

Collection #
SC 3474
DVD 1454–1456

**ROBERT SALINAS, JR.
LATINO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW,
27 OCTOBER 2017**

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Processed by

Nicole Martinez-LeGrand
July 2018

Edited by
Paul Brockman
July 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, 3 DVDS

COLLECTION DATES: 27 October 2017

PROVENANCE: Robert G. Salinas, Jr., Kokomo, Indiana, July, 2018

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ACCESSION NUMBER: 2018.0233

NOTES: This forms part of the Latino Oral History Project

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Gregorio Salinas, Jr. was born in May of 1956 in Corpus Christi, Texas. His parents are Adelmira Amaro Salinas and Robert Gregorio Salinas, Sr. Robert is a fifth-generation Texan and Mexican-American.

After a family vacation to Kokomo to visit his maternal grandmother, Irene Velasquez Clark, his father decided to move from Corpus Christi, Texas, to Kokomo, Indiana. In 1969, the Salinas family relocated from the La Cuarenta neighborhood of Corpus Christi to Kokomo, Indiana. His maternal grandmother, Irene Velasquez Clark, with her second husband, Julian Clark, had already been settled in Kokomo for a few years.

Robert, Sr. worked for American Standard Pottery when they first settled in Kokomo. In 1975, Robert Jr. married his childhood sweetheart, Eva Irwin. In the 1970s, Robert, Jr. worked alongside his father at American Standard Pottery as well as Chrysler Transmissions. However, despite being a new father and husband, Robert was laid off from Chrysler.

After being laid off, Robert Jr. had a chance meeting with Howard County Sheriff Bob Sargent and was encouraged to apply for a position with the Howard County Jail. After working for the Howard County Jail, he developed an aspiration to be a part of the Kokomo Police Department. In 1981, he was sworn in as an officer and was the first Latino police officer for the city of Kokomo. He retired as Capitan Robert Salinas in July of 2016, still making him the first and last Latino police officer for the city of Kokomo, Indiana.

At the time of this interview, Robert is sixty-one years old

Sources:

Information in Collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

In this interview, Robert Salinas, Jr. recounts his youth growing up in Kokomo, Indiana, with the challenges of growing up in a heavily populated Latino neighborhood in Texas and transitioning to the largely non-Latino population of Kokomo, Indiana. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Latino population was very small, with most families settling in the area due to participating in seasonal agricultural work. Present-day Kokomo has a 3.3 % Latino population. Robert gives a detailed account of his time working as a Sergeant in the Drug Taskforce (retired as Capitan), Supervisor for the local Drug Taskforce, K-9 Unit, Drug Interdiction Unit, and his twenty eight years as the SWAT Team Commander for the Kokomo Police Department. He recalls events and high-profile cases that he has worked on, most notably the 1987 bombing of the Howard County Court House.

This manuscript was transcribed from a digitally audio recorded interview conducted on Friday, 27 October 2017, at the Kokomo Public Library in Kokomo, Indiana, by Nicole Martinez-LeGrand, Indiana Historical Society's (IHS) Multicultural Collections Coordinator for the project. The transcription has been lightly edited, in February 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.

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