

Collection #
SC 3480
DVD 1466–1469

**GREGORIO CHAVEZ
INDIANA LATINO HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW
6 DECEMBER 2016**

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Collection Information | 1 |
| Biographical Sketch | 2 |
| Scope and Content Note | 3 |
| Contents | 4 |

Processed by

Nicole Martinez-LeGrand
August 2018

Edited by
Paul Brockman
August 2018

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 folder, 4 DVDs

COLLECTION DATES: 6 December 2016

PROVENANCE: Gregorio Chavez, Jr., South Bend, Indiana, August, 2018

RESTRICTIONS: The interview may be used for private study, scholarship, or research. Permission to reproduce or publish this interview, whether in whole or in part, must be obtained from the William H. Smith Memorial Library, Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, 450 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46202-3269

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Sandra Valdes Oral History (SC 3471; DVD 1446–1448); Irene Osorio Oral History (SC 3472; DVD 1449-1450); Raul and Rogelia Piñon Oral History (SC 3473; DVD 1451–1453); Robert Salinas Oral History (SC 3474; DVD 1454–1456); Miriam Acevedo-Davis (SC 3477; DVD 1457-1459); Maria Carmen Velasquez (SC3478; DVD 1460-1462); Maria Luisa Tishner (SC 3479; DVD 1463-1465)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2018.0242; 2017.0374;2017.0003

NOTES: This forms part of the Latino Oral History Project

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gregorio “Greg” Chavez, Jr. was born in November of 1932 in Robstown, Texas, to Gregorio Chavez, Sr. and Aurora Hughes Chavez. His father was from Burgos, Tamaulipas, Mexico and immigrated to the United States in 1913. His mother was born in Brownsville, Texas. Gregorio and Aurora were married in 1929. Greg’s parents were migrant farm workers who found and followed seasonal work in the 1930s and 1940s in the south and southwest United States as well as Indiana and Michigan. There were four children in the Chavez family, Greg being the eldest. Greg has also an older sibling from his mother’s previous marriage. By 1948, the Chavez family bought a home and settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where his father worked as farmer. Additionally Gregorio, Sr. worked as a laborer at American Excelsior Corporation in Grand Rapids.

While in Michigan, Greg attended South High in Grand Rapids and graduated in 1952. Shortly after graduation, he enlisted in the United States Air Force where he completed his training at Randolph Air Force base in Texas. While stationed in Texas, he met and married Rosa Garza in 1954, before being deployed to Korea. Rosa and Greg had five children. During his twenty year Air Force military career, Greg was stationed stateside and abroad in Japan, Korea and Germany. During one of his stateside station assignments, he and his family lived in Roswell, New Mexico. While stationed at the Walker Air Force Base in Roswell, Greg worked as a Nuclear Weapons Technician during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

After retiring from the Air Force in 1972, Greg, Rosa and their children settled in South Bend, Indiana. Greg worked in the electronics sector for Burroughs Corporation for a few years before opening up his own business called Molino, which made and distributed tortillas in North Central Indiana and Michigan. After closing his business, Greg entered into the education field. In 1980 he began to work for the Bilingual Services Department for the School Corporation of South Bend. While employed with the school corporation, Greg actively worked with the Latino student population and their parents, informing and engaging them in the 21st Century Scholars program. After leaving the school corporation, Greg continued to work within the Latino youth population in South Bend and surrounding counties. He continues to actively recruit and engage with Latino high school students for The Page Program at the Indiana State House.

In 2015, Greg was a recipient of the Sagamore of the Wabash, one of Indiana’s highest honors. In 2016, Greg was also nominated to serve as one of the torch bearers in St. Joseph County for the statewide Torch Relay program that celebrated Indiana’s State Bicentennial.

On the day of this interview, Greg is 84 years old

Sources:

Information in Collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This manuscript was transcribed from a digitally audio recorded interview conducted on December 6, 2016 at the South Bend Public Library in South Bend, Indiana, by Nicole Martinez-LeGrand, Indiana Historical Society's (IHS) Multicultural Collections Coordinator for the project. The transcription has been lightly edited, in March 2018. The interview, which includes the audio recording and the transcript, is housed at the William H. Smith Memorial Library, Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, Indianapolis, Indiana. Readers of this oral history interview should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word. Although the transcript has been lightly edited, IHS has diligently sought to preserve its informal, conversational style, as well as the integrity of the interview's content. While some attempt has been taken to explain through footnotes some of the facts given by the interviewee, IHS is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the interview's content or for the views expressed within. The audio recording remains unedited.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| Preface..... | i |
| Biography | ii |
| Transcript | 1 |
| Birth, Parents and Growing Up in Texas | 2-4 |
| Family Migrant Farm Work: Following the Seasons, Camp Living Conditions | 5-6 |
| Settling and Living in Michigan | 6-9 |
| Enlisting in United States Air Force..... | 10 |
| Meeting and Marrying Rosa Garza, Starting a Family | 11-14 |
| Nuclear Weapons Technician Career | 15-17 |
| European Deployment with Family | 18 |
| Moving to South Bend | 19-20 |
| 1970s Start of Latino Organization and First Latino Policeman and Fireman | 21-22 |
| Working in the Electronics Sector | 22-23 |
| Opening and Closing of Molino Tortillas | 23 |
| Working with the Bilingual Services Department of South Bend School Corp. | 24-26 |
| The Page Program at the Indiana Statehouse | 27-30 |
| Recalling The Great Depression and World Events of World War II | 31 |
| Challenges and Successes of Life, Recalling Children's Accomplishments | 32-33 |
| Sagamore of the Wabash and Bicentennial Torch Relay | 34-35 |

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Transcript of Interview

Oral History Interview and Transcript (user copy)

Oral History Interview and Transcript (master copy)

Digital Images (1 of 2)

Digital Images (2 of 2)

CONTAINER

Folder 1 of 1

DVD 1466

DVD 1467

DVD 1468

DVD 1469