



ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

*The Reminiscences of
Antonio Ramírez Olvera*

*The University of Arizona
2018*

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Antonio Ramírez Olvera conducted by Denise Moreno Ramírez on December 13, 2018. Olvera's daughter, Shirley Hutchison, was present during the recording. This interview is part of Moreno Ramírez's dissertation research at the University of Arizona.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The interview focuses on Ramírez Olvera's recollections about his life in Arizona and his experience as a miner at the Iron King Mine located in Dewey-Humboldt, Arizona.

Transcription Service: Verbal Ink	Session: 1 (Oral History)
Interviewee: Antonio Ramírez Olvera	Location: Chino Valley, Arizona
Interviewer: Denise Moreno Ramírez (Q)	Date: December 13, 2018

Q: Hi, Antonio. How are you?

Olvera: *Oh, muy bien.*

Q: *Que bueno. [Laughs]* Uh, so I want to start by asking you, um, where are your parents from?

Olvera: They're from Mexico. They're – my father came from...

Q: Did your parents come from Zacatecas?

Olvera: Zacatecas? Yeah, my father was in Zacatecas.

Q: Uh-huh.

Olvera: My mother came from Chihuahua.

Q: Mm-hmm. And what are your parents' names?

Olvera: My father's, uh, uh, name, uh, Ancieto. And my mother, use to be Lucia.

Q: Uh-huh. And what is their last names?

Olvera: Uh, Olvera.

Q: Olvera? And, um, your parents then were from Mexico and then came here to Arizona?

Olvera: Arizona.

Q: And why – do you know why they came her?

Olvera: Well, I guess, uh, somebody, uh, talked to them and just said everything was nice over here, and she wasn't making too well over there, so what the hell, let's go back to Arizona and see what we can do. And then a friend they know him, and he was, he was coming, and they said, you know, I'm gonna have to walk I got no money. I'm gonna have to travel on foot, and then there's uh a person uh, found out he says, "Don't worry." He gave him money to to, to come come across here walk up, wa-walk. And he stopped and get a – I guess a little train probably up to Tucson someplace before they came from figured out that that man gave him some money so he could come over here. And then they came over here and there walking

around and looking for a job over here. And then my brothers, they were born in Mexico too. I had a brother – two brothers and a sister from over there.

Q: And you were born here, right?

Olvera: I was born here in Arizona, yeah.

Q: And what was the town?

Olvera: I was born in Seligman.

Q: Seligman.

Olvera: It's about – ah from here, Ash Fork, I think is 50-some miles. And then from there, I think it's another 30 miles from – from Ash Fork down to Seligman.

Q: Uh-huh. And what did your parents do over there in Seligman?

Olvera: Uh, it was just hanging around a little bit and some people start to come and helped them and give him a little job doing something of repairs or fences or he put him to work after going for the Santa Fe but that last not too long, maybe a couple months, and it was off again.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: So, they be traveling and then we – then we moved to Mayer, and then the rest of the family, they were born here in Arizona.

Q: Mm-hmm. And what did your family do out in Mayer?

Olvera: Uh, well, well not too bad because I think my dad used to work for W Plié years ago, just like a handyman. They take him to work somewhere where, he worked in the street like the Washington Street, they pour cement in the metals and then they put the sticker in it what year they done it. And then there and then he got sick and couldn't make no more and then was lay off. And then my brothers were working so they – they bought the, the food for us and everything and bought us a little house there, then we stay there – then we stay there till when she dies, she – well I think they call us have ah like a cancer or some kinda cancer, and – and then she got bad arthritis so bad she can't even do nothing. At night I use, to her hands got all stiffed up, couldn't do nothing with her hands. Can't even knead with the hands, so I sat down and give her some food with a little spoon. And then at night, she yelled so much because she was hurting so much. And she tries to turn around, so I have to – I sleep with her all night just turn her

around and sat her down and then I feed her in the morning. I feed her all her meals and I give her some water so she can drink water, but that's the way it is. That was the end of it.

Q: Uh-huh. And so, when did your mother pass away then?

Olvera: Uh, that was around – around the '40s. '46, '47.

Q: And, um, and then you never found out if it was cancer or anything?

Olvera: I think this mentioned it was some kind of a cancer, but I don't remember with it was.

Q: Uh-huh. And so, when did your – and your father stayed alive after that?

Olvera: Yeah, for a few months, maybe a couple of months. He got sick and couldn't make it no more. Then he got so sick, they put him in the hospital. And he stayed in Prescott for maybe two weeks maybe. And they couldn't do nothing, so they sent him to Phoenix, and he had to – he was sick of his stomach or something. And I was working at Iron King then, and then he was over there in the hospital and they give me a call that he was very, very sick and you have to go see him. So, I went, and we stayed the whole day and I asked my boss to let me out a couple of days, three days to see him. So, I came back and then came back to the mine again and working ah about – probably about 1:00 they call me again and said, “You better come because he's very sick. I don't think he's gonna make it.” And then we took off, me and my brother Augustine. But we went and we just got there just – he just passed away when we were getting close to the hospital. That was it for him.

Q: Okay. And that was in Phoenix.

Olvera: That was in Phoenix.

Q: Okay. And then can you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters?

Olvera: Uh, my sister was named Jenny. And the older, uh, brother is Steve. And then I had one – another little one, they were almost together, he was a – he was named Felix. I had two brothers. I don't know how my mother put them another, so we called him Big Felix and Little Felix. And then I got another brother, he's still alive. He lives in, uh, over by – the other side of Tucson's.

Q: Okay. So, then you have – I was Augustine, Big Felix and Little Felix and then your other brother in Tucson.

Olvera: My other brother.

Q: And your sister, Jenny.

Olvera: And my sister, Jenny.

Q: Okay, and then, um, where did you go to school when you were young?

Olvera: Oh, when I was young, I went to school in Mayer for a while and then my brothers, they – they – they're looking for jobs, so we moved for maybe a couple years maybe. We went to live in, moved to um Jerome. I think it was there we stayed a couple years, then they finally they opened the mine like over here, so we came back. And it was just back and forth. Whenever they tell you they go out there, they were in Jerome and we stay for a while then come back to – back to Mayer. And there was this was our only, we almost lived all in Mayer.

Q: Mm-hmm. So, then you would go to Jerome and then –

Olvera: Yeah, sometimes we used to go to Jerome and then my brothers used to work over there, so I used to go over there and help them and stay over there in Jerome too.

Q: So, did you work in the Jerome mine too?

Olvera: No, no. I just visit my sister-in-law.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: And my brother.

Q: And then, um, do you have any fond memories, like when you were a kid? What did you do for fun as a kid?

Olvera: Well, I used to play, uh, baseball, basketball. I don't play too much um football. Play lots of baseball, back then – then when we were playing when I was in Mayer, we had a little team and we come to town here and play with – with the boys over here.

Q: Mm-hmm.

Olvera: And sometimes we win and sometimes we lost it. Some of them. Then were started running around. That's it.

Q: And so, did you play, uh, the boys from the Granite Street?

Olvera: Uh, yeah, some of them Granite Street and some from, just around the – around town different places there – like Washington and Granite – West Granite and Leroux. That's where I lived. Next to a street there. And then I was just there. Yeah. Then I was, “Well, I need to look for a job,” and – and then I had a friend of mine, he's father-in-law he used to work for the telegraph for the Santa Fe. And he said, and he said, “Well, I'm gonna try to get you a job.” So, he talked to one – so he talked to one of the bosses, and the bosses said, “Yeah we can put – we can use him. But you can't – you can't go to work now till you're 21. You have to be 21 to go to work for the Santa Fe.”

Q: Was that your first– that wasn't your first major job?

Olvera: Yeah, that was the first time I had big job I worked, and I worked for the Santa Fe for nine and a half years.

Q: And so, you worked in the telegraph then?

Olvera: No, I – I used to get my, uh, my all of my materials to – to go to work. I used the stop, stop whip- uh, uh, the station for – I use to just to cross. And then I work from – from Mayer down Cor – like going to Cortes Junction. Ah just a couple of miles on the other side of Mayer, there used to be a little mine out there. Then tracks used to go over there and bring the gold from all the mines, and then they bring the dirt and dump it right there. And then sometimes they – they bring a lot of – a lot of cows and everything and the trains and we would go over there and unloaded them back and forth. And sometimes they had a lotta of sheep. They had about 3 or 400 sheep that come up and you put them in the grounds. And then the guys who owns it – who owns it, he used to pick them up on the track and leave it out there for – you know where the smelter is out there in Mayer? He used to have a little ranch up there.

Q: And so those were sheep?

Olvera: They were sheep. Uh-huh.

Q: And do you know if there were Basque herders' sheep or –

Olvera: Well, one of the guys, he was that's it. He was taking care of it, and then one time he – he, he said, “Well, I'm sorry do any of you want to go take care of them because I'm gonna be gone for a couple weeks or three weeks.” “Yeah, I will.” Then from the house, I used to walk up the hill where they had to go so then took them out in the field and take them up there where they can feed. We were there about three or four o'clock when I come back, put them in, back in the yard. And my brother-in-law,

brother-in-law used to have some too. They used to have a little ranch up there in top – up in the hills up there.

Q: And that was in Mayer, right?

Olvera: That was in Mayer, yeah. That was about a couple miles from there up – up the mountain.

Q: Oh, okay. And um so then you basically got a job at the Santa Fe railroad.

Olvera: I got a job because the guy, the man he said, “Oh, oh we need you will you come and work with us.” Okay. So, I said, “Well, I’ll go,” it was on ‘91 or ‘92 and they said, “Okay, go to work.” And then you’re 21, now you can come and work. That’s when I worked for nine and a half years for Santa Fe. They used to work in Mayer, out of – out of Mayer back and forth. I used to come back to Humboldt. We used to drive that little train and work in Humboldt sometime and then I come up there to the other side, the other way and we come up to Prescott right there by the Granite House. There used to be a station there where the track would get into town.

Q: And then did you work for the railroad station before you worked for the Iron King?

Olvera: Yeah, it was – job was the first one. It was Santa Fe.

Q: Okay. And then I’m gonna go back a little bit. Did you ever get married?

Olvera: Yeah, I got married.

Q: When did you get married?

Olvera: Uh, uh. When was it? ‘50, ‘60? ‘66.

Q: Okay. And then, uh, what is the name of your wife?

Olvera: Virginia.

Q: Virginia.

Olvera: Always called her Virgie – everybody calls her Virgie now. Used to call her, but her name was Virginia. Virginia Mary Olvera.

Q: And where did you meet her?

Olvera: Uh, met her here in – my sister used to live here – right there in Granite, used to live there. Then I used to come to town and when I saw her, and

we were just next door, we use to live and I used to come around and – and finally we got acquainted and – and I say, “Oh, well, I think this is the right girl for me,” all the hanging around, I looked for her, and come then and we used to come in her house and everything. I said, “Okay.” And I used to – her father said, “Okay.” We used to sit in porch outside and he would say, “It’s nine o’clock it’s time to get in.” [*Laugh*] So, then I have to leave, and I have to be walking around. And I had one of friends of mine from – from Mayer, he used to come to town, so I get rides from him to go to town, and then sometimes he would sit over there. He finally had a girlfriend or something, and he used to drive, and I used to run around in the park and – and go to my sister's house because she lived there in Granite. And she said, “Ah, [*Unclear*].” And I used to come up. I used to be down here or walk from Humboldt or walked down here, come to see her. And the people, I talk to them and my friends and, “Oh you walked from Mayer, from Mayer all the way to Prescott.” Yeah, I walked from down there.” And sometimes I would like to get a ride, I come to town. And then I have to look for a ride at two or three o’clock in the morning because the people. The one was supposed to give me a ride and he was – he was over there running around with his girlfriend. And I said, “How...” And there used to be a restaurant that used to call it El Centro. It was a restaurant there that, “Well, I’ll just stay here and have a little cup of coffee or something. And see when he’d come back and pick me up.” He used to come back about one o’clock, sometimes twelve, and then back to Mayer.

Q: Oh [*Laugh*].

Olvera: But that was a lotta fun. Later when I got the job, went to job to work with the Iron King, then I used to get – I used to have a ride from there from my brother-in-law or my brothers, and they used to come and stay here or something. They used to, they come at night or my days off, Saturdays off, and come up there and I stay time here and then I go back. And then I have – then afterwards there were – they put buses. They used to run buses from – from um, probably from it goes all the way to – to – Phoenix, from Phoenix to Prescott, from Prescott they used to go up to Flagstaff, I guess they would go. They used to drive. That's where I used to get to the buses that come from Mayer up to town.

Q: And were these buses for the Iron King mine workers?

Olvera: They were for Iron King mine.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: Yeah.

Q: So – so they would bus people from Phoenix even and –

Olvera: Yeah some – some of them were from Phoenix, but they stayed here in town. Sometimes they go back and, uh, that's where I used to get the buses.

Q: So was Prescott to Humboldt.

Olvera: To Humboldt.

Q: Okay. And then, um, so let me see. And then so before you, uh, when you – you moved from Seligman to Mayer and then you moved to Prescott then.

Olvera: Yeah.

Q: And when did – what was the time period that you moved to Prescott? Like in what years? Do you remember?

Olvera: Well, I think I got married, when I got married, um I stayed here in town. And then I used to live with her mom, she had a house, she said, “Well, we got a little room downstairs you can stay in.” Well, I stay there. She gave us a little place because we had no money. And no job or nothing. And then once in a while I used to go with my father-in-law to work at the quarries over there in Drake.

Q: Okay, and those were the flagstone quarries.

Olvera: Flagstone, yeah. I used to yeah, the where flagstone. I used to get all the scrap, put it in big piles. I used to get the wheel barrel and shovel it up. Then he had a lot – a lot of flagstone, and I used to help him – to put it, loaded them in a truck so he can come to town and sell it.

Q: And, um, when you moved – when you were in Prescott, did you – was there a lot of Mexican families living in Prescott?

Olvera: Well there were kind of few – there were kind of few Mexicans. Now maybe when we had about – about only – about four white people who we were working with the Santa Fe. And – and then they used to live with the – the Santa Fe used to have a bunkhouse where we used to stay and live there, and from there we used to go to work where ever they would take us in the car, in the little train whatever. And that’s where we were living. I live in Mayer for a little while and then I moved to Prescott and then I went to Chino. And I said, “Well, they are gonna, they’re closing every second, they’re closing everything”, so they take everything and then I came to Prescott, and I don't think I only stayed about maybe two months.

He said, “Well, we're gonna close it. We're gonna close. No more for the worker,” so I get –then I got transferred to Drake.

Q: Okay. So that was after the Iron King mine was closed.

Olvera: Yes.

Q: Okay. And then, uh, in Prescott, do you – did you live on – what street did you live on? Granite Street?

Olvera: On Granite Street. I used to live on Granite.

Q: Do you remember any of the families? Like I don't know if you, uh, like the Carreras? Was there families that lived -

Olvera: Yeah, some and her aunts that used to come from Phoenix and stay over here, and then we used to do camping and that. We did a lot of camping with them, and then her uncles and the nephews and everything, and then we used to go – and then we used to go to, uh, over there by Williams and they had, uh, brother-in-law's – brother-in-law, his father had a – a – they had a cabin up there and, uh, we used to stay up there. And we'd do all the fishing around out on top of the mountain. Over there.

Q: And how did you decide to become a miner?

Olvera: Well, I said, well, my brother said, “It's a good mine, a little, probably a little dangerous, but if you take care of yourself, you'll be okay.” And he said, “Well,” – and he said, “Well, um maybe two or three weeks and we're gonna start hiring some people and see if you can – see I can get you a job.” Cause he knows the foreman pretty good and they talk to him and he said, “Okay, bring your brother, see if he wants to work over here.” And I went to work. I worked all day. I used to work two weeks day shift, two weeks night and two weeks graveyard.

Q: And, um, what was the year that you started working as a miner?

Olvera: Uh, let's see. It was around – probably about '64 or '65.

Q: And then when did you first hear about the Iron King mine? Was it through your brother?

Olvera: My brothers because they had three or four brothers working there. And then Augustine used to work there. And then from there we used to – I used to ride with him to work, to work – to go to the mine.

Q: And so, Augustine, your brother, when did he started working for the mine? Do you –

Olvera: Uh, because I remember he, he work for – I don't remember how many. He probably worked about 20 years working there. Then he got hurt and he broke his leg bringing the stuff out, with those rails. I guess he slid forward and bump into the bucket and broke his leg, so he was off for a long time.

Q: And, um, I guess you told me then that you took the bus that was taking miners from Prescott to –

Olvera: Yeah, from Prescott. I used to work about a half a block from the house up to the street to catch a bus that would stop and pick us up to go to work.

Q: And then they would drop you off back there?

Olvera: Yeah, drop off there. Mm-hmm.

Q: And then, um, after you got your job, then you started working, what was your main work at the Iron King?

Olvera: Uh, main thing was I went to work and I was – I had a different – all kinds of different jobs. When I started, I started in the grill where they dump the ore into the grill and – and clean 'em up and sometime have some big rocks, they'd have to break it and they had to get a double jack to break it because they don't go in the hole by little squares 12 by 12. You had to break it to – to go, to go down. And then I'd drive and back and then finally they say, “Well, you can go start loading some cargo. We're gonna put you on that.” So, I used to get my little – little, like a little train. I used to get five or six carts, sometimes ten, and go back to the tunnels and fill them up and then bringing down to the station to dump it in the grill and back and forth. I had about ten – ten to fifteen cars I had.

Q: Oh wow. And how far down the shaft were you working?

Olvera: The, uh, last time, when I started at one level and then another level because I used to transfer for people don't come to work and they say, “Hey Tony you can go – you go with this man or go over and help him over there.” So, I work at one – one level to another. But the – the far – the farther we went down to the mine, way down the mine goes 42,000 feet.

Q: Oh my gosh. And then you mentioned that it was hot in the mine, right.

Olvera: It was very hot. It probably run to 95 to 90s, and then it was so hot and then it was too messy gassy, and then you go back to where they blasted,

blasted. The people that drilled, drilled and dynamite and then you have to wait to set stuff down and they go in and wet it up so we can load it up and then work in it and fill it up and fill it up and put water so, so it wouldn't make dust. And. But it was so hot. It was 90 to almost – about 95 so far as I went to. It was the hottest that it was down.

Q: And then, so during your time, then you were blasting, you were doing cut and fill.

Olvera: Yeah, I used to run my little train and then something I used to have big rods I had to put – maybe a handful of dynamite in a cap and then pat it down and then light it – then light it and then go outside to blast, blast the rocks that were too big. And that's right. Used to fill all them carts. Fill them up and take it – and then sometimes they were kinda wet sometime, get wet and stick to – to the little wagon, like a little trailer, and I had to dump it to the, to the grill, and it was so thick that the whole thing went down to the grill. So, I'd have to come back to the station and get a chain and a little, come along and bring them up wagon. And I go back and get another load. Went all day and then we had a lot of – I used to put the water line and I need to put um – I think it was 24-inch um cover they used to put cover for air – to bring the air through so it can go in so it could be nice and – a little bit cool but it's still – still was too hot.

And – and then – and then come back and bring all my tracks to get - so I could get the carts in there. And then they, when one of the guys were working over here, drilling and everything and other guys working were blasting on the other side, so we had to go over there and clean it up when they were drilling over here. And then by the time they got, they got loaded and everything, then we all cleaning it up, me and the other guy, cleaned it up and then we would start going back, take another thing back. And they say, "Okay, everybody out." And then, then there was another. I used to take turns. He said, "Go back over there and he'll go over there and don't light it there before I stop you." Then I got about to 50 to 60 holes that were filled up with dynamite. He said, "Okay," and he'd check everything, that there was nobody there. "Okay, everybody out," and he stays there till everybody was in the clear and back to the station to get the cage. And then he light them up. He'd a have whole bunch they'd put little sparkle in the lighter there was a little sparkle. And then they'd take us out. By the time he gets to the station there was a "bam" blasting and everything. It was terrible. And then sometimes they used to work and then the guys they were trying to hurry up and then they make a mess. They make a spill and then I have to go there and clean it up before I took my machine out. I used to get mad because the guys – they all make a mess. We were coming out already, and then I had to clean up before I could go in and – and they come back the next day, go well, you have to clean off the to get my carts out.

Q: Okay, Antonio. I don't know if you can talk a little bit about what we were mentioning before about some of the accidents that you witnessed.

Olvera: There was this accident. When I was working one of the tunnels. I wanted to fill – fill my cart, and I had like a little doors. Like a little door, you have to take the door off to fill the cart. And one rock came up there, came to the side and – and bumps in there and bumps into my finger and broke it. “Ah,” and I’m trying, I’m trying to take it out of there, couldn't take it out because it got jammed in – in the little bucket, you know, like a little bucket. It got stuck and finally I had to work on it, my finger that was all busted up and bleeding and everything. So, I went down to the station and put medicine on it, and they tape it up. And it was okay, for a little while. Then once in a while I used to get a little pain. Was hurting a little bit, but it wasn't bad – too bad. And –

Olvera: And then I see some people that were working there that– and sometime they – they had big tunnels they would fill it up with sand or gravel and everything, and sometime – sometime they– got stuck, somebody got wet a little bit and stick to the wall, so we had to get a stick about 15 feet long and put a little point – they had a little point and they had to poke it over there to let it, let it break down. And sometimes they break down and then the whole thing come down. If you don't stay – if you don't stay, they have to move on to the side because otherwise it would knock you down and – and they said, “No, I better watch it.” And, and then sometimes I used to tie the dynamite in the post and then when get ready to light it up and then put it out there where they can blast it to make it loose or come down.

Q: And you were mentioning that there was an accident with the dynamite too. Uh, or was there – or was there an accident with your brother?

Olvera: My brother, yeah. Yeah, he was, uh, he was loading the dynamites to put them in the holes, and he was sitting, probably in the sun a little bit from the side. He was in the deal. And then he was loading and then a rock caved in. But then afterwards, when I went, went both said, “Here, take this big bar,” and when they blasted everything, and everything blasted off the cave where we were already. And then you would go in there and poke all the rock and see if any rock was loose. Because sometimes you can see the cracks about that big and about that wide. And then you had to go there and put it inside the rock before you can clean it up or – so, so it would be tight, the ceiling will be tight. And sometimes you had doors about 15 long - feet long and you had to be poking on the wall and the ceilings to see if any rock would be solid so, before you go in.

Q: And so, then your brother got – a rock hit him on the head.

Olvera: He got a rock, one of – piece of rock. I never seen him when, when they got there, but – but afterward they start coming up and say your brother got killed over here. They say everybody has to get out, they had to bring him out. Then yeah, I said, “Well,” we went out and I came back. Next day we went back to house and said, “You go home. We're gonna straighten up all this here and find out the foundation and see exactly, exactly what happened.” And, and then the next day, I went to work again, but the same thing, “No, no better start watching, watching everything.” The first thing I do was check all my parts, whether they were still, to be solid so nothing could come down.

Q: Mm-hmmm. And did – was that Felix – Big Felix or –

Olvera: Yeah, Big Felix. Yeah.

Q: Big Felix. And did – where did he, uh, get buried? Do you know?

Olvera: Uh, he buried – uh, here in Prescott, I think.

Q: And then, um, were there – uh, can you tell me about the locker system that you were telling me?

Olvera: Well, when the locker after you – after you – you done your work for eight hours, it was time – the other team was coming in and we were going out. And then we got out and then get the cage and get all of our clothes. All of my clothes are wet. It's so hot. So, so I said, “Ah, I better go over there,” and then when we went to the shower room, and they get – and then they had hangers where you hang your clothes. And then you put it up. Then the next day, you come in to work and then get the clothes, and there was so much powder in the pants that they would just stand up by themselves. It was so hard.

Q: Mm-hmm. because it was the sweat and the –

Olvera: The sweat – the sweat and the heater and everything was getting so hot. And then take a shower and then they had to take a shower in a hurry to catch a bus because sometimes, there, there was people in a hurry, so they didn't want to wait for nobody.

Q: [Laugh] And then you had a number, right?

Olvera: Yeah, it was, uh, 3 – 312.

Q: And how did you do that? So, you would come in and what did you do?

Olvera: What we used to do, like, the door like that, it had a little square like that and they have all this metal hanging up there. The first guy would come in to go to work, you get your metal, and then you go to the next door where you go up to get the cage, cage. Then you go get your metal on that one. So, when everybody was working, the boss used to come, and check was this – this metal is okay. This metal is somebody down there, “Yes” because that metal, the coin is still there. And then if they're waiting, they say, “Well, if they don't move to that one,” so they go down there and look for them. And then, probably they were working, and they forgot the timing, so they had to go over there and look for them.

Q: So that's how they knew if somebody was [*Crosstalk*]

Olvera: So that's the way they knew they were there or if they – if it was over here, it was in the clear.

Q: And do you know if they buried anything in the shafts or in the mine tailing?

Olvera: No. Huh-uh.

Q: No, they never buried anything? And then –

Olvera: No, there was a guy killed, but they take him out right away. They used to bring the stretcher and put him in and bring him out.

Q: And how about barrels of, like, acid or anything like that? Did you ever hear that they –

Olvera: No, all that was out – outside.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: See, they had another crew up out there, they took the – the rock and then they took it to the mill, and they grind it. After it was all ground up and everything and then they bring the truck and fill them up. Then they used to go down – down the hill for the Santa Fe to throw them in the Santa Fe, trucks. Boxes.

Q: And then they would take it to the smelter from there.

Olvera: They used to take it to the smelter or either the, they use to send them to uh El Paso.

Q: And then, um, you so then like you said, during your time there with no cut and fill, it was just blasting of the shaft.

Olvera: It was just blasting yeah.

Q: And then do you think – did you think it was very dangerous when you're blasting more the shaft?

Olvera: Oh yeah. You blasted, you don't know what to do if that rock is loose, and you go in there, and the rock comes down, because sometimes it shakes too much sometime, and loosen the rock, the rock so you had to go over there and pick – pick at the walls and everything to see if everything was tight to get in to go to work.

Q: And so, you would put these metal bars there and how you were picking.

Olvera: Metal bars, crow bars is what they used to be.

Q: And then those would help so things wouldn't fall down.

Olvera: They would help, the, the shaft where ever you were at.

Q: And then you also mentioned, uh, that you worked until the time that they were closing the Iron King Mine.

Olvera: Yeah, yeah, they're closing her up, and I knew that the – the foreman, he used to be a pretty nice foreman. He said, “Well, we're gonna close now.” Uh, everybody's gonna – everybody's going to be gone they'll only gonna hire so many to, to clean, to bring that stuff up. And my brother was working in there. He used to bring the – he used to – we used to load 'em up and then he used to take them out, out unload it outside. And you had batteries that have, probably about this wide, the, the little batteries when you hook up your carts and everything – and had ramps to ride them, electricity, charging them. And that was kind of hard you had to walk back and forth to get it up because when we came up and Victor, Victor he was one, one of them he tried to put it up and I don't know how he got it to the side – close to the side of the rail, and he had a finger in and the plate come up and cut his hand.

Q: So, it cut his fingers off.

Olvera: His fingers. All the fingers. They had to go run up there and – and tied them up pretty good. Well, I'd hadn't done it but the guys that worked with him they brought him up and they tape it up and they brought him to town. They had an um ambulance.

Q: Okay. And did they have, like, a little nurse station or anything at the –

Olvera: A little desk some of it but not very much of it.

Q: And then – so then you were having to – so you were the few miners that were employed when you're taking everything out.

Olvera: Everything out. They have big materials, big rails, and they have what they call it the “Y” that’s where your track – moves to one side to put the cart in and when you move it back this way so the other cart can go by. It's like a little, little “Y”.

Q: Mm-hmm. And then – so you were having to take – pull all the tracks out.

Olvera: Pull all the tracks, the railroad track – uh, tires. They were not too big because it's just some. But I used to load all that. And all the rails and all the machineries, all the back hoes all kinds of machine I used to put them up and take them into station and load them up and then set them up. My brother was up there. He'd take them out and send it back.

Q: Mm-hmm. And what did – so they were basically trying to sell all that off.

Olvera: Yeah. They wanted to try to clean up before they close everything out. They tried to done what they – what they can take out. I think I only worked – I think I worked about two weeks like that, taking stuff out, bringing it to the station and loading them up and my brother and he'd take them out and unloaded outside.

Q: And then afterwards, uh, then when you took everything out of the shaft and everything was clean, then you just worked on top.

Olvera: And then you work on top and then, “Okay, that's it. There's no more jobs.”

Q: Oh. And did – and did you have a retirement? Was there any –

Olvera: They don't give you no type of retirement.

Q: No retirement.

Olvera: I had a friend that – one of my friends, he worked about 15 years when he got retired, and he went to put – to get the retirement and they said, “There's no money there.” So, they don't give no retirement or nothing.

Q: And that was for, um, the Iron King Mine.

Olvera: The Iron King Mine.

Q: And then, um, so then you were without a job and –

Olvera: Without a job for quite a while, and then I used to walk from the house all the way – about four blocks up down to the – to the City Hall, and I go every day, and every day looking for a job, every – and I – I go over there, walking from the house – it takes me 20, 30 minutes to get over there. And I walk over there and, “Okay, I’m here looking for a job.” And then the guys they’d seen me and, “Okay, but hang on. They’re gonna hire some but I don’t know when. As soon as we can find something.” “Oh, okay.” Then I used to walk back, and I used to work with my father-in-law even to build a – a patio. Because he has to work – he loves a lot of these to get all kinds of rock and bring them in his truck and fix his patio and he had rocks to sell. He had big rocks, big rock. And then there’s the, the – what they call it?

Q: Was it the flagstone?

Olvera: The flagstone. Then I used to go – once in a while, I used to go over there and stay over there two days, three days, help him over there clean up all the crap to make room for he can start working on – and sometimes I used to – “Here’s a rock here, peel it. Fix these.” And I’d have to peel it to make it nice you know. So, it was – I had a little chisel, ah – ah try to break all the little pieces – to make it nice.

Q: Uh-huh. And so, then you helped for a little bit to try to, like in the quarry and build like this patio?

Olvera: Yeah, just to help – just to help him to work it. And he’s had a place up there a little house up there, and we used to stay up there.

Q: And was this in – where was this?

Olvera: In Drake.

Q: In Drake. Okay.

Olvera: At the quarries up there.

Q: And then, um, you – oh, I actually want to ask you a question. I’m gonna go back, and you told me that once the – there was the cage cable broke.

Olvera: Oh yeah, that’s when we were going – there was – there was a day job, day. We were going to work, and they say, “Well, we’d better wait because the ca - cable from the cage, it busted, and all the cable went down about 400 to 600 feet down. All the cable went down. They have to come and get the other cage and – and walk down and then tied it up before we could pull it up. But the cable busted and good thing nobody was inside of the cage, but the cage came down by itself. And then they

got um – they called them a little [*Unclear*] when they, when it breaks the clamps. Supposed to clamp it to tighten it so it wouldn't go no farther down. Like a little brace it – to brace it up so it don't move no more.

Q: Uh-huh. And did it work? It stopped it.

Olvera: It worked yeah, it worked out.

Q: And then, um, I'm gonna – then before we leave the Iron King, do you think that your job as a miner at the Iron King was dangerous?

Olvera: I would say yes because every time when you go to work, you have to, to check it over before you start working and check everything walls and everything the track you had to move all your tracks and get everything ready to go in. And then you had to work in the walls and see if any rock was loose because sometimes they would had cracks like that and it's loose, and sometimes when they blasted someplace else they'd blast the mine you know how it shakes and then the rock would come loose and down it comes.

Q: Uh-huh. And do you have any, like, very nice memories of the friends or people or I don't know if you attended picnics or anything of the Iron King?

Olvera: Well, everybody was very nice. They were very nice. They would get together and talk together and – and sometimes we'd, we'd get out. “You know there too much dust over there, let's stop over here at the little bar right there in the highway.” We would stop and have a couple beers and then we come home.

Q: Was that the Chemas bar?

Olvera: The Chemas bar. The little, that's the little lady she was always there. We used to stay there sometimes closing time, but I don't drink that much. Just a few beers and that's it. I don't drink no more. Then I start drinking a little Coke and break it down. And then some of the guys they used to drink, and they use – and had some bundle and get going they were driving, they were driving to town sometimes. Somebody told me that they were going, and they were having a little beer and one of the guys got the can and throw it outside and the highway patrol was right behind him. He had to stop him. He said, “Well,” – then he told him what happened. “Ah well we had too much powder, too much gas so we wanted to suck it out.” He said, “Well next time, don't do that because next time I'll put you in jail.” But we – they were pretty good guys. He'd let them go. “I'm gonna be watching when you get home.”

Q: And so that was – from what I have heard from other people, the Chemas Bar was a place that a lot of the miners would –

Olvera: Oh, most all the – and it's not that people – people used to go to work, and they stop at the bar and then forget about the mine. They start drinking and they don't work.

Q: And do you remember who were some of the miners that you worked with? Do you remember some of the names? Some of the Mexican miners? I don't know if you want to mention them.

Olvera: Well, I had a lotta people that worked, and that I knew them. Willie – Willie – what? [*female voice whispering* - Mendibles, Mendibles] Willie, Willie, Willie Salazar. Um, we used to call him um Richard. And one of the boys was Ybarras and I used to work with him, I used to work with him. Down there together sometimes. And we used to, all of them I used to try to give him a hand every time.

Q: And then – so then after you started, um, working, um, or you stopped working there as a miner, um, then you got – you went and worked for your father-in-law a little bit.

Olvera: A little bit. I used to go up and help him out and clean up his site and I had a good time up there. After he – he's done his little job and I would help him and then we come to eat and he would stay, stay in the house, he'd make the meal. And had a little fireplace outside. It was dark and have a few beers in the fireplace till about nine, ten o'clock at night. Everybody would get together around the fire, have a good time.

Q: And then you also said that you worked for the City of Prescott too after you –

Olvera: Then after that, uh, I looked for a job and, and I knew a guy there, I'd said, "Hey, Rudy got any jobs." "No, not right now. Um maybe in a couple weeks, I think we're gonna start hiring some more." I'd said "Okay." And every day I used to walk from there all the way down to - to the City Hall. Every day I would be there about 15 minutes early just to show them I was looking for a job. And then the other guys, they started looking at me, they say, "Oh, he's gonna look – he's looking pretty good. He's looking for a job." And sometimes they'd - they'd talk to supervisor and talk to the foreman, to hire me, and – and that's it. I think it take about maybe about a month, and then I was working at the house with my father-in-law, building a foundation and a patio, and he came around and said, "Okay." We were talking pretty good and then, "Well," he'd said, "um – you want to work?" "That's what I'd been looking for. I'm looking for a job." "Okay, be there Monday – Monday at seven o'clock. Be there." "Okay."

And then Monday morning, I get up early, be there on time, “Okay, you go – go with these guys.” They’d work for the sanitation. Used to take a garbage route. And then the guy, he’s the foreman, he used to drive the truck and me and the other we used to sit in the back of the truck filling the can, go get the garbage over here, get the garbage there. And sometimes my neighbor, he used to get a big box, you know, where they, where they uh, toilet papers them big boxes he used to get one of them. He used to go one side and I go to the other and pick up all the garbage all the way down the street – all the streets. And that’s sometimes. And sometime there was a little lady and she was an old. And she had a garbage can, but they were metal. They were heavy. And she’d fill them up, you could hardly pick them up to dump them. And then she had a lot of dogs and cats, and those cans were stinky. Ugh, make me sick. And finally, I say, “I’m not gonna do this no more.” I got the garbage can, put them in the truck and I said, “Okay,” throw the can and the next time they bought the new ones, little ones. But the dogs and cats and cans and everything they smelled. It’s terrible. That little lady was – after I found out that little lady was kind – she was old, and she didn’t want to spend no money and had hundreds of dollars in the – in the skirt and the blouses, she’d carry a lot of money in the – when she died, they found all this money in there. Probably \$10,000; \$15,000 in there.

Q: Wow!

Olvera: And the old man, he was an old man too because he – he wasn’t dumb or nothing, but the little lady was saving all the monies. I don’t know what for. But he didn’t want to spend the money.

Q: Okay, Antonio, I don’t know if you can talk a little bit about, um, your work, uh, during the Christmas time and what happened with the people that you worked with.

Olvera: Well, all the people they were nice, and they give us little money to help us out, and everybody was very nice, and they’d give us envelope with money and would travel. And then these other ladies went into the City Hall and talk to us to give us more money, but they don’t want to give us no more money. They’d give us a new raise to give us a – something want to give you a three cents raise. There was no money there – they don’t want to give us money. I got to work, I had – I had job I had to do it even if it had to be less money but all the work and then working and then he said, “Well, you got to work over here. This job is gonna be – gonna work because, uh, the sewer lines.” So, they gave me a truck. I used to drive a truck, a truck was there with all the machine, all the cables and everything. I used to go out and run all the line. And sometimes it was so bad to other people that there were cleaning it right and then I went in and take me almost all day for just one line to finish because there was so many roads.

I used to run about that around. Come out in the cutter and then I'd have to take it out, back and forth, back and – cut it out and cut it out got a big cutter. First, I got it with a three-inch cutter and then a – and then a six-inch cutter to clean it out right.

Q: And that was – was it – the sewer –

Olvera: The sewer line. The sewer lines, yeah. And then sometimes we used to work. Well, we used to do that and then they gave me a raise after work and calls. Sometimes I used to go home and nine, ten o'clock at night. "Hey," they'd call me on the radio, they said, "You got to come over. People are getting flooded. You're gonna have to come and run the, uh, the manholes because we're running over, they were stuck, and water was going into the house." And then at nine, nine or ten o'clock I used to go over there and clean the carpet. I had to clean the carpet first to take it out because it's so messy. And then part of the times, I used to run, and they say, "Well, let's plug it up you got to run this line and then they could have more chance to – to take the truck in. You have to run it by hand and sometimes I have to have 600 feet, 300 feet, I had to run it by hand, take it up there behind the houses and run it by hand. And I had a little bar and I turn it and turn it until I get it to open up.

Q: Wow.

Olvera: But that was. And then sometimes used to clean the, the stations, the plant, and sometimes the pump would give up, you'd have to go down in that big mess to get to bolts up so you could bring the pump up and put another one. And then your hands would get black and it'd take me more than two weeks to, to clean it up.

Q: Wow. And was there a lot of cockroaches?

Olvera: A lot of cockroaches, a lot of stuff, lotta sand. You had to clean them up and then they have to wash it and then they have to wash them up. Afterwards, I got another truck. And they gave me another truck was a big barrel to wash, wash the, the stations. Some rooms about this size of the room, have to go there and wash the walls and everything to keep it clean. And then I had about 24-inch pipes where the water would come in. And then they had to wait about – probably about ten, eleven at night so nobody – nobody would using the bathrooms or anything because there was a lotta water coming in. You had to clean up. To clean up when everybody was asleep, so you had to go over there and clean up at night with the hoses. And then afterwards, I was doing that and then he said, "Well, you know, now I'm gonna give you another job. I'm got to get you a little – get you a truck and go over there and check all the pumps, all the lift stations in the hill and in the streets and then – and see if it is working okay, quality

control. And they have big tools about that high. I had to push some buttons to get it started.

Q: And was this just for the drinking water or –

Olvera: No, the sewer lines.

Q: The sewer line.

Olvera: That's for the sewer line comes into the pump. And then you had to pump it up. That, the motors that pump it out, that pump the water out.

Q: because there's a lotta hills in Prescott, so –

Olvera: Yeah, there's a lotta hills. They had to go out there and in places you can't even get the truck in. You have to rent a van and then you have to watch out because a lotta of the guys, they wanted to be in a hurry, so they'd turnaround and they, they have too much – too much strain on it and so then they just turn around, it hurt my hand. There was a little lever because they used to put a little handle to turn the – the cable. And he was in a hurry and he prep it up and then one time, one time he had too much pressure on it when he hang up. They tried to pull it, and when they pulled it, that little bar went up and hit me right here and put in two stitches in me.

Q: Oh wow. So, then there was – it was dangerous there too.

Olvera: It was dangerous. Then they, they when it rained or the creeks would get flooded, running, you know, and then the, the water would take the pipes off and we have to go there underwater to figure out where the pipe is to hook it up again. And the water was ice in the wintertime. Aye, no, no.

Q: And it was cold, I imagine.

Olvera: It was cold, and I had to get in there and then I have to take pipes to, to hook them up and then at, uh, right there for – they're building new houses over there in the Willow Creek. They have manholes on, right in the middle of the creek, and there was so much water, it turned the manholes over and you know, manholes oh, are about four feet, five feet high out of cement, and the water just turned them over.

Q: Oh wow.

Olvera: And then they have to go back and clean it up and get them raised and get a jack and raise them up and then set it down. And then they get another pipe and put it together back.

Q: Wow. And so – oh, go ahead.

Olvera: And then they used to build manholes down the streets in the highways and the street – used to build manholes because they put new pavement on it. And then you have to go there and dig it up and put some more blocks on it, um, um bricks to build it up and then fill it up with cement. And sometimes, sometimes you start from the bottom and then put the bricks.

Q: Wow. And so then did you retire then from the city?

Olvera: Then I retired. I put in, uh, 23 – 23 years for the city until I retired.

Q: And that's the City of Prescott.

Q: Okay. And then, um, so now we're gonna finish up and I'm gonna ask you some questions, just your opinion. And then thinking back on your work and your experience as – at the Iron King Mine, what do you want your grandchildren to know about it, like your work at the Iron King Mine?

Olvera: Well, the only thing I see that I worked un, underground for so – so deep. Ran all the machines that they had down there. All the equipment to hang the pipes and rails and set up the machines and, and then work in the grill bringing rocks and – and then finally I, I used to go out and bring some more materials, lumber to brace them up so – so it would be tight so when cut in. And used a post – like a 10 by 10s to brace it – to brace it out and they have those stickers put it in and hit it with an axe to – to make it tight so it won't get loose.

Q: Yeah. So, then you want them to know all the work you did, the hard work that you did.

Olvera: Uh-huh, the hard work.

Q: And then, uh, how do you want the memory of your work and your experience in general to be remembered at the Iron King? And your brothers too?

Olvera: And my brothers.

Q: How do you want that memory? Do you want it to be of a hard worker?

Olvera: Hard worker. Yes, you had to be a hard worker. And, when I was working, I worked – I never slacked up or anything like other guys, sometime used to do in their little job. “I wanted to get something here, I got to go up there and get the stuff,” and then they go out there and then they mess around out there two or three hours, then they come back, and you say,

“Well, what happened?” “Oh, I got tied up over there,” but they wouldn’t tell you what they were doing. When they went out, they don’t want to work. Um. And then they used to bring stuff, say, “Oh, I got to go get this, I got to go get,” – and then they’d come back two or three hours later and I’m all over here digging holes to hang the pipe up there, the insulation, water lines and – and they had put pipes – 24-inch pipe and they’d get gunny sack wet them with cement and then cover it up so the air don’t come out. And they have to get all those materials. All day. Hmmm.

Q: So yeah, so then you did all this hard work, and then sometimes some of your fellow miners were up there –

Olvera: They were up there messing around.

Q: Yeah. *[Laughs]*

Olvera: Terrible. Um. “What happened?” “Ah, got tied up, ah,” “What did you do?” “I don’t know.” I don’t know, just wouldn’t tell us what they’re doing outside.

Q: Yeah. And then is there anything else that you want to comment or say before we move on to the second part of the–

Olvera: Well, I used to bring all the jackhammers to drill because their heavy their about bigger than this, bigger than this set. Heavy. I had to carry - go to the station and get them and bring them back and then set it up so I could start drilling for the high beams to hang the material up there. And – and then I put a little where you come in put a little bell – I put a little bell. I had about, I had ten carts going into the side to fill them up. And then every time I ring the little – ring the little bell, I moved up front and then the guys ring and ring, and he was, he was already filled, and he would ring the little bell I moved the materials a little back.

Q: And so that little bell would tell people that you’re –

Olvera: They’d tell people yeah.

Q: That you’re filling up your –

Olvera: That I was coming out with a big load on them, so get out of the mine and then I turned my switch to one side so I could get up. And as I get up, I get off and I walked back and I turned the track back so the other car – the other people could go back, so they could go this way, and another goes this way.

Q: And those were the Ys that you were –

Olvera: They're the Ys, yeah.

Q: ...that you were talking about.

Olvera: To get in.

Q: Wow.

Olvera: Then I had – then, uh, then I had another, I think it was a 15-lever. They had a- air – air doors. You had to go, oh maybe about 100 feet back, I think, probably 50 or 100. You had to push a button so the air to open the door because it was air pressure on them. You had to get, open before you start going with your material. Going to the stations with all the carts you got. So it was, so you wouldn't hit the doors, have to push that button for the air to – so the doors would open to go across.

Q: And was there any accidents with those doors?

Olvera: No, as far as I know, no. Sometimes the people – well, one of the guys because he was just playing around. He played around and fooling around and knock the carts off. And that wasted a lotta time trying to pick it up and then to unload it. I had to get jacks to lift it up and set it back on the track.

[End of Interview Session]

Transcription Service: Verbal Ink	Session: 2 (Photovoice)
Interviewee: Antonio Olvera	Location: Chino Valley
Interviewer: Denise Moreno Ramírez (Q)	Date: December 13, 2018

Q: Okay, Antonio, can you talk a little bit about what you have in your hand?

Olvera: Well, I have in my hand a lamp to work to wear on my head and – and pour water – put water here, and let it sit and this is your flame then where you want to big light or a small light, you turn it, it clicks. Turn it like that and it makes a brighter light. And then you turn it down if you want a medium. And then you get your sparkle, over here, and clean it up a little bit and put a little nail to clean it up. And then you get the sparkle and take this – take this back, take it out and then you put your sparkle in there. And then you turn it around. And then after it's all set – set up, you put it in your – you light it up with a match and then you sparkle it. And then you turn this to see how much light you want it and then you put it in, in your head, in your head. And as you walk down – down to the shaft,

whatever you want to go walking, you got your light on. And this power here, I don't know, I don't remember where I got that powder. Well it's been there for long time. But that's the only way you can light it, put water here and then, then turn your lock on so much water will go in, and then you have it on the head and then you turn this little wheel here to make a sparkle so you can light it.

Q: And can you show us the powder? Ah very good. And so that is what you would put with the water.

Olvera: Yeah. This is, this is the water goes in here and come up through here and it grabs like a little spa- drops and gets enough water in there and then – and then you close it. And you shake it a little bit and then you just do that.

Q: The sparkle.

Olvera: To sparkle to light it up. And the rest like that like that you, you time your light, and you put it in your head and walk on.

Q: And walk on in in the mine.

Olvera: And walk on. Yeah. But I don't remember what year around this this was, from like um. And the other day when I went up the other house, “I don't remember the little lamp I wear.” And I look for it and finally I found it. It was with the stuff I brought. I mean, I was gonna go clean it. It's had a little rust because it's been there so long. I scraped a little bit, but –

Olvera: Well, when I'm ready to go underground, they get my lunch, get my – my clothes and get um maybe a rope or something for in case I pull something. And then um at lunch time, we used to set it there on the side where I was working inside. And then it was time to, to eat, I go down and sit down on a rock or a bench whatever we got down there and then I open it, I clean it up a little bit and I then I open it and then I get my lunch and then my coffee here. And then I'd close it. Then I turn around and I see - I don't think that's the house number but it's just the same thing. And then I walk down and my name - initials on it.

Q: And what did you -

Olvera: I walk down to – down to the underground going down and take my lunch and everything. And then I get my lunch and come up and get my metal and put it back where it goes, and I was doing okay.

Q: And what did you eat for lunch typically?

Olvera: I ate some um lunchmeat and have some weenies sometimes, um cheese crisp I used to do sometimes I do it and put it on. I had my coffee. It was sugar and coffee – I mean milk. And it stayed there.

Q: And did you eat underground or did you –

Olvera: We ate underground. We sit down whatever place we could sit down. And sometimes we put a little big rock - like that and I put it there and put one in here and put the lunch here and eat it from here. Underground.

Q: And did you eat with other people, with other miners?

Olvera: Well, yeah. With my partners. Yeah, I had a partner, now he's dead. Or they, they come – to eat together. Sometimes they come, “Ah I'm gonna meet him, we're gonna eat together.” So, then we ate, and he goes that way and I go this way to go to work.

Q: And what was your partner's name? Do you remember?

Olvera: It was, uh, Ybarra. Frank Ybarra.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: And then another guy from, uh, Jerome, his name was Jessie. But I couldn't remember the last name. Jessie, he used to come and say, “Oh let's have our lunch. I'll sit here with you. Let's have lunch together.”

Q: Was it Jessie Carreras? Do you know?

Olvera: No, he was working outside. With my brother outside.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: He unloading and loading down.

Q: Uh-huh. So that was then your lunchbox you used at the Iron King.

Olvera: Yeah. It's um – “Okay, time to – time to go home.” I guess. I get my lunch [Unclear]. This is where [Unclear]. “Come and eat.” And then after we eat, “Okay, you know what, let's sit there a little – sit there a little for ten maybe fifteen.” And then we'd go to sleep because it was so hard – we worked so hard you relax after you eat and relax, we went to sleep. And then say, “Oh, sleep.” [Coughs] And then, pretty soon we'd see the cage coming down, the boss was coming down. “Hey, hey, the boss is coming. What, what, what, what were we doing.” Oh, and I'd look at my watch. “Aye, we've been sleeping here for two hours.” [Laughs] He said, “Well,

let's get up, let's get up let's go faster, go back up and pretend we're doing something." You know, and sometimes he goes all the way down, but he would come sometimes to check to see what we were doing. Yeah. And then we were so gassy and sleepy, especially when you work graveyard you stay all night and then you eat your lunch and just relax and, "Ah, went to sleep. Hey, we went to sleep for two hours, let's get, let's get out of here." He said, "Well give me the little book, right here." So many carts I put in, but I never put, put. I just fill them up and I never, I never fill them up. Something like that.

Q: Yeah.

Olvera: It's about – I would say about maybe 30 to 40 tons a day carrying the ores to the station - bringing the carts, load them up all day. Sometimes I'd make about three or four loads and that was it and it's time to quit.

Q: So that was a lot of ore you brought out.

Olvera: A lotta ore. A lotta ore.

Q: Wow. Is there anything else you wanted to share?

Olvera: Yeah. When they bring it up, sometimes they used to – I used to go up – up there when I had a little more time. They used to go up with the other guys up to the mill for the mill, the grinder. They used to grind it. After they took it out of the ground and fill it up and dump it in like a grinder and dump it over there with the whole thing. And then this machine would run it and run it and crank, crank it and busted it. And then after it all cut up, it goes down to the – to the – to the level – to the next level where the big bucket is, and then they – and then they fill it up and then they put it up to a belt after it was all grind up and everything, they run it and then they put a belt on it, load them up at the tank where they would out it up, and then from there they used to fill a truck and take it down – down to the railroad tracks.

Q: And send it to Texas.

Olvera: And then they used to send it to Texas, they used to send it to El Paso. There was a – did you see it? There was a lotta tracks. I don't know how many tracks they have after, afterwards. But they used to – there was one big rock oh maybe about that big, it went into the grinder where they grind it and that rock just kept going and going. Couldn't break it. Couldn't grind it and grind it and finally it got stuck and the – in the plate, it got so tight and it pop, it went up to – to the ceiling and went up to, to the roof and came up through roof and it never broke it. That was so hard, so hard.

Q: And do you know what was in there?

Olvera: When they took it to the – to the mine – I mean, to the surface outside and they tested it and see because they had other guys checking all the doors if they had gold, they had to take the gold to the outside.

Q: Wow, and so did it – it didn't hit anybody when it –

Olvera: No. It didn't hit. It was so tight, it got so tight, it popped out. It popped and it went to the ceiling and knocked the roof off.

Q: [Laughs]

Olvera: And I never knew what kind of rock it was it or what was it. It was so hard.

Q: Wow. Because it was iron – I think iron.

Olvera: Probably iron and zinc and something else in there. It was all mixed up.

Q: Yeah, because...

Olvera: And kind of green and kind of purple. Then you see little streaks of gold in the walls. [Laughs]

Q: Oh really?

Olvera: Yeah. They said, "Um, I'm gonna take some of this." You can't take it. Well, I said to myself, "I won't take it because if they catch you" – and sometime when you're coming to the station to go out, sometimes the bosses would check the lunch pails, to see if you were taking anything out of there.

Q: Oh, okay, making sure –

Olvera: Making sure you're not taking anything out.

Q: Mm-hmm. Yeah, because they had gold. That's true.

Olvera: They had gold. I see a big piece about that big, great big one like that. Because we don't have many like that.

Q: Yeah.

Olvera: And then that guy over there, they dump it over there, they use to wash it down and disperse the gold to – to the zinc one side and the gold to the other side, and then they put some kind of a metal.

Q: Wow. And that's how they would separate –

Olvera: They'd separate it.

Q: And that was up – up in the surface.

Olvera: In the surface. Yeah.

Q: That they did all that.

Olvera: In the – yeah, the outside.

Q: So, then your lunchbox has a lotta history.

Olvera: Yeah, it's got history. And then, when I moved over here. Well where is my lunch. I know I have a lunch, but I don't know what happened to it. Then I started cleaning the house to move over here and I found it. Ah, here's my lunch. Yeah. I've been looking for it.

Q: Oh, that's neat.

Olvera: And then I kept going and then I found this little lamp. I said, “Well, I know I have a lamp but where I don't even know.” I've been over there seven years, and um finally I found it. It was over there, I brought it over here it was in the boxes.

Q: Mm-hmm.

Olvera: I said, “Um, I'm gonna save this, this is antique now.

Q: Yeah. Thanks for sharing that with me. Yeah.

Olvera: It's pretty nice.

Q: Yeah, that is. You can pass it on.

Olvera: The ones at the mine had – they had a little, uh, probably about half of this light, the batteries – the batteries were about this high and about this wide. And they had a light on it. They had a clamp on it too, you can put it on your head. But they had a cable there.

Q: Okay.

Olvera: And then you'd get your lamp, your number, your lamp. Then you go to work and then when you get out of work, you take it out and then put it to charge it again.

Q: Okay, so they had batteries.

Olvera: They had batteries. They had about two set ups on it, so the other people would come in, they have two battery. And the other guys had another one for the night shift and then now for the graveyard. So, every time you come up, you took your batteries to charge so you have it ready for next morning.

Q: Mm-hmm. But the one that you showed me earlier, the one is the older style.

Olvera: Yeah, the older style.

Q: Yeah. And you used that type in the mine?

Olvera: In the mine, yeah.

Q: Yeah, wow. [*Laughs*]

[End of Interview Session]