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Ana M. Varela-Lago: This is an interview with Mr. Joaquin de la Llana. Joaquin, or Jack, may I call you Jack?

Joaquin de la Llana: Right.

AVL: Let's start by talking a little bit about your family. Tell me, how did your family first come to Tampa, and what did they do here in Tampa?

JL: Well, my mother, she was 16 when she came from Spain, she went to Cuba and then later she came to Tampa. My uncle, her half-brother, he went to get her and my father, about the same age, he came to Tampa also—

AVL: From Spain?

JL: From Spain. He was a reader in a cigar factory and then when the depression came—my mother worked at the cigar factory, in fact when you got your job as a reader you had to audition and when he went to audition at Martinez Ybor, my mother was working there and she was afraid that they would boo him as he auditioned, so she went and hid herself in the ladies room and then when she heard everybody applauding she came out, you know. Because that meant that they accepted him, because the workers were the ones that paid his salary, you know.

And then when the Depression came they liquidated that and we were out of a—you know, he was out of a job. So, what little money he could put together, he got an old beat up truck and he started delivering ice, he bought a cow to feed me and we had chickens, and this is how we survived the Great Depression. Then he went into doing a coffee—he went into the coffee business roasting coffee, roasting it, grinding it and packaging it and

he had a regular route that he put in with his ice route and then eventually he done away with the ice route and then solely did the coffee business.

AVL: What did your mother do at this time, was she—?

JL: She was a cigar maker.

AVL: All those years?

JL: Through all those years.

AVL: Could you tell me their names, you father and mother?

JL: My father was Joaquin de la Llana and my mother was Rosario.

AVL: What was her maiden name?

JL: Santos.

AVL: Santos. Now where in Spain did they come from?

JL: My father was from Pravia, and my mother from Gijón. No Gijón, Tineo, Cangas de Tineo.

AVL: Cangas de Tineo.

JL: Cangas de Tineo. A little town called Merillées, and my father's little town in Pravia was Ponte Veiga.

AVL: Ponte Veiga. Why did they leave Spain, do you know, did they ever say?

JL: We never talked about it, but I guess it was the living conditions and, on my father's part my aunt had already been living here in Tampa for years which was his oldest—my father was the youngest in the family—and she had been here at the turn of the century and I guess he came, you know, they must have wrote for him to come and eventually he did.

AVL: Did she come alone then, the sister?

JL: No, she was married, and her name was Amadora.

AVL: So she had come to Tampa because she had married somebody and they had come to Tampa.

JL: They had come to—right, years earlier.

AVL: So she was already here, and that's why your father probably came.

JL: Right, right.

AVL: How did your parents meet, did they meet here in Tampa?

JL: Yes.

AVL: Did they belong to the clubs, your family, were they involved in the clubs?

JL: Centro Asturiano, and in fact that's where I was born.

AVL: In the hospital of Centro Asturiano?

JL: Right.

AVL: What do you remember growing up in Tampa as a child?

JL: Well, basically—from my house, maybe it was like two blocks square that was the place that I went other than going to school, and there we had our own little games that we played. When my father would come out on the porch and say it's time to come in, everybody went to their respective houses, which was normally around 8 o'clock.

Dolores Rio: *También tenían la ley de, a las nueve de la noche si te cogían fuera, la policía te llevaba.*

JL: Right, I had curfew but I never recall that curfew. We were very well disciplined at home. Before I would go to school I remember I would have to take the cow out and stake it at a place so she would eat grass during the day, leave a bucket of water there. Then when I would come from school, I would pick up the stake bring her and put her in the shed, and then my father would come from work and then he would milk her and the milk, what was left, we would sell to, different people on the block would buy the milk. With certain portions of it we made our own butter and our own cheese out of it.

And we had our chickens too, and back then, you know, when you wanted to eat chicken you would go to a poultry market and you'd pick out a chicken that was alive and running and then they'd kill it there for you and dress it up there for you and—one time, this is funny, my father had the pen where he had the chickens and they were real fine wire and all these sparrows would get in there and eat the food, so they had a certain spot that these sparrows would go in and so my father sealed that hole and he went in there and he killed all those sparrows and he peeled each one out individually and that day we had yellow rice and sparrow.

DR: *Casi todo el mundo tenía algo en los potes, para ayudarse.*

JL: Oh, yes, everything—we had—orange trees, different fruit trees that we had, you

know, in fact we had so much of it that I would get a paper bag and go down the block selling oranges or selling lemons or selling grapefruits, and, you know, 10-15 cents, man, was a lot of money in my hands then. The first job that I had was at a grocery store cleaning in it or delivering groceries on by bicycle and I was there from 7 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the evening, 7 days a week and for three dollars, and then I would bring the three dollars and give them to my mother.

AVL: How old were you at that time?

JL: Maybe 6, 7, 8 years old, something like that.

AVL: So you weren't going to school then?

JL: Yes, but I'm talking, like, in the summer time.

AVL: I see, yes, so you worked a lot then, for that age.

JL: Well, it was—the store was only two blocks from my house. I'd walk over there, you know, and there was a neighborhood grocery store.

DR: *Bueno*, that really was to teach you how to —

JL: Right, yes, you know.

AVL: Tell me, what do you remember about the things going on in Tampa here in the 1930s? Apart from, you know, the Spanish Civil war, we will be talking about later—

JL: I knew nothing about, anything in the outside world. To me it was just Ybor City. On the weekends my mother on Saturdays would go shopping and we'd go down 7th Avenue from store to store. When I needed shoes there was a Thom McAn store there and this is where I got—my mother bought the shoes, my shoes at, you know, and—well, we looked forward to events, well, like today, things are taken for granted.

To me the biggest things of the year was the 4th of July, Christmas and my birthday. Christmas, because of the gifts and Santa Claus and everything, my birthday the same, and the 4th of July we would go to the beach and there would be a struggle going to the beach because we would have—there was no bridge, we had to go, and then my father's truck would overheat and he'd take, feed it gallons of water and wait until it cools down, you know, and we'd finally get to Clearwater and we'd spend a few hours there, we'd take our own food and all that and then pack it in, time to go home, I used to hate because we had to leave early because, my father would say, "*Hay que ordeñar las vacas.*"

We'd have to milk the cows, you know, and we got things to do, but I always looked forward for the 4th of July, that was a big thing. Today, you know, everybody just takes everything for granted, but—

DR: They used to teach you how to take the trash out—

JL: Oh, yes.

DR: How to keep clean the yard.

JL: Well, you washed dishes, I washed and my sister dried, or she washed and I dried, you know.

AVL: How about the picnics at the clubs, was that part of—?

JL: That was another thing that I really enjoyed. I recall one that was a real picnic which was out in a park and there was—en route to—that we would take going towards Clearwater, it was in that area there. There was a dairy, it was a dairy—you know where I think it was—?

DR: *¿Nistal no era español, chico?*

JL: Where Tampa Stadium is today, I think it was right in that area there.

DR: *¿Nistal no era español?*

JL: *Nistal*, yes.

AVL: *Nistal*, do you think that's the place—?

JL: That was another park that they would go to, but I don't recall that one, I think that mostly when my father was single or courting my mother that's where they would go.

DR: *Todavía, cuando nosotros estábamos casados ya, todavía. El Círculo Cubano y La Unión Italiana.*

JL: And we would go to all the benefits at Centro Asturiano the—what would they call them? *Verbenas*— [street parties]

AVL: *Verbenas*, in the theater—?

JL: Yes, and the theater, we would go to that and watch different plays and stuff like that.

AVL: Did you speak Spanish in your home?

JL: Oh, yes, that was the only—

AVL: How did you learn English?

JL: Very little. When I started school there wasn't—my dad promised the first grade

teacher that I would learn it, and that summer he would send me to an old lady that was retired, I remember her name was Mrs. Jenkins, and she had a group of us during the summer teaching us English at her house, and her husband worked at night and we had to be real quiet so he wouldn't wake up, you know. And she helped us along and this is why, you know, we didn't fall back because they would fail you because you couldn't participate.

AVL: Did your parents speak any English?

JL: Very little, but then eventually they started going to school and they got their citizenship papers. (phone rings)

Recording paused

JL: My father had one thing that he really was against and that was firearms, and he never even thought about buying me a toy pistol, he condemned that all, you know, because it might tend to make me a criminal or to use a gun and all that. So, we used to make our own guns and then we would make them out of wood and they were called rubber guns and we would have, we would put at the back of it a clothespin and then we would rub, we'd get a tube and cut strips out of it and stretch it all the way back and snap it and then we'd shoot somebody with it, you know.

AVL: I'll bet he wasn't happy about that either.

JL: Well, but he let it slide, you know. One was that—we had another—we have the hide and go seek, you know, we played that at night—

DR: *También hacían una lata, le hacían un hoyito, le ponían unas agarraderas de pita, una en cada pata y caminaban, y cantaban "A la i a la o a la hija del latero."*

JL: —different things, I mean—we got roller skates for Christmas, and during—as they were wore out we'd break them in half, we'd get a 2 by 4 and put the front end in the front and the back in the back and stand the 2 by 4 like this and put a handle on it and then we had a scooter, you know, we made a scooter out of them.

AVL: Yes, I remember seeing things like that. Let's start talking a little bit about the war in Spain. What are the memories that come to mind when you think of that?

JL: Well, because my grandfather was still living then too, and—except for one uncle and my aunt, the rest were in Spain and we were always, because of the war, very concerned. And we were, my father, was—Republican from the get-go, you know, and I would hear him talking and it would inspire me, you know, and we would gather clothes from everybody and we would send clothes to Spain, and then as the Centro Obrero where he participated in different things, events that they would have there. I remember going—or they had a project of picking up the empty cigarette packages that were found in the streets, it was lead instead of tinfoil and we would take, we would bring, put it all, little

by little until we had a ball of lead, we would take it over there and that was to do bullets.

Then the Centro Asturiano would have *verbenas* or different events, you know, where the proceeds would go to the cause, you know, to the Republic of Spain and the cigar factories had collections to send money to Spain and then all this, you know, and then—you know, it inspired me hearing about the Republic, you know—

AVL: How old were you at that time?

JL: —in fact, I was so out of touch with—with the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, that when I was going to school up north and I went to my roommate's town in West Virginia and they asked me what party I belonged to, you know, and I said the Republican Party, and that gentleman, he raised his eyebrow, because in the South they was Democratic, you know, but I didn't, I said, “Republican” associating it with the party in Spain, you know.

AVL: What kind of things did your father tell you about the war? You mentioned before that he used to talk about—

JL: Well, we were getting here, we would get whatever bit of news we could get from the newspapers and all that, that was the news that he would get about the war and then the people that came from Spain and would hold speeches at the Centro Obrero and they would tell them this is what's going on and this and that, you know, and we get this and we need to get that, you know, and stuff like that.

AVL: Do you remember any of those speeches or anybody?

JL: No, no, no. I remember the great thing was when La Pasionaria [Dolores Ibárruri] came over here.

DR: —everybody talked about her.

JL: Right, and so, great, but then later on in years when I found out that she was just a devout communist I disassociated her with the Republican party.

AVL: Do you remember, for instance, the ambassador coming, or any other person—?

JL: No, no, I was too young for that.

AVL: Why was your father so Republican, you think, how did he explain that to you? Why did he support—?

JL: He didn't, I just took it for granted what he believed in—I followed.

AVL: But did he explain to you why that was the case?

JL: No, no.

AVL: And how about the other side, were there people here in Tampa who supported General Franco, or were there—?

JL: Oh, well, if there were—you know, we disassociated ourselves with them, but I don't recall them going, I don't recall them telling, Well, don't go with them because he's a fascist, but I'm sure that there was and this is what caused that guy from Arango to get—you know.

AVL: Tell me—tell me more about that, what you remember.

JL: I think that I had, we had been to a Gasparilla [Pirate Festival] parade, anyway, it was an event, and we all stopped at my aunt's house, and while we were sitting there on the porch talking somebody came running and they said, about what had happened, which was like about six blocks away. So right away we got into my dad's truck and my dad drove over there, they had been taken to a hospital already, and—[people talking in the background]

Recording paused

AVL: Let's repeat the whole thing again. Okay, start again, Jack, with, you were returning from a Gasparilla parade.

JL: Yes, I think it was a Gasparilla parade and we were at my aunt's house and we were all sitting on the porch talking and somebody came by and said about the shooting, so right away my father, oh, and by the way my father was the first one here to invent seatbelts, because the truck didn't have no doors, that he delivered ice in, and when we'd get in it he'd get a rope and he'd tie my and my sister in the seat to the truck—

AVL: I see.

JL: —and we went over there and it impressed me because this was like a little house that had been converted into a cafe, which was next door to, which was almost next to the cigar factory where the one, this one guy was the foreman at. And, well, the shooting evidently took place in the front porch, because there was blood and they were getting buckets of water and washing the blood off the thing and it impressed me when I saw that.

And then I find out that the person involved was a friend of my father's. His name was José Alvarez and that they had had an argument over the civil war and that Arango, the foreman at the cigar factory was a fascist and made a fool out of him, or made him look bad, or whatever, and he only lived like two houses down and he went to the house, came back, shot him and then he shot himself, and he died instantly but the other one, Arango, was still alive and I remember in school all the Spanish kids were all hoping for him to die, and you know, they didn't want him to live because he was a fascist, and everything

like that.

AVL: And what happened after that, I mean, they both died, was—?

JL: His son, he had a son called Daniel Alvarez, all right, and there was a—they had a drugstore at the corner of Columbus Drive and Nebraska [Avenue], his name was Hixon and he took him in almost like a father, and then Hixon ran for mayor and became a real strong mayor and this Danny was always like his, you know, his right hand man, I say, you know.

And he had another brother that fought in World War II and I remember when—he fought in the Pacific, I forget what his first name was, but one day my father told me, “You know what he's got in there?” I said, “What's that?” He said, “He's got in his key chain the bone from a finger from a Japanese.” You know, and I said, “Wow.” You know, he had come back from the war and he had brought a—I guess got a bone from a Japanese soldier and put it on a chain and that really impressed my father, you know, he—

AVL: So, Jack, apart from this shooting between one person who supported the Republic and the other who supported Franco, was there any other type of conflicts between the two sides that you remember?

JL: No, no, no.

AVL: How about in the clubs, were there any—?

JL: No, they were strictly all one—well, there was a Fascist—they were outnumbered by Republicans and I don't think that they spoke out too much.

AVL: And how about when Franco finally won the war, you know, did that change the tables, I mean, that now the other side won, or what happened?

JL: Well, my father lost interest in Spain. I think my father would have gone back to Spain if it wasn't, if the Republic would have won but—with that, he lost complete interest, so, you know, of ever going back to Spain. Even in later years, my mother, when they retired my mother wanted to go and he wouldn't go.

AVL: Because Franco was there?

JL: I think that in his mind, that was one reason.

AVL: If not, do you think he could have gone and retired there in Spain—?

JL: Well, I think going to visit.

AVL: I see. How about your family there in Spain, what happened to them after the war?

JL: Well, they worked, my cousins there worked at the coal mines and the other one in the field and all that. And I visited them back in 1951 and all that, and I remember that even at that time there was an underground radio up in the Pyrenees, for the Republic. They would play the National Anthem of the Republic and they would spit out propaganda, and, as far as the Republic was concerned.

AVL: Right. How about here in Tampa after the war was over, were there still efforts to help Spain in any way, collecting money or anything?

JL: I think they more or less just faded away.

DR: I don't think so, because *luego venían los vivos que se quedaban*.

AVL: How about the other communities here in Tampa, the Italians and Cubans?

JL: I wasn't too much in touch with them.

AVL: Do you have a sense they also participated in these events or were there mainly the Spaniards?

DR: *Si*, they did.

JL: Maybe she could tell you, I don't.

DR: *Si*, they did. *Todos los latinos*.

AVL: And how about the Americans, did the Americans participate in any way?

JL: No, no, no.

AVL: Nothing. Do you remember listening to the radio, listening to the news from Spain on the radio?

JL: I remember, yes. Well, my father would get it at home and he would, it would come in and you hardly could hear what they, there was static and everything like that, and then too, as a boy, I became very fond and loved and enjoyed the reading of Ernest Hemingway and one of the reasons that I enjoyed him was because he was a Republican, for the Republic of Spain, you know. And anybody that associated themselves with Spain and the Republic was a friend of mine.

AVL: I see. How about the church, what did people here in the Latin community think about the church?

JL: Well, I was baptized in the Catholic Church, but my father had no interest in the Catholic Church and it went back, when he went to Spain, when he was in Spain he was

an altar boy and he saw a lot of things that went behind the scenes in the Catholic Church that he disapproved, and so consequently, you know, he never went back to church, and then too, it was under a mandatory thing that everyone had to go and participate in the—and that was something that he didn't go along with that you were forced to do these things. So, he separated himself completely from the Catholic Church, even though he allowed my cousins to baptize me and I had a godmother and a godfather and stuff like that, you know, but in fact I had a visit one time by two nuns at the house and I hid underneath the house because, wondering that I had gotten my baptism, why I didn't continue to get my communion, and all of that, you know. So, that was as far as—

AVL: How about your mother, was she religious, or—?

JL: No, not really.

AVL: What kind of experience did she have with the Catholic Church?

JL: No, she just, whatever my father said she went along with it.

AVL: And how did the people here in Tampa feel about, you know, the Catholic Church and the Spanish War?

JL: Oh, I don't, I wasn't in touch with that part.

AVL: Were there any kind of conflicts with the Catholic Church in Ybor City, or—?

JL: I heard stories about, during the Civil War, that in monasteries they dug up graves of babies that were abortions from the nuns, and, you know, stories like that, that they had gotten themselves pregnant with the priests and that they had abortions and stuff like that, but that's, and those were just stories that you picked up in the streets, you know.

AVL: Why do you think, Jack, that the people here in Tampa were so supportive of the Republic, how would you explain that?

JL: Because it represented what Spain was all about, you know. Spain from the beginning, you know, that's what I would assume. Another power was trying to take over, especially fascism, which was, almost sounded like a bad word.

AVL: And how about the United States, how did the Latin community here feel about what the United States was doing?

JL: Well, you see, I wasn't involved in comments and stuff like that, I just, little bits that I picked up as a child, and that was it.

AVL: But do you remember, for example, maybe your father talking about, with other people, about that, you know, the neutrality and the fact that the United States weren't that active in supporting them?

JL: No, no.

AVL: Do you remember any of the demonstrations that the Latin community here had—?

JL: Oh, yes! Well, I remember seeing them and all that—

AVL: Tell me about that.

JL: —and they had little pins with the Republican flag they would put on them and then there was a big drive, when the fascists were trying to take Madrid and they would have this song that they, all of them would sing in the Centro Obrero, and the streets and everything. "*Pero a Madrid, pero a Madrid ¡No Pasarán!*"

AVL: Oh, is this the song you are talking about? (showing him the lyrics)

JL: Right, yes.

AVL: You like to sing a little bit for us?

JL: *Ya van marchando los milicianos*—yes.

AVL: So, did you participate in the demonstration too?

JL: Oh, yes, yes.

AVL: So—

DR: *Los leales, le quitaron los leales, le pusieron comunismo y fastidieron la cosa— y José tuvo un entierro que fue morirse—*

JL: I think that—what hurt the Republic was the participation of the communists, of Russia and the Communist Party.

AVL: Really?

JL: I think so.

AVL: Why do you think so?

JL: But that was the only country that wanted to help them. But I'm sure it was with intentions of installing Communism in Spain, which I don't think Spain would ever go to.

AVL: Do you think people supporting Spain from within the Latin community were particularly Communists, or—?

JL: I'm sure that there was a fraction of them that were. And I'm sure that a lot of them didn't think that the Communist Party was any harm or any threat to the democratic process, you know.

AVL: Was there a lot of communist activity here in 1930s—?

JL: Oh, I wasn't aware of that.

AVL: —that, you know, people were already—

JL: I've read where, you know—there was a Community Party headquarters and different people that were arrested and—they had hearings in Washington, D.C., but, other than that, no.

AVL: Somebody like your father, for instance, was he particularly politically active, or—?

JL: Well, he just—well, he wasn't, you know, like one—

AVL: Was he a member of the party, not the Communist party, but another—?

JL: He wasn't, he wasn't like a hundred percent whatever, but whatever came up he would give his, do his part.

AVL: I see.

JL: And, of course, his main concern during the war, too, was his family, or our family that was in Spain, that when we sent clothes we sent clothes to them, you know, and whatever we could send we would—I remember fixing big boxes, like this, just filled with different kinds of clothes, clothes that I had outgrown, clothes that my sister had outgrown and from my cousins, and like that.

AVL: So, I have another question for you Jack. When you look back from today, what would you think the impact of the war was on your life, if any?

JL: That I what now?

AVL: Yes, what was the impact of the Spanish Civil War on your life, if it had any—did it mark you in any way, would you say, the fact that you went through this—?

JL: It brought me close to Spain, because I became involved in something outside of here, the United States, and something that I put my heart into it, you know, was the Spanish Republic and it made me a little closer to Spain along with the family there.

AVL: Okay, to conclude the interview, I would like to ask you, is there anything else you would like to add, or—?

JL: Right now I can't think of anything else, but—

AVL: Maybe some topic we haven't dealt with that you think we should have.

JL: I don't—I can't recall.

AVL: Nothing? Okay, well, this concludes the interview with Mr. Joaquin de la Llana, and I would like to thank you very much for participating in this project. Thank you very much, Jack.

JL: Okay.

End of interview