

**Interview with Adela Soto Fabella, July 9, 2008. 516 Santa Barbara Street, Oceanside, California. Interviewer: Kristi Hawthorne, Oceanside Historical Society**

Kristi: Today is July 9, 2008. I'm here with Adela Fabella.

Adela: Adela SOTO Fabella.

Kristi: Adela, can you tell me when you were born?

Adela: June 24, 1930.

Kristi: Who were your parents?

Adela: My father was Casimero Soto and my mother was Mary Lopez Soto.

Kristi: You were born in Oceanside?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: Were you born home or in the hospital?

Adela: There was only one doctor.

Kristi: Who was the doctor?

Adela: I can only remember Dr. Reid. He was the only doctor.

Kristi: Were your parents born here or were they born in Mexico?

Kristi: Do you know who his parents were on the Soto side?

Adela: I have the whole paperwork, you can have a copy.

Kristi: When did he come to Oceanside?

Adela: He worked on the railroad tracks and he came around when he was 17 years old.

Adela: My mother was born in Northern Mexico. Her father and mother were in the revolution against the French. They are only registered as being from Oaxaca, Mexico.

Kristi: Do you know how your parents met?

Adela: They met here in Oceanside.

Kristi: Do you know how they met?

Adela: The families around here, there weren't very many. Most of the families here were Mexican and Spanish. My mother's parents lived in Vista and then they came to Oceanside. They must have met when they were young, here.

Kristi: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Adela: I have 4 brothers and 3 sisters; with me it's 8. So it's 8, 4 and 4.

Kristi: Are you the oldest, youngest?

Adela: Second to the oldest. Myself and my youngest brother Frank are the only living ones.

Kristi: Where did you live when you were born?

Adela: At the end of Lemon Street in that little square house.

Kristi: Do you know what the address is?

Adela: It doesn't exist anymore.

Kristi: So it was at the east end of Lemon Street?

Adela: Lemon goes from East to West, then it stopped... Then the military housing was there. Lemon stopped there and went up hill and plant geraniums and all that.

Kristi: How long was the house there?

Adela: I imagine it was there--I don't know when it was built--but I remember it was there when I was about 7 or 8 years old it was moved to the corner of Marquette and San Diego Streets.

Kristi: Is it there now?

Adela: Not anymore?

Kristi: What year was it moved to Marquette and San Diego?

Adela: I was young. It might have been 1936 or 1937.

Kristi: So originally it was at the end of Lemon and then they moved it to Marquette and San Diego. When did they tear it down? Do you know?

Adela: I don't remember the Lopez family, it was another family, not related that tore that down, but I don't remember the year.

Adela: I was still in school.

Kristi: Then where did your parents live?

Adela: We moved around a bit. Those places don't exist anymore. We lived on the corner of Lemon and San Diego, the right hand corner of Lemon and San Diego. There was an empty lot, in Balderramma, all that park was empty. There was only one single house on Bush and San Diego. The rest was empty, there was nothing there.

Kristi: Do you remember who lived at the house at Bush and San Diego?

Adela: No. I have forgotten. Those families have moved and I have forgotten.

Kristi: When did you start school?

Adela: When I was five I started kindergarten.

Kristi: Do you remember what school you went to?

Adela: Division. I went to the Americanization School.

Kristi: Was your teacher Mrs. Harris or Mrs. French?

Adela: Miss French and Miss Johnson and Miss Carlson. We loved her.

Kristi: Do you remember any of the friends that you went to school with?

Adela: Well, I went to the school with Helen Juarez. See I was in between generations. Most of the Hispanics were a year younger or a year older. They didn't have that many my age.

Kristi: How many years did you go to the Americanization School?

Adela: We were there for 3 years, then we were switched.

Kristi: Did you go to the Horne Street School?

Adela: Yes, then the high School. The Oceanside-Carlsbad Union High school.

Kristi: Do you remember your teachers at the Horne Street School?

Adela: No, I had so many. I remember the ones at Division.

Kristi: What do you remember about the Americanization school? Do you have any specific memories?

Adela: No, to me it was just school.

Kristi: Is that where you learned to speak English?

Adela: Aurora Soto Badillo.

Kristi: So she had gone to the Americanization school one year ahead of you?

Adela: Yes, she was one year ahead of me.

Kristi: Did you walk to school together?

Adela: Oh yes. There weren't any buses.

Kristi: Do you remember the route you used to walk to school?

Adela: Well, we lived on the corner of Marquette and San Diego—that's when I started going to school. We would cross Balderamma, which was an empty lot, and we'd cross the corner of Balderrama and then Lemon to the corner of Bush and Santa Barbara. There was a pass, that crossed all the way across, then we would go across Mission Street and there was a gasoline station from the family Gomez. The only one. Then we went that way, there was a pathway to Division. There was nothing there.

Kristi: Do you remember any of the businesses on San Diego Street? Which were the first little businesses that popped up.

Adela: The Chavez if you ever knew the Chavez's, they had one.

Kristi: Did the Chavez family have a market?

Adela: Yes, Right where that little Tortilla market is, the Chavez family had, in fact that market was built on the market that is there.

Kristi: That was Lucy Chavez's family?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: Did her brothers own that or her parents?

Adela: I think it was her parents who came here. What was the name of the other store? There were two stores actually; One at the very corner of Mission and San Diego.

Kristi: Do you remember the name of that one?

Adela: It was Mission Grocery.

Kristi: Do you remember the family that owned it?

Adela: Castorena.

Kristi: What year do you think those markets came in?

Adela: Well, we walked from Dubuque and San Diego, me and my sisters...

Kristi: The mid 1930s?

Kristi: They were there when you when you went to school?

Adela: Our parents taught us to salute we would have to take the dogs with us so nobody would hurt us so we'd end up taking the dogs with us.

Kristi: When the military built Sterling Homes, how did that change the neighborhood?

Adela: Well, when the military came--actually we were a military family way before that. Because my grandmother Lopez had 11 children. Out of 11 she had 3 daughters. She had 8 sons. Out of the 8 sons they all went into the service, which was the Army. It was very hard on my grandmother because they took 3 at a time, they left only one son. They didn't take him, but they all went. It kind of broke my grandmother. She was praying her heart out because they all came back, they all made it back. So actually we were a military family before Camp Pendleton.

Kristi: But did Sterling Homes change or disrupt the Eastside neighborhood? Did the construction, extra traffic change it all?

Adela: Oh yes, I remember the meetings my mom and dad had, pavement. The rainy days everyone got stuck and they had to use the wagons and horses to get out. The pavement was already done by the time they came.

Kristi: Eastside was all dirt streets?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: Until about what year?

Adela: I was already a teenager, it might have been 1948 or 1947.

Kristi: Were the rest of the streets paved in Oceanside?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: But not in Eastside?

Adela: No.

Kristi: You said you had use horses to get the cars out?

Adela: This area was nothing but farmland until Pendleton came.

Kristi: Did your family have horses?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: How many horses did you have?

Adela: I can remember two horses. Cows, pigeons, chickens.

Kristi: If your family had all that, how much property did you have to put it all on?

Adela: From Lemon that way.

Kristi: So it was open?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: So they could graze?

Adela: From Lemon up to the field, there was a garden where a gardener grew geraniums. There was a fence that was between the crops and the houses. That was all open field all the way down to Marquette. So they had all that.

Kristi: Who was the guy who grew the geraniums? Do you remember?

Adela: No.

Kristi: Was he an Eastside resident?

Adela: Yes, but I don't remember his name.

Kristi: Was it mostly Mexicans or Spanish-Americans. Do you remember Black people?

Adela: They didn't come until I was around 9.

Kristi: Do you remember any of those family names?

Adela: The Clarks, Walkers, Buchanon.

Kristi: Do you remember a Black man by the name of Johnnie Mann?

Adela: Oh yes! Mrs. Mann's husband. She was the one who started the Girls' Club. I helped her. It was on the corner of Holly and Laurel.

Kristi: Her name was Charles Etta.

Adela: Carlotta Mann.

Kristi: She started the girls club here in Eastside?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: What year would that have been?

Adela: I was married already. I would have to be in the early 1950s.

Kristi: She started the Girls club? Did she have children?

Adela: I don't know that she ever had any. I knew that she favored a boy but I don't know if that was a relative or not. She liked children and she liked cooking. I went to help her because they didn't have enough funds and I was helping because I took arts and crafts in high school and I could do crafts. She asked me if I could make lots of enchiladas. I made sheets and sheets of enchiladas to fund the building until they got connected to the Boys and Girls Club.

Kristi: What was the name of the original club?

Adela: The Girls Club.

Kristi: Who else was involved in that besides her? Can you remember?

Adela: I don't remember. I know she had help.

Kristi: Did you have children by that time?

Adela: Yes, I did.

Kristi: Whatever happened to her? Did she live here until she died?

Adela: Yes. She lived up there, you know where the restaurant is? El Churrrito? Well, the house next to it--that's where she lived till she died.

Kristi: I heard her husband was hit and killed by a car. Do you remember that?

Adela: I don't remember anything about her husband. I had more contact with her.

Kristi: What about a Black family by the name of Evans? Does that name mean anything to you?

Adela: Sounds familiar, but I didn't know all of them. I only knew the ones I went to school with. I remember Mrs. Mann because when we had the meeting in the old house here for the pipes and the pavement, Mrs. Mann helped. She baked oodles of big glazed donuts. We did our cooking--me and my sister we sold tickets. People would come to eat. We helped all morning to do the cooking. All those people that wanted improvements.

Kristi: The neighborhood had to raise money for their own improvements—the sewer system?

Adela: Yes. They had it all over except here, so we needed it. We had meetings here in the old house. I don't know about NAACP meetings but sometimes we would connect because we were all together in the same place.

Kristi: When were you married?

Adela: I was married in 1955.

Kristi: Whom did you marry?

Adela: I married a Staff Sergeant, Alfred Rodriguez.

Kristi: Where did you meet him?

Adela: I was a waitress out in town and I met up town.

Kristi: Where were you waitressing?

Adela: Joe's Place.

Kristi: Where was Joe's Place?

Adela: Right where the Regal Theater is. There was an alley--right there where the Regal Theater is.

Kristi: Who owned it?

Adela: Joe Altamirano.

Kristi: How many years did you work there?

Adela: Golly, I don't remember.

Kristi: What other jobs did you have?

Adela: I started out on in the fieldwork. I started picking tomatoes. All fieldwork.

Kristi: Here in this area or elsewhere?

Adela: Up in--you know where the front gate is?

Kristi: Yes.

Adela: The area up towards there; over there and over in South Oceanside--There was hardly nothing but plants. Here, down at the bottom and then across the Interstate. It was farming, there was hardly any city per se. Even when we graduated it was hard to get a job out in town. So it was fieldwork what we could do until progress started coming in.

Kristi: So you met Mr. Rodriguez when he came into Joe's Place?

Adela: Yes. I picked a Marine!

Kristi: Where was he from?

Adela: San Antonio, Texas.

Kristi: How long was he in the Marine Corps?

Adela: I don't remember. We got married and he got out. And then he got killed. Here, not over there, in a car crash and then I remarried.

Kristi: What year did he die?

Adela: I think in 1960.

Kristi: Did you have children with him?

Adela: Yes. I have a son and two sets of twin girls.

Kristi: Two sets of twin girls!

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: Do you have twins in the family?

Adela: I heard they ran in the family, but only one survived. They didn't tell me. They should have told me!

Kristi: What are the odds of having two sets of twins?

Adela: I don't know!

Kristi: What are their names?

Adela: My son is Allen. Then there's Annette and Audrey. Alisha and Allison

Kristi: What years were they born?

Adela: Allen was born in 1952. Annette and Audrey were born in 1955. Alisha and Allison were born in 1956.

Kristi: In that day and age could they tell you that you were having twins?

Adela: They didn't have those things.

Kristi: You just gave birth?

Adela: That's when they told you!

Kristi: Were you astonished?

Adela: Astonished! My mother was drinking coffee and she dropped everything when they told her she was the grandmother of twins!

Kristi: That must have been kind of exciting.

Adela: I was glad to get it over it. I was very sick. My pregnancies weren't very good. They were very difficult. To me, having them, get it over with!

Kristi: Where were you living at when you were married?

Adela: Carlsbad. We lived there for a while and then we came back to Oceanside.

Kristi: How long have you lived here at 516 Santa Barbara?

Adela: 1946-1947. The old house was here.

Kristi: When you say the "old house", was that your parents' house?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: Did they build the old house here?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: What year was it built?

Adela: I would say when I was 15 or 16.

Kristi: Then when was it rebuilt?

Adela: In 1970, around there.

Kristi: Did you buy the house from your parents or the lot?

Adela: Well, my father didn't live here with my mother any more. My mother had to give payments for \$9000 and she sold me the lot. There was a builder going around. She sold me the lot if I would build a house. That's what I did. They had from here all the way to the very end, where the market. They had to sell the lots. That one we sold 4 years ago. And now I have this one. This is the 'last of the Mohicans' here.

Kristi: Do your children live in the neighborhood?

Adela: I have two daughters and my son that live here with me. I have a daughter that lives in Hemet and one that lives in Vancouver, Washington. She moved that far away because that was the last place her husband was stationed in the Air Force in Portland, Oregon, so she stayed there. She said she was coming back. She's a nurse out there.

Kristi: Now, Aurora told me years ago how Posole got its name.

Adela: There was a vendor that used to sell--

Kristi: ---This is what Aurora told me, there was a lady by the name of Romero who sold this Posole soup and she would say "Posole, Posole."

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: That's how the area got its name because people would come to get her posole. Is that what you remember?

Adela: Yes.

Kristi: Do you remember Mrs. Romero at all?

Adela: Very little. She was pretty old when I was young. Aurora had a better memory of people than I have. I have more a memory of places and streets.

Kristi: What did you call the neighborhood?

Adela: Everybody called it the Barrio or Posole.

Kristi: Do you know when people called it Eastside?

Adela: That was a city thing.

Adela: We called it the Barrio.

Kristi: What does Barrio mean?

Adela: Barrio, is like a small town.

Kristi: How do you think it has changed over the years?

Adela: I think it's changed beautifully. I think there are more positions for Hispanics all over. More people that are educated that are going into all fields. We have a lot here that have gone out and become something, because of all the education and the improvements of work--medical, clinics, doctors, lawyers. We have Hispanics, bilingual-speaking people that can help. It's a great improvement--that my children had a better chance than I did--I was a farm girl. My son was a contractor until he hurt himself. My twins are electronic technicians. My daughter is a nurse up in Vancouver. My other daughter works with mentally disabled children, which is a hard job. I worked all kinds of jobs from plucking chickens to all that kind of stuff.

Kristi: Do you remember where the slaughterhouse was?

Adela: In Escondido.

Kristi: Do you remember where there was one here?

Adela: No. I remember we used to have the job of changing the hog. The meats were divided among the families. I remember during the war everybody ate horsemeat because everything went to the military. A lot of people went to the Army because the Marine Corps wasn't here yet.

Kristi: What do you remember about Recreation Park and the Drive-in on Mission?

Adela: I remember Recreation Park was where we had a rec league, a baseball team. I remember Dolly Hanson, she used to be one of the baseball ... no separation of anything, it was like a family, that's how Oceanside was, it was a whole family and we had games and then they had wrestling and then they moved it up town.

Kristi: Do you remember the Drive-In movie?

Adela: There was one, but I don't remember that it stayed there very long.

Kristi: Do you remember when they built Kmart?

Adela: My children were little. I remember going to Big Bear (grocery). I remember Kmart. We went there, too. We didn't go there after that because there was a stealing of a woman and she got killed. There was a fight.

Kristi: When did you remarry?

Adela: In the 1960s. I year or a year and a half after...I was divorced from my first husband before he died. Marines sometimes get into drug problems and stuff.

Kristi: What was your second husband's name?

Adela: Jesus Fabela. He was a gunnery staff sergeant from Texas.

Kristi: Where did you meet him?

Adela: Same place.

Kristi: You were still working at Joe's? How many years did you work there?

Adela: I worked there two different times. I was working at the base hospital in the base laundry, I worked there as a second job. I was working two jobs.

Kristi: How would you get all the way to the base hospital?

Adela: Bus. You had to get up early in the morning to get there!

Kristi: Did your girls go to Oceanside High?

Adela: Yes. Well, Allen graduated from there. My girls graduated from El Camino.

Kristi: How come they went way out there?

Adela: I don't know how they ended up there--but I remember we lived in Rainbow for a while and they used to drive themselves there. The bus would pick up my other daughters and they went to Fallbrook. They graduated from Fallbrook.

Kristi: What year did you come back here?

Adela: In 1974.

Kristi: Had the neighborhood changed a lot when you came back?

Adela: I was scared the first time we came back. We had a scare. There was some shootings from the bottom up and my kids all ran out to see! We were not used to it. We lived in the boonies out there. Kids ran out to see what was going on! What are you doing!?

“You are in the line of fire.” There was a lot of people who would steal the radios out of your car and stuff. It was horrible. I said, “Oh my goodness, turn back!”

Kristi: How do you think it is now?

Adela: Good. We have a lot of police.

Kristi: Do you know your neighbors?

Adela: Yes. A lot of the old neighbors here, they fanned out. The families got bigger. A lot of new families and a lot of new faces. But I do not about one third of them. The Blacks were already here and the Samoans started coming and they expanded, too. We have an international city. We have a lot of Filipino friends, a lot Japanese friends, Black friends, we have all kinds of friends. My children go to work and there’s all kind of races and there’s a togetherness now. I don’t know--at least I haven’t seen it--I don’t know if there’s any racists.

Kristi:

Adela: I can see the policemen working. They know more than I do. They mark my wall. If I say, “they marked my wall”, they say, “I know which gang members these are.”

Kristi: You feel safe. When you first came it was bad in the 70s. But do you feel it is a safer neighborhood?

Adela: Oh yes, by far. I have a good relationship with the police department. If I see something bad I will let them know or they will ask me. They were talking to the lady next door, because they did her wall. She speaks some English and some Spanish. They asked if I could go an interpret. I said, “You know how to speak English!” Her children go to school. “Why am I interpreting, you know how to speak pretty good English!”

Kristi: Did you teach your children to speak Spanish?

Adela: No.

Kristi: Did your mother speak Spanish all of her life?

Adela: No, my mother was bilingual. My grandmother Lopez, she decided she wasn’t going to speak English. I spoke Spanish to her.

Kristi: Where are your family buried at?

Adela: Some are buried in Oceanview and some are buried at Mission. In the old times there was no Eternal Hills.

Kristi: Do you have pictures of your parents or grandparents in front of the homes they used to live in?

Adela: I would have to dig them out. I have my genealogy on both sides of my family.

Kristi: Do have photos of the Girls Club?

Adela: No, I don't. I don't know if Mrs. Mann had any.

Kristi: What year do you think she passed away?

Adela: Probably late 1970s. She was sick, at the very end she was sick.

Kristi: Her and her husband were some of the first Black people in Oceanside. They came in the 1930s. For a time they were living on Tremont Street and he was shining shoes and then some time he came up here and bought property.

Adela: That's when I met him. I knew then he was still in the shoe shining business.

Kristi: I don't know a lot about them. I'm trying to put a story together what people remember.

Adela: They were beautiful people, especially Johnnie. He took to children. I don't think they had any children. He was very nice. She baked real good.

Kristi: Did you go to church at St. Mary's or the Mission?

Adela: I was raised at St. Mary's. I had my confirmation there. We walk there. Father Ryan was the one that did the blessings for the meetings we had here for the improvements for Eastside or Posole. It was Posole then, I don't know why they call it Eastside when east side is way out! The streets named after us in South Oceanside. Why do they call it Soto Street, Lopez Street in South Oceanside when our families are over here!?

Kristi: What other family names do you remember?

Adela: The Aguilera's, they were Spanish. I know they were Spanish because in their home--they invited us for supper and we had to ask mom and dad if we could eat with them because they served all the people a little thing of wine. We were kind of reluctant because our parents wouldn't allow it, but it was allowed in their home as part of the family get together for supper.

Kristi: Where did they live?

Adela: That house is right next to ... do you know where the N? is? The little grocery store. The other house belonged to the Duarte's. It still exists. It's still there.

Adela: Her last name now is...all these families here are intermingled and intermarried. She's an Alvarez now. Her husband's sister married my uncle. Chavez family, they lived right where the store was, above. My dad's family, Soto. My mother's family, Lopez.

Kristi:

Adela: I can never get lost. I can go to Vista, I can go to Fallbrook. They lived at the very end of Santa Barbara. She had a brother, her brother was married to my aunt. My mother's sister. She had a grandson, married to my niece. Her grandchildren happen to be my nieces and nephews. Her grandson is my grandson. Like I said, I can't get lost, I bump into all of them. I don't know the younger generation. Like my second cousins, they would know me.

Adela: Yes, there's Andrew, he lives in Escondido. Some of them live in San Diego and some live in Vista.

Kristi: Are her children still around here?

Adela: Yes, Bobby lives over there on College. I don't remember where Joey lives, but Wendy. The grandchildren live in Albuquerque and in Texas.