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Rosemary Rios

Abby Kennedy

Laura Vasquez

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Interview with Rosemary Rios

Conducted at Glen Hill Orchards on Glen Road, Mt. Vernon at 4 p.m. on November 5

Interviewers: Abby Kennedy and Laura Vasquez

AK: I'm Abby Kennedy, this is Laura Vasquez--please say your name.

LV: Laura Vasquez.

AK: And we are interviewing Rosemary Rios and we are in Glen Hill Orchards. The date is...

RR: Thursday the fifth.

AK: It's Thursday the fifth. And we're going to commence the interview now. Okay.

LV: Also, if you... you seem really fluent in English but if you want to say anything in Spanish that works fine too. I can ask you the questions in Spanish, or-

RR: English better. I just learned y Spanish. I speak Spanish but I don't speak it fluent, you know. My husband does perfect.

LV: So, we can just begin with some questions about your background. You said... where you're from?

RR: Well, I live in Dallas Texas but I just moved to Florida in '93 and I've been coming to Ohio for, going on 7 years. Picking apples and working in the packing. So we prune and we get everything ready for the peaches and the apples, we do everything. We carve, we prune the trees, we trim trees; we do everything. Hard work.

AK: How did you get involved in this?

RR: My husband. He does the kind of work he does since I met him since we got married--I've been married 3 years--but he was doing this before I married him so I got into it. And that's it.

AK: How is Knox County similar to where you came from and how is it different?

RR: Oh, it's different because it's a lot of mountains and it's more friendly than Florida, Florida's kind of dead. There's a lot of Spanish people and a lot of American people but, you know, we come back to Florida every six months so we don't really know if that means anything. Like, we come here in March and we're supposed to finish in October but we're staying here this year, the whole year. So. I like Ohio better than Florida. I don't like Florida--it's too hot (*laughs*).

AK: So what was your first impression of Knox County?

RR: I don't know... I guess the work, the people. I don't know what to answer about that.

AK: What did you think of the people?

RR: Oh, they were real friendly. They're more mature; I guess there are older people here in Ohio than in Florida. In Florida there's a lot of young people and Ohio's kind of quiet.

AK: I thought Florida was big on retirees.

RR: Un-uh, not where we are. Over here it is; seems like all I see is older people. I guess there are lots of retired people and... there's nothing to do in Ohio. In Florida, there's a lot to do. Here, you've got to go way out to Cleveland and Cincinnati to enjoy yourself, but here in Mount Vernon it's kind of dead, and that's what I like. [It's] not noisy. Me and my husband; we're not party people so we just sit at home (*laughs*). Sit at home and get old.

AK: Do you know anything about the local Spanish-speaking community?

RR: What do you mean?

AK: I mean, do you know any people who speak Spanish in Knox County, aside from your husband?

RR: No, nobody.

AK: I'm going to backtrack a little bit. What made you stay here after your--because you came with a group--

RR: Uh-huh. Well, I'm not with a group. We used to be with a group but we're on our own, you know. (*Statement repeated a number of times*) But since Maureen hired us to work, we just stay here. We don't have to go if they tell us to go. We're on our own. We like the people that we work with and especially Richard and Maureen (*unintelligible*)... we'll see how we do in the winter because we haven't been in the cold for a long time. They like how we work, and we're here everyday, long time. We never talk about wanting to go home early--wanting to do this or wanting to do that--we always do everything. We never say no.

LV: What's a basic day? When do you start, and what's your typical day... ?

RR: Oh. Well, we used to work from 7 to 4. Depends on the orders. And then I go home. Then I come pick up my husband at 5. He eat, takes a shower and goes to bed. We're asleep by 6:30. (*Laughs*) So we don't have anything going, that's our regular schedule. We're on our own, you know. We're not like, going to see our friends go do this; we do that once in a while on weekends but most of the time we like to be by ourselves. You know, all the other workers left, and we're so glad. We're used to being by ourselves; nobody around us or anything. We get along better. You know, because, we've had other people along because, you know we live in trailers in groups. You've got people who are lazy, people that drink and start fussing, and... not clean. I'm not clean clean myself, but I like people who are decent. And we've got some workers who were, you know, not. But I like it here. That's why we stayed--to get away from everybody.

AK: What do you do on the weekend?

RR: Wash. Go buy groceries, but on Sunday, because we work on Saturdays. So we only have Sundays off. Once in a while we'll work Saturday until 12 o'clock, but if we have a big order, we work all day. From 7 to 4, six days. If you're doing the peaches, you work on Sundays, sometimes, during the peaches, you work on Sundays sometimes, because we take orders and [the peaches] have to be picked or they'll get all rotten and stuff; they'll fall... so during the peaches we usually work on Sundays.

AK: How does working at Glen Hill compare to the other jobs you've had in the past?

RR: To me, they're all the same. You know, if you like your work, you like to come to work, you'll enjoy it, but if you're not happy in your job--a lot of people say "I don't want to do this, I don't want to go to work tomorrow"--but I like it. We're up by 5:30, on our way to work. We're never late or anything. I like it, because you know, my daughter--I have a daughter--you know, if you don't like your work, you're always going to have problems. And I've never had a problem here. Never, and I've been here almost 7 years.

(Long pause)

AK: How does your daughter like it?

RR: Well, my daughter's in Dallas.

AK: Oh.

RR: I have a daughter that's 21 and she works for the phone company, and I talk to her as much as I can, and she's happy--she's glad I'm staying because she doesn't like me traveling back and forth so much. Because it's an 18 hour drive from here to Florida and it's kind of dangerous, going, you drive careful but you never know if you trust the driver; we were almost in a car wreck coming out here. The guys was paying attention to his girlfriend, not the road, and almost threw us off the bridge. That's why we decided to stay because... you know we go back to Florida and stay for 3 months and then Maureen wants us back, so we decided it was just a waste of time, going for two months of three months then coming back up here, so we decided to stay. I think she wants us back in March, so why spend over an thousand dollars finding an apartment, then come back? So we decided to stay. It's better.

AK: How do you like the place you live?

RR: Oh, it's a nice little trailer.

LV: Is it right around here?

RR: Yeah. *(Explains where.)* We live right next to our supervisor. His house is here, then there's two trailers. And that's mostly where all the peaches are, and apples and everything. There's a lot of deer, a lot of wild turkeys, it's nice. I like it. Kind of gets a little spooky in the dark back there *(laughs)*, but it's okay.

AK: What kind of obstacles have you faced in your job?

RR: What do you mean by that?

AK: Hmm. A good question... well, what's the hardest thing you've had to do as a... would you really call yourself a migrant worker?

RR: No, just a regular employee. I don't know why they use that word anyway, why they use the word "Hispanic" or "Mexican". We're all the same, we're just different colors. I mean, I know a lot of them are illegal--they'll have it in the papers, anywhere you go, you'll have people like that from other countries. They come here; some have got papers, some don't, you know, but they're all hard workers. The thing about Hispanic people... they're the only ones who like to pick apples and oranges, and be out in the field. That's what I heard from here, they've had Chinese, White Americans, and all--they don't want to pick. It's too hot--it's a hard job, a really hard job.

AK: What's the hardest thing you've done since you've worked at Glen Hill?

RR: Oh, you know, shovels for picking up dirt, (*unintelligible*) taking bushes out, on your knees, it's hard. Especially when you get out there and it's been wet. You get mosquito bites, you get gnat bites, and all that stuff. That's what I don't like. But you've got to work. And that's hard, especially on the women, because you're on your knees, you've got to pick up heavy things; anything they tell you to do, you've got to do. You get blisters on your hand when you do the shoveling, and stuff. So.

AK: But you like it?

RR: Yeah, I like it. I was hoping I'd lose some weight but I didn't. (*Everyone laughs*) I gain weight here in Ohio. I lose weight in Florida and I gain weight here. But we like it.

AK: Do you ever feel isolated?

RR: Nope. No.

AK: You like your privacy.

RR: Yeah. (*laughs*) Yeah, we do.

AK: How long do you think you'll stay here and what do you think you'll do afterwards?

RR: Oh, we'll be here until next year, until October of '99. If we like it, we'll stay here, every year. Because they need help because we have a lot of trees, of apples and peaches. They planted almost 4,500 trees of apples and peaches. So all of them need to be pruned, and they've got to do a lot of fertilizing and stuff like that.

AK: What do you feel like you link is to the community, beyond Glen Hill? Do you go into Mt. Vernon very often...?

RR: No, not very often. I go in to get groceries to get my lotto number. I play a lot of lotto. Yeah, what do I feel when I go in there?

AK: Yeah, or what do you think about Mt. Vernon?

RR: Well, I like it; it's pretty and nice. It reminds me of being out in the country. Everywhere I go, people say hi. Sometimes we get people look at us like "Oh, look, Hispanics", you know, they've never seen any Hispanic women or Spanish people. They're just like (*opens her mouth and looks astonished*). We laugh. Me and my husband laugh. We come into a store, like Kroeger, or anywhere, and the first time we got here in May and they say us walk in, they were just like (*surprised expression again*). And my husband goes "Look at 'em, look at them". You know, I guess they've never seen--there's a lot of Chinese and a lot of Indian people but I don't see may Mexican people here--you see them in Columbus but not in Mt. Vernon. You see them in Taskala, and Carol, and Lancaster, but you don't see them in Mt. Vernon. I think we're the only ones sometimes. But after the apple season starts, that's when you start seeing them more and more. We have like twenty people come here. That's when you see Mexicans.

LV: Is there anything of the Hispanic culture than you incorporate into your life here?

RR: No. Un-uh.

AK: I think I'm set. (*To Laura*) Do you, do you have any more questions?

RR: My husband can answer a lot of your questions, because he's more Spanish than I am, since I was born and raised in Texas, and he was born in Mexico so he's probably know more. He's working farms and he used to be a policeman in Mexico, so he'll probably know more.