

M: I guess you're [??] at the plant – was it Gold Plains? – in Salem. That led to bigger and better things for you, though.

H: It did, one of the things I did is, we had a [??] contract for the labor force, the mushroom plant. Senator Aubrey Day was the Secretary Treasurer. We had the opportunity to learn a lot from him, as well as I [??] people at San Francisco, because we were owned by **Castle and Quick(?)**, we were a multi-international employer, with operations all over the world, and learned a lot about the labor relation side of human resource management. They offered an opportunity to go to the corporate office to work for the labor relations department in San Francisco, and I took a month on it, and I had a great time, I learned a lot, and we dealt with probably 24 different union contracts, or 24 different unions with about 37+ different contracts. So I had the opportunity to deal with everything from union elections and campaigns to contract administration, arbitrations, **decertifications(?)**, organizing, you name it. I loved it. It was great.

M: So it was an exciting time for you.

H: It was, because I also had the opportunity to literally slow down and negotiate a contract several times with Cesar Chavez, the president founder of United Farmworkers' Union, [???], and-

[pause from 1:07:12 to 1:07:29] **Part two begins here**

[loops back to beginning of recording, same playback as earlier in the recording until 1:07:54 where it pauses into silence again]

[silence from 1:07:54 to 1:08:25]

H: Yep.

M: Continuation of the interview with Hector Hinojosa, March 15. So you're having a good time.

H: I did, I loved it.

M: Did you mind being a management representative when you were, or were you?

H: No, I actually didn't, because (I loved it)... because one of the things that management was missing [was] the community base, that public service side of citizenship to be with. You've heard the term called corporate citizenship, well, that's really one-sided. I was able to bring my previous background from dealing with disadvantage and handicap and how to quickly assess a student's needs in the matter of a thirty minute interview and find what resources they need and get them to the right people for assistance or whatever. All those skills and guidance and counseling to bring to the table and incorporate that into the labor relations side of the business where I have been a former migrant seasonal farm worker and now I'm representing the [??] in negotiating union contracts for terms and

conditions of employment. It was just the easiest transition for me; I loved it! I found that the employer was missing that perspective of the employee. Had no concept of housing issues; no concept, even though they were compensation specialists, had no idea the impact of minimum wage and poverty level guidelines or any of that.

M: So you were able to...

H: I was able to [snaps] fill those gaps in and close it up and negotiate a contract in no time at all. I was able to troubleshoot issues, labor issues in the fields, as well as camps or employment or in the packinghouse or whatever. And then employer didn't have that and I had that background so it was great for me. I loved it.

M: And did you think that because of the skills you had and your own background that you were able to get the employer to be more sensitive to the conditions of other workers?

H: Absolutely, there's a lot of, some of our operations that were non-union, I was able to do employee handbooks and policies and benefits before even a union showed up to organize, and there was no need to. The employer was able to take my advice and counsel on the [??] on some of those issues, and some of our facilities, were, quite frankly, better off in terms of employee benefits and compensation, time off, seniority recognition, promotions, all of that, in a non-union environment. We were able to do a lot of restructuring that way and had lots of success stories from those. It was a lot of fun; I really enjoyed that side of the business.

M: Ah. And then you went on to work... you worked for ten years for **Castle and Quick**?

H: Yes. We ended up, went through and learned a lot from this one, we went through a very hostile takeover, who is the current owner, and literally shut down the operation in San Francisco and relocated what was left of some 350 or more corporate folks and 50 of us received an invitation to go to Los Angeles to a new corporate office. I was fortunate enough to receive one of those invitations, I sure wasn't [?], I wanted to come back to Oregon. I only left here for two or three years to learn labor relations. The company had decided to get into a citrus business, oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes, and they were starting a new division and were asking me if I would be a part of that group, as a director of human resources. I decided to take it, and did that for about four years.

M: This was [??] Citrus?

H: No, that's still [???] corporate goals and it wasn't... So I did that for about four years and literally starting learning about acquisitions and divestitures and contracts [??] and purchasing [??] my own property, and leases and that kind of stuff, being part of the top management team and developing the company. When I left, they were probably doing \$128 million a year or some part in revenues, and had acquired about twelve different

packing houses, and from Florida to Arizona, and Southern and Central California, and I enjoyed that part of the business as well. I did that about four years.

M: Then you weren't to work the [??] after that?

H: I did, I left and went to work for **Pearmont Citrus(?)**.

M: Why would you make that move?

H: I was getting lots of phone calls for consulting work, actually. To help out in some of the other competitors, and found that before I know it, there was a lot more money to be made out there. I decided to take the plunge and expand out after ten wonderful years of learning from **Castle and Quick**, they were really good to me. They literally took me from zero experience to full confident HR person. In labor relations and employee benefits. They provided me with training to train the trainer. So I'm a trained organizational development person and so next thing I knew was that I was getting lots of phone calls for employment opportunities and one of them was just too sweet to pass up, so I left.

M: But you only worked for them for a couple of years?

H: [??] a couple years, and then went off on my own as a consultant because the phone calls kept coming in and the offers kept getting better and better. I went off on my own as a human resource consultant and I've been doing that for about eight years now.

M: So you're still an employed –

H: I am, I'm off on my own as an independent contractor and hire myself out in human resource management, training, labor, employee benefits, policies and procedures. That's what I do for work.

M: I understand you're on the board of Virginia Garcia Clinic.

H: I am, that's still one of my pride and joys, the Virginia Garcia Memorial House Center. The little girl Virginia Garcia was one of my students while I was a director of the Migrant Health Center, and a migrant kid, of the summer program. Can I take a break?

M: Sure.

[cuts to when he comes back]

M: So you were saying that you knew Virginia Garcia.

H: The little girl, yes, I was the director for the migrant ed program that summer in 1975, and she came to our center. I think she was probably six years old and became ill in her home or outreach, took her home to the parents, were living in a migrant camp, I believe. The next news we had was that she had passed away. Out of that, a lot of horror stories

came out, the lack of attention, the lack of treatment to because of insurance, because of the language [??], and all kinds of horror stories that we quickly realized, "If we don't do something about this in our community, then this can happen to a lot of other folks." Again, through [??], like, people like José Garcia, Sunny Montez, and some of that community support, the network of people I was telling you about, we began – oh, Jaime as well – all these folks were able to come together, put their resources together, Garza did have the skills to write the proposals and set up partnerships with St. Vincent's Hospital to Tuality Hospital, and literally began the process of funding health services for migrants. We were trying to close a gap of the barriers of the language and insurance and so on, and sensitivity to concerns of migrants that were farm workers who live under migrant camp conditions, who can contribute to health or bad health, in some cases. We were able to address all these needs, and that time, the only facility we had was Centro Cultural, and we were about to put in an electronics assembly, it has a three car garage, in a contract with, I believe it was Tektronix. We decided to scratch that one, move that some place else and put in the clinic, in a three-car garage with Centro Cultural. We had a first doctor and nurse, his name was Malcolm, I believe, Dr. Malcolm. Maria Garza was one of the [??] Verde, one of the nurses, a registered nurse. And that's how we started, a three-car garage.

M: So you were there at the very beginning. Very involved in it yourself, huh?

H: Yes, and today, it's just about to complete the [??] of a full city block. A full [??] clinic and [??] and [??] care and outreach and just an [??] clinic here in Hillsboro side out in Yamhill County. Our little crowd that's a center over there for our community.

M: It's serving the larger Hispanic community or just the migrant community?

H: No, it's serving the larger. The majority is still... I think 1999 statistics showed 85% are still Hispanic, 84% are limited English speaking, 7% are white, 7% were unreported, 1% Asian, we're probably in the neighborhood of serving some 9000 patients per year, give or take. And I'm still looking forward to growing and developing, like I said, that city block will eventually be developed. We now have a fundraising foundation separate from the center to the purposes of just fundraising private money, so we still have a lot of federal state grant money that we can now utilize for some other things that we need, from purchasing a property and a [??] you name it. It's very limited resources so we're hoping to get private grants and monies to come into, to be able to use those monies where we need them to develop the full center.

M: What year was it that Virginia Garcia became ill and died?

H: It was 1975, so we had just celebrated our 25th year, because it was July, in fact I think it was July 4th or 5th, somewhere around there. We did the celebration, the community was celebrating the 4th of July and we were celebrating the opening of a migrant house center.

M: How long did it take after that to get it up and running?

H: That same year. The community came together and it was unbelievable. People wouldn't believe that you could start a health center within months. Her death was probably, I'm going to go out on a limb here and say June. By July we got something up and running, these people were pretty fast. Thank goodness to the efforts of strong leadership and development that we were able to get things going.

M: And who were some of the movers and shakers?

H: José Garcia...

M: And he has no relation to Virginia, right?

H: Right, no relation. José Jaime, **Salimontes**, Father Beezer, Father **Franconusco**, I could just go on and on with the people who, besides our laymen like us, the Hinojosas, the Hernandezes, the Garzas, the [???], the Vasquez, they just jumped in and any [??] at the county fair to whatever it took to begin the process and develop it. It was very interesting.

M: You started in the very beginning under the wing of your Centro, to some extent?

H: Yes. [?????]. I had the opportunity to do another migrant health center and that was in Woodburn, the Centro [??] was also a fully funded migrant health center. When I was working at the mushroom plant for [??] in Salem, I also served on that board. My mom and dad were members of the Virginia Garcia board, and I was a member of the [???] board down at Woodburn. The interest for migrant health has always been within the family. I have cousins that have also served on the board in [???] and [????] and we had another center over there.

M: It's remarkable that the community was able to spawn not only Centro, but also Virginia Garcia Clinic and be so successful with both. It's quite amazing. I guess you were probably in Eugene, maybe, at the time, that Centro got the federal funding for its present center.

H: Yes, I was, well at that time I was California. It's a beautiful center now. I had the opportunity to head a small contract for the employment office here and provided supervisory training for some of the private industry companies that employ Hispanics that have basically come up with ranks and are now sitting in crew leader or supervisor positions and so I was able to conduct supervisory training in English and Spanish [??] Centro Cultural. Those were the dreams back then, that you'd be able to do those kinds of things, [??????] a couple of weeks ago, and he had a partnership set up with the Department of Motor Vehicles, Centro Cultural and the sheriff's office – it was a three-way partnership – and we were able to provide educational classes and we made it to the Department of Motor Vehicle Regulations. He ran a classroom full of participants. They do so many other things that I don't even know all the things that they do, from teaching English to

limited English speakers to teaching to Spanish to people who want to learn Spanish, you name it, and it's just wonderful, the resource center that it's become.

M: Back to Virginia Garcia, just for a minute. So you started off originally in that space that was going to be the electronics manufacturing space. You mentioned that you grabbed some grants and stuff along the way, but in the beginning, it sounds like it was pretty grassroots.

H: It was very grassroots, our biggest partner collaborator was St. Vincent's Hospital, and the [??] also the Providence Hospital, Tuality Hospital, they all responded immediately.

M: In what way?

H: Both in funding and staffing, equipment.

M: So that's where some of the doctors and nurses came from?

H: Yes. Medical corps, these [??]

M: [????] from hospitals then?

H: Yes, we had a great response to the need for... because they were dealing with some of these patients from the emergency room to doctors' visits with no..... without culturally competent staff to effectively communicate and deal with that population, without the cultural competence and understanding the culture, the Mexican folk medicine, if you would, to dealing with migrant seasonal farm workers who were exposed to pesticides and residues that normally they didn't deal with, to disparities in health care that were much greater in the migrant seasonal farmer population than the norm. There were [????] that came with it, everything from diabetes to you-name-it that were higher than the norm nationwide or otherwise. The need was there, everybody saw it and everybody knew it, and it was just, unfortunately it took the death of this child to realize. We needed to move and do something. It was not just the community support and the leadership and the network that we had developed that pulled it off, but that the health industry did respond in the end. They came through and responded with what they knew was a disparity that existed in the system with that particular target group and so they were able to respond. We were really pretty impressed with their support.

M: Sounds pretty remarkable. Were Virginia Garcia's parents on the scene at all?

H: During that time, they were. They left and are pretty much lost to history after that if they continue to migrate back and forth. I know that now they're in central United States, I think. I don't think they've come for several years now. I know that we tried to invite them for the 25th anniversary and they were interested in coming, I don't think that they made it, and that was last year. That was the last time that I had heard from them.

M: They were involved in the efforts to set up the clinic, at all?

H: Well, they were to an extent that we used them as the memorial of their child. They were migrant seasonal farm workers. They certainly didn't understand what we were trying to do in regards to establishing a health center, and certainly not to that extent. I don't even think our **dreams(?)** were to that extent at that point. Now we dream beyond even what we have, so where they fit into the picture, I don't remember to what extent.

M: Now, [???] questions, I wonder if there's anything else you'd like to say about Centro or Virginia Garcia or any other part of your life that we haven't talked about.

H: Oh my goodness, I guess one way to tie it all together would be that I've been blessed with the opportunity to learn and experience... have experiences that have been [??] delivered to my [??], an opportunity to learn and develop that, wherever I can put that to good use is the most rewarding thing for me. Growing from being a victim of discrimination to growing beyond the development of affirmative action programs to help assets of the under[??]ization of unemployment to developing culturally competent and [??] programs in private industry that want a social [??] and so I was just so thankful that we've come such a long way, and yet we still are not there yet.

I had the opportunity to meet with a gentleman about a month ago, or two months ago, who plays a very key role in our community and he expressed to me his feelings about... he had been going to a church here in Hillsboro, and he remembers when the first Mexican-Americans were coming to church, and the community grew and the numbers grew, and the next thing was that they wanted services in Spanish, and then after that they wanted their own building, so they built their own building, a church and a congregation. That offended him so he left the church. His feeling was that – and this is an educated person – his feeling toward an overpowering feeling of forced assimilation was alive and well in the year 2001. Contrary to the Constitution of the United States, contrary to compassion of human dignity, contrary to spiritual fulfillment, of praising of the Lord in somebody's own language in their own culture. It is still everything under one roof, one language, one way, so we're still not there. Yet this is a very compassionate man, a religious man, a giving man, an educated man, but the misconception of all of us living together in the same community with differences is still not respected and responded to. That's the definition of culturally competent, I guess, is to respect each other's differences that go beyond that and respond to those differences in a nurturing manner, in a learning manner. No! There are still those overpowering feelings to forced assimilation, that we must all do it the same way. Dress the same, speak the same, live the same way, praise the Lord the same way, etc.

M: Embracing those differences and then enriching your own life.

H: That's it! And that does enrich our own lives, and that's the beauty of it, you just get right on, that's exactly what I'm talking about. I think that that's where we are today, and that's where I wish we all were. I'm going to continue this probably throughout my blessings and my experiences and human resource management, private industries as well as public service, I have a wonderful client, similar to Virginia Garcia whom I have adopted as a loving client at this point, and that's the domestic violence resource center here in

Washington County that I do work with as well, and they're reaching out to the Hispanic community in regards to domestic violence. That's another area where they've also shown interest in becoming a culturally competent organization, in hiring the staff; Tuality Community Hospital has also expressed that. I had the opportunity to meet with some of the staff. We're getting there, it's getting better and there's plenty to do, so you feel free to jump in wherever you want because there's plenty to do, I'm telling you. We need all the help we can get. The only thing that I can tell you about this whole thing is that one of the things that the common denominator from way back then to today is still true, that the need is greater than the resources that are available.

M: I guess one reason, maybe, for the assimilation model is this belief in the melting pot as opposed to an American idea as opposed to north of the border, in Canada, they talk about the mosaic, which is a different sort of concept. Well, I want to thank you very much, Hector, for the opportunity to sit down and talk here. Thanks a lot.

H: Great, thank you!

Search terms:

Civic centers

Civic improvement

Families

Farms

Fires (there was really just one fire, so this may not really be relevant at all)

Health facilities (the Virginia Garcia clinic)

Housing

Employment agencies

Migrant labor

Minority students

Oregon

Police (because of all the immigration issues)

School principals

Schools

Work