

VICENTA M. SINGH

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An Interview by Wanda McDonough

Wanda McDonough Oral History Project

Tape No. 12

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ORAL/TAPED HISTORY INTERVIEW
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Interviewee: VICENTA M SINGH 573 No 600 E, BRIGHAM 723-6002
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Interviewer: Wanda McDonough
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Interview: 9/27/93 Brigham City, Singh home
Date Place

I willingly contribute my testimony recorded on 9-27-93
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Vicenta m Singh
Interviewee

Wanda McDonough
Interviewer

WM: This is the recording of an interview with Vicenta Singh, made at Brigham City at her home, Brigham City, Utah, on September 27, 1993. The interviewer is Wanda McDonough.

VMS: I was born on August 25, 1920 in Elwood, Box Elder County, Utah. My father was Sunder Singh. He came from India. And my mother was Petra Moreno. She came from Mexico. You see it was East meets West, and I am very proud of my background.

WM: What did they do? Why did they come to Utah, the two of them?

VMS: My father had some relatives living here in Box Elder County, and when he left India, his intention was to come and see them. He decided to stay and became a farmer. First he was a shareholder working for other people, and later bought his own land, and had his own farm.

WM: How old was he when he came?

VMS: He came to Corinne in 1916, and was 26 years old.

WM: What had he done in India?

VMS: My father joined the British Army when he was 17 years old. After being in the Army for a while, he became a sergeant and instructed the new recruits. He became one of the color guard that escorted King George whenever he was in India. Then one day he decided to come to America. That was his dream. And so he came to America and landed in Seattle in December 1912. He visited Utah in 1913, but he went back to California where he worked for a sugar factory in Woodland and later for the cotton gins in the Imperial Valley in Southern California. They tried to recruit him to become an actor in the movies, but he said the movies was not for him. He would rather be a farmer. Then when he came here to Utah in 1916, he worked in Collinston and later in Corinne. It was in Corinne where he met my mother. My mother came here from Mexico. Her father and her brother were recruited by the Utah-Idaho Sugar company. It was during the war, and they brought them here to work out in the fields and the sugar factory in Garland.

WM: During which war?

VMS: It was in 1918, so it would have been World War I. They recruited them to come and work in the sugar factory and in the sugar beet fields. My father worked on a farm as a shareholder, and my mother's family went to work for him, and that is where he met my mother. And they were married in July 31, 1919.

WM: Where did they live then?

VMS: They lived in Corinne, and then later moved to Tremonton where I was born. From Tremonton they came back to Corinne where they lived until the day they passed away.

WM: Was your father ever a Catholic?

VMS: No, but he was really the one that would see to it that we went to church. When they first got married, there wasn't a church here in the area so they had to go to Ogden. Mama would tell us about the times when Daddy would take her there in a buggy. It was a long trip, and sometimes they would stay in Ogden and come home the next day. When the priests first started coming here, it was my father who used to say to us: "Now get up and go to church. Remember, they have come a long way, and you'd better get up and go to church." My mother of course was the Catholic--but he was the one who drove us to church and made sure that we got there. I know the nuns that used to visit them on the farm would always say to him: "We're sure going to baptize you." But he never did get baptized. My mother always kept her faith. She would pray every day. When I was a little girl I said to her one day, I said, "Mommy, teach me to pray." I was just a tiny gal and so she taught me to say the "Our Father" and the "Hail, Mary" in Spanish.

WM: Did she speak English at all, your mother?

VMS: This is what was kind of surprising. Mother would never speak English when we were around, but when anyone would call to the house when she was alone, she would answer the phone and talk to them, be it Spanish or English. Callers would say, "You know, every time we're talking to your mother, we feel we're talking to you." I would say, "Well, she doesn't speak English," and they would say, "Oh, yes, she does." But I really did not realize how well she could speak English until just a few years before she passed away. She learned it from my father. My father also spoke Spanish--I think he was quite an intelligent person. I mean he would learn things real fast. He worked his way to the United States. When he was in China, he learned one of the Chinese dialects, when in Japan, he learned Japanese, and when he was in the Philippines, he learned the Spanish language. So when he met my mother, he already knew Spanish. Also, being with the British Army in India, he knew the English. A lot of times he would speak English to her. Where we used to farm my dad used to run some farms for English-speaking people. A lot of times Mother used to go look for him, and they would talk to my mother in English. I guess she learned some English from them. Then later on we kids always used to speak English at home.

Very seldom did we speak Spanish unless we were speaking to her.

I learned to read and write Spanish when I was in the third grade. My mother used to get after me when she would say, "You're not going to learn the English if you're just going to learn that Spanish." But I did it myself on my own and did pretty well. And if I couldn't say the words right, my mother, being from Mexico, would teach me. Her Spanish was a little different from the Spanish spoken here in the United States, by a lot of the people. She always wanted me to learn the real Spanish from her part of Mexico. When I was 13 years I was an interpreter for a Mexican during a court trial. My family was proud of me.

WM: Well, what about your father's native language? Did he speak it?

VMS: My father was from Punjab, India, and spoke Punjabi. He used to speak it when people (that were from India) came to his house. But we never learned it. I had an uncle that was going to teach me. He spent one day with me, and I still remember what he taught me. I can still say the numbers and alphabet. We learned to understand a lot of what my dad was saying when he was carrying on a conversation with other people. We could understand what they were talking about. But as far as speaking, no. We don't know it.

WM: You said your mother had some trouble getting here. You said they were recruited, but why did she have trouble? Getting through? Pancho Villa, or something like that?

VMS: Yes. My mother came from Mexico at the time of the Revolution. My grandfather was a merchant, and he used to travel from state to state taking merchandise. And of course they were looking for anyone that had a little money because that's what they would take, their money. They always felt that my grandfather had some money. And as I understand, they had gone to the house several times to look for him.

WM: Who was they?

VMS: The soldiers. They were looking for him, and the family became quite scared. They decided they would leave and not live there anymore. So they left, and all they brought with them were just a few belongings. They came to Juárez, Chihuahua, just across the border from El Paso. My mother, her father and her brother got a job in El Paso. They used to cross the border every day, going back and forth working

in El Paso. It was in the fall of 1917 when the sugar factory went to the border at El Paso, and that's when they were recruited. My mother came here in March of 1918.

WM: But she came right from Mexico? She never did live in El Paso?

VMS: No. She came here directly from Mexico. My mother had been married before, and she had a young daughter that came with her, my sister Maria, who still lives in Ogden.

WM: How many children did your mother and father have? What kind of a family do you have?

VMS: My mother and father had six, three girls and three boys, and we're all living. I have a brother John and sister Santos who live here in Brigham City. I have two brothers Marcelo and Peter who live in Corinne. And I have a sister Rosalie that lives in Roy. We now are kind of a United Nations. My one brother, his first wife was German, Irish, and English, and my other brother married a German. My one sister married an Italian, and the other sister married a Frenchman. Then there's my brother and I, we have never married. So now my mother's and father's grandchildren, they're all getting married with different nationalities. So it's just a big United Nations. We get together and have an annual reunion, and most of them attend. It's kind of nice to see. I say to myself--"They're just like different nationalities coming from different ethnic groups and we can all get together."

WM: Do they all speak English?

VMS: Yes. All of them speak English.

WM: Plus the other languages.

VMS: Yes, some speak other languages. Like my sister-in-law speaks German. She came from Germany.

WM: Where were you educated? Where did you go to school?

VMS: I went to school at Corinne and Box Elder High. After I started working, I took some classes from the University of Utah and from Weber. I have approximately two and a half years of college, that's all. I also took a lot of courses from the Army schools. And I took some classes from IBM in San Francisco. (We had to take some tests in order to work for the government.) I worked for the Army. My first job was at the Ogden Arsenal, and I was there just a short time. One day my family called me and said, "There's a man

at Bushnell that would like to speak to you." So I went to see the man, and he said, "I want you to come and work for me." I looked at him. I had never seen him before. "You don't know me," he said, "but I know a lot about you. I've seen the results of your tests and therefore would like to have you here. We need somebody here." He said, "What I want you to do is more like a messenger job. You will be taking care of all the times, like timekeeping, for all of the wards and all of the offices and so forth."

WM: Bushnell was a hospital, an Army hospital.

VMS: (I had received a letter from the Army, and they had offered me some schooling to become a draftsman/engineer.) So I said, "Well, I can't because I just talked to my supervisor, and he said that I could not go. I know I can't leave there. I have to stay there and work." Then he said, "Don't you worry about it, I'll take care of that." The next thing I knew a captain came and picked me up at the Arsenal gate, and took me around and cleared me. So then I came to Bushnell and worked. I started out like he said as a messenger, and later on I became a clerk. After that I was in payroll, and became the certification payroll clerk. When Bushnell closed, I stayed home for a couple of years. I was born on the farm, and as a little girl worked on the farm. I learned to handle a team of horses, and later handle a tractor. So I stayed on the farm for two years and worked helping my father and my brother.

During the winter months I didn't have anything to do, so I decided I would go and take another civil service test, and I took a test. As a result the Army depot in Ogden called me, and I went there for an interview. They hired me in the fiscal office at Utah General Depot as a file clerk and after six months as a cost accountant. Later on I was assigned as a supervisor for the cost accounting section, and worked there for quite a few years. One day the executive officer of the Depot came to me and said, "You know the computers are coming and we're going to have them. That's the new thing. We've got to start by having some people trained so that we can computerize all of our records. We'll have to computerize not only the payroll and accounting records, but also all supplies." He went on to say, "There'll be someone from the finance and accounting office that will be selected to become the systems accountant." I was the one selected. So I had to go to San Francisco to be trained by IBM. I worked for the Depot until 1973.

Later, I was assigned to headquarters in Washington, DC. They had already called me to work with them in a task group because the Defense Logistics Agency was planning to

mechanize all of their systems. They wanted someone to work writing requirements for programming purposes. So my position was transferred to headquarters in Washington. I worked for them even though I stayed here and never moved to Washington. I stayed here. I used to travel quite a bit. Then later I was reassigned back to Ogden, and I worked for a unit called the Data Defense Logistics Automation Support Center, working in new systems and developing new requirements. During this time I traveled throughout the United States. In fact, my traveling really started in 1969. I met some wonderful people, and I really liked my job. When I was traveling, my job was to implement new systems and train the people how to use them.¹

I retired from there after 38 years of government service, and enjoyed every minute of it. However, it wasn't as easy when I first started there. I'll never forget the first individual I met when I went there. I think he was a little prejudiced. (When it was a Holy Day another Catholic in the office and I would take the time off to go to Mass. He always had some comments about our religion.) In later years he would say to me, "Well, can I help it if that's the way I was brought up?"

WM: Because you were Catholic....

VMS: And also because of my ethnic background. I went through that sort of thing when I was going to school. Our family knew what prejudice was because of our ethnic and religious background. It was bad when we went to school. My sister Santos and I would not go to LDS Primary, which made it worse. So we really went through a lot of prejudice. Some of those kids used to be so mean to us and used to beat us up and all that. In later years some wrote to me and apologized. One day I got a letter from one of the individuals. He had grown up and had gone back East to school, then came back and got married. In the letter he apologized for what he had done to me when I was in school.

Some of them apologized in person. But the funny thing is that it was always the men, the boys, that apologized. I never did get an apology from any of the girls.

WM: Before we stop talking about prejudice, how about out in Corinne when you went to grade school out there? Did you meet it out there? I thought Corinne was kind of an open town.

VMS: It was an open town. When I first went to Corinne school I did not know any English. There were only three words that

I knew: "Hello" and "Keep still." I did not know any other English, and didn't want to go to school because I couldn't speak it, and couldn't understand what others were saying. My dad would take me to school, and sometimes he would stay with me for a little while. At home at night he used to teach me the ABC's and try to communicate with me in English. And that's how I finally got to the point where I could understand something. But when I tried to speak sometimes the kids would giggle and make fun of me. I used to look at them and think, "Someday I will stand in front of a lot of people and do a lot of talking, and nobody's going to laugh at me." Now, after having this job at Ogden Defense Depot, and having to talk to people like managers and commanding officers, and stand in front of them to make a presentation and explain what the computer systems would do, I would think of when I was a little girl and couldn't say anything.

The only time I was ever questioned about my nationality was when I was going to the IBM computer school in San Francisco. I used to walk along the street by some shops, and a lot of times I used to stop and look inside. A lot of people thought that I was an Arab or other from one of the Middle East countries.

WM: That's what I would say, too. You took some children on a trip with Father (Jerald H.) Merrill someplace?

VMS: Yes. In November, 1963, we chaperoned 21 youths back to New York City for the National Council of Catholic Youth Convention. It was really nice. President Kennedy came to talk to the children at that time, and it was just a few days before he was assassinated.

WM: President Kennedy talked to you. How did the youngsters react?

VMS: They really liked him, and thought he had something for them for the future. After he was assassinated, we had a meeting here in St. Henry's, and they said, "What's left? There's nothing left anymore." They had been very enthused about going forward after the President's talk, and now it seemed like a letdown, you know.

WM: Are you still working with the youth in this parish, in St. Henry's?

VMS: No. I just try to help here and there with what I can, but I don't work with them.

WM: Did you send a group to Denver from St. Henry's when the Pope was there last August?

VMS: Yes. I was kind of on the side, helping them get to go. I had a niece and a nephew that went. I think it did a lot of good, and I think it's wonderful. After I left the Catholic Youth, I became a leader in the 4-H Club, and I worked with them for many years. I had been to a Farm Bureau Convention in Las Vegas, and I talked to our President from South Box Elder, and I asked him, "Why don't we have safety training for our young children that drive tractors? There's many that get killed with accidents on tractors." And he answered, "Well, let's see what we can do about it." One day I had a call from Corinne, and they said, "We're going to have a meeting at the LDS chapel. We're calling our youth, and we want you to be there and become the leader."

I said, "Well, I can't do it!" They said, "You can. Your brother there will help you." So my brother John and I, we had a Maintenance & Safety Tractor Club, and we had it for many years. Our youth went to State competition, and one of them went to the National competition. I also had other 4-H Clubs in food and clothing. (They also went to state competitions.) And I enjoyed working with them.²

WM: Now, shall we talk about St. Henry's? You were here before St. Henry's was.

VMS: Yes. I remember the first time I met a priest was in Corinne. A man in Corinne had passed away, and we went to his funeral at the cemetery, and the priest came to dedicate the grave. I remember that there were other small children there. My mother had taught me how to bless myself, and I did at the funeral. The priest noticed this and came up to me and asked, "Have you had any classes in religion?" I said, "No...." He asked, "Do you know how to pray?" I said, "Yes, in Spanish." Then he asked, "Would you like to learn how to pray in English? And would you like to learn more about your religion?" I said, "Yes." He asked, "Would you like us to come and teach you?" And I said, "Yes." The priest was Father (later Monsignor) Patrick E. Kennedy.

This was in the spring, and it was cold. I think it was about the month of March in 1932. Later that spring, they came, Father Kennedy and a lady named Mrs. Green and a man they called Howard. What is last name was, I don't know. They started teaching us catechism.

WM: And they came from where?

VMS: They came from St. Joseph's in Ogden. We met at a house where the Mendez family lived, which later became our house. They came weekly to teach us. I will never forget one time when it was raining and it was muddy, and it was

only Father Kennedy at that time that came. He couldn't even drive the car down the lane where we used to live, so he had to walk. And when he came to class, he was all full of mud. It really was muddy. My dad said, "See! You'd better go to class. The priests come to teach you even if it's muddy, even if it's raining. So you'd better attend class." And so we did. It was just the older group that he was teaching at that time. But most of the time it was Mrs. Green and Howard that would teach us.

WM: Who went? You weren't the only one that came? You must have gathered children up.

VMS: There were the Baltazar girls, the Mendez girls, another Singh girl named Hortense, and my sister and I. Those were the ones that started out first.

WM: All girls?

VMS: I can't remember. There were some boys there, I think, but most of them were girls. At that time there was an Italian family living at the railroad section in Corinne named Mr. and Mrs. Frank Andrietta. Mr. Andrietta's brother lived and had a hotel in Ogden on 25th Street. One day they told us that we were ready to receive our First Holy Communion, and they sent a car to take us to Ogden. We were to stay overnight with the Andriettas in Ogden. I remember the car came, it was a big car, and it was Father (later Monsignor) William E. Vaughan driving. I remember he was very young, and I guess he had just been ordained. I don't know. As we were going by the sugar factory, coming into Brigham, a bird hit the windshield. I'll never forget. Father stopping the car, and getting the bird, and tenderly looking at it, and putting it on the side of the road. And it was something very special, to put it on the side of the road. We received our Communion on Sunday. They got us back that afternoon.

The following year they continued to teach. My niece, my two brothers, the Mendez boys, another Singh boy, and the Baltazar boys used to attend the class. By this time it was Father Sloan that used to come and teach us. A lot of times when Father Sloan couldn't come, I used to teach. I remember Father Sloan would say, "I cannot come next week. Will you teach the class?" And by this time we would come to Corinne for classes. It was in the spring, and it was nice and warm. We would sit under a tree at Corinne at the section house. That's where I would teach the catechism. And Father would come sometimes and teach us. Father would teach us hymns. I still remember his favorite, "Mother dear, pray for me."

WM: Wasn't there a Catholic church in Corinne?

VMS: No. There was never a Catholic church in Corinne. There was property that had been designated for a Catholic church, but it was never built. (Oh, I'll have to get the name of the person that had donated the funds to purchase a Catholic church, the ground, back in 1870.) But they used to use the Opera House to celebrate the Mass. The priest used to come from Denver or from San Francisco at that time. For instance, Father Foley used to come from Denver, I think it was, to celebrate Mass at Corinne.

But there never was anything in Corinne as far as a church went. When this group that I used to help teach received the First Holy Communion, it was the first time that I know of that we celebrated Mass in Corinne since the late 1800's. There was a garage at the railroad section house. Mrs. Andrietta and Mrs. Baltazar cleaned it out, and set up a place where Father could set up the altar. Father Sloan came to celebrate the Mass there, and he brought two altar boys from Ogden, one of which was an Andrietta who later became a priest. I can't remember his first name now. And the other altar boy was Vince Tassone. He's a pharmacist in Ogden now. The class I taught received their First Communion in Corinne. Then we didn't have anything for quite a while. One day we were at this--

WM: Can I interrupt you just a minute? Were you confirmed at the same time?

VMS: No. We were not confirmed then. One time we were reading the paper, and read where the bishop was coming to Ogden to confirm the children in Ogden. So we told Dad and Mom, and they said, "Okay, if you want to go, we'll put you on the bus, and you better go down to your sister's." By that time my older sister was living there in Ogden. "You go to her and have her take you to be confirmed." So my sister and I and this other girl that lived with us quite a bit-- named Hortense--went by bus to my sister's. She got us ready and took us to the church to make sure that we could be confirmed. So we were confirmed then.

WM: Who was the bishop?

VMS: I think it was Bishop Duane G. Hunt at the time, but I'm not so sure. We didn't get any certificates when we received our Communion or when we were confirmed, and I don't remember who the bishop was. Then we in our family started getting some correspondence courses from the sisters in Ogden. We were always anxious to learn. I don't know whether the rest of the people in Corinne got correspondence courses or not.... We used to do our

correspondence courses and send them back to the nuns who would check and correct them. If they were wrong, they used to write us a little note to tell us. Sometimes they used to send us little pamphlets so that we could get involved.

WM: How old were you then?

VMS: I must have been about 13 or 14. They were the ones that let us know later on that they were going to have a confirmation in Ogden. So my two brothers and my sister got confirmed at that time. There were other Catholics living in Corinne like the Roches, who had to go to Ogden to church for awhile. It wasn't until World War II broke out that Father (Joseph H.) Valine came to Corinne, and for a while Mass was being celebrated at the city hall in Corinne.

WM: How often?

VMS: He used to come on a weekly basis. And later it was celebrated at the Methodist Church in Corinne. It was Father Valine and later it was Father (later Monsignor) Jerome C. Stoffel who came. And we celebrated Mass there for a few years. Bishop (Duane G.) Hunt occasionally would come to Corinne and visit my mother and father. During the day, we were in school, at work, or somewhere. And he used to visit them. Somehow, he found out that we were celebrating Mass at the Methodist Church, and he didn't want it to go on any longer. I don't know why. So then the Mass was moved over to the Baltazars' house.

So then we moved, and we were celebrating the Mass at Mr. and Mrs. Baltazars' home until this church was built. During the war was when we got our first church here. It was in 1941. For a while they were celebrating Mass at the War Memorial Hall on Forest Street here in Brigham City. After that they got a house with a big room, and that became the chapel. There was also a chapel at Bushnell General Hospital. That's where the soldiers, patients and visiting families went to church, but a lot of times they used to attend Mass at our chapel. A lot of the families used to attend the Mass at our church there in Brigham.

WM: Where was it, the house?

VMS: It's on First East, and it's between Forest and First North. It's right behind where the city hall is. In 1949, when Father (James C.) Coyne came to Brigham, he went to the sheriff's office to find out where the Catholic church was.

WM: Now this is-- We're going from diocesan priests to Jesuits here?

VMS: No, no. He was still from the Diocese, both Father Coyne and Father (Alfred W.) Harding. The sheriff sent him to my dad in Corinne. He said, "You go out to see the Sunder Singh family. They can tell you where the church is." It's kind of strange because the Catholic church was just across the street from the sheriff's office.

So he went out there, and we told him where it was. In fact we came into town with him when he came in and got settled. When Father Stoffel used to come from Logan to the church here in Brigham, there was a family living there. It was the Visentiners. They used to live in the home and take care of the chapel. When Father Coyne came in, he was by himself. He had me work on the books, and a lot of times we used to do his laundry and other things for him. He was here only for a little over a year. Then Father Harding came in, and he stayed here until 1952. That is when the Jesuits came in.

WM: Why was the church named St. Henry's, do you know?

VMS: I don't know. I have no idea why they named it St. Henry's. Father (Edward J.) Whelan and Father (Francis P.) Dunn were the first Jesuit priests that came here. They used to come to our house in Corinne quite often, and on holidays, a lot of times, that's where they were. The Jesuits as well as the other priests came here because of the Intermountain Indian School. They used to teach the Indian children there. Then later on, the nuns came, and we had a convent on Main Street. During the late fifties and early sixties, on Sundays, the priests would go to Little Valley, by Promontory, to celebrate Mass. Sometimes the nuns would also go to visit the families.

WM: Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters.

VMS: Yes. They kept the Indian children--the Indian youth--quite active. I remember during the summer months, and especially in the fall, they wanted to keep them busy doing something, so they used to send them to our farm. (Some of the Catholic Indian children.) They used to get a bus and drive out there to pick tomatoes. In the wintertime a lot of times we had Indian children in our home. The priests used to say, "We have these Indian children, and we'd like to give them some home environment." So they used to take them out there. I'll never forget these girls. Mother used to let them make a lot of fry bread, and they would bring it back to their school.

I would go and help the sisters sometimes. By that

time we had our own youth, and sometimes I used to teach them.

The Indian Center was built in 1968. It was built so that they could have their religious classes there. The children, the youth, used to come there for their religious training, and also they used to have some social activities for them there.

WM: Why couldn't you go in the school and teach them religion?

VMS: I don't know. I think there was a time when the nuns were no longer going to the Indian school. I don't know whether the government told them they couldn't do it anymore or what. The LDS Church built their Indian LDS Chapel across the street from the Indian school.

WM: I know where it is.

VMS: And so the Catholics built the Indian Center for the Indian School, and that's where they would come for their religious training. That's where the sisters used to teach them. The convent was around the corner from the Indian Center.

WM: Well now, how long did that last? Until the school closed?

VMS: Until the school closed, yes. Then later they used that Indian Center for our CCD classes until it was sold. They sold the Indian Center and the convent about two years ago.

WM: Well, who's up there now? Aren't there sisters up there now?

VMS: No. We don't have any nuns. Since Father (Daniel J.) Charlton came, the nuns were no longer there. I think they left back in 1984.

WM: Oh, the migrant workers. Tell us about them.

VMS: In the early 1960's, there were quite a few Mexican migrant workers coming in to work on the farms. Some of them used to go to church, some didn't. At that time my sister was the Altar Society president. And my brother-in-law was with the Holy Name. They used to "mom and pop" every other week during the summertimes. They used to have dances and other social activities for them. And there were quite a few of them that used to come. One day there were some problems and some disagreements, and they started to fight. So that was the end of the Mexican dances. My sister Santos also worked with the Migrant Council. She helped them set up here in Brigham City, and she used to go around

and visit all the different Mexican families in the county. So she did quite a bit of work with them.

WM: The priests never had contact with the migrants. I mean, they didn't take them into the parish and try to do anything with them?

VMS: Like teaching them CCD or something like that? Well, no, because they were here just during the working season. So there were no catechism classes or anything like that.

WM: So they just moved from here to there and probably never got any religious training.

VMS: Well, they used to come here to Utah. Then from Utah some would go to Idaho, and then come back to Utah and back to Texas. That's where most of them came from. Some of them used to stay all summer long here in Utah in Corinne, Brigham, Tremonton, and other places. We had our own laborers that used to come to the farm to work, like thinning and hoeing beets, picking tomatoes and work like that. And some of them would move from place to place. One day my sister said to one of them, "How come you keep on moving, going from place to place? Why don't you stay in one place and get a job?" They did listen to her because they're living here now.

WM: Did any of the Indian kids like Brigham City well enough [that] they stayed here? Do you know?

VMS: Yes. There are a few. During tax season I work for H&R Block. Some of them that I meet when I prepare their tax forms tell me they used to go to the Indian School. Some live in Ogden and some in Salt Lake.

WM: There are a lot of Native Americans in Salt Lake, Catholics, too.

VMS: I know some of the students who used to go to school in Brigham are now living in Salt Lake.

WM: You said people came from Tremonton and around. St. Henry's has grown, I know, but how big an influence did the Thiokol people have on it? Was it growing before that? Or did they make it boom?

VMS: When Thiokol came in, yes, little by little it started growing. There was also an increase in the parishioners. When they laid quite a few of them off, there was a little decrease, but then eventually it started to increase again. There are also other businesses that came into the area,

and there were some Catholics that came in with them.

WM: Like what?

VMS: Well, there's Vulcraft in Brigham City, Lazy Boy in Tremonton and Nucor in Plymouth.

WM: Well, now when they started Santa Ana Mission in Tremonton--?

VMS: It cut our congregation some because the ones that go to church there used to come in here. Mass was celebrated at Tremonton in the Utah Power and Light Building and later in the Methodist Church, but some of the people came to Brigham.

WM: From Tremonton and Garland?

VMS: Yes, and there were some people from Snowville that used to come.

WM: But you're still crowding in that little church.

VMS: There is the Mass on Saturdays, an English Mass on Sundays at nine o'clock, and the Spanish Mass at ten-thirty. So it doesn't get very crowded anymore. The only time it really gets crowded is during the holidays.

WM: Like Christmas and Easter.

VMS: When we were using the Methodist Church in Corinne, we would celebrate the Midnight Mass there, not in Brigham. A lot of the people from the Corinne area that used to come to Mass would be there. Our organist was a Methodist lady. My sister, my brothers and I used to be in the choir. I remember Father Valine always saying to my sister, "You ought to go to Europe and study voice." "That voice!" he'd say. "You'd better go there and study music."

WM: I understand Father Valine had quite a good voice himself.

VMS: Yes, he did. He was from Europe. Wasn't he from Portugal?

WM: Portugal, yes.

VMS: This lady, Mrs. (C. G.) Adney, used to go to Midnight Mass and play the organ, and also for Easter. My brother used to get moss from outside to put around the Christmas crib that he set up a few times in the Methodist church.

WM: Were the Methodists meeting there? Was it still used as a

Methodist church, too?

VMS: It was still used as a Methodist church, too. Then for a few years my father used to come to town and buy boxes of oranges and candy, and distribute them to the little kids as they left Midnight Mass.

WM: What prospects do you have for a new church, a larger church? Or do you think you won't need a larger church now that they have the mission out at Tremonton?

VMS: Well, you never can tell. New industry may come in and more people may move in. And we do have the property for a new church on the west side of town. When I was little, I know that there wasn't a church, and I used to pray because I wanted to go to church. And I used to pray for a church.

WM: Would there be any chance of two parishes? Or wouldn't there be enough to divide up the whole parish?

VMS: The population has to increase quite a bit before there could be two of them. I don't think there could ever be two. That property over there was bought for a school. Then when Thiokol started laying off some of their people, they decided not to go ahead with it.

WM: Do you need a school now?

VMS: Well, I think it would be wonderful if we had a school.

WM: But you have religion classes?

VMS: Yes, we do have religion classes. I have taught religion here at St. Henry's in Corinne and in Tremonton since they've built that church. But I'm only a helper now because I'm involved with America First Credit Union. Religion classes are on Tuesdays here, and I have to go to America First board meetings on the second and last Tuesday of every month, so I can't make it to both. In between if they need me, I'll help.

WM: Who teaches the classes? Just lay people?

VMS: Just lay people.

WM: The priests don't take any part in it?

VMS: No. When I was with the CYO, we used to have two hours. The first hour was for the priest to teach religion, and the second hour was for social activities. And that really worked wonderfully. I'm kind of proud of the youth that I

taught. Sometimes I hear from them. If they ever come to Utah, they'll stop and see me. One time there was one that came from Florida. He said to me, "Why don't you get us all together again?"

WM: A parish reunion.

VMS: Yes. Have a parish reunion. Some of those were the children of people that were working here for Thiokol. But where can they be? I know there are some back East. I know some of them went in the service and became officers, and some of them are working in computers. They're all over.

WM: This is aside from the parish now, but I've got to ask you. When you were young, do you remember the Depression and what you did and what life was like during the Depression period?

VMS: It was kind of hard. We had plenty of food because we lived on the farm, and we raised all of our vegetables, chickens, and pigs, and we had cows, so we had milk and meat. It was hard when it came to things like clothing and the like. We were poor just like everybody else. I can remember that somebody told my dad to go downtown and get some flour. But he said, no. He was the kind of person who believed that you had to earn or pay for what you got. When they told him to go get some flour, he said, "Okay, I'll go to work." So I know he went to work for a week to get a sack of flour. After that we used to grind our flour. It was hard, but we had work to do.

WM: But if you had food, you were pretty independent.

VMS: Yes. We were independent. Mama used to sew and make our clothes for us.

WM: Speaking of your father, in this area there must be other East Indians. You said that there were. Have they ever found a place to worship in their own religion?

VMS: When my father first came here, there were a lot of East Indians here. I found that out through the census when I tried to get some information. They were all farmers working on farms as shareholders. They did not have a place to worship here. Their nearest church was in California. My father was a Sikh. There are several Sikh temples in California now. There are some East Indians here from Punjab from where my father came, and they are Sikhs. There's a lot of them that have gone to colleges here, and a lot of them are working here as teachers,

engineers, chemists and so on. All the ones that I know seem to be in professional work here. They don't have a church here, but I think they meet in Salt Lake every so often. I know there are some Anglos that have joined the Sikh religion and worship with them.

WM: I just wondered if they were still around, if they have ever formed any kind of a group.

VMS: Here in Brigham there are some, but I think they are Hindus. There's a difference between the Sikhs and the Hindus. I don't know whether they have any place to worship. I know the Sikhs do. When Father (Joseph M.) Clark came here, we were still at the house on First East. At that time Thiokol was already coming in, and there were quite a few people. I remember one time when working at the Fiscal Office, I went to the Post Engineers' Office, and they were talking about how they were going to take bids on some buildings. One of the buildings was the chapel that they had at the Defense Depot, Ogden. At that time it was Utah General Depot. So I told Father about it. I said, "Father Clark, there's an old chapel at Utah General Depot, and it's going to go up for bid." By that time Bishop Hunt had already bought the property where we're at now. So he said, "Whom do I see?" And I said, "Well, it's the Corps of Engineers, but they're in San Francisco. You can put your bid through the Post Engineers at Utah General Depot."

So Father Clark went to Utah General Depot, put in his bid, talked to them about it, and got the chapel. So then it was moved to Brigham, and we set it up. A lot of the finish work was done by Father (Thomas V.) Savage. He was quite a carpenter. And my brother-in-law, Godfrey, did quite a bit of work finish work on it, too. He is a carpenter and does finish work. My brothers had their trucks and came in and cleared out a lot of dirt from the parking lot so that they could put in pavement. My sister did all of the drapery for the living quarters for the rectory. She made them all and had my brothers and her husband come in and put them up so they could be ready for the dedication. My sister also did the secretarial work for the priests for many years, about 25 years. It was just all volunteer work. She used to live in Corinne, and would come in to type the bulletin, and anything else that the priests wanted typed. I used to do the books, and we would do any other work that they wanted us to do.

WM: You don't work now except in the church? Oh, well, you said America First.

VMS: I hardly do anything at the church now unless they ask me.

I'm just a helper right now. For many years I was a member of the Finance Committee. I was recently asked to be a member of the committee again.

WM: Well, you said you'd been on the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (DCCW), and we've skipped that. What did you do in the DCCW?

VMS: I was a member of St. Henry's Altar Society. I was the Youth Chairman, and at one time Publicity Chairman for the parish. I was chairman at one time of the Spiritual Committee and of the Youth Committee for the northern district.

My sister and I used to attend the DCCW meetings. My sister also worked with DCCW. She used to help when they would get things ready for the big party they used to have every year for the Intermountain Indian School. The bishop would come and be with the children and give them cookies, candy and punch.³

WM: I think every parish in the diocese--

VMS: --used to make cookies. I know because they used to bring all of these boxes of cookies and things.

WM: And gifts.

VMS: And gifts for the individuals, yes.

WM: Was that for just the Navajo children, Catholic children? Or did everybody--

VMS: It was just for the Navajo.

WM: Any Navajo who wanted to come, whether they were Catholic or not?

VMS: Anybody could come visit them and join them. And I remember when they had their first confirmation and Bishop Hunt came. I think it was when Father Whelan and Father Dunn were here. And my brother said, "I was never a sponsor for so many boys as I was that day."

WM: These Navajo children, were they allowed to-- If they had not been Catholic, were they allowed to join the Church on their own? Or did their parents have to approve?

VMS: I don't know whether their parents had to give permission.

WM: Did the Mormons here take the Navajo children into their families?

VMS: They used to take some into their homes during the school year. A lot of them used to stay over the school year on what they used to call the Indian Placement Program.

WM: Bishop (Joseph Lennox) Federal and Bishop (William A.) Weigand, were you acquainted with them?

VMS: I have met Bishop Federal many a time, but I don't think he even knows my name. I don't know whether when he sees me he knows who I am. When Bishop William K. Weigand went to Mexico--the second or third year he was our bishop--he took a group of people on pilgrimage down there. Father (Thomas J.) Meersman was with him. I went on that, and that's when I met the bishop and had several conversations. A lot of times when my niece and her husband and I would be sitting at breakfast, he would come and sit with us, and we would talk. When I see him now, I think he knows me--I'm sure he does.

WM: Bishop Weigand's been trying to develop the Hispanic population culture. They aren't all Mexicans anymore.

VMS: I know they're not.

WM: Of course they did not build the diocese. If you've got Mexican blood, he probably knows who you are.

VMS: Well, I don't know whether he knows that my mother was Mexican. But he should because my niece was there on the pilgrimage and the Salazars are a well-known name.

WM: With the Hispanics, are they all Mexicans here? You don't have any of these Salvadoreans here or Puerto Ricans and others?

VMS: We have some, but I don't know whether they're Catholics, at least for our church. From preparing taxes, I meet people from Chile living here in this country. They might be LDS. I have some people that are from San Salvador living in Ogden now, and I have some from Peru who I think live here. There's a lot of Mexicans that may be Catholics, and there might be some other Hispanics. Sometimes the ones from Peru and the ones from San Salvador live and work in the same area that the Mexicans work. But I don't think they go to church because I don't see them. The only reason I know them is because they come to me when it's tax time.

WM: You mean the Mexicans have a certain part of the city that they congregate in?

VMS: No, no, they work out on the farms, and sometimes they live on these farms. And sometimes these from Peru or San Salvador go work on the same farms, so they live in the same area. They live in different places in town.

WM: What about the Hispanics and the old parishioners working together?

VMS: Well, at one time they were working together and going to Mass. Some of the women were working in the church. They would cook and do things for the church. And then I don't know what happened. They left. Some of those women that used to belong to the church are no longer in the church. They have joined the Assembly of God. These are Mexican women. One of the families that were Catholics have formed their own religion. It's part of the Assembly of God, but they have their own minister. I think the only ones of that family that are still Catholics are the parents, and it was a big family.

[End of Interview]

1. "During the years with the Federal Government, I was a member of the Armed Forces Management Association, Great Salt Lake Chapter No. 25. Members of the association were management personnel from Hill Air Force Base and Defense Depot, Ogden. I served as secretary for two years (1968 and 1969). I also was a member of the Federal Government Accountants Association, Salt Lake Chapter. The members were accountants from all federal agencies in the state. I served as secretary for two years. I also was a member of the Management Association of Defense Depot, Ogden, and served as secretary for two years."
2. "I am a Crusillista. I made the Cursillo when Father (Gerard G.) Trageser was at St. Joseph's in Ogden. I belong to the Oblates of St. Benedict. I attend meetings in Ogden. I have been a Eucharistic Minister since 1980. I received the NCCY Pro Deo et Juventute Medal in 1962. I have served in the Parish Council. I served for one year as the Religious Education Director. For 29 years I kept the books for the Church. I prepared the checks for payments, prepared financial statements for the Diocese and for the Provincial."

3. "In October 1960, my sister Santos and I attended the 30th National Convention of the National Council of Catholic Women in Las Vegas, Nevada. To me, one of the highlights was meeting Mother M. Theresa, foundress of the Missionaries of Charity. She and I had a nice talk about India. At the convention I also met His Eminence Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, and Helen Hayes, the actress."
4. Vicenta Singh was honored as Women of the Year from St. Henry's Parish Saturday, October 16, 1976 at the Northern District CCW meeting at Hill Air Force Base. Other service awards she received included: Superior Performance Award, Utah State; Federal Women's Award, United States Government; and Meritorious Civilian Service Awards, U.S. Defense Logistics Agency.

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