

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
621

Interview with
MARY LOUISE MUJICA
February 15, 1984

Place of Interview: Chino, California
Interviewer: Jeri Echeverria
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: *Louise Mujica*
(Signature)
Date: February 15, 1984

COPYRIGHT



1984

THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Coordinator of the Oral History Collection or the University Archivist, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas 76203

Oral History Collection

Mary Louise Mujica

Interviewer: Jeri Echeverria Date of Interview: February 15, 1984

Place of Interview: Chino, California

Ms. Echeverria: This is Jeri Echeverria interviewing Mrs. Mary Louise Mujica for the North Texas State Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 15, 1984, in Chino, California. I am interviewing Mrs. Mujica in order to obtain her recollections concerning her Basque parents, her work at the Bastanchury Ranch, and raising her children in America.

 Mary Louise, where were you born?

Mrs. Mujica: Los Angeles.

Ms. Echeverria: How did you get from Los Angeles to Orange County?

Mrs. Mujica: Well, my mother married Pop...my step-dad. Then they moved to El Toro. He used to herd sheep for the Igleles, and the Igleles hadn't paid him any wages. So when he got married, they gave him two-and-a-half acres of property. That's where my folks lived--two-and-a-half acres of apricot trees (chuckle).

Ms. Echeverria: And you were born in...

Mrs. Mujica: 1914.

Ms. Echeverria: Can you tell me a little bit about where your mother and

father were from in the Basque Country?

Mujica: Yes. My father was from Spain, from Arizoon. My mother was born in Spain. I don't remember the name of the town. She was only two months old, and her dad moved her. They went to France. She was raised in Aldudes. That was the name of the town. Her dad became a widower, and he remarried. She was the first one from his second wife.

Echeverria: How did they get from there...

Mujica: How they traveled? In those days I have no idea. They probably had some carts or something. They didn't have any cars in those days like we do now. That part I cannot tell you--how they got there.

Echeverria: How is it that your family has the name Ustaritz? I know that's a French-Basque name.

Mujica: Well, see, my second...I call him my real dad (chuckle). He was born in Spain. Arizoon was the name of the village he was born in. Then I don't remember what year he came to this country, but he wound up in El Toro. That part I'm not certain of. Working for the Igleles, I told you about the property they got. Then he went to the Moulton Ranch to work. He worked there until he died. He worked there all the rest of the time. He worked there.

Echeverria: Now when you were a young girl, did your parents talk about the Old Country a lot? Did they talk about the Basque Country?

Mujica: Well, I don't remember too much of it because, you know,

us kids--when it got dark--we all went to bed. There was no electricity in our house (chuckle)--a wood stove and coal oil lamps, you know. Gosh, I'd come home from school, and I'd have to clean the chimneys because there was always smoke on it. That was our job--to clean the chimneys. In the mornings we'd get ready to go to school. When we'd get up, our dad would make breakfast, and I'd have to go hitch the horse on the buggy.

Echeverria: Is that right (chuckle)?

Mujica: If I had to do it today, I couldn't do it (laughter)--hitch the horse on the buggy. We had this one horse, and I remember I never could get his bridle on. He'd keep turning his head, and I was kind of short (laughter)!

Echeverria: Then you took the buggy to school? Your dad would take you to school?

Mujica: No, Dad would take the buggy to his work. Then us kids would walk to school (laughter). The only time that he took us to school was on a rainy day because he wouldn't have to go to work on the Moulton Ranch. Then he'd take us kids to school.

Echeverria: Tell me a little bit about school for you.

Mujica: Well, we had just two teachers, you know, two rooms. It was a small school, and it had four grades in each one. I remember when they rang that bell, we all had to get in line and salute the flag, and then we'd march in (chuckle).

Each of us took our seats. We had a lot of homework to do. We had only two teachers, and each one had four grades. All the lessons that they had to teach us were...about fifteen...I don't think we had even twenty minutes for each class.

Echeverria: Now when did your day begin, and when did your day end?

Mujica: We had to be at school by nine o'clock in the morning, and by two o'clock we were out. From the fifth grade on up, three o'clock was when we got out of school. Then we walked home.

Echeverria: Did you have the same teacher throughout?

Mujica: Well, no. Pretty near every year there were different teachers. One year we were in the fifth grade with this teacher who only had one arm. He had one arm that was cut off over here (points to elbow).

Echeverria: I bet you remember that!

Mujica: I remember, yes. Oh, he was a very good teacher. Very strict, you know. Of course, we all were taught that way. Then when we had our recesses, there weren't too many games to play. It was mostly softball, baseball. That or tag. There weren't too many things to do. There weren't too many recesses.

Echeverria: Were the other kids mostly American? Did they speak a foreign language?

Mujica: They were mostly Mexicans. Oh, sure, there were Americans,

too, but not as many. There were more Basques among us than there were Americans. Oh, there were Americans, too. When we graduated from the eighth grade, there were only seven of us--five girls and two boys.

Echeverria: From that class that began?

Mujica: From the eighth grade. Yes, when I graduated from the eighth grade, there were seven of us.

Echeverria: Pretty small class.

Mujica: Very small. Yes, the classes weren't large, not at all.

Echeverria: What language did you speak at the time?

Mujica: Basque.

Echeverria: You spoke Basque?

Mujica: When I went to school in the first grade, I spoke no English. I was two years in the first grade because I had to learn English the first year I was there (chuckle). There were some real nice teachers there, and we sat there...I can remember that! We didn't know a word they were saying (laughter)!

Echeverria: You can remember not understanding?

Mujica: Well, we didn't know any English--nothing I could say.

Echeverria: Did you talk with other Basque kids and try to figure out what the teacher was saying?

Mujica: Oh, yes. Mary Ingles was the oldest one we had there, and Grace Whistler. See, they were older than us, and we communicated with them.

Echeverria: Did they help you?

Mujica: At recess time. They were ahead of us in school. Yes, that's the truth.

Echeverria: That must have been difficult.

Mujica: Very difficult!

Echeverria: Did you have any problems in school with other kids being prejudiced toward you because you spoke a different language?

Mujica: No, not too much. I don't remember, to tell you the truth, too much that happened. It seemed like such a small area, and everybody got along, I think (chuckle). If we'd just understood each other (laughter)!

Echeverria: What was the attitude of your folks toward going to school? Did your family hold it like it was serious and all kids should go to school?

Mujica: No, I don't remember. They never said too much.

Echeverria: So it wasn't discussed too much?

Mujica: No, they just knew the kids had to go to school apparently (laughter). Themselves, they didn't go too much in the Old Country.

Echeverria: What chores did you have around the house? What were you responsible for at your folks' house?

Mujica: Outside of hitching that horse on dad's buggy, I had to make the beds, sweep. At that time we were young kids. We all slept in one room; all the kids had different beds. But it wasn't hard. I had to make our lunches, which was

very easy to make.

Echeverria: What did you usually have for lunch?

Mujica: A jar of beans.

Echeverria: That was what you were talking about earlier, before the interview. You had a jar of beans.

Mujica: See, my folks always made their homemade bread. We had a piece of bread with that. We didn't have much, but when we came back from school, then we'd eat a lot more because we were hungry (chuckle)!

Echeverria: Then did you have after school chores, too?

Mujica: Oh, yes. We'd feed the chickens, pick the eggs, feed the rabbits, because my folks had those.

Echeverria: You were the eldest of the children?

Mujica: Yes, I was the oldest and then brother John. When he got a little bit older, my dad put him hitching the horse (laughter). I was glad not to have to do it!

Echeverria: (Chuckle) It sounds like hitching that horse was a very important job!

Mujica: Yes. See, those two would make the breakfast. Then when I first started hitching the horse, brother John and Dad would be making breakfast. John would get up and have breakfast, too, and I'd get there, and there would be just a little bit left (laughter). I remember. But my mother never used to get up until later. She didn't get up early. When we were getting ready for school, then she would get up.

Echeverria: Was that unusual for the time?

Mujica: Yes, but I don't think she was well, really, because I don't know why a mother would sit in bed that long (chuckle).

Echeverria: You had three brothers and one sister?

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: And you were the oldest?

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: Did you have special responsibilities because you were the oldest, other than having to do more chores because you were older?

Mujica: No, because brother John had to work quite a bit, too. He was in there working, too. There used to be a lot of eucalyptus trees around the house. They'd chop them down, and we used to have to go raking all the time (chuckle). Oh, that was a mess! At that time that house was kind of... it always was a small house, but eucalyptus trees were all over there.

Echeverria: Now where would that house be today? What town would that be?

Mujica: El Toro. Oh, it's all changed now. It's all torn down; it's all gone. It's all different now. What used to be our walnut orchard, too, is all new homes. It's not the same. You wouldn't recognize it.

Echeverria: What about church activities? Did your family go to church?

Mujica: They started a little Catholic church in El Toro. A priest

from Capistrano used to come. Then they stopped. We had to go to Capistrano to go to church, so we didn't go every Sunday. It was too far from El Toro--horse and buggy--to go clear to Capistrano.

Echeverria: (Chuckle) How long would that take?

Mujica: It took a bit of a while. Gosh, I can't remember. It was nine miles from El Toro to Capistrano. I have no idea how long it took.

Echeverria: So when you did go, you'd all bundle up and pack up in the buggy.

Mujica: It took the whole day (chuckle).

Echeverria: It was a whole day's event!

Mujica: And then the Galeses...when they got a car, they would take us. That was easier.

Echeverria: About what year would this be that we're talking about? You were still in school...

Mujica: It would be about 1925, 1926--somewhere in along in there, I guess.

Echeverria: Cars were a new thing back at that time?

Mujica: Very new at that time, yes.

Echeverria: Were they considered to be real expensive?

Mujica: Gosh, I don't know.

Echeverria: You wouldn't know that,

Mujica: No, I don't know that.

Echeverria: Did your family have other Basque families that they used

to socialize with?

Mujica: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. On Sundays they took turns--the Changalas, Echeberrias, Etchezars, Eramuspes, and Seguras.

Echeverria: Is that the same Segura I know--Dominic Segura's family?

Mujica: Yes, that same family. Changalas, Eramuspes...Grace...I don't know if you knew her. They were...he had a brother over here in Riverside, but they're all gone. That's been a long time ago. Mr. Echeberria...you know Rose. It was her dad, Domingo. Then he had three sisters--Mary, who was Marcie's mother, Marcelina, and then Mary Eramuspe. What was the other one's name? Marcelina, Mary, Marcelin! No, that was the old maid. I can't think of it now.

Echeverria: So on Sunday afternoon you would go from one house...

Mujica: You'd go there for noon lunch.

Echeverria: Noon lunch.

Mujica: Noon meal, yes. Oh, about every other two or three Sundays. The guys would play mus (Basque card game). That was their thing. Us kids would go out there and play--all of the kids together. They always do this. It was fun. I remember that.

Echeverria: What would the women be doing?

Mujica: Chit-chatting, I guess. I don't know (laughter).

Echeverria: You weren't paying attention.

Mujica: No, I was out playing. They were probably busy in the kitchen because then whatever they fixed for noon...it

would be two or three families at a time, not the whole bunch at a time. That was once a year for a picnic. A few families would get together, take their turns. The ladies, I guess, would be in the kitchen cleaning up the messes (chuckle). Us kids would be outside playing. Once a year each family would give a big barbeque the old-fashioned way. Then there used to be a bunch of Basque bachelors in Capistrano, and they'd throw a barbeque. It was mostly at the Changala's place.

Echeverria: Were the Basque bachelors in Capistrano ranchers? Ranch hands?

Mujica: Some were and some were not. Some were working on the Moulton Ranch, some on the Oyarzabal Ranch, some on the Lacougue Ranch. The Echenique Ranch in Capistrano had some Basques over there.

Echeverria: There were actually quite a few Basque families...

Mujica: Yes, there were.

Echeverria: ...Capistrano Valley area.

Mujica: Oh, yes, at that time there were. There were some Amestoys, there was a Plaza, and there were the ones I already mentioned to you...Juan Amestoy. There was a bunch of them over there, but they're all gone. Most of them are gone. Mrs. Oyarzabal, as far as I know, is still living. She's got to be up in years. I bet you she's in her nineties.

Echeverria: Now this is what you were doing...like, on a special Sunday

afternoon, you'd go to other family's and kind of have a miniature picnic.

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: Did you complete the eighth grade?

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: You didn't go on to high school from that point?

Mujica: No.

Echeverria: What did you do then?

Mujica: Well, in August of 1928, I graduated from the eighth grade. I went to work in Fullerton at the Bastanchury Ranch--house-keeping.

Echeverria: What did the Bastanchury Ranch...can you describe for me the Bastanchury Ranch at that time? I've seen remnants of the Bastanchury Ranch.

Mujica: Oh, it was a big ranch. They had a lot of citrus--"oodles" of it. Then they had the water well. They dug for oil and got water--that Bastanchury water.

Echeverria: That's the bottled water that we know...

Mujica: Right. They had some citrus groves down there in the valley--like I was telling you awhile ago--before you get to Tijuana.

Echeverria: Oh, El Centro?

Mujica: El Centro. Down there in that area someplace, they had some citrus there, but then they went broke. When they let me off, the ranch had gone broke.

Echeverria: So you started there in 1928, and you would have been fourteen?

Mujica: I was fourteen years old, yes.

Echeverria: What was your first job? Describe for me what your job responsibilities were.

Mujica: The first thing was washing dishes (laughter).

Echeverria: You moved from washing dishes to washing dishes (laughter)!

Mujica: Washing dishes. The first year that I was working there, Juanita did all the cooking. She taught me to do the cooking.

Echeverria: This was Juanita Bastanchury?

Mujica: Yes, Juanita Bastanchury.

Echeverria: You were cooking for a large group of people, I imagine?

Mujica: Well, they had a family there. All the family was there. Grandma Bastanchury...that little old lady, you know. Every Sunday she would come there for noon meal. I used to hate to serve her. She was so particular. Nothing was right (laughter). Yet the one I was working for always thought I did good. I'd always ask, and they'd say, "It's okay. It's okay." I'd always ask, you know. But Juanita was very good to me. She was my sister-in-law after I married her brother (chuckle).

Echeverria: Now where did the Bastanchurys come from? Do you know? How did they get started up there in Fullerton?

Mujica: Well, the one I worked for--Juanita and Pop (Augustin Mujica)--

they're from the Spanish side. He was born here...Joe Bastanchury...they were all born here. Their mother was from Aldudes, from France. The grandma had come to San Francisco, and old man Bastanchury had all that property in the Fullerton area. There was this ship that came in... came the long way, the old way, you know. They landed in San Francisco, and he had gone up there. He was going to get a Basque girl off of that boat, and he got her (chuckle).

Echeverria: Is that right?

Mujica: That's the story, the way they used to tell us.

Echeverria: Now when you say the long way, do you mean around South America or would that be through the Canal by then?

Mujica: That part, I'm not sure. I know that they didn't land in New York. They went by boat to San Francisco. I'd say it was in 1904 or 1905, something like that.

Echeverria: That's a long trip.

Mujica: A long ways. A long time back. That was what I remember.

Echeverria: So Joe Bastanchury went to San Francisco to find a bride, brought her home...

Mujica: That's the old...

Echeverria: The old one. Oh, I got it.

Mujica: This one's...

Echeverria: Joe Senior.

Mujica: Joe Senior. This one (Joe Junior)...Juanita had come to work at the Echenique Ranch in Capistrano. I don't know

how they met each other, but that's when she got married. I think she first landed in Fullerton and then went to Capistrano to work for the Echeniques. The Echeniques had sponsored her here. This Echenique in Capistrano... his father was from the Old Country. Well, he was, too. But his father in the Old Country used to send...the Mujica girls all came over that way.

Echeverria: They were sponsored?

Mujica: Yes, from the Echeniques over there in Spain to this Echenique in Capistrano.

Echeverria: What's that mean--to be sponsored?

Mujica: To help them here.

Echeverria: The family here helped pay their way, and then they worked for them and gradually let them go?

Mujica: Right. That's how they did it.

Echeverria: Do you know whether that was a legal thing? Did some of the Basques coming in have to have a sponsor before they came?

Mujica: Gosh, that part I don't know. Well, my mother came, and she didn't have a sponsor. I think later on they probably needed somebody, but at that time they didn't.

Echeverria: Probably not that early. So, anyway, you landed at the Bastanchury Ranch (chuckle). Your jobs were mostly cooking and cleaning.

Mujica: Cooking and cleaning house, yes.

Echeverria: And how long did you do that?

Mujica: Three-and-a-half years.

Echeverria: Tell me about your pay--your wages--that you earned at that time.

Mujica: Well, when I first went there, I was supposed to get a dollar a day. When the month was up, I got forty dollars instead of thirty because she thought I did more work than she thought I'd be able to do. But that was all. Her oldest daughter was ten months older than I was. Her daughter didn't do too much, either. So then when the month was ended, she gave me an extra ten dollars because I did more work than she thought I was able to do.

Echeverria: So you started off, really, at forty dollars a month?

Mujica: At forty dollars a month. Then the following year, she gave me fifty, and then the last two-and-a-half years, I got sixty dollars a month.

Echeverria: Was that considered to be fairly good money for that time?

Mujica: For me it sure was (laughter).

Echeverria: How did you spend it? Do you remember?

Mujica: Well, the first several months, my mother wanted it, and then finally my sister-in-law, this Juanita, told me, "It's all right to help your mother, but put part of it in the bank. Save some of it." So then I told my mother that I was going to save my money. She got a little bit upset with me, but it was all right. She finally got over

it (chuckle).

Echeverria: So you started saving it?

Mujica: Saving my money, yes. I had to.

Echeverria: Did you have any days off?

Mujica: Sunday afternoons we had off, but we didn't go. I'd go to Tia Francisca's. She lived by...we'd go down there or else go with your mother.

Echeverria: My grandmother's?

Mujica: Yes, with them. Then on Sunday mornings Joe Bastanchury, the boss, would go to the first Mass--seven o'clock Mass--and he would take me to Mass every Sunday morning. I would go to Mass with him. When we came back, I would make breakfast. Then the rest of the family went to Mass.

Echeverria: So you were the early shift?

Mujica: Yes, the early shift. Every morning I had to get up at five o'clock. I had to clean out the family room, the breakfast room, and the kitchen. Those three had to be cleaned up. The family had breakfast for the ones coming down to eat--kept you busy.

Echeverria: Yes.

Mujica: But you learned to do it so quickly that you would just go right through it--one day a week, each room. For instance, this room here one day a week I would get all the windows washed and the floor waxed. Next week, it would be the other room. Each week, you had one room--the windows had

to be washed and the floor had to be waxed.

Echeverria: Was this set up for you? Did Juanita...

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: ...tell you what she wanted done?

Mujica: Yes, she gave you your orders, and you followed it.

When the kids got up in the mornings, they had to make their own beds. I didn't have to make their beds. I didn't have to change their beds on Saturdays. They had to do that. But I would have to clean the room. But, see, she wanted to teach her kids a little bit of work, too. It was easy work...really easy.

Echeverria: It doesn't sound easy to me (laughter).

Mujica: You get used to it. When you are young like that, you just go right through it. If I had to do it today, I wouldn't be able to do it, that's for sure.

Echeverria: You perhaps were thankful for the job?

Mujica: They were good to me...very good to me.

Echeverria: How about the children? Did you get along well with the Bastanchury children?

Mujica: Oh, yes. Marie--she's not living now--she was about seven, eight years old when I went to work there. In the afternoon I could go to my room. I didn't have to be doing anything. She made me get up early in the mornings, do my work, and in the afternoons go get your rest. But Marie would always come into my room and mess around. We would talk, piddle

around, you know. Then sometimes in the summertime, Denise and Juanita would come in the kitchen and help me with the dishes. They would want to play ball and want me to go out there and play with them (laughter). And the Diharces had two boys, neighbors, and they would come. We would all play ball in the afternoon sometimes.

Echeverria: Like softball or...

Mujica: Softball, yes. Jump rope or whatever. I was just a young kid myself, too, and I would go right along with them (chuckle).

Echeverria: What other things did you do with the kids in that neighborhood?

Mujica: Well, not too much, really. Just that everything was normal.

Echeverria: Every once in awhile I'm sure there was a picnic or a big Basque doings. Did you go to them at that time when you were working at the Bastanchurys?

Mujica: Yes, over to the Chilibolost Ranch. As a matter of fact, I would go with your grandparents. I went there a couple of times with them. I went with your mother and uncle. On the old Bastanchury Ranch, they had some parties, but I didn't go to too many of those.

Echeverria: The way I've heard you and Mom and others talk about these things, that was a highlight for you--to go to these dances and picnics.

Mujica: Oh, yes. Those doings, oh, yes. The few times we went,

we really enjoyed it (laughter).

Echeverria: Can you tell me why it was so special to you?

Mujica: Well...

Echeverria: It's probably obvious to you...

Mujica: Well, you didn't go out too much, and when you went...we just went to have a good time. A lot of times at those dances, gosh, you hated to miss a dance. If you had to go to the restroom...you know, the music would stop for a few minutes, and then you would run to the bathroom (laughter). You didn't want to miss that dance!

Echeverria: Was there live music?

Mujica: Accordion. In those days it was the accordion. The old-fashioned way...accordion.

Echeverria: There would be one accordion playing mostly?

Mujica: Mostly one, maybe two. Mostly one.

Echeverria: Did they do Basque dances?

Mujica: It was mostly a lot of jotas (Basque dance). It was mostly waltzes, and they did square dances, too, later (four-person Basque dances). Square dances came in later on. A lot of polkas. Polkas and waltzes. That was those days. Today I'm not so sure. That's how it was then.

Echeverria: That probably was an opportunity for you to meet people, too?

Mujica: Oh, yes, you meet a lot of people. In that old Chilibolost barn, there was a long...I don't know if you remember it or not.

Echeverria: Very vaguely.

Mujica: Well, we would all sit in one line waiting for the music, and the guys would come and pick you, and away you'd go to dance (chuckle). They would always bring you back to where you were sitting before.

Echeverria: Is that right?

Mujica: Oh, yes, yes. They would bring you back. Oh, yes.

Echeverria: Sounds a little like a train station (laughter).

Mujica: Yes, exactly, exactly. Then they had their little bar, but we never went to have anything. At the Chilibolosts' Ranch what they used to do...they would have all those doings down below. When most of the people would leave, they would take you up. Then they would give you coffee and cake. They always had desserts over there. Drink your coffee...us kids used to enjoy that then (chuckle). The music was over, so we thought, "Heck, this is over with now."

Echeverria: Describe meeting Augustin. He worked on the Bastanchury Ranch, too.

Mujica: Oh, yes. He was a foreman there for a long time. As a matter of fact, he gave up being a foreman for Grandma Bastanchury in 1942. In 1940, he had bought this place on the hill--where we were (Yorba Linda). As a matter of fact, when he first saw that place for sale...Stein in Fullerton had it up for sale. He asked Pop (Augustin Mujica)

did he want to buy it, but Pop wasn't really ready to buy it. He was trying to save his money to buy some property. He had to sell the El Toro one in order to buy anything else, so he sold the El Toro property. Domingo Segura was living in El Toro and was supposed to come to live in Chino. Pop told him, "Gee, there's a nice place up there." Domingo Segura didn't want to buy it, so Pop bought it in 1940. In 1942, we went up on the hill. There were two little shacks up there, and he had this Pedro Shimonario. He was a carpenter, this Pedro. Pop got Pedro Shimonario, and between the two of them, they dug this great, big hole to make that cellar and then put the two houses together. We put our two shacks together. I don't know if you remember what they looked like? You don't remember that, do you?

Echeverria: No, no, I have never heard that story.

Mujica: Then Pop and Shimonario built that garage. You know where we had that garage over there? All right, when he told Grandma Bastanchury that he was going, she was a little bit upset. After we moved up there...a month later she died. Well, she was up in her nineties. She was old.

Echeverria: When did you and Pop marry?

Mujica: 1933.

Echeverria: So he had worked there about nine years...

Mujica: Oh, more than that.

Echeverria: ...after you got married?

Mujica: Oh, after we got married. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, they had an old house, and we lived over there. We had nothing but a wood stove.

Echeverria: Is that right? When you were first married, you lived in a house at the Bastanchury Ranch?

Mujica: Right.

Echeverria: And you had a wood stove?

Mujica: He was supposed to be getting \$200 a month, but he wasn't getting that money because they were charging for house rent, for the water. The only electricity was this cord (chuckle) that hung from the ceiling. It was the only light we had in the house.

Echeverria: The light bulb hanging from the electric wire?

Mujica: Right. The house wasn't a very good house, but we were there until 1942.

Echeverria: When did your children come?

Mujica: Augie was born in 1935, Louie in 1937, Norberta in 1939.

Echeverria: You had them all there?

Mujica: Yes, all were born there. I don't know what else I can tell you.

Echeverria: How did you decide to marry?

Mujica: Oh, when I was working over there with Juanita, her brother was there, and we just got together. At first I didn't know. I didn't know. Then when we would go to the

picnics in El Toro, he would take me. He was the driver.

Echeverria: So, Mary Louise, you moved to Yorba Linda in 1942.

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: I can remember the house. Your kids were about what age when you moved there?

Mujica: Augie was in the first grade at St. Mary's. When we were in Fullerton, we started taking him to St. Mary's. Then when we moved to Yorba Linda, Father LeHaine got a little upset with me because I couldn't come from Yorba Linda to bring him to school in Fullerton. As a matter of fact, I told him that if he would come as far as Placentia, I'd bring him to Placentia (chuckle).

Echeverria: He didn't like that idea?

Mujica: No, he didn't like that idea. So that's when we put him into the Yorba Linda school. That's where they all graduated from grammar school and then from Fullerton High school.

Echeverria: I see. So you started him out in Catholic school and then switched them to public school.

Mujica: Yes, I switched them,

Echeverria: How about decisions on how to raise your children? Did you and Pop talk about it a lot, or did it sort of evolve?

Mujica: It just worked the way it was. Nothing was discussed.

Echeverria: From your point of view, did you try to raise them to be Basque?

Mujica: Well, when Augie went to school, he knew nothing but Basque.

We were talking in Basque. But when he went to school, he started learning English, so the other two learned a little bit of English, too. Then we used to get along with the Travalias. You know, Catherine and them? See, their kids spoke no Basque. Our kids got along real good. Now Louie and Norberta didn't speak much Basque because when Augie started talking English, we started talking in English, too. Then later in years, Pop was trying to talk in English, too, because he wanted to learn to speak in English a little bit more.

Echeverria: So your learning of English came from your children?

Mujica: Oh, yes.

Echeverria: You didn't speak much English until your kids started going to school then? Is that true for you?

Mujica: Yes, because we were always talking in Basque--him and I. Always talking in Basque.

Echeverria: What about your three children? Do they speak Basque?

Mujica: Norberta does. But Louie and Augie are a little bit confused. I think Augie understands a little bit, but with Louie I think it's gotten away from him. Well, he's been away from that Basque for so long. Augie isn't around the Basques too much, where Norberta, see, her husband is Basque. But they talk a lot of English at home. When she's working at the bank, a lot of times the Basque people come to her. Then she has to explain.

Echeverria: She keeps it up that way?

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: She practices. What about your grandchildren? What about Leo? Does he speak any Basque?

Mujica: No, none of the children speak Basque. No Basque there.

Echeverria: Do you think it's sort of natural that it has to die out eventually?

Mujica: Well, it seems that way. Over here, too, you see a lot of Basque people, their younger ones don't speak any Basque. It gets away. When they go to school, it's all English. Then when they come home, it's all English.

Echeverria: Did Augie...when he first started school, he spoke Basque just like you did when you started school.

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: Did he have problems getting along?

Mujica: Well, see, he was at St. Mary's when he started. I don't think he had too much trouble.

Echeverria: He just started learning English?

Mujica: Yes. He was more alert than I was when I was little (chuckle).

Echeverria: You know, that's remarkable because you'll hear other kids who have problems...those that don't speak the same language have problems. But all your kids, as far as I can see, do Basque dances.

Mujica: Oh, yes. Years ago Loran (accordion player) used to have

us bring him here. This one time we laughed. What's the name of those people? As a matter of fact, one of them is gone now. Anyway, Augie didn't want to dance. There was a great, big shade tree. What does he do? He climbs up that tree. He was up in that tree and Shimona says, "Get your son down from there! He's got to dance!" Louie and Norberta liked dancing but not Augie. So, anyway, after they got through practicing, they bring out some dessert. So who climbs out of the tree? Augie (laughter)!

Echeverria: He wasn't coming out until dessert, huh?

Mujica: He was coming down for his dessert. Augie didn't care too much about dancing, but the other two did.

Echeverria: They danced quite a bit.

Mujica: Yes, they liked it a lot.

Echeverria: Now when you folks had a family outing--like, when you were a young girl having a family outing with your mom and dad, and you'd have these Sunday things--what did you do for family outings? You and Pop and the three kids?

Mujica: Us? Well, the guys always played cards. That was their main thing. They played their mus. And, us, we would sit around and watch.

Echeverria: Did you often go to the Hotel (Centro Basque Hotel in Chino)?

Mujica: Oh, not until later in years. Then we would come every Sunday. Pop always had to come and play mus over there. After we would have our noon meal at home, we would get

to the Hotel about three o'clock or three-thirty, something like that, and then start playing cards. After supper they'd play cards again. We would get home sometimes at ten o'clock, sometimes midnight, sometimes two o'clock (chuckle) after playing those crazy cards.

Echeverria: Did you ever play brisca (womens' Basque card game)?

Mujica: No, we would just sit there and watch. When Henry and Marie had the Hotel, Henry would entertain us. He would tell us jokes, or we would be talking. Remember, Marcie Barcelona was living. See, they are the ones that got me started...Pop used to come play cards, and in the evenings he would get back home again. Then one time, Marcie--you know Pete and Marcie Barcelona--told him, "Why don't you bring your family?" That's when I started coming to the Hotel. Then Marcie and I would sit there and visit. Sometimes we would go see Shimona while the guys were playing cards or visit some people around here... Joaquina or somebody.

Echeverria: Was it important to you that the whole family went out together?

Mujica: Well, later in years, we came by ourselves. The kids were doing their thing...which is normal.

Echeverria: Yes.

Mujica: Pop never was a handball player, so the kids didn't play ball, either. A lot of times he would be playing cards,

and the rest of us to do something would go out and watch the handball players play ball.

Echeverria: Did they play every Sunday?

Mujica: Oh, yes. They always had their games in the little cancha (court) there.

Echeverria: Now the Basque Hotel...I know what it looks like today. But earlier, in the forties, fifties...

Mujica: It was different. That garage was torn down.

Echeverria: Tell me a little bit. What did it look like to you then?

Mujica: Well, first, it was a perfect place. They had that great, big grape arbor and a bunch of benches and tables all stuck into the ground, and you ate there. You would go inside... they'd have music inside. The bar was inside, too. You danced in that big garage. It's not there anymore.

Echeverria: I remember barbeques in the afternoon.

Mujica: Yes.

Echeverria: You could be out in that area. You used to cook a lot there, didn't you?

Mujica: I did a lot of serving.

Echeverria: A lot of serving?

Mujica: My husband used to do a lot of barbequeing--he and Domingo Segura and Bautista Chilibolost and Michael Mucheberria. Those four were pretty nearly always there. They're all gone.

Echeverria: I can remember singing...hearing people sing after...

Mujica: Oh, after dinner that was the Basque custom. I don't care where you went, even when us kids were little in El Toro, after they had their meal, they all had to do their Basque songs. They were good songs. After they'd sing, then they'd play cards or danced or whatever was coming up. They'd do that over here at the picnics at the Hotel, too. After supper there would be singing.

Echeverria: Did you teach your children those songs?

Mujica: No.

Echeverria: Not particularly.

Mujica: Well, I didn't know them myself, either (laughter)!

Echeverria: (Chuckle) You just listened.

Mujica: No, I'd go along with them, but I couldn't remember half the words. Mary Segura was a good lady singer. She used to sing. I used to sit by her and follow her (chuckle).

Echeverria: In general you would say...the thing I am wondering is, would you say that you and Pop attempted to pass on Basque ways to your children?

Mujica: Yes, mostly Basque. Yes, he was from that Basque era. We grew up Basque, and we stayed with it. We stayed with it.

Echeverria: How about your kids? Did they ever kind of reject it? Did they go through a stage where they didn't want to have anything to do with it anymore?

Mujica: No, not that I know of. They never gave me any bad answers. Whenever you mentioned anything, they were ready to go (laughter).

No, they didn't. I don't think they hated the Basque bit at all. If they did, they sure didn't show it.

Echeverria: You don't know about it, huh (laughter)? I have read some things that say that women among the Basques are pretty highly respected.

Mujica: Some yes, some no (laughter).

Echeverria: Some yes, some no? I've read things about the Old Country... that the women there have a real partnership with their husbands.

Mujica: Oh, yes, definitely. The husband is the boss (laughter).

Echeverria: Oh?

Mujica: the husband is the boss over there. They are pretty strict --at least the ones I've seen. You don't see too many over there messing around. They stay near the home. They work. In the mornings they get up and drink their coffee, and they go out in the fields. The ladies go out there, too.

Echeverria: In visiting the Basque Country, what were some of your first impressions? Now you're a Basque-American...what were some of your first impressions?

Mujica: The first day we wound up in my husband's brother's house, I thought, "Are we going to stay here for three months?" (laughter)

Echeverria: Can you describe it for me?

Mujica: Oh, everything was so different. I couldn't believe it. Then the next day, I thought, "Gee, I love it." I got

used to it right away.

Echeverria: What year was that? Do you know?

Mujica: Nineteen sixty. We were there for three months.

Echeverria: And what was that house like? What was the inside of the house like?

Mujica: It was a very clean house. Upstairs it had highly waxed floors...more than we have over here, I'll tell you that. We had a sister, a little old maid, Norberta. She stayed up there with us when we were there. She was working with these two doctors in Elizondo. She was their maid there, and when she knew we were coming, she took her three months off. She was already at Micheleborda. That's where Miritxu, Pop's brother, was. That's where we stayed. I watched her wax the floor. It looked like a little brush. She would strap it under her foot, and this was what she was doing (she makes a circular motion with one foot), waxing the floor.

Echeverria: So she strapped the brush to her shoe and...

Mujica: ...waxed the floor. Those floors were immaculate.

Echeverria: Why did you have that first impression of, "Oh, my God, I have to stay here three months."

Mujica: I didn't realize what it was going to look like over there. He had told me it's different. It was. Oh, I've been there three times since then. It's all changed. The first time we were there, this Norberta, his sister-in-law, used to go

down to the creek to wash clothes and walk up the hill. Now they have a washer, and they have a dryer. The first time we were there, they had a little gas plate stove.

We were going to go to church in Amairu. In the summertime they have a bunch of priests and a bunch of boys...they go around camping, and they say a Mass. It was right below the hill where we were staying. Pop saw that Mass and said, "Let's go to Mass down there." So instead of going into the village, we would go down there. Martina had the garbanzos on her gas stove, and she was going to leave it off. I told her, "Why don't you leave it on? We are going to be back in an hour?" She said, no, because it would be burning too much gas. I'll never forget that. Those people did not want to waste anything. When we came back, she put it back on again (laughing). That was so funny.

Echeverria: What other changes did you see in that period of time in their lifestyle?

Mujica: When we sat down to eat, first, they started giving me too much and then not so much. At that place it was very good, I couldn't drink their coffee. I told her, no, I didn't like coffee. You've probably seen their coffee...like mud (laughter)! It's so thick. Then I don't know where they went in Elizondo someplace. They went someplace where they got us coffee that we could drink. Later, when

I went back, the next few times, themselves, they are going lighter on that coffee. It was horrible, the first time I had it (laughter). This is coffee? Like mud!

Echeverria: One impression I had when I first got there was that one part of my family was pretty well-off and had a nice house, and another part had dirt floors still. What did you find?

Mujica: No, I didn't find any dirt floors. Now downstairs there was regular floor. As a matter of fact, at Martina's they had a little piece of linoleum. Where they got that, I don't know (chuckle)! A little piece of the linoleum! The rest was all...they had a dining room right next to their kitchen. It was highly waxed, also, like the rooms upstairs. They have a store over there. That store was kept pretty clean, too. Now it's changed, and they made it a lot bigger now.

They didn't have any children. When Fernando came to this country, his brother wanted to come, too. But the brother was a godson to Martina and Dionysio. So they told him, "Well, you are our godson. Why don't you just come over here?" He is an heir over there. He has married, and they have had three children. They are expecting a fourth. Before, when we were there...Michael was there working for his uncle. Pop made the remark, "How come you're not running the store for your uncle here?" But he did. He got married, and her folks had a store.

Now they run the store themselves. It's a beautiful store. So they are doing all right, and they're right on the border there where there are a lot of French people coming in.

Echeverria: You brought up something that's interesting. The system of inheritance in the Basque Country--that sometimes the farm would go to the son or the daughter, depending on who is the oldest, or sometimes--from what I've read, who is the favored one?

Mujica: They usually go for the oldest nine times out of ten. Like, this couple that had no children, and he was their godson. Otherwise, Dionysio would have been here. Now Fernando has gone back. He is married and has two children over there. Another nephew who had come here, Jose Marie, has gone back, and they are expecting a second one.

Echeverria: You know quite a few Basques who have come here to work and then have gone back?

Mujica: And then gone back, yes.

Echeverria: Would you say that more come and stay or more...

Mujica: More stay. More stay. Sure, some go back, and a lot of them that go back can't come back here. Some of them come here...how can I say that? They don't come here legally. Then when they go back, they can't come back.

Echeverria: Oh, I see. They can't leave.

Mujica: Yes. There's not that many that have gone back. Most of them are here. Once they get here, they know they're all

right over here (chuckle), but not at first.

Echeverria: One question I wanted to ask you, Mary Louise, is what... how would you describe a Basque? I know that's a general question, but how would you describe a Basque person? What are the characteristics that make a person Basque?

Mujica: Well, I don't know. Their ways. If they are from over there...they are set in their ways over there. The ones that come over here, they do change. Some still keep their old-fashioned ways. I can't really describe it, Jeri. It's hard to say. How can I describe it? They are workers. They are good gardeners. Of course, over there they all grow their own vegetables and raise their own little animals. A lot of them over there have some sheep. What they will do, if they have to go to different areas to keep the sheep going, maybe two or three little farmers will get together and have one person take them all to another feeding place. They get together and do this. I've seen that done over there when we were over there. They raise their hogs. Then, at least in those old villages over there, in Elizondo, once a week they have a little market over there. Then everybody would take their eggs or whatever they have. You have probably seen that.

Echeverria: They are kind of self-sufficient?

Mujica: Very much so. Very much so. Now they've changed so much now. A lot of the homes are getting their telephones.

They are getting electricity that they didn't have before. They are coming up, you know, which is great. After you see them...like I said earlier, the first time I was there and the last time I was there, everything was so different. The four times I have been there, each time I went I saw something coming up better. Then all the little villages there have fiestas, you know, and those are interesting to see.

Echeverria: Well, I have about exhausted my list of questions for you here (chuckle). Is there anything that I haven't thought to ask you that you would like to tell me about?

Mujica: Gosh, I don't know. I can't think of anything. One thing... the first time I went there...I don't know if you want to tape it or not...it was funny. It was the first part of June or July. They say a little prayer...outside in the evening...they light this little fire, and you have got to jump over it. It's supposed to do something. I can't remember now what it was. I remember I had a dress on-- in those days I didn't wear slacks--and I had one of those nylon slips, and I was afraid to jump. I was afraid it was going to catch on fire (laughter). Pop laughed. They all laughed. I said I didn't want my slip to catch on fire (laughter)!

Echeverria: That's right. Most women still wear dresses there.

Mujica: Yes, most of them do, but now you see more of them in slacks,

especially the young people. But the older women, they are like...you know, the old style.

Echeverria: But you don't remember why you jumped over the fire, huh?

Mujica: I don't know what that...it was some kind of fiesta over there. It was something that they did over there. I can't remember now, doggone it. It was so funny...I was scared. They all had jumped, and I wasn't jumping (laughter). They kept pushing me.

Echeverria: When you think of yourself, do you think of yourself as Basque?

Mujica: Yes. I don't know why. We grew up Basque, and I'm around Basques so much. Over here, when I get these letters, I would say, "Gee, I wish I were over there." Then I think I'm better off over here (chuckle).

Echeverria: So at the same time, you think of yourself as American, too?

Mujica: Oh, yes. I'm a typical American. I always will be. American number one, Basque number two.

Echeverria: Well, Mary Louise, thank you very much.

Mujica: Oh, you're welcome.

Echeverria: It's been a pleasure talking with you.

Mujica: I hope I said the right things.

Echeverria: Well, I don't think there's a right thing to say. I've enjoyed this very much.

Mujica: You're welcome. I enjoy your company. To me you're like part of the family.