

Cuca Audio

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santa rita, town, remember, school, knew, reunions, born, growing, families, fascinating, lived, settled, mother, moved, children, raised, memories, store, confectionery, company

SPEAKERS

Kelli Lycke, Cuca

Cuca 00:25

My name is Refugia Rodriguez. I was born in Santa Rita. My maiden name is Gonzalez. And I was known by the name of Cuca as I was growing up,

Kelli Lycke 00:39

and what part of Santa Rita are you from?

Cuca 00:44

I don't know what part of the Santa I lived in, but I know that I don't know if it had a name. I don't know if it had a name. But my house number was 1123. And my box number PO box number was 518. I remember all those things from way back when, you know, but I don't know that my area was known as any particular name. I don't know. Did it have a name? I don't know. Yeah. But anyway, we were raised there. I'm from a family of 14. My mom and my dad settled there. My mom was born in Mexico. My dad was born in El Paso, Texas. And I guess they must have settled there when they were young. So they got married in 1924. And went on to have 13 children, 14 children, seven boys and seven girls. And we were all raised there. We all went to school there. We went to the little school on the hill, Hill School. The name was Hill School. And there was a grammar school. And then we went on to Sulley school. And then I went on to Cobre, which is here in Bayard. And I did three years of high school. And then we moved in 1959. We moved to Los Angeles, because my mother became a widow. And so she had a bunch of children. And at the time, the mine was not working too well, that she had a bunch of boys. So my sister already lived in Los Angeles. So she told my mom, you know, we gotta you gotta do something, because you have to make kids to raise and there's no work. And so we all went to California in 1959. And I got married and had my children there. And we used to come and visit my sister here in Santa Rita every year. I brought my husband once and he said, I'm retiring here. And he did in the 1990s. In 1993, we came back and we settled in Mimbres in the Mimbres Valley. And so this is our 30th year here. And he passed away about five years ago, five and a half years ago, and I'm still here. My children come and visit me every now and then. And they enjoy coming to the country because they all live in Los Angeles. That's about all. What else do you want to know?

Kelli Lycke 03:22

If someone had never heard of Santa Rita, and they asked you what's Santa Rita, what would you say?

Cuca 03:31

Santa Rita was a very nice town. Everybody knew everybody. And everybody looked out for everybody. Everybody, all the families knew each other. Maybe we didn't congregate as much, but we knew who was who. And you knew that everybody could reprimand you if you did something wrong. You know, you were always, you made sure that you always respected your elders. You know, there was just no question about that. And so if somebody saw you doing something they had, they had the liberty to tell you "hey", you know, this is "you stop this," you know, but WE lived in a very nice town. It was a very clean, clean cut town. I mean, we all were raised there. We all had good lives. I mean, we used to walk everywhere. There was no cars. We used to play ball in the empty lots. We used to play baseball, and we used to go to church on Sundays, you know, just a normal but it was a very, very nice, clean cut down. I don't think I've seen another town like that in my life

Kelli Lycke 04:44

How do you remember the town?

Cuca 04:49

I remember having a very nice upbringing. And we were a bunch of us. We're a bunch of kids. But we all went to school. My mother made sure that we all went to school. My mother made sure that we all went to church. And my mother made sure that we all respect each other. And we she was never allowed to miss school just for the heck of missing school, we had to go to school. If we were sick, we would stay in bed all day. We could go anywhere. And so if you're sick, you're staying in bed all day. So we would go to school, you know, we would try. We would walk to school, you know, in the winters and everything it was, it wasn't nice. We had nice programs, nice teachers, nice. Everything was, and I guess everybody my mother had 13. So the other teachers knew all of us. Oh, you related to this. So it was an interesting, interesting, interesting town. And at the time that I remember, we had the downtown, which was a hospital in the post office, confectionery, we had a confectionery down there. And the company store, you know, my mother used to go and buy groceries at the store, you know, we used to walk everywhere when we didn't have cars. So it was quite interesting, quite an interesting town. Yeah.

Kelli Lycke 06:11

How would you describe your connection to the other people from Santa Rita?

Cuca 06:16

Oh, well, I that we all knew each other. I think we knew. And maybe we knew mostly the kids because we went to school with them. And after I came back after God, I left in 1959. I didn't come back until 1993 to stay. And I could still relate to a lot of the older people. I could still relate to the families, I still read knew who they were. I knew who belong to whom. Because that was the kind of town that it was. It was a town for everybody knew everyone. And we know he just looked after everybody. And so when they came back, he was like, wow, I didn't realize when I was young how great a town Santa Rita was. I just, after you came back, and you said, God all these people lived there. And you really didn't realize it

at the time, I guess. Because of been young, and you know you were a child growing up. But we had a company store, we had our little store would sell a little bit of everything. Whe high school, we had to ride the bus. So that bus dropped us off. And it would stop at this little store called a fruiteria. And we would buy the sodas and the peanuts and whatever and waln we went tok home and it was really really nice. It was nice altogetheer town and it was a nice town. It's good memories, good memories of Santa Rita.

Kelli Lycke 07:44

Do you have any memories you want to talk about?

Cuca 07:48

Like what?

Kelli Lycke 07:49

I don't know?

07:50

Well, what surprises me now that I'm here and now I'm 81 years old, I left when I was 17. Now I'm 81, and I can still see people and relate to people and know where they what who they what people, families they came from. And I remember that everybody was a good, everybody was a good person! You know, wherever you went wherever you wherever you met. Now I see people, I say "Oh are you from Santa Rita?" because you Santa Rita had like a...They protect some kind like Santa Rita people. You know, so I am always asking people , "Oh, are you from Santa Rita?" I you know, because I remember some but not the youngsters. I remember the older families, but I don't remember the youngsters. And so but that's fascinating to me, too, that "Oh, I knew your dad. Oh I went to school with your dad." "Oh, I did this." So that's that was fascinating to me. That's still fascinating to me. Yeah, that there's still quite a few people here that were here when I was growing up. Yeah. So that's, that's very interesting. So Santa Rita is a town within itself I think. Not too many towns like those

Kelli Lycke 09:06

How do you commemorate or remember the town, like memorialize it, or maintain a connection with the town?

09:14

Well, I was born there. Like I say, I was born there. I went to school there, I was raised there. And even though I left I still had family here. So we used to come out visit all the time. And so I remember Santa Rita has been a very nice town to be brought up in. I think my kids miss out because they have no. They live in a city and times have changed so dramatically. But for me, it was a place to really grow up in, a clean cut place where you can still look back and say, "Oh, I remember all that. I remember all this," you know, so it's very fascinating, fascinating to me.

Kelli Lycke 10:00

So there's the Santa Rita shrine. And then there's the kneeling nun. Oh, yeah. Aren't either of those places in any way important to you?

10:13

Well, yeah, my brothers always used to go up to a kneeling nun. We the girls didn't go up to the kneeling and but my brothers used to go to a kneeling nun. Now they're the shrine. Well, I left for like, when they moved our town, when Santa Rita was closed. So I was in California, but then we used to come to the reunions. And we used to come here. And sometimes they used to take trips to the pit, to go see the mine, you know, to go to their mind. And so they would do that. And you always see "oh, I remember where my house was," "I remember for this," and there's nothing but a big hole now. But you know, it's amazing that in that big hole, there was a complete town, a complete town, with families, with people with hospitals and schools and everything. It was there. Because I don't think any of the other towns compared to Santa Rita. I really don't think Central compares or Bayard come. I don't think any of these other towns compared to Santa Rita all because we were self sufficient. I think we had everything, even though it was a company town and that company owned the homes and stuff. I wasn't here when the company said "okay, everybody has to move out." So I don't remember that. But it was a good town. All in all, it was a good town because you had everything. Everything that you need to grow up in. So it was fascinating to me.

Kelli Lycke 11:39

And when you say the reunions? Can you tell me a bit about what that is? What are the reunions?

11:44

Well, I think what happens there is that people come from wherever they moved away to and still come to Santa Rita to meet up with older to meet up with other people that they remember. I think that's really what the reunions are. And so it's quite interesting people come from everywhere. You know, they're they're everywhere. Santa Rita people are everywhere. So, I don't know. It's it.

Kelli Lycke 12:14

That's all I have to unless there's anything else that you want to share about your experiences or anything you want to say about Santa Rita or the people or the events.

12:24

No, I think Santa Rita will be in my always in my memory, my fond memories. I think I have that fond memories for my children of Santa Rita and my brothers and sisters. So it's fascinating. I get emotional about this.

Kelli Lycke 12:45

I would too. Okay!