

The Institute of Texan Cultures

Oral History Office

Subject: Family Life in South San Antonio, CSMA

Interview with: Vincent Huizar

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Interviewer: Marilyn DeKing

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VH: Yeah, Pedro Huizar, we found out, through my genealogy and I was doing research, that Pedro Huizar got here around 1770. He was a carpenter and a surveyor for the missions. He even did artillery pieces for the province of Bexar County in the late seventeen hundreds. The son I come from, his name is Jose Carlos Huizar, and his son that I come from is Macario Huizar. Jose Carlos was born around 1785. Macario Huizar was born in 1838, and the son that I come from -- from him is Macario Huizar, Jr. and he was born in 1874, my dad, Luis Huizar was born in 1916. And we've been living in and around San Antonio, the missions area, since Pedro Huizar got here, around 1770.

And there's a lot of history here with the missions, with the Huizar family. It goes back in buying land. They were given grants for -- land grants - for on the missions. We found some paperwork, the archives - Spanish archives where Jose Antonio Huizar was given the granary and land in and around Mission San. Jose. And he got granted the land in, like, 1815.

There's plenty of history here and I was surprised that there was that much history attached to my family, dating back that far back here in Bexar County. I'm interested in doing more research and trying to find out more about my family history and especially about Pedro Huizar.

I'm trying to find out where -- who was his father and mother and if they were really from Spain; I was told that they were Hispanolas from Spain. The reason I started doing genealogies -- my grandson, was born in 2000 and he was.... my son asked me how come he had light hair and light complected and hazel eyes. That's the reason I started doing my genealogy. He asked me, "What are we? Are we Spaniards, Italians, Mexicans, or what are we?" So I started doing my research in 2000, and this is 2008 and I'm still doing research on it. And I got hooked on it, and I'm gonna probably keep on doing it.

My dad's mom is from Italy, is Maria Dorangrichia. And she married my grandfather in 1899. My dad was born in 1916; he passed away in 1951, that's the year I was born in fifty-one. I didn't get to meet my dad, 'cause my mom was pregnant and I was born three months after my Dad passed away. Then it was real interesting the way I started doing my genealogy. I liked it and I'm gonna keep on doing it until I find more areas, 'cause Pedro Huizar at the time -- he was known ...like maybe if he was the one who built the rose window or carved it, but then I found paperwork where he was asking for payment of artillery pieces that he had built for the province, gun carriages, he was sent to La Bahia in Goliad to do surveying on how to get water into that mission. And I found...I got copies of the documents where they sent him to Goliad in 1798. And I found his signatures on some documents at the Bexar County archives. He wasn't just a carpenter per se for the missions; he was a stone worker, stone carver. He had to have been like a blacksmith so he could do artillery pieces for the province. And then he did surveying. On some documents we found that he was known as El Maestro, and that's somebody that knows more than just one skill. He passed it on to his kids, 'cause Jose Antonio Huizar became the mayor of Mission Concepcion and the mayor of Mission San Jose after his father passed away, Pedro Huizar. I believe he passed away in about 1803. And this is when Jose Antonio Huizar was asking -- in 1806 he was asking the King of Spain for the lands in and around the Mission San Jose for the work that his late dad

did, and his brothers, for the province in Bexar County. So, I found the documents where they were registered in 1852. Well, Texas was already a state, a state in that there was a legal and binding document where they had gotten the grant of the mission and the granary because of the work him and Jose Antonio and his dad and his brothers did for the province.

So I'm going to keep continuing and trying to find more documents in the Bexar County archives, in Texana and the library, and the archdiocese for baptisms, marriages, and see how much more information I can find out about the Huizar family. We're one of the first Tejano families here in Bexar County. (laughs)

MD: Mmmhmm. Do you have uncles -- your father's brothers -- that are living?

VH: The only ones that are living are half-sisters to my dad. My dad's mom passed away in 1920. My grandfather married another Italian lady -- Elena Anthony -- and then he still had four more kids with that lady and the two youngest ones are still alive -- that's Beatrice Rodriguez and Emma. But the only person that I've seen or talked to is Beatrice and I think she's 78; she was born in 1930, so she's 78 years old right now. I'm trying to look for pictures, old pictures, of my grandfather and I can't find any. But I found an old picture from one of my cousins that had my grandmother, Maria Dorangrichia, who was an Italian lady, my dad's mom.

They got here from Italy in 1898 and she married my grandfather in 1899. In 1900 they had their first son which was Macario III -- Marcario Huizar and I think the rest of the brothers, the siblings -- my Dad's siblings-- had passed away already, except for the two aunts.

MD: Do you have some of the land that came down?

VH: No we don't. The only thing I've gotten is documents stating that Pedro Huizar paid for some land -- two parcels of land that were around the King William area. And then I've got the

documents stating that Jose Antonio Huizar had gotten the land grants for the granary and the land in and around the mission. And they... he was granted the land in 1815.

MD: And did you grow up in that area where the land of your family was -- do you have any stories from there?

VH: No, I really grew up in the west side of San Antonio, around Brazos and Guadalupe Street, around that area. We moved from the south side off of Fetch when I was about 11 years old. I started going to Southcross Middle School; now it's changed to Leal, Andrew Leal, Middle School, and I graduated from Harlandale in 1969.

MD: Did your family attend the church -- any of the mission churches -- when you were growing up? Did you get to spend much time around there at all?

VH: No, not when I was growing up. No, me and my second wife, we'd go to church there -- Mission San Jose -- and I found some documents where my uncles and my dad were baptized at Mission Espada. His uncles, my dad's uncles, were baptized in Mission San Juan and the previous uncles were baptized in Mission San Jose. Pedro Huizar's sons were baptized in Mission Concepcion.

MD: And were you baptized in any of the missions?

VH: Nah, I was baptized in Iglesia Guadalupe, in the west side.

MD: Do you have a lot of cousins from your dad's side?

VH: No, because after my dad passed away, nobody in his side of the family came to visit us.

MD: You didn't keep in touch?

VH: No, we didn't keep in touch. I didn't start knowing...I knew my mom, when I was growing up told me that her dad -- my dad -- told her that we were part of the missions and that the ancestor was Pedro Huizar and he's the one that carved the rose window but I didn't know I had that much connection until I started doing my own research and my own genealogy, that I found out that baptisms from Pedro Huizar's sons, and then I found out that I come from Jose Carlos Huizar -- one of Pedro Huizar's sons -- then Macario I found his sons' baptisms and then I found that I come from that Macario had another older son named Macario -- the one that was born in 1874 -- and I found some documents where I found his brothers and sisters on a document where his mom passed away and they were selling the property, and they all had to put their names down on the document, and that's how I found the rest of the names.

MD: Oh, amazing, yeah. Now was your mother born in Italy, or she was born here but she's just Italian ancestry?

VH: It was my grandmother that was born in Italy: Maria Dorangrichia.

MD: And did you know her?

VH: No, I didn't get to meet her 'cause she passed away in 1920. My mom is Martinez-Barrera. Her mom was Barrera. My mom was born here in 1914. Her mom was born here like in 1898. My grandmother on my Mom's side --Antonia Barrera-- she passed away when she was like 17 years old....

MD: Oh really?

VH: ...After giving birth to a son, she had complications and she passed away. She was born here in Texas and my mom's grandmother was born here in Texas. My mom's family -- we can

trace them back to about 1840 -- that they were living here in and around Bexar County and in Texas, but the side of my dad's side -- over here since 1770.

MD: Do you think the Italian culture is a big part of your childhood, or didn't it influence like the cooking, and the stories and all that kind of thing, from the Italian side?

VH: Not too much. My mom used to tell me that when they used to go visit, my dad's mom over there to eat, that she didn't even meet her either, but she -- the one she was talking about was the second wife -- she was an Italian too, the second wife of my grandfather. But she remembers... she used to tell me that my dad used to like the bread that they were eating, it was always hard, and the way they would put it in the gravy or something of the food they were eating and it would soften it up like that. But they always... the bread was always hard, that's what my mom would tell me, when I was growing up. I don't know if it's the way they cooked it, they'd let it dry and get hard, but it's the way my Dad used to like to eat the bread, like the French bread or something; he liked to eat it when it was hard ! (laughs)

MD: Different from tortillas, right?

VH: (laughs) Yeah.

MD: Did your mother ever tell you anything about how your mother and dad met?

VH: Not really. She had more.... the deal was, my dad had passed away and when I started knowing about anything, we were living in the west side and then I remembered that she had to get up and go to work...

MD: What kind of work did she do?

VH: She worked at a restaurant -- at the Manhattan, downtown next to the Majestic Theater. And I found, she used to show me her pay stubs, after I got older, and she used to get paid 25 cents an hour.

MD: Yeah, in those days...And did your mom marry again?

VH: No, she did not. She didn't want to bring us up with a stepfather.

MD: But did you have cousins to play with nearby or just neighbors who were not related?

VH: Neighbors that weren't related. Then we were eight in the family, so I had a lot of siblings to play with. (laughs)

MD: Did you go to the center of town much, to like movies and stuff?

VH: We used to take the -- I remember taking the bus -- on Guadalupe Street and going downtown. I used to remember going to Joske's store, Joske's downtown; that's where she used to take us to buy popcorn or candy. The more memorable thing that I remember is taking the bus at Easter to go to Playland. That's where we passed Easter as a family at that Playland Park off Broadway. We used to stay there from when they opened until closing time during Easter.

MD: Was it part of Brackenridge Park?

VH: No...

MD: It was a separate...?

VH: Separate, separate corner.

MD: More like an amusement park.

VH: An amusement park. She used to buy -- there were five brothers and we used to get the shirts all the same -- get the Buttercrust deal. The Buttercrust little squares -- that's the way -- the shirts she used to buy us that way we could recognize each other in a crowd. (laughs)

MD: (laughs with him).

VH: I didn't start asking any questions about my dad until, probably right before I got married. 'Cause I was raised -- I didn't know any better I thought everybody used to live like that. I grew up in the courts; I was in Apache Courts. I didn't know any better, I thought everybody lived the way I did. And I didn't pass through any hunger or nothing, because where we used to live we had hot water, and gas, and everything. I found out from my wife, when she was growing up, they didn't have facilities inside the house, and she didn't live no more than a mile when I was, from where I was living in the west side. They had an outhouse in the back. And they didn't have a bathtub; they used to heat up water on the stove. They didn't have a hot water heater, and fill up a tub to take a hot bath in, in the kitchen.

MD: Yeah, just like you would be out in the rural area.

VH: And they didn't live no more than about two miles from the house in Apache Courts, a little bit farther west.

MD: How many children do you have?

VH: I got three boys: Vincent Jr., Joe Luis, and William. They got....Vincent, my oldest son don't have any kids. My middle son's got three boys and my youngest is the one that's got - let's see, three boys and three girls.

VH: Six! (laughs)

MD: And are they interested in the research of the family that you've been doing?

VH: Not really. But what, like I said earlier, is that, when my grandson was born in 2000, he asked my son questions, and I started doing the research, and I showed him what I found out, and (son said)..."Oh, okay." (implies lack of interest) (laughs)

MD: But someday he will be, he'll have everything you're working on.

VH: Well, I'm gonna save everything I've found, and leave it there. That's how come I want somebody to put it down and save it, so that they can have records for it later on. I'm gonna try to put all my information on CD or whatever, so they can just put it, and download it in the computer, and they can see it.

MD: Now how did you and your wife meet and what year did you meet, more or less?

VH: Me and my first wife been divorced. I married -- I got a second wife, but me and my first wife met....we were, a couple of friends were coming down, we were going to play ball, on Saturday -- softball. We were like four guys in a car, I was driving and we passed up a car and there were four girls in the car. We got close to the car and I told 'em to pull over. It was like Gyros, where they sold sodas and burgers. I told 'em to pull over in there. I told my brother and the other two guys, "I'll talk to the driver since I'm driving." And that's how I met my first wife! And three weeks after I met her, we got married. I was 19 and she was 19; she was born in fifty-one and I was born in fifty-one.

MD: And your children, are all from her, or ...?

VH: Yes, all my three boys are from my first wife.

MD: What kind of car were you all driving when you....?

VH: She was driving a sixty-nine Buick LeSabre that belonged to her dad and I was driving a sixty-two four-door Chevy Impala.

MD: And the place where you were playing softball, do you remember where that was? Did it have a name or was it just a neighborhood area?

VH: We were playing.... it was off, I think old Highway 90 and Callaghan Road. There was a ball field where they used to play ball on Saturdays and Sundays. And we....a friend of mine had a team and said we were gonna play the tournament there that Saturday, so we had played, I think, three games, and we won the first one and lost the next two, so we were out. So that's how we started driving back, going back home already. (laughs)

MD: And the place, did you call it the Gyro? The restaurant?

VH: The Gyro, Gyros.

MD: Gyro? What was that like? Is it still in existence today?

VH: No, I don't know. I think they sell cars there or something. I used to park and order through one of those little speakers or something, and they'll come to the car.

MD: But did it have a place you could go inside too or was it strictly drive-in?

VH: It probably did, but normally I'd always park outside and order through the little speaker-deal, and they would bring out the drinks out to the car.

MD: And were there drive-ins in the area still then -- drive-in movies?

VH: Yeah, we used to go a lot to -- what was it? -- the Mission Four. It wasn't even Mission Four then, I think only one movie at a time when I was growing up, then they changed it and started doing the Mission Four Drive-in. There was, like, eight drive-ins around San Antonio.

There was the Lackland, La Fiesta, on the west side I think there were a couple of them -- the Charro, I think.

MD: And after you were married, did you go when the kids were little, to the drive-in still?

VH: Yes, we used to go, especially, the one on Mission Road, the Mission Drive-in. I used to take them there, to the drive-in. It was fun until everything changed, after my divorce. (laughs) It's okay. One of my sons is a border patrol agent, the middle one, Joe Luis. The other ones went the wrong way, my oldest one and the young one. One of the three doing okay. (laughs)

My trade is sheet-metal technician. I started doing sheet metal work, working for air conditioning companies, around 1970, and I'm thinking of retiring already this year.

MD: Which companies did you work for?

VH: The last one I'm working with is Victoria Air from Victoria, Texas, that I worked for is a mechanical. Jack Lawrence Air Conditioning; R.C. Industries are from Bryan, Texas; G.R. Blank Air Conditioning and Plumbing.

MD: And how did you learn to do that kind of work?

VH: I started as a helper. When I started minimum wage was \$1.60 an hour.

MD: How old were you then?

VH: Eighteen.

MD: You just learned on the job.

VH: On-the-job training. I learned how to lay out the metal, cut it, break it and go install it.

MD: Is that kind of work hard on your hands?

VH: It is and cutting your fingers all the time too, with the metal.... working with it. It's a skilled trade and it pays good. Like I said, when I started minimum wage was \$1.60, and in around less than a year, I started, they gave me a helper and they gave me \$2 and I could use the company truck to go do the work and they gave me a helper; I was getting \$2 an hour.

MD: In just one year?

VH: Yeah.

MD: That was pretty good, good advancement.

VH: The last company now I'm working for -- it's on and off. Right now, making \$24 an hour. But then I was working for another company -- in the base at Medina Base and there I was making \$30 an hour. It depended where was the money -- the federal government or just regular business, like in schools that I'm doing now.

MD: Do you have to travel doing this?

VH: Sometimes. Last year I had to go work in Del Rio at the base, down in...what is it? Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio.

[silence for several seconds]

MD: Okay. Do you want to repeat what you were just telling me while I was putting that (tape) in there?

VH: Yes, I said that if I retire this year, I wanna keep on doing more of my research and doing more displays of the paperwork and documents that I've found with the Bexar County archives, and the archdiocese, the library. I wanna talk to the National Park Service and see if I can set up my displays at all the missions, then maybe go to Goliad at the mission at La Bahia, 'cause I found paperwork for Pedro Huizar's son -- one of his sons, Jose Geronimo, moved up there with

his dad....when Pedro Huizar was sent up there to survey to see if he could get water into that mission. I think his son stayed up there with him. And he stayed, after his dad came back, I think he stayed up there, then eventually became the *alcalde* (Mayor) of that mission. And I found some documents showing that he was the *alcalde* the Mayor from Mission La Bahia, for about 20 years or more. And I wanna keep on doing more research and displays, 'cause a lotta people need to find out that the Tejanos, they were here a long time ago and they were still around -- the ancestors are still around, living in and around Bexar County. Some of the Huizars moved down to Somerset, to Rossville, to Charlotte, to Poteet, Floresville, Pleasanton, all over Atascosa County, Medina County, and Wilson County, 'cause when they got their land grants, they all followed the rivers. They wanted to land around the rivers, like the Medina River, the San Antonio River, 'cause if it wasn't for the San Antonio River, I don't think San Antonio would have been here, because that's the source of life for planting, at the time when they were here ...I think the Alamo was established like, I think like 1711, around there and San Fernando Cathedral came around and was, I think was starting to be built like 1731, where the Canary Islanders came in to Bexar County. But then the missions, all of 'em, were established like in 1718 and I'm surprised that the Huizars had a part that either being in the missions, or had a part of the building and irrigation systems, I think, in and around the missions. And it's very important to find out -- especially to me, since I'm a direct descendant of Pedro Huizar, to find out what they knew and maybe my skills came from -- was passed down -- because of the work Pedro Huizar did. He wasn't just a mason, a stone carver, he was a carpenter, a surveyor, built artillery pieces for the province, for Spain here. And it's incredible to find out all the information I'm finding out, in documents where he bought land and now it's the King Williams area. I found documents -- the baptisms, old baptisms, got copies of baptisms dating back to 1779.

MD: Now the pictures, the photographs that you have on display, did I hear you say that they're not your family? How did you choose them to put in your display?

VH: I choose them because they've got -- I can see the Mission - and if it's, there were pictures that were taken in front of any mission -- Mission Espada, Mission San Juan, Mission San Jose, Mission Concepcion -- it's a part of me!

MD: Okay. And are you thinking of maybe trying to meet the descendants of some of those people to see if you can get any cross-information that might give you some more insight into...?

VH: Yeah because I had put some information on display at Mission Espada and there were some people had gone there for a baptismal and they were looking at the pictures I had, and they're (saying)... "Oh, look! There's uncle so-and-so on that picture! How'd you get that picture?" they would ask me, and I told them to go to the National Park Service, the main building off of Roosevelt and talk to Susan Snow, 'cause I asked Susan Snow, and she gave me a CD of the *Faces of the Mission I and II*, and they got 'ern saved in the CD in their computer. So, off the CD I burnt the pictures and made my own pictures and my own boards. I did it all myself, 'cause they had -- they have pictures in boxes, but I didn't want to look through all of 'em, then pick the ones I wanted, then they would, like, lend 'em to me, and I had to sign paperwork of which ones I took, then I'd use them for two weeks and bring 'em back. So I said - I told her if I could get a CD and she said yes, so I did. I'm doing my own pictures, formatting my pictures, so I can have....like when I go to Mission San Jose I got pictures just from families from Mission San Jose and I'll display those, and I'll put in a couple of pictures from San Juan and Espada, because they all tie in, because people from Mission Concepcion came and married people from Mission San Jose, and vice versa, and from San Juan with San Jose -- they're all intertwined. All the families came together and that's what they married. They married -- there's a lot of Bustillos, there's some Bustillos that married Huizars, Guerreros that married Huizars.

It's amazing that I'll probably be talking to somebody and they'll probably wind up being my cousin, long...cousins, like distant cousins. It's surprising and hopefully if everything goes okay when I, if I retire and I'm gonna keep doing it, and hopefully I can put the information out, 'cause I think people enjoy seeing those old pictures, and me talking of how I acquired the baptismal copies and where did I go and how did I do it. 'Cause a lot of people study information that was given to them and my information, I did the legwork.

MD: Yeah, you sure did. (both laugh) Well, your grandchildren will have a lot of information, due to your interest and all your work. Is there anything else you would like to say, or shall we...

VH: Nah. Hopefully if anybody listens to this, hopefully they can understand it and hopefully they can either find something interesting in what I've said about the history of Bexar County and the Huizar family, attach it to Bexar County. It's weird when you walk into the missions and you know that your ancestors have something to do with it.

MD: It's a mysterious feeling. This is Marilyn DeKing, as the interviewer, talking with Vincent Huizar.

VH: Thank you.