Linda Welch Ocana

Layton, UT

An Interview by

Tori Fairbanks

24 October 2024

LAYTON HISTORY COLLECTION

Verdeland Park Oral History Project

Tape No. HM2024.059.18

Layton City
and
Heritage Museum of Layton

GOOD AFTERNOON, TODAY IS MONDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 2024. MY NAME IS TORI FAIRBANKS, AND WITH ME TODAY IS LINDA WELCH OCANA. WE ARE AT THE LAYTON MUSEUM IN LAYTON, UT. I'M INTERVIEWING LINDA TODAY FOR THE LAYTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, AND ALSO THE VERDELAND PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. AND WE'LL ALSO BE TALKING ABOUT ST. ROSE OF LIMA CATHOLIC CHURCH.

TF: I'm so happy that you've joined me, because these are all things that were a big part of Layton history. But before we start, I just want to be sure that I have your okay to record.

LO: Yes.

TF: All right. Well, I'll just start out with some general questions, like where and when you were born, and your parents' names, and we'll go from there.

LO: I was born in Tooele, UT, in 1955. My parents are Mary Welch, and Epifañio Welch. My dad was in the military when my older brother and I were born, and the one who's in between us was actually born somewhere in Idaho, I think. And because my dad was in the military, I think he went back and forth for a few years. Then when he got out of the military, we moved to Verdeland Park when I was just a baby, or maybe a year old. We lived there for a couple of years, then we moved to Ogden. Three more of my siblings were born there, and then we moved to the neighborhood just south of King Elementary. I can't remember what it was called, but it was one of the first subdivisions they built in this area.

TF: Was it Wasatch Heights? Wasatch Heights had homes with flat tops.

LO: Yes, that's it. They had those flat tops that would just get covered with snow in the winter.

TF: Yes. People have told me they actually had to shovel snow off of their roofs in the wintertime.

LO: Yeah. And then we moved over to Golden Avenue, right across from Central Davis. So, first I attended Wasatch Elementary, then I went to Verdeland Park Elementary, then I went to Crestview Elementary.

TF: Did he your father serve in WWII?

LO: He served in Korea.

TF: Okay. I'd like to talk about your grandma in a little bit, where she took care of Father Draeger, but first, tell me your grandparents' names.

LO: My grandparents on my mother's side were Anne and Ben Garcia. My other grandmother was Fedelina Martinez, and I didn't know my grandfather from that side. He disappeared from my dad's life.

TF: So, the Martinez's were on your father's side, and the Garcia's were on your mother's side.

LO: Yeah.

TF: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your family background. How many siblings did you have?

LO: There were six of us, and I was the third. I have two older brothers, two younger sisters, and a younger brother. And we were the first ones to graduate from Layton High. My oldest brother was the first one to graduate from Layton High, then my next brother was in the third graduating class, and I was the fourth. Then my family moved to Salt Lake, so the rest of my siblings graduated from other schools.

TF: So, you were in Layton until you graduated.

LO: Yes.

TF: What were some of the things you enjoyed doing as a child?

LO: Well, we used to ride our bikes, and we went swimming at the Layton swimming pool when it was still the one outside. And in the winter, we'd go sledding up off of Hill Field Road, where the dump is, and all those houses and businesses. That used to be a sledding hill. And when I came back in the early '90s, that's where I took my kids. I taught my son how to ski on that hill. We skied down, then we'd hike back up, ski down, then hike back up again. It was cheaper than going to a ski resort. (laughs)

But there used to be a place called The Hollow between Church Street and Gordon Avenue. And there was a dirt trail that went over the little creek that used to be here. It was steeper on one side, and it came down into the ball fields. We rode our bikes down there and got into a lot of crashes happened there. (laughs) Two of my brothers crashed there and got broken arms, scratches, and all kinds of stuff.

TF: Your poor mom. (laugh)

LO: We did some crazy things back then. (laughs) We even used to build stilts. And there was a house right up off of Gordon, by the LDS Church, back when there were nothing but fields behind it. We called it the haunted house.

TF: I think I've heard about the haunted house. Tell me more about it.

LO: It had horses around it, and the big "dare" was to run to the house and jump onto the roof of the barn before the horses came. They'd chase you away. (laughs)

TF: Did you do it?

LO: Oh yeah. (laughs)

TF: What made the house seem haunted?

LO: I don't know. That's just what I knew it as—the haunted house.

TF: I'm guessing it was kind of old.

LO: Yeah. But anyway, that church there had dances, and even if you weren't LDS, you could go. So, we would go to those, even though I'm not LDS.

TF: When you were growing up in Layton, did you feel like there was a separation between those who were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latte-Day Saints and those who weren't?

LO: Not when I was a kid, because when you're a kid, I don't think it matters as much. We all got together and played football at Central Davis, and we all rode our bikes together. So, it didn't really start feeling like that until I got to high school. But even then, it depended on where you came from. Because I was raised here Layton, I think it was easier for me to be a part of every group; but there were kids who came in from Black and Hispanic families who may have had a different experience. And then kids from migrant families also had a different experience, because they went back and forth to different locations. That was still common back then. But a lot of the fields in West Layton brought in migrant families, so those kids came to school here.

So, I wasn't one of those, but I was kind of caught up in that world as well. I don't speak Spanish, even though that was my dad's first language. His experience learning English was very negative, so he didn't teach me and my siblings to speak Spanish. So, we got criticized by some on Spanish-speaking end, and we got ostracized by some on the other end. There weren't many kids like me. But I think at that time in our society, it wasn't overt. And as children of color, we were taught to not really talk about those things. And in some ways, you had to deny parts of who you were. Like being Native American, for example was something that many people had to deny.

I am very much a part of that Native culture. My grandmother's mother was a Native American.

TF: What tribe?

LO: The Taos Pueblo Tribe. We know that my other grandmother was Native American as well, but we don't know very much about her history, because she didn't talk about it.

TF: Did your grandmother belong to the Zuni or Hopi Tribe?

LO: No. My other grandmother was part Apache, and we're not really sure what else—maybe Ute, because some tribes stole from each other. But I don't know very much about it.

TF: Yeah, it wasn't always talked about a whole lot.

LO: Right. But Layton High actually had a Native American club. Most of the members were Navajo.

TF: That's interesting. I've interviewed a couple members of the Northwestern Shoshone Tribe, but I've heard about Navajo students living here, and even Navajo workers who came in from the Four Corners area as migrant workers, for example. It seems like once the Basque farmers kind of moved on to the Ogden area, farmers here brought in Navajo workers, as well as migrant workers from places like Texas.

LO: The Navajos I know of would come from Southern Utah or Northern Arizona, because that's where a lot of them lived. That's where the reservation is and has been for a long time.

TF: Yeah. Was the Native American Club at Layton High a student alliance, like the Black Student Alliance they had there at the time?

LO: No, not really. I think it's because Native American students in Layton at that time were some of the most quiet, unassuming kids. They struggled with identification, and many people

here thought they were Hispanic. I think that's what people would say to them: "You're Hispanic." That's the group they were lumped into for a lot of years.

TF: Right, because why not? Like, "You're someone of color, and you all look the same, so you must have the same background, and the same experience." (laughs)

LO: Right. But like I said, as a kid, I can't say that it was as stigmatizing as it was later on. I mean, there were times that it was, but I'll tell you, one of the biggest issues I had at Layton High was that we had to wear dresses to school. So, during my junior year, a bunch of us girls decided we were not going to wear dresses anymore. We were going to wear pants. And there were probably close to 100 of us—because we got as many girls as we could—and they sent us all home for a couple of days. But I think they finally decided they couldn't just keep sending us all home, because we said, "We'll just keep getting our parents' permission to wear pants to school." (laughs) So, they changed the rule.

So to me, when you're a kid, the kinds of things you mentioned were bigger issues for my kids when I brought them back to Utah. I left Utah when I was 19 because I joined the Army. But I eventually came back here with my kids, because if there was one thing I knew about Utah, it was that it was a safe place to raise kids. But my kids had a harder time here than I did. I think part of that is because, like I said, we were taught not to make it an issue. But when the Race Wars hit in the late '60s, that's when things started changing. So, it's kind of a catch 22.

TF: Right. Did your kids experience things like exclusion, because they didn't belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints?

LO: No, because you tend to seek out those who are more like you. So, my kids gravitated towards the Hispanic kids, and the Black kids, and those kids weren't Mormon.

TF: It's interesting because I grew up in Cache Valley, which was mostly White, and mostly everyone was the same religion. But I was raised so differently, because my parents taught me that no matter what race a person is, or what religion they belong to, if they're a good person, they're a good person.

LO: Where were they from?

TF: My dad was from Cache Valley, and my mom was from the Uintah Basin. She grew up around members of the Utes tribe, and my grandma had a lot of Ute friends as well. So I think that made a difference. But I was so baffled by kids my age who would tell other kids, "We can't play with you, because you're different." I mean, was raised to *see* color, but to judge people on their merits, and the type of person they are, not by the color of their skin.

LO: I'm so glad you said that, because it's a big issue when people say, "Oh, I don't see color." Well, I'm sorry, but you have to see color when you look at me, right? You can't *not* see color. That was something we addressed when I worked with the school district. I did a lot of teacher training with different programs. They had a program back then called The Reach Program: Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage, and a big part of that is you need to see color. The difference is that when you see that color, you don't discriminate because of it. But don't say you don't *see* color.

TF: Because it's right there in front of you.

LO: I'm glad you know that, because you have a daughter of color, and if you told her you don't see color, or somebody else told her that, she would be like, "What do you mean?" (laughs)

TF: The funny thing is, my first husband and I saw her the morning after she was born, and after we spent some time with her in the hospital, her birth grandmother pulled me aside and said, "What are you going to do to raise her to be a strong Black woman?" I was like, "Um,

that's a good question." I realized that I needed to start doing some reading and get this figured out. So, the more I read, and the more I thought about it, I realized that I was scared to talk about race, because being White, I had never had to. And by the time my daughter was three, I realized that I always referred to Black kids as "cute kids." I'd always say to my daughter, "Look at that cute kid over there," because I wanted her to grow up with the "Black is Beautiful" mindset, and that was the only way I knew how to do it.

Well, by the time she was three-and-a-half, she was saying the same thing: "Mom, look at that cute kid. Mom, look at that cute kid." And I thought, "She can't call Black people 'cute' her whole life. This is ridiculous. I'm just gonna start to talking about race." By the time she was four, I thought, "I have no idea no idea what I'm doing, but I'm just gonna run with it." So I did. I told her, "You're called Black, even though your skin is brown, which is kind of silly. And I'm called White, even though my skin isn't really white, which is also silly. But that's the way it is."

But anyway, once we had that conversation, she ran with it. She was so excited to learn about things like Civil Rights, and Black history. She was like, "Let's talk about all of this." And I was like, "Okay." And I followed her lead.

LO: The other thing you can do is to bring people of her color into your life. That's really key, so that kids can see that not only are you willing to talk about race, but you also have courage to be friends with people of different races.

TF: Right. That's hard in Utah, because there are people of different races here, but it's so spread out. My daughter is 19 now, and my second husband is in the military. I wish I could have lived next to Hill Air Force Base when my daughter was young, because she would have been around more diversity.

LO: My kids were raised around diversity, and that's why they had a hard time coming here. When I left here at 19, my first husband and I went together because of the military. We had all of our kids in military installations, and that's where they were raised. And then, we brought them here and they were like, "What the heck is this?" (laughs) But it worked out.

But one of the things I taught them was to stand up for themselves and to not use it as a crutch. Like, "Just because you are … whatever, it doesn't mean you'll get excused if you get into trouble." And those are the kinds of things that I struggle with. I served on some committees in for the Hispanic community, and I don't like when people say, "Well, this happened because they are this or this." No, your child did that. It doesn't matter if they are this or that." You only give them a crutch when you use their ethnicity, their color, the way they identify, or whatever.

So, my kids have actually survived being here. But I have a range of grandkids now, because some of my kids married Hispanics, and some non-Hispanics. I have a great-granddaughter that is just as blonde, and blue-eyed, and probably more white than you. (laughs) And her mom is more Native American than I am. So, it's really funny how that works. (Tori talks more about her daughter, and her relationship with her birth family)

TF: So, you lived in Wasatch Heights. Tell me what you remember about the neighborhood you grew up in.

LO: We had a variety of friends, and we just ran the streets. Of course, it was a lot safer back then; but we were always outside playing with everybody. I remember a little blonde, blue-eyed kid who lived down the street and had these thick glasses. And one of my friends, Barbara Arciaga, lived just kitty corner from where I lived. Her family was Filipino, and she was one of the youngest of about seven or eight kids. I can't even remember for sure how many kids were in their family. And of course, I had Hispanic friends as well.

I don't think you solidify your friendships until you get to high school, and I try to tell my grandkids that, especially now, because there are so many schools. When we went to school, there were only a couple. There were kids who lived way out in West Layton, and they all went to a different elementary school. And we didn't meet them until they started coming to the same junior high and high school.

But anyway, things were a lot more carefree back then, and we just did crazy things, because nobody told us not to. (laughs) I mean, we could ride our bikes wherever we wanted, because there wasn't as much traffic to worry about.

TF: At least you didn't break an arm like your brothers. (laughs)

LO: I didn't, but lots of people I knew did. I didn't break any bones until I was an adult. I've had more broken bones as an adult than I ever did as a kid.

TF: Tell me any memories you have about Main Street in Layton, and the places you used to shop there.

LO: We didn't really shop on Main Street. I know Steve's Market is down on one end by Main Street, but I don't remember going in there very much, because we had a Kings right here on Fort Lane. So, I'm not as familiar with stores on Main Street. But what I do remember is dragging Main Street as a teenager. We didn't have to go to the Boulevard in Ogden, because we had Main Street right here. So, that's what I remember about Main Street.

TF: Did any of your friends used to race cars?

LO: Oh, all the time. And there was a place—I was trying to remember what it was called—where used to get Lime Rickies.

TF: Was it The Dipper?

LO: It might have been. But I remember how we used to climb the fence and go swimming in the Layton pool after it closed at night. And it was right next to the police station, even back then.

TF: Another dare. (laughs)

LO: Yeah. We were pretty mischievous. (laughs)

TF: Do you remember any of your teachers in elementary school?

LO: I remember one teacher at Crestview Elementary named Mr. Spear. He was very science-oriented. But I don't remember anyone else who was really significant until high school. I only remember one—she was an English teacher—Mrs. Anderson. But I do remember Nancy Fleming, who was a counselor at Layton High when I was there. She was really, really key for many of us at the time. None of us knew what her orientation towards women was. She never married, she never had kids, and I don't think she ever came out. But thinking back now, some of us wondered.

She became an assistant superintendent for the school district, and I had the pleasure of working with her at that level. She really knew what high school kids needed. But unfortunately, her voice was not heard as much as it should have been, and part of that is because she was worked in that "good old boy" arena. But she was a real key person in my life. I also saw your Face Book post the Layton History page about the principal. He was a great guy. I didn't like Mr. Mann as much though. He was a hard nose. I think he was an ex-marine, and that's how he tried to run the school.

My brother used to be a part of the hippie group at Layton High. He wore those great big cross necklaces, and all that stuff. Well, Mr. Mann came up and snatched it right off his neck.

Not over his head, but right off his neck. But they used to be able to do those kinds of things back then.

TF: That's frustrating. What year did you graduate?

LO: 1973.

TF: I've heard people say that in elementary school in Layton, kids kind of lived in their own little worlds until they went to Central Davis Junior High, and that's kind of when they were like, "Ok, there are students from the West Side. There are students from East Layton.

LO: Yeah, they came from all over.

TF: Do you remember a big division between different parts of Layton, like East Layton versus West Layton?

LO: No, I don't. I had friends who lived on the east side, and when I went to their houses, I'm not gonna lie, I was impressed, because the houses were bigger up there. We used to pick cherries up on Highway 89 back in the day. Fruit Heights was the big place to go pick cherries. But I can't honestly say that I saw that division. But I do think that I was one who made friends with more people than maybe some others did.

My dad was a huge part of the Hispanic movement in Utah. He belonged to an organization called SOCIO [the Spanish-speaking Organization for Community, Integrity, and Opportunity], and he was one of the first presidents of the organization. So, he was really key in helping with the issue of bringing people together at Hill Field, and all over. Then he moved up to the University of Utah, and he was one of the people who recruited different ethnic minorities to come to the university as professors to teach, or to work in different positions. So, I think I was the way I was when I was growing up because of my dad's attitude. But my dad also looked like a white guy, more so than a Hispanic. His grandfather on his mother's side was Spanish,

which means that he was more fair complected. But it was his grandmother belonged to the Taos Pueblo Tribe.

But my dad was very open, even more so than my friends' parents. For example, I dated a Black guy in high school, and my friends' parents—particularly my Hispanic and my white friends' parents—would have been like, "No way." But my dad was very open, and maybe that's part of why I didn't see that division you talked about, and why I didn't have the same kinds of experiences that others had.

TF: Tell me a little more about SOCIO. I heard about it for the first time just a couple weeks ago.

LO: It was an organization that was formed so that the Spanish community could come together and talk about the issues they were dealing with, work-wise, community-wise, and issues with their kids in school. Like if there were discriminatory-type issues, they would bring it up to this organization, and they would see if they could find a way to work those issues out.

It eventually became IMAGE de Northern Utah, and the Reach Program that I worked for in the school district was a huge thing that came out of that kind of work, although that was more national. But with the Reach, we tried to do things like train teachers. When everything came out with Rodney King, people said, "Gosh, we need to train policemen. We need to train firemen. We need to train these different organizations that come in to deal with these types of situations." Well, that was SOCIO's role, and things like thar started because of organizations like SOCIO.

TF: When was SOCIO started in Utah?

LO: I think it started in 1967. La Raza (NCLR) was another organization, but it was more national. SOCIO was also "national", but I think it was based more on the West Coast. La Raza

was more of a radical organization that started out of California. They're the ones that would go and deal with discrimination in the wrong way.

TF: Kind of like the Black Panthers.

LO: Yes. But SOCIO was more diplomatic. They tried to figure out ways to bring together the people who needed to talk about those issues, like mayors and senators, and those types of people.

TF: Did they deal with things like Veterans Affairs?

LO: No. That kind of stuff wasn't really dealt with until a few years later.

TF: Did they work with migrant workers' issues?

LO: Yes, but those were a bit harder. Veteran's issues became more prevalent after Vietnam. With WWI and WWII, and even Korea, people praised soldiers when they came home, and they didn't really look at things like PTSD. But when soldiers came back from Vietnam, people said, "We don't like you." And that's when really huge issues became more prevalent.

TF: Yeah. One of the reasons I asked if SOCIO dealt with migrant workers' issues is because one of the first maintenance guys in Verdeland Park, Raz Trujillo, worked hard to try to improve living conditions for migrant workers at the Layton Sugar Factory, and things like that.

LO: That's probably because Verdeland Park was military housing until it became a place for regular people to live.

TF: Yeah. Another question I have is when you were growing up, was there a strong relationship between the Hispanic community and the Black community?

LO: Yeah.

TF: I was wondering because I've interviewed people from the Black community, like Eileen Tucker, as well as the Hispanic community, like Maria Flores, and that's one thing they both mentioned.

LO: I know Maria. I knew her brother Gilbert, and her brother Mace graduated with Eileen.

TF: I love Maria. But anyway, tell me about the relationship between the Hispanic community and the Black. Community.

LO: Well, we gravitated towards each other. We were close to the Fairman family because they lived around the corner from us. Fairman is a big name here in Layton, as well as the Nelson family, like Claude and Orlando Nelwon. But the Fairman's had one girl, and her name was Colleen Fairman. She and I were best friends, and I think that's because you gravitate towards those you feel most comfortable with. They lived in our neighborhood, and I grew up with them.

TF: Well, before we start talking about St. Rose, tell me what you remember about Ruby Price.

LO: To us, Ruby was sort of a maternal figure. She was a Girl Scout leader, and that's the role that I knew her in back then. I didn't know much about her role as a teacher until I started working with the school district. I didn't even know things about her, like her being one of the first Black teachers in Utah, until later. But I knew about her kids a little bit.

TF: What do you remember about the Price family?

LO: The twin girls were a year younger than me, and Ralph Jr. was a year older. He was into sports, so I knew him in that capacity, because I was around all those jocks. But I don't remember much about the twins. I think maybe they were all a little rough around the edges, but

then again, we all had our moments. We all had to fight somebody back in those days. It just happened.

TF: Right. I laugh about that, because my husband went to West High, and their mantra was, "It's not who wins the football game, it's who wins the fight afterwards." (laughs)

LO: There was always a big rivalry between us and Clearfield. We were the only real high schools back then, other than Davis High, and Davis was pretty predominantly White. Layton and Clearfield had more diversity because of Hill Air Force Base, but also because of the migrant workers' kids. But I married a guy from Clearfield; they used to call them The Clearfield Dogs. (laughs)

TF: Tell me about St. Rose of Lima—what that church meant to you growing up, and what it meant to the community.

LO: It had a huge meaning to us. I went to catechism there. I wasn't baptized there, because I was born in Tooele, and we didn't move here until I was probably one of two. But I went to catechism every week, and then to church every Sunday. And we used the social hall next door, like whenever there were any weddings, or other things like that. And I got married in that church. St. Rose was a big icon for us, and for the Catholic community overall. Catholicism was the next biggest religion in Utah, outside of the LDS Church, although I know a lot of the Black kids were Baptists. So, we didn't have that aspect in common with them.

But anyway, the LDS Church had activities for their kids, like basketball, and different sports, or whatever. And St. Rose had things not just for Catholics, but people from all faiths. And my dad was a coach for the basketball team there. And what's funny is that I actually played softball for the LDS team, because a lot of my friends who played softball were on that team. But the beauty of it is that they didn't exclude others.

I know there was St. Josephs in Ogden, and I'm trying to remember if St. Mary's came before or after St. Rose. I think St. Rose was here a long time before Saint Mary's.

TF: It seems like St. Rose was built in the '40s.

LO: Yeah. I don't think they build St. Mary's until the late '60s or early '70s. So, St. Rose was the main church besides St. Josephs, and it was a beautiful church.

TF: Where was it located?

LO: Right on Main Street. If you know where Church Street comes down and crosses Main, That's where Saint Rose was. I'm trying to think of what's there now. I think it's all just apartment buildings. Not long ago, I drove down the street that used to go behind the church, because I wanted to see if the white house was still there, but I couldn't tell exactly, because it wasn't a very big house. But it was right next to the church, and it was mainly there for the person who helped take care of things, like my grandmother.

TF: Right. And one of your earlier comments that struck me was how your grandma helped care for Father Draeger. It sounds like your family has a long connection with St. Rose.

LO: Well, my dad was the one who got involved with the church first, because he worked with the church through the CCO. Well, my grandmother came to live with us when I was ten or eleven, and I'm not exactly sure when she went to work for the church, but I think it was pretty soon after that. She was there until I was a senior in high school, and that's when she moved back to Nevada. But my dad and Father Draeger were very good friends, and my grandmother was able to work for him because of the connection between him and my dad.

TF: Maria told me a little bit about Father Draeger. She showed me pictures him at her wedding, and she told me just much she respected him, because he really went the extra mile to

learn about the Hispanic community, about their holidays, and just big things that were central to them. Can you tell me what you remember about Father Draeger?

LO: I should look at my wedding pictures. I'm pretty sure he's the one who married me as well. But as with any big religion, when you have a certain population who goes to church, and the majority of people who attended St. Rose were Hispanic. So looking at the Hispanic community and what they celebrate … I mean, it makes me kind of sad that I didn't know anything about things like Día de los Muertos until recently. We didn't celebrate that when I was a kid—and no one else that I knew did either—because my family doesn't come right from Mexico. My dad was born in New Mexico, my grandmother was born there, and her parents lived there before it was even considered the US.

But as you start moving north, some of those traditions don't come with you, and that's one of the bigger ones that I'm sad we didn't celebrate growing up. I only learned more about it in the last few years. I love the whole idea of it now, because I lost my husband eight years ago. So for me, Día de los Muertos is a way to remember and honor him.

But anyway, when I got married, we had a big band come in, because of my dad's connections. And of course, we had people cook Mexican food and bring it in. And we got married on one of the snowiest days in January. We were all worried about whether people would be able make it. But we got married, and we were there till all hours of the night, because they had that big hall next door.

But it was a beautiful church, and I'm sad that it's not there anymore.

TF: I wish I could have been here to see the original one. Well, tell me about any other people at church that you remember.

LO: There was Father [Curtian?], and he was there about the same time as Father Draeger. But I left shortly after that, so I didn't know any of the other fathers until I came back. By the time I came back, they had started building the new church and moved everything over there. And then I don't go anymore. I feel bad, but it just didn't feel the same. I wasn't very fond of the father who ended up there, and the new church just wasn't for me. It wasn't the same St. Rose that I was used to before I left. But anyway, Father Draeger was the main one I remember at the original St. Rose.

TF: Well, going back to your dad, it sounds like he was a big influence in your life, and also very central to the Hispanic movement in Utah, which you don't hear much about. Tell me about the influence he had on your life.

LO: Well, because he was part of an organization that helped people … I mean, he's continued with that even up until now. He's going to be 95 years old. But he actually ended up losing his job at University of Utah because of discrimination charges. He worked so hard with community outreach, and things like that. Like I said, he started out here, working at Hill Field as part of SOCIO. Then after I graduated from high school, he and my mom moved to Salt Lake, because he was recruited at the University of Utah to help them with outreach to the ethnic population. But unfortunately, he ended up running into a situation where discrimination charges were filed against him, and he lost his job over it.

So, my parents left the state of Utah and went to Nevada, then they ended up in Arizona. But he continued with that type of work wherever they went. He worked at the Governor's office in Phoenix, doing the same thing that he had done here in Utah with different Hispanic organizations.

But anyway, I feel like he was key in Utah with a lot of things like that, because of his involvement with SOCIO. And like I said, when I very first moved back here, I wasn't working for the school district yet, but I was still involved with the Hispanic community. So, I started going to IMAGE de Northern Utah meetings, and I actually wrote an article one year for the magazine they published. It was about kids growing up in this atmosphere in Utah, who weren't born and raised here like I was.

I mean, my oldest son started kind of using that as a crutch, and he would do things that weren't terribly naughty, but just on the edge of being naughty. He got pulled over a lot by the Layton City Police, and every time they pulled him over, they found something different. I think maybe he was being targeted, because he also had a friend who would get pulled over often, but they would never find anything. Well, finally, his friend's dad went to the police station with him. His dad was white, but this kid looked more Hispanic, like my son. But I had to tell my son, "I'm sorry, but I'm not going do that until you stop giving them a reason to pull you over. I can't fight that."

But anyway, I got involved with the Hispanic community and tried to look at how we could deal with that kind of stuff. I did the same thing with the school district, and I think that's where you can make the most difference, because that's where you train the people who are teaching the kids. I mean, kids aren't born prejudiced. They don't start out seeing problems with people being different from them. It's what we train and teach them.

So, I really feel like my dad was significant in my life, because he's the reason I learned the things I learned, and I tried to pass it on, not just with my own kids, but in the school district as well.

TF: What made you choose to go into the Army after high school?

LO: Well, I got married right out of high school, and my first husband had already been in the Army. Then he decided to go back in. So, when the Army recruiters came and started talking about military life, they said to me, "What about you?" I mean, it was a job, and honestly, being a woman … I mean, growing up, women were supposed to just stay home, raise the kids, and take care of the house, but that just was not me. So, I was kind of looking for a way out of that, and they convinced me to go into the Army. There was a female and a male recruiter who came to our house, and when the woman talked to me, I was like, "That sounds pretty good to me."

TF: It's interesting that they sent a female recruiter.

LO: Yeah. I think that's what made the difference. It might not have turned out the same if the guy had talked to me about it, because as women, we deal with different issues than men. Like if you go to basic training, what do you do if you're on your period? I wanted to know, because I struggled with that. So, the woman talked to me about it, and I ended up joining. And I actually finished number two in my unit out of basic training. I did really well. I'm not very big, but I'm pretty powerful.

TF: So people shouldn't get on your bad side. (laughs)

LO: That's right. (laughs)

TF: When you joined the Army, were there very many other women?

LO: Well, I went to a basic training that was only for women. At that time, I want to say there was one place in South Carolina that was co-ed—both men and women—but I went to a place called Fort McClellan in Alabama, and it's no longer there. But it was a female-only basic training. And then, I went to Fort Dix, NJ, for my schooling. That was co-ed, and it was scary. There were only three barracks of women amongst about twelve barracks of men, and men were still very threatening to women, particularly those who were on their own. I mean, one of the

first warnings they gave us was to never go off base by ourselves—to go in groups of at least two or three, people just to be safe.

But like I said, it was a career opportunity, and it really served me well. And even the hard stuff helped me, especially when I became a single mother, because I knew that I could be tough. I knew I could do what I needed to do, and I did. I actually got my master's in education after I moved here. I was already working for the school district.

TF: What did you do in the army?

LO: Well, I went for the shortest amount of schooling, because I was married at the time. We were just trying to get back together. So, I was a voice radio operator. I was one of the ones who would carry the backpack with the radio that you used to communicate. I would be the person who would get a hold of the main office so that the commander could talk to them, setting up the communications stand, and that kind of thing.

TF: How long were you in?

LO: I was only in for a year, because I ended up getting pregnant, and I didn't want to stay in with a baby. But I was a military wife for twenty years, and I honestly believe that military wives do not get the recognition they should, because they're the ones who hold everything down when their husbands are gone. And in some branches, the Army being one of them, the husbands are gone a lot.

TF: And they're gone on *long* deployments.

LO: What branch is your husband in?

TF: He's in the Navy Reserve.

LO: My second husband was a Navy guy. He was on ships a lot.

TF: What did he do?

LO: He was in special forces.

TF: Was he in special forces while you and he were married?

LO: No, that was before.

TF: That has so many lasting consequences.

LO: Yeah. He had a lot of stuff to deal with. He told me he'd mellowed by the time we met, but he talked to me a lot about it, and that was not easy; but he needed to do that.

TF: It's hard when you're the sounding board.

LO: Yeah.

TF: So after you were done in the army, you got your bachelors, then your masters. At what point did you start working for the school district?

LO: I worked for them as I was going to school. I actually started working with the English as a Second Language Program, and within a year, the federal government came in to look at our programs, because of a lawsuit involving the San Juan School District.

TF: What lawsuit was it?

LO: It was a lawsuit against the San Juan School District because of … how did they put it? Unequal opportunity for Navajo kids, because so many of them spoke Navajo. And when they waited to go to school, it was difficult to teach them. So, the federal government came in to look at other school districts, Davis being one of them, because it's such a large district. We had 70 different languages spoken in Davis School District at that time.

TF: I would think some place like Salt Lake City School District would have 70 languages, not Davis.

LO: Well, the difference with Salt Lake is that it's very contained. It's a smaller, inner-city school district; but Davis is spread out all the way from South Weber to North Salt Lake. We had schools in Kaysville with only one student, then we had other schools that had a bunch.

But anyway, I was working as a secretary at the time for the program when the government came in to look. And they said, "You need to make changes to the program." Well, the lady who was over the program when that happened was also over foreign language, and they were trying to get her out anyway, because there were some other things going on. So, they actually asked me to step in as director of the program. So, I did for a year, but I didn't have the degree I needed. That was key.

So, I went back to school. We had another lady take over the program for a little while when I was going to school. And then, I went over to The Native American Indian Program and became an instructor in the English as a Second Language Program. I did a lot of training for teachers and in the schools, I did a lot of school support, and I just taught schools how to deal with the parents. And the parents how to deal with the schools themselves.

TF: Tell me about some of the things that went into that training.

LO: Well, like we talked earlier about seeing color—it's okay to see color. Don't worry about seeing color, because that's natural. And as a teacher, you don't have to change everything you're doing to satisfy every different culture in your class, because there are a lot. But if you can at least express, acknowledge, and validate the kids in your class child, and find ways to communicate with the parents … I mean, because a lot of the parents are coming from places where they're not supposed to go *to* the school. That's not seen as their role. They come from places where the school says they know what they're doing, and they don't want the parents there. But here, we want parents involved; so we have to find ways to not only encourage them,

but also to let them know that it's okay, and this is how we do it here. And it's good if you can find somebody to help you communicate that.

I'm not saying that we have to speak every single language—that's impossible when you have 72 different languages; but you have to find a way to communicate with those parents, and we discovered that we have a wealth of resources with our returned missionaries from the LDS Church. You can always find somebody who speaks almost any language in your own community, if you really look. So, we did a lot to help schools know that there were resources out there, and how to find those resources. And we also taught them how to acknowledge and validate students, like introducing a lesson plan that has something from that student's culture. Then the other kids can learn about those different cultures, and how great is that?

TF: Right. hatW years did you work for the school district?

LO: From 1990 until I retired about eight years ago.

TF: Did your training involve things like racism, and what to do about it?

LO: Yes.

TF: How did you train teachers to deal with that in a predominantly white area?

LO: Well, a lot of them didn't know what the Race Wars were. A lot of them didn't know about some of the things that took place during those times. So, we showed them what happened in a historical context, because we don't teach those things in history—even things about Native Americans. That's a perfect example. A lot of people have pre-conceived notions of Native Americans. They think they don't pay taxes, they think they always get tax breaks, and they think they all come from reservations. Well, those things aren't true. And even teaching that there's a different between being a migrant worker and being Hispanic like me.

TF: There are even differences from one Native American tribe to another.

LO: Exactly, and there's something written about all of that, it's just that we usually don't have those things in our schools. So, we tried to help them find those resources, but we also had this program called REACH that had been developed nationwide. It had lots of resources, and it actually had five or six different books on the different ethnic groups in Utah, and how things played out for them, historically. Like how the Chinese workers were key to building the railroad, how the Japanese that were put in internment camps in Utah, things like that.

So, we'd get teachers talking about those things, and most of the time, they were grateful for that training. I mean, there will always be that one teacher who says, "Well, it's not *my* fault those things happened." We'd try to explain to them that nobody was accusing them—that we were just informing them that those things happened. Take slavery, for example. Yes, your ancestors could have been slave owners, but that doesn't make you guilty. But at the same time, if you at least acknowledge that, then you can begin to understand the dynamics that come with it, and how it affects things now.

TF: And that it's *okay* to have a tough conversation.

LO: Exactly. And most educators, teachers, and principals were very receptive to that; but there was also the language piece that we worked on—the understanding that you can teach a child English, even if you don't actually speak their language. There is a methodology to it—like isolating their language and using resources from their language to kind of transfer what they were trying to show them. And also getting parents involved. Just a lot of things like that.

TF: This current political climate aside, how have conversations about racism changed over time, from when you started in the '90s, until when that you retired? I mean, even during my lifetime, from the '80s until now, the conversation has evolved in some good ways, but also in

some horrible ways. What changes did you see during your career, and how did you adapt to those changes?

LO: That's a good question. Quite often, we compare it to a pendulum swing. Like, where are we on the pendulum? Are we up or down? We get up, and then we swing back down. We get up, then we swing back down. And that continues to this day. The political atmosphere is part of it, and we'll have to see how that continues to play out. I think we've actually made a lot of gains. I always try to be a very positive person, because like I said, I have grandkids all the way from my little blonde, blue-eyed, very fair-complected granddaughter who claims to be Hispanic—that's what she'll tell people. If you tell her she's not, she'll get mad at you—to my very dark, Hispanic—looking grandchild, with dark eyes, dark hair, and dark skin. And I have everything in between. But they know they're all related, and those differences don't bother any of them.

Our family is very cohesive and very close, and all of that is key to helping them in the bigger world. But they also have to know that in the bigger world, if somebody sees this really fair one together with this really dark one, they're not going to think they're related. It'll be up to them to say, "Yes, we are related." And it's those relationships that will help them in the bigger world.

But it's important to keep the lines of communication open. I'm hoping … I don't know. I haven't been involved in education for quite a while. I read about it sometimes, and what I see and hear sometimes scares me; but I think it has less to do with race now and more to do with sexuality. And even behaviors like autism, and any of those kids that we consider "odd". That's where I see discrimination—more so now than around things like ethnicity and culture.

To be honest with you, I don't like the term "race." There's only one race in this world, unless we start seeing aliens that that live. (laughs) Then maybe we can say, "Okay, that's a

different race." (laughs). But instead of ethnicity and culture, I think the bigger issues have to do with sexual orientation. And I don't know the correct term now for kids who are autistic, or who have a different learning ability …

TF: Maybe neurodivergent?

LO: Maybe. But I have a couple of grandkids who fit into both categories: sexual orientation and being neurodivergent. So, I think discrimination against those groups seems to be the bigger issue today. But there will always be issues like that that we'll have to learn how to deal with.

TF: And I think trying to keep up with those things as educator is so hard.

LO: I give teachers a lot of credit—I always have—because they have to be so adaptable.

TF: Right.

LO: Thinking of how there will always be issues, it's crazy how big Layton has gotten. I can't say I like it, but all in the name of progress, right? (laughs) But I really appreciate that you're recording our history, because that's the key to all of this—everything we talked about, like learning about differences, and learning about culture—everything like that. If we don't keep our history alive … well, I saw saying one time when my grandsons were wrestlers. We went to a lot of different high schools, and one time, I saw a quote on one of the walls that said, "If we forget our history, we destroy our world." We have to remember history. We can't let our kids believe that the moon walk never happened, or something like the Holocaust never happened, because that's dangerous.

TF: Right. And we have to give a voice to those who haven't had one in the past. It's important that they're given a seat at the table. I have a good friend whose dad was actually a coach here at Layton High. Do you remember Bruce Parry?

LO: Oh yeah. I worked with Bruce for a lot of years.

TF: His son Darren used to be the chairman of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone, and that's what he often says: We need to give people who haven't had a voice in the past a seat at the table. And they need to have a voice now. We need to be willing to have hard conversations, then figure out the best way to move forward.

LO: That's what we did with the REACH program, and I served on the Equity Committee in the district. We would bring up those issues, and we would bring in those voices. We would ask the community if anyone wanted to come share with us. Well, that's something that SOCIO started. It wasn't necessarily an educational or a church organization—it was a community organization, and to me, that was the key thing about SOCIO.

TF: Does your dad still have memories of SOCIO?

LO: He probably does. I could ask him if he could talk about them. I actually came across a couple of articles about SOCIO, and my daughter and I were looking at different pictures. I'll have to look at them again and get a hold of you.

TF: That sounds great. Well, is there anything else that we haven't covered that you want to include?

LO: No, I think that's pretty much it.