**Transcription of the interview with Corsino Fernandez garcia (by dr. Alicia pozo-gutierrez)**

**(45 minutes 15 seconds)**

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**NOTE: sections in red, or marked ‘XXXX,’ indicate areas where the recording is unclear, or identifying information has been removed.**

**P:** OK…we had, more or less, got about going to college, getting out of college because you didn’t enjoy it, and then you started to work… and then you met Barbara. Can we pick up from there and follow on… How did you meet Barbara?

**F:** That’s another story! I was in an orphanage, in San Antonio called XXXx – in fact, I think there’s a photo in there - and they had, I think the fifth anniversary of that orphanage and they had a celebration and for some reason, the man that operate that orphanage, the newspapers were there writing articles…writing articles in newspaper… because different organisations were supporting that orphanage like Quantis club, lions club and they wanted to.. for the article they wanted to write in the paper they wanted a picture and the man that ran the orphanage saw me and said ‘Cole, come here’, so they took my picture and it was in the paper and about a week later I got a letter from Barbara saying she that she had seen the picture in the paper and she wanted to be my pen pal, do you know what a pen pal is? People that write, she wanted to be my pen pal. I wrote back you know and we wrote for a little while, in fact we wrote even when I going college in Colorado, we wrote… and I’d never seen her then but then I decided to leave college, we met …I went back to San Antonio [where] I met her and her family and then we decided to get married [laughs]

**P:** That quickly!

**F:** Well not that quickly.. we knew each other about a year…

**P:** You’d been sending letters…

**F:** We didn’t meet one day and get married the next [laugh]

**P:** Ok, Ok ..and what were you doing by this time, were you working?

**F:** Yes, by the time we got married, I was working, living in an apartment in San Antonio, a little apartment

**P:** And what year was this, more or less, do you remember?

**F:** 1952, I think

**P:** What was the U.S like in that period, do you remember?

**F:** What the U.S was like?

**P:** Yes, what was society like, what was life like?

**F:**  Like now…[laughs]

**P:** Really?

**F:** Nothing much has changed …. Since I’ve got more expensive you know.

But at least in Texas is about the same I think.

**P:** Was there anything just maybe looking back what you have known about in Spain was there anything about the U.S that you found interesting or good that you liked or did you just fall into the American living…

**F:** Yeah I had no trouble merging to the American way of life…because in France, I was in XXXX which was almost the same as orphanages, living in XXXX..and

[LORRY DRIVES PAST] when I got to the United States I lived for a part of the time in an orphanage too you know… to me it wasn’t that much different.

**P:** And then you started your family?

**F:** Yes, yes about 1952 …and I have 5 children now… one of them is here

**P:** I know, amazing…

**F:** 2 of them are twins 2 girls, the first ones were twins, twin girls

**P:** Can you tell us a little bit about your work life?

**F:** I worked a lot of different places, a lot of different companies

**P:** But you always stayed in Texas?

**F:** No, no … when I left college and I started working for a company in San Antonio make refrigerators - manufacturers and umm… then I decided that wasn’t a good life for me, working in a factory, operating a machine, so I took a correspondence course through the mail, to study electronics and while I was studying I worked for a dual physical company that do oil exploration and so I was helper to one of those, what d’you call…surveyors, a surveyors helper with this dual physical company and I worked in South XXxx for a while and then they sent us to Florida, and I worked in Florida for a while, and all this time I was studying electronics from this correspondence course, and when I got finished on the correspondence course, I started working for a television repair shop back in San Antonio. So I…I worked for repair shops till about 1959, and then I got a job with an electronics company named Philco (?) and they sent me to El Paso, as an instructor in electronics, basic electronics, because they had Fort Bliss, an army base there in El Paso and they take the military people to teach them electronics and so on. I was an instructor there and then they moved me…that company moved me to Alabama to be an instructor in ballistic missiles…Jupiter ballistic missiles. I was an instructor there in Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama, same town where – I don’t know if you know who Von Braun was…. he was that German rocket scientist

**P:** [Wernher] Von Braun, he developed the whole space programme

**F:** He was a rocket scientist, a German rocket scientist; I was just an instructor there in rockets, in rockets

**P:** And every time you moved and changed posts, did the whole family move - you and Barbara and the children, move places

**F:** By the time…

[BACKGROUND NOISE]

**F:** By the time I moved to Alabama, we had the twin girls by then, so they moved with us, the 2 girls and then Donna, who is down stairs over here, and Jo and Terry was back in Texas, but the family moved, yes. So um I was in Huntsville, Alabama for a while and then they were gonna send me and another guy to Italy

**P:** To Italy?

**F:** To Italy, they were going to …they were planning on sending me… no, I didn’t want to go to Italy

**P:** Why didn’t you want to go to Italy?

**F:** Because my wife had to stay behind you know, they were just gonna send me to Italy and she had to stay behind with the 2 children and I said ‘no’ so I got a job with an aircraft company in San Louis: McDonald Douglas, they made military airplanes, so that’s how I moved to San Louis, Missouri, and I worked there for round about 5 years. And then one of the co-workers [who] had moved down to Texas to work for general Dynamics in Texas and one day he called me and asked me if I wanted to work for General Dynamics in Texas, and I said ‘yes’ because it was back in Texas.

**P:** So you wanted to go back to Texas?

**F:** Yes, so then I went to work for General Dynamics

**[third, unidentified person]:** Did you meet any Spanish immigrants in San Louis?

**F:** Ah no, no immigrants. The only Spanish I saw in San Louis was a company where…at that time McDonald Douglas aircraft manufacturer was making F18 airplanes and Spain had bought some airplanes from them and there were some Spanish military people there as co-ordinators and saw I them but never got to really meet them, you know I saw them that they were there but they were not immigrants, they were just representatives of Spain to co-ordinate the sale of airplanes.

**[third, unidentified person]:** Because there was a colony of Spaniards in San Louis…even there was a Spanish centre or something. Spaniards were…

**F:** I didn’t meet any Spaniards other than that, no. I know that in nice days…XXXX Asturian centres but I never belonged to any of them…I never knew about them actually. It wasn’t until just recent years, I found out that we had Spanish centres in New York, Florida, Miami or something …I never knew about that.

**P:** So did you work for General Dynamics then?

**F:**  Yeah, I worked for General Dynamics and I worked there in Fort Worth, they are in Fort Worth, but then they started laying off people because the military stopped ordering as many airplanes, so were laying off people, so I figured they were going to lay me off pretty soon so…. I went back to San Louis to work for the same company I had left and I worked there for about 15 years, in San Louis, till I retired. So I retired from… When I started the name of the company was called McDonald Douglas but now the Boeing Company has taken it over, so now it’s called the Boeing. In 1987 I retired from Boeing and I went back to Texas. I went back to Texas because of.. our children had stayed in Texas in the meantime, they become teachers and they were teaching in schools there so we moved back to Texas for 4 years.

**P:** When was the first time that you started to think about [BACKGROUND NOISE] going back to Spain maybe to visit?

**F:** Well, I never thought about visiting… I started think about coming to find my family just about the time I retired because then I figured that I had the time and I could save enough money to come.

**P:** In 1987?

**F:**  Yes about 1987 I started thinking about it but I had to save the money because I had no money,[LAUGHS] you know raising 5 children is expensive, you know so…….I retired in 87 and..

**P:** And all that time you hadn’t been to Spain…

**F:** No, no, no and as I retired from that company, I went back to Fort Worth and I worked a few more years to save a little money and then in 1996 is when I decided to come over here the first time…to come to Asturias.

**P:** How old were you then?

**F:** How old, I don’t know …60 [LAUGH]..I was born in 1930 and it was 1996 so I was 39 years old right

**P:** 66 so…66 so…how did you plan the journey? How did you go about it…what was the idea?

**F:** Well, after I’d saved the money, I started researching, finding out as much information about Asturias, because I knew I was from Asturias. I did not know the name of the town but I knew the region of Asturias. I knew that it was same place close to Moreda because XXXx was going from my home to his home in a truck, I heard somebody say we stopped some place and man said this is Moreda. So I remember that – Moreda - so I knew that my hometown was pretty close to Moreda.. so that’s why when I came, I first went to Moreda.

**P:** Did you come on your own?

**F:** Yes I came by myself, my wife was sick she couldn’t breathe very well and my twin daughters were busy you know and I asked if they could come they said ‘no we can’t come.’

**P:** Can you tell me, can you stop there and tell me all the names of your children

Donna, Kerrie XXXx

**P:** Are they the twins?

**F:** Yes they’re twins, yes, they are the oldest ones then there is Sandy, Sandra we call her Sandy or Sandra and there’s Barbara, we call her Bo for short and there is Robert, Robert..we call him Buster

**P:** Aww ….he’s the youngest one Robert yeah?

**F:**  Yes he is

**P:** Did your children know about you having come from Asturias? What happened with Spain, the civil war…?

**F:** For a long time they didn’t know very much for a long time, I didn’t think they were much interested. Really, they did not get interested until I told them I was coming back.

**P:** Which was about this time, 1996?

**F:** Yes that’s when they started asking questions about… before…

**P:** What did they know about you, about your past?

**F:**  I think they knew that I wasn’t a Native American because I had an accent …but it was until about 1996 when I decided to come back here, when they started getting interested and started asking questions ….of course, now really it’s just been the last year that they, they got real interested you know because…in fact some of them decided to come over here to visit the family.

**P:** So that trip when you first came back, you flew here from the States on your own?

**F:** The first year, yes

**P:** You flew to Madrid?.. And what were your first impressions on landing in Spain and seeing the country?

**F:** I was very eager to start looking for my family.. and because I had been thinking about it for several years and then finally getting to Spain, I was very eager to start looking for my family. And because…I rented a car in Madrid and to drive up here and boy, the closer I got the more eager I got…I’d say ‘Asturias is getting nearer, you know!’ and then I think somewhere north of Leon you start seeing the mountains of Asturias, you know…

**P:** Did you recognise the landscape?

**F:** No, not Asturias, because I hadn’t travelled… when I was a little boy I stayed in my hometown all the time, I hadn’t travelled around Asturias or anything… I didn’t recognise… I knew there were mountains… I knew when I saw the mountains that it was Asturias because I knew there were the Cantabrian mountains there. I didn’t recognise Moreda or anything like that.

**P:** Where did you go first of all?

**F:** I went to Moreda.

**P:** That was your first port of call.

**F:** That was when I first got there. When I first got to Asturias and I saw the Moreda sign, I remembered the name Moreda and I saw the Moreda sign ‘Moreda 5 kilometres’ XXXx and I went past Moreda and I got as far as Corrigos and there was a filling station – gasoline - station there, so I knew I was close to where I was born and I had to get some gasoline there. So I got gas and I asked him where XXXx was I was looking for XXXx and the man said well there’s a place close to Moreda, in the hills with a similar name, so I turned around and went back to Moreda and it was in the afternoon and there were a lot of people in the plaza there and I thought well …I got to talk to some old people.

**P:** You didn’t have any contact number, name, nothing?

**F:** No. I was just on my own, so I think well, I got to talk to old people cos the young people are not gonna know anything about the past, you know. So I saw this couple of men and women walking in the plaza, so I parked the car real fast and I went to talk to them and I was looking for XXx but they didn’t know anything about it but they walked with me to XXXx Seville and they didn’t know anything about it. So then they knew some more older people in town around Moreda, so we went to talk to an old lady and she said no I don’t know anything but there was a woman there that she knew spoke English a young woman that spoke English.

**[third, unidentified person]:** Cos before…how did you put in contact with this old couple?

**F:**  The older couple … they just happened to be walking…

**[third, unidentified person]:** But do you remember the words that you say to them?

**F:** Oh yes, I asked them if they knew where the XXX was

**[third, unidentified person]:** How? In Spanish?

**F:**  [In Spanish: where is XXXX?] I knew a few words, I didn’t forget Spanish completely [speaks Spanish]

**F:** I had to use whatever Spanish I had so when I went to the XXXx Seville they couldn’t help me, so we went… talked to this old woman, and said oh well I know this young lady that can speak English, so then then we walked over to the woman’s apartment and she knew English because she taught English part-time to children, the children would go to her apartment in the afternoon, she would teach them after school. So her name was Julietta and and then she knew Julietta ..knew her boyfriend, she wasn’t married at the time, but she had a boyfriend who worked in Cabanaquinta which is the capital

**P:** the capital of…

**F:** Yes the capital of XXX, knew a man that knew Cabanaquinta so she called him and he came over after it was after work in the afternoon and then he said well we’ll drive around Moreda to see if anything looks familiar, so we drove around Moreda and nothing looked familiar. Cos I was looking for a bridge across a river, cos I knew that to get to our house we had to cross a bridge on the other side of the river and nothing looked familiar so we decided that – Julietta and I - we decided ….tomorrow morning we’ll go to Cabanaquinta and see what records they have records they have in Cabanaquinta, the justice of the peace I think they call them …

SOMEONE SPEAKS

**F:** So I rented a room in a hotel in Moreda and the next morning she met me in the lobby at 9 o’clock in the morning, and we went to Cabanaquinta to the justice of the peace and we figured we’d start looking for my birth certificate. Cos we figured if we find my birth certificate then we could find out where I was born. So we went there and they had big books with all the birth certificates in and I thought I was born in 1930 because my records show 1930, so they got a 1930 book and looked through it and no, no Corsino. They got a 1929 book and right at the end of it, they look all through it and right of it the end of it they say ah! …. Corsino!

So of course they... gave my correct birthday and where I was born, so we got a copy of the birth certificate and she had to go back to her apartment that afternoon to teach some more children, so we went back to Moreda and I went back to my hotel and it was still in the morning and…somebody.. the manager of the hotel when I went in, he said you have a message and somebody had left a phone number. So he called the phone number, and he said ‘esperer’ (wait). So I waited there I didn’t know who he had called, he just said ‘esperer’. So I waited there. About half an hour later here comes 2 women in the lobby, and they looked around and I was the only one there and said ‘Es Corsino?’ (Are you Corsino?) ‘Si!’ (yes!). I didn’t know who there were you know, and it turned out that the day before when I was asking questions in town, word got around and one of the women lived out in Moreda de Araba which is above…Moreda de Araba. She went to her hairdresser and her hairdresser told her there was a man in town looking for his family and somehow or other, she said oh, I know who he is, cos she was one that was on the same boat as I was she was a cousin and she was about 2 years older than I was and I didn’t know this, but we were on the same trucks on the same boat and she was supposed to watch after me, but when they had this commotion on the boat she lost track of me and she never found me. So she stayed in France about 3 or 4 years and then they bought her back to Moreda and of course then she found me in Moreda …[LAUGHS] in 1996 and then of course she knew I had a brother in Moreda and we walked over to the apartment of my brother Constantino and… cos then he knew I didn’t know anything about Castañedo, so we drove to Castañedo, and saw the house and he started calling everybody in the family and the next day, about 7 people came from Gijon, all the family from Gijon came to see me and people from Levinco the 3 sisters, and my oldest brother that lived in Levinco came to see me and…

**P:** How did you feel?

**F:** I was dizzy [laughs]

**P:** very dizzy….

**[third, unidentified person]:** You were so close the first time, when you stopped at the gas station in Corrigos, which is straight across the river from his house. When you stop at the gas station, in Corrigos, it is straight across the river, it was the other side of the river but you didn’t recognise it as the bridge because the bridge wasn’t there…

**F:** There was no bridge, the bridge had washed awa.y I was looking for the bridge, there was a wooden bridge there and as I remember…is that I had to cross a wooden bridge to get to the other side, so every time I was looking at the river I was looking for the bridge. And even as I stopped at the gas station in Corrigos which was close and asked and I started driving back to Moreda and there was a man walking and stopped and asked him ‘where is XXXX?’ ‘Don’t know.’ Well the man lived in Castañedo my home town but when I said xxxx he didn’t recognise it but … cos after I found my brother Constantino, then he started calling my sister Aurora she lived in Cordoba by that time…and ‘aahhh’ she was practically going crazy, why didn’t you call sooner - where have you been?

**[third, unidentified person]:** She had been looking for you…

**F:** She had been looking for me and she had gone to France in 1942 or 43, she went to southern France to start asking for me cos she knew that I had gone to France. So she went to southern France and, of course, they had no record of me, cos by that time, by the time she went to France I already had left France for the United States anyway. She went crazy when she heard that I had returned so she and her husband took the train from Cordoba and by the second day she got a XXXx and for several days people kept coming in from different…

**P:** So all the bits of the past were gradually put together. What had happened to your father?

**F:** He died; my sister wrote to me, he died in 1952, 1950….1950 he died in 1950. He was living by himself but that time all the children had gone off. Even my sister Aurora, when she was 13 years old, she was living with my father and since she got bad, the situation got bad when she was 13, so she went over the mountain to a the province of Leon because she knew that one of our brothers was working there on a farm, so she went over the mountain to a little town, just across in Leone to work there in the farm and she worked there for several years in a farm, taking care of the cows and things like that. Cos she eventually got married and she had…Hameen was her first husband Arturo… and Hameen was their son and she worked in Madrid for a while and Hameen didn’t like Madrid, so he moved back here and became a miner working the mines and then her first husband Arturo died…

**[third, unidentified person]:** No, Arturo died before…Arturo died when my father was about 8. When my grandfather died, my grandmother moved to Madrid to work.

**F:** To work…sewing stuff…as a seamstress. And then she met Paco her second husband and he was a mailman in Madrid and he got transferred to Cordoba so they moved to Cordoba, so when I came in 1996 she was in Cordoba so she came to visit in Moreda and then the following year my wife and I, my wife came with me and we went to Cordoba to see them and that’s about it [LAUGHS]

**P:** And since you’ve come here regularly?

**F:** I’ve been here about 4-5 times; I think I’ve been here about 4 times about my fourth time and my wife Barbara has been here 3 times.

**P:** And your children have also started coming to meet cousins …….Oh this is the first time…

**[third, unidentified person]:** The second time he was here, he came with his wife and one of his daughters. [people speak over each other]

**F:** One of my daughters came and her son came, the second time I was here one of my daughters and her son came.

**P:** Can I just ask you one question, all the time that you were in the States up to 1996, as you were an adult had you tried to find out what was going on in Spain… politics, history …?

**F:** Not too much about politics

**P:** You didn’t keep in touch….do you remember for instance when Franco died..?

**F:** Of course I knew when Franco died…

**P:** democracy and…

**F:** …a little bit except I didn’t like Franco I wasn’t that much interested in Spain. Most of my time since then was spent looking for the other refugees in the United States.

**P:** The last part of this interview I’d like to find out when you started to want to look for the other children…when was that?

**F:** About 2003, about 2003 I started thinking about… I had written a little book, ‘Corsino,’ I wrote the book first and then I started thinking about…started wondering about where the rest of the refugees were so …I started looking on the internet and I saw this website ‘Asturian-American migration’ forum on the internet and so I wrote a message in there that I was looking for the refugees and then…it was her that started helping me…

**[third, unidentified person]:** and Donna Sweeney too…

**F:** Donna Sweeney, yes I know the one…from that website… she started helping me Donna Sweeney from the website started helping me and she helped me put together stories in the first book, our stories, she’s the one that compiled the first book. But Donna Sweeney helped me a lot, telephoning people, looking in the telephone books and finding a name and started calling and finding the right person and gradually we kept finding some people. And she found this one XXXx in Barcelona .

**[third, unidentified person]:** And those we didn’t find we just, you remember XXXx, I don’t remember their names, there were some we never found…

**F:**  We never found them, there were a brother and sister that we knew had gone to Mexico, Mexico City, and they had a name pretty familiar, Romero, and so I started sending letters to Mexico City anybody by the name of Romero but we never could find him.

**P:** So how many of the original group of children have managed to get together or….

**F:** 30, 30

**P:** 30 out of?

**F:** 40

**P:** of the 40 original children…have you ever met as a group, in person?

**F:** We are too spread out… some have talked about it but I think one or two have got together but as a group we never have got together, some live in San Diego and Washington State and Chicago and New York State .. It’s just too far apart.

**P:** how did the idea of writing ‘We came alone…’ come about?

**F:** Well, after we found enough people, and I had written my book for myself ‘Corsino’, I said well maybe we ought to write a book of stories among the groups and so everyone in the group would know what happened to the others, and so we started writing stories and comparing them together.

**P:** And the book ‘Corsino’….why did you write that book …. Was it for you, for your family?

**F:** For my family.. it wasn’t to make money, or something. It was for my family because, like I say, this friend that lived in Denver that had married, was a good friend from San Antonio, had retired and gone to Denver Colorado and married a Canadian woman, and she had heard my name but she didn’t know anything about me - just my name - and other than I was from Spain so she started asking questions through email.

**P:** Email?

**F:** So each email I write, I’d write a little about my life and maybe about 2 months later, she said well why don’t you put together that book, she suggested it ..so ok I put it together in a book and distributed to the family friends …and never made any money out of it, no money [laughs]

**P:** No promotion

**F:** No promotion, No

**[third, unidentified person]:** No promotion campaign

**F:** You can pay companies to promote you book, you know but I didn’t want to pay for somebody to promote my book… I wrote it for my family and friends, not to be promoted [laughs]

**P:** And how do you feel now that you are in Asturias once again?

**F:** Very good [laughs] I feel like I am home.