

Interviewer: Tell me when and where you were born?

I was born in the northern part of Spain, Province Navarra, in a little village named Gorriti. I was born in 1948, I went to school there and in 1966 I decided to come to the United States.

Interviewer: Were you born in a hospital or at home?

I don't know, my mother never told me that.

Interviewer: What was your country like?

My country is very beautiful, mountains, summer is very green, rains alot, that is why it is stays pretty. Where we live is about 90 meters, 2700 feet from the ocean level.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to come here in 1966?

The main reason was the dollars. I am very ambitious. My intention was to come here, stay a few years, earn some money, then go back and start a business.

Interviewer: What were your first impressions when you came to Rock Springs?

I came here on October 14, 1966. First I would like to say it was an experience in a way. They sent me like a package. They had the address hanging on my coat, that is where they put it on my first flight with the address to Rock Springs, Wyoming. I was somewhat embarrassed to hang that on my pocket, so I put in on the inside of my pocket. Each time when I had to change the flight, or the direction I had to go to, I was showing that. That is how I came like a package. I flew to Salt Lake City, and from there I came here on the bus.

The first impression on October 14, on that particular day there were about eight to ten inches of snow in Rock Springs and it was terrible. I thought I was getting into one of the worst places. If I would have had the money, I would turn around and go back, but I didn't have no money, I was stuck here. That was my first impression, and the second thing was the following day I had a four o'clock in the morning breakfast and they took me to the ranch, and I thought I was going in the pickup forever, because I never was used to the open spaces and distance. It took three hours to get to the ranch and I thought that was outrageous.

Interviewer: Since your talking about the ranch, was that your first employment here?

Yes. That was the only employment I could get. That was for Magagna Bros.

Interviewer: What were the conditions like working on the ranch? What did you actually do on that job?

First, I tended to run around with the foreman, helping with the shipping for about 30 days, and then they put me in the sheep camp in the dessert. They put me with a guy from Mexico, and giving me the condition to stay with this guy for a couple of months and then they were going to put me with my brother who was already here. That is how I started it.

Interviewer: Did you stick with your brother after you were with this other gentleman?

I stayed with my brother about another six months or so and then, the management decided to take me and train me for a foreman position. So, I was one of the luckiest persons. For six or seven months, I don't remember exactly, I first learned how to drive, second they trained me how to be a foreman, by eighteen or nineteen years old I was foreman managing the outside operation.

Interviewer: What were your wages back then?

When I first came here my contract was for \$225. a month with room and board being paid by my employer.

Interviewer: Was any of the work you did dangerous?

No, not if I didn't push the danger myself. It was a good company to work for.

Interviewer: How many hours did you work in a day and in a week? Did you work long hours?

We never worked by the hour. It was daylight to dark. In the winter was shorter days than in the summer, but we never ended the day until dark. We were up early seven days a week. The first seven months I was here, I didn't even come to town.

Interviewer: Was that pretty hard?

It was somewhat lonely, you get used to it.

Interviewer: When you were on the ranch did you come to town for groceries, or did they bring them out to you?

When I was at the camp, the foreman used to bring twice or three times a week the groceries and supplies we needed. He brought grain for horses and in winter grain for the sheep and all that. When I became foreman, then I was in town. I lived in town in the winter, going out everyday in a different direction to different camps. My position to

other foreman was mainly to give the supplies to the men of the camp, and direct them where to go. Also, I counted the sheep once a week or every ten days to know if we had lost any sheep so we knew where to look for them.

Interviewer: When you were foreman, how did you handle the language situation because you didn't speak English when you came to this country?

No, I didn't know any language at all.

Interviewer: How did you learn it?

I was somewhat forced. I used to take classes in the evenings at the college and also privately. There was a program, the Right to Read Program, at that time, I think they still have it. That helped me alot. There were some hard times, I used to go to the store and point out the groceries I needed, the cases. Those guys somewhat laughed at me, but I always was able to get what I needed, load up, sign the ticket, and take it away.

As far as resturants, we used to have at that time the New Grand which was quite an active place. We used to have an account there and early in the morning we would go to breakfast and in the evening I would eat there. I learned quite quickly to order ham and eggs in the morning, and chicken in the evening, that went along for three or four months and I was forced to take a dictionary in my pocket to start ordering different things because I got sick and tired of eating those same meals every day.

Interviewer: Did you have holidays off?

No, we had for the holidays an additional ham or something special to cook and a little celebration in the camp. That was all.

Interviewer: After you finished working for Magagana's where did you work?

After I finished working with Magagana's I bought the business, which was the Butcher Shop. I worked there for several years. I would like to tell you a little bit about that. When I went into that business, I was looking at business, no matter what kind of business. That was the only business I could afford to get in. When I went to talk to the previous owner, he indicated I didn't know anything about meat cutting or anything. He didn't think it was a good idea for me to start out looking into the business. So, he discouraged me there. The following day I went back to see if I could work for nothing for a week. So I went to work Monday morning to work for nothing for one week. By Friday, I bought the place. From then on, I had a verbal

agreement with him, he would have to show me in about 90 days, that was one of the conditions. Late in the fall when I took the business, it was in the downcycle and about 30 day after I bought the business we didn't have any business. I told him I would have to lay him off, because the business couldn't support both of us and I'm going to have to fire my own. That is how I started in the business.

I did that business for three years and then I opened another store in Green River. That was more a specialty store, delicatessen, grocery and all that besides the meat shop. I ran both of them for two additional years and then I sold them.

Interviewer: Was it too hectic, is that why you sold them?

No, I got more in motels and other investments. I got away from the store business.

Interviewer: Do you still have the motels and other investments?

Yes, I still have some of it.

Interviewer: From there did you go to your present position?

Well, I did some other activities for the time being from 1980 to 1987 actually. When the economy went down, the rental and the real estate was really down, I had to do something else and that was when I decided to do the car sales.

Interviewer: Do you like selling cars?

Yes, I really like working with the people. I thought when I first went to work there it was going to be temporary. It turned out to be alot better than I expected, it is alot more lucrative than I expected. It has been good for me.

Interviewer: Do you belong to a church here in Rock Springs?

Catholic church. Most of the Basque community is catholic.

Interviewer: When you were growing up in Spain, what kind of games did you play as a child?

I did alot of running, handball, outside sports, I played things like that. The moment we were able to lift the ball, we start playing, we played alot of soccer. Those were the main games in school.

Interviewer: Where did you go do school and what was the classroom atmosphere like? Did you go right there in your village?

Yes, I went there most of the time, except the last two years I went to Pomplona and stayed out in Pomplona for some special classes.

Interviewer: Was Pomplona like a high school or college?

It was pretty much like going from a high school to a college.

Interviewer: I have heard you talk about the bull run in Pomplona, would you like to say a little about that?

It is one of the traditions that has been there for a long time. That originally was to transfer the bulls from the corrals where they were kept prior to the fight. That is exactly what it is now. As far as people getting in the street they can somewhat before or after as part of the game, it has been there for many, many years. It is dangerous, but it is a tradition. It is not as dangerous as they make everybody believe on the TV or when you see it. They have guards in front of the bulls, and if anybody is with too many drinks, they do pull them out. Most people there are able to run and able to defend themselves.

Interviewer: Have you participated in the bull run?

No, I never ran. I have watched many times, but I have never run. The most dangerous part is going in the arena, in the doorway, especially during the week-end, there are too many people. People get piled up or drunk and get run over by other people.

Interviewer: When you were a child were you expected to do chores around the house?

Not only chores, we did alot of work during the depression and during the war. We came from a big family and we were pretty poor, not to compare, we were never hungry, but we were quite poor. The older brothers as they were getting fourteen and fifteen years old were getting out to earn some money in the timber, construction, factory, or whatever. I was in the middle and we had to carry the farm work with our parents. We always had somewhat heavy work being in the livestock, taking care of the livestock after school or before school and weekends.

This is one big difference I see in this culture compared to that, at that time especially. People learn to take responsibilities and handle heavy work at a younger age in Spain than in the United States.

Interviewer: How were your birthdays celebrated in Spain?

Over there they used to celebrate the name mainly, rather than the birthday. So the saint's name is where they usually celebrated. Now, lately they are going back to the birthday over there also.

Interviewer: Do they have presents like we do here in this country?

No, usually it is a gathering of people together and they have a good dinner and a good celebration that way. They just enjoyed each other.

Interviewer: How is Christmas celebrated?

Christmas is like a party celebration, but the King's day, January 5th night, that is when Santa Claus used to bring the presents. Children have to stay in bed, in the morning the presents were there. Tradition is to put a shoe out in the window and the king's came to the window and put a present in each one's shoe.

Interviewer: What kind of presents did they get? Is it anything like in this country?

No, it was something they needed very much or some treats or some candy.

Interviewer: When you were a young man, did you date?

Yes, I used to date. Usually with the music with the dance on Sunday afternoon celebration. As a young man, I used to help the girl to her house.

Interviewer: What did your family do for fun, or did you ever go on a vacation?

Not really, most of the time it was work. Fun was on Sunday celebration, and then in the summer they have festivals from June to September. Almost every weekend there are festivals and we were able to get out more at this time of year. We used to go to our uncles or aunts house and play with our cousins and stay there for two or three days, this was a big treat.

Interviewer: You came from a big family and I know you have two children of your own. Can you tell me about them?

The oldest one's name is Santos, he was named after my father, his grandfather. My youngest boy is Mike, Michael. I am really proud of them they are really good boys. They are good students. They are active in sports, they are playing basketball right now, and on weekends they ski.

Interviewer: Are your children maintaining the Basque language?

No, unfortunately I was not able to manage that. They do speak some Spanish. Hopefully, they will develop more on that.

Interviewer: What role have the Basques played in the development of Rock Springs?

Mainly, I would say ranching. I think the general public has the opinion that ranching is low life. I completely disagree with that. I said several times while I was doing that. You work with a life, animals are life. It is not like machinery, you park it and you turn off with a key for the weekend. The livestock, even though they don't talk, they have their mind, and you have to be aware of what they are going to do, how to feed them, and if you don't keep them well fed and satisfied, they take actions with the weather change. They try to run away. It's a life. In general, the American people don't know what the livestock life is. You work with life, we used to treat them like people. I think if you research why most of the Basque are so successful in the livestock, it is they know how to take care of them. Before we came here, in a little farm we had ten or twelve cows, four or five pigs, hundred head of sheep and raised a family of ten. We never were hungry. We were not living in luxury, but at that time we didn't miss anything. It tells you where the value comes for the life. They really take care of those animals daily, or hourly. If they have any illness, they take care of them. The veterinarians are just as busy as the doctors, and probably do just as much money. Why is it? Because they support the families. That is one thing I found out about this culture, even today, I get comments about being a sheepherder. I have great answers for them. I have experiences they have never had and I'm proud of them.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea how many Basque people are here in Rock Springs?

Are you talking about relations, married to, or associated to? I would say mainly, between Rock Springs and Green River we probably have somewhere between all of them, three and four hundred.

Interviewer: Do you know why some of them came to Rock Springs? Was it like you, mostly for the money?

Mainly, it was for the money. I think, even the older generation came here for the money. The older generation also came to get away from the war and for the opportunity. Our generation it was for the outlet open to come to herd sheep and the contract, the three year contract. Dollars

change (exchange rate), if we calculate it for that area, it was quite a bit of money and we were encouraged.

Interviewer: I know you helped form the Basque Organization for Sweetwater County. Can you tell me about this organization?

Yes, this is what we call the Basque Club. It is the Hikartasuna Southwestern Basque Club. Prior to that, we did some activities one time of the year having dinners and dances. From there, we decided to form the club. I did quite a bit of work on that which has been pretty active. This is the first year since we formed the club that we did quite a few things, and we expect to do alot more.

Interviewer: You also formed the Basque Dancers didn't you?

I started it, yes. The group is a little better than ever right now. It is a good group. Another person is the instructor right now.

Interviewer: When you came in tonight, you were telling me about a Basque Choir.

Yes, we do have a Basque Choir. We sing the Mass. Mainly we get involved with the Mass and other songs.

Interviewer: How many people are in the Basque Choir?

Sometimes we have fifteen to twenty, most of the time about fifteen.

Interviewer: Do you sing in Basque?

Yes, we sing in Basque. Some songs we sing in English.

Interviewer: Do most of the people in the choir know how to speak Basque?

They understand, alot know the Basque language. Some we have to practice alot, the words to be able to sing.

Interviewer: I know you taught a course in the Basque Language at Western Wyoming College. What prompted you to do that?

That idea was mainly from my class where my teachers from the Right to Read Program ask me to teach the culture and the language. The reason behind this was when I came here, even two to three years after, there wasn't any Basque activities, not even just getting together. The first was the teaching of the language and the culture. After this

class we had a party, which was the first Basque activity with fifty to sixty people. This was also the beginning of the Basque festival, what we call now, and it is a yearly thing.

I also had a little radio program which I thought guys and girls needed something on their culture. I used to have a half-hour program on KRKK station on Sunday afternoon for a couple of years. Somehow, we kind of got away from this, but every since then it has been developing (the Basque Community) and right now we are more together, we know each other, whoever lives here. I think the general public is more aware of the Basque nationality.

Interviewer: How do most of the Basque people percieve Rock Springs. Do they like it here?

Most when they first came thought it was really desolate country. I think the same thing that happens to everybody else, it grows on you. One thing, if we wern't happy, we wouldn't stay here. We are pretty willful, or decisive nationality. If we don't like it, we don't stay. It is really goofy, I really like it. It has very friendly people and many opportunities.

Interviewer: Can you name some of the more prominent Basque families here in Rock Springs and what they do?

I think that probably the generations that are well established here are the Arambel's, Erramouspe's, Carricaburu's, Jauregui's, Larrabaster's. Some I don't have as much association with like the Gutierrez', Etcheverry's, several others, and I guess the Savala's. They are pretty much all ranchers or business people.

Interviewer: Do the Basque people have a real interest in education? They are interested in educating their children arn't they?

Yes, they really want an education for their children. You'll find out here and over most of the United States the second generation, even third and on down, where the children are born here, most are really well educated. Alot are professionals, like attorneys and engineers. Many are in Boise, Idaho where there are more established communities.

Interviewer: Which political party did you support and why?

Do I have to talk about this?

Interviewer: Narrator hesitant about talking about this. I told him he didn't need to discuss it.

Interviewer: Do you vote?

This year I didn't. I was too busy at work and somehow I missed registration. I regret on the election day that I didn't vote. Previously, I did. Since I became a citizen, I vote everytime.

Interviewer: How long were you here before you became a citizen?

I was here about eight years. The first three years I had to work under the contract. I was only allowed to work on the sheep ranch and operation, I couldn't do any other work. Then during that time, I became resident with a green card, by the time I took the resident card, I was ready to take citizenship. I did my studies, histories, and everything I needed. I was already to take the test and I found out I had to wait 5 years. I had to be a resident of the United States for 5 years to become a citizen. In 1975 I became a citizen.

Interviewer: What is your best memory, either the funniest of the saddest of Sweetwater County?

I have a good memory of the summers, being up in the mountains having a great days, I don't call that not working, but really enjoying working. Every summer when I go camping, I feel back home, it is great.

The saddest I think was when I first came here, my family was on the other side of the ocean. Being so far away from my family, especially during the holidays, it was hard to take. It was some deep sadness on my inside. I have to admit the best thing was getting married, and worst was getting divorced. I enjoyed greatly being in the business. I enjoy growing up and doing well. I learned alot when I was having a hard time. I found out a person learns alot more when you are having a hard time than when you are having a good time.

Interviewer: How has Sweetwater County changed from the time you came and the way it is now?

The growth has been tremendous. I would never have speculated that would happen in this area. I came in 1966 and at that time Rock Springs had seven or eight thousand people and now there is over twenty thousand. To watch that progress was quite interesting. I had years between 1972 and 1975 I couldn't hardly stand it because I could see opportunities to progress and I could see everything and I was still working on the ranch and because I was foreman I felt obligated. I was well paid for my position, but I also knew I was missing out on the progress. I had a hard time

staying there, a couple of years I stayed because of loyalty to the company.

Interviewer: Would you like to say anything about the Basques or your family that we haven't covered?

All I can say is this is the greatest country. Whoever complains here in this country, I would say, is because they are spoiled. There is no other country like this. If anyone would have an idea of how other places live like, they would have a greater appreciation. I have a great appreciation for Sweetwater County, or United States, however you want to put it. This is the only country I'm in. It has been great for me and I appreciate it.

As far as the language, it takes a little while. In the beginning it was tough, the worst part was in my mind. I didn't doubt my intelligence as much as everyone else did, but I don't blame the people, the people are good here. Sometimes you don't know if they are talking back to you, or when they come smiling or laughing, if they have a laugh you don't know why they are laughing. I didn't know if they were making fun of me, but I made it.