A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF HUTCHINSON, KANSAS

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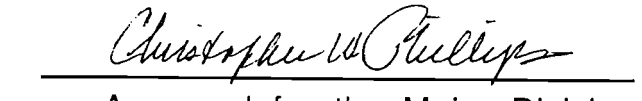
This thesis deals with the process of assimilation of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, Kansas through three Anglo institutions: the Catholic Church, fastpitch softball, and military service, namely the various Airborne divisions of the United States Army. The process of assimilation for this group of people has taken place, but if has been a process of cultural pluralism as opposed to complete assimilation or integration. This type of assimilation uses the Anglo institution to provide cohesiveness, stability, and in the case of softball and the Airborne troopers, role models for the Mexican-American youth. The Anglo institution is also used to battle stereotypical perceptions of Mexican-Americans as well as prejudice and discrimination, in order to help to break down prejudicial barriers facing the Mexican-American of Hutchinson. The result of assimilation to the Catholic Church (Our Lady of Guadalupe Church), fastpitch softball (Hutchinson Our Lady of Guadalupe team and Hutchinson *Los Lobos* team), and the Airborne

troopers (*Las Paracaidistas*) is the process of Mexican-Americans assimilating into mainstream American society and has produced a cultural pluralism, a maintenance of a semi-autonomous culture within a dominant culture which will take on the broadest elements of the majority while maintaining elements of its sub-cultural integrity. The results of this assimilation do not yield Mexican-Americans but, rather, American-Mexicans.



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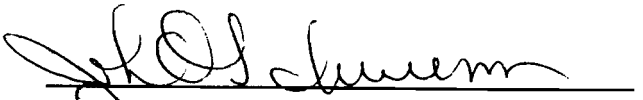

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

As a child growing up in the early 1970s, a source of enjoyment and fun was spending the night at the home of my grandparents, John and Josephine Sallabedra. The routine was predictable; my parents would drop me off right around dinner time, and as I walked up the driveway towards the back door, passing the kitchenette window, I could always smell what was to be for dinner. My mouth would begin to water even before I got inside. My grandmother was a skilled cook and never once can I remember anything being less than wonderful. As I walked around the back of the house and into the back doorway, I could see Grandma working away at the stove, preparing such favorites as: *sopa* (Spanish rice), *frijoles* (refried beans), *papas* (fried potatoes), and some type of *carne* (meat). My grandmother always offered me a warm greeting, eighty percent in Spanish. Grandpa was either just getting home from work, changing from his letter-carrier's uniform, or working in the garden, tending to an infinite number of different plants ranging from jalapeno peppers to strawberries. Everything from the lawn to the house was tended immaculately. I took great pride in pointing out Grandma and Grandpa's house to my friends because 420 East 14th Street was much more than my second home.

Two things about Grandma's meals were unique to my family. First was the great amount of food prepared for each meal. I do not

remember a meal my grandmother prepared which the entire family could completely consume. The volume of food served never seemed large until I started spending the night with some Anglo, or non-Mexican-American, friends. Their mothers, I recognized quickly, usually prepared food enough for only one plateful. Consequently, my mother began feeding me supper before I went over to a friend's house for supper, so I would be sure to get enough to eat. Second (and this never even registered in my mind until after I was much older) was the way in which family members seated themselves at the table. Grandpa was always seated at the head of the table, while adult males would come next to be seated. I sat at the main table--being the only grandchild at this time--and I always tried to sit next to Grandpa. The men would begin eating while Grandma, my mother, and my two aunts would continue to work in the kitchen. Only after the men were well into their meals did the women themselves sit down to eat. After talking to other Mexican friends of mine, I came to understand that in an earlier time, when the men worked all day, Mexican-American tradition expected women to make sure their husbands were fed before feeding themselves.

After the meal, once people had left, my grandparents and myself would either sit down in the living room and watch Anglo television programs or, if it were summertime, we would sit on the screened-in front porch, watching the traffic go by on Plum Street

and talking about the day's happenings. Occasionally, Grandma or Grandpa told me stories from a bygone era that caught my attention very quickly. Being eight or nine years old, I listened with rapt attention and appreciated these stories wholly for their entertainment value. I had no idea that these tales were an oral history of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, Kansas.

Grandma spoke of the days when the local Mexican-American Catholic Church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, was located right in the middle of the Mexican-American community. She spoke of the movement of the parish to a new site in South Hutchinson, several miles away from the old site, claiming the community had never been as strong after the move. Grandma and Grandpa told stories of the church sponsoring a fastpitch softball team for the men returning from World War II and how they used to play softball regularly and against any and all who wanted to play. As a child, I thought to myself, those truly were wonderful times.

In those early days, I had no conception of the process of assimilation that was well underway, affecting my Mexican-American family and Mexican-American lifestyle. Assimilation--the adoption of institutions of the host society (in this case the host society being Anglo-American)--had caused my own conception of Mexican culture to have been already much Americanized. The fact that my grandparents lived on East Fourteenth Street, across town

from the traditional Mexican enclave in southwestern Hutchinson, was assimilation in action. The fact that my grandfather worked for the United States Post Office--and not the railroad--was another example of assimilation and the fact that while my grandparents spoke Spanish and my parents were functional with the Spanish language, yet I spoke no Spanish at all, offered perhaps the most obvious sign of generational assimilation.

In the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, Kansas, one can observe the process of assimilation in three distinct areas: the founding of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Parish, the exploits of Mexican-American fastpitch softball, and *Las Paracaidistas*, the Mexican-American men who served in the Airborne Divisions of the United States Army. All three institutions maintained a bond to their Mexican heritage, yet, neither the Catholic faith, the game of softball, nor military service was in any way uniquely Mexican. All three endeavors were vehicles of cultural assimilation into mainstream America.

Yet assimilation as a social process often involves prejudice and discrimination from mainstream populations. Prejudice is best used to describe an attitude, a feeling, and as such is covert. Discrimination is best used to describe an act, and hence is overt.[1] Mexican-Americans were subjected to prejudice in innumerable

[1] John H. Burma, Mexican-Americans in the United States: A Reader (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1970), 57.

social situations, as well as discrimination in occupations, housing, education, and political activity.[2] The founding of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church was a result of prejudice and discrimination vented towards Mexicans by parishioners and clergy of the Anglo-American St. Teresa parish, also in Hutchinson. Assimilation occurred gradually, as the fledgling Mexican community clung to its Mexican culture and Mexican Catholic tradition, yet was forced to change to meet the demands of the Anglo Catholic hierarchy; the relocation of the Mexican Catholic Church--the buttress of the vernacular community--from the heart of the Mexican-American community to a location several miles away cemented the process.

Yet the process of assimilation acted as well as a means to breaking down prejudicial and discriminatory walls. The Our Lady of Guadalupe fastpitch softball team, as well as *Las Paracaidistas,* helped to transform stereotypical assumptions and destroy long-held beliefs derogatory to Mexicans. By their actions and accomplishments in dealing with Anglo-Americans, these organizations helped to change white perceptions of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson.

The O.L.G. church, the O.L.G. softball team, and *Las Paracaidistas* also served roles exclusive to the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. The church was the obvious anchor to the

[2] Ibid., 55.

community, the religious and social cornerstone to the people. The O.L.G. softball team not only served as the main social event of the summers, but individual players served as role models and heroes to the Mexican-American community. *Las Paracaidistas*, by military service, also provided a standard that offered to Mexican-Americans in Hutchinson proof that loftier than expected accomplishments were possible.

The price of assimilation proved to be change. The O.L.G. church was moved. Softball and *Las Paracaidistas* changed as well. With the 1960s Civil Rights movement, so too did these groups move in different directions. Fastpitch softball no longer was the hub of Mexican-American summers, and the Airborne experience of Hutchinson's *Las Paracaidistas* failed to continue on to the next generation. Assimilation and civil rights, and the resultant personal freedoms therein extended, to minority groups, have transformed Mexican-Americans into American-Mexicans.

Despite such transformations, the O.L.G. church, fastpitch softball, and *Las Paracaidistas* of the past continue to endure today as does the overall American-Mexican community of Hutchinson itself. They have created a situation of cultural pluralism by carving out a cultural niche of Hutchinson for themselves. Cultural pluralism (maintaining a semi-autonomous culture within a dominant culture, i.e. the Anglo culture) is demonstrated by the

utilization of these Anglo institutions to strengthen their own community. While these institutions have changed, the American-Mexican community of Hutchinson has kept its cultural integrity.

The Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, Kansas, has a rich cultural tradition. Unfortunately, its residents have failed to preserve accurate written records of the community's earliest times--a time prior to the intrusion of assimilation which has obscured much of its Mexican heritage. Consequently, the information gathered for this project is comprised almost exclusively of oral interviews, with more than fifty interviewees recalling events and perceptions from as far back as sixty to seventy years ago. By transcribing these fragile recollections, this project will preserve the cultural traditions of a community which has never possessed a written history. Thus the project keeps alive a Mexican-American heritage that may be lost forever. In many ways, this project has reshaped the values and principles of my own life.

Chapter 1

HISTORY

The Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, Kansas traces its roots to employment with railroad companies, and assimilation into Hutchinson by Mexican-Americans will branch from this base. As with any successful town on the Great Plains in the late nineteenth-century United States, the connection of the railroad with these communities was an economic necessity. With the building and the maintenance of the railroad came workers, and by the turn of the twentieth century, immigrant Mexicans had become a prime source of labor for the railroad industry, serving as a cheap source of manpower. By 1907, and by some accounts perhaps even a few years earlier, Mexican railroad laborers had found their way to Hutchinson. Beginning with the founding of Hutchinson, and the introduction of the railroad shortly thereafter, the first Mexicans settled in Hutchinson.

Hutchinson was incorporated as a city in 1871.[1] Reputedly, Lewis M. Thomas was the first settler in the area that would soon become Reno County, having come to the area from Iowa in 1870.[2] Other settlers came shortly thereafter and the new arrivals established a settlement. In September, 1871, Clinton Carter Hutchinson came to central Kansas in hopes of finding a suitable

[1] Willard Welsh, Hutchinson, A Prairie City in Kansas (Hutchinson: Willard Welsh, 1946), 1.
[2] Hutchinson News (Hutchinson), 4 July 1893.

location for a town. Satisfied with the settlement potential of the area, Hutchinson selected section thirteen, township thirty-three south of range six west. In October of 1871, surveyors laid out the town and the settlers gave the town the name of its founder.[3] People soon began to come to Hutchinson, businesses began to emerge, and the community firmly planted itself on the Kansas plains. Besides Hutchinson himself, arguably the most important of the early inhabitants of the young town were Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Williams. Williams, a carpenter, had a building taken down in nearby Newton and moved it to Hutchinson, rebuilding it there. This proved the third building erected in Hutchinson and was the home of a store, hotel and stage office, a stage line having been established between Newton and Hutchinson.[4]

By the summer of 1872, the Santa Fe railway reached Hutchinson.[5] From this point forward, the population of Reno County grew steadily. In 1872, the population of Reno County numbered about six hundred people. By 1880, the county boasted two cities and twenty-three organized townships with a total population of 12,826. According to census records, by 1890, Reno County had six cities and twenty-nine townships for a total population of 27,079.[6]

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Keith L. Bryant, Jr., History of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1974), 26.

[6] Eleventh Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890).

The Santa Fe cannot take total credit for the population boom in Reno County. By July of 1893, Reno County was home to eight different lines of railroads with over two hundred miles of track. The list included the Rock Island, two divisions of the Missouri Pacific (both the Hutchinson Division and the K and S Division), the Chicago, Kansas and Western, the Hutchinson and Southern, a local track, and the Kansas and Colorado Pacific. Nearby towns in Reno County had one or two railroads running through their communities, while others sat next to the railroad itself. By 1893, towns like Arlington, Medora, Partridge and Turon lay along the Rock Island Line, and Missouri Pacific had found a home in Elmer, Nickerson and Haven. Other towns had connections to the local railroads. Sylvia and Plevna adjoined the Chicago, Kansas and Western, and the township of Booth lay along the Hutchinson and Southern.[7]

For settlement on the Plains in communities like Hutchinson, the possession of rail lines was essential. They provided a means of communication and transportation over large areas. Manufacturers shipped goods by railroad to Plains communities. From the standpoint of agriculture, railroads provided the means to transport crops or livestock to markets in Kansas City, Chicago, or other points in the East.[8]

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[7] The Hutchinson News (Hutchinson), 4 July 1893.

[8] Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), 279.

The area's three main railroads -- the Santa Fe, the Rock Island and the Missouri Pacific -- would become dominant in a very short period of time. The rest of the previous railroads either went bankrupt or were absorbed by the other three. The Santa Fe, the Rock Island and Missouri Pacific all eventually found their way to Hutchinson[9] and created the economic base which in turn led to the arrival of Mexicans.

The arrival of the railroad upon the Plains spawned a population boom to the region while at the same time boosting the status of Hutchinson as a railroad destination due to its central location in Kansas. The Santa Fe reached Hutchinson in the summer of 1872. As a broader perspective, the total population from Hutchinson to the Rocky Mountains in 1872 was 2,019. By 1877, after introduction of the Santa Fe, that figure had risen spectacularly to 67,450. Residents had cultivated only seven thousand acres in this region in 1872, by 1875, that total had risen to 600,000 acres.[10] As Hutchinson became recognized as a central location of the United States, other railroad companies began to move in as well. By 1886, the Rock Island had completed its Golden State route and was in operation up to Horton, Kansas with its eventual destination of Topeka, Kansas, a prime business target for

[9] James L. Ehrenberger and Francis G. Gschwind, Smoke Above the Plains (Calloway, Nebraska: E & G Publications, 1965), cover.

[10] Willard Welsh, Hutchinson, A Prairie City in Kansas (Hutchinson: Willard Welsh, 1946), 65.

a young community like Hutchinson. The Missouri Pacific secured its charter in 1885, built under the name of the Wichita and Colorado Railroad. Originally, plans for construction of this railroad called for it to be built along the southern border of Reno County. With the aid of men like Jay Gould, a major Eastern financier, planners convinced the company to reroute the railroad through Hutchinson.[11]

In 1890, only fifteen persons of Mexican birth resided in the state of Kansas. All fifteen of these lived in Kansas City, Kansas, which at this time served as one of the major ports of debarkation for Kansas-bound immigrants.[12] Prior to the twentieth century, the major source of immigrant labor for railroad construction crews was the Irish. A crew of Irishmen built the Santa Fe Railroad through Hutchinson.[13] By 1900, however, Mexicans had slowly replaced the Irish. In the beginning, Mexicans labored largely in Arizona and New Mexico; by 1910, they worked wherever needed all over the system. According to one Anglo, Mexicans were excellent track workers "if handled properly.[14] By 1913, Santa Fe began to issue Spanish dictionaries to their track foremen to assist them to communicate with the overwhelming number of Mexican laborers.[15]

[11] Ibid., 66.

[12] Office of the Governor, Economic Opportunity Office, Minorities in Kansas: A Quest for Equal Opportunity, by Walter D. Broadnax and John Caro Russell, Jr. (Topeka, Kansas: The State Capitol, 1968), 56.

[13] Keith L. Bryant, Jr., History of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1974), 26.

[14] L. L. Waters, Steel Trails to Santa Fe (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1950), 327.

[15] Ibid.

From an economic standpoint, Mexicans were as hard working and effective as the Irish, but Mexicans would work for far lower wages. As a result, Mexicans eventually replaced the Irish as the predominant ethnic laborers on the Plains and in the West.

As the western United States continued to expand rapidly, Mexicans filled the need for unskilled inexpensive labor not only in the railroad industry, but also mining companies and agri-business. As most of the immigrant Mexican laborers settled in the Southwest and Colorado, the Mexican population of the Great Plains, particularly Kansas, began to increase significantly as well.[16]

The early Mexican community of Hutchinson was not unlike many of the other Kansas Mexican communities. Mexican immigrants came to Kansas from virtually every state in northern and central Mexico, the majority coming from Guanajuato or Michoacan.[17] Almost all who came to Kansas pursued to major areas, the railroads or agricultural work. The least desirable jobs to others appeared as the proverbial pot of gold to the immigrant Mexican.

By 1907, Mexican railroad laborers reached Hutchinson. The 1907 Hutchinson City Directory listed only one, Cruz Herrera, who boarded at 300 North Jefferson and who worked for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad.[18] Oral accounts hold that Cresencio

[16] Robert Oppenheimer, History of the Peoples of Kansas: An Anthology (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), 314.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Hutchinson City Directory (Sioux City, Iowa: R. L. Polk Co., 1907), 243.

Hernandez also arrived in Hutchinson as early as 1907 as a Santa Fe laborer.[19] Others may have been in Hutchinson at this time but no documented proof was brought forth. By all accounts, the first major influx of Mexicans into Hutchinson arrived in 1910.[20]

The Mexican community of Hutchinson in 1910 was youthful not only in age but also in terms of time residing in the United States. By 1910, the population of Hutchinson had grown to 16,364[21] and, by all accounts was a thriving community. The 1910 Federal Census showed a total of 229 Mexicans who were residing in the community,[22] comprising a little over one percent of the entire community (1.3%). Of the 229 total, 161 men (70.3% of the total Mexican population) were railroad laborers. Average age for these male workers was 28.7 years. The rest of the labor force totaled seven people (one adult man, three adult women, and three children). A thirty-two-year-old man, John Williams, was listed as a restaurant keeper. It is probable that the census taker who wrote this name down did not understand the man's true name. Birth place and native language given for John Williams were Mexico and Spanish, respectively. Two women, Estel Socoro, age thirty, and Laura Riviera, age thirty-three, were listed as cooks for the Santa

[19] Matt Hernandez, interview by author, 7 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[20] Thirteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910).

[21] Wendy Murray, Kansas Statistical Abstract, 1982-83 (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 14.

[22] Thirteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910).

Fe. Curiously, a twenty-one-year-old woman by the name of "Louisa" was listed as a railroad worker, the same occupation as given to the men, as well as that of three children: Maria Medrano, age ten, Juanita Guiterrez, age nine, and a twelve-year-old boy named Jesus, all listed as employees of the railroad. Of the total labor force, 144 reported the year in which they immigrated to the United States. Of the 144, thirty-eight (26.4%) reported they had come to the United States between 1887 and 1907, with the main number of these coming between 1905 and 1907 (twenty-five of the thirty-eight). Twenty-two of the 144 (15.3%) came to the United States in 1908, fifty-two (36.1%) came in 1909, and thirty-two (22.2%) came in 1910.[23]

The family structure for the Mexican railroad workers of Hutchinson in 1910 breaks down into four categories: 1.) married men who brought their families with them; 2.) married men who left their families either in the southwestern United States or in Mexico; 3.) widowers; and 4.) single men. Twenty-four of the 162 working men (or 15% of the total) brought their families with them to Hutchinson. Married couples averaged 1.3 children per couple with ten couples reporting no children at all. The average age of these twenty-four married men was 30.6 years. The average age of their wives was 28.7 years, nearly two full years younger. Not unusually

[23] Ibid.

did one of the married couples' have one or more boarders living with them during this particular time period.[24] The second group (married men who came to Hutchinson by themselves) represents the transient nature of the majority of these married men. Thirty-four men (21% of the working men) reported they were married but that their families did not come with them to Hutchinson. Apparently, they planned either to send for their families later or return to Mexico when they had completed the work here. One hundred men reported themselves as being single. Of the 229 Mexicans in Hutchinson in 1910, forty-three (18.7%) were children listed as dependents by their parents.

Only with difficulty can one put a definition on the familial structure of the Hutchinson Mexicans in 1910. Their lives appear to have been in a state of transition. All complete families that did come to Hutchinson were nuclear, and it appears widowers brought their children with them as opposed to leaving them behind with relatives. Three men reported themselves as widowers, all having children in the home. The average number of children per widower was 3.6. While 62.1% of all the men were single, obviously railroad work for these men would provide only temporary labor. Many were destined to return to their homeland, so for the majority the prospect of working in Hutchinson was only a short-term

[24] Ibid.

proposition. Consequently, many of these workers decided to return to their families rather than to have them come to Hutchinson.

In 1910, the Mexicans of Hutchinson lived in two main areas of town. The first was located between West Second Avenue and West Fourth Avenue on land owned by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. For the most part, this enclave was completely out of town, away from the mainstream. The 1910 Census referred to this area as "Construction Camp Santa Fe R.R." Mexicans living here were given box cars as homes. In all, 138 Mexican men, women and children lived in the construction camp. Seven Mexicans were reported as living on First Avenue East outside of the construction camp. Laborers from this group also worked for the Santa Fe. In all, there were ninety-six Santa Fe workers of Mexican ancestry.

The residence patterns of Hutchinson's Mexicans suggests that they were brought to Hutchinson by the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. Sixty-four of the total population were identified in the 1910 Census as living on D Avenue East. This particular location would put them at a considerable distance from the rest of the Santa Fe *colonia*. However, this proximity put them directly adjacent to the Rock Island depot. Another group of twenty lived on C Avenue which put them only one block away from the Rock Island tracks. Avenue C and Avenue D total sixty-five workers.[25] The

[25]Ibid.

Hutchinson News reported on April 2, 1910 that the Santa Fe was constructing a railroad from Sylvia to Zenith to Kinsley and which employed 660 men, most likely accounting for the Santa Fe workers. The Rock Island might well also have had construction projects underway in order to have workers living in this particular area of Hutchinson.[26]

Literacy figures for Mexicans in Hutchinson in 1910 prove both confusing and inconclusive. The literacy rate, according to the 1910 Census, for the total Mexican population in Hutchinson was 32.9%. While literacy was determined based on the English language, it must be pointed out that the standards for determining literacy were not outlined in the census records, therefore, this number seems very high considering that all adult Mexicans in Hutchinson were native to Mexico at this time, and all thirty-nine Mexicans who were interviewed on April 24, 1910 were deemed literate in English by the census taker. Removing these thirty-nine from the figures, the literacy rate drops to 22.6%, a more likely figure.[27]

By 1913 the Hutchinson City Directory listed just two Mexican residences. John Gonzales, a laborer for the Kansas Chemical Manufacturing Company, lived at 317 N. Woodard. Another was Benjamin Martinez, a boarder living with another family at 18 East

[26] The Hutchinson News (Hutchinson), 2 April 1910.

[27] Thirteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910).

Avenue A whose occupation was not listed.[28] In 1919, the city boasted twelve Mexican residences, as well as a billiards hall run by Abel G. Barrientes at 426 South Main and a Mexican restaurant run by Louis and Martha Martinez at 424 South Main.[29]

By 1919, Mexicans were beginning to work not only for the Santa Fe or the Rock Island but also branching into other areas of labor in Hutchinson. Mauro Garcia was a porter for the Rorabaugh-Wiley Company and Dablino Rodrigues worked for the Morton Salt Company.[30] All Mexican residences the 1913 and 1919 City Directories were located on the south side of Hutchinson. As they had six years earlier, railroad laborers still lived in box cars at this time; their names do not yet appear in the city's directory. In 1910, no Mexican names appeared at all in the city directory when there were more than two hundred in Hutchinson, suggesting that city leaders looked upon the Mexicans at that time as a temporary source of labor that would remain in the area only briefly. They did not consider these people to be residents of Hutchinson.

By 1920, Mexican labor had begun to branch into other areas of work besides the railroads, a sign of progression of assimilation into Hutchinson. The 1920 population of Hutchinson was 23,298,[31]

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[28] Hutchinson City Directory (Sioux City, Iowa: R. L. Polk, 1913), 237.
[29] Hutchinson City Directory (Detroit: R. L. Polk and Co., 1919), 63, 249.
[30] Ibid., 154, 304.
[31] Wendy Murray, Kansas Statistical Abstract, 1982-83 (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 14.

with a Mexican population of 362, comprising 1.5% of the total population. Records indicate a very different occupational mix than a decade earlier. Sixty-five men were documented as railroad laborers, accounting for sixty-three percent of the entire Mexican labor force. While this was still the majority of Mexican working men, another industry in Hutchinson was beginning to reap the benefits of Mexican labor. Twenty-three Mexican men were employed by the salt plant as laborers, constituting twenty-three percent of the Mexican work force in Hutchinson in 1920. One of these men, thirty-year-old H. Efionso, listed his occupation as "Fireman-Salt Plant." Ten men worked for the City of Hutchinson as general laborers or street laborers. Two brothers, Jesus Lucero and V. Lucero, were listed as "canal laborers." These men represent almost ten percent of the Mexican work force.[32]

Immigration statistics clearly show that between 1910 and 1920, population turnover, due to job relocation or job completion, had entirely changed the composition of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. Sixty-five men reported the year in which they immigrated to the United States. The 1920 Census indicates that of these dates, only nineteen (29%) came to the United States during the period from 1909 to 1914. Eleven (17%) came to the United States in 1915, twelve (19%) in 1916, ten (15%) in 1917 and

[32] Fourteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920).

1918, and three (5%) in 1919.[33] This proved a marked contrast to the 1910 Census where the major influx was between 1908 and 1910. These particular statistics show that the major source of work for the Mexicans, railroad labor, was performed seasonally. As Robert Oppenheimer points out, "the rail companies hired the laborers to work from May to October on the repair and maintenance of the lines and then the workers usually returned to Mexico."[34]

From 1910 to 1920, family structure among Mexicans in Hutchinson also changed dramatically. The 1920 Census indicated that seventy-two men were married with their families also living in Hutchinson, while no men who were married had families who were living elsewhere. The 1920 figures are a marked contrast to those of 1910 in that the overwhelming majority of men came to Hutchinson without their families in 1910. The average age of a married man in 1920 was 33.7 years. The average age for wives of these men was 29.4 years, a statistic that would have been much lower if not for the fact that some married couples were well into their forties and fifties. Several of these Mexican brides were teenagers with the youngest being fourteen-year-old Carmela Macia. Her husband, Francisco, was twenty-two. The nineteen-year-old wife of Anachito Rodriguez, aged twenty-seven, was already the

[33] Ibid.

[34] Robert Oppenheimer, History of the Peoples of Kansas: An Anthology (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), 316.

mother of three children. Despite the age disparity of some of the marriages, the institution of marriage was obviously strong within the Mexican community of Hutchinson at this point in time. Of the seventy-two married couples, fifty-three (74%) had at least one child. The average number of children per couple for these seventy-two had grown to 2.47. Of the total Mexican population in Hutchinson of 362, 178 (49%) were children.[35]

Literacy rate in 1920 was 23.8%.[36] This percentage is consistent with 1910 figures and is supported by the total time these families had resided in the United States. Despite inconsistencies in determining literacy, it appears that census takers in 1920 had a more solid criteria to follow in regard to literacy standards.

The 1910 Census showed there were two main areas of Mexican settlement in Hutchinson: the construction camp on the grounds of Santa Fe property and the area on Avenue D East, presumably working for the Rock Island. By 1920, settlement patterns began to stray, albeit not far, from the Santa Fe construction camp and the Avenue D East area. The major concentration of Mexican population was the old construction camp, now known as Mexican Row, which housed 134 people in box cars, of

[35] Fourteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920).

[36] Ibid.

whom thirty-two were railroad laborers. A total of seventeen Mexicans lived on First Avenue East, seven of which were Santa Fe laborers. Based on oral interviews, those railroad workers who lived on Avenue A West also worked for the Santa Fe.[37] Forty-five total Mexicans lived on Avenue A West, six of whom worked for the Santa Fe, but three men worked for the salt plant and two were city laborers so this could hardly be considered to be completely a railroad area. Second Avenue East was home to three Mexicans at two different residences, one of which being the aforementioned H. Efionso and his wife, and the second residence belonged to Jake Rodriguez who was listed as a hotel houseman. Sherman Avenue West was home to one family, the Callatano Chavez family, with a total of nine family members, including seven children. The 1920 Census gave no occupation for Mr. Chavez.[38]

The second major area of residence, the Avenue D area, was home to 110 Mexicans. While the Santa Fe work force still included forty-five Mexicans, the Rock Island work force was down to just thirteen. Avenue D West was home to seventy-one Mexicans but only ten were railroad laborers. Thirteen men living in this area were salt plant laborers. On Avenue D East, just across Main Street, thirty-nine Mexicans resided, but, only three were employed by the

[37] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 26 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[38] Fourteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920).

railroad. It appears that as work began to decrease, people who lived in this area began to look for other work, namely, the salt plant.[39]

Assimilation and permanence of settlement in Hutchinson was well underway by 1920. The Mexican family was much stronger in regards to nuclear families that resided in Hutchinson as well as the variety of jobs which Mexican laborers performed. At this point, cultural assimilation was in an infant stage in that contact outside the workplace was at a minimum, yet the period laid the initial foundation for later cultural assimilation.

While Kansas' Mexican population increased, Hutchinson's Mexican population declined. By 1921, Kansas' Mexican population had grown to 13,700 persons. The major cities of migration for Mexicans were Kansas City, Topeka, Wichita, and Emporia in eastern Kansas with Dodge City and Garden City in western Kansas.[40] While Hutchinson was not a major area, the beginnings of a permanent Mexican community in Hutchinson, which began to plant itself in 1910 and continued to grow into 1920, took shape by 1923. The 1923 Reno County Directory indicated a population of 130 Mexicans that offered a reduction in numbers from 1920. Thirty-five percent of the total Mexican population was employed by the three railroad

[39] Ibid.

[40] Office of the Governor, Economic Opportunity Office, Minorities in Kansas: A Quest for Equal Opportunity, by Walter D. Broadnax and John Caro Russell, Jr. (Topeka, Kansas: The State Capitol, 1968), 56.

companies. Twenty-seven men worked for the Santa Fe, sixteen men were employed by the Rock Island, and three worked for the Missouri Pacific.[41]

By 1923, however, one can see signs of assimilation by Mexicans into the general community of Hutchinson. Though the Santa Fe construction camp still existed, settlement in residences outside of the construction camp had begun to occur. Thirty-one Mexicans (23.8%) in Hutchinson at this time still lived in the Santa Fe construction camp or Mexican Row, living in box cars.[42] The 1923 County Directory also showed the Rock Island and Missouri Pacific railroads used box cars as living quarters for their Mexican laborers. Calisto Agoitia, a Rock Island laborer and his wife, Delfina, lived at an address simply stated as "D West box car." Pedro Natal, a Missouri Pacific worker, and his wife lived at the address "421 West C box car,"[43] suggesting Missouri Pacific and Rock Island workers of earlier time periods in Hutchinson lived in box cars also. The addresses show the living proximity to the respective railroads. Yet the County Directory shows that some of the Santa Fe workers were now moving to rental homes that were likely cramped, but were far better than a box car. Jose Flores and his wife, Marcelline, were listed as having lived at 524 West 4th, which would have

[41] Reno County Directory (Hutchinson: Hutchinson Office Supply and Printing Company, 1923).

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 245.

bordered Santa Fe property. Two boarders, Juan Flores and Pilar Flores, obviously relatives, lived at that same address.[44]

The second major area of inhabitance, the Avenue D area, began to grow and develop into what eventually would become the heart of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. A total of forty-five Mexicans lived in the 100-800 blocks of West Avenue D and the 100 block of East Avenue D. This included the total of five people who lived in box cars while working for the Rock Island. This accounted for 34.6% of the total Mexican population. This statistic proves a cornerstone: not only did Mexicans inhabit Avenue D, but, they also had branched into West Avenue C, West Avenue E and East and West Avenue F. These streets, combined with residences at South Monroe, South Main, South Poplar and South Madison, created a community that endures to this day. In 1923, the total population of this particular area numbered eighty-two Mexicans, or 63% of the Mexican population in Hutchinson.[45]

As the young Mexican community expanded spatially, it did so economically as well. In 1923, Genaro Garcia owned a Mexican restaurant at 420 South Main. Two Mexican groceries were operating as well, one owned by Pedro Maldonado and located at 405 West Avenue E, the other owned by P. V. Rodriguez and located at 429 West Avenue C. Moreover, Ramon Hernandez was listed as a barber,

[44] Ibid., 120.
[45] Ibid.

and he eventually opened his own barber shop, located at 208 West Avenue C. On the other hand, economically speaking, there were only two Mexican men working in the salt industry of Hutchinson in 1923, a severe decline of Mexican labor from 1920, when twenty-three worked in the factory.[46]

The period from 1916 to 1929 represents the years during which the greatest Mexican immigration to Hutchinson seemed to occur. This increase in migration resulted largely from the ending of World War I. United States' involvement resulted in a moratorium of European migration which extended through 1924. This law helped open the door to Mexico for the filling of the great labor demand which existed in this country.[47] While this arrangement began positively enough, by 1925, problems arose throughout the United States. Anglos' negative feelings toward Mexican immigrants began to run high as Mexican laborers worked for any wage offered. Even such paltry wages proved better than what they stood to have earned back home. The number of Mexicans moving into communities also caused unemployment problems for some native-born workers. This phenomenon led to the 1925 visa requirement of a $10 charge for all Mexicans wishing to come into the country. The fee, which many could not afford, acted as a barrier to limit Mexican

[46] Ibid.

[47] Office of the Governor, Economic Opportunity Office, Minorities in Kansas: A Quest for Equal Opportunity, by Walter D. Broadnax and John Caro Russell, Jr. (Topeka, Kansas: The State Capitol, 1968), 56.

immigration into the United States.[48]

By 1929, with the onset of the Great Depression, Anglo attitudes toward Mexican immigrants became even worse. Large industries' recruiting practices changed drastically as jobs became fewer and wages decreased. In this case, Anglo philosophy became clear: force out the Mexicans in order to make room for out-of-work whites. The result was a mass Mexican exodus from Kansas as well as from the rest of the country.[49] This situation could help to explain why the 1920 Census records 362 Mexicans while the 1923 Reno County Directory only documents 130. The 1929-30 Reno County Directory only further supports such a contention.

With the onset of the Great Depression, economic opportunities for the Mexican began to dwindle. The 1930 population of Hutchinson was recorded as 27,085.[50] The 1929-30 Reno County Directory documented only 120 Mexicans in Hutchinson, which comprised 0.4% of the total population. Of this a total of twenty-six men were listed as having jobs with the railroad companies. In those years, twenty-two men worked for the Santa Fe and four worked for the Rock Island; none worked for the Missouri Pacific at this time.[51] The 1929-30 statistics cap a steady decline in total Mexican

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[48] Ibid., 57.

[49] Robert Oppenheimer, History of the Peoples of Kansas: An Anthology (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), 320.

[50] Wendy Murray, Kansas Statistical Abstract, 1982-83 (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 14.

[51] Reno County Directory (Hutchinson: Drennen-Stewart Press, 1930).

workers. Again, based on economic hardship as well as racial tension as a result of the economic situation, the Mexican population declined during this later period.

By 1930, the Santa Fe construction camp no longer existed. Thirty-three Mexicans lived in the 200-500 blocks of West 4th Avenue. All were living in residences, none were still living in box cars. The West Avenue D area of Hutchinson solidified itself during this period of time. West Avenue B through West Avenue E was home to sixty-nine of the 120 Mexicans in Hutchinson, or 57.5% of the total population. Interestingly, West Avenue E was now home to more Mexicans than West Avenue D (thirty-eight to twenty-three, respectively). In this particular part of town, few Mexican residences were given on the east side of Avenues B through E. Only seventeen of the 120 lived outside the West 4th Avenue or West Avenue B through E enclaves. Of those, five lived on West Sherman, which was only two blocks north of Avenue B, and the residence of Pauline Garcia was 417 North Monroe, only a block away from the West 4th Avenue group. Six more listed their addresses as Rural Route 2, in other words, they lived out of town. Through these times, the Mexicans of Hutchinson banded together to ride out the tough times. No Mexican restaurants and groceries that were open previous to 1929 appear in the 1929-30 Reno County Directory.[52]

[52] Ibid.

Despite the tough times, one thing proved certain; the Mexican community of Hutchinson, Kansas had planted roots. Even though times were bad at this point, they could always go to their brand new Catholic mission, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

An obvious sign of initial assimilation to a community is property ownership. Property tax records reveal that as early as 1929, Mexicans paid taxes on residences they owned, rather than rented. In December of 1929, Joe Rodriguez paid $11.64 in property tax on his home located on Avenue D East.[53] Dario Alonzo paid $5.80 in property taxes on his home located on West Avenue D.[54] As Mexicans came to Hutchinson, they also began to claim property. Mexican property ownership in Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1929 was a form of assimilation through community membership.

By 1930, the assimilation process for the Mexicans of Hutchinson was well under way. While the railroad was still the major source of employment, others had found other jobs in the salt industry, as porters or hotel housemen or city laborers among other jobs. Some had briefly opened their own businesses. Others owned real property. Large numbers of Mexicans had been in Hutchinson since 1910, but, this was a transient lot. The group in place in 1930 largely had their roots in the 1920s group or later. Assimilation is

[53] Hutchinson, Kansas, Reno County Treasurer's Tax Receipts (1929), receipt number 2750.

[54] Ibid., receipt number 2833.

a process that takes time, and, as time moves on, one can witness a more complete evolution of Mexicans into Mexican-Americans.

Chapter 2

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH

The foundation of the Mexican-American community in Hutchinson is the Catholic Church. The Catholic faith is not unique to Mexico. The traditional practices of the immigrant Mexican Catholic, as well as the reverence held for Our Lady of Guadalupe, is unique. Assimilation takes place as the early Hutchinson Mexicans carve out their own ethnic community within Hutchinson based on the bedrock of the Catholic faith they brought with them from Mexico. With Our Lady of Guadalupe Church as a foundation, the Mexican community takes root and will continue the process of assimilation.

The apparition of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego at Tepeyac in Mexico on December 9, 1531 and the resulting miracle on December 12 are the basis for the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe by the Mexican people. The Virgin asked Diego to visit the Bishop of Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumarraga, and request the building of a church on the hill of Tepeyac from which she could aid the people of Mexico. This bishop asked for proof of the apparition and on December 12, 1531, the Virgin instructed Diego to pick the Castillian roses that had grown on the hill. Gathering them in his *tilma* (cloak), he took them to the bishop. When Diego opened his *tilma*, the roses fell out and an image of the dark-skinned Virgin appeared on the garment.

Convinced, the bishop ordered the construction of the church.[1]

The Mexican people look upon the apparition of the Virgin Mary as a special gift, a direct message from God that the Catholic Church embraced the people of Mexico, welcoming them to the faith. When Mexican immigrants began to come to the United States, and especially to such Kansas towns as Hutchinson, Newton, Dodge City, Garden City, Wichita, Emporia, and Topeka they brought with them their Catholic faith as well as their patron saint, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (Our Lady of Guadalupe). As Mexican-American communities began to take root in Kansas, and, as hardship, persecution, discrimination, and bigotry followed, the Mexican-Americans in the region clung even tighter to the Blessed Virgin, a protector, and as the patroness of their early *colonias* (small Mexican settlements).

The founding families of the Hutchinson Mexican-American community originally attended Catholic services at St. Teresa Catholic Church, the only Catholic Church in Hutchinson at that time.[2] Anglo residents' acceptance of immigrant Mexicans into the St. Teresa parish was brief, if at all. Anglo parishioners relegated Mexicans attending services at St. Teresa to the back of the church.[3] Santos Martinez recalled that as a young girl the white elders

[1] Ellen Auerbach and Eliot Porter, Mexican Celebrations (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 10-11.

[2] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[3] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

expelled her from St. Teresa for attempting to purchase a candle to light in remembrance of a friend who had recently died.[4] The prejudice exhibited by the St. Teresa parish was overt and remains well recognized among the Mexican community of Hutchinson.[5]

The earliest champion of the Mexican community in Hutchinson was Father Jose Munoz, a traveling priest who visited a variety of early *colonias* in several Kansas towns.[6] Born in Mexico[7] and traveling from Kansas City, Munoz often came to Hutchinson, staying with Mexican families that had room to keep him. By all accounts, Father Munoz was a wonderful friend and priest to the Hutchinson Mexican community, tending to the spiritual needs of the people and even serving as godfather to Mexican-American children.[8] Father Munoz was the first man truly to befriend the young Mexican community of Hutchinson, making him a very respected person in the recollections of those interviewed.

Father Munoz's greatest contribution was that he urged that a church be built for Hutchinson's Spanish-speaking community.[9] By 1927, the growing number of Mexicans in Hutchinson and resultant prejudice necessitated the building of a new church. Father Munoz brought this proposition to Father Patrick J. Nagle, pastor of St.

[4] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[5] Josephine Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[6] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[7] Father John M. Moeder, J.C.D., History of the Diocese of Wichita (Wichita, Kansas: Father John M. Moeder, J.C.D., 1963), 198.
[8] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[9] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 1.

Teresa, who agreed with the plan for a separate church. Father Nagle eventually purchased lots on the corner of West Avenue E and Adams Street on the southwestern side of Hutchinson. The church awarded the contract for construction to the Leo J. Bromart Construction Company of Hutchinson. Tradition holds that Mr. Bromart himself helped to finance the construction of the church as a gesture of good will.[10]

On November 11, 1927, August J. Schwertner, Bishop of the Wichita Diocese, officially blessed the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church.[11] In its first years, the church served as a mission, an underling church, under the guidance of Father Nagle of St. Teresa.[12]

The Mexican community of Hutchinson received their first full-time pastor when Father Gabriel Perez arrived in 1928.[13] An exile from Mexico, Perez had fled the "Red Tempest" revolt. The Catholic Church in Mexico and the Mexican government had been locked in a power struggle related to the Constitution of 1917. The Constitution had outlined harsh restrictions on the clergy such as limiting the freedoms of priests to vote or to criticize government. The Constitution even forbade outdoor masses for fear of political

[10] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 26 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[11] Father John M. Moeder, J.C.D., History of the Diocese of Wichita (Wichita, Kansas: Father John M. Moeder, J.C.D., 1963), 130.

[12] Josephine Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[13] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 1.

organizing. By the 1920s, as the church protested, the situation in Mexico began to turn violent.[14] Thus, priests like Father Perez fled to the United States.

Though the Our Lady of Guadalupe church structure itself was small and of modest dimensions (70 feet long by 25 feet wide), it would become, for the city's Mexican community, the focal point of its social and religious existence in Hutchinson. The contents of the church suggest the true devotion of immigrant Mexicans to the Catholic church, and also, the modest means from which these people originated. The church boasted no carpeting, only a wood floor.[15] While the pews were modest in appearance, the wood altar was unadorned and without cover.[16] Above the altar on the main wall of the church was the dominant ornament in the church -- a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Mexican people.[17] Simple in its design but powerful in its beauty, the painting, as in other Mexican-American Catholic parishes, was a source of comfort to the parishioners.[18]

On both immediate sides of the altar were shrines, dedicated respectively to the Sacred Heart of the Virgin Mary and to St. Joseph.[19] The various shrines served as emotional support and as

[14] Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 270.

[15] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[16] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[17] Matt Hernandez, interview by author, 7 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[18] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[19] Micki Calvillo, interview by author, 17 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

sounding boards for prayers and petitions of the people, an extremely important service to Mexican-American Catholic community. The Stations of the Cross, the recreation of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, also adorned the walls of the church.[20] At the back of the church sat the baptismal font, the confessional, a set of stairs leading to the choir loft and the choir loft itself. The foyer area at the church's entrance also contained a set of bookracks where song books and missalettes could be picked up before church and returned afterwards. All structure and ornamentation in the church were fundamental to the Mexican Catholic traditions.

According to the edict of Vatican I, the altar was located at the extreme front of the church so priests could conduct mass while facing the tabernacle.[21] The Vatican I Council also mandated the use of the Latin language in the saying of the mass.[22] Early on, sermons at Our Lady of Guadalupe were said in Spanish, making the entire mass a bilingual ceremony. By the 1950s, sermons were also being offered in Spanish and English, making for trilingual ceremonies.[23]

Father Perez served only a short time at the Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, succeeded in 1929 by Father Michael Barry.[24] Father Barry would serve the parish at the outset of the Great

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[20] Josephine Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[21] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[22] Jodi Castro, interview by author, 18 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[23] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[24] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 1.

Depression and remained there until 1932. Nellie Maldonado remembered Father Barry to be agreeable and well liked by the Mexican-American parishioners, despite his Anglo heritage. She recalled the priest would have the ladies walk down to the Winchesters Meat Packing Company located on Avenue D and Madison Street to get chicken neck bones for hominy soup in order to help stretch monthly budgets.[25] During the time Father Barry was pastor of O.L.G., two Benedictine priests also helped out for a brief period of time, Father Earnest Stallbaumer and Father Mariannes.[26]

In 1932, Hutchinson's Mexican-American community became the religious headquarters of this particular area of the state.[27] The Augustinian Fathers moved to Hutchinson and were put in charge of the Our Lady of Guadalupe parish. This was an extremely important point in the history of the parish. The priest appointed, Father Fernando De Salterain, was from Spain, and he brought with him two Spanish assistants, Father Leandro Abella and Father Porfirio Fernandez.[28] These Spanish priests traveled to Newton, Great Bend and Lyons to take care of the Mexican colonias in these communities, as well as that of Hutchinson.[29] Several parishioners remember Father Salterain as a man of "pretty good size"[30] and as a priest who

[25] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[26] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 1.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Father John M. Moeder, J.C.D., History of the Diocese of Wichita (Wichita, Kansas: Father John M. Moeder, J.C.D., 1963), 156.
[29] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[30] Catherine Curiel, interview by author, 24 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

practiced his faith so zealously that "he was like a saint."[31]

The early 20th Century was a time for all immigrant Catholics in America to cling to the church and to its social institutions. Other cultural groups such as the Irish, Germans, Polish, Italians, French Canadians as well as Mexicans were all flocking to the United States.[32] With the church being the center of the immigrants' lives, social organizations came into being. The Mexican community of Hutchinson helped each other in time of need because, as one resident recalled, "they had nobody, so they helped themselves."[33] Social groups organized in the church tend to reflect the priorities of the congregation. The church created prayer groups and men's and women's groups to organize, plan, and execute the events and activities which distinguish the particular church.[34] *La Cruz Azul* (The Blue Cross) was created as a ladies auxiliary organization. The ladies wore uniforms similar to those worn by nurses. One of their functions was to administer to the sick and elderly of the community.[35] *Las Guadalupanas* (The Guadalupe Ladies) provided workers for various church functions and also attempted to help various families in the Mexican community by offering *novenas*

[31] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[32] Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1985), 147.

[33] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[34] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, The Black Church in the African American Experience (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 146-7.

[35] Charlene Albert and Noberta Perez, "Mexican Americans in Hutchinson," Legacy: Journal of the Reno County Historical Society, Spring 1990, 16.

(Roman Catholic nine-day-long devotions).[36] Both of these groups were forerunners to the creation of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Altar Society, founded in 1937. The Altar Society's responsibilities included preparation of food as well as church cleaning.[37] A men's group, *Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana* (Mutual Society of Mexicans), attempted to assist other Mexican families by pooling financial resources from which Mexican families could borrow money at five percent interest.[38] All of these particular groups, organized in the early years of the Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, served not merely as extra-curricular, but, rather, out of necessity. During the church's early years, little help in any form came from the Anglo community. Working together brought the Mexican community of Hutchinson together.

One of the most important topics to the story of the Our Lady of Guadalupe parish is fund-raising. How money was acquired to support and to maintain their modest church helps to explain the cohesiveness of Hutchinson's early Mexican community. To raise money, members organized a small gathering, called a *hamaica* .[39] Fund-raising was based on the selling of traditional Mexican cuisine, namely tacos, tostadas, enchiladas and tamales.[40] The preparation

[36] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[37] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[38] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interviewed by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

of the food was preceded by the ladies of the parish going door to door within the Mexican community and asking for donations of whatever could be spared--flour, cheese, rice, and other items. Cash donations in lieu of food were welcomed as well.[41] Church members held many of the early *hamaicas* at Sylvan Park, where food, music, dancing, socializing and camaraderie occurred. Many times, young women would fix box lunches and young men would bid to buy them. These events were an opportunity for the Mexican-American community to come together in the name of fellowship, as well as a chance to raise money for the church.

One could easily refer to the mid-1940s as a "Golden Age," not only in the history of the parish, but, also in the history of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. On January 13, 1946, Father Hyacinth Cleary of the Passionate Order of St. Paul, Kansas, received appointment as pastor.[42] Men from the parish who had been serving in World War II were beginning to come home. Also, in July of 1946, the church bought two lots south of the church, purchased by the Diocese at the insistence of Father Cleary, who believed the parish needed a social center. The building was used for classrooms, for catechism, and for religious education.

The house on the newly-acquired property came to be known as the Community Hall or the Community House. Church volunteers

[41] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[42] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook, (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 2.

remodeled the single-story building on the inside so one side served as a kitchen, and the other half served as a meeting hall.[43] Up to this point, the church structure itself had served as the social center for Hutchinson's Mexican-Americans. With the addition of the Community Hall, the bond between the church and the people strengthened.

The Our Lady of Guadalupe Church's "Golden Age" commenced with the purchase of the Community Hall and continued into the 1950s. The activities, events, and the overall feeling of togetherness and unity made this particular time period the cultural peak of this group of people. Typical activities the church sponsored during this time included chaperoned youth dances and Mexican movies, both of which were held in the new Community Hall.[44] Few families who belonged to the parish owned televisions; therefore, seeing such Mexican movie stars as *Cantinflas* was special.[45] *Cantinflas* was a Mexican actor who, besides having a long career in Mexican movies, also had a starring role in Around the World in 80 Days, making him an early cross-over star.[46] During the late 1940s to early 1950s, Hutchinson was still very much segregated, forcing Mexicans to sit in the balcony of the Fox Theatre.[47] The Mexican

[43] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[44] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[45] Amelia Maldonado, interview by author, 25 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[46] Jeremy Pascall, Fifty Years of the Movies (Los Angeles: Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1981), 151.
[47] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 26 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

movies at the church Community Hall provided a Mexican alternative to dealing with the segregation in downtown Hutchinson.

The *fiestas* that the church held were always major events in the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. The entire parish would involve itself; the ladies would work in the Community Hall preparing food to be sold, while the men organized other activities such as a horse shoes. The major fund raiser for the church, *fiestas* consisted of a variety of activities for people of all ages. The children had a variety of booths that included such activities as face-painting booths,[48] or fishing booths where you would be able to "catch a prize."[49] For the adults, there were such activities as bingo games in which prizes, rather than money, was the reward for winning. Dart games and horseshoes were usually reserved for the men. Of course, food was sold, with all proceeds from the *fiesta* going directly to the church.[50]

One can easily recognize why this particular period in church history can be referred to as a "Golden Age." The various activities that were open to the members of the parish (church organizations as well as entertainment activities) could result in a particular parish member participating in a church-sponsored activity several times a week. Not only were new traditions created, but, most

[48] Jodi Castro, interview by author, 18 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[49] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[50] Ibid.

important, the old traditions were maintained.

This "Golden Age," started during the tenure of Father Cleary who served from 1946 to 1954, would continue through the 1950s. Father Ignatius Jimenez came to the parish in July, 1955, and was every bit as visionary as was Father Cleary. A native of Mexico, Father Jimenez received his education in the United States and was previously serving as an assistant pastor at St. Patrick's Church in Chanute.[51] The Spanish-speaking and heavily-accented Father Jimenez would often make trips to Mexico, returning with various novelties such as Mexican movies to be shown at the community hall as well as *serapes* (blanket-like garment), scarves, *pinatas* (candy-filled caricatures opened by striking with a stick in a game-like setting), Mexican dishes, and lamps.[52] The items were given away as prizes during fiestas. By bringing these various prizes back, Father Jimenez also preserved the Mexican culture in Hutchinson, bridging the gap between the old country and the new. Overall, parishioners remember Father Jimenez as having been "good for the church;" in other words, he was a positive influence on the parish and community.[53] The pastorships of Fathers Cleary and Jimenez bookended an era in which the maintenance of Mexican tradition was foremost. The fondest-held memories of the Mexican community of

[51] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 2.
[52] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[53] Jodi Castro, interview by author, 18 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Hutchinson in relationship to the parish experience center around events that were not only fundamental to teachings and doctrines of the Catholic Church, but, were largely Mexican in culture and design.

Traditions surrounding special occasions, happy or sad, were unique to the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. Traditionally, after mass, people tended to remain to socialize with family and friends.[54] A Sunday custom among the Mexican people at this time was to go and visit family and friends at their homes.[55] With no other forms of entertainment such as television, visiting was the major form of entertainment on Sundays.[56]

Customs according to Mexican tradition often dictated the course of marriage rituals in the Mexican-American community. Once the prospective groom had proposed the idea of marriage, he and his father went to the church to consult with the parish priest. If the priest gave his consent, custom held that the two men would go to the house of the bride to officially ask her father for her hand in marriage. Only after the completion of this ritual would the marriage actually proceed. All invitations to the wedding were hand-delivered.[57]

Weddings in the 1920s and 1930s were relatively modest

[54] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[55] Josephine Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[56] Micki Calvillo, interview by author, 17 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[57] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

affairs. The wedding mass was always performed in the morning.[58] Only close relatives were in attendance, and dresses were usually homemade.[59] Occasionally, these morning weddings would have a breakfast afterwards consisting of Mexican sweet bread and Mexican chocolate to drink.[60] More elaborate weddings could also have receptions in a person's house, or, could even have a small dance at a relative or friend's home.[61]

Weddings from the 1940s through the 1960s also showed a flavor that reflected the O.L.G. weddings of the 1920s and 1930s, but the purchase of the Community Hall offered a more elaborate day of activity. The actual ceremony would take place in the morning around 9 A.M., with a full day of activity to follow. All families in the parish received invitations.[62] The couple's *padrinos,* or the married couple standing up for the couple getting married, paid for pillows for the kneelers, which were either brought from Mexico or which ladies in the parish had made. Mexican custom holds that by asking one of the *padrinos*, the spouse was included automatically as well.[63]

Because of the limited seating in the church, communicants arrived early for a wedding, for fear they might be relegated to

[58] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[59] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[60] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[61] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[62] Amelia Maldonado, interview by author, 25 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[63] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

standing outside and watching through the open doors of the foyer. The bride's family had purchased the dress in Mexico, for which the groom had paid. Mexican wedding dresses were a type of hoop dress.[64] Customarily, the parents of the bride and groom gave a blessing to the couple in Spanish, a sign of approval of the marriage and a conveyance of their good wishes for the couple's future. The day would continue with a dinner at the Community Hall that would usually consist of *mole* (a traditional chicken dish) and *sopas* (*arroz*, or rice, and *fideo*, a pasta-like dish). The day would conclude with an evening dance.[65]

Funerals, too, remained very much in the Mexican cultural tradition. Because financial resources were limited, often the family could not have the corpse professionally prepared.[66] Consequently, funerals took place very quickly, generally the next day and never more than two days after the actual death.[67] A *corona*, or wreath, on the door of a house signaled the death of a family member.[68] At the wake, friends and relatives brought food to the family's house where the wake was held as the body lay in state.[69] Those persons who came to the house stayed up all night with the body, as this was the last time this person would reside at his or

[64] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[67] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[68] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[69] Catherine Curiel, interview by author, 24 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

her own home.[70] People who came to the house sang hymns recalling the life of the deceased.[71] Owing to the generally small size of the house, men who came to pay their respects usually stood in the yard, drinking tequila and talking about the life of the deceased,[72] while women remained inside with the rest of the family. When Pedro Ramirez died in the middle of winter, men built a fire and stayed by the house all night.[73] On another occasion, Manuel Curiel, Sr., recalled seeing tears on the face of the dead man from his family standing over him in grief.[74] During the night, mourners said a rosary for the well-being of the soul in the next life.[75] After the funeral at the church, the mortician to the Mexican community, Mr. Crocker, who had a funeral home on Madison Street by Cow Creek,[76] would transport the body from the church to the cemetery.[77]

The Christmas season for the O.L.G. parish was a prime example of cultural assimilation in regards to the Catholic faith. The church would be decorated for the holiday season.[78] The *naciemiento* (nativity scene) would be in front of the altar.[79] Nine days before Christmas, the tradition of *posadas* would begin.

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[70] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[71] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[72] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[73] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[74] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[75] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[76] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[77] Manuel Curiel, Sr., interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[78] Santos Martinez, interview by author, 16 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[79] Anne Ramos, interview by author, 26 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Posadas was a recreation of part of the Christmas story during which the Holy Family sought shelter after their long journey. Participants constructed a platform which held statues of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus.[80] Those responsible for the platform would take it house to house, asking for refuge for the Blessed Virgin.[81] The owners of the house often invited these people in, saying a rosary, after which they laid the infant Jesus in the *naciemiento*. The host family would then treat everyone to tamales and *atole* (a drink).[82] Children often sang Christmas carols during this period before Christmas.[83] After attending mass at midnight, residents would visit from house to house to enjoy family and friends, fellowship and unity.[84]

Besides presiding over the parishioners in the early 1960s, Father Jimenez was also concerned that the church needed more land to create new buildings for classrooms. He took it upon himself to begin to collect and save funds for the purchase of land to construct this new building. Conducting food sales (not only during church socials or fiestas but in September during the Kansas State Fair where the church had a small stand, selling various Mexican dishes), parishioners contributed to Father Jimenez's building fund with

[80] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[81] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[82] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[83] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[84] Dorothy Graham, interview by author, 21 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

which they would eventually purchase several lots adjacent to the church property. Though he was reassigned to Wellington in 1963, the vision of Father Jimenez was well under way.[85]

After deliberation, the Diocese determined that the E and Adams Street location of the O.L.G. church was not suitable for proper expansion, and in December, 1963, purchased for $10,500 nine acres of land located in South Hutchinson. This land would serve as the new site of the new O.L.G. church and parish grounds.[86]

Many saw the change of location positively, one claiming "no future where we were at"[87] while another held that it was a "move for the best."[88] These parishioners put assimilation over cultural autonomy, recognizing that "customs would have to change."[89] They held that the creation of a beautiful new church along with a parish hall and later the construction of a softball complex was indeed a blessing from God. One member stated simply that the once humble parish has come "a long way."[90]

The closing of this church remains a controversial topic with the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. This move in many ways forced assimilation on the community. Moving the church's location from the predominantly Mexican area of Hutchinson to a

[85] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965), 2.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 26 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Eleanor Navarro, interview by author, 4 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[90] Carmen Vieyra, interview by author, 15 July 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

predominantly Anglo area was cause for a variety of social conflicts. The removal of the church from the Mexican side of town proved a transportation hardship for many community members. The difference in distance between the two locations was several miles, leaving some to ask "How can you get to church?"[91] While some younger families owned automobiles at this time, most of the older members of the parish now had no way to get to church.[92] Too far to walk, some of the Mexican-American residents considered going back to St. Teresa.[93] Others were left feeling an overwhelming sense of loss over the fact that the physical church was removed from the community.[94] "People had grown up in the little church," lamented one, and the move was very hard to accept.[95] The move also "hurt because it broke us up."[96] With the cornerstone of the Mexican community moved, in a sense, their religion was moved away also. When the location of O.L.G. shifted to South Hutchinson, more non-Mexican families joined the parish and as time progressed, the number of Anglo families continued to rise at O.L.G. Some Mexican parishioners believed that the process caused the dilution of Mexican traditions in the church. Consequently, these members hold that many of the Mexican youth in the community know very

[91] Eva Hernandez, interview by author, 7 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[92] Catherine Curiel, interview by author, 24 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[93] Micki Calvillo, interview by author, 17 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[94] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[95] Amelia Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[96] Micki Calvillo, interview by author, 17 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

little about the traditions anymore, mainly because the modern religious practices are altered from what they once were at O.L.G. Consequently, as one claimed, "Kids are missing out since the old church and traditions were 'lost'." The church's transformation appears to have caused other traditions to change as well. According to one resident, the *hamaica*, or outdoor gatherings at the old O.L.G. were "never trouble." Yet, at an outside dance at the new location, Anglo residents of the neighborhood felt the need to call police because the event was "too loud and too late."[97]

Many expressed the concern that the heart of Mexican Catholic tradition remained at the old church. Another major concern about the new church was its inner appearance. Unlike the old, "the new church did not have the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the altar."[98] Rather, a painting was located outside the actual church in an area of the foyer designed for meditation. Some took offense that the saint for which the church was named "had no image in the actual church."[99] Also, the new church had no statues of saints. Many objected due to the fact that many had appealed to saints with their problems asking for help.[100] They felt major sources of help had been left behind. Others, however, grudgingly accepted the fact that the population of the parish had outgrown the size of the

[97] Carolyn Flores, interview by author, 29 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[98] Matt Hernandez, interview by author, 7 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[99] Nellie Maldonado, interview by author, 22 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[100] Ibid.

church, but, it was "sad to leave."[101]

The location of the O.L.G. Church in the center of the Mexican-American community caused the overwhelming majority of Mexican-Americans living in southwest Hutchinson to attend church, to attend church-sponsored social events, and to belong to various organizations directed by the church. In other words, and agreed upon overwhelmingly, the church was the focal point of both the community's spiritual life and its social world, a world as yet based on Mexican traditions. A particular organization founded by O.L.G. in the late 1940s would become the center of Mexican-American summer entertainment as well as a method of breaking down racial barriers. The organization was the O.L.G. fastpitch softball team.

[101] Jodi Castro, interview by author, 18 June 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Chapter 3

MEXICAN-AMERICAN FASTPITCH SOFTBALL IN HUTCHINSON

The game of softball is an Anglo-American creation. The sport itself is a combination of competition, interaction (with other Mexican-Americans as well as Anglos), and entertainment. During the 1940s, fastpitch softball offered a vehicle by which the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson could both navigate through racial prejudice and break down racial barriers that the dominant white culture had put before them. The experiences of the 1940s Hutchinson Our Lady of Guadalupe softball team represent more than simply softball. They provide a window to the process of assimilation into mainstream American society.

Sport itself is inherently a process of assimilation (by playing teams of other races as well as traveling to other communities). The 1940s O.L.G. team was extremely significant in that it provided interaction with other ethnicities (Anglo-American and African-American) while at the same time remaining autonomous, a Mexican-American team. Assimilation took place not only by competition against other teams, but, merely by playing the sport itself. Moreover from within the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, the 1940s O.L.G. softball team offered a social function that provided a buttress against a prohibitive society. A church-

sponsored activity, the team provided a source of friendship and camaraderie for the players involved. Their fond memories of games and of each other are testament to this. For the entire Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, the team was a source of pride, the players holding their own on the field of competition against people of all colors. But, more important, the O.L.G. team provided a form of entertainment for Mexican-Americans of all ages to enjoy. Cheering for the O.L.G. team was an activity that residents could participate in without worrying about the outside world of prejudice and stereotypical thought.

The history of Mexican-American fastpitch softball in Hutchinson can be broken into three distinct eras: 1.) the genesis and early years of the O.L.G. team in the late 1940s; 2.) the mid- to late-1950s, when new players replaced the old in order to keep the O.L.G. tradition alive, and; 3.) the early 1970s and the creation of the Hutchinson *Los Lobos*. In this chapter, softball serves as the medium by which one can observe a broader story of assimilation and the process of social change in the community.

Mexican-Americans playing both baseball or softball in Hutchinson has its roots as early as the 1920s.[1] The various railroad companies in Hutchinson sponsored teams to provide a cheap form of entertainment for their Mexican laborers.[2] Several

[1] Joe Calvillo, interview by author, 11 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[2] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

interviewees had played baseball at one point in time or another for various baseball teams in the Hutchinson area as early as 1928.[3] When the United States entered World War II, many of these men went into service, some playing baseball with various military teams.[4] With Mexican men returning home from the war in the late 1940s, Father Hyacinth Cleary, pastor of O.L.G., decided to sponsor a fastpitch softball team for the parish men.[5] The creation of this team provided a church-sponsored activity that the entire Mexican-American community could attend. Father Cleary purchased uniforms and equipment for the team.[6] Assimilation would begin through competition with a white community that was not prepared to allow ideological change in its regard for race.

Post-war World War II America was a world of contradictions. On the one hand, Mexican-American men had served valiantly overseas in the United States military, earning more Congressional Medals of Honor than any other racial or ethnic group. On the other hand, instead or receiving heroes' welcomes, many returned to find blatant prejudice and racial segregation in an America that treated even Mexican-American war heroes as second class citizens. Medal of Honor winner Macario Garcia from Sugarland, Texas, was chased out of a restaurant by an Anglo-American with a baseball bat in

[3] Ricky Rodriguez, interview by author, 9 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[4] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[5] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[6] Ibid.

Richmond, California, for wanting to purchase a cup of coffee.[7] Many recreational facilities excluded Mexican-Americans. For instance, they could not use swimming pools in East Los Angeles and in other southland communities. Often Mexican-Americans and African-Americans could swim only on Wednesdays--the day the county drained the water. In places like San Fernando, California, Mexican-Americans sat in the balcony of movie theaters.[8] At the same time, the United States continued the 1942 *bracero* (work hands) program that brought Mexicans to America to work on commercial farms and the railroads.[9] Social leaders deemed it permissible to allow Mexicans to work the most menial of jobs, but held firmly that the races remain segregated.

Like most American towns during the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hutchinson, Kansas was a segregated community. Few Anglo restaurants served Mexican-Americans; signs in some eating establishments read "No dogs or Mexicans allowed."[10] Weeks Drug Store refused to serve Mexicans unless they took their food orders and ate somewhere else.[11] Theaters required Mexican-Americans either to sit in the balcony or in the rear rows of seats.[12] Based on

[7] Rodolfo Acuna, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 254.

[8] Ibid.

[9] James Stuart Olson, The Ethnic Dimension in America (New York: St. Martins Press, 1979), 384.

[10] Josephine Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[11] Paul Blea, interview by author, 13 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[12] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

census and city directory records, nothing had really changed since 1910 in the way of social integration. Mexican-Americans worked for Anglos, but they were still treated as second-class citizens. The racial ostracism suffered by Mexican-Americans in Hutchinson strengthened the close-knit structure of the Mexican-American community. For the most part, they could rely on no one but themselves.

The original O.L.G. Mexican-American fastpitch softball team consisted of twelve men: Atilano "Judge" Raya, Paul Blea, Angel Garcia, John Sallabedra, Louie Aleman, Ricky Rodriguez, Lawrence Ramos, Andy Anzo, Matt Hernandez, Reuben Ramirez, and Paul Ojeda, while Joe Calvillo managed the team.[13] Besides simply being a softball team, they acted as representatives of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. They were social ambassadors of Mexican-American society in a time when stereotypical prejudice was commonplace. The characteristics for which they became known actually began to chip away some of the second-class perceptions that Anglos held about Mexican-Americans.

The Hutchinson O.L.G. team played the game with great pride resulting from the fact they were an all-Mexican team. The zeal with which they played derived in large part from the fact that they were representing the Mexican people.[14] The O.L.G. team participated

[13]Ibid.

[14] Joe Calvillo, interview by author, 11 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

in the Commercial League, that would annually field six to eight teams. Besides Hutchinson O.L.G., the league also included the African-American team sponsored by Whitt's Sporting Goods. The competition in the league was exciting, with Hutchinson O.L.G. usually in contention for the league championship.[15] Besides Commercial League games, the Hutchinson O.L.G. played various Anglo teams from surrounding communities.[16] Competing against Anglo teams, the Hutchinson O.L.G. team rarely encountered prejudice on the field, although it occurred occasionally. While playing in Kingman, one white player shouted, "Look at that big Indian on first base" at Lawrence Ramos.[17] Only with difficulty did Anglo teams accept the fact they had been beaten by an all-Mexican team.[18] Overall, however, players recalled no verbal abuse of a more severe magnitude than this, which some credited to the Hutchinson O.L.G. team's clean style of play and overall sportsmanship. The effort and high demeanor demonstrated by the Hutchinson O.L.G. team led to a good reputation and continued in its competition with Anglo teams from the surrounding area. These games continued the process of assimilation as the team traveled to these towns. The lack of any overt problems which might have accompanied solid competition suggests that Anglo competitors gave grudging respect to the

[15] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[16] Matt Hernandez, interview by author, 16 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[17] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[18] Paul Blea, interview by author, 13 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Hutchinson O.L.G. team.

Traveling from town to town to play Anglo teams, the Hutchinson O.L.G. team encountered situations that were either humorous or provided a stark lesson in racial reality. Playing conditions generally amounted to little more than fields or cow pastures and lighting provided little visual assistance. While playing a game in Rago, "Judge" Raya, playing the outfield, literally became lost in the darkness. The light bank was relatively close and no outfield fence existed. As the ball was hit, it continued to sail into the darkness, with both it and Judge traveling into the night.[19] With Mexican-Americans being barred from most restaurants, the team members took their own food with them.[20] Based on their experiences in Hutchinson, team members knew that it was not a good idea to try to enter a restaurant, for fear of the controversy it might create.[21]

Mexican-American tournaments, on the other hand, were considered major social events. These weekends were times during which the *Raza* (term for Mexican-Americans) could socialize, see friends and family from out of town, and have a good time. Entire families would travel to Newton, Salina, or Wichita to participate in the festivities. The host community often sponsored a *hamaica*

[19] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[20] Ricky Rodriguez, interview by author, 9 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[21] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

(small party) during the playing of the tournament, thus creating a picnic-like atmosphere.[22] The aroma of fried chicken, fresh peppers, tacos, beans, chile con carne, and potatoes were common at these tournaments, and Frank Raya, Sr., would bring tubs of homemade beer to games.[23] The *hamaica* created a fun-filled atmosphere for people of all ages. The game of softball served as an occasion for social interaction, not just for players but for all Mexican-Americans in south-central Kansas.[24] Moreover, it was a means of communication between the various communities.

Competition in Mexican-American tournaments could lead to long-standing, good-natured rivalries between teams. The significance of rivalry stemming from competition is that the more competitive a tournament, the more people will be compelled to attend. The 1947 Newton tournament gave rise to the Newton-Hutchinson rivalry that exists even today. The Hutchinson O.L.G. team of 1947 had two pitchers; Lawrence Ramos was known as a power pitcher with a blazing fastball, while John Sallabedra, according to O.L.G. manager Joe Calvillo, "was a slowball pitcher."[25] Hutchinson, according to the members of that 1947 team, vividly remember reaching the championship game. While Ramos had been pitching well up to that point in the tournament, Calvillo decided to

[22] Ricky Rodriguez, interview by author, 9 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[23] Matt Hernandez, interview by author, 16 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[24] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[25] Joe Calvillo, interview by author, 11 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

pitch Sallabedra in the championship game. Calvillo decided that the opposing team would be ready for Ramos' speedy pitches, so Sallabedra's off-speed ability, hopefully, would carry them to victory. The gamble paid off; O.L.G. won the championship game.[26] Controversy lingers to this day. Though records of the tournament champions were kept as early as 1946 (the first Newton tournament), no written record exists of either the championship of the 1947 or the 1953 tournament. The 1947 championship, claimed by Hutchinson, is officially "lost" in the Newton record book.[27] Stories such as these have given the Newton Mexican-American Fastpitch Softball Tournament a legendary reputation for competition. It stands as the oldest Mexican-American fastpitch tournament in the United States, attracting teams from as far away as Texas and Iowa.[28] Without traditions such as that of 1947, the Newton tournament might not have evolved into the major gathering it has become.

Hutchinson O.L.G. softball served as an entertainment focal point for the Mexican-American community during the summer months. Attending softball games as a recreational pursuit was fundamental to Hutchinson Mexican-Americans because during this time period, many Mexican-American families did not own

[26] Ibid.
[27] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[28] Rick Martinez, interview by author, 1 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

automobiles or televisions, creating a potential vacuum for entertainment possibilities. Fastpitch softball filled the void by providing an event that the whole family could attend while cheering on friends and family members. The team played its home games in Carey Park at Redmond Diamond, within walking distance of the Mexican-American neighborhood in Hutchinson. The close proximity allowed for much of the Mexican-American community to attend. Those who owned cars lined them around the fences of the ball diamond, honking their horns whenever a player for their team would get a hit.[29] Tradition holds that the biggest crowds turned out for games against Whitt's Sporting Goods, the all-African-American team.[30] The games between Hutchinson O.L.G. and Whitt's were something of a novelty that people of all colors came out to the park to watch. Players and fans alike estimated that as many as five hundred people would come to watch the Mexican-Americans and the African-Americans play, largely owing to the obvious abilities both teams possessed. More verbal exchanges took place between these two teams than with white teams, all in the name of gamesmanship.[31] All agree this turned into a good rivalry because of the high quality of the competition. Overall, the Hutchinson O.L.G. team provided the Mexican-American community with the

[29] Josephine Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[30] Paul Blea, interview by author, 13 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[31] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

opportunity to enjoy not only a game but a family-oriented, outdoor event that was fun to watch. By taking on any and all competition and by representing the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson in a very positive way, the members of the Hutchinson O.L.G. team soon became heroes and role models for Mexican-American boys who hoped one day to play for this team.[32] Many children recognized that these were men from their own community. These types of heroes were very special to the Mexican-American during this time period because they were not something or someone who lived far enough away to be deemed nearly mythical. Rather, these men lived down the street or next door.

The 1950s in America was a time for all people of color to demand opportunity and civil rights, promised by the Declaration of Independence but withheld by social practice and legal impediment. Mexican-Americans were beginning to enter politics in the southwestern and western United States. In San Antonio, Texas, Henry B. Gonzalez ran unsuccessfully for State Representative in 1950, a year later he won a seat on the San Antonio City Council. Gonzalez would eventually win a seat in the United States Congress in 1961.[33] In Los Angeles, Edward R. Roybal was elected to the Los Angeles City Council in 1949. Through the early 1950s, Roybal

[32] Manuel Curiel, Jr., interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[33] Rodolfo Acuna, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 283-4.

fought housing discrimination, police brutality and school segregation.[34]

For African-Americans, Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 became the national focal point when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery commuter bus. The subsequent conflict led to an African-American boycott of the bus system in Montgomery and gave the opportunity for leadership to a young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr.[35] The Civil Rights movement had begun.

In Hutchinson, the status quo of the 1940s remained in place. White residents attempted to limit Mexican-Americans to second class citizens. Full participation in mainstream Hutchinson would not occur until the Civil Rights Act of 1968.[36]

The late 1950s ushered in a transition period from which new players began to join the Hutchinson O.L.G. team. Some original team members began to retire from playing fastpitch softball and younger men began to take their place, not only as players but as representatives of the Mexican-American community. Continuance of the team was particularly important now, given the sour mood of the nation toward minorities. To let the Hutchinson O.L.G. team die at this stage would have destroyed all for which the original team had worked insofar as the breaking down of racial stereotypes. Men

[34] Acuna, 286.

[35] James Stuart Olson, The Ethnic Dimension in America (New York: St. Martins Press, 1979), 389.

[36] Ibid.

like Santos Vieyra, Reuben Murillo, Manuel Curiel, Jr., Trunkalino "Trunkie" Vieyra, Tony Augusto, Frank Blea, and Frank Raya, Jr. stepped in and continued to uphold the Hutchinson O.L.G. tradition.[37]

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, perceptions on race held by Hutchinson whites - and Mexican-Americans - began to change. Each of the remaining team members is immensely proud of the fact that the O.L.G. team was an "all-Mexican team."[38] Yet, during this transition period, an African-American, Jimmy Johnson, played with the Hutchinson O.L.G. team in the 1960s.[39] This is an example of assimilation not only by the playing of the game, but the association of the races. All interviewed recount that Johnson was a very good player and consider him a friend today.[40] Externally, Anglo opponents had progressed from sulking over their defeats by the Hutchinson O.L.G. team to giving them the moniker of the "Brown Bombers" - an obvious reference not only to their hitting ability but also to the color of their skin. While the nickname may appear derisive to some, the members of the Hutchinson O.L.G. team of this time period took great pride in it as a vocal respect for their abilities as well as recognition of the Mexican-American ethnicity.[41] While the team kept no official records in the 1940s and 1950s,

[37] Manuel Curiel, Jr., interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[38] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 6 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[39] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[40] Lawrence Ramos, interview by author, 14 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[41] Reuben Murillo, interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

between 1960 and 1964, in seventy-one games, these Brown Bombers hit a total of sixty-six home runs. Records kept by Manuel Curiel, Jr. show that from 1960 to 1964, the team posted a record of 52-19 with two Commercial League Championships.[42]

These new players who stepped forward went through a rite of passage. "Trunkie" Vieyra could recall playing with and learning a lot from Ricky Rodriguez.[43] Original team members like Lawrence Ramos and "Judge" Raya continued to play alongside the youngsters into the 1960s.[44] Others like John Sallabedra went on to manage the O.L.G. team.[45] This ceremonial changing of the guard was not just due to age. Rather, it was a graduation of young men who respected the old guard and wished to follow in their footsteps, obvious recognition of the status the original O.L.G. team had achieved and desire by other, younger men to keep the team together.

By the middle 1960s fastpitch softball in Hutchinson began a gradual demise. The Commercial League disbanded in large part due to the introduction of slowpitch softball, a game that is much slower, and arguably less exciting, but, which more people could play.[46] For the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson, the vacuum left by the breakup of the Commercial League was an obvious

[42] Manuel Curiel, Jr., interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[43] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[44] Manuel Curiel, Jr., interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

blow to summertime entertainment. Moreover, a vehicle to assimilation had suddenly ground to a halt. While this scenario may appear to be the death knell for Mexican-American fastpitch, it actually begins second generation participation by sons and nephews of previous players as well as new additions. It also represents the final stage that Mexican-American fastpitch softball has to offer in the process of assimilation and social change.

The civil rights which Mexican-Americans achieved during the mid-1950s and 1960s depended largely upon the work of African-Americans. In 1955, Martin Luther King, Jr. organized the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott as well as advocated the policy of non-violent civil disobedience and direct political action through marches, boycotts, and litigation. Joined by politically conscious Mexican-Americans, Native-Americans, and Asian-Americans, the movement resulted in the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.[47]

Despite this federal legislation, Mexican-Americans faced a variety of problems, namely that they still needed to fight to become recognized as a group of people in America who were being discriminated against.[48] In Hutchinson, Mexican-Americans could not walk into a restaurant with full knowledge that they would be

[47] James Stuart Olson, The Ethnic Dimension in America (New York: St. Martins Press, 1979), 361.

[48] Rodolfo Acuna, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 289-90.

served until 1968.[49] While Mexican-Americans did benefit from the Civil Rights protests of the 1950s and 1960s, they received such parlance only at a decelerated speed.

Nevertheless, from the softball perspective, this time period began to open such modes of assimilation as travel by chartered bus, the use of restaurants and hotels and motels while on the road, and other forms of recreation like use of shopping malls and the frequenting of various night clubs. Even though the Hutchinson O.L.G. team had, for all intents and purposes, broken up, the third and final phase of Mexican-American fastpitch was about to emerge during which Mexican-Americans would exercise these new social freedoms for the first time. The barriers broken down by the original Hutchinson O.L.G. team in the 1940s would be enjoyed as well as furthered by a group of young men in the early 1970s.

By 1972, the third and final stage of Mexican-American fastpitch in Hutchinson had begun. By now, many of the former Hutchinson O.L.G. players had sons or relatives old enough to play the game. Steve Anzo is largely credited with organizing the players for what was to be a completely new team.[50] With the help of Richard Aleman, Anzo was able to put together a team of ten players.[51] Anzo also contacted Ed Martinez and Joe Palacioz to coach the team.

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[49] John Sallabedra, interview by author, 25 May 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[50] Stan Ramos, interview by author, 16 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[51] Rick Martinez, interview by author, 1 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Martinez would end up coaching this team for twenty-two years.[52] The team initially played its first games in jeans and t-shirts because it was not a church-sponsored team.[53] At the time, this proved a major break from past tradition, though eventually the team would receive financial support from O.L.G.

While in Kansas City for a Mexican-American tournament, the young members of this team decided to eat at a small restaurant, which happened to serve an item called "wolf burgers."[54] While there, several female patrons commented that the team members, young and single, acted "like a bunch of wolves."[55] Thus the nickname *Los Lobos,* or "The Wolves," was decided upon by team members.

As minority Civil Rights expanded, so did opportunities for travel and entertainment not just outside of Hutchinson but outside of Kansas as well. While the *Los Lobos* team continued to carry on participation in the tradition of the Hutchinson O.L.G. team by playing in Newton, Wichita, and Salina, new social freedoms allowed them to venture to such places as Kansas City, Emporia, and Chanute. The *Los Lobos* team has played in Mexican-American tournaments as far away as Des Moines, Iowa and San Antonio, Texas.[56] The team

[52] Ed Martinez, Sr., interview by author, 18 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[53] Rick Martinez, interview by author, 1 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Stan Ramos, interview by author, 16 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[56] Vince Ramos, interview by author, 15 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

plays annually in the *Los Santos* tournament in Omaha, Nebraska, over the Labor Day weekend.[57]

The annual Labor Day weekend trip to Omaha is the classic example of assimilation by Mexican-Americans into mainstream American society. The team chartered a bus from an Anglo-American company, taking seat reservations from members of the Mexican-American community who wish to go also, and using the holiday as a contemporary Mexican-American vacation.[58] Hotel reservations were made and the caravan was set. Besides watching the softball games, Omaha provided opportunities for shopping and night life. The bus, during the course of the weekend, stopped on the Mexican-American side of Omaha to visit various Mexican-American stores and business establishments in order to purchase food or other Mexican items.[59] Chartered, air-conditioned buses, hotel reservations, and Midwestern travel were considered a fantasy in the 1940s for a Mexican-American team. After the 1970s, the chartered bus trip to Omaha became an annual rite of summer for the *Los Lobos*.

This new social order did not come without problems, however. Players from the early to mid-1970s *Los Lobos* teams remembered times when the team would be told by a hotel manger there were no

[57] Ed Vieyra, interview by author, 6 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[58] Alex Vieyra, interview by author, 6 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[59] Ed Martinez, Sr., interview by author, 18 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

rooms available, only to find out a short time later that an Anglo couple had been given a room at the same hotel.[60] In Kansas City, the team received rooms in which the television did not work and the rooms were not cleaned up from the previous night's lodgers. The television or the rooms were never tended to, but, other Anglo rooms were cleaned.[61] When the team played in open tournaments, i.e., tournaments not consisting of Mexican-American teams exclusively, (e.g., A.S.A. state softball tournaments), epithets such as "spic" and "greaser" were occasionally heard from the Anglo crowds.[62] The team learned the price for moving into the mainstream.

The *Los Lobos* team continued to provide the same type of socialization activity that the Hutchinson O.L.G. team had offered in 1946. All interviewed regarded the team as an extension of family;[63] some considered teammates as brothers, as people with whom they grew up.[64] Others looked upon the years together as memories that they will never forget with the hope "there will be a team forever."[65] The closeness of all involved was a main reason why the team performed as well as it did. In 1976, the *Los Lobos* team won the championship of the Newton Mexican-American tournament.

[60] Rick Martinez, interview by author, 1 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[61] Vince Ramos, interview by author, 15 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Rick Martinez, interview by author, 1 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[64] Ed Vieyra, interview by author, 6 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[65] Ed Martinez, Sr., interview by author, 18 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

During the 1984 and 1985 seasons, the team won a variety of Mexican-American championships ranging from winning their own tournament in Hutchinson to success in Wichita, Emporia, and a host of solid finishes at the Newton tournament throughout the 1980s.

Assimilation, bred through the fight against prejudice as well as the pursuit of civil rights in the 1960s, has led Mexican-American fastpitch softball to a crossroads in its history. While still significant in its place in Mexican-American tradition, fastpitch softball is neither a social cornerstone nor a fundamental mode of entertainment to the Mexican-American community.

Yet, many of the rights and privileges which Mexican-Americans enjoy today are the direct result of the breaking down of racial stereotypes by the Hutchinson O.L.G. teams of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. The Hutchinson *Los Lobos* continued this tradition by using fastpitch softball even more so as a vehicle for change through travel and also being some of the first Mexican-Americans to enjoy some of the new freedoms won in the 1960s Civil Rights movement. However, assimilation has slowed the progress of Mexican-American fastpitch, not only in Hutchinson, but, in Kansas as well. While fastpitch softball was used as a means to assimilation, the end result has led to assimilation helping to break down what was once a bedrock cornerstone of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson.

Chapter 4

LAS PARACAIDISTAS DE HUTCHINSON

Mexican-Americans in the service in the United States Armed Forces have boasted a long and distinguished history of excellence. A number of residents of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson have served in the American military in such conflicts as World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. While many were obviously drafted into the military, some who joined the United States Army decided not only to fulfill their obligations, but, to volunteer for specialized units; namely, the various Airborne Units, in which they became *Las Paracaidistas*, or paratroopers. Twenty-five Mexican-American men from the southwestern side of Hutchinson have served in Airborne units from the early 1950s into the 1970s.[1]

While serving in the Anglo-dominated army, the experiences and feelings of these men served as means to the furtherance of the process of assimilation of the Mexican-American into mainstream American society. Mexican-American Airborne troopers used military service as means to demonstrate patriotism to the United States, proving themselves to the Anglo society. While minorities in America fought for civil rights as civilians, these Airborne troopers attempted to help the overall cause by proving their loyalty through volunteering for Airborne duty, a show of patriotism and loyalty to

[1] Leonard Maldonado, interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

the country. Many Mexican-American Airborne troopers from Hutchinson used this experience as a proving ground for themselves. For them, the challenge allowed them to prove their manhood, as well as offering the opportunity to show to other Mexican-Americans that it was possible to aspire to more than just the ordinary. The extraordinary was very much possible for the Mexican in America. Thus, Airborne troopers also served as role models for Mexican-American youth in Hutchinson, as evidenced by the three-decade tradition of Hutchinson's Mexican-American men volunteering for Airborne service.

The experience also demonstrates assimilation by the special brand of camaraderie which the men exhibited. Whether in Hutchinson or throughout the world, Hutchinson Airborne troopers maintained a very tight bond. They exuded a special pride not only from their having been from the same town, but also as a result of their Mexican-American heritage. *Las Paracaidistas* reunions in Hutchinson are testament to this. Assimilation in Hutchinson has been aided in part due to the accomplishments of *Las Paracaidistas.* Due to their national and international experiences, *Las Paracaidistas* have helped the modern Mexican-Americans of Hutchinson become, in fact, American-Mexicans.

The training of the United States Army Parachutists commenced in earnest in 1940 with the organization of the

Parachute Test Platoon. This Platoon was eventually designated as the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion, followed by the 502nd, 503rd, and 504th. In August of 1942, the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division were organized, and by 1943, the 11th, 13th, and 17th Airborne Divisions received activation.[2] The Army created Airborne Divisions to carry out special missions such as sabotage, guerrilla actions, and rescue operations. Airborne troops could also be used to cut off a retreating enemy, to seize inaccessible areas, or to reinforce hard pressed units. As development of these units continued, the Army recognized that the Airborne would be the military force of the future.[3]

The bonding of the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson with the United States Army Airborne Divisions began with Rojelio "Jupie" Vieyra. Vieyra joined the Army in 1949, beginning his career with the 79th Armored Division. Vieyra saw action in Korea, participating in General Douglas MacArthur's landing at Inchon, the famous amphibious invasion, masterminded by MacArthur, which split Korea in half bypassing several divisions of North Korean forces.[4] Wounded at the Pousan Perimeter, Vieyra was shipped back to the United States in 1951, stationed at Fort Riley. Eventually

[2] Geoffrey T. Barker, A Concise History of the US Army Airborne Infantry with Lineage and Insignia: Volume 3 (Brandon, Florida: Anglo-American Publishing Company, 1989), 1.

[3] Col. Francis X. Bradley and Lt. Col. H. Glen Wood, Paratrooper (Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Company, 1967), 77-79.

[4] Harry G. Summers, Jr., Korean War Almanac (New York: Harry G. Summers, Jr., 1990), 141-142.

Vieyra was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky where he learned about the opportunity to join the Airborne and did so in 1951. Vieyra received Airborne training at Fort Benning, Georgia. After successfully completing the training, he was then assigned to the 11th Airborne Division, with which he served until his retirement from the service in 1952.[5] Vieyra's military career was distinguished in all ways, yet his Airborne experience created the most interest within the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. To those who would eventually decide to "Go Airborne" (volunteer for Airborne service) the military would suddenly present a host of potential new challenges and experiences for Mexican-American men of Hutchinson.

The Airborne experience of Mexican-American men from Hutchinson in the 1950s derived largely from Vieyra discussing the service with other prospective men. By the time Vieyra arrived back in Hutchinson after his military service, several Mexican-American men in Hutchinson had heard about his Airborne exploits. Joe Sanchez asked Vieyra about the training involved in becoming an Airborne trooper.[6] Coming away impressed, Sanchez joined the Airborne in the early 1950s. Albert Raya also consulted with Vieyra as to whether or not to try the Airborne. Vieyra gave Raya the advice to "try it" but also said, "it's up to you;" in other words, only

[5] Rojelio Vieyra, interview by author, 16 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[6] Ibid.

an individual could decide his success or failure.[7] Others who would follow suit included Vieyra's brother Trunkalino "Trunkie" Vieyra, their cousin Santos Vieyra, and the Curiel brothers, Pete and Manuel, Jr.

Not all followed directly in the footsteps of Jupie Vieyra. Pete Curiel, as a child, remembered a man by the name of Johnny Agosto, a family friend and Airborne trooper, urging him and his brother Manuel, Jr., to "Go Airborne."[8] Trunkie Vieyra, while serving his first, non-Airborne stint in the Army remembered an incident that occurred in Japan in 1951. While waiting in line at a movie theater, Vieyra noticed two Airborne troopers march to the front of the ticket line, purchase tickets, and go right into the theater. Out of respect (and possibly intimidation), no one in the line Vieyra was standing in decided to intercede or protest. This caught Vieyra's attention, and when he reenlisted in January of 1955, he decided to volunteer for the Airborne.[9] Jupie Vieyra had blazed a trail for others to follow and from this 1950s group emerged the Hutchinson *Las Paracaidistas.*

The 1960s ushered in the Vietnam conflict, and the government continued to draft men of all races and ethnicities into military service, a practice which had begun in 1941 with World War II.

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[7] Albert Raya, interview by author, 25 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[8] Pete Curiel, interview by author, 20 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[9] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Mexican-American men from Hutchinson who volunteered for the Airborne included Joe Raya, the brother of Albert, Margarito "Maggie" Mendoza, William Pina, Dean Delgado, Leonard Maldonado, and Joe Soto. These men would carry on in the footsteps of those Mexican-American paratroopers from Hutchinson who came before them.

The Airborne experience assisted the process of assimilation. These young men from Hutchinson looked upon the Airborne in a variety of ways. Airborne service was strictly on a voluntary basis, and, just because a man volunteered did not mean he would become a paratrooper.[10] The training process to become a paratrooper weeded out many who could not deal with the physical and psychological demands the *cadres* (drill instructors) inflicted on paratrooper candidates. Jump school was a three-week training period. The first week taught men how to parachute properly and instructed them on the basics of how to handle themselves while in the plane. The second week centered around physical training. Physical excellence was mandatory to help lessen the chance of potential injury upon landing by a paratrooper. A trooper might have had to jump with up to one-hundred pounds of equipment strapped to his body, increasing substantially the impact of a landing. After landing, a trooper had to be able to spring to his platoon and begin to

[10] Rojelio Vieyra, interview by author, 16 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

set up equipment. The final week instructed the recruits on how to make the proper fall, which included making the required five jumps. Two jumps were required in full combat regalia, while one other was performed at night.[11] To many of these men, this proved a challenge to be conquered from within; it was a test of manhood, a matter of "having something to prove."[12]

The challenge of jumping out of an airplane brought with it an infinite amount of peril. Obvious dangers included your chute not opening or getting a "Mae West," which was a semi-inversion of the chute caused by twists in the suspension lines.[13] The time a trooper candidate spent in the airplane waiting to jump probably was the worst part of the entire process. "Sitting in a plane waiting to get to your drop zone gives a man a lot of time to think"[14] about what can go wrong. As Pete Curiel stated, "Fear didn't really enter my mind because I was too busy thinking about how bad I wanted to get it (the jump) over with."[15] This challenge "having the guts to jump out of an airplane,"[16] as well as the test of jump school, proved frightening at times for these men. The fear of failure pushed these men on to successful completion of Airborne training. By the 1960s, young recruits would have the support of the older, retired Airborne

[11] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[12] Santos Vieyra, interview by author, 15 July 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[13] Col. Francis X. Bradley and Lt. Col. H. Glen Wood, Paratrooper (Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Company, 1967), 89.

[14] Albert Raya, interview by author, 25 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[15] Pete Curiel, interview by author, 20 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[16] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

veterans from Hutchinson.[17] For *Las Paracaidistas* of the 1960s, this provided extra motivation. When these men returned to Hutchinson with their Airborne wings, the experience provided a sense of satisfaction that they had passed this test of manhood. Within the community, former Airborne troopers voiced their approval and other young Mexican-American men looked to them with hero-like admiration.[18] The completion of Airborne training proved a symbol of obvious stature within the community.

During the Jump School process another form of assimilation took place. At Fort Benning, many of the *cadres* were Mexican-American themselves, and all Mexican-American paratrooper candidates were especially prime targets for verbal and physical conditioning. Pete Curiel remembered a Mexican-American *cadre* that was dubbed *El Toro* (the bull). "He was about five feet five inches tall", recalled Curiel, "and was tough as nails. Some of the older *cadres*, who had been drinking the night before, carried the smell of liquor on their breath when they were yelling in your face."[19] Albert Raya also had a Mexican-American *cadre*, and he also noticed how they were tougher on Mexican-American trooper candidates. Raya looked at this behavior as positive because the harsh treatment forced the prospective trooper to prove how much

[17] Leonard Maldonado, interview by author, 14 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[18] Pete Curiel, interview by author, 20 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[19] Ibid.

he actually wanted to make it into the Airborne ranks. At the same time, it toughened the recruits even more. Instead of resentment, Raya felt a sense of pride upon completion of jump school, knowing that a Mexican-American had actually made him a better trooper and a better man by forcing him to be better than the rest.[20] Within the system, Mexican-Americans had helped Mexican-Americans. Success in the Airborne came with a price, but when the pain and suffering was over, the result was another Mexican-American victory, Mexican-American men proving themselves.

The type of camaraderie demonstrated by the Mexican-American Airborne troopers of Hutchinson illustrates not only the pride that exists in their accomplishments, but, also the closeness that existed between the men when they were stationed in different parts of the country or in different parts of the world. While stationed together at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Trunkie Vieyra and Pete Curiel lived next door to each other. Curiel credited Vieyra with teaching him how to jump correctly with a forty-two pound, thirty caliber A1-19 machine gun. When Joe Raya was sent to Vietnam, part of the group that went with him was Joe Sanchez. One of the soldiers that met Raya and Sanchez in Vietnam was Eddie Pina, a Green Beret, also from Hutchinson. When Raya returned from Vietnam, he was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and became

[20] Albert Raya, interview by author, 25 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

reacquainted with Leonard Maldonado and Joe Soto. These relationships were more than just passing pleasantries or coincidental meetings. It was Airborne compatriots renewing a bond that was special and unique unto themselves. They were not only Airborne troopers, they were Mexican-American Airborne troopers from Hutchinson, Kansas. Today in Hutchinson, members plan annual reunions which are open to the public and allow people of all races and ethnicities to view what being an Airborne trooper was truly about. Grounded demonstrations are given to show how troopers lined up in the aircraft and they offer simulations to show proper jump techniques. *Las Paracaidistas* has also held fund raising dinners in order to raise money to pay for a church bell that was given to Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in honor of all veterans. On two occasions, Congressional Medal of Honor Winner Roy Benavidez has visited Hutchinson to join in the celebration of *Las Paracaidistas.*[21]

Las Paracaidistas of Hutchinson served as role models for the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson. The appearance of the Airborne trooper, with bloused boots and Airborne wings, was an impressive sight. Pete Curiel remembered that when he used to come home on leave, Mexican-American boys would ask to hear his paratrooper stories and Curiel felt many who listened were envious

[21] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

of his accomplishments.[22] The respect that future troopers gave to Hutchinson Mexican-American men home on leave, in full Airborne uniform, further supports this status as role model. Joe Raya admitted to being very impressed with the uniform worn by Margarito Mendoza.[23] When William Pina saw his cousin Eddie Pina's uniform, his first thought was that "If I'm going into the military, I'm going Airborne."[24] Dean Delgado was impressed with his friend Nick Mendoza of the 82nd Airborne, thus making up Delgado's mind to go Airborne.[25] This is not to suggest that the uniform was the only reason these men chose the Airborne. Respect for the United States was given vicariously through the uniform.

The impact of *Las Paracaidistas* as role models to the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson is two-fold. First, their exploits proved that in the new national mood of the 1960s, Mexican-Americans could realistically aspire to a level of the person's choosing. This group of men showed that sacrifice and determination is an outstanding method to achieving goals. Secondly, the Mexican-American paratroopers of Hutchinson influenced young Mexican-American men by the numbers that followed in their footsteps. The tradition of Hutchinson Mexican-Americans joining the Airborne lasted into the 1970s and is

[22] Pete Curiel, interview by author, 20 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[23] Joe Raya, interview by author, 24 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[24] William Pina, interview by author, 23 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[25] Dean Delgado, interview by author, 15 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

testament to the example these men provided. From this perspective, the contention that the use of the Airborne experience provided a proving ground, camaraderie, and an example for generations, proves well founded.

Conversely, Mexican-Americans viewed military service as a means to proving loyalty and patriotism to the United States as well as showing to Anglo-Americans that Mexican-Americans were worthy of more than second-class citizen status. As the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s moved forward, *Las Paracaidistas* attempted to further the cause of Hutchinson's Mexican-Americans with their Airborne military service.

Mexican-American paratroopers served at the start of the Airborne Divisions themselves. The paratroopers appealed to Mexican-American soldiers at the outset of American involvement in World War II. Mexican-Americans comprised as much as one-third of graduating trooper classes at this time. When asked why the Airborne appealed so much to the Mexican-American, one man replied, "When they told us at the induction centers that the paratroopers was the toughest of all to get in and stay in--we decided that was for us."[26] Mexican-American and Spanish-American paratroopers took part in all the major Airborne attacks of the European theater in World War II.

[26] Beatrice Griffith, American Me (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 259.

Despite heroism and bravery in all branches of military service, Mexican-Americans were forced to deal with the prejudice and racism of the time. Many Mexican-Americans in the southwestern United States were not allowed to enlist in the Armed Forces, the government having labeled them "aliens" even though they had lived in America virtually their entire lives. Eventually, these men were drafted into the Army. Those who could enlist often chose the most dangerous branches of the service.[27] Sergeant Jose Lopez of Brownsville, Texas, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner, was refused service and thrown out of a small town Texas restaurant that made a policy of not service "Mexicans."[28] Twelve Hispanics (people of partial Spanish ancestry) received the Congressional Medal of Honor during World War II,[29] yet Mexican-Americans came home to this treatment. In Korea, nine Hispanic Americans earned the Medal of Honor.[30] In Vietnam, studies showed the Mexican-American had a higher death rate than all other races or ethnicities of servicemen. Between January, 1961, and February, 1967, 19.4% of all United States Army ground troop casualties had Spanish surnames and were presumably of Mexican parentage.[31] In regards to the Airborne in Vietnam, two of the top eight major

[27] Ibid., 258.

[28] Ibid., 266.

[29] Dr. Robert J. Reyes, "The Medal of Honor: A History," La Luz Magazine, February 1981, 19.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Wayne Moquin, A Documentary History of the Mexican-Americans (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 372.

combat units with the highest casualty rates were the 101st Airborne (ranked fourth) and the 173rd Airborne Brigade (ranked eighth).[32] Thirteen Hispanic Americans were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for service in Vietnam, ten posthumously.[33] Despite this meritorious record of service, prejudice and discrimination awaited the Mexican-American when he returned from war.

Several of Hutchinson's *Las Paracaidistas* specifically mentioned joining the Airborne in the hopes of fighting the Anglos stereotypical perceptions. Santos Vieyra looked upon becoming a paratrooper "as a way to fight prejudice by showing his patriotism as a Mexican-American," to show the Anglo that he was Mexican, yes, but, that he was also an American. Vieyra made another important contention when he stated, "Young Hispanics today have nothing to prove, they're more Anglicized."[34] Joe Raya reflected upon his Airborne training period by saying that, "Because he was Mexican, some (Anglos) may have looked down on him. By making it through Airborne training, it proved that a Mexican man could get the job done."[35] By using the Airborne as a vehicle to attempt to break down prejudicial perceptions of the Anglo, the two Mexican-

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[32] "Major U.S. Combat Unit Casualties in Vietnam," VFW Magazine, March 1993, 34.

[33] Dr. Robert J. Reyes, "The Medal of Honor: A History," La Luz Magazine, February 1981, 19.

[34] Santos Vieyra, interview by author, 15 July 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

[35] Joe Raya, interview by author, 24 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

American paratroopers provided examples of assimilation through their feelings on why their Airborne experience was important. Vieyra's comment in regards to the Anglicizing of the Mexican-American youth of Hutchinson is an obvious viewpoint that most Mexican-Americans of Hutchinson, *Las Paracaidistas* or not, have become American-Mexicans, or Americans of Mexican ancestry as opposed to the traditional Mexican-American, still rooted in an assimilated version of Mexican tradition and culture.

Military service allowed *Las Paracaidistas* to demonstrate patriotism in innumerable ways. Belonging to an Airborne unit required one to be on constant standby. If any situations were to arise requiring military intervention, an Airborne unit generally responded first, in combat readiness. Pete Curiel remembered that while serving in the 101st Airborne Division, the Army required him to write a Last Will and Testament in the case of his death.[36] Service in the Airborne was not as glamorous as the fancy uniform with wings connoted. The experience of paratroopers was very much grounded in reality. Trunkie Vieyra was recognized as a "career man", a man who made his life the living of the military experience. Vieyra served two stints in the army, the first lasting from September of 1950 to September of 1953, eventually serving in Korea. In January of 1955, Vieyra reenlisted in the Army and

[36] Pete Curiel, interview by author, 20 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

decided to volunteer for Airborne duty from 1955 to 1972. Vieyra served with the 508th Paratrooper Infantry Regiment, the 101st Airborne Division and the 82nd Airborne Division. Except for a ten month period beginning in December of 1968 when he was assigned to Fort Knox as a "straight leg" (non-Airborne soldier), Vieyra served in the Airborne the entire time. Vieyra served in the Vietnam conflict, beginning his tour of duty in 1967. Vieyra remembered Vietnam as a very confusing time. Combat lines were unclearly drawn and "you didn't know who you were fighting."[37]

Trunkie Vieyra's military career proves significant because he is the epitome of *Las Paracaidistas* in terms of assimilation. For the better part of three decades, Vieyra represented the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson all over the United States and around the world, proving to Anglos his desire to represent and to serve the United States of America. Moreover, with regard to assimilation, while Vieyra took great pride in being a Mexican-American paratrooper, his service, his travel, and his experiences occurred in the United States military, a mode used to advance assimilation of Mexican-Americans into American society.

Many men besides Vieyra served in Vietnam. Some 9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the Vietnam era (August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975). Of those, 2,594,000

[37] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

personnel served within the borders of South Vietnam between January 1, 1965, and March 28, 1973, with a peak troop strength of 543,482 recorded April 30, 1969. Of the nearly three million who served in South Vietnam, 58,183 were killed. Sixty-one percent of the men killed were twenty-one years old or younger.[38] Several of Hutchinson's *Las Paracaidistas* were among those who served in Vietnam. Joe Raya saw action with the 82nd Airborne at Cam Ranh Bay in South Vietnam in 1965.[39] William Pina served as a radio operator with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Central Highlands area of Vietnam north of the city of An Khe in 1968.[40] Most compelling of all was the experience of Dean Delgado who served in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969 with the 101st Airborne. Delgado saw action during the Tet Offensive, just outside of Chu Lai and in the A Shau Valley south of Khe Sahn.[41] These Mexican-American Airborne troopers of Hutchinson, again, by serving in Vietnam, unwittingly furthered the cause of the Mexican-American not only in Hutchinson, but in America in general. Not only did they serve, but they joined the Airborne in the spirit of *Las Paracaidistas* from Hutchinson that had come before them. Volunteering for the Airborne guaranteed they would see action in Vietnam. These men not only performed their service to the United States, they volunteered for even more

[38] "Vietnam Warriors: A Statistical Profile," VFW Magazine, March 1993, 20.
[39] Joe Raya, interview by author, 24 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[40] William Pina, interview by author, 23 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.
[41] Dean Delgado, interview by author, 15 July 1993, Hutchinson, Kansas.

dangerous duty as part of their duty in Vietnam.

Reflection upon the accomplishments of *Las Paracaidistas* as well as their place within the overall community of Hutchinson shows that military service was very much an Americanizing experience. As mentioned previously, *Las Paracaidistas* has held reunions annually for many years. Today, however, troopers of all races and ethnicities are welcome to participate. The St. Michael's bell fund held in 1989 was not exclusively a Mexican-American Airborne function. Donations were accepted from Anglo troopers from all over the nation.[42] Many functions that *Las Paracaidistas* participate in today are Anglo in origin. The group has performed as a firing squad for military funerals, as flag bearers, as honor guards for flag raisings on Veterans Day and as participants in the annual Hutchinson Prairie Fest Parade. Assimilation both within the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson and in regards to the Mexican-American dealing with the Anglo has come far, from Anglos refusing service to Mexican-Americans in restaurants, to Mexican-Americans participating fully within the city of Hutchinson. In this regard, Mexican-Americans of Hutchinson have made great strides in assimilating to Anglo-American culture. They have become American-Mexicans.

[42] Trunkalino Vieyra, interview by author, 1 June 1991, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Conclusion

In 1996, the Mexican-American of Hutchinson, Kansas has achieved relatively solid assimilation through the adoption of Anglo institutions. By incorporating the Catholic Church, fastpitch softball, and military service, the Mexican-American has constructed a solid foundation within the community that has maintained itself for nearly ninety years. The aforementioned institutions were used as tools of assimilation. All three provided a bond for the Mexican-American people to keep the community together and to provide a social model for the Mexican-American to respect and to which to aspire. Fastpitch softball and *Las Paracaidistas* served as racial and cultural proving grounds for Mexican-Americans in the hopes of breaking down prejudicial stereotypes and aiding in the creation of a better way of life for Mexican-American people in Hutchinson.

Contemporary statistics demonstrate a successful Mexican-American assimilation. The 1990 United States Federal Census shows a population in Hutchinson of 41,752.[1] The 1995 Hutchinson City Directory records 804 Mexican-Americans living in Hutchinson, accounting for two percent of the total population. Also according to the 1995 City Directory, 143 Mexican-Americans are recognized as homeowners, reflecting 17.8 percent of the population. The most

[1] Twenty-First Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990).

significant sign of assimilation in regards to residency is the current status of the Mexican-American enclave on the southwestern side of Hutchinson. Of the 804 total Mexican-American residents recorded in the 1995 City Directory, only 177 (22%) live in the traditional area of Avenues A through G and surrounding streets such as South Monroe and West Sherman. Mexican-Americans now reside in every area of Hutchinson. The traditional southwestern residence corridor of Mexican-Americans is now home to less than one-quarter of the total Mexican-American population of Hutchinson.[2] No Mexican-American groceries or billiards halls exist in Hutchinson today, but the Anchor Inn Restaurant, owned by the Antonio Flores, Jr., family, has been a thriving success since the mid-1970s. A classic example of cultural assimilation, the Flores family has not only created a separate carry-out restaurant operation in Hutchinson, but operates a branch restaurant in Salina and briefly opened a Flores-owned restaurant in Great Bend. Other restaurants, such as Kiko's, owned by Frank Raya, Jr., have also been successful. These businesses, however, do not cater exclusively to Mexican-Americans.

Employment for Mexican-Americans in 1996 has changed dramatically since the turn of the century. Men and women of Mexican descent have moved into jobs in all branches of labor. The

[2] 125th Hutchinson City Directory (Hutchinson: R. L. Polk & Company, 1995).

railroad employs very few Mexican-Americans today in comparison to companies such as Dillons Warehouse (grocery) and Krause Plow (agricultural machinery).[3] While much blue-collar labor still remains, the Mexican-Americans of Hutchinson have moved into occupations that once would never have been open to them.

The best example of Mexican-American assimilation into Hutchinson emerges from the holding of political office. Jim Martinez was elected to the Hutchinson City Commission in 1969 and became the first Mexican-American Mayor of Hutchinson in 1970. The current Mayor of Hutchinson, Frances Garcia, is also the first Mexican-American woman to be elected Mayor. The current City Manager, Joe Palacioz, is also Mexican-American.[4] By holding political office it is readily apparent that Mexican-Americans in Hutchinson have broken through several stereotypical discriminatory and prejudicial conflicts, but, as witnessed by Garcia's election to office, many have earned Anglo approval enough to lead the community.

Assimilation has also taken place at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, once the bastion of cultural separatism. Originally opened in order to provide a place of Catholic worship for Mexicans once it removed from the Anglo St. Teresa parish in the late 1920s, O.L.G. has seen its church roster go from an entirely Mexican-American

[3] Ibid.

[4] City Manager's Office, interview by author, 17 July 1996, Hutchinson, Kansas.

composition to having a significant number of Anglo families. The 1965 O.L.G. patron list records a figure of 161 total households belonging to the parish. Of these, fifty-four households (36%) have non-Mexican-American surnames. The 1965 patron list also includes four Anglo businesses that supported the O.L.G. parish.[5] The 1996 O.L.G. parish roster records a total of 477 households that belong to the O.L.G. parish. Of these, 163 households have non-Mexican-American surnames (34%).[6] Anglo-Americans participate in the planning and organization of church functions, such as fiestas and food preparation, right alongside Mexican-American men and women. The one-time philosophy in regards to the creation of O.L.G.--separation of the races--has largely ceased to exist.

While Mexican-American fastpitch softball remains a part of the community of Hutchinson, assimilation has reduced its significance in large part. While tournaments still draw an average of ten to twelve teams per event, community support has waned to the point that, despite all the comforts of modern transportation, only a handful of supporters go on the road today to support Mexican-American fastpitch of Hutchinson. Today the average Mexican-American of Hutchinson has a myriad of activities to choose from in the summer. Travel is restricted largely by financial

[5] Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Cookbook (South Hutchinson, Kansas, 1965).

[6] 1996 Our Lady of Guadalupe Patron List, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church Office, South Hutchinson, Kansas.

considerations; "staying on your own side of town" is a thing of the past. Assimilation has come full circle with Mexican-Americans not only cheering for Mexican-American fastpitch softball teams, but also cheering for professional sports on a national level including the Kansas City Royals and Kansas City Chiefs. Local residents offer more regional loyalties to college sports teams such as the University of Kansas "Jayhawks," Kansas State University "Wildcats," and Hutchinson Community College "Blue Dragons" than to other local sports, largely due to media and transportation access. With this in mind, Mexican-American fastpitch tournaments have easily become secondary modes of entertainment. Automobiles and televisions are the primary forms of entertainment today in the average American home, regardless of ethnicity. This, too, has helped to erode the importance of Mexican-American fastpitch. Economics, too, has come into play. Many teams find it difficult to field a team of top players as a result of blue-collar job constraints. Many times, "pick-up" teams have replaced regular rosters. Relatively newfound freedoms have allowed the Mexican-American to put aside fastpitch, once a social centerpiece for the Mexican-Americans of Hutchinson as well as a vehicle to fight racism.

The Airborne history of the Hutchinson Mexican-Americans is preserved through reunions and various civic functions, but, it appears there will be no recent additions to the paratrooper story.

The pride that is the Airborne is not something that will fade, but, the existence of Mexican-American Airborne troopers from Hutchinson on active duty in the United States Army appears to have reached an end. This does not reflect any degradation of the younger generation of Mexican-American men in Hutchinson; rather, like fastpitch softball, assimilation has reduced its significance to the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson.

The sad irony of this story is that the Mexican-American community of Hutchinson has always based itself on close ties and self-reliance, to work hard for what they did not have. Assimilation has progressed; but, at what price? Institutions that were once cornerstones to this group of people have been allowed to decline. Assimilation was necessary in order to achieve the rights and freedoms that persons of Mexican descent deserve in this country. Yet, today, a Mexican-American community does not exist in Hutchinson. Today, an American-Mexican community serves the future of Hutchinson, Kansas, and, in a broader sense, the United States.

The American-Mexican community of Hutchinson still retains a rich cultural heritage within the city. The result of the assimilation process has been cultural pluralism, which allows the American-Mexican community of Hutchinson to co-exist relatively harmoniously with the Anglo community. Yet assimilation is far

from complete. The Our Lady of Guadalupe Church of South Hutchinson still consists of a solid majority of people of Mexican origin. Mexican traditions still take place in regards to weddings. Priests offer Spanish language masses on a regular basis, though English remains the primary language of the church. The church continues to sponsor Mexican dances and, in the tradition of the earliest O.L.G. parishioners, the church still owns two stands at the Kansas State Fairgrounds, selling Mexican food for fund-raising purposes for the church during the State Fair. The church continues to be a main focal point of the American-Mexican social life in Hutchinson.

The memories of blatant racism from previous decades have not faded. The foundation of the American-Mexican's cultural pluralism is based largely on the remembrance of this earlier racism. All interviewees who were asked for their memories recalled a time when race relations were much different, when discrimination was much more overt. Institutions such as O.L.G., fastpitch softball, and *Las Paracaidistas* have endured the pressures of assimilation and have kept their cultural identity so that future generations will not forget the history of their people, whether Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, or American-Mexicans in Hutchinson.

Problems exist for American-Mexicans in Hutchinson in regard to the maintenance of their heritage. Preservation of the Spanish

language faces difficulties due to the English-based public education system. Intermarriage with Anglo-Americans can potentially further dilute Mexican culture. While more culturally mixed marriages are currently occurring than ever before, the vast majority of those interviewed had married within their ethnicity. Despite these problems, the base of Mexican culture in Hutchinson continues to endure. That base is set firmly on the maintenance of such traditions as food, music, marriage and funeral rituals, an affinity for the Catholic Church, and above all, kin networks and family ties.

The childhood stories that were so influential in shaping my perceptions of the world, of what was good, of what was right and wrong, were also the reality of the earliest Mexican immigrants to Hutchinson. My grandparents' tales were not merely for entertainment, they were about what was once real life. The Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, fastpitch softball, and *Las Paracaidistas* exist proudly today, but, their functions serve more as cultural standard bearers than as bastions fighting external hostility and discrimination. Through assimilation, these institutions have helped to create cultural pluralism within Hutchinson, providing for the maintenance of Mexican culture within the city.

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