

Interviewee: Charlie Jaquez

Location: Cooper Room, Nielson Library

Time: 4:00pm

Date: 01/28/2015

Notes: We interviewed Charlie Jaquez at Adams State University in the Jack Cooper Room.

Interview:

(00082. video)

03:23

Interviewer 1 (Ben Waddell): What is your relationship to the valley more specifically your relationship to the town of San Luis.

Charlie Jaquez: I was born in Alamosa in 1946, so I am 68 years old. That means in 2 years I will be labeled as elderly. I've lived in the Valley all my life, with the exception of college. I got a BA from Adams State in Physics and Math, then went off to the military U.S. Army for 3 years. University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, received my masters in Physics. I came back to San Luis and I taught at my high schools for (30 years)?? And then I retired and got in school board and was there another 6.5 years. I've been in the valley basically all my life. Didn't matter where in the world I was I knew which way was home San Luis. When I was in Vietnam I knew which way San Luis was it was that way, and I went on R and R and I knew that San Luis was right about down there you know. My dad and my grandpa, and my great grandpa they were the kind of people that they were born (diver??) then a 10 mile radius. I think I said that in an earlier presentation I haven't died yet so. I'm still within that radius pretty much. I...um... Some people will tell me like my brother in law he's from Colorado Springs, He goes what Centennial that's my town that's where my boys went to school. I have two sons. There's no football there. None of my nephews will go to school without football. I said oh well...now they do, they play with Sierra Grande. But...um... I... I..have no regrets about it, if I died here right now you know uh.. I have no regrets about how my life has gone its been full and ugh happy man. My wife she works for BOCES, and she is a retired teacher but ugh she still likes to be a part of things, she's a paraprofessional now she does uh... speech..uh.. speech therapy and she goes around the valley, Antonito, Sierra Grande, Alamosa, Centennial, San Luis, Manassa and um.. this Valley is is uh.. its kind of, a ah.. it has a uh magnetism or a spiritualism that um..that I found out throughout my life I mean yeah obviously I didn't have any intentions to live here but uh.. when I came to Adams State there a lot of people that I met you know who were roommates and friends and uh upon graduating they didn't want to stay here in the San Luis Valley you know or here in Alamosa. So it does have that well uh.. Mt. Blanca is one of the Sacred Mountains of the Hopi as the I think the eastern Los Lunes Naginie (??? 6:40) So there's uh something there at least that's what I feel. And I feel an attraction to the people and to the cultures because I spoke Spanish before I spoke English. But um there is cultures here in the valley and um.. I feel an attraction to the way we live. There's an agriculture base that people love the land, they love the water, love the air, they love the mountains and uh.. I concur. I go along with them

7:20

Interviewer 1 (Ben): Well um, I hope you don't die here in this moment uh..

Charlie: oh no no no I do not plan to do that

Interviewer 1 (Ben): you mentioned that, that is a possibility, I certainly don't hope that doesn't happen, I did want to uh... follow up with some of the questions or some of the things you brought up you know I, I wonder for a young man leaving the valley in the 1960's uh I'm not uh sure if you went to Vietnam around the 60's or the 70's

Charlie: I went in 69.

Interviewer 1 (Ben): but but my question would be you know for a young man leaving the valley, the valley is an isolated place with a very distinct culture and a number of different distinct cultures what was that experience like and what did you remember most when you were far away from home?

Charlie: well um... it was... it was hard and um having to leave home to start with. Um even when I came to Adams State that's like only 40 miles to San Luis you know so we could go home on weekends and as we got older I say we because my brothers and sisters also came to school here and as we got older you know we got more into education you know like uh we can't go home this weekend cause we have to study at the library ya right and we were actually at... at the Beefs you know having some drinks or whatever. Um but... I did you know especially going into the military I had never met anyone that I knew. Well one person Larry **Hiasheta** from Fort Garland. I had heard of him but I didn't know him. I met him in the.... In Fort **Belt** of Virginia. We were officer candidate school together. He's a cool cool guy. Um so I was... I was uh uh alone among millions of people. You know but um, uh... I was okay with that. I... I know. I think my parents did a good job in... in letting us know that we can fit in the world wherever we go. You know if that is where we wanted to go. I didn't want to go to Vietnam right away but that is where I went um, and there um like I say I always knew which way was home and I could hardly wait for the freedom bird that's the air plane that would take us home. The freedom bird that would uh carry me home and so uh when I went to uh grad school at UNC in Greeley uh they the culture there is a little bit different the racism, the racism is more uh was more uh obvious and um I use to belong to a group called uh The UMAS (The United Mexican American Students) and we would do um... uh... picketing like a Segway. We use to picket the... But the county commissioners uh for things like the great to boycott was on the list. Boycotting was on at those times and uh and there would be people you know (Shouting) GO HOME MEXICANS you know uh (shout) GET A JOB MEXICAN uh that kind of thing which uh I mean there is racism here in the valley don't get me wrong. There is racism, there is reverse racism. I mean it goes both ways um but it's not as open as I experienced in Northern Colorado like it was, it was pretty blue. It's pretty brutal. It's it's the learning experience you know uh people we just have that goofy gene or whatever it is that it has to be a picking order on uh uh I'm better than you, I'm taller than you uh whatever smarter than you I'm richer than you uh I'm whiter than you, you know and and its still going on right now I mean the Vietnam war which was I experienced was a horrible thing that humans do to each other its terrible um and um the training that we got was and I might of mentioned it the night of the that I did my presentation that I don't hunt anymore because I developed an inversion to weapons because of what we were taught in the military, I mean the weapons were for for extinguishing lives that is what they are for and there was lots of them I mean shhhe golee and and uh some people really like it. Its fun you know its fun to shoot at targets and I had a friend and he was a Latino from California and I always wondered about him but I think he is probably in heaven now um he could hardly wait to go because it was the ultimate hunt

(00083. video)and he was so good. He had that extra sense that he knew when something was wrong. When they would go on patrols you know they went first, those kinda guys don't live that long. Um and I don't remember what I was uh gonna... I don't even remember what your question was so we will stop there.

Interviewer 2 (Tori): Well you had mentioned the strong connection to the valley and to um that your classmates had to the valley even being pulled home after going to to war. Do you think that this generation still has as a strong of a pull to stay here in the valley as your generation did?

Charlie: You know what I think probably not much but um you can go to San Luis and there is the grandparents and the parents and the children and they all live in like the same little lot or whatever you know uh we call it the extended family. And uh that was that used to be very strong and I think its I don't know for whatever reason that its um its weakened somewhat so that our kids pretty much have plans to leave the valley. They have plans and when I say that I mean since I was a high school teacher they graduate and they left the valley. Uh they left San Luis because what's there for them if your not working for the county, for Valley Wide Health Systems, not working for the school district, or if you have no business I mean there is nothing else you know so they go off to school they go to the military, they go off to work some place else. Which is what happens in the valley anyway I mean in in from what I found uh uh certainly when I was a school board member at Centennial uh we have what we call declining enrollment that means schools are getting smaller and smaller in in enrollment. Whereas I have friends that teach or administrators in the Front Range area and their schools are exploding and you know the walls cant contend they have so many kids. Why is that? Well because they are going from here over there that's where the jobs are the opportunities are and so um rural Colorado has that we just don't have the resources that the Front Range offers and but as far as Do I think the our kids get a good education? I think so there's a good example you know uh they do well um but I know when my son started as ah as ah freshmen at CSU he he was in this honors program and so he they had a lot of meetings and with the parents and all the kids and all that but there was some kids there they were starting school as first semester juniors they were only what 18 years old why because they the large schools had what AP classes. Here in the valley we have AP classes here and there but you know we don't have that.

Interviewer 1 (Ben): I want to back up a little you mentioned that you spoke Spanish before you spoke English, it would be fascinating to hear a little bit more about what that process was like as a young boy going to school for the first time um and and how negotiated that myself my little girls we speak Spanish at home my wife is from Central Mexico and shes two and so shes speaking and we occasionally ask her for example how do your friends at school speak? And she'll go "Ah wssh wshh wshh" but I wonder what that experience is like for other people that grow up speaking Spanish

Charlie: Well it was pretty brutal uh actually because I um because were taught that Spanish was wrong that's the brutality part. And sometimes I think like what were my parents thinking what were they thinking they knew I would be going to school and my brothers and sisters we would be going to school and we were speaking Spanish only. So I go to school uh that that time San Luis was a public school then public school district number 1 didn't have a kindergarten so I went straight to first grade. So I walk in there with my pants all and I still have that (?????) I still have that tablet says Indian chief tablets that's red and has an Indian chief on it. And uh I didn't know what the teacher was saying and she didn't know what I was saying and um and so but started negotiating the system and I started learning English little by little and my parents did a 180 no Spanish at home all English which is you know I'm going like that's nice but as a little kid if I spoke Spanish and we didn't speak Spanish in school because we knew it was wrong we were told that it is maybe they didn't say outright that Spanish is bad Spanish is wrong they didn't say that but the actions were uh English in the classroom only and then when we went out to recess sometimes the teachers would catch us speaking in Spanish and that's where the ruler came in and they smacked us on the backs of the hands that really hurt there I'll never forget that pain um so as a little kid I knew Spanish was bad but my grandma and grandpa spoke only Spanish and they live in San Pablo which is where I live now and they weren't bad people had a hard time as a little kid with trying to figure it out Spanish is bad grandpa and grandma are good people but they speak Spanish you know what's going on here. Then you know I finally did figure it out um but uh it was uh hurtful experience you know that we couldn't speak Spanish and uh its still here I mean Colorado passed the called the English only law uh official English. That was I fell was directed at people like me that speak Spanish it wasn't directed at people that ah speak English, Japanese, German, or Italian you know I felt it was directed at us so um but the bilingual thing I think is really is come and gone like in the school systems when

I was first teaching we had a bilingual program and the kids would do pledge of **elegance** in English and Spanish and then finally the program went down to it was a federally funded program and I don't know what schools are doing now off and on they do bilingual and a lot of times not. But here in the valley I have friends in the Boulder area they have so many languages that are being spoken there I mean not just English and Spanish like here in the valley they have several uh uh Asian languages that are being spoken um because they have kids from all over world there so its um it's a problem that I think that um at least from what I've seen in the Front Range area that they deal with it because they hire people that can work with those kids and get them into mainstream um they are a little softer with the concept than say uh the conservative view of this is America speak American you know which means speak English and and that's all. So um I think were were a little bit more humane about it now that's that's you know what I feel that were more humane about how languages are treated.

Interviewer 1 (Ben): And how did those types of experiences influence you when you became a teacher and when you stepped into the education system?

Charlie: uh well certainly I had empathy for for sometimes we would get kids from Mexico they were monolingual kids and then I'd go like well you know a lot of my friends your monolingual you know they they it was like a battle monolingual like ah you know like ah your monolingual English you know I mean say something in Spanish um but it was tough especially in Math lord I'd have to look up about every word you know cause I didn't know my vocabularies but I mean I could speak a conversation in Spanish I could say bad words as well as any other Mexican but um to do technical terms and all that that was pretty tough but um no I didn't have any discomfort with it I was challenged and um and I I like working with kids that needed that extra help um just because they had to struggle with the language itself but it didn't take them long no it didn't take them long and theres we sometimes I mean sometimes didn't take them long at all I remember I was ah I used to have this group called um River Watch and that was through the Colorado Division of Wildlife and we would take water sampling I think Sierra Grande did it for a couple years but we did it for many years and uh then we had another one called Project del Rio and we would monitor water of the Rio Grande we had a school up near lets see maybe Creede or South Fork and then schools all the way down to **(Matamorison 9:56)**Mexico so we used to get a full vile of the Rio Grande every year at a certain time. We got ah all the different ah um pollutants that were in the water turbidity and on and on its very very cool project but we went to um what was called a Water Congress in La Cruses New Mexico and I took my students it was kinda like a science fair. And anyway um we did a project that that won and I had talked to the students about it before and I said okay so uh do you guys wanna go wyo well okay well do you wanna do a project yes okay is it gonna be to win or just to do it. And they have to think about it and finally the decided it was a project to win so they worked really hard on it sure enough they won so there were was like four American schools and four Mexican schools that that won and the prize was that someone would go rafting on the Big Bend and the Rio Grande in Texas and we'd camp out there for like a week it was but we met um they had met students from Mexico and of course American students and uh I met a lot of teachers but I ah I talked to this one teachers from Juarez and uh I said why don't you guys come and visit us and he said we cant I mean they don't let us we don't have the money uh its really really hard why don't you come and visit us, so we did we went to visit them we went to Juarez and you know San Luis well Costilla County and Conejos County have reputation of being the poorest counties in the State of Colorado. Okay so uh so Centennial being a part of Costilla County were you know were the poorest county in Colorado and we went Juarez and we had just gotten a brand new van at the time (laughs) so we show up in Juarez these rich Americanos rich Americanos yeah right from San Luis yeah

(00084.) Colorado I mean were like we exuded wealth that was unbelievable my kids are dressed to the hilt you know they were we had brand new van uh soft drinks in a cooler in the van and ah music and what all to get into the school the van was so big the school was so small uh the entrance I could hardly they had to stop

traffic on main street (eeeeerrrrppppp) so that I could maneuver the van to get into the parking lot of the school uh that kinda thing and the differences between between us and them were huge humungous I mean as far as I mean we say ah we come from a poverty area (chuckles) um this what we say over there that was poverty you know um but going back to language there going I had took I don't know I had took some kids from Alamosa too by the way that went with us one of them was ah ohhh what was his name Lorie Gonzales son he used to play in a band with his dad I cant remember their names, but um I remember two of the girls came to me one of them she was Martinez and the other one was Vigil and they came to me Charlie I... administrators in my school district had trouble when they said that you have to have them call you Mr. Jaquez and sometimes they would call Mr. Jaquez but it was usually Charlie. Charlie the kids here are calling us "gringas" and I'm Martinez and she Vigil" I go well over here theres no Martinez and Vigils (Spanish accent Martinez and Vigil) but um so we would be translating theres me and Dr. Freeman he was our sponsor he did like the valley he was like the administrator for that program and uh would be uh translating you know and I had a kid one of my students that was in Art art student that did an Aztec Calendar a painting God it was gorgeous and then we had a little brass plate on it was from our school from our country to their school in their country and wow it was a big hit you know it was a big hit. But you know by lunch time or so the the Mexicanos were speaking English and the the Mexicanos were speaking Spanish I mean enough to be able to you know like well I remember one of the students um they wore uniforms over there so white shirts white pants or white blouse and black uh skirt one of the boys came over and said maestro and he asked me if I would ask one of my students if she would show them her tattoo. How do you know about her tattoo. Well he knew about her tattoo (?????? 3:02) well he wanted to know if she would show him her tattoo okay so she went over there she had a tattoo on her thigh you know uh so I mean they they could communicate pretty well and it was interesting they took us to a little a little uh uh what do you call it shanty town uh that they had adopted that their school had and that that their school was really gosh compared to our schools they were very very poor they had very few books they you know the maintenance obviously they didn't have daily maintenance going on in their school you know that kind of thing and here it's a different environment its warm over there you know theres leaves sometimes in the corner of the classroom because you know the you know the windows are open almost all the time that kind of thing. Um but they took us to the shanty town where they were working with these people that were getting water from the pipa and to us the pipa is a pipe but to them the pipa was the water tank the water truck that takes um supposedly potable water to the people who live there what they were doing was ripping them off they would take them gray water and you know the kids were getting sick and it it was really horrible and um what I remember about it was they would steal electricity from the power lines how they did it with out getting killed I don't know but they take a wire throw it over the power line they bring that wire down and straight in their house or some of them they took it through the wire over the power line connect it to a fence and they were hooked to the fence and the wires going across the dirt road into the houses. Um I thought oh my God you know its an eye opener about how you know how we talk about poverty here but there are different levels and I saw poverty in Vietnam I mean that a whole different level you know where it even effects you're your life span you know I mean when I was there I mean their life expectancy was 37 at 37 they were old they were gonna die well here in this little shanty town um these kids were standing up for the people they were standing up for them and making sure that they got good drinking water and that they paid for what they got and all that then we went to the Rio Grande they showed us where they got their samples and as soon as we got there within minutes seconds probably the immigration naturals station service was there with rifles and binoculars and there was like uh two or three trucks pickups and those guys had rifles and had binoculars and they had uniforms and um well uh I you know I can see I mean its just theres a cable and this is Mexico and the other side is USA I mean that's so you know there gonna make sure that nobody crosses that cable but it was um its ah (wheew) the way that that people don't get along you know the way that we should get along and don't get along and the way that some people have to live compared to others you know these dudes here I mean here at Adams State I mean geece this is I mean this is really something you know compared to what other people in this

world have to live through or they have to you know they have to die young I don't know why that is I... I've thought about it but I don't know why that is there is such ah such ah terrible distribution of resources around our world you know cause people are people you know people are people people doesn't matter what language you speak what kind of food you eat what kind of music you listen too ah all people eat, sleep, group, drink, um want to be happy want to be loved I mean doesn't matter where in the world that happens but we haven't we haven't figured out how to do that

Interviewer 2 (Tori): So you talk a little bit about those students really being connected with that community and wanting to give back to that community um how do you think that kind of connection happens here in the valley with students today and just in the community in general that connection

Charlie: um you know I don't know where it comes from but there is that connection theres that connection I'll tell it where it was extreme where it was extreme was in Juarez. When we went to visit that school all those kids they wanted to stay in Juarez and wanted to be you know of course these are kind of more motivated students they wanted to be doctors and lawyers and professionals that would work with the people in Juarez. And um and here are kids um well I'll take you know my son for example his name is Carlos uh he wants to be uh uh uh family doctor and he'd like to work in San Luis that kind of says it all you know from me because you know its its its pretty tough you know its pretty tough to to come and stay in the valley if your young ah and you don't have if you have a job your good but I remember I used to be on the board for Valley Wide Health System and uh we were always recruiting doctors doctors are hard to come by and they would last a while but unless they had rural roots they didn't last or if they were married and their spouses couldn't take it they didn't last it wasn't that they didn't have plenty of work or that it was about the pay you know it was that the lifestyle was just too different to different for them so yeah we do have ah ah I would say its majority kids though that want to ah stay here in the community and ah give back its not that they want give back its that they want to get their life on track and they know they are not gonna do that in Conejos County they are not gonna do that in Costilla County I don't know about Alamosa, Alamosa loses a lot of its youth too you know they they don't stick around.

Interviewer 1 (Ben): I'd like to follow up with a question about another young man who in the 60s and 70s came back to his community and got involved with a movement to to regain access to some of the traditional lands in San Luis and that was of course you um and I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your motivation in getting involved in that the last time we had met you left me with some literature that I was able to read more about the the land grant commission report and and I just I'd like to understand a little bit of um kind of your personal motivation in going into that so maybe if you could explain a little bit about the situation and what lead you to get involved in it.

Charlie: Um well ah I think basically it was that an injustice had been ongoing for decades and I you know I saw it as an injustice um actually especially like to stay the summers in San Pablo with my grandpa and them I call San Pablo the suburbs of San Luis because its 5 miles away see and ah I ended up in Suburbia ah but my grandpa lived out there and he was a farmer and rancher you know ah ah and on Sundays Sunday afternoons all these old guys ah would meet at some little casita there in town and um they'd have a meeting about how they can get the mountain back and they'd throw in their 5 dollars to get an attorney and I thought I mean even as a little kid you know I'm like 5 dollars for an attorney what is that gonna get you well what it got them was they got squashed in court they did they got squashed and um so when I got back from Vietnam well I went to graduate school for a year then I went back to San Luis um I was kind of I had a different mind set in those times because I had some anger issues in me because um I was a sure I'd like to hunt small game I was basically fishing and small game hunting that's what I liked my dad used to hunt big game ah but the Vietnam war did a lot damage to a lot of people my age and you may know some of them if somebody says a Vietnam vet they all go like look out you know look out their their damaged goods

(00085.) and um we all are damaged goods I mean I remember downtown well it wasn't downtown Denver it was in Denver some place I was wearing my uniform and people spit on me you know be well because you know and they were yelling at me you know about yelling at me about my enrollment about going to Vietnam and (tutututu spitting) you know you clean that stuff off you know and your like what what is going on here um and that's what I meant about the anger issue what is wrong with you you know God damn oops sorry um so when I came and I started teaching at ah Centennial ah I was ah you know I was not happy man I was happy to be home and all that happy to be away from that terrible environment um um combat environment but I could say the pledge of elegance for like 5 years I mean we had to do that everyday at school in San Luis and I do this much you know but I am going I aint saying those words it's a bunch of bologna that's the way I felt at that time you know and um and I...I say that because uh there was injustices within that whole um Vietnam era thing you when I went to basic training I met every kind of person there was I mean there was guys there eating with their hands you know and um languages all kinds of languages all kinds of people but uh after we got done with basic training then we had this one formation and they were giving out orders to the people because we graduated from basic training and they have given out orders and they going to finance chemical core and uh and then the rest of us were what did they call us some kind of personnel infantry and I looked around and its like man everybody is brown or black and there was some white boys but there you probably heard the story they're southern white boys and that's who that and that was the part of injustice going on in Vietnam too that make even angrier that you know there was well I have a friend that ah she was from Kansas and well I ah was showing her about how we had ah there was six guys from Costilla County that died in Vietnam and I did the rubbings at the Vietnam wall and um and shes going like well in my town in Kansas I cant even remember if anybody going to Vietnam let alone dying in Vietnam cause it was a white (????2:38) town and then there is you know then there is us. So um that that's kind of part of the damage you know that was done um bring me back to your question again.

Interviewer 1 (Ben): And so how did that you know you know when you said that you came back you you weren't completely happy and perhaps a little bit angry how did that influence your involvement in the land grant form

Charlie: okay yeah uh uh there were there was others of us you know uh there were other Vietnam vets and I am not just saying this a Vietnam vet movement but uh there was a lot of it involved and um we said um lets do something about it and in 1978 there was a group uh down in uh Chama in San Luis and a little town of Chama that formed whats called Land Rights Council and the objective there was since Costilla County is originally a Mexican Land grant not a Spanish Land grant those came from Spain a Mexican Land grant which came from Mexico and it happened in the 1840s and that's when the US was doing it manifest destiny trip and we got to control from sea to shining sea and all that kind of thing so Mexico is trying to protect its its boundaries and its frontier lands because Mexico we'd be in Mexico right now all the way up to the Arkansas River in Pueblo that was Mexico and so the Mexican government was making ah grants to people and um and their charge was colonize that that land and protect it and and the land will be yours uh to the settlers now the guy that got the grant uh it was his grant but and then he would deed out land to to the settlers and um so they would they used the mountains I mean they lived with the mountains I mean that where they did their grazing of their livestock that's where they got their fire wood that's where they got their timber to make their corrals and the houses and all that kind of thing well um that went on for over a century you know that people in that community were still using the mountain when I was a kid we used to go up the mountains all the time it was our backyard. Now to to these kids its its ah background kind of like the picture on your Ipad or something you know its its ah pattern or something its its ah background because it was closed off it was closed off by the guy that bought it in 1960 and he closed it off and um so we went we went to court we filed a class action lawsuit in 1981 and it took like 30 years to go with that lawsuit on on and on it went on and on and on but uh finally in 2002 um the Colorado Supreme Court miracle um said that we did have those rights the Mexican government gave the rights to those people in the first place the US went and

kicked Mexico's butt in the war with the Mexican American War they call it in Mexico they call it the (5:42 "la Embasion de los Norte Americanos") Invasion by the North Americans uh and so that's when Mexico lost almost half of its territory um and so now this is this is USA and um and we say well the Mexican government gave those rights to the people they should still have them and um and the courts generally said no no no that's Mexican law blah blah uh but the Colorado Supreme Court um said this has been going on for two decades now lets see what is going on and they they got into it and uh they said yeah those people should have those rights they they we wanted the heirs of the settlers to have to be able to claim their rights um the Supreme Court used American Law they said um um ah not predecessors entitled but what is after ah successors entitled should have those rights so that means uh and so when in 2002 I got a key I got a key to go up to the ranch and I can go up there and I can get firewood I can get timber for corrals or ah if I had live stock I could take them up there for grazing and um and its part of my deed now and if uh I sell my property to you then your successor title or to you you're a successor in titled it it not an heir of the original settlers that's what we wanted and that's not what we got but then you would have those rights as well and that's going on right today that's pretty amazing really uh it opened a can of worms in land grants in land grant issues because there is a lot of land grant issues throughout Colorado, New Mexico you know California Florida uh New Mexico is pretty big into it uh so it was it its kind of amazing thing that the Supreme Court found that we did have those rights by American (???????7:52) you know they said following our laws we find that you do have these you have the right to go up there um because the guy that bought it and the mountains have always been owned by somebody um from the original grantee um to you know who the last person that (8:11?????) the persons who own it now is called Sierra Vista Ranch they own it now um in their title it said that that the land was subject to the settlement rights so called settlement rights of the local people and um if there was earlier um owners that tried to extinguish those rights and um in the end failed to do so so we have those rights its unusual for the USA I'd say.

Interviewer 1 (Ben): have you noticed that having those rights has changed the community in anyways in the last twelve thirteen years

Charlie: well were hoping that it would have some economic impact on the community because the community ah farming ranching there is subsistence you know there are no big farmers no big ranchers there I mean uh we have big farmers say Sargent Monte Vista you know that big center pivot systems and all that even Fort Garland so but down in the San Luis area uh no there are its basically subsistence uh but herds are starting to build up uh so that means that some of the ranches are getting more and more cattle some of them have more horses some of them have talked about sheep and uh Division of Wildlife has talked to us at the Land Rights Council saying would you um not let people take sheep up there because they are going there gonna eventually kill the big horn sheep which us ah big trophy and um and well go well you know we are for traditional use rights and that includes sheep herding and those big horns are transplanted anyway but you know for big game hunters um so its had an effect that people are its been some relief in a lot of people are going up for firewood again and there not getting hammered by heating their homes just with propane which is very expensive um but its been a slow process there aren't that many people that are that are grazing ah livestock up there and you know theres less than two dozen up there that are doing that but they have issues with the ranch because the ranch I mean we might have four or five hundred cattle up there or 200-300 pairs they call them um but the ranch has like 2,000 3,000 elk up there and theres the clash about you know the land is being over grazed and our our um grazers are going well you know the deer are I mean that theres deer too but the elk are basically ah over grazing the whole area and the ranch is saying well you people with your cows up here are just over grazing the area and so that's something that needs to be worked out but I think its its had a positive effect it hasn't been a negative impact on community its had plus theres like it's a different outlook like like ah theres hope you know there which it that had been gone for so long there that never be able to go up the mountains we almost ah opened up the mountains to the community for the Fourth of July which it used to be the tradition up there when the mountains were just open I mean now its

been fenced and gated everything but before you know it was it wasn't fenced you would go up there all the time for the Fourth of July the entire community would just go up there and have picnic.

(00086. 10:00 ends)

Charlie: ___ and what all. Uh this last year we talked to the ranch to the Sierra Vista Ranch we being the land rights council. Uh about maybe opening it up for that. So we were working together and we were and we were making some headway then our attorneys got involved then uh their attorneys our attorneys and you know security and liability and blah blah and hopefully fell apart. But you know maybe in another year or two maybe maybe it will happen. So I think that's a positive thing for the community.

Interviewee (Ben): and then you know I think we were getting close to that time where we want to wrap up the interview here pretty soon but um there is a final question that we would like to ask uh of you and it has to do with your favorite place in the valley and we wondered if perhaps you would share with us where it is you most treasure in the valley and why?

Charlie: gee that's a that's an unfair question you know.

Interviewer 1 Ben: Its' her question to be frank

Charlie: hey how come how come you didn't pick my place. Well you know what uh as long as I am in the valley Im at home. Doesn't matter where it is. I mean it don't have to be San Luis or San Pablo cause I the mountains are always there to tell you where you are. You know as appose to lets say being in Kansas where there are rolling hills and they go all that way forever or we went to go visit uh some of my um my in laws in um Michigan and we we driving down this highway with all these uh evergreens and we'd like drive for an hour and (chu chu chu chu chu) the trees are just going by going by going by and an hour later its like we are still in the same place you know I and I'd go how do all these people know where they are I mean dang its you know your just in the middle of this huge uh forest um where as here in the valley you know where Mount Blanca is and then where the Culebra is and so on. Um but uh I think I think I have places that are magic magic places and one of them is Mount Blanca and another one is Culebra Peak cause I like I like and my boys like to climb. You know they like to do climbing. Uh those are those are like super magic you know they theres just something you know when when when your up there like you're the you're the first person that's ever been there which of course isn't true but uh that's what it seems like and theres like a spiritual connection that's kinda hard to explain and even though I have a friend that he is here from Alamosa he is a retired art teacher he taught at Centennial to and um I remember we went up there to Mount Blanca with him one time and and uh he did this one uh he he interacts a lot with Hoppe he has a t-shirt uh whats it uh don't what is it uh anyway the one that i would say be happy is his B.O.B and uh and he left uh chili at uh a green chili at one of the trees and that kind of thing uh because he was you know paying his his respects you know. And uh I don't laugh at that uh as a matter of fact when the timbering was going on in San Luis cause the th at the ranch that uh up in the mountains they timbered the heck out of that there for for awhile and they did a lot of damage and so we asked we'd have people come down like ancient forest rescue and earth first and and really radical times you know I mean they chained themselves to the trees to the trucks and so on. And I remember we'd have meetings with them or barbeques and something and theyd have us hugging trees you know and howling like like coyotes or wolves and um and this just that we don't we don't do that typically but its not that it. One time we had a meeting a Land rights council meeting in Chama and it was a cold fall day man the wind was blowing it was cold teole anyway uh finally uh we had these these uh dancers that came

from Mexico and they were going to perform for us and so um they said okay its time so we went outside and were zipped up uh you know were up against the wall the winds blowing and these guys from Mexico the dancers they came out in loin cloth you know and some some feathers and beads and uh conch the little conches and they went they faced correctly into the wind you know they hailed the brother the wind they did their four directions and Im going oh my god you know we gee ole I mean here these guys are hailing the brother the wind and here we are ya freezing crouching and all that its just the way you look at the world you know just the way you look at the world so I don't know I I know I I missed your question because I went off on some other tangent

Interviewer 1 (Ben): I think that is exactly what we were looking for

Charlie: Im good at that

Interviewer 1 (Ben): Culebra Peak is a very beautiful place

Charlie: oh yea no doubt

Interviewer 1 (Ben): it is certainly special so

Charlie: but when I am in the Valley I when like especially like when I was in the military and a uh uh and I if I come home on leave uh once I got into the valley it was like man this is this is a magical place you know I mean now Im now I'm home when I'd say if I was coming from uh from uh if I was in Maryland there for awhile and Virginia and um driving on I-70 the speed limit was like 85 I think and there were days I mean it was unbelievable and I had this hot car back and I could haul butt (wooooo) and then after awhile wayyyyy out there you could see the mountains the peaks and Im going alright! This is looking good you know I mean I knew I was getting close to where where I was complete. You know and once it got once we got in you know close to Denver and you could see the mountains and I knew I was home cross the mountains and I was in this magic place here called The San Luis Valley its it probably doesn't make sense but it that that's uh that's uh the way I feel about it I, I love it.

Interviewer 2 (Tori): So to close out our interview, if you could talk to somebody whose never been here in the valley what do you think they need to know about this place?

Charlie: well they just need to know that um that climate is something to be concerned about I mean I don't um recommend driving across La Veta pass right now without a jacket and an extra banana or something in your car because uh it will take you you know the mountains are uh beautiful but they are brutal too. Um, I I've gotten sucked off that that La Veta pass where I thought I was going to die it was in the snow storm and I was by myself. I was so happy that I was by myself because I go thank you lord cause I don't wanna be responsible for somebody elses death. You know that you know they say this is Colorado if you don't like the weather wait 30 minutes well you know that that is literally uh true . and so I think that's one of the things uh the other thing is um just be prepared for the wide open spaces, the wide open spaces because we still have them. Uh and thats uh its um its so different people don't live elbow to elbow here you know we were kinda spread all over the place heck in the whole San Luis Valley there aren't as many people as there are at a Broncos game at Mile High stadium on a Sunday afternoon I mean you know its uh and and people know each other a lot my wife since she teaches all over the valley I mean we cant go to uh Safeway, City Market, Walmart, its like she knows everybody it seems you know and uh and I do too for that matter of course Ive been around for a long time so your bound to meet a lot of people um and um as far as if you expect lots of um excitement. If your expecting to see the, to have the the city here it it doesn't exist it doesn't I mean there is Alamosa okay we thought that was a city but um if you want, you need um excitement from sports uh you know professional sports or uh drama productions uh shopping I mean that's that's in Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver, you know that's where it is its not here um in al in Alamosa that's that's the hub of the

valley this is the hub of the valley and if we need if we need food or gas or whatever we come to Alamosa and then and then go back out to the rest of the valley um it's a beautiful places lots of gorgeous sunrises, gorgeous sunsets, lots of stars at night, lots of stars. That is pretty magic too my son Bryler works with some of his friends uh last year and they were like freezing their neck and you guys are going to get frost bite they just couldn't believe that there was that many stars I mean wwwwhats that? That's the Milky way and their like oh my god look at those stars its uh we have a lot going going here in this valley you know and you know its uh its uh place that uh takes care of your soul if that's what if that's why you like. If you need excitement that guy over there with the camera man uh no TV Stations here in Alamosa your going to have to head out to the big city

(Laughter)

Interviewer 1 (Ben): I think that's a perfect ending point, well we certainly appreciate you coming in and uh

Charlie: Thank you for the invitation

Interviewer 1 (Ben): We will do our best to uh to get you you know as as we start putting the information together we will do our best to ta to get a copy of it to you um either via email and um you-tube so a little technology

Charlie: ya sure sure

Interviewer 1 (Ben): or through uh hard copy on a disk so

Charlie: Okay