Transcript of OH-00126

Marina Estevez

Interviewed by

John Wearmouth

on

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Typographic Note

- [Inaudible] is used when a word cannot be understood.
- Brackets are used when the transcriber is not sure about a word or part of a word, to add a note indicating a non-verbal sound and to add clarifying information.
- Em Dash — is used to indicate an interruption or false start.
- Ellipses … is used to indicate a natural extended pause in speech

Subjects

Agriculture
Businesswomen
Cuba
Cuban Americans
Hispanic Americans
Home-based businesses
Immigrants
New York (N.Y.)
Rural conditions
Rural electrification
Second language acquisition
United States Naval Ordnance Station (Indian Head, Md.)

Tags

Food preservation
Charles County infrastructure

Transcript

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Marina Mayoral Estevez.

Marina Estevez [M]: Yes.

J: At her home which is now the Charles County nursing home. She's been a resident of this county for 56 years. She's a native of Spain and had come to America as a young woman. She has farmed in Charles County and will know quite a bit about tobacco culture and has raised a good size family here. Most of her children went to school, graduated from high school in this county. Her father was Florentino and her mother Pilar and they were natives of Spain and probably never left Spain, your mother and father?

M: No they left with me.

J: They came with you?

M: Yeah.

J: Okay well we'll get into that story.

M: We get to Cuba.

J: Okay we're interviewing this in her room and in the background you may hear a little bit of TV sound but not enough to be any problem. This is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program. The date is December 27, 1988. One reason for interviewing Mrs. Estevez or Estevez as they pronounce the name here is to get a new perspective on life in Charles County. A look at what she saw when she first came here. We will probably concentrate on the 1930's, 40's, and 50's periods in which she lived here and was very close to the county scene. Mrs. Estevez may I call you Marina on this?

M: Yes sure.

J: And you call me John. If you want to stop and think about something let me know and I will shut the recorder off for a while. How many brothers and sisters in your family?

M: My brothers and sisters are dead. All of them died. I was the only one.

J: You're the only one who survived. Okay what did your father do for a living?

M: Well my father was a horticulturist but he [learned and he follow] only for a little while. He went into business after and he was in hotel business and building homes for rent, little homes.

J: A landlord as we say.

M: Yeah a landlord.

J: Yeah okay alright. What part of Spain is your home town?

M: Logroño; it's a great big city.

J: What is the largest city next to Logroño?

M: I couldn't tell you because I lived in Spain when I was six years of age.

J: Six years old. Okay who made the decision to leave Spain and why?

M: My father.

J: Your father.

M: He did all the decisions.

J: Better life in the new world?

M: Well he thought that he would. And when his father died he left him a large amount of you know property. And it was divided between brothers and once they [start I think he had] and sold them. And he went to the city. He live in there while I was born.

[Tape interruption by others in room]

M: He stopped working in horticulture and he went into business of this stuff that you put in the ground, fertilizer. And then he got the taste of money call him and he decided—his brother was in Cuba—he decided to go to Cuba with his brother.

J: Oh okay so that was the main reason that you were going to Cuba.

M: So that was the main reason. So he came to Cuba and my father was all business there. So the other brother was working and he had contracts from the sugar factory. So my father went into [horticulturist] in there because they were beginning to make a town. And they want to plant flowers and trees from things and make different places to play ball and things and he was the man for it.

J: So he was a general purpose agriculturist?

M: Yes.

J: Not a botanist or [grounds man]—

M: And then he began to get into a side contracts of different things and he put people to work in there. So when he made enough money he bought a hotel.

J: In Cuba?

M: In Cuba.

J: What city?

M: In the Preston, Cuba. So he from there on he went in business. So he had a hotel and then he had a restaurant. And then he had a hotel again. And then he went back to another contract when it was easier. It was easier the money and easy for the family. And he worked for the company of the United Fruit Company, you know. And he bring food to the men that were working on the railroads, to make railroads to bring the sugar cane to the factory. He was making easy money in there and better than on the other place.

J: So life for you was really better in Cuba? He was successful in business.

M: Yes that's right.

J: Okay.

M: And from there he decided to move to another town that was growing and beginning to grow because they were building a sugar factory in there. And then when he went up there he got a contract and then after that he planned and build homes. And he was renting the homes to families that were coming to the town.

J: Were these small cottage type homes would you say?

M: Yeah. Yeah.

J: And what was the climate like?

M: Awful hot all the time.

J: Comfortable? No winter?

M: No winter no, no. And it was sea shore all the sea around.

J: Were you along the north coast?

M: No. We were central.

J: Oh in the center part of the island.

M: The center part of Cuba. More to the south than to the north. And it was warmer there all the time year in and year out. Only rain—the only thing we wanted was rain.

J: Was your—were your father and mother satisfied with the kind of government they found in Cuba?

M: Well in those days yes. They had better government than they have now. That was when Miguel Gómez was the president and some other ones. I have to think but I remember—

J: Yeah Gómez that's right. He was a friend of the United States.

M: Yeah he was a very good friend. And then we have fires and then we have [to learn] that he has been educated in the minor grades in here in the United States. And [inaudible phrase].

J: Would you say that you arrived in Cuba about 1910?

M: No. Before that.

J: Before that.

M: Yeah I arrived in Cuba 1908.

J: And how old were you?

M: Seven years. [She put it] seven years.

J: Seven years.

M: So that was it.

J: So life was good for the whole family?

M: Life was good to the whole family. And then when he got older and he needed money he sold one of the houses he always had and he also had the income of the other ones see. And then when he got real old my mother wanted to go to Spain back again.

J: Oh about what year was this?

M: Oh my goodness it was—

J: How old do you think you were at this time?

M: That time I was about let me see 27 or 26 years.

J: So this would be about 1924 or 5?

M: Yeah she wanted to about 1925. They went up there and they established their selves in there and they were going to buy a home and they never—I think they never bought it. My father got to catching pneumonia one time.

J: In New York?

M: No, no, no in Spain. So he died. He didn't live very long in Spain.

J: Did you go back with them?

M: No. He left my mother in there and my mother had more family, more relatives in there. So she went to live the relatives and then she got herself to have a little—something that are called quioscos do you know? And she used to sell all kinds of vegetables, eggs, and things that they came to town and she would sell them. With that money she made a little bit of money for herself and the girl that was with her taking care of her. And I was in here United States. Finally I told her if she wanted to come with me and she told me yes. When she was fixing the papers to come to the United States she got sick passed away.

J: So she never did get here.

M: She never got here.

J: When did you reach the United States yourself?

M: We reached United States I think it was in 1926 or 27.

J: Did you come alone?

M: No I came with my husband.

J: Ah there's another story. When did you?

M: We were in Spain. We went back to Cuba and we were visiting Spain and we were thinking of going back to Spain and making our living there with all the family. But when we went to Spain we saw that life was not like it was before and we were getting out. So we decided to come back to Cuba again that we could do better there because we both knew Cuba. So we decided to come to Cuba and live there. And then when he was there something, I don't remember what, happened but we decided to go to the United States. So we came—

J: How long had you been married when you left Cuba?

M: When I left Cuba the first time that I left Cuba when I got married I had already been married at least 10 years.

J: And how many children were there at this time?

M: At this time there was one, two, four.

J: Four of them.

M: Yeah.

J: Born in Cuba?

M: Yeah.

J: Okay all born in Cuba. So we decided to go back to—to come back to United States. And we came back to United States before that we you know spent the money traveling.

J: Had you been to the United States before?

M: I was in United States when I was a little girl but I don't remember very much. The only thing I remember is that I came for six months with a family that was American and they had two children, two girls. We were very close and they brought me here.

J: Where did they live?

M: Somewhere near Chicago.

J: Out in the [high lands]. That was a good experience for you? You enjoyed it?

M: Well. It was something new you know. Something new that I didn't see. I couldn't understand what the people talked. I could not.

J: You did not speak any English?

M: No.

J: Absolutamente loca.

M: And then the only thing that I saw in those days that I came here the things in here were very cheap and that caught my attention because you know the money. I was interested in the money. And the things were much cheaper than were in Cuba.

J: What kinds of thing? Clothing?

M: No all the things that—not only clothing and shoes but vegetables and bread. And you eat in hotels and places you know and it was much cheaper. And then you bought a piece of little bread for two cents and things like that. And that caught my attention so when I went back I told my father and my mother that you know the prices here were much cheaper and all that. They care about me but they don't pay no attention to me.

J: So they didn't come.

M: No. So and then the other family left and we didn't see them anymore. And somebody new came to the town because he was the manager of the town see.

J: Oh the mayor?

M: The manager. He was working for the United Fruit Company and he managed the whole affair. He was a big man. So he went away and I don't know where he went, some other place. Perhaps better than that one. Oh it's a long experience you know. And then my father and my mother went to Spain after that.

J: I see. Now what did Mr. Estevez do for a living when you married him?

M: Well he was working in the sugar factory that this man built and he was a [what they call] they use the canes from the sugar cane to convert it into sugar. He was a man that had to do something with them those great big [things] that they had in there they call it [dachos].

[Tape Interruption]

J: What made you and your husband decided to leave Cuba? Things were going pretty well for you there weren't they?

M: Yeah. His health.

J: His health?

M: Yeah.

J: What was he suffering from a factory related?

M: Well he had what they call the palúdicas that fever that grows in a hot countries that gives you and you got [three] days, one day, and the next day, and the net day real high and then every day you get a little bit. Every day you get a little bit and then you are not good anymore. So he had to leave the country and go to a cold country and take care of himself.

J: Did a doctor suggest that he come to a colder country?

M: Mhm. See that's why we went to Spain. But he didn't like Spain after that we got in there the second time. He was Spanish.

J: This is your husband, Estevez?

M: Yeah, Estevez.

J: He was born in Spain too?

M: Yes.

J: You didn't know him in Spain?

M: No.

J: Okay was he from about the same part of Spain as your family?

M: No, no he's from another province you know, a state what you call that here.

J: Yeah province or state, estado?

M: He was from another.

J: So when you came to the United States what city did you arrive at?

M: Havana. There was not any other thing. Havana, Santiago.

J: That's it. And when you came to America what was the first city you came to?

M: New York.

J: New York. Do you remember the statue of liberty? Did you see that?

M: Sure, sure.

J: Did you have to land at Ellis Island do you recall?

M: No. We had papers.

J: Visas?

M: No wait before we left we had all the papers completed and we had the hotel that we were going to go and a man was there waiting for us.

J: Was he a relative?

M: No but you can get in touch with this agent they called it.

J: Oh. Did your husband have the promise of a job when he arrived in New York?

M: No but he had the promise of his job that they would be needed very much in here in the United States.

J: Oh.

M: See because he was a copper smith.

J: A copper smith.

M: And he—they were making the subways in New York you know and enlarging them. And he thought that in here he would be much better. So he came and he saw the place and he saw the [thing] but after he was a very proud man. And when he went to see the job and everything and he saw that he didn't speak English enough to make himself understood with the other people he wouldn't take the job. He wouldn't.

J: Well then what was the next step? What did he have to do?

M: Then he went to work in other things he knew. So he went to work with a Jewish fellow that was making buildings. And helping him you know with the buildings and doing [the way the work he wanted to think] he could understand the Jewish fellow. I don't know how but he could.

J: Maybe this man knew a little bit of Spanish?

M: Or maybe the way they're speaking or something. But he did you know very good with him. And he worked several years with him. And then I used to tell him why don't you go work in the subways? And he says you make [15, 16, dollars an hour] in those days you know.

J: What year are you talking about roughly?

M: We are talking about 19—I think it was 28, 27, or 28.

J: Okay just before the Depression.

M: Yeah. No, no, no it wasn't. It was long time before Depression.

J: A long time before the Depression?

M: Yes maybe it was 15 or 16 I don't know something like that. The thing is that he was a very proud person and he would not call—he could not explain why this had to go this way or this. He wouldn't do it. So he went into this other thing that paid much less and then they had to work

harder until he learned to speak English. And that took him some time because he didn't want to come from work and then go to a school. See I used to work in home and then in the night time I used to go to school. So in six months I learned English very, very good. And then I had the ability that wherever I went I carry with me a [book] see and a pencil. And I used to go to the store and I used to tell the man in the store how do you call this in English and he'd tell me and the way it sound to me I wrote it.

J: Phonetic?

M: And then some other thing. I begin to learn the stores the [inaudible] in those days the stores weren't at all like it is today ,was different. And they used to tell me and I wrote everything. So when I went to the store I say, "Give me a dozen eggs and give me a pound of butter." The stores were smaller. They were not this great big—

J: And so the store manager he would get it and bring it to you?

M: He would get it and bring it to me. And they had the greens and the things in bushel baskets so I asked him for so many pounds of this or so many pounds of that. And you know it was different completely. And there was no big Safeway's or no big stores of any kind. All were small. All were small. [Everything tucked away] in the best streets and you know only Macy's. I think it was three big stores, one of them was Macy's that have bigger stores and [inaudible with TV noise] something like that. And it had a basement. The other stores all were smaller stores.

J: What kind of building did you live in in New York?

M: Well I live in a regular building where they had an apartment.

J: Okay was it a walk up?

M: Yeah.

J: No elevator?

M: No elevator. They had elevators yes but in hotels and different places, [old] places and different places. And in some hotels they had elevators too but not where we lived. Not in section where we lived.

J: Yeah was it a comfortable home for you there?

M: Well it was comfortable. We could rent five, six, seven rooms, whatever eight rooms, whatever we wanted. Only the life was not like it is today. You know life's changed.

J: Yeah were you happier in New York?

M: Yeah.

J: Than you had [been in Cuba]?

M: Yes I had no trouble I got myself a job at home and I used to make 36, 40 dollars a week easily. I just went to the factory, got the work, take it home, and do it in home. Take care of my children.

J: What kind of a factory was this now?

M: It then was making hats and it was embroidering the hats.

J: Women's hats?

M: Women's hats. And in those days everybody used hats. And everybody wear the best that they could. So he was embroidering and he used to give me a dollar and a half for each hat that I embroidered.

J: How long would it take you on the average to do a hat?

M: I used to make three hats a day. So you know I make 36, 40 dollars, 42 dollars easy in home.

J: You considered that good compensation?

M: Yeah. In those days sure.

J: Yeah, yeah.

M: And then you know I didn't have to abandon my children or pay for anybody to take care of them. I used to feed them, go to school, ride there, they used to come home, have lunch go back and you know. And I didn't have to bother about [inaudible phrase] finished all hats in three days or four days—

J: So it was an ideal job for you? Had you ever done any embroidery before?

M: Oh yes.

J: Did your mother teach you?

M: No I learned in school.

J: Oh okay. How many years of formal schooling did you have in Cuba?

M: Oh about 14.

J: About 14 okay.

M: But you know they are different. You [eight] o'clock in the morning and you come home 12 o'clock [and you eat] your lunch and you go back to the school and you start again one o'clock. The second lunch until three. And three o'clock the girls if they want to learn to sew, [to pull bobbins.] To do [inaudible] anything that they want they learn an hour and a half in that. Everyone, every girl they used to learn that way. I don't know now but they used to. So now you could learn how to sew. All kinds of sewing. Machines and all kinds. Hand, embroidery, and [inaudible], everything.

J: How did you find Cuban society compared to—course you were only six years old when you moved to Cuba.

M: Oh but I was bigger when I left Cuba. I was 20 something.

J: Did you find that in New York because you were keeping the home going you learned English faster than your husband did?

M: Yes but that's because I would study and he didn't.

J: I see okay alright.

M: See I was eager to understand and speak because I needed and I wanted to get my children to learn quick too so we used [fidge] you know.

J: How many years did the Estevez family live in New York City?

M: Oh we lived in New York quite a few years. We left New York and we came here to the farm.

J: In 1932 you came here. How many of your children started school in New York City? Did Frances go to school in New York?

M: Yes she was going to kindergarten.

J: Okay and how old was your oldest child when you arrived in Charles County? Henry?

M: No it was not my oldest child. It was another one. He was just graduated from the school.

J: High school?

M: 16 years. Henry had one more year to go.

J: Did you find the education system reasonably good in New York City?

M: Yeah.

J: Did your children grow up being bilingual? Did you see that they spoke Spanish at all?

M: They didn't want to.

J: They didn't want to? Isn't that sad.

M: I didn't want them to forget it. But they said if we speak Spanish and we speak English we are not going to learn any one of them good and then we would have more trouble. So [inaudible] learned English and when we catch more English and then we—but in the home we spoke Spanish while we could not speak English. But after that we speak English.

J: That was the only language in the home?

M: That was the only—

J: That's kind of sad isn't it?

M: And then it was good for my husband too because that way he learn it more you know.

J: Now do your children feel that was a mistake? Do they wish they had listened to their mother?

M: I don't know they don't tell me. Yeah. They don't understand very good what I say.

J: Have you lost any of your fluency with your native tongue?

M: I don't think so. I don't think so. I think I can speak it and write it perfectly good.

J: That's good. Okay now what made the family decide it was time to leave New York?

M: Because that was me. Because New York was getting like it was in [Tontecina].

J: Okay alright, the neighborhood was changing.

M: And I felt that my children were beginning to grow and pretty soon they would have to go and mix up with [these] people and they would be rough and nasty like the other ones are. So I said, "No. I don't want to stay here. I don't want to stay here. I want to go."

J: Now what part of New York City were you living in? What did they call it?

M: I was living next to the Central Park in 112th Street.

J: 112th Street near Central Park.

M: Yes right one street from the Central Park.

J: It was a good neighborhood.

M: It was a very good neighborhood.

J: It probably is now.

M: And the 7th Avenue, and the 7th Avenue you know.

J: 112th Street and 7th Avenue.

M: Very good neighborhood. Very, very good.

J: Were the children able to walk to school safely?

M: Oh yes. Well sometimes they have to get a trolley because they changed certain things in the school and I gave them fare and they went.

J: So the reason for leaving was not really an economic one?

M: No, no, no. It was really that they were getting too much of what's going on and I didn't feel like I want to be raising my children there.

J: Yeah okay.

M: And then you know I had business and I had a whole house rented that I sub—rented. And then we said the only way is going to the country, more like the country. So I begin to look in the Strout catalog for a place.

J: What sort of a catalog was this now? Strout I don't know.

M: Farms and houses in the country.

J: Oh country establishments.

M: Yeah. And then we found this farm that they were selling the family in here and close to Baltimore and close to Washington and so on and I said, 'Well my husband belonged to family that was farmers and I belonged to a family that were farmers original." So I said, "Well the best thing is you bought a farm, live and work there and keep you know in a good way."

J: So it sounded like an ideal arrangement?

M: Yeah.

J: What was the name of the family that was selling?

M: Oh I can't think of the name. They were from Bryantown. I may think of—

J: Were they still living there?

M: No. No I think—

J: Wasn't Murphy family?

M: No I think one or two are left no more.

J: Well who came down first to take a look at it?

M: I had a partner in the house that we had in New York City. We were renting a great big home in New York City and then sub-renting rooms furnished rooms like a hotel see. And the place was named [Estoco] corporation because his name was of O'Connor and my name was Estevez. So we had [Estoco] and we had made a corporation.

J: [Estoco]?

M: Yes. We made a corporation and we had you know sold the house and with the money that we got we came here.

J: So you had a good business head as they say now?

M: Oh yes. I had it.

J: Was that a result of you learning as a young girl something more about your father's affairs?

M: Well I guess it was the farm thing. You know my father came from a family that was had good [inaudible]. And he was a business man and I had a base of business all my life.

J: I see. So it was in the blood.

M: In the blood.

J: In the blood.

M: And then I always figured how could I do better? How could I do better? So when we came to United States we try and then I saw that my husband was [back] in his job and if he don't do something with [bringing] so many children's [inaudible phrase] and we didn't have any possible—any way of doing anything you know. And I don't want them to—

J: As you look back on your life now do you feel that you and your husband were a good team making decisions together?

M: Well in a way—

J: Were you more aggressive or dynamic?

M: No, no, no but I like business. Maybe that's because my father liked business or I was grown on the business better see. And I like business. I don't like to be only housewife. You know what I'm saying. I don't want my children to need.

J: So you were a pioneer of—

M: So when I saw that he didn't want to go to his work because he didn't speak English and he was ashamed that they saw that he didn't speak English and then that made me feel kind of dead you know. And I said, "Well I am not ashamed." Why do I go on ask how do you call this in English and write it in here? You know and why do I go to the store and I said to the girl, "What does it mean this word that is in here? I don't know. I don't understand. I don't speak English." I was not ashamed you know. But he wouldn't. I thought that my husband was going to back track on me and then we were going to be kind of in need. And I didn't want to be in need.

J: How many ethnic groups were there in this neighborhood? You were running into people who spoke only Italian for example or only Polish?

M: Oh every kind. All the kinds.

J: A real mix.

M: Yes the only thing—

J: Yiddish I'm sure.

M: The only thing that you didn't see there there weren't many was Chinese. And that's because they had China Town in New York so they settled there see.

J: So they all settled in that neighborhood. Was there any large Spanish community at all in New York?

M: No it wasn't the [22nd and three] and 23rd Street some Spanish.

J: No Puerto Ricans and such?

M: No they were beginning to come, Puerto Ricans here were beginning to come.

J: Just beginning to come okay. So when did you arrive for the first time in Charles County and see this property?

M: The first time I arrived was 19[32].

J: In the summer or fall?

M: Yes [summer].

J: Did your husband come with you? Just you?

M: Me and the other fellow that was in business with me.

J: I see okay. And again for the record what was his name?

M: O'Connor. His name—

J: O'Connor?

M: Yeah.

J: Okay.

M: He was Irish you know and he had—we had the business with the name of the [Estoco] Corporation.

J: Okay now I see how you combined parts of the two names.

M: Yes [Estoco] Corporation and we had very good business for a while but and then people started moving in that was not my cup tea you know. And it was too many troubles and drugs were beginning to come just like it was in [inaudible] now. That's something like you got in there. And I said, "[So] I don't want my children to grow in here and neither do I want to be." Because a couple of times I had stand up to a couple of men. And one time I remember I push

one through the stairs and he went down the stairs and when I leaned down I just thought, "My God." I said maybe he's going to get hurt badly you know. But I think he was in drugs and I don't know what he thought you know.

J: So you were serving as building manager in a way?

M: Well I was the one the landlady of the house. I was the one who would rent the rooms of the—

J: And living right there in that house very close to all the maintenance problems.

M: That's right.

J: No fun.

M: No, no fun.

J: Okay so you saw this property out here and what was it called at that time? What was the old name of that property?

M: Which one in here?

J: In here in Charles County.

M: It wasn't in Charles County.

J: Did they tell you that it had a name?

M: Yeah it has a name but they didn't use it.

J: Apple Grove.

M: No.

J: Is the real old name.

M: No.

J: And it was right at the edge of Zekiah Swamp.

M: Yes. It was in Dentsville.

J: Near Dentsville.

M: If you go to the road that goes to Dentsville you will find them there and the name I said is [Estoco], Estevez Road.

J: Yes that's right.

M: It's Estevez Road. And you follow the road and you go around. Well we used to live—we used to have the home. The home is still there but it's all broken up and it's all gone to pieces.

J: I took some pictures of it two years ago. It was a beautiful home.

M: Yeah but now it's nothing.

J: What condition was the home in when you found it?

M: Well when we found it had some holes and had a lot of work to do. But my husband wasn't working and that's what he did. He fixed the home and he made new buildings, new barns, new stables, new [own] house, everything new and fixed that home] and we put running water and we put heat. I think we were the third person in Charles County who put heat in their house.

J: Central heating?

M: Yes.

J: Where did you put the heating equipment.

M: In the basement.

J: In the basement. So there was a basement.

M: Yes. And we did all that and then I had two laborers. And the two laborers used to work in the farm with the cattle and with the farm. My older son used to go around and get friends who explained them how planting tobacco and planting corn and doing this and doing that [even]. And then Mr. Dyson used to live in [Inaudible].

J: Preston Dyson?

M: Yeah. The old man Dyson used to live in there. So he used to tell him what to do and this and that. You know how to do it and take him to work with him one or two days.

J: So your son went to work with Mr. Dyson to learn tobacco production?

M: Yes. Helping him yes. So they helped us a whole lot you know.

J: Were you aware of what kind of farm production you were going to get into?

M: Yes I was aware. I was aware and I think [inaudible] prepared for it. But you know it was nothing left to be. I had to do it because I felt like I was the one who brought them here and I was—

J: It was your word.

M: Yeah and I want to make sure that they were able to do the things and to tell you they thought that we were going to stay here three or four years then fly away. And they didn't have that. And when they saw that tobacco was bringing the second or third price of the tobacco in the warehouses they paid you know the second or third price the best. And one year we had the best tobacco.

J: How many years did it take you to reach this point where you were growing prize tobacco?

M: Around six years.

J: Six years of very hard work.

M: Yeah.

J: Who were some of your neighbors that you think were most helpful to you?

M: Mr. Dyson was very, very, helpful.

J: Do you know his nephew [Birch Bee]?

M: Yes. And you know they used to help us a whole lot. Help my boys. Tell them—he used to tell them what to do. And my boys used to tell the laborers what to do.

J: I see okay. Now what were the names of your sons and what were their ages roughly about 1935?

M: Well the oldest one was [Yuck] and he was maybe 19 or too many years.

J: What was his name again?

M: [Yuck]. [Yuck] Estevez.

J: Yuck?

M: Yes. And the next one was Henry.

J: I see.

M: And he graduated here.

J: La Plata High School?

M: La Plata High School. But Henry worked very little on the farm because he was with the high school work you know. And [Yuck] graduated in New York city. He was older two years so he worked here on the farm and he liked the farm.

J: He did like the farm?

M: He liked farm.

J: How to what extent did Mr. Estevez involve himself in agriculture?

M: Very little.

J: Very little. His job was the maintenance?

M: He involved himself with the cattle you know. With the cows and the horses and the mules.

J: Livestock.

M: Yeah he involved himself in that.

J: Did he invest in breeding stock? Was he buying selectively, quality?

M: Yeah we buy in selective quality kind of way and we don't have it you know who is buying who. We buy, the family buy.

J: I see as a family.

M: As a family.

J: What kind of cattle was he interested in?

M: He was interested in [livestock] and good horses and good mules. But we couldn't make it in the beginning because it cost too much money. You had to bring them from somewhere places and we don't have no tables and we didn't have no places to put them. So we had to make them. So we used the old barns to make a stable and we built new ones. Then we used to have pigs enough to support all of the meat we'd need for the year.

J: And you butchered there?

M: And we butchered there. And we would every year five or six big hogs you know and—

J: How heavy were these hogs when you butchered them on the average?

M: Some of them weighed quite a lot of pounds. No little ones.

J: 200 or more?

M: Yeah. More than that. More about three or four hundred.

J: Did you butcher any beef?

M: Yeah, yeah, one or two. One calf they did—

J: Per year?

M: Yeah per year. And we had plenty of milk.

J: How many milk cows on the average?

M: I managed two a year.

J: Who was milking the cows?

M: My husband. He took care of the cattle. And he took care—I sent the laborers to feed the hogs you know.

J: The laborers?

M: Yeah.

J: How many laborers did you have?

M: Two.

J: Two.

M: Two. Course my husband—

J: Black men or white?

M: Black. My husband used to help sometimes too, you know depends. And then my son when he came out of the school used to help. Each one of them had something to do. One went to the cattle the other one grow wood for the house. The other one got water for the paddocks. The other one—each one of them had something to do. And when they got free that if they don't have to do it they could walk, they could go, they could visit. They could play over and talk with the laborers.

J: How many daughters did you have?

M: Only one.

J: Frances?

M: Yeah.

J: What was her job.

M: And then I was raising another one for one lady that I had with me but she didn't help out. She help in the house.

[Tape Interruption]

J: Who kept the books and the accounts of the farm operation?

M: I did. I did.

J: Okay how many years did you run into the red?

M: Well I tried not to but we were above five or six years that we made enough to cover you know.

J: The expenses.

M: Expenses. We'd maybe be back a few months but we caught up.

J: Were your friends and neighbors here surprised that you were going—that you succeeded.

M: Yes very much because they thought that we had to go back to New York.

J: How many years were you on that farm all together.

M: Well I was on that farm let's see about nine or ten years. And my husband [later] maybe a little bit more. My husband made fix all the house like new. We put running water. We put heat.

J: Was there electricity?

M: No, no. The electricity came in 1927. My children—26 or 27—my children helped to put electric poles since Dentsville to past the Zekiah Swamp one—

J: Oh they worked on that line?

M: Yes. [They both do it]—

J: Now that came through about 1938.

M: They put 27 poles in there and they pulled one to my house see.

J: Were they getting paid by the Southern Maryland Electric Co-Op?

M: No that was volunteer work.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes.

M: No that was volunteer work?

J: Who was their supervisor?

M: I don't know.

J: There weren't many at that time. Maybe one of—

M: I don't know who it was but they worked for nothing and they worked day after day too. Henry and [Yuck].

J: All that work by hand with hand tools.

M: They put 23 poles I think. And they put them since Dentsville until after the Zekiah Swamp. We did get to the people to put the bridge where it is now on the road.

J: The Route Six bridge?

M: We give them the land and to cross because they were going to go through the other side it was too far away. So we give them the land for that you know. That's why they put Estevez Road on the road as a gratitude when they make that road that goes out on the other side.

J: When did you start buying your first machinery for the farm?

M: I started buying the first machinery in the Hughesville. I found these people that were very willing to help us in payments.

J: What was the name? Was that the Bowling family?

M: Let me see. How many, how many stores were in there? There were [two stores] Ryon's and the other people. I don't think it was Bowling. I don't remember.

J: The big store—

M: The bigger store.

J: Was a Bowling store right on the corner.

M: Was a Bowling store? On the corner of the street?

J: Yeah coming into Hughesville where you would be on the right. The first corner but on your right south side.

M: On this side?

J: Yeah.

M: Yeah and then it was it. And then was another store across the street on this side. Well we used to buy in the [two] stores but in this store we never bought machinery. All the machinery and all the credit we had it in this Bowling store.

J: Now one of those store owners is still alive. He's 94 years old. Still living over there in that neighborhood.

M: Yeah so we used to buy in there and they used—we used to go once a month and they used to give us a truck full of stuff to carry groceries you know and things that we needed for the whole month to eat the family and the laborers. Whatever we could get from the yard. All my farm seeds for the garden. I used to use it from Burpees and paid cash for it you know. And there used to be a man—we used to buy the horses and the mules or something that wasn't here in La Plata but I don't know I [he died] pretty soon after. I don't remember. Henry maybe remembers you know.

J: Where did you buy your first tractor? Hughesville?

M: Hughesville.

J: And what kind was it? What make?

M: No, no, no the first tractor I don't buy in Hughesville. I don't remember [inaudible] bought it. I don't think it was them so. I think it was with this man in here...I think he still is in there.

J: Gardiner's?

M: The Gardiner's.

J: Must have been a John Deere? Was it a John Deere?

M: Yes.

J: He still sells them.

M: Yeah. I bought two or three tractors with him.

J: Did you ever learn to drive a tractor yourself?

M: Drive a tractor? Yes one time. For only one time.

J: Only one time. How old were you Mrs. Estevez when you learned to drive an automobile? Did you drive an automobile?

M: I drove an automobile a little bit before but I didn't go out on the road on my farm. The time that I got my license was when I was 60 years of age. I didn't bother to learn to drive because the boys used to drive see. But then comes the time that the boys weren't home and I needed to go and my husband didn't drive so I had to learn.

J: Did your husband ever learn to drive?

M: He didn't want to.

J: Were you living here when you got your first driver's license?

M: I was living in the home yeah.

J: What was the best years for you on the farm as far as money's concerned, crops?

M: Oh money? [Inaudible]—

J: What was the best income?

M: I tell you the best years on the farm it was the last four years and that was good in the war.

J: How much was tobacco bringing then during that real good year?

M: Oh they used to bring in 70, 66 cents, 70 cents.

J: For top grade?

M: Yeah.

J: And did you grow only top grade or primarily top grade?

M: Oh no, no we grow everything because the land when we came was very poor and would not give the tobacco like it should. So we tried to help to enrich the land. [Inaudible] soil a big help for us when we came here was the corn. We used to plant corn and sell truckloads of corn. And then we used to raise pork and cattle.

J: How did you sell the corn? In what condition? Off the stalk, dry, green?
M: No we used to sell it for barrels.

J: By the barrel?

M: Yeah.

J: And was it dry?

M: Yeah.

J: You seasoned it let it dry?

M: Yeah.

J: Okay. How much a barrel?

M: I don't remember.

J: But there was some profit in raising corn and selling it?

M: Yeah. We had some that go six, seven dollars. And then we had many other for five dollars. I think the last crop we sold was five dollars.

J: How much of your food did you raise on the farm?

M: Raise? You don't know how—

J: Maybe it would be easier to say how much did you have to buy at the store?

M: You don't know how much I [worked] in the farm. I didn't know a thing about planting anything. I didn't know anything about how to grow. And I read books and I had the County Agent—

J: What was his name?

M: Brown, Mr. Brown.

J: Paul Dennis Brown.

M: Yeah.

J: Was he a help to you?

M: Oh big, big help. And he used to tell me this and that and you know I used to ask him call him out of town hall. But I worked like a beaver in that place.

J: Out in the field with a hoe yourself?

M: Then you know I went to the fair and I won three years the best first prizes.

J: In what?

M: On vegetables. And display—no thank you—and display of jars and there on the—

J: Canned goods? Mason jars?

M: Mhm. And I used to have over a thousand, three hundred, or four hundred jars of all kind of vegetables in my pantry. And I used to have [a slower] and I used to have different things in beef halves you know and salt and brine for—

J: Did you pickle? Did you make pickles?

M: Yes.

J: Coleslaw?

M: Yes I made beautiful cucumbers for the slaw.

J: Did you can meat?

M: Yes. Pork Chops and all kind of meat.

J: How did you can pork? What was the system?

M: Well I had a canner.

J: Pressure?

M: Pressure. And I went all through the books and I used to can by the book. Not what somebody told me.

J: You went by the book?

M: Yes, by the book.

J: And that was the way—

M: Yeah.

J: It was good advice? Good instruction?

M: Yeah, yeah. And I sometimes it was in there depends on what I was canning and I had three hours to boil the jars on the stove and I so many time I was 2:30 in the morning [singing] in the kitchen [canning] you know, doing the work.

J: Who stayed up with you and gave you a hand? Did anybody stay up to help?

M: No, nobody to help me canning. Nobody to help me can. I did can thousands of jars.

J: Was there some satisfaction in this for you?

M: Yes, yes.

J: Okay hard work but enjoyable. Good eh?

M: Yeah.

J: How much of your own baking did you do?

M: Baking?

J: Bread.

M: Oh I did, no we did biscuits. And sometimes later on we did some when we had more time, we did some loaf of bread. But we did biscuits with butter and buttermilk and they were delicious.

J: What stove did you use? What kind of heat for cooking? What kind of stove? Wood, coal, oil?

M: Oh I had a [good] stove that I bought in payments [inaudible].

J: Montgomery's ward?

M: They—yes. They gave us stove. And you had ovens in the top you know to keep warm and have it a big tank of water for you know.

J: Oh yes warming oven yeah. Copper tank on one end?

M: Yeah for hot water until we got the hot water. We used to love that thing.

J: Did you ever burn coal in it?

M: On the stove? No.

J: Just wood?

M: No, just wood.

J: Okay who cut most of the wood?

M: The boys used to put it in the hall.

J: Your own sons.

M: You know they used to put it and let it dry a couple of months. And then they had a power saw. And I used to have my own garden in the back of the house. And take care of [inaudible] of the garden you know. And used fertilizer and manure from the barn, the two things.

J: About midway through your stay on the farm, about how many farm animals were you maintaining? Horses, mules, cows?

M: Three. Oh you mean the—

J: Horse three head of horses.

M: Oh we had 16—we have [a fair] mules. And we had two horses or three you know. And we raised every year for our own use five pigs. Big ones, you know, big ones. I had lard that sometimes that could sell 60 pounds, plentiful.

J: For how much a pound?

M: Well I don't remember but—

J: Five, six cents a pound?

M: I used to sell it to Mr. Cooksey in Dentsville. [He had it in his store see.] And I used to raise five, six pigs every year to have plenty hams and shoulders and plenty of the other. And pork chops I used to put them—make them—put them in jars.

J: How did you seal the jars?

M: Oh I sealed the jars. And you know one thing? I had a special pantry and a man from the state used to come in there once every month and see how I work and he couldn't believe it.

J: For heaven's sakes. Did you pour fat over the pork chops in the jar?

M: No, no not very much. A little bit but not very much.

J: Just pressure, steam and pressure till the tops would snap?

M: That's right. Yeah. And then you know I used to have to—I learned how to make sauerkraut and some other stuff that used to be made with cabbages. And they used to love it. And different things. Every recipe that came I looked. I mean if I thought it was something good I try.

J: At this point in your married life were you completely converted to American recipes and ways of eating and tastes?

M: Yes, yes.

J: And your children knew nothing else?

M: Well they didn't know nothing about the other ones. I don't cook anything Spanish. Only when we wanted something.

J: Right. This was considered a special, a treat?

M: Yes that's right.

J: What were some of the traditional Spanish dishes that you would prepare on special occasions?

M: Well arroz with galena, with chicken. Rice with chicken. The rice was cooked you the Spanish taste.

J: Was the rice cooked separately?

M: Yes.

J: And then added to?

M: No, no sometimes when it was chicken with rice we cooked the chicken until it was time to put the rice and when you let the rice in one hour was [some]. So we—

J: Oh I see so when it was one hour left for the chicken, put in the rice. And what else?

M: We put in the rice and then it cooked with the chicken.

J: Yeah I see.

M: And then we you know mix it.

J: Any tomato sauce?

M: It's get the and gets the taste very good. And then the rice puff up. Then we push it out and put it warm, the warm.

J: Sounds good. With the chicken flavor?

M: Yeah. But the chicken that I make I don't put it with the rice. The chicken was a [long] in the jar. And when I want to cook the rice with the chicken you know I used to get the jar of chicken and put it in there so it [easy]. The one thing it spoiled the two of them don't spoil.

J: Yeah that makes sense. What size jar did you use for a chicken?

M: Well I used to use small jars, pint jars. I used to use a quarter jars and then half a gallon jars. I had loads of them.

J: Wouldn't your mother have been surprised to see what you learned to do?

M: Oh I'm sure. I am sure. And jellies. I used to make all kinds of jellies.

J: From your own orchard produce?

M: Yes and I used to make these...how you call it? Something that you eat. [Melon ring] you know?

J: Melon ring. Melon balls?

M: Oh I used to cook them and they always used to enjoy that when they came night time from the movie or something here in La Plata you took to the pantry and gave one jar.

J: What kind of melons?

M: Well the melon the watermelon was the [inaudible] melon. It doesn’t matter to me. The watermelon was better. It was more tasty.

J: How about dairy products, cottage cheese, did you ever make cheese?

M: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

J: All boys and girls liked that?

M: All boys yeah.

J: And buttermilk as you've mentioned.

M: Yeah buttermilk, my husband loves buttermilk. He could live with it. And I used to make cottage cheese. The boys and the girls used to like that. The buttermilk there [inaudible] you know.

J: I was gonna ask what were the popular cheese that you found in Spain as a child?

M: Oh good cheeses? The one that I liked the most was the...sheep. Sheep milk.

J: Sheep okay. Was it a white cheese?

M: Yes white cheese.

J: And what was it called?

M: Mantequilla—queso you know. Queso de oveja.

J: Sheep cheese.

M: Sheep cheese.

J: Were you able to make anything like that from cow's milk? Did you age your own cheese here?

M: No I didn't make no cow's milk cheese. I make a lot of butter cheese you know but we had to be you know making it regular the cottage cheese. Every maybe 15 days I make quite a few you know quarts or half a gallon some [inaudible phrase].

J: Okay how did you keep things cool before electricity?

M: Before electricity [laughs] we used to have one old [thing] that we used to buy the ice and put it on it. Now in the winter we used to have a great big hole where we used to put them and cover it up with summer straw and then put ice on top of it, you know. If it snowed.

J: So you had a special box in the—

M: No box it was a hole in the ground.

J: Okay and that's what you used year round?

M: No, no, not the year around.

J: What did you use in the summer to keep things cold?

M: In the summer we used to have refrigerator. Two, one in the kitchen, one in the dining room.

J: That take the big blocks of ice?

M: Yeah blocks of ice.

J: Where did you get the blocks of ice?

M: Well they had to go to buy it. Had to get them. We knew the days that the men came around. We used to go to Dentsville and wait for them.

J: Ah okay see I didn't know this. So there was someone that had a route. He would pick it up maybe here.

M: And if he don't, if the truck doesn't come and it stopped in your house we did that all to the store and get in the store you know.

J: Did you ever make ice cream?

M: Oh yes. Yes I had an ice cream freezer, big one.

J: Was ice cream popular in Cuba when you were a little girl?

M: Oh yes. Oh a lot.

J: So you were on that farm roughly 10 years?

M: It'll be 11 something.

J: Okay and during that 10 or 11 year period you modernized it? You restored the land? Built new fences? Modernized—

M: A lot of things that my husband did that. He was the one who built the fences, built the buildings, making a stable, a bigger stable, and trail nice for the horses and the cattle. Make a whole fence for them for the sows when they were in process to have you know the babies. We used to move them some other places so they don't get too cold or something. And we had another special for mules and horses.

J: Was he happy on the farm your husband?

M: He seemed to be.

J: How was he coming with his English language?

M: Well he finally learned you know but he was not a man that he would get a book and study. He learned talking with us.

J: [Rubbed off]. Yeah but he was able to come into La Plata or Hughesville and do whatever business.

M: Oh yes he was able to talk with anybody or something. Perhaps not perfectly but he did. They did understand him well but he didn't care particular. You know like he care for his language. So he'd read the newspaper because it was English. He knew what it meant.

J: What businesses in La Plata did you know best?

M: Well now really I don't have anybody that I knew in La Plata in business. The Bowling's were the only ones that are in there the most time. But the old ones have gone.

J: What was the condition of that road between the farm and La Plata in the early 30's?

M: Not bad, not bad.

J: Hard surface?

M: Yes. No not bad and then we gave them about 25 acres of land to make the Zekiah Bridge closer, not going in the other side that they had to go. And make the road more straight to La Plata. The other one that they had to go all around and it—

J: So your farm land actually extended into the swamp?

M: Yeah into the swamp. So we gave them 25 acres of land and there was a big [sore I mean]. They didn't have to move it. And they make the bridge and it was nicer. You know that much smaller than the other one they had to make.

J: It's right—it was right where it is now. The same location.

M: That's right the same bridge.

J: When you came to Charles County did you have a family automobile?

M: No we bought one.

J: You bought one here in La Plata?

M: Yeah there was a Ford company in there. And they bought a first Ford in there. It was one of those that had—you could put the roof back you know.

J: Oh yeah touring kind. Was it a four door?

M: Yeah.

J: Alright touring car I think they called them. Cold in the winter?

M: Well sure.

J: Side curtains or windows? Or canvas?

M: No they had something to put in there. Yeah you could close it. And we didn't, you know, we didn't travel too much. The winters were harder than they are now.

J: They were harder than?

M: Yeah. The winters were harder.

J: Do you remember how many cords of wood you needed per year?

M: No. Oh I had two wood piles.

J: You just cut and cut and cut?

M: Yeah we cut trees and we had two wood piles.

J: Did the boys use a gasoline saw with a big wheel about like that?

M: Yeh. The first ones you know we had to borrow stuff but the second time don't. Of course we didn't know and we were new and nobody. Mr. Dyson used to tell my older son a lot of things but you know young boys until they found out. And then we had to carry wood up the stairs to the bedrooms to warm them too.

J: Fireplaces or wood stoves?

M: Fireplaces. And then in the middle of the night or two o'clock in the morning I had to get up and move them and put wood in them so the fire wouldn't go out and they [laughs] thanked me for the warm. And then I said, "Uh-uh. It's not warm." So we rented—we got this young man that was in the school and just graduated a couple of years before. He learned to be a farmer. I think our house was the third one that he had for putting heat in the whole house.

J: What was his name?

M: Oh I can't think of it.

J: Howard?

M: No.

J: Mr. Fowler by any chance?

M: No. [he had another name] I can, I can't think of it.

J: Did you have running water on both floors or only below?

M: No we put running water in the whole house. Up the stairs and down the stairs.

J: Did it ever freeze in real cold?

M: No. Because we had another stove, big stove for the heat and the basement was warm so it warmed the water from the you know. And warmed the basement. Never was cold enough to freeze. We didn't have no freezing pipes ever.

J: Were your winters fairly comfortable in that house?

M: Yes they were comfortable. And let me tell you that we had harder winters than we're having now you know. We had many, many days that the temperatures don't went any more than 33 or 36. Was very cold.

J: Was there ever a time—

M: There was a lot of more snow than is now too.

J: More snow too? Was there ever a time when you got so discouraged you were ready to go back to New York?

M: Once.

J: Once. How early?

M: Oh about three, four years after I was here.

J: What was the most difficult thing for you during those first three or four years? As a mother as a farm manager what gave you the greatest [difficulty]?

M: I think the most thing that I missed the most was the bathroom and that was to me something that I could not.

J: You had all outdoor?

M: All outdoors you know.

J: Until about what year? Until electricity?

M: Until about 1937 or something like that we have to you know.

J: That must have been...

M: That was the hardest time for me.

J: When did you change your wood burning stove for something more modern? Did you ever go to gas or kerosene?

M: In the stove in the farm?

J: For heating yeah and for cooking.

M: Yes I did a kerosene.

J: A kerosene.

M: I did change that but third or fourth year because I need to can. And sometimes they used to have the stove for cooking or doing something and I could not can. And that make me stay until three, four o'clock in the morning watching the other stove and I couldn't sleep. So I saw that it was impossible to do.

J: Was the wood burning stove more uncomfortable in the hot weather when you were canning say in July or August?

M: Yes. Yes but it was more uncomfortable in heat but it was more comfortable in what I was doing than the kerosene. See because I could move my pots easier in the top of the stove than I could on the kerosene one.

J: That's true was the kerosene a three or four burner?

M: Three.

J: Three so you'd be constantly shifting the pots? Yeah I've seen it.

M: Yes. And then the freedom you know moving. I was not satisfied with it.

J: Well when—what caused you to feel that it was time to leave the farm? What circumstance?

M: What?

J: What caused your decision to leave the farm? You say your sons were moving away.

M: Yeah my sons were getting married going away getting other jobs. I saw that I could not have that help. The house was too big for me and I don't want to get people from outside inside because it was too much trouble. And then my husband was no use to put him because he could not do it so he didn't want to do it. So he didn't want to do it. So you know when he didn't have any more work to do I didn't know what I was going to do. And then I thought you know it was better. It happens that the fellow that was in business with me you know died.

J: O'Connor?

M: Yeah. He got pneumonia and heart attack and he was brought to Baltimore and was there with his sister and I went up there to see him. And we tried, you know, I tried to help them in that time and all that but he died. He passed away. So and then after that I had to give them half of the farm.

J: Oh I see. It was a company all these years, partnership?

M: Yes partnership. Only that he was not here.

J: Where did he live most of those years?

M: Those years he lived in New York and he was a man that a great big company of copper had him for many years. You know and he and they don't want him to go. And the farm was not hardly established yet to pay for his [knee] and you know things. Well he did not want to come.

J: Did he ever visit you on the farm after it got going?

M: Yes every year he used to come.

J: Was he appreciative of what you had done?

M: Oh yes, oh yes, everything and he was very, very good. And he had another fellow that used to come with him. You know and the two of them take vacations together. Take two weeks and eat well and feel well and enjoy the farm. Well he was only a spring, summer, and fall you know. And they used to come and spend two weeks with us. And then after that when he died the other fellow used to come and stayed with me one year on the farm and then when we sold the farm I bought another property in the western section and I made a house. The property had a little three room house on it. So I made a house in there. I put all conveniences.

J: What near what town was it? On what road?

M: Oh it was in the road that goes to Indian Head and it was in front of the house of Mr. Linton [store]. Mr. Linton had a store in there. And I bought the house, a little three room house. We could fit in there but I built the home.

J: Near Mr. Linton's store? Over near Nanjemoy?

M: Yeah but Mr. Linton's store is not there anymore. He sold it and his son sold off the land.

J: I think his son built a house near where the store was, near where his grandfather was.

M: He built a house but he sold the house too.

J: Oh really?

M: That's what they tell me. I don't know I haven't seen them anymore.

J: Was it hard to leave the farm?

M: In a way yes but when I sold the farm you know I was getting older. And I had to work too hard and I felt like I just couldn't keep doing what I did. And then I went to work in Indian Head.

J: Oh did you?

M: Yes.

J: What year did you sell the farm? 43?

M: 43 yeah.

J: Okay so at that time you were about 40 years old?

M: No I was 41.

J: 41. Enough of canning?

M: No. And then you know I. Things have changed quite a lot in there because I went to work. I was making more money in Indian Head than I could make on the farm. And see I don't—you see I didn't can, nobody canned. You see I don't manage the property nobody managed the property. You see I didn't have an heir for the plantation or the tobacco. Nobody wanted it. And

at the same time people was going off to work up there and then they don't want to work for the salaries that they pay on the farm. So the farmer's found themselves that they didn't have people with what to work. And my children were all getting married and going that way. And the war broke out and then they had to go to the war and then I didn't have them in home. So you know I could not—

J: And your daughter married about this time? Frances 1941 roughly.

M: Yeah. So all of them got married and they left me and I don't—I couldn't do it anymore.

J: Was Mr. Estevez kind of happy to leave the farm?

M: Well I don't know if he was happy. Well you see Mr. Estevez had a very good life because he was not the one who was having the headaches. He was not the one who—he tells me, "I need this and I need that." And I'd do this and I'd do that. And I'd look for the money or do whatever I had to do and he looked to me.

J: So you were the pusher? The provider.

M: Yeah I was the pusher. Yeah and then—

J: The energizer.

M: I was the pusher for both of them because the other one too asked me what you know what you'd [plug] this morning and this and, you know, this and that. And how much would we get for this, and how much would we for that?

J: What did you do at Indian head? What kind of work?

M: I was...how do I explain to you. I was working in a work that was very important because I had to measure the differences in the language you know for knowing how long a bullet can go or a thing can drop or a shot can go. So I had to work. I worked in shop 23. 22 I mean 22. Where they made the ballistics department.

J: Oh I see so you were involved in some mathematics? Where did you get the background for the mathematics?

M: Well you know I was—I learned to be a teacher when I was a young woman.

J: And you still had the skill? You remembered—

M: Well I don't know if I can do it now you know it's impossible because how old do you think I am?

J: Well I know when you were born. You just told me yeah but I think it's amazing that—

M: I made just 89 years not very long ago.

J: That's amazing but after all those years in 1943 you were able to go to work and do a job.

M: Yeah.

J: That'd be demanding that required that precise thinking.

M: I know. I know. I know see.

J: So you built a new little house over near Nanjemoy—

M: Yes mhm and it was real nice. I built seven rooms in there and then I built a new well and a new hen house. And I went back to raise chickens for food because in those days you could not buy meat.

J: Oh no more hogs eh?

M: No. No not only that but the war you know was taking all the meat. There was no meat. You had to raise yours.

J: When you moved Mrs. Estevez did you take any of your canned goods with you? You must have had jars and jars and jars.

M: Whatever I had. Oh no but you cannot keep them any more than 15 or 16 months. If you keep them more the time you run the risk that you—probably they are not good. And you had to wash—

J: Especially the meat was a problem.

M: You had to watch out for that. But you know I knew all that so I didn't do any more than I could.

J: I know one thing I forgot to ask you about preserving meat. What was the best system you found to preserve pork and make hams? Did you have your own—

M: Hams?

J: Yeah how did you make hams?

M: No I have a book and I went by the book.

J: Ah okay what book was this now?

M: I don't remember.

J: Did you make your own bacon?

M: Yes. I make everything from there.

J: Sausage?

M: Everything. Sausage, bacon, ham, pork.

J: What seasoning did you put in the sausage?

M: Well I put some seasoning in like they put in Spain.

J: Okay I was wondering if you did carry that over.

M: Yes a little bit.

J: Was it a little hotter than American sausage?

M: No, no, no.

J: What—some different herbs?

M: Oh only one that I used to put a little bit of one spice that they call oregano and they don't put it in here.

J: Oregano? I love. I put it in everything I cook, stews.

M: I used to put oregano and it was [alright] but they don't like it here.

J: I love it. It's becoming more popular and sage some pepper.

M: A little bit yeah. The regular ones. But I used to mix a little bit of oregano. And a lot of things that I cook then I go and I put some spices. Some Spanish spices you know. You would find Spanish spices in my kitchen you know.

J: You enjoyed the kitchen type work, creating?

M: Sometimes. I don't eat very much spices but I like some of them. Have better taste I find.

J: I understand you came back to La Plata later. When did you leave the little house out in Nanjemoy?

M: Well what happened in Nanjemoy was that my husband wanted to go back to build homes.

J: Ah still had it in his blood.

M: And then I was tired of pulling so much and I was beginning to get an [age] too. And then after I didn't work in Indian Head anymore I went to Washington, DC looking for a job.

J: Now when the war ended did that end your job at Indian Head?

M: Yes, yes, sure it had to be.

J: A lot of them yeah.

M: Because I was working for shoots, for all kinds of shooting you know. The distance, needs measuring the distance. So you know I had to do all those things and I don't want to tell you but this sounds funny but I was the star calculator. I was a calculator and I was the star. Shop 22 star. And they used to bring the lots that they thought that they need require more care put it in my table and say here this you fix this one.

J: You feel good about that. I would. You should be proud.

M: So you know when the job stopped I thought I had to do something and I had bought that house and I had made the, you know, building and made seven rooms in there. Plus the three rooms it had.

J: So you worked in Indian Head for about three years or a little less maybe?

M: Yeah something like that.

J: And you were driving from your home?

M: Three or four years yeah.

J: Okay so when did you actually arrive back in La Plata.

M: Well I arrived back in La Plata because my house. My husband wanted to build a home. He never learned to drive [inaudible].

J: Where did you build this house in La Plata?

M: Right here. Not very far away.

J: Walking distance from here?

M: You know is my house was—well you know what in there the great big brown house that used to be this and dentist?

J: So Dr. Blue's office for a while.

M: Somerset Street.

J: Yes I know where it is.

M: Number three was my house. My husband said that he wanted to come to La Plata. He wanted to stay in La Plata. He didn't want to be living here and living there. He couldn't drive nowhere so you know.

J: He wanted a place to get out and walk around.

M: I was not working in Indian Head. I was not working in Washington see. I was not working in any place but my home. So I said "Well I don't care. Build a house." So he build a house in here and—

J: Was he happy when he was doing something like that?

M: I don't know.

J: Achieving something.