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Tyler: Today is November 14th, 2015. We are here in Tampa, Florida and we're sitting down with my grandmother in her home. Would you mind stating your name?

Norma: Well do you want my name as it is stated in the United States? Or as it is stated historically, by my family, which version would you like?

Tyler: Both.

Norma: Both alright, if it is Tampa's which is in the United States, you would want my name you would hear Norma Barbon Lobato, if you wanted the way it would be stated in a European country, primarily Spain, you would hear something like Norma Para Felipe Barbon Lobato. That's my full name. Because we would state my mother's maiden name, my other grandmother's maiden name, my grandparents name and my married name. So now you would know if you were going to do a historical or biographical background about me you would know everything about me because you know the names of my grandparents.

Tyler: Okay, so when where you born?

Norma: I was born... where?

Tyler: When.

Norma: I was born November the 8th, 1934. That was 81 years ago this past Sunday.

Tyler: And where were you born?

Norma: I was born right here in Tampa Florida in Ybor City, 17th street and 24th avenue.

Tyler: Wow, that's very specific.

Norma: Yes it is.

Tyler: So where are we right now?

Norma: We are at 3124 West Tampa Bay Blvd, in Tampa, Florida. It's an area called West

Norma: This

When my father became a barber, things started to improve a little bit and things became

were poor and as I said we grew up with Italian immigrants and I learned three languages very early on, I was fluent in all three.

My grandfather on my father's side my paternal grandfather has tremendous stories to tell and my father at the time of World War II, I believe, told me he was he was born, by the way both my parents were born the same year, 1902, and when World War II came around in 1941, he was already married and he had one child so he was classified as I believe what they called a 3A. If you were a 1A you were ready to be drafted, war drafted, but he was a 3A which meant he was married and had children. So what he was committed to was working for the government as a barber because that's what he did. So he went to what is now called Drew Park, which was then known as Drew field and they housed soldiers it was uh, I guess, a leading point to the European theater. And we had German prisoners there for a while and there some of them escaped one time and that was kind of interesting and they finally found all three and two of them they found hidden underneath a house.

Tyler: That's just crazy to imagine.

Norma: But anyway that was not too far from here, as a matter of fact.

Tyler: So what were the thoughts around the time, the opinions of the War before Pearl Harbor and afterward?

Norma: Well prior to Pearl Harbor as near as I can remember and by the way I remember clearly listening to the fireside chats of...

Tyler: FDR

Norma: FDR. And FDR was looked at as almost godlike. He lifted the country out of incredible, incredible depression hunger; there were so many suicides. It was a horrific time but he lifted the country out of that and he started what was known as the WPA which workers established the state parks, national parks and he had people working and when that happened they began to lift themselves up, so starvation was not so eminent. The spirit of the time was definitely not war. The people were definitely not in the mindset of going to war when they had just been at a couple years ago been at the precipice of dying. So no they were not, they didn't want war and Roosevelt knew that and to the best of my recollection, I think Roosevelt told Churchill exactly that; that the people were not ready to go to war and that they would not go to war. And then of course once the attack on Pearl Harbor, the American people came together and then you couldn't keep them out, the lines to volunteer were long.

Tyler: That was a big event.

Norma: Just about as big as it can get and the only thing I could compare it with the would-be 9/11.

Tyler: I was just going to say.

Norma: That would be just about as far as the emotions some ran, some were frightened some were courageous some were "let's go get them", there were so many attitudes but all of them

pointing to one thing and that was we stand together. But growing up its fascinating, but growing up as a matter fact let me regress a moment. Today one of the first things that you become aware of, or you're cognizant of, or you may even be asked is "what is your political affiliation." It's

afraid of your fellow American. It became very real when there was racism and prejudice in this country. Then it became very real. As a child I remember that they would say no Latins or dogs allowed and those in my era couldn't go certain places because Latins were not permitted and I remember my father going to Sulfur Springs and he took us swimming to Sulfur Springs, which is now polluted you can't even put your feet in the water, but it was a beautiful area it was a spring, clear, pure, and I remember my father saying to my mother "We're going swimming", and my mother being very afraid and he walked in, paid at the entrance and we walked right on through and no one told him anything. But my father had a temperament about him, a look about him I think that demanded respect and we were never bothered. But yes I grew up with that prejudice too. So it was a very emotional period of my life; tranquil but yet emotional in the sense a what we had to fear and that was the first time that I was about 14 maybe 15, that I became aware of being afraid of my fellow Americans was through prejudice and was through politics. That was a big turning point in my life. But like a said then later on, after I married it never ceased. There was a period there during the Vietnam War, or the Korean War let me add, the Korean War and it's amazing how I lived through World War II, I lived through the Korean War, very vivid. I remember the Vietnam War, I've lived through so many wars it's incredible and always the divisiveness among the American people. To me I was very aware of on my middle teens.

Tyler: So it would've been around the 50s, early 50s? Normng how I

Norma: Yes, yes it was in the early 50's.

Tyler: So many people today, we tend to hand t Q q 0.2S d.

Tyler: So, when did you start to see the change? You know, obviously eventually the schools were reintegrated and the civil rights acts were passed, so did things change...?

Norma: The laws changed. Not the people. The people didn't change, the laws did, you would hear through the media "Oh we're all one, we're brothers and sisters, the church developed, oh

Norma: I was at Jefferson high school, the old Jefferson on Highland and Euclid and they closed that down, and that's another chapter, about what happened and why. And that school they told us that it was not fit for students and it's still existing today and still handling students. But anyway they dispersed the teachers and the students and I ended up at Pearce Junior High School. I taught 7th, 8th, and 9th, journalism. I taught drama and I taught journalism in the high school. T

you know

she says, "Well, we don't wait on niggers." And I thought wow, that was harsh and it kind of took me aback. Just then, I see these two guys come in through from the front of the door with these clubs like the handle of a hatchet, you know without... just the club and, and they were hitting their hands with the club. And I looked, and there were two of them with cowboy hats, I remember that clearly. I remember looking down and they were wearing boots and they walked past and I was scared because I thought oh Lord, they're going to come after me. And they walked past, and as they were walking past the woman they told her, "Nigger get out of here, you're not eating here." And I remember feeling flushed... feeling so angry and they walked right past because and came around again with those clubs and this time as they walked past her, with their elbows they rammed her and the poor woman flips forward. I was... I've heard of temporary insanity, okay, I've heard and I understand what it means because I'll be honest with you I did become temporarily insane.

Tyler: (Laughs) Oh I can imagine.

Norma: Really I did. I was not reasoning, I wasn't thinking, there was no logic. There was just sheer anger I... I can't beg

Tyler: We made it.

Norma: We got there. It's going to be simple, we'll work it out, and it's a piece of cake. Unfortunately no. But anyway we're back to square one. So, here we are... and that's Tampa, and Tampa was not without its excitement. And there's the cigar factories and so on, my mother retired in 1961 to take care of my daughter. She started to take care of my daughter when she was nine months old and then after that, you know, we went through the space-age, we went through the McCarthy era then it was not prejudice that against any race it was prejudice against what you believed. Which to me is almost as deadly if not worse. You couldn't believe what you wanted to believe because you were contemptible. And that was really a dark time in our country's history.

Tyler: What about for women? How did women fare during these times?

Norma: Women... (Laughs) it's interesting. Women was not violent, it was passive aggressive. I can tell you, when I became a supervisor for bilingual education, I went to work at the administration offices and the first thing I heard is, "Welcome to Peyton Place." Now Peyton Place was the name of a popular TV series in which everything went. You know, it was sexual it was just a really unscrupulous and immoral place and when they said, "Welcome to Peyton Place" I was kind of taken aback. But I figured if you keep your standards, it's okay. Well it wasn't okay. I went to conferences where I was... I remember I shared a room with two other ladies that were supervisors and at 7 o'clock in the morning, the assistant superintendent for administration by the name of Frank Farmer, calls me at my room and says, "Norma, I want you to come downstairs, get dressed, come downstairs and I'm going to take you to breakfast and then after breakfast, take you shopping, and you can buy anything you want. I'll buy it for you, and then we'll go up to my room." And I said really...

Tyler: Well that's a lovely offer.

Norma: And I remember I said, "I don't think so Mr. Farmer." He says he'll be downstairs in the lobby. I hung up and I remember one lady was called Grace and the other Velma, and both of them said if you don't go you can forget it, you're going nowhere. You're going to be without a job. I said are you kidding me? For real? I don't think so. My mind said that these women are saying that because they have slept around and that's their excuse. But it's not going to be mine because I don't need to sleep around. Am I doing a good job? That's going to be it, it's all I need. So my program was under the mandate of the office of civil rights, it was a government Supreme Court decision to implement bilingual education in Hillsborough County. When Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980... remember I came on the job in 1974 and in 1980, I got a call from the office of civil rights in Atlanta and the head of the office says, "Norma, start packing your bags, you're going to lose your job." I asked why? He says because it's not mandated by the government anymore and now they're going to cut you loose. They couldn't stand you but they had to tolerate you and now they don't have to do either. I couldn't believe it an Tf pad toey aehopping

here, on a Sunday morning reading the Sunday paper front page and there are was my name. I have been “booted” from bilingual education. And I was out. I was out. Of course I sued... and I won.

Tyler: Sued the paper?

Norma: No, sued the school

establishing an infrastructure but we haven't done it. The only thing we have done, is we have

