

## AUDIO TAPE LOG

Accession No.: MH-14-13-DA Date(s): March 2, 2014

Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg

Interviewee(s): Anjelica Ortiz

Event: interview to learn about her pinata making

Place of Recording: Dining room of Anjelica's home in Medford, MA

Recording Equipment: Tascam DR-100 Microphone(s): Built-in

Recorded in: stereo Tape Brand and Format: DAT, 65 minutes

Amount Tape Used: Cassette: \_\_\_\_\_ DAT: ABS time: \_\_\_\_\_

Related Accession Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief summary of tape contents: Move to MA from Mexico City, uncles made pinatas at Advent time, Italian origin, original purpose of 7-peaked star pinata to break temptation of 7 deadly sins, Spanish bring tradition to Mexico to transmit religion, fruit and nuts inside, use of shiny paper in Mexico, process of making a pinata, Angelica emigrating here, visa limited her work, began babysitting, then started making pinatas as gifts for the children when no real ones available here, became a business making custom pinatas, a mix of Latin American and American customers, Mexican song sung for breaking the pinata, when singing ends, turn is over, maintaining Advent party here, and memories of parties in Mexico City, candles, singing from Los Posada booklet, traditional foods and fruit punch served.

Counter/ABS	Contents
MH	Let's start by you telling me where we are today and your name.
AO	My name is Angelica Ortiz and we are at my home in Medford.
MH	How long have you lived in this house?
AO	This house, four years. Almost five. we moved from Mexico here eight years ago and we bought this house after four years of being here in Massachusetts.
MH	Tell me where you were raised.
AO	In Mexico City. I am from Mexico City and I lived almost all my life there before coming here.
MH	And your husband works doing -
AO	He's a software engineer. That's why we moved here because he got a job here.
MH	All right, well the reason that I'm here today is to learn something about pinatas, pinata making, and how you learned it in your family. So talk about that.
AO	Well, as you know, it's a very traditional thing in Mexico. When I grew up, as a little girl, I used to watch my family, my uncles making them because in Mexico, they're very, especially for the Advent time in December. It's very traditional. That's the original purpose of the pinata. We have parties every day in Advent.

Now, it changed because of security issues and maybe time or the lifestyle but when I was a little girl, in the street, every house organized the party. So one day it was his house; the next day it was the other house. So every day there was a party during Advent.

And I remember watching my uncles making them. Pinata is originally a word in Italian. It means clay pot. So actually, traditional pinatas in Mexico, the part that is inside, it's still a clay pot.

MH It's clay but what is around it?

AO After that they put newspaper with homemade glue. And then they start decorating them with other kind of paper, especially tissue paper and other kinds of paper. So I remember watching them making them every year, every year. And that's how I learned, just by watching. When I was older, I helped a little bit.

MH Talk a little bit about the more traditional function or the symbolism of the pinata.

AO Because it was originally Italian, the Spanish people took the idea to bring to Mexico to evangelize. To transmit the religion to Mexicans, because they weren't Catholic, of course. So they thought it was a good idea to represent what to do with evil. The idea was to make the pinata and the traditional pinata is a star. Even the original idea was the seven-peaked star, which represented the seven deadly sins. Each peak.

MH Can you tell us what those are?

AO I don't know them in English, actually.

MH Oh, well say them in Spanish.

AO In Spanish is le gula, ira, avarici, mmmmm, I don't remember, ira [the others are Pereza, envidia, and soberbia.]

MH That's ok

AO The idea was to break it. Or hit it as hard as possible so evil and the bad sins will be gone. And you will be ready for Christmas. Of course there should be a reward so originally in Mexico, they filled them with fruit, not candy. Little oranges, limes but sweet limes that we don't find here, and jicama, little jicamas. Sugar cane and other kind of fruits like the jocota - it's a little orange fruit that I don't find here. Very traditional. Also peanuts, things like that. And they still do it like that. That's the original tradition of the pinata.

MH And who gets selected to, they blindfold?

AO Yes, they blindfold.

MH Why do they blindfold?

AO Just to make it more fun. Little kids get to go without the fold. As you get older, you get the blindfold because it's for all ages, not only kids.

MH So who gets to be the one smashing the pinata?

AO It doesn't matter. The usual thing is that everybody makes a line. It's funny, the one that breaks it usually doesn't get that much cause everybody is waiting for the things to fall down, and the one that breaks it usually doesn't get that much. But it's a lot of fun.

MH Were there particular shapes or colors your uncles used?

AO The star is the - you want me to go get one? [she goes into another room to fetch one of her star pinatas.] It can be any color. That's the fun part. It could be any combination of color. In Mexico they use a lot of shiny paper. I think that's more traditional, the shiny one. It used to be seven peaks but now they don't make them anymore. There are four or five, or three, whatever. But there used to be seven and they used any color. It doesn't have to be one color in particular.

MH So this is a traditional shape. And inside, is it a balloon?

AO Yes. that's how I make them, with a balloon [she lifts it up so I can see inside the pinata]. So that's a balloon and I cover it with newspaper with this homemade glue, which is just water and flour. It depends how hard or strong are the layers of newspaper that I will put on it. And once it's dry, I pop the balloon and then I can start putting all the other paper on top of it with the same glue. And these I make with just cardboard, the cones, and put them in with the same glue. Just glue them in the round shape and cover it with paper.

MH So once you come here, do people make different demands on what they want the pinata to be?

AO Yes. Of course, in Mexico, we don't break pinatas only at Advent. It was so fun and people loved it so much, they use it for birthday parties. Mainly in Mexico. Everybody that has a party will have a pinata. And they make different shapes. So when I moved here, [we both hear her daughter babbling over the intercom] because the kind of visa that I had, I couldn't work. like look for a job. So I was looking for something to keep busy. That's how I got the idea. First I became a babysitter so I was around a lot of kids. I didn't have kids at that time. So for one of the girl's I used to take care of birthday, I thought, I will buy a pinata for her birthday. Because in Mexico, not a lot of people make the pinata -- it's a lot of work, so everybody buys them.

MH Oh interesting.

AO You go to the market in Mexico and it's full of pinatas. And it's not that expensive. Because I was new here I just thought I'd go to the store and buy a pinata. I didn't find them as easy, but when I found them, I thought they were not real. So I thought, I will make one for her.

MH What was not real about it?

AO They are cardboard. They are just like boxes with paper on top. They are not like handmade pinatas so I thought I will make for them. I think I have a picture. [She shows me pages of photos] When the people at the birthday party saw the it they said, "That is so great!" because they never saw something like that before. First I just made them as a present for them but then they said you should charge for them. So that's how I got the idea.

MH Oh, you made a car. That's fabulous.

AO Most of them are custom made. People ask me what they want.

MH A snowman. Oh, they are great. Are the people getting these of any Mexican heritage or not at all?

AO I would say half and half. Mexicans and Latin Americans who are more familiar with the tradition and Americans. Actually, it's funny because the Latin American people will ask more for the star and maybe animal shapes but then Americans will ask for more different, like the car [one was a Citroen] . I never made a car in my life. So the guy gave me a photo of his car and I made a pinata in the shape of his car. And then a snowman, I never would have thought to make something like that. I've gotten crazy orders before to make the pinatas.

MH When I first thought of this I thought, I'm not going to be able to find anybody, it's just commercial stuff and then there you were. I read somewhere that there are traditional songs that people sing.

AO Yes, one song. Well, for Advent, maybe there is more than one but for birthday parties, there is one. You want me to sing it?

MH Yes.

AO [She sings a simple melody with lyrics, including a counting from one to three] So, it's very important actually, the song cause, especially kids, they will just keep going, hitting the pinata. The song says at the end, you hit it once, you hit it twice,

you hit it three times and that's it. So the other kid can go. They hit the pinata the time we are singing the song. And then the next kid and then we sing it again. Otherwise it would be everyone would be --

MH So what do you do in this country? We don't know that song.

AO Here? Of course, with Mexicans, they sing the song. With American friends, they try to learn but if they don't know the song, they will just hear it and take turns.

MH So when is your next birthday party that you are making one for?

AO May. You know, as the weather gets better, the demand starts to get better too. So I already have one for May. A star.

MH That would be fun to watch. What do you use for the stick?

AO In Mexico, we use a broomstick. And here, I would use a broomstick but if I want to use something better, I would just go to Home Depot and get, they sell them there. They can cut them for you and sometimes they even decorate. But people use bats, whatever.

MH I was surprised. I would say I was embarrassed that I didn't know the religious symbolism this. It's fascinating to learn of it. And I think that's a great reason to bring you to the festival and have that be part of it. In this country, that doesn't exist? What's it like here? It's lost?

AO Yeah. I have a group of Mexican friends and we try to do it every year with our kids.

MH At Christmas time?

AO At Christmas time, yeah, at Advent. At least one little party we try to do. But my older girl is four years old, so I think they will start to understand as they grow older. We do it more for us because we miss that. It's not only the pinata, it's the whole tradition. We have also special songs for that and people gather in the street, because it's not cold in Mexico.

MH Is it Los Posados?

AO Yes. [She has brought out some paper pamphlets with song lyrics printed on them] So, those are the lyrics for the songs. Everybody in the street has one of those. They sell them. And everybody has a candle. [she has brought out a small box of colorful candles.]

MH Do they do it at night?

AO In the evening, like around seven they start. So everyone has a colorful candle and we have to sing the whole thing so we walk around the street with the candle, all the neighbors on the street. We walk around singing. And this is about the story of Joseph and Mary looking for a place to sleep when she was pregnant. A posado is like a place to sleep, to stay. So, it's a story. This [paper pamphlet of songs] tells the whole story, that they were walking around and people didn't want them to let them in. So at the end, how to say? The happy ending of the story is when they found some place to rest for the night. And the pinata is the last thing of the party. Everything is happy in the end and they break the pinata. There is some food.

MH And what is the traditional food?

AO You know what is a tostada? OK, so tostada or tortas, you know, things that are easy. Nothing to warm up. Something that everyone will just grab and eat. Even sandwiches. And there is a traditional drink for it which is called ponche and it's like punch. Fruit punch Mexican style with fresh fruit, sugar cane and other fruits. Like guava or apple. And everything is boiled with a kind of molasses. I forgot the name. It's like sugar but it's in chunks. It's brown, very dark. And it's made of sugar cane. Bilencio, it's called bilencio. You put it in there to sweeten. And that's a tradition. Very warm because it's not as cold as here. Because we're outside.

MH You do this every night of Advent?

AO Every night. That was the way it was when I was a little girl. I don't know nowadays if they do it the same. I know that my family does it with the family only but I don't know if in the street they still do that.

MH You mentioned also something about papel picado.

AO Oh Picado papel?

MH Is that also something you do?

AO No, no. That's another art.

MH OK, do you want to ask me any questions about the festival?