to have business and my family also and they were hard-working. So they have seen that. And they don't make an ugly face to anything they have to do.

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So carpentry that's what they did; they learned fast. It's something that they never did in his life but they don't make an ugly face like oh no, I won't do that; no. They used to do whatever they need to do to survive. I'm happy for that because my oldest son he was almost graduating from the best university in El Salvador, it's La Osaka from Jesuitas. I don't know how to say it in English—Jesuitas is a sisterhood.

00:26:59

SW: Is it – Jesuit?

00:26:59

AO: Yeah; it's the university from the Jesuits. He was almost finished to be a lawyer but he didn't. The situation over there is very sad and sometimes the people graduate and they don't find a job. They don't find it so I don't think right now before that—and as I said, they—they do any kind of job they have to do and they started a construction company here.

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SW: In Richmond?

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AO: Yes; the first one I sent here to Richmond was Eduardo, the middle one and I sent him with his uncle. He lives here. He was working in construction and that's how he started. And then he started by himself with his brothers and that's how they were working in construction and they were doing really, really, really good until the moment that I opened. They were helping me but they never thought that they would become my partners. But at that moment the construction—that construction went really down slow and so they did it like a full-time as my partners.

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SW: And what year was that? What—what year did they go?

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AO: 2009 they were doing part construction and part in the bakery until Eduardo said no, no, no; this construction is not good anymore. We're going to stay here. That's how—

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SW: And just for the record can you tell me the names of your sons?

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AO: My oldest son is Jorge Dawson; my middle son is Eduardo Dawson; and my youngest son is Mario Dawson.

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SW: And can you talk about okay—and I just want to be clear—did you come to Richmond from Chino or were—did you come from directly—and what year was that and why did you come to Richmond?

00:29:09

AO: I moved to Richmond completely in 2002, March. We separated with my husband. He wanted to go back to El Salvador and the things—and it wasn't just that; it's things between us were not good anymore and I came here because at that moment my three sons were living here. First came Eduardo and then came Mario and the last one to come was Jorge.

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SW: And how did they move to Richmond or did they all come straight from El Salvador?

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AO: From El Salvador.

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SW: And why did they come to Richmond?

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AO: Because my son Eduardo was here and so he helped them. You look where your family is and I'm happy for that because the three of them were in the same place and so I came. I missed them a lot also when I was in California because I knew my three sons were living here and then my husband was—is still back in El Salvador. He won't come to live here. And I was in Los

Angeles and the things in my marriage were not good and I was missing my—my sons. That was easy for me to move here.

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SW: Are you still married to your husband in El Salvador?

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AO: No; I divorced twice and—no, I won't say that. I feel happy. [*Laughs*]

00:30:36

SW: Now Tina you got here in 2002. Eduardo was here and then your—all three of your sons were here. So how did you get—how did you start a bakery? I mean did you launch right into it? How—can you kind of talk about how you got to this point here?

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AO: Well as I told you I went back to El Salvador to take my baking classes because the plan at that moment was to start a bakery in Houston with my sister-in-law.

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SW: Dalia?

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AO: Yeah; I see her as my sister, really and that's what she said about me because even if I am not married with her brother anymore but we see each other like sisters. She has been very, very

nice with me. But then we didn't get to the point to start it. And then I—when I moved to California I got married with this guy that owned a bakery and then when I moved here to Richmond and I started to work with this decorator, I loved my job because I love to sew too. And but my son told me, my son Eduardo, you still want to have a bakery, right? And I said yes; I would like. And then he said why don't you try to make a loan? And it was a coincidence that this lady that we know she was selling the bakery because she didn't—her health wasn't good. And then she said she didn't want the bakery anymore.

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SW: This bakery here?

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AO: Yeah; but this was in Holy Street, it was very tiny, 600 square feet—it was very tiny. But then—

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SW: And where is Holy Street?

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AO: Holy Street is the important street that runs parallel to Midlothian, next and it's seven minutes from here. And then I went to see the bakery; they really were not working the bakery because they just opened when I wanted to see it and the rest of the days it was closed. And it was very hard for me when I started because I come to the store and when I mentioned the name of the bakery the owners of the stores used to tell me. Oh no; you come now and you come back

until—maybe it was in August and you will come the next year and then—no. They wanted service. And every week service or twice a week, but they wanted a good service. And Sabrosita wasn't offering that. That's why I said when they opened something they went to the stores to deliver the bread but they didn't come back and the stores didn't like that. It was very hard for me to break that.

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When I showed them that I would give them a good service and I will be constant every week or twice a week they start believe in me and that's the way I was growing and I was adding another variety. Like I said I have my book from my baking classes of recipes and I started to add varieties and that's how they started believing me and that's how I started to grow.

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SW: And so when you purchased the business which was originally on Holy Street was it—it was also called La Sabrosita so when you bought the business you bought the name too?

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AO: Yes; my intention was I call it—I wanted to call it La Guadalupana because it's the name of the virgin Guadalupe, Mexican, because I have faith in the Virgin de Guadalupe. I heard that if you ask something to God, to the vision, you say I am your son, I'm your daughter; I just need to ask that's what you said and I believe in that because everything I have asked comes my way. If you ask with faith things come and you—of course you have to make an effort. And your faith makes you stronger and you go forward. But you have to have—I always say you haven't ten ideas because if you have that—you wouldn't achieve any; have one—one. And get it; that's the way you go—little by little. If you want to go do ten things, ten dreams at the same time you

won't get any. Just be patient and work hard and try to reach one. That's—then you're done.

[Laughs]

00:35:24

SW: So how come you decided not to name the bakery – ?

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AO: Because the people already knew it by La Sabrosita and I was talking with my sons and I said do you think—I was ready to change the name and they said no, no, no. I don't think it's a good idea because the bakery is already known by La Sabrosita and that's how we kept the name.

00:35:48

SW: Was it hard because you were talking about this when I stopped by in October too how their reputation wasn't so great because they wouldn't be constant. So what—did you consider changing the name just to not have that association or – ?

00:36:02

AO: Well I think I have that idea I just should have started since the beginning but I didn't do it. I was so excited with the bakery and trying to grow that at that moment I didn't think about the change. If I would change the name since the beginning maybe this could be La Guadalupana, and honoring the virgin, because that's why I wanted to name it and I owe it to the virgin because—well I wanted to name it La Guadalupana because I think I'm—as I told you, many things that I have got I really say it was from my faith, yeah. I'm not too much living every day in the church but I have a big faith.

00:36:48

SW: When you first started over on Holy Street what were the biggest challenges for you and how—how did you—because I think you know you—you started by delivering the bread yourself. You were actually driving the truck. Can you talk about what it was like in the early days and how hard you worked to make this thing work?

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AO: Yes; well luckily the things I'm telling you they were giving it to me like if I planned them—I didn't. First I think about when I moved from California to Richmond I—I got a car. It was a Corolla; had a small space. But then I saw this car and I liked it and I said no, no, no; it was expensive for me because I change it—three months I switched cars. I knew that was too much for me money. But I got this car and it has a big space. The Matrix has a big space. And that was my first truck. I started delivering in my car. It has as I told you—I had several accidents in my car because in—I was impatient—in rainy days I didn't think about the rain. I just was excited and rushing try to deliver the bread and that's how I had several accidents. And then my sons helped me to get my first van. We buy it with their money and my money. And then I started with the van. I used to go three hours from here to the Eastern Shore. That was a good place for me to—to move my bread, to deliver my bread because over there people comes from Miami to pick tomatoes. And they were really good to buy my bread. I full—I drive over there three hours with my van full completely and I sold out everything. That was one of my best places.

00:38:58

SW: It was—the bread was something that they—it was like a slice of home to them?

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AO: I think they are so busy in the peak of that tomatoes that their diet is mostly soda, milk, bread. I don't think they have too much time to cook.

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SW: And so how many deliveries—when you first started how many deliveries did you have compared to now because I heard it—it's just huge now and you were driving the truck by yourself. So can you talk about the growth of the business in terms of the deliveries and all?

00:39:36

AO: Oh—

00:39:39

SW: Your clients how it grew?

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AO: The coast, yeah when I was going to the—I call it the island because when you go through the Chesapeake Bridge, the first thing you reach is the island but that just—you cross the island in four minutes and then you go to the Eastern Shore. But it was a long trip, gas, and everything; I—I—the price was higher because I had to consider the gas, my time, and that – . So they pay it really high over there but for them it's normal. That's how the other bakeries work too because when I was there, there was another bakery but then they started to like my bread. And there was a time that it was just me and that was good because I could sell a lot. But then they came one,

two, three bakeries and then right now and after the crisis it doesn't work because the sales are not the same.

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SW: Are you talking about the economy taking a dive?

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AO: Yes; the workers they're—right now it doesn't come the same number of workers. Well I'm talking about maybe three years ago because I left the island and haven't go back because it's too far; it's too far. I could do it. The drivers kind of complain because it's really a long way.

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SW: But you don't mind so much; you don't mind?

00:41:24

AO: No; but my sons doesn't want me to deliver anymore. I'm not that young anymore.

[Laughs] And they don't want it. After I have so several accidents they say no, no, no; I don't think it's a good idea.

00:41:37

SW: So in – in 2005 the bakery moved here.

00:41:41

AO: 2009.

00:41:41

SW: 2009

00:41:42

AO: I started in 2005, August; I was there about – I would say '06, '07, '08 over on Holy Street. We opened here March 2009.

00:41:56

SW: How did that change by moving here? How did the business change by moving to this location?

00:41:59

AO: Well the people was – everybody in Richmond was excited about the bakery. Oh they – we now keep customers but at that moment this was crazy. A bunch of people coming; I was kind of scared because too much too soon; yes.

00:42:23

SW: Was there a need to get bigger? I mean were you – did you just outgrow the space on Holy Street?

00:42:28

AO: The space on Holy Street is – was really tiny. When we moved here we have of course more space because over there the space was – I was kind of too crowded for everything. Here we are okay.

00:42:50

SW: I – I was telling you this earlier but I walked back to take some photographs earlier. I can't believe how big this bakery is; it's huge.

00:42:58

AO: Yes; it's big, yeah.

00:42:59

SW: There's all these – there's like four rooms back there.

00:43:00

AO: Yes; yes.

00:43:04

SW: How many deliveries would you say there are in a week that you guys have in a week?

How many deliveries?

00:43:11

AO: Well we make – we have three drivers but our biggest point of sale is Richmond because we visit the stores more often so our bread that – luckily that people like our bread and it's in

every store in Richmond, not just Hispanics. We have convenience stores, as I said from other cultures and they – they buy our bread.

00:43:43

SW: What is – can you talk about the bread? It – it is special; can you kind of describe it for people who have never had it? What – what is it about your bread that makes it so special?

00:43:50

AO: Well the breads that we have are the ones that for instance the quesadilla is one of the best sellers in my country. The quesadilla is like a – have you heard about the pupusas? Well the quesadilla is equal to the pupusa. In El Salvador people loves the quesadilla and like the concha is one of our best sellers. That's Central America, Mexico and many American people they like it. They come here; at the beginning we used to sell bagels and it was funny because when they come we said – because we know that's your everyday bagels. We said we have bagels and – and they say no, no, no. I want to see – I want something different. They love it; they love like the alfajore. It's a cookie filled with caramel. I said caramel but it's dulce de leche. Your caramel is made with brown sugar I guess and our dulce de leche is made with milk, sugar; it tastes different, a little bit different. And that special cookie, the alfajore is in South America and in Central America.

00:45:17

When I started the bakery I thought it was Salvadorian and that just we knew the alfajore but when I started here people started to come and as I said we asked how you want it? And people from Argentina said yes; we like this cookie but it's with coconut around. And so we started to make different kinds of alfajores depend on how people like it. And then came another

one that says oh yes; we have this cookie now, in our country but it's with chocolate in the half of the cookie. Okay; and then another time just with icing. So now we have different kinds of alfajores. And the concha, what other best seller we have, the pastelitos del pina is a good seller in my country too in Mexico and the pastry puffs, we started to sell it like the Colombian people like with guava and guava and cheese.

00:46:20

But then came people from Puerto Rico and they said we have a bread like this that is called casita. It's filled with a cheese – sweet creamed cheese and we started to do it. And they come in and they ask for another flavor and that's how we do the breads.

00:46:41

SW: Just you started making things that people love?

00:46:44

AO: Yes; so as I said the other time is this bakery, its people made it, the customers because they ask and we do it, like the French bread. Oh now we – we sell a good French bread and a few months ago I started to make a tiny French bread like in El Salvador that's the way we eat in the – in the morning. We have our breakfast with tiny French bread. And I started; I love it. I ate it every day the French bread. And people always try it and they just said oh, it's like in El Salvador because we have that kind of bread every morning.

00:47:32

SW: Can you talk about you talked a lot about the bread but what are some of the other really good things that you sell here that are really popular for people?

00:47:38

AO: Oh yeah; and that we learn from our customers because our customers come and they start to look at the store and they said oh, don't you have this and that? And we try it out -- that's Eduardo. And he asks for it and he tries to have it. That's how we have a thing from Colombia and from Argentina, from Brazil; we have some of those people ask the coffee. My son loves coffee, my son Eduardo and he's the one who has all the kinds of coffee that people ask; yeah.

[Laughs]

00:48:17

SW: And I noticed that. There is a lot of coffee behind us.

00:48:20

AO: Yes; my son is a coffee lover and I just smile when I see him because he loves candies, he loves the coffee and he -- and he likes to have variety. For him and for the people **[Laughs]**; yeah.

00:48:39

SW: Tina I just have a couple more questions. Do you have time for a couple more questions?

00:48:43

AO: Yes.

00:48:43

SW: I'm wondering, I mean it sounds like that you have created this bakery over the years and it's served a need for people here in the area where they weren't getting these things before. Do you think that's true that – that they came here to get bread or sweets or you know specific items that they couldn't find in other places? Do you think that that's true that you've created this place where people can find things that they love that they can't find other places in Richmond?

00:49:10

AO: Yeah; you know what – what is – what they like, because we made it from scratch. And there are other places – I used to work in a bakery in a big market – in a bakery but everything is frozen. For me that was weird, but you have to when you are in Rome – you have to do what Romans do. People, when I was working in that big market in the bakery they – they told me what to do. I went to the freezer and took out of the boxes and put it in the cooler and then they go to the display and that was weird for me because the Hispanics doesn't like that. They like everything fresh. Sometimes they come and the – and the French bread, hmm was out of the oven three hours ago. So it's – it's not hot. But they love it when it's hot – that they can smell it and feel it. And I cannot have hot bread the whole day but we do it in the morning and we do it in the afternoon. So when people is coming out of the work they – they have the opportunity to have it warm; yeah.

00:50:28

SW: Now when your sons – when your sons – when the economy took a hit and they weren't doing so well with their construction business –

00:50:34

AO: Yes.

00:50:35

SW: – did you teach them how to bake? Did you teach them everything you know?

00:50:39

AO: Well when we moved here at that moment I already have four bakers. There was a moment that we have let's see, one, two, three, four – about eight bakers but now we have hmm, six. That's enough. But there was a moment that we have six; they – Mario can bake several things. Eduardo mostly he is buying supplies for the store. Mario is buying supplies for the production and Mario has the skill of he can do anything that he sees. He's the one who decorates the cakes. He's awesome; he has never taken one class, decoration class.

00:51:33

In California he just saw how the ladies made the cakes and that's all he needed. He started to practice and he does a really, really good job. Everybody likes Mario's cakes; everybody.

00:51:48

SW: And does Mario specifically do the cakes like he's the guy who does the cakes?

00:51:53

AO: Yeah.

00:51:55

SW: They're beautiful; I've seen them.

00:51:55

AO: Yes; and a few times he has baked. And Eduardo tried to think in different but I like that because I tell them don't try to have a lot of ideas, just thinking of one and if that hits that's good. When you're done with that try to think of another. Just few by few –

00:52:24

SW: And when you think of how you started here in Richmond, over on Holy Street and you were I imagine that you were doing a little bit of everything; you were delivering, were you – were you baking and everything? You were doing most of the work yourself?

00:52:36

AO: Yes; yes.

00:52:38

SW: And then if you think of where you're at now with this place here what – what is – what do you – what goes through your mind when you think about how you've – how you've grown over the years or how you've become so successful and you've – you're at the point now where you don't have to do everything by yourself?

00:52:55

AO: Yeah; I am – give them every – almost everything. I wish that they could do everything but they tell me, I – what will you do now? What – and I said I want you to do it. [*Laughs*] I want to

see you do it. *[Laughs]* But they ask – I said Eduardo is – he is at the front buying supplies for the store and Mario is the one that is more involved in production because he's with the cakes. And sometimes I help him because I – in California I used to make cakes. I used to decorate. Now my – my – I don't see very well as I did before. I help him because some – he doesn't come on Sunday. Sometimes we have orders on Sunday for cakes and I have to do it.

00:53:47

So if I get orders I'm almost in the back working in the cakes and what I do is that the people that buy my cakes like the other day I was scared because I did it before but I haven't done it lately. A lady came in and asked for a heart cake in heart-shape and I was thinking – thinking how am I going to do it? How am I going to do it? And then I thought – and I cut it diagonally and I made the shape and I just something that I cut it here, and I cut it here and I finally – I made the heart-shape and I called Mario. Hey Mario; I have a tip for you. And he said what? That I didn't waste the bread; I cut it in a certain way that I took every piece and I made the heart.

00:54:37

And I did it and the people came and I was kind of thinking in the other – they came and maybe that was five days later and I said – I was scared; I said did you like the cake? And they went oh my goodness; they said yes. They loved it. And I feel very good and I called Mario. The people liked my cake *[Laughs]* because I know he does a good job at it. I don't do it every day. So when I do it I try to do it slowly and try to do my best. But I was happy when these people, they said yes, yes. *[Laughs]*

00:55:15

SW: Do you miss – do you miss doing the cakes? I mean do you miss doing this more like the baking; do you miss that at all or not really?

00:55:21

AO: I do; I – I love to decorate cakes but as I said, my son does so nice a job. I cannot do the same that he does. No, no, no; he has ideas. He can mix colors. Just if he's too busy and he comes and somebody with something very difficult because the difficult things he does – and he says no; I don't have time because he likes to make them really good and if he's too busy he says no because we – if something new he has to think. He'll always do it, because I say no, no, no; you will do it. But when it's something new he needs time. If he has time he does anything. But if he's busy with wedding cakes, with birthday cakes – and he thinks that he doesn't have time to make a new decoration he says no, I can't.

00:56:20

SW: Did you do cakes back when you were on Holy Street?

00:56:23

AO: Yeah; I used to decorate and I was – had the – one day I delivered one sweet sixteen and it was with the font kind and it was like in about five tarts, five cakes, and I took it by myself. And I built it. Oh I was happy; I was happy. I don't do it anymore. Now my – Mario does the cakes and Eduardo is the one who delivers. Jorge – Jorge is the oldest. He – he helps us with the drivers. He's the one who delivers the production and receives what they have sold and he's in that.

00:57:06

SW: Do you know how many stores that you sell to approximately?

00:57:13

AO: Let's see; maybe it could be around 100.

00:57:21

SW: And you were talking when I was here in October that on Christmas Eve people are in here to get bread and it's crazy. Can you talk about that?

00:57:29

AO: In our culture December 24th we – that is when we make the turkey and we do it in a certain way with sauce and tomato and spices, sauce and in the oven. And they make rice. They make salads. But they use subs that we make – we call it subs, French bread and they cut it in the middle and they do like a salad with lettuce, tomato, radish, cucumber and the turkey and the sauce. That is traditional in our country.

00:58:16

We still eat it every day because there are stores that that's all they sell, the turkey, bread – bread with turkey inside, I mean sandwich with turkey. They are stores in my country that that's all they do because like the pupusas, there are places that they just sell pupusas and there are places that they just sell quesadillas and pastelito del pina, the bread with turkey is every day in my country. And so they celebrate the – December 24th like that and they use a lot – a lot – a lot of bread. That day since we opened we don't – I don't think barely we – barely eat. We don't sit and people come and – now we're getting to prepare for that day. I even have the signs that

they – asking them to please order in advance because if they order in advance we know how – how many. We do more but people – some people come right that day and if I don't sell it to them they get upset. [*Laughs*] So I have to make extra but that extra because right now there is more Hispanics than three years ago. But I don't know how many more, so – . I could do the right amount. I love to do more. If it's leftover we use it to make bread pudding, to make like a – we do to – powder bread and like to cook and but I never know because many people leave it for the last day and there is no time for me at that moment. I ask – I slice it; I ask extra, extra but I know if I'm right. But I don't know how many will come.

01:00:25

That bread needs to grow since the day before. They leave it overnight growing and they bake it until the next day. So hopefully we're going to be okay with that production; I don't know because even the Thanksgiving people – Hispanic people they celebrate more the Thanksgiving because this is your culture – Thanksgiving. And but now they are aware of that more and they celebrate – more Hispanics celebrate Thanksgiving because this year I was kind of in a problem because there was two hours that I was without bread. And the baking will come later and people come and say do you have it? And I say no; it's going to be at 3 o'clock and they got upset. They say no; why? How come? And as I said, I – it's more Hispanics and it's more the demand of bread.

01:01:27

SW: So you're seeing – you're seeing the population – the Hispanic population grow in Richmond?

01:01:30

AO: Yes; yes.

01:01:32

SW: What is that like? I mean how – how is it – how are you seeing that and how is it influencing Richmond do you think? Or, how – how do you think the – the growing Hispanic population is influencing this area or Richmond?

01:01:43

AO: Yeah; because it's concentrated like I said Midlothian, Jefferson Davis and the – around the Chickahominy counties where the Hispanics are now there is also in the West End because we have several stores that we deliver and they have good sales over there with the Hispanic people. But the thing works like this. You start – you come; years ago I'm talking about a bunch of years ago, you come and then you see that you're here in the states if you work – if you are honest you have a better life. And a lot better than in our country and we like it and so why not share that with our family? And they send for a cousin, for family, for friends, and that people like it because here if you work you have a home, you have your dress, you have your food, and that's what it is – where you have your home, dress, and food that's your country.

01:02:58

If you cannot get it in your country you have to look someplace else. And I think not the 100-percent but a bunch of people, Hispanic people that comes here that's what they are looking at – place to live in peace and working. Not all of them, but mostly that's – and – and – and we fall in love with the place when we can get our house because I'm telling you; all my – all of my life I wanted to have my home because I hate to say this but my first husband always told me this

is my home. He never included me and I – I felt like estranged and I wanted to have my home. Here I have my home; it's – I live in a modest neighborhood. But it's my home.

01:03:54

SW: What does that – what does that mean for you because you've worked so hard your whole life and now you have it? What does that mean for you?

01:04:00

AO: It's my dream. [*Emotional*] When I got it, I didn't have any money. And I came and my son Eduardo told me, "Do you want a home?" And I said, "Yes." And he gave me a phone and he told me, "Call and tell them," and I kept the phone and I said – he will give you \$7,000. And I just inside of me I smiled and said, "Who is going to give me that money?" And then one month later Eduardo came in and said, "Did you call?" And I said, "I will." And he was upset and he said, "You said that you wanted your home but you haven't called." And I called. And really they gave me \$7,200. And I said – I said my house is worth \$108,000; it's one acre. My house is modest, tiny, but it's my home. And you know what; I love it. They laugh.

01:05:25

Eduardo says "Don't buy a home if I don't see it. I wanted to see it." And one day I was upset with him and I said "No, I'm going to find my home and I'm going to move," because I lived with him. And he said, "But don't pick it yourself. Call me." And I went with that realtor and he showed me that house and at the beginning – it needed a lot of repairs. And I saw outside the house a big lot and there was a lot besides and I called Eduardo and Mario and – and Jorge and they came to see the house. And they said "Mom, in that land is – it's also that lot over there belongs to the house?" "I don't think so," I said because you can see that there are trees like it

separates and we asked the realtor and what about that lot? It belongs to the house he said, “It’s one acre.” And says Eduardo; “Okay, this house I like it.” And he said “But you’re going – you won’t move right now.” And they started to work – the house. They make ceramic in the kitchen, the tiles in the kitchen, the bathroom they ripped it out; they put everything new and they put rug new, they finished the floors and I moved – I got the house in January 2005 but I moved I think until August because they – when they have time they went to repair the house.

01:07:01

And so I loved it and I said “I would never sell this home because you worked in it.” And they – they laugh and say “Mom; don’t pay attention to that,” but they did it. And I love that; yeah. *[Laughs]* And I – as I said that’s a dream for me because as I’m telling you, my first husband, they – he talks about his home. And I didn’t have a home. And I have it now and I’m happy for that. *[Laughs]*

01:07:28

SW: And it’s yours.

01:07:29

AO: Yes; it’s my home.

01:07:32

SW: Tina I’m wondering if there’s anything else – because this – this whole project is about women and food, could you talk about just you know you mentioned a couple things but just the hardships or the challenges or the upside to being a woman in this business, to being a woman

who started your own business and – and did it yourself? Can you – can you talk about what that means to you or if there were challenges along the way?

01:07:59

AO: As I'm telling you I think most – the 99-percent of the Hispanics they moved here to survive, to have a house, to have food, to have dress, to have some money to help their families over there because there is a poverty in my country that you cannot imagine. And when I came here I – I wasn't thinking about having success. I – something you – when I worked with the decorator I used to wake up quarter to five in the morning and I worked every day around the house and when I was working I was talking to the Virgin, to God and saying "Just let me have my home, be independent; help me. I'm your daughter. Help me to achieve that." I wasn't thinking to succeed; I was thinking about having my home that was a dream too high. I never thought I would have a home here. It was too – too high.

01:09:03

And I just wanted to have my home and survive, have to pay my expenses, because you see this business; you see it big – many people outside, they think we have too much money. And sometimes all the money is just [*Phone Rings*] to survive, to pay the expenses, and you're like an employee and you get money to pay your expenses. But I think that's enough. I don't ask God to be myself a rich woman, a rich lady – no. I just want to have money to pay my expenses to have an honest life and be happy and have my family. [*Laughs*] That's – I never was thinking as I said, having success – to succeed or being a business woman. I just wanted to survive and have an independent life. That's what I wanted to have because over there it's just the men; the men, the men, the men and they – you have to do what they say. They don't let you achieve your dreams – no. Mostly if you get married with a – somebody that is selfish you're thanking them; they don't

care about your dreams. They don't care about what you want. If you feel good or if you don't feel good; they just care about that they feel good. They don't care about your dreams, no. And here you get that. And I said "I don't need a man." I'm sorry to say but I just – I'm okay with the support of my children because they have supported me. And I thank God; I always – I don't have the problem to awake at night and – and have like a [*Phone Rings*] something that –

01:11:07

SW: Can you start that over?

01:11:11

AO: Yeah; I – I feel blessed because I don't have to wake up at night – have a call and then somebody tell me hey, kid in a bar – your son is here from jail – no, no. They are hard-working people. They are in their home with their wives and their children. They are hard-working. I don't have that problem that somebody is going to call me that they are making a mess in some place and – or going to jail to happen – no, no, no. I feel blessed for that. I have peace of mind for that. I – they are not like having a – a job like being millionaires but they are good people and I feel blessed with them.

01:12:06

SW: When I was in here last time, your ten-year-old granddaughter was in here helping.

01:12:10

AO: Yes.

01:12:10

SW: Can you just – can you – can you say her name and talk about what – what she – how she helps you and what you hope for her as – as a you know – growing up when she’s you know what – what are your hopes and dreams for her?

01:12:23

AO: Yes; you know that – that she loves to be here at the bakery. And [speaking in Spanish to one of her sons] – I’m sorry; [Speaking in Spanish to son]. She loves the bakery and she loves to be in the register. She likes this place and she helps us a lot. Actually there was in the school how you say it – like a concurso; she – every – every student has to write a story. And it was a very nice feeling for me that she told me “Tita!” that’s what she calls me – “Tita, I won.” And I say “What?” “They asked us to write a story that somebody that makes an impact in us. And I wrote your story because you’re like a something to follow. You are like an example,” like – how you say it – that word –

01:13:35

SW: Like a hero?

01:13:35

AO: “Like a pattern for me and – and I like what you have done in life and I write you a story and I’ve won.” And so she went to meet Gandhi's – hmm, Gandhi's grandson [Rajmohan Gandhi]; that’s what she won and about that story she wrote and she went to meet him. And she won a – a diploma. Oh she’s happy; uh-hm.

01:14:07

SW: And what's her name?

01:14:08

AO: Cathia. She's 10 years old. She's very, very tall; you see she's my height. [*Laughs*]

01:14:13

SW: She's beautiful, too.

01:14:16

AO: Uh-hm.

01:14:16

SW: She takes after you.

01:14:17

AO: Yeah.

01:14:19

SW: She's just very, very bright. I was telling – I was telling Eduardo that she just seems very ahead of her years, too. She seems very soulful and bright.

01:14:28

AO: When we started this – the bakery we – we just opened and she was – she was – she was seven years old, no, six and then she used to create cupcakes and she was selling. She had customers. [*Laughs*]

01:14:51

SW: Do you think that she's going to help take over the business when she gets older?

01:14:54

AO: She said that her dream is to work in the TV like in the news and like we tell them – all of us tell them, she has to study to make her dreams come true because it's the truth here. If you work hard you get it. Don't think too high because if it comes things come, but things too, too, too high I just – try to do something and sometimes God blesses you and gives you more than you asked.

01:15:33

SW: Tina is there anything else that you want to talk about that you think is really important that we didn't talk about?

01:15:40

AO: I think that's enough. I hope that my sons succeed with this business because I always tell them soon I won't be here with you every day. Maybe I'll come – I mean soon maybe ten years – not yet [*Laughs*]. You know that my father was a pattern for me and I feel proud when I talk about him that he wished to be – he died when he was 84. But he was working like a 20-year old every day, every day at the point that I tell him my dad never worked like slow, and 84 years. No;

he worked very straight and because he every day he woke up and worked every day hard. He does tractor trailer company; that's a hard job. And he was my pattern. To see him wake up every day with problems, big problems, and he woke up and he solved what he could and go ahead. I admire that from him. I never saw him depressed. He works every day and I talk about – my sons remember that and they said remember when we have some problems – remember my – my grandpa. He had big problems and he woke up and solved what he could and go ahead. Go ahead; yeah.

01:17:17

SW: I asked you this in October and I just want to ask you; are you planning to be here on Christmas? You said that you – you wanted to work but your sons don't want you to be here.

01:17:25

AO: Oh no, no, no; Christmas yes, all of us. The only thing is that they already told me and I will – to close around 6:00 because the first years I closed at 9:00 and they wanted me to go home and I was tired and I didn't want to go. But now Thanksgiving we close at 6:00 and Christmas also at 6:00. But I open the next day. I don't give it time – I tell the customers. For you at noon, but it could be earlier but I don't have time to open the next day; I take the time and I come at – at noon I'm here. I open – every day we're open, even January 1st, December 25th; we're open.

01:18:13

SW: And are you – are you right now – as of right now are you here every day mostly?

01:18:17

AO: Yeah; my day off I take it on Tuesday. But at the beginning I didn't take days off, but my sons make me think about that. Yeah; you need time for your personal things. When I – I said I have my home and I love my home, but at the beginning I just saw my home – the necessary. But then I started to think if I can make drapes, why is it I haven't done mine? And one – and when I started to take my days off I worked in it and I did my things. **[Laughs]** Yeah; I'm trying.

01:18:55

SW: And – and Tina I just want to ask you real quick because you mentioned this last time and I forgot to ask you about it. You guys had a fire here not that long ago.

01:19:04

AO: Yeah.

01:19:03

SW: Can you talk about when that was and how that affected you guys?

01:19:07

AO: Yes; that day I – I – at that moment my day off was Wednesdays and that day I didn't come and my sons closed at 9:30. I got a call at 10:00 – ten minutes to 10:00. A lady called me and she said “You – that – that La Sabrosita is on fire.” And I was choked. I didn't answer anything and I hung up. And my oldest son he lives with me because his daughters live in Vienna, Austria in Europe and so he lives with me. And he saw my face and he said “What’s going on?” And I said

“La Sabrosita is on fire.” And he runs. And then I dialed again the lady that called me and I said, “What were you saying? I’m sorry.” She said, “The bakery is on fire.”

01:20:03

And I hung up and I said, “The last thing I want is to have an accident.” So I was in pajamas and I changed and I did it slowly and I drive really slow – slower than usual because I – that was the first thing that came to my mind. The last thing I want is to have another problem. It’s enough with that. There was a leaking, all of us were in shock. Outside we were here until three o'clock in the morning I think with the detectives. But they saw our faces that we were shocked. And when the detective opened and he bring us inside because it was the last room, then I was asking – I was anxious and I was asking “Do you think we can open in one week,” because I was thinking about that business. And the detective saw me so sad and so stressed and he said, “Yes; yes, you can shut this back room and you can work at the front,” because at that moment we had an oven here at the front and he told me yes. He wasn’t – he didn't want to disappoint me; now I know.

01:21:31

And I was thinking and I was – I was pushing and I said to my son just buy plywood and put it like that and shut it and he said that we can open. But then the next day came the lady from the Health Department and she was very nice with us and she started to tell me slowly – slowly “No, no, Tina; you cannot. You won't be able to open soon and that things are going to be like this – like this.” But it was the next day. At that moment we were digesting the thing. But the first night was – we thought that we wouldn’t be able to open because at that moment you get insurance because you have to but you’re not thinking that something is going to happen. At that moment my son Eduardo was very scared because we were so busy that we didn't know

sometimes we have money in the bank, sometimes we didn't – if the insurance was paid, but he didn't want to tell me.

01:22:41

I wasn't scared the next day when he didn't even know the name of the insurance. Then I got scared. And he said “No, no, no, just a moment; I'm going to find it,” and he found it. And luckily we were okay with it. If not we wouldn't have opened. But here we are again; God bless.

01:23:04

SW: And when did the fire happen? It was –

01:23:05

AO: It was August 17th.

01:23:09

SW: Of this past year?

01:23:10

AO: Yeah.

01:23:10

SW: Two thousand twelve.

01:23:13

AO: Two thousand –

01:23:14

SW: Eleven?

01:23:15

AO: – eleven, August and we were open in February 17th; yeah. And you know that I dreamt – three days before I dreamed like a – with somebody, one of my relatives, he was telling me you will be back in three months – in three months and that was the 14th. My mother died the 14th and then my brother died the 14th – died the 14th and two of my people died the 14th. And I had that dream on the 14th and they were telling me you will be back in three months – in three months. And it happened in three days. I was talking to my sons and I said, “What, what – what it means?” because that dream got too strong for me. What it means; what it means? And they say I’m crazy but I relate it with that like if I have a warning, but I didn’t know what. It was three days. And they – and they – and in that dream, the one that I dreamed with it he said you will be back in three months – in three months and it was the 14th – 15th, 16th, and 17th – and three days later was the fire.

01:24:30

It was the 17th and my dad died the 17th. [*Laughs*] I don’t want to – things happen like that.

01:24:41

SW: Tina my last question is – are there any – you spoke about your sister-in-law Dalia. I’m wondering if there are any other women either in Richmond or in your life that have had a – have helped you out and – or have had a – a profound impact on you?

01:24:58

AO: Hmm; my sons and Dalia. Yeah; she – she’s – I don’t consider her my sister-in-law and she talks about me the same. I consider her my sister, Dalia; when I – when I first came with my baby she was like my granddaughter – that age but she was so smart and she helped me with my baby, Jorge the oldest and while I was in – and backed me and I’ll never forget that she was like Cathia, my granddaughter that age, and when my baby reached one year old she was like an adult and she told – she told me – I didn’t have too much money at that time, “I’m going to celebrate his first birthday. I need you to come with me to downtown. I’m going to buy the clothes and the things that we’re going to need for the party.”

01:25:59

She was little. *[Laughs]* She impacted me and she celebrated his birthday but she was – and that’s the way she is. She is very independent and I saw that in her since she was little. She comes in – girl that age and she’s telling you that she’s going to do this and that and taking you like if she was the adult. I was twenty-two years old and she was eleven. And she took me to get everything for his party. *[Laughs]* I – I admire her as a woman.

01:26:40

SW: Does she still live in Houston?

01:26:40

AO: Yeah.

01:26:43

SW: Do you guys get to see each other at all?

01:26:44

AO: Not lately; we talk by phone, uh-hm.

01:26:49

SW: How often do you talk on the phone?

01:26:51

AO: Oh like it could be every week. It could be every three months, but if – sometimes it – it passes – goes by six months but when I call her like it’s like our conversation is like if – we talked yesterday and we always say I love you very much and I love you too. Yeah; I – I don’t have sisters but she’s my sister. [*Laughs*] Yes.

01:27:17

SW: And besides Cathia how many other grandchildren do you have?

01:27:20

AO: I have five granddaughters and one grandson. As I said Jorge is separated. His wife , when we was trying to bring her to the states, something happened in the way they were separated one year, so she’s a lawyer. She’s in Europe in Austria, Vienna, and my two oldest granddaughters live in there. That’s good; she’s a nice woman. My granddaughters speak Spanish, English, Latin, and German, yeah. And the oldest is sixteen; the second is fourteen. And then there’s Cathia and there’s my other two grandchildren from Mario is Sophia that is seven and Matthew is nine and there is Julia now the baby, Cathia’s sister and she’s one year and a half.

01:28:20

SW: I saw her running around. She's so precious.

01:28:22

AO: Yeah; she's beautiful, yeah.

01:28:24

SW: And so what are the names of your two oldest granddaughters who live in Vienna?

01:28:27

AO: It's Andrea is sixteen and then there's Adrianna – fourteen, Cathia is ten, Matthew is nine, Sophia is seven, and Julia now – one year and a half. And when I had my three boys in El Salvador my mother-in-law when Mario was born she told me, because that's the way it happened to her, she had three boys and then three girls. And when Mario was born she told me "You should have another three because you're going to be like me." And I said, "No, no, no, no; I'm going to have grandchildren and I'm going to have granddaughters." Oh and that's the way; now I have five, yeah. [*Laughs*]

01:29:12

SW: Well Tina is there anything else you want to talk about?

01:29:15

AO: No; that's okay and thank you. I appreciate your time.

01:29:19

SW: Well thank you for doing this. We're really happy that you – .

01:29:21

[End Argentina Ortega 12-12]