

[Begin Yolanda Showalter Jacala Interview]

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Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for Foodways Texas in San Antonio, Texas at Jacala Restaurant. I'm with Yolanda Showalter, who is one of the daughters of the founders of the restaurant, and Yolanda if I could get you to please state your name and occupation for the record?

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Yolanda Showalter: Yolanda Showalter and my occupation here is restaurateur, one of the owners of three.

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AE: And can I ask your birthdate for the record, please?

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YS: May 2, 1941.

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AE: All right and could I get you to name your siblings and then your parents as well?

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YS: My siblings is Laura Gonzalez, Karen Boswell, James [Calgar], and Nile Wright.

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AE: Okay and your parents' names?

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YS: My parents were [Adelphia] and Rudolph [Kinyonis].

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AE: Now I came in and spoke with your sister, Lucille, and she volunteered you for this interaction because she says you know more of the history. So tell me why that might be that you're the keeper of the history.

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YS: Well I'm the oldest and so I was around almost four years earlier than her. So I'm hoping that I'm going to remember everything as--as perfect as I can.

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AE: Okay; so let's start with your parents. How and when did they come to San Antonio?

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YS: My mother came from Mexico, Tampico, Mexico right around the--the time of the Revolution. And my grandfather got my grandmother and the brothers and sisters and brought them here because there was a lot of chaos and--and so forth in Mexico. So they left and came here when she was I think about eight years old when she got here.

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My father, he was from Oklahoma and some way, somehow, I don't know that much about it but my grandparents moved here to San Antonio and he--so he was raised here. And that's about what I know of--of both sets as--as to how they came about.

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Then they got married and they were young but they--they struggled a while. My--my father was working for Joske's in the refrigeration department and did very, very well. And my mother was a--a housewife, raising the daughters and--and the sons. And [*Phone Rings*]--

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AE: And let's see; okay, this is Amy Evans again. We paused for a minute because Yolanda before--earlier she named her children and not her siblings. So we're back to clear that up and you're going to name your siblings now, your brothers and sisters.

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YS: Okay was I the oldest, Yolanda, and then it was Lucille, three and a half years later, and three and a half years later it was Cynthia. And approximately four years later it was Rudolph [*Kinyonis*], all of us. And--

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AE: Okay; so if I could go back for a minute. Do you know how your mother's family chose to come to San Antonio specifically?

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YS: Well I came from Tampico, Mexico, okay and at that time it was her and her brothers and sister and they moved here because of all the things that were happening in Mexico. It became very, very dangerous at that time. I think that was like around 1919, some--somewhere around there. And--and so then they moved here and my father like I said, he was from Oklahoma. I don't know exactly--exactly what it was but it was his parents that lived here in San Antonio and basically he was raised here with his brothers and sisters.

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AE: Right; what I meant by my question was how your mother's family chose the City of San Antonio and not another location in Texas.

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YS: I don't know. Maybe it was the closest the borders; that's the only thing that I can think of. Or, actually no; it was his brother already was here and if I remember correctly, he came into town and he went to work for Pioneer Flower, the old Pioneer Flower and then his brother had a--a grocery establishment that he sold groceries to different stores and he went to work for him. But I--I believe it was because his brother was already here if I remember correctly.

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AE: So do you know how your parents met?

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YS: I--I wish that I could remember, but I don't remember how they met. Yeah; it was a date but I don't know if they came across each other. You know actually we never really discussed it.

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AE: Okay; well have they--did they over the years share stories about their lives growing up in San Antonio and what San Antonio was like back then?

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YS: Well yes; they did. You know they talked about just like everybody else has talked about you know. I walked five miles to work or I walked three miles to go to school and when it was snowing and raining and everything else. And that's--and they were--they were poor. They were not a wealthy people. And--and then like I said, my father after a few years he--he decided to go ahead and open up a restaurant and try it. And it was his--his sister's husband that had--was oh, kind of helped him through it. And he opened up the first restaurant and worked very hard. He built everything in the restaurant, opened it up; my mother was the waitress. He was the cook. And that's how it--it started with this business. And then he opened up this one. Then he opened up two or three more.

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But those eventually closed up. We ended up closing the one over there on Wilson and [Callabrum]. And this one was across the street and he bought this building and we've been here ever since and I think it was 1952 or '53 that we moved over here.

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AE: So it would have been 1949 before the original--?

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YS: Yes; 1949 when--when we--when it was the original one that opened up.

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AE: Do you remember anything about that--that space, what it looked like and what he served?

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YS: I remember it being empty and my father at night would go in there and--and make the--get--have plywood and have booths and tables because they didn't have any money to go ahead and buy equipment. And we were very, very young. I guess I was probably about nine or ten years old when they started that.

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And then at night they would work and it was across the street from a service station. And back then things were very, very safe. And they would have us sit in the car and while my mother worked in--in front as a waitress and you know and she would tell the--the owner of the gas station will you watch my children, you know? They're--they're in the car and you know we would get once--once in a while we'd get a chance to go inside and sit in a booth very quietly and then we'd get a little rowdy, so then we'd go back out to the car. But I mean that was the life then that there was nothing dangerous or nothing that you did that a parent couldn't do or shouldn't do.

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AE: So as y'all grew up I would assume that you began working in the restaurant as youngsters?

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YS: Yes; I--I got married very, very young at the age of 19. And I moved because my husband's father owned an oil business in--in Bay City and then after a few years we decided that--that was a hard life, so we decided to move here to San Antonio. And I went to work for them; I guess I was about 22 years old and I've been here ever since then.

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As you know I'm 74 years old now and I have worked for them all my life. And it's been great.

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AE: So back to the original restaurant; what was on the menu at the first location?

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YS: Basically what we have on the menu right now, but the prices were like 90-cents. I think we have a menu right now that we had it printed and it's framed. And I think it--that--that menu was in '53 but it was like 90-cents for a plate of food; yeah.

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AE: And I understand that your father is credited with bringing the Puffy Taco to San Antonio?

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YS: Yeah; absolutely. And to this day everybody that comes here, they come here for those Puffy Tacos. I mean there's--there's a lot of people that have ended up making them but my customers say there's nowhere to eat Puffy Tacos like here at Jacala.

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AE: And so is that something that your father grew up eating? Is that how it came to be on the menu?

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YS: No; he learned how to make them and--no. I mean you know the--the Mexican people you know they eat a lot of rice and beans but the food that we have here is Tex-Mex food. It's not your original food from Mexico. And that's what a lot--what--what everybody loves about this food. It's--it's plain old Tex-Mex food you know which is different and to this day I still enjoy eating everything that's on the menu.

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AE: What is your favorite Tex-Mex plate?

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YS: Well our signature dish of course is Enchiladas. And that's what people come here to--to eat but I mean we have homemade Chile Rellenos; we--we do a lot of things that--that--that we put into the menu in the last you know 15 years or so. But our signature is the Enchiladas. And the cheese; people love the cheese. It's a special blend cheese that we do and everybody always asks well, where can I buy it? Well you really can't; you know 'cause it's--it's a special blend for us. And--and that's one of the favorite dishes that all of our customers have.

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AE: Now talking about Tex-Mex, this book the *Tex-Mex Cookbook* that your sister appears in, in her interview that Rob Walsh did, she says that she didn't identify with Tex-Mex and didn't like this restaurant being kind of associated with that.

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YS: My sister? Well this is considered Tex-Mex food. And--and I don't know--

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AE: I'll just--I have the book here, so let me see. *We never wanted to call our food Tex-Mex though; Tex-Mex was slang.*

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YS: That's basically what it is. People come in here and they say this is the real Tex-Mex food.

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AE: So can you kind of explain how that changed; how at first it was slang and then now it's something that's part of what--what people expect?

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YS: I don't know.

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AE: Like your family had this restaurant and doing what came naturally here in San Antonio but then now Tex-Mex is appreciated as a regional cuisine.

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YS: Exactly. Back then they didn't call it Tex-Mex. They just called it Mexican food. But then you know they started with you know Tex-Mex. I know one thing that the food that you have here in Texas is not the same as New Mexico or anything that they try to associate in the northern part of the States or even in California. It's--it's got its own taste and it's completely different. And people from all over the States, you know that lived here or they have--or they have come here with relatives, when they get off that plane they come here because this food is the original you know and I guess many, many years ago that's what they ended up calling it--Tex-Mex because it is entirely different.

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AE: Do you have any idea what your parents thought about that phrase--that label?

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YS: They--they--back then many years ago we didn't want to call it Tex-Mex because we really didn't understand it, you know as being Tex-Mex food. But bottom line that's what it is and that's what everybody that comes here, that's why they--they want this taste because it's entirely different. It's even entirely different from up in Dallas; you know it's just a--it's San Antonio has got a--a different taste as far as Mexican food is concerned. And it's considered the best.

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AE: So when your parents decided to open a restaurant you know what was their motivation because your father had a career at Joske's?

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YS: He wanted to be able to support his family in the manner that he would love for them to be accustomed to or we to be accustomed to. And he didn't have it, so all he could think of was hard work and--and he felt like working at Joske's in--in the refrigeration department just wasn't going to get him anywhere. And then he also was--he became a bookkeeper for [Earl Labels] and he had done that too; you know so then one of his brother-in-laws said look. Let me help you. And I'll give you some ideas because they owned a restaurant. And the name of the restaurant was--I'm trying to--I'm trying to remember; they had three or four restaurants there, but their family wasn't able to keep them up. It was a lot of turmoil in the family and they eventually closed them, closed the three or four and the parents died.

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And--and Jacala, as a matter of fact, I've had many customers to come up to me that have been here for years and they're calling this restaurant an institution now. And I was amazed when they tell me that. I said what? And they said yes; you're an institution. And I feel very, very proud of that because like I told you; I've been here--I've been with them since I was 22 years old. And to this date I'm still here.

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AE: Well that--that is saying a lot. Tell me about the kind of people that your parents were, their personalities, what they were like.

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YS: Very loving, very sweet; everybody cared for them. They had a beautiful marriage and in this restaurant many of my mother's on my mother's side ended up with several of them being employees here that turned out to be great employees. Her brother, her sister, another--another brother, and--and so this--this was a place that everybody was able to make a living and--and--and they helped us. We helped--my parents helped them and it--and they both died; they were working here and then just soon after that they died. So--so they worked here for many, many years.

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AE: What years did your parents pass?

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YS: My parents? My mother passed away seven years ago and my father passed away ten or eleven years ago. I don't remember the exact date.

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AE: So what do you--how did they feel having started this institution and becoming an institution in San Antonio?

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YS: They were very, very proud of it. You know they worked very, very hard and like I said when it got down to this restaurant, all we did was--I was a young girl and I--I said let's expand it. It was a very small one, so we just kept--we expanded it there and then we did the patio and then we did the courtyard. We did everything we could. He bought the property across the street

for the parking. He bought the house that was behind this and--and we use it now for parking. And then we bought another house that is rented but it--some--someday it'll be parking, but as far as my sisters and I are concerned--of course, we have a brother and he's not in the business. He's been ill and so he's not in the business. And we don't really have an exit plan 'cause we're just not going to worry about it. We're just saying you know let go; let God.

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AE: Did your parents expect y'all to--to continue the restaurant?

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YS: They didn't really realize that we were going to you know. It was a--it was a starter for us to make a little salary. You know we had our husbands and it was a salary and but we loved this restaurant so much that you know as they got older and we got older we just kept it going. So we--so Lucille and I mostly have been here for many, many years. And then Cindy came in, you know maybe 10 years or so ago. And it's just been in the family and we don't know what we're going to do. We--like I said, we're just going to wait and see. We would like whoever comes along that they would care for it like--like we have.

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We have children but we don't plan to have them continue the business because there's too many of them. And--and--and sometimes it--it can become a problem. The three of us, we work great together. We all work different times and we've been able to work together and that has been a blessing in itself.

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AE: Now tell me; you said you love--love the restaurant. Tell me what you love about it.

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YS: It's home. It's--it's people that I've seen, customers grow up, die, their children, their grandchildren, and I--people ask me, are you going to retire and I don't want to. I mean I--I'm very fortunate because it's the three of us. We all work different times, but I get up in the morning and I walk and--and I--and I come here until 1:30--2 o'clock you know and then check and get everything ready for the afternoons. And then I leave and I'm here five days a week. And then my other sisters, they do the night work 'cause they figure that I'm older and they want to give me a little bit of time off.

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But I mean I love this; I mean well, this is part of my life. I mean I--I've raised my children. I've--I've gotten married. I was a widow. I remarried again and--and this has always been my life.

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AE: So tell me about when you were young and your family had the restaurant what would y'all eat at home?

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YS: Well she always back--way back then she had I'm going--a helper, a lady that--that helped. It's kind of hard to decide how to call them, not servants, they're not maids, but she would take care of us and she would cook. But I mean we ate; you know I mean we ate regular food because we had the restaurant to come to. So we didn't do Mexican food per se. We had that here. But

you know my father loved to cook lobsters and--and we'd have lobster every Friday 'cause we were Catholic and way back then you--you couldn't eat meat.

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So there was a time when we finally said dad, please; get us something else. Now that sounds terrible, but back then you know people were able to afford lobster I think a lot better than now. And--and he loved cooking it. And my mother was never much of a cook. My father did a little bit more cooking, but it was just you know steak and baked potato, things like that, you know that we ate at home. But we came to eat here at this restaurant two or three times a week.

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AE: Do you have any memory or idea what your family's competition was in the early days and what the kind of restaurant scene in San Antonio was like?

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YS: With other competition? Well there's always been competition and we have always you know been concerned about it because so many restaurants have opened up and then they've expanded them and everything. But our customers are very, very loyal and they bring their friends and then their friends bring their friends and that's how we've been able to keep up this business, because like I said there are many, many Mexican restaurants. All through the years since I was young, but not of course as much as it is now.

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But we've always you know have tried to take care of our customers because all of these customers are not neighborhood. These people are all from way out 1604; they come in from

Corpus. They come in from Kerrville; they come in from--from Boerne, Austin. They all come in from every part around here--San Antonio, because they were raised; they knew the restaurant. They'll come in from Houston. I mean it's--it's really something else.

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There's one story that I guess I have--I will never forget it. And this was--what was it, about seven or eight years ago, remember when they emptied out Houston because of the--of the hurricane? They literally emptied out Houston. Well it was on the second day and these customers walked in and they looked all frazzled. And I said how--how can I help you? They sat at that table right there [*Gestures*]. And they said they had a jar of hot sauce; it had our name on it and the address. He said is this the restaurant that we buy this hot sauce in Houston all the time? And we felt like we had to make that 18-hour trip and we were determined that we were going to eat at this restaurant. And they walked in with their children and I was almost in tears to know that they traveled 18 hours and the only place that they wanted to come was to Jacala. After that they were here a couple of days, they ate here at least twice a day. And it was just a real touching story to know they had come that far and--and drove that many hours and they wanted to come to the restaurant here. And I've never forgotten; that is one of many, many stories that we have.

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AE: The power of food. So you sell your salsa in Houston?

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YS: We sell our sauce through a distributor and some of it goes to Houston, some of it goes to Austin, and--and the problem here--H-E-B, many people have seen it at H-E-B, but they don't

keep it up. You know they have so many hot sauces that they finally said you know we had it or they tried the hot sauce and they loved it so much and then they started coming to eat here to pick up the hot sauce because H-E-B like I said is just a very, very big store and they don't--they don't keep it up.

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AE: So when was it that y'all started doing that?

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YS: The hot sauce? I wish I could remember. I'll ask Lucille 'cause she's the one that really got the hot sauce started.

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AE: Well and I saw up at the counter that you have a Jacala Brittle that you package. Tell me about that.

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YS: Well it's--it's a candy that--that--that we love. This little candy lady that makes it and--and we've bought her candy for many, many years; I mean it was her grandmother and now--and now the granddaughter has taken over. And I imagine that we've been selling that candy now for about the last 15 years or so.

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AE: Is there also a praline or are there other candies?

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YS: Yes; there's pralines, there's the peanut brittle and there's the chewy praline and the regular pralines, yes. And like I said, we've been buying them for years.

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AE: So tell me how this neighborhood has changed over the years, what kinds of changes you've seen.

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YS: The neighborhood people that lived here either live far away from here or they've moved out of--out of the City and they come here to visit us. But the business here as far as the neighborhood is concerned they do come, but most everybody are coming from all over San Antonio. I mean off of--I live on 1604 in De Zavala. So it's a pretty good ways out and--and I mean I make this trip here five days a week. And--and a lot of people will say well, I live all the way on 281 and 1604. And I say I know; you know and they're amazed that I live that far, too. And I drive here every day. But I mean we have a lot of customers that I mean that they'll come here twice a week, sometimes more. We have some that walk in here every day.

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AE: So you talked earlier about all the expansion and your father kind of spreading out; tell me about some of the additions and what purposes--

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YS: The expansion consisted of--we had this part of the restaurant and I was--I was a little older and my husband had a--had a construction company and it was a big, big company. And so I talked to him, to one of his guys and he helped me to extend the restaurant. And we extended it and then we thought well, you know we're doing really, really great. So then we extended it to the patio. That was like an outside patio. And then we covered it up. And then--and then the concrete, well that was parking and my father said well let's just make that for the restaurant too. And we used all of it. I mean like on the weekends, we are packing morning 'til night.

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AE: Do you do a lot of special events and things?

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YS: Weddings, some weddings, showers, reunions, birthdays all the time, funerals almost every day; there's a funeral that's coming in for 50. There's another one coming in tomorrow. There's another one coming in Saturday. And these are people that have eaten here and either the person that they went--that they're going to the funeral ate here, or they knew of this restaurant. We have a lot of funerals.

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AE: So this is something I have yet to ask, but tell me about the restaurant's name.

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YS: Jacala, now that I can tell you. I was I guess about nine years old--hold on just a second.

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AE: We were talking about the name of the restaurant, Jacala.

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YS: Okay and so my mother had a lot of family in Mexico City. And back then you drove San Antonio all the way to Mexico City and we're talking about two days, three days-drive. And we were going through--going up the mountains and we stopped and had lunch at this--at this little bitty town. And the name of the town was Jacala. And I guess--I guess like I said, I was about nine years old or so. And we were sitting at this long table, the three kids--the three kids and my parents. And I just loved that little town. And my father was talking in conversation; what should we call our restaurant? And I turned around and I said daddy let's call it this, Jacala. And he said you think so? I said I love this little town.

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And he said do you like it? I said I love it. That's how that name came about. So we've had that name and from time to time there was a--a group of--of people that came in here and they were from that town and they sent us pictures of the city. I don't know where they are. We've moved things around and--but it was--it was pictures of the--of the--I mean it's--it's always been a little town, but it's a beautiful little town right before you get to Mexico City. And that's how we came about it; I told my parents.

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AE: Had y'all ever made trips back there over the years?

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YS: No; no, no, because then it got to where you know we didn't drive. You know you--we would go to Mexico but we'd fly you know. So we never got a chance to see the town again 'cause my parents after--after they left or after they went up there, they--they got so busy with the restaurant you know and--and got other restaurants that they didn't go to Mexico City as often. And by the time that they did, you know they flew.

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AE: So your mother and her family when they left Tampico during the Revolution, she still maintained ties to family that stayed behind in Mexico?

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YS: Yes; well she had--she had uncles and aunts and some cousins that lived in Mexico City. Tampico there was a little bit of family and some family in Monterey and--and--and I guess when we--the last time that I went to Monterey I guess I was about 25 years old. And--and we would go to Monterey because there was some family and there was a wedding or--or whatever. But we didn't go to Mexico that often after--you know as we got older; you know everybody kind of just separated. My mother's aunts and uncles of course, you know they've passed away and I don't know. I don't know that there's any real family left of hers in Mexico.

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AE: So did you and your brothers--brother and sisters grow up speaking Spanish?

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YS: What?

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AE: Did you grow up speaking Spanish?

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YS: Oh yes; yes, we were. And as a matter of fact, the one that speaks the best Spanish is myself. Lucille and Cindy speak it, and my brother does, too, but I was younger and I--and up until when I went to school I--as a matter of fact, I--I failed the first grade because I didn't speak the language. So I had to--I had to--well that and I--and I got sick with pneumonia or whatever. But anyway, so I had to repeat the first grade. But I did not know how to speak English when I went and it was very, very difficult for me. But I finally learned.

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So the first you know seven years or so you speak one language and then you speak the other one; you're going to do very well. But when you try to speak both languages at one time that's a very, very difficult thing to do. So you know you're not able to speak it. And of course, the sad thing about it, so many people--so many Mexican people now they don't even speak Spanish, you know and it's sad. It really, really is sad that they don't speak Spanish and they'll tell me my name is Gonzalez or my name is Sanchez or whatever and they said no, well I don't speak Spanish. And I just think it's so heartbreaking. But it's just according to how you're raised. You know it's--like I told you, it's--it's difficult to learn both languages by the time you get to school.

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AE: Did you raise your children to speak Spanish?

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YS: Unfortunately I did not because I married--I didn't marry a husband that spoke Spanish and he was not of Mexican descent. So, I couldn't--I couldn't speak it to him and it just became really, really difficult.

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AE: Well let's go back to the food for a minute and tell me what you might know about how-- where recipes came from and how things have developed and evolved.

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YS: Well there was a lady that worked for them from the very, very beginning at the first restaurant. And--and--and she made the food. And--and it was good. And so then she stayed with us for years, I mean years that we were even here. And one day I--I got really, really panicky and I said dad you know when she gets sick or she dies I said you don't have recipes. He said no; I don't.

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And I said, we got to do something about this. So I went back there in the back and we already had another person that had learned from her and I spent two or three days writing everything down, you know so much of this. And their measurements was a--a plastic cup of this, another tablespoon of this, or a half a cup, coffee cup you know or whatever. And I just-- and I put all of the menus together. And I said okay; I've got them I think.

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Then a couple of weeks later I decided that I was still scared. I thought you know I can't go by what I just wrote down. I got to do it myself. So I would go in there once a year and with their help they would become my sous chef and I did all the measuring. And I did it. And so I have the recipes in my safe at home. And so far you know they have taught from one person to the other person but if anything was to ever happen to any of my cooks I could get in there and do it myself.

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AE: So what was this woman's name, the first cook?

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YS: Um, the lady that started it, her name was Maria, but I--you know I can't remember her now. I mean she's been gone for years. And right now Jose Louis who is our--our cook, he's been working for us since he was 20 years old or 18 years old and he's still working for us and he's probably 55, you know so--. Yeah; so he's been here. And there's two other brothers that work in this part, but they know the recipes. And like I told you, I have them at home in case somebody would decide you know we're all going to walk out. I've got them home. And I know that I could do it because I've done it.

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AE: But Jose Louis learned from Maria's recipes as well?

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YS: Well he learned from some--I think it was Maria; yes, yes. I'd have to try to go back and try to remember. The problem is--is that if I don't know it, I don't know that they know it. But I'm-- I could ask him. And he can tell me.

00:39:48

AE: Do you happen to know anything about who Maria was, what--how your father found her?

00:39:52

YS: She was just somebody that worked for my grandmother you know that helped and--and at home; she had never worked in a restaurant. But you know she started tasting you know and saying well, what do you think about this with the rice and then the--? And our chili and our gravy of course is the--is the two things that none of the other restaurants have, you know. I mean they--we really--it's a complete different Tex-Mex taste, but I've never been able to see anybody be able to--to serve with that particular taste at any other restaurants because a lot of times when--you know we'll go to--to a function you know and it's at a Mexican restaurant you know. But it's completely different.

00:40:50

AE: I don't suppose you have any idea where she was from originally--Maria?

00:40:55

YS: She was originally from Mexico. And--and she--she came here into the States; I mean we're talking about 60 years ago. So she was from Mexico, but like I said, as far--it was just

somebody that my grandmother knew and--and they used her and all of the sudden she became an employee you know and--and was able to work with us for many, many years.

00:41:30

AE: I just wondered if there was some special kind of technique or way of doing things in the part of Mexico where she was from that she brought with her that maybe had influenced--?

00:41:42

YS: No; actually like I told you, this is an entirely different food. You don't eat this in Mexico. You know it's--it's entirely different. That's how they got the name Tex-Mex. It's just--it's completely different. It's like in New Mexico where they had the red chili, you know. Well we don't use that. So it's just a complete different taste that--. I don't know how it came about but it did.

00:42:14

AE: Do you know if when your father first started the restaurant how he accessed ingredients? I mean were ingredients to make this food easy to come by back then?

00:42:22

YS: I really can't tell you because you know I was a young child and we never really I guess-- maybe we did talk about it, but there's so many things that you forget at this age that you just cannot remember. And then something out of the clear blue sky that happens 70 years ago you're going to remember it, but I really couldn't tell you. I wish I could.

00:42:50

AE: Can you tell me about your tortillas?

00:42:54

YS: Well the tortillas, we make them here, but you know years ago, you know you would do them by hand. Now we have little machines. And it's a good product. People love it but you're-- you're not having to--I mean you're able now to buy your flour and sauce and some of the ingredients are in it, so that makes it a lot easier. The corn tortillas we buy them, but we have to go through several companies before we have found the right tortilla.

00:43:31

The company that we used for years and years and--and they were related as cousins, it was [Jala Momasa], but the father died and then the--the son tried to keep the business going but he ended up closing it up. And so eventually we had to get another company. But this company is doing very, very well for us.

00:43:52

AE: Is the new company a local company?

00:43:54

YS: Yes; yes.

00:43:57

AE: Would you care to name it?

00:43:58

YS: I don't know; he--he changed the name on it. I'd have to find out.

00:44:04

AE: So do you think that a restaurant can survive in San Antonio if they don't make their own tortillas, some of their own tortillas?

00:44:14

YS: I think so. I really do. If you can find the right product out--out there, you don't--you don't need to make them yourself. You know see; many restaurants serve only flour tortillas. We serve corn and flour. And sometimes I have felt like--like um, excuse me. I think that if you can--if you can make your flour tortillas or people can see that you're making them it's--that's what it's all about, and if you get the right product.

00:44:58

AE: And children love seeing the tortillas being made.

00:45:02

YS: Oh yes; yes, and the--and the smell of the tortillas, yes.

00:45:07

AE: Well can you think of you know the Katrina story or the hurricane story you told earlier from Houston it was so great. Do you have--can you think of another story like that--that really stands out in your 50-year history working here?

00:45:21

YS: I'm trying to think. No babies have been born here. They've left here to go to the hospital. No babies have actually been born here. Well there--there was another very, very sad story. Our waiter, Frank Saldivar, he worked for us so many, many years. He's died I guess about six--seven years ago. And he died probably of a broken heart.

00:45:57

Frank Saldivar was the father to Yolanda Saldivar, who murdered--Mexican singer.

00:46:14

AE: Selena?

00:46:15

YS: Selena. And that day it was a Friday, and I was here and I answered the phone and they said we want to speak to Frank Saldivar. And I said he's very busy right now. I said he can't come to the phone. And I said Frank can you, and he said no, because I mean he was a fabulous waiter. And they said ma'am this is like a 911-call. I said oh my god; I said all right.

00:46:45

So I called him to the phone and he looked at me like oh my god in Spanish, [oh dios mio], and I said what Frank? He said I can't tell you. I have to leave right now. So he drove to Corpus Christi and then later on we found out that it was his daughter. I saw him later; he came here and he was in tears. And he said I feel so bad. Her name was Yolanda. I can tell you how many years we've known him. He named her after me.

00:47:27

He always loved me; you know I was kind of like a special person. And--and--and he had this little girl and he said to me, I named her Yolanda. And I said oh that's so sweet; you know 'cause like I said she's--I don't know exactly how old she--she is now but she is younger than I am. And I said that is so sweet. But yeah; that was a very, very sad story. And all of our customers you know were asking for him and--and they said that's not Frank's daughter? I said yeah; yeah it is.

00:48:07

Even *Time Magazine* came here and they did a write-up on it, you know and talked to me about it. And I said I don't know what to tell you. All I know is that the man has got a broken heart. And he was never able to go back to work. I mean he just--like I said, he died of a broken heart.

00:48:27

AE: What made him such a wonderful waiter?

00:48:29

YS: He was a waiter that he would stand at attention and it was almost like he'd stand there and he'd click his--his shoes together and would tell the customer I'm here at your service. That was the kind of waiter that he was. People would come here to this restaurant and they had to have him. And--and I mean and he was loyal. He was always here, like I said for so many years, and he was a perfectionist. That's what he was. And everybody wanted him.

00:49:14

AE: So how long after the drama of Selena's assassination, murder did--did he pass, do you know?

00:49:23

YS: Well that--I'm trying to remember, but it's--it's been a few years. I can't tell you.

00:49:34

AE: Had Selena ever been to the restaurant prior to that?

00:49:37

YS: No; no, no, but you know he would talk about her and that people you know that his daughter worked for her, you know and--and we'd say oh really? And he said oh yeah; she--my daughter is the right-hand person to Selena. And I said that is so neat. She had a store here and Yolanda would run it. And I--I saw Yolanda here; she would come to eat her with her family, and--very, very sad.

00:50:16

AE: I'd say. What a connection to a super-historical event; my goodness. Well back to the restaurant. You've given me a lot of your time. And I know y'all are going to be busy if you're not already. We're in the corner over here. But is there--well first, I want to ask you if you have an idea; I know you've talked about you're not really certain of the restaurant's future. But what do you think about the future of Tex-Mex since you've seen it evolve all these decades?

00:50:41

YS: Well I think that Tex-Mex is here to stay. I mean--I mean this is Texas. This is right next to the border. It's nothing like eating on the other side of the border, but it has become a food that--that people know that this is a different taste. And people come here to eat Tex-Mex food. And I think it's here forever.

00:51:08

AE: Well and somebody mentioned to me yesterday that they think now today in San Antonio there are like 1,200 Mexican restaurants. How--how do you continue to--I mean I know you can continue to stand out through you family history, this being the longest--oldest family-run, so--so that's to your credit of course, but what else would you think is the key--a key ingredient to success?

00:51:33

YS: I think that this restaurant not only that we've been here so many years, but they've seen us grow up. I mean it's hard to say that anybody has seen me grow up because I'm already up there and the people that saw me grow up they're already gone. But their families, you know and they'll come up to me and--and they'll tell me the story of--of what's happened or if--if there's something sad that happened or an illness, and they put their arms around me and--and they just feel like I'm like--like a friend, like a good friend that they come and see.

00:52:16

And--and I think that that's what it is--is that we've been here for so many years that they know that they're always going to find a family member, which is Lucille, Cindy, or myself. Cindy works three--four nights a week, three nights a week and then she works Sunday at lunch.

Lucille works Friday nights. I work every day Monday through Friday. And if one of them can't make it on--on the weekend, I take their place, you know so there's always a family member.

00:52:50

And then of course Richard, he's been here for--I was 14 and he was 15 and he's still working here. And he started here as a dishwasher. And--and he's been with us since, well since he was 14--15, so back in '55.

00:53:18

AE: What's Richard's role now?

00:53:20

YS: Richard Galvan, G-a-l-v-a-n, and he's worked--this is the only job he's ever had. And so as years went by and now he's like an assistant manager. And he's still here.

00:53:36

AE: So I did think of one question, another one while you were speaking and that is I saw outside the mosaic plaque that says the *Deco District*. Tell me about that quickly.

00:53:46

YS: Yes; yes, well Lucille can probably tell you more about that but we're considered part of the Deco District and the Deco District as far as I know it's just these buildings that have been here a certain amount of years and--and had that deco look, you know with the tiles and everything else. And they--they considered that this was part of it, too, so we're very proud of that.

00:54:12

AE: Well is there anything I haven't asked you that you'd like to add or a note you'd like to end on?

00:54:18

YS: I think we pretty much have covered it all that I can remember. I'm sure I'm going to remember stuff after you leave, but I think we pretty much have covered it all.

00:54:30

AE: Well thank you so much Yolanda for sitting with me; I really appreciate your time.

00:54:32

YS: Thank you; thank you for having us and we appreciate the recognition of Jacala.

00:54:40

[End Yolanda Showalter Jacala Interview]