

# **An Oral History of Louis and Lorraine Erreguible**

4<sup>th</sup> Street | Prater Way History Project

Interviewed: March 27 and April 2, 2012

Published: 2014

Interviewer: Imanol Murua

Louis and Lorraine Erreguible opened Louis' Basque Corner at 301 East 4th Street in 1967, and also ran the hotel upstairs. A native of the Basque Country, Louis moved to Reno in 1948. Lorraine, born in California, moved to Reno in the mid-1940s and worked for nine years at Alpine Glass. They met at a local restaurant and married in 1955. Louis' Basque Corner quickly became a regional favorite, eventually gaining national recognition for its family-style Basque lunches and dinners. The Erreguibles sold the business and retired in 2011. Lorraine passed away in 2013.

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## LOUIS AND LORRAINE ERREGUIBLE

Interviewed on March 27, 2012 and April 2, 2012

Imanol Murua, Interviewer



Photo by Patrick Cummings

*Louis and Lorraine Erreguibles opened Louis' Basque Corner at 301 East Fourth Street in 1967, and also ran the hotel upstairs. A native of the Basque Country, Louis moved to Reno in 1948. Lorraine, born in California, moved to Reno in the mid-1940s and worked for nine years at Alpine Glass. They met at a local restaurant and married in 1955. Louis' Basque Corner quickly became a regional favorite, eventually gaining national recognition for its family-style Basque lunches and dinners. The Erreguibles sold the business and retired in 2011. Lorraine passed away in 2013.*

Murua: This is Imanol Murua. I am in Reno, in the Erreguibles' house. Today is Tuesday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of March. I would like to start with your origins.

Louis: Do you mind if I tell you why I came to this country, and how I came, and what I did over here? I did quite a few things.

Lorraine: I think you should start by saying that you were born on 8-25-26.

Louis: First of all, before I came to this country, I was in Mauleon,<sup>1</sup> where I passed le certificat d'études, en la Escuela.<sup>2</sup>

Murua: So you were born in Mauleon in Zuberoa in 1926?

Louis: Yeah, 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1926. And then, when I was fourteen years old, I left school and I started working with a plumber. I learned the plumbing business. Then I got a better job, going from Mauleon to Bordeaux, France.

Murua: How old were you when you went from Mauleon to Bordeaux?

Louis: Sixteen years old.

Murua: And until then, you were living always in Mauleon?

Louis: Mauleon, oh yeah. Sixteen years old. [pause] Wait a second.

Murua: Did you start working—

Louis: Oh, that's right. Because when I went to Bordeaux, then I went back to France, and that's when I went to Spain. I got a good job in Bordeaux, so I started working in Bordeaux as a plumber. And when I went to Bordeaux as a plumber, I used to live in the hotel Anatola-France. It was my aunt, sister of my mother, that used to own the place. And to pay for the rent over there because I was living there, I used to work at night in the kitchen, and I learned the plumbing and the kitchen. After that, I went back to Mauleon. That's when I was not quite eighteen years old. And that's when my aunt, my father's sister, and her husband, Justo, came to Mauleon.

Lorraine: What about the war in-between?

Louis: The what?

Lorraine: The war in-between.

Louis: Well, I went to the war first, that's right.

Lorraine: Yeah, the war first.

Murua: How old were you when the war started?

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<sup>1</sup> Maule, in Basque language. Capital city of Zuberoa (Soule, in French), one of the three provinces of the French Basque Country.

<sup>2</sup> Basque language.

Louis: Oh, gosh, it was 1939. I was fourteen years old, fifteen years old. But I went to the war when I was not quite eighteen—seventeen and a half years old. I didn't want to go to Germany because, you know, I was afraid.

Murua: Did you go to Germany?

Louis: Oh yeah, on foot, all the way to Germany afterwards—

Lorraine: He didn't work in Germany.

Louis: Oh yeah, but I went, and the Germans, they wanted me to go to Germany. So a bunch of Mauleon people, friends of ours, we then decided to go to Spain. From Spain, some went to the Navy, some other ones, Army, some other ones different places. So then I went from there to Africa. Spain, Africa. After Africa we were shipped to England.

Murua: And what place in Africa? What town or what area of Africa?

Louis: Very close to Casablanca.

Lorraine: He was with [Jacques-Philippe] Leclerc. He was a very famous general.

Louis: Yeah, I was, you know, it was pretty bad in there. So in a month and a half, I went from France, I mean, Spain, Africa, from Africa to England... we spent maybe one week, one week in England. And then we got parachuted into France. And that was my first work in parachuting—the big guy from England, he was a captain and I think he was over six feet tall. He says put your feet on the rook of the parachute over here, and when you are ready to jump you count to twenty and if the parachute doesn't open, then you pull the little thing.

I don't know if it opened or not but, but when I got on the floor, on the ground—you know, I might have hit my head—it was still there—it never moved, and I had to open that thing with the other fingers...but it was during the night, too. I think we were over 45 people jumping in there, next to Paris.

Murua: So did you jump often with the parachute?

Louis: Only once, that was the first time in my life, and I didn't jump, they pushed me. Next, boom, next, boom.

Murua: Where was it?

Louis: That was from England above Paris.

Murua: And before England, why did you decide to go to Africa?

Louis: We didn't decide to go to Africa; we went to Spain, and they threw us out of Spain because there was a problem with France and Germany. There were a lot of German

people there then, too, and so they sent us to Africa. And from Africa, you know there were Germans in there, too, so they sent us to England. We were the people they let us go like that. There were nineteen of us; two came back.

Lorraine: During the war, I'll have to tell this, they transported many people who were coming south over the border.

Louis: Yeah, that was when I was in Mauleon.

Lorraine: His father's place is the place where they all kept track of it and they would take them over the border at night time.

Louis: The other people, people who escaped from Germany, my uncle Joe—Jose—he was too weak, he escaped from Germany himself, but he helped my papa, the two brothers, and we helped all the people who used to come by to cross to go to Spain. Lots, lots of German soldiers who had enough of Hitler, I remember that.

I remember the time they shot at Papa, and they missed. There were nineteen Germans who took over Mauleon and they were living across the river from us. And papa one day was in there, just around to the basement of the house over there, just when the Germans shot at him. If he stayed there he would have had his head blown up, right about the same size...it ripped a hole in the wall. My father remembered that about what the Germans did to them. And we had a lot of problems over there, too.

Lorraine: Of course food-wise they would have to go to the farmers in the night to get food.

Louis: *Papa...comida* [Father...food]. At night, when I was doing that I was probably 15, 16 years old or something like that in there, I didn't stay too long. I went back to Bordeaux. In the meantime, we used to go, Papa and I, to the farms and trade *alpargatas* for food.

Lorraine: The Basque sandals.

Murua: *Alpargatas*.

Louis: We used to take some of that in there and trade it for food to the farmers. That's what they used to do. Well, I wasn't there most of the time.

Murua: Before starting to record the interview you told me that you didn't want to talk about the war so I'm not going to ask you details, but just to clarify, just tell me the places you went during the war. You left Mauleon.

Lorraine: Esterencuby was the town they left from.

Murua: You left from Esterencuby, I know that is very close to the border.

Louis: Esterencuby, yeah I stayed on a farm for a while there.

Murua: You and another 18 young Basque men left—

Louis: Yes, all from my home town, we escaped together across the border there.

Murua: You escaped to Spain, and from Spain you went to North Africa near Casablanca, from Casablanca you went to England. Where in England? What place in England?

Louis/Lorraine: Dover.

Louis: We were near Dover, then we stayed up, we were maybe 50 kilometers. I don't know, a little town in there, you know, to pick us up in the perimeter....

Murua: And after England, were you in England when the war was over?

Lorraine: No, no, no this was after D-Day when they went in, all the forces went in, the combined forces, Eisenhower and so forth, this is when they went in. As far as I can tell from what he tells me on dates.

Louis: I joined the army; I signed the paper with LeClerc, remember LeClerc?

Murua: LeClerc.

Louis: Yeah, that's right, and from there when I came back from the thing, from England, when I parachuted from England—

Lorraine: What was the town that you parachuted into, it's a very famous town, where they have the car races...you parachuted into what town?

Louis: You mean where I jumped to?

Lorraine: Yeah.

Louis: It was close to Paris.

Lorraine: I know.

Louis: Le Manz.

Lorraine: Le Manz.

Louis: Le Manz, that's where I joined the regular army in there, then I started using the, what we used to call "Chuniette." "Chuniette" is a little tank, I even drove it, not many can drive for a while, but we had the French Chuniette, but it didn't compare with an

American tank. You should have seen the *cacharo* [thing]...Five speed to back up, and Jesus Christ and I don't want to talk to that—back to the war.

We were in that thing there and we headed to Kiel and we crossed the Rhine and went to Germany, and close to Baden Baden in the Black Forest, that's where it is. Every time they allowed us we were driving, and they would announce the Luftwaffe [German Air force], their planes are coming. Do you know what we used to do? Jump out of the darn tank and go hide, or at least a couple of hundred yards from the tank.

Lorraine: Because they would incinerate them otherwise.

Louis: Yeah, I don't want to go back to that because of that.

Lorraine: But you had some nice experiences.

Louis: *Cuatro amigos mataron alla, no lo creias* [Four friends that they killed there, you'd never believe it.]

Lorraine: You have to tell the story of the people where you decided to go grab the pig, and it didn't work out and they invited you back. I think that's a beautiful story. Remember you were waiting for rations? You decided to go to look and see if you could steal a pig.

Louis: That was in Strasbourg, close to Kiel with the Rhine, we met with the American troops, and we were eating beans and the Americans were tired of those rations in the cans—

Lorraine: Oh dear, what were they called?

Louis: So we used to trade the beans—

Murua: With the Americans?

Louis: That's when I saw, what's the name of the general?

Lorraine: Patton

Louis: Patton—General Patton—we were together there – and I saw him leaving there and he was saluting everybody and everything.

Murua: So you saw General Patton?

Louis: General Patton, yeah.

Murua: You saw him?

Louis: Yeah, he was in charge. I never got to talk or shake hands with him because everybody was...and they were trying to keep the people away from Patton.

Lorraine: Anyway, tell him the story about the pig.

Louis: About the what?

Lorraine: When you guys went to steal the pig because you were waiting for rations, then you got an invitation. I think that's a beautiful story.

Louis: The rations, K-rations. Those Americans were tired of eating that stuff and we were tired of eating beans, and more beans, and more beans so we used to trade our food. They used to love that. They used to give us cigarettes, packages of crackers and cigarettes, we used to trade everything.

Lorraine: So anyway, you went to steal a pig.

Louis: A what?

Murua: The story of the pig

Lorraine: Or the German pig.

Louis: The what?

Lorraine: Remember you went to see if you could find a pig.

Louis: Well, it was Christmas 1944, and we decided we wanted something better to eat, natural food. So we went to a farm over there and we wanted to kill a pig, and I remember the guy coming out of there with a fork in his hand like that. He was speaking French, it was on the border, and we said we would like to eat something, if you can sell us a little pig, so he said well...he hesitated and then pretty soon he said "It's almost time for supper, would you like to join us?" There were six of us in there, and they prepared food for us you wouldn't believe.

Lorraine: This was a German family.

Louis: We were so happy. How wonderful it was. They were very nice people. They were German, but they hated Hitler. We talked about that, but we were watching how we were talking. I said, well, I'll come back in a couple of weeks, I think it was. We went back, we took all the American K-Rations and we put food and everything, we gave them a couple boxes and they were so happy, those people.

Lorraine: So, it doesn't matter what nationalities.



Louis: The man said, "We are tired." They were 17 years in the war and they were tired of it. It was Karlsruhe was the name, Karlsruhe. Had a little...should I tell him what happened with the lieutenant?

Lorraine: Go ahead, you might as well tell him.

Murua: Tell me, please.

Louis: Well, you know I got a temper, I had a temper. So there was a group of uh, how you call that?

Lorraine: New recruits.

Louis: Yeah, a different regiment than mine, okay? And then I was walking by with a paper, I had my discharge paper in my hand. I was happy about it. And the lieutenant went by, boom, boom, boom and that was the new people that started taking over. And the lieutenant says, "You!"

He stopped the group and he said, "You, *vient ici* [come here]" and said, "Walk with us."

"I'm not going to walk with us, I belong to the par-tank [phonetic] guard. I don't belong to you people and besides I got a paper over here."

He picked up the paper and he tried to give me—he went like this to give me a slap, but my fist was faster and I dropped him. They put me in jail for six months. That's what they do when you are in there.

Murua: Did you spend six months actually in jail?

Louis: Six months.

Murua: Where was it?

Louis: That was Karlsruhe. A little town very close to Baden Baden, there was a camp in there for the prisoners. And they put me there, you know with whom? With the African, what they call the blue man from Africa to guard [unclear], so they pile up for two weeks I was over there and finally they put me in another department because those blue man if you go like this to them, boom, they will kill you.

Murua: Blue man?

Louis: From Africa they are spies, you hear about the spies?

Lorraine: They used to have their ears in the water. This was a new lieutenant from Salzere [phonetic]. Who decided he was going to be, you know...so he fell into it.

Murua: Do you remember the end of the war, where you were when you were told you can go home?

Louis: You bet I remember that. You know why?

Murua: Why?

Louis: Because they apologized and they gave twenty seven thousand francs back pay to me. Cigarettes, everything I wanted to take. So I ship everything I can, and all the guys and I, we stopped in Paris.

Lorraine: What a minute—he wants to know the date you were actually discharged.

Louis: What?

Lorraine: The date of your discharge.

Louis: I cannot tell you the date of when it was, I think it was May.

Lorraine: Of what year? '45?

Louis: 1945.

Murua: May of '45?

Louis: Yeah, May, I think it was May.

Murua: Before going home you stopped in Paris?

Louis: Oh, yeah.

Lorraine: Yeah.

Murua: What for?

Louis: I knew a lot of people in Paris from my hometown, they used to own the Ball Dance in Paris, what was the name, *no me acuerdo* [I don't remember] names.

Lorraine: What's the name of the one where the singers were?

Louis: I used to go to school with one of them, he was Spanish. He was born there in Mauleon, but both parents Spanish—Huerta!

Murua: Huerta?

Louis: Huerta. Yeah, he had the guy that used to buy the groceries and everything else, next to where we, before we reach—God! *Nombres* [Names].

Murua: Never mind.

Louis: Huerta

Murua: It will come.

Lorraine: Anyway, so you went there and—

Murua: So from Paris to Mauleon?

Louis: Mauleon, yeah.

Murua: You came to America in 1948, so what did you do the three years between the war and America—in Mauleon, in Bordeaux, what is the story of these three years?

Louis: Two years.

Murua: Two years.

Louis: I came back home after a good thing in Paris and after I talk, I call my father—*crapaud*—Dad! You know what it is a *crapaud*?

Murua: No.

Lorraine: It's a little toad or a little frog.

Louis: Yeah.

Murua: It is what?

Louis: *Sabes que es una grenouille?* [Do you know what a *grenouille* is]?

Murua: No.

Louis: *Es esas que saltan.*

Lorraine: It's a frog.

Murua: A frog.

Louis: But it's not a frog, it's a big one.

Lorraine: A toad.

Louis: *Crapaud.*

Murua: He called you that; your dad called you that?

Louis: Yeah, oh yeah, to come home.

Lorraine: Louis, you gotta backtrack one thing, though. When you were in Paris, do you remember the singers?

Louis: Where?

Lorraine: The singers, the Basque singers that invited you to join them?

Louis: The what?

Lorraine: We got their recordings—the ones who came to the Riverside.

Louis: Oh, when I came back to Mauleon.

Lorraine: To Mauleon? I thought it was when you were in Paris this happened.

Louis: It was in Paris. Yeah, that's right, I took them to Mauleon afterwards.

Murua: So what is the history?

Louis: When I was in Paris in those good days in there, we decided to go to Can-Can, the famous deal, and there was a group, "Les Compagnons de la Chanson"—there were eight men and one woman, they used to sing, and when I was in Paris I used to sing with those people. They wanted to keep me with them too, you know. I used to have a beautiful voice.

Lorraine: Louis had a beautiful voice.

Louis: I remember, I will never forget that. They made me sing over there in Paris, you know.

Murua: You sing?

Louis: Yeah, there was a group of singers, a beautiful group in there, oh god.

Lorraine: So anyway, you went home to Papa. What did you do for two years?

Louis: They wanted me to keep on going with them, I was so tempted but I say, no, I better go see my family and I went to Papa. When I went to Papa, that's what happened, he wanted me to take over the business, his business.

Murua: What business?

Louis: The *alpargatas*,

Murua: *Alpargatas*.

Louis: Yeah, because I am the oldest boy, he got three boys and four girls, okay, we were seven. But he wanted me to take over the business and I think, well, Papa....I spent two years working with him, in the sandal factory and then my uncle, my mother's sister and her husband—Rita, Rita was there, too.

Lorraine: Your father's sister.

Louis: Huh?

Lorraine: Your father's sister, not your mother's sister.

Louis: Dolores, that's right, I'm confused but, it's pretty hard to remember everything that happened.

Lorraine: Anyway, your father's sister and her husband.

Louis: And I say to Papa, I mean, my aunt and her husband she had sheep in this country, and he starts talking and he asks if you want to come to the United States, and I say why not, you know I've been running all over Europe, maybe I can see the United States. So they tell me to make the papers and that really was something. They give me the papers, they pay for the trip and everything with the condition that I pay when I start working over there. Everything was okay. Do you want me to tell the trip?

Lorraine: Sure, Momma and Papa took you up to Paris, they got you on TWA.

Louis: What happened, my father dropped me and my mother in Paris to take the plane directly to New York.

Murua: New York, when was it?

Louis: When was it?

Lorraine: 1948.

Murua: Do you remember the month or the day?

Lorraine: October was when he arrived.

Louis: The plane was TWA with four cylinders, four propellers, and I was right on the thing where the propellers were. There was a big bad weather.

Lorraine: In the North Sea—they were going to Ireland.

Louis: Ireland.

Murua: First to Ireland.

Louis: *Irlanda* [Ireland] there was big weather, and so we stopped in there and I was sitting in the airport and luckily there were two sisters.

Lorraine: Some French women.

Louis: “Hey young man,” *habla francais* [they spoke French], if you want to eat something?”

“Sure, I want to eat something!”

Well, the company pays the dinner, everybody eating over there. So I had a good meal. So we went back to the plane and we arrived in New York.

Lorraine: Late.

Louis: Late, so I gotta wait until 10 o’clock the next morning to go to Reno. So geez what am I gonna do over here?

Lorraine: Talk about the check-in with your suitcases.

Louis: The fruit?

Lorraine: Yeah, Papa had a beautiful orchard and momma had put some of the fruit in there in packages.

Louis: *Mi madre me preparó una comida con toda la fruta de casa, ya sabes que – alli tenia peras, tenia* [My mother prepared a meal for me with all the fruit from the house, you know, there were pears, there were....]

Murua: Tell me in English.

Louis: Yeah, so they wanted to throw them away over there, well, I don’t know if they throw it away or eat it themselves, so I pick up the thing and I sit on the bench right over there, I ate the whole thing, everybody was laughing like hell. I didn’t care, I enjoyed the fruit, my Papa’s fruit, and then—

Lorraine: You wandered around for a while.

Louis: I wandered around all over the place.

Murua: Where were you—in the airport?

Lorraine: Yeah, in the airport.

Louis: To see if I can have a place to go to Reno, there's a pilot, Air France, oh, I'm safe. So I went over there and I said this is my situation, and this and that, and he said, "Well, we got a plane that will go to Denver, Colorado which is close to Reno and then maybe, if we got the thing, we're gonna let you know, we can put you in there." Why not? So they call me a couple of hours later and said we got room for you, so I went to the plane, and you know what it was? A bunch of entertainers from New York to Denver, Colorado to entertain—the dancers, the ladies, and everything, they put me on the plane in there, and I was sitting there with all those girls, the shortest one was about six feet tall, *mujeres, ai mama mia* [women ahi mama mia]!

Lorraine: And champagne, they had food, cigars.

Louis: *Todo fuera* [All out] *me llevaban todo para comer—es eso america todo esta bien* [They brought me food—if this is America, boy, this is good!] I had a beautiful trip in there and I went to Denver. In Denver, there was no connection either, so I had to wait. So I see a young man, *mexicano* [Mexican] *Hablo Espanol tambien y me dije* [That spoke Spanish too and he said] he saw the thing and said, "You trying to go to Reno?" "Yes, I am, come on with me." They took me to a plane, and I was going to Reno. Gosh, I go to the plane. It was 11:30 at night when I arrived in Reno. In Reno, I saw the town with lights all over the place.

Lorraine: What a minute you, they put him into a big limousine.

Louis: They must have a fiesta over here.

Murua: Why?

Louis: *Toda las luces que hay* [With all the lights that there are].

Murua: So many lights.

Louis: The limousine took me.

Murua: So you arrived late in Reno and did you have any place to go—your aunt?

Louis: *No, no, no tenía la casa de mi tía* [I had my aunt's house].

Murua: Your uncle and you had what?

Louis: *El otro tenia aqui* [The other was here].

Lorraine: They had the address he was going to.

Murua: The address was in your—

Louis: Yeah I had the thing right there, Louis Erreguible, Valley Road *y todo* [and everything] and so they put me in a taxi. I had French money, but only one five dollar bill American, I don't know, Jose, my uncle, he gave me that.

Murua: Five dollars.

Louis: Yeah, five dollars, so the taxi took me in front of the house, I gave it five dollars and by the time I turned around, he was gone. My uncle opened the door, "What are you doing here?" "What am I doing here? I just arrived." "We didn't expect you until tomorrow morning." Well, I explained to him what had happened and he said, "Well, you made it, so that's fine," and he said, "You could've called me or something." I didn't even know how to use a phone over here.

Lorraine: So he asked you about what you paid the cab driver.

Louis: Oh, yeah, "You paid the...." "Yeah, I had a five dollar bill I give it to him." "Five dollar bill! You're crazy! It costs 25 cents, from town to here." I didn't know anything; I didn't know what five dollars was either in those days.

Murua: Okay, it was your arrival in America. Let's stop your history here and let's start with your wife's parents' history, I will come back to Reno. Tell me where were you born, and what's your story?

Lorraine: I was born in Nampa, Idaho. Nampa was named after a chief of an Indian tribe; it's right outside of Boise, Idaho.

Murua: When were you born?

Lorraine: September 24, 1922. I'll be 90 years old in September. Anyway, my father was in the First World War and he contracted tuberculosis and so when I was about two they sent him to the Veteran's Hospital there in Boise, and he died in '25 and my mother worked as a helper there at the hospital. She met the gentleman that became my step-father, and when I was about three-and-a-half, we went to California. My grandfather was Portuguese, from Azores, and my grandmother was German, from Poland. He was a sheepman which was very unusual for Portuguese. They mostly went into milk cattle. And he had had pneumonia a couple of years and of course my mother was the oldest of 13 and she was born in Jordan Valley, but anyway, the whole family moved to California.

Murua: Where in California?

Lorraine: Where? We first went to Oakley, California which is in the delta land. You know, there is San Francisco, then you go up the river and there is delta land through there? And my mother and father married, and my father decided to farm, and he had asparagus and wheat and when I look back on it, my life, it was probably the most joyous, and happy time of my whole life. It was really a beautiful time of peace, and love and just a wonderful time.



There are a lot of Portuguese people in that area who had their celebrations and so forth. Then one day one of the Portuguese gentlemen came on his horse and said the Hindu down the way broke through the levy because that was levy land—they have to build up against the river. And he came back a half hour later and said you get in that car and you get out of here. The next day our house was 30 feet underwater. They never reclaimed that land. So we moved to Pittsburg, California, which was an industrial town. There were the steel mills, and the rubber mills and Dow Chemical—all of them.

Murua: How old were you when you went to Pittsburg?

Lorraine: Pittsburg? I was about five and then my brother was born, and the population at that time was very, very Italian. These people from the Isle de Femoni, in Sicily had come who were fishermen, and of course there was fish, lots of fish in the river then. But a mixture of many nationalities in that town. I look back on it and think, how wonderful!

Louis: There were a lot of Italians and a lotta—

Lorraine: There were everything; there were Greeks, and there were everything. And that's of course where we went to school, and my father became very ill at one point because he had been hurt during the war too, got mustard gas, then we had to live in Martinez with a friend. But I went through school there and I graduated from High School. I was salutatorian. I studied music for nine years; in fact, that was going to be my life.

Louis: Excuse me one second, don't be afraid to tell the truth about you and I and everybody in the family, okay?

Lorraine: All right.

Louis: Please, don't be afraid about that.

Lorraine: All right, so anyway, there was a period of time in my life, you know, you're 17 and there was a possibility of scholarship to UC and things like that, but things went a little haywire, out of some other matters for me, and I got married.

Murua: In Pittsburg?

Lorraine: In Reno, Nevada, as a matter of fact. It was my first trip to Reno, Nevada. I was 18, and he was 26, I think it was, and then we lived in Pittsburg and moved to San Francisco because he worked there, and my oldest son was born, and unfortunately, it didn't balance off. I spent many years, between having five children, I worked at Dow Chemical in the Research Department, I went to the University of California, I think I gave the children everything I could give them, but mostly alone.

So finally, he was here in Reno and he was a dealer, and this was a man who could tell you 35 pages of things on a crap table, but that takes a tremendous amount of mental ability. This was the genius part of this man, and I went through the years

because I understood background, and I was a Catholic, and anyway, I finally decided that either it was gonna work, or it's not gonna work. So I bundled up everything in the whole household, and we spent all night coming over the mountain to Reno, and after a comparatively short time, I was, just after Mark was born—the youngest boy—that was it, and it just happened at that point I had a friend who had called me and asked me if I wanted to work at Alpine Glass, which is right across the street from Louis' Basque Corner, in the accounting department.

So I went in and I went to work there for nine years, on Fourth Street. And I kept my family together, and in the meantime, we used to go to a little bistro on Friday nights. It was a little Italian family, it was a family affair. All of us from Alpine, just for a few hours, and we used to get the antipasto and we'd get the French bread and the onion and the cheese and so forth, and they had the music.

I lived nearby, and the little place was here and Louis worked down Second Street. He used to come once in a while, so I got to know who he was, then one night the young man who owned the place decided that he had enough so he said, "Louis, you take over," so Louis gets behind the bar and he's pouring the drink or whatever, and all of a sudden he starts singing, then he sang the *Ave Maria*. And I can remember saying to one of the friends that was with us that night, the following day, I don't think I've ever spent an evening I enjoyed as much as that night. So it just happened—of course, I was divorced at that time—I had gone to dinner with a young man at the Red Barn, and I came home and the fellow that had the little bistro had loaned me his Henry J because my little car was disabled—he called up and asked me, "Where have you been?" And I said "It's none of your business." I went down and said, "Here are your keys to the car."

And as I started to go, here comes Louis, and he said, "Would you like a ride home?"

But it was only about a half a block to my house. Well, that was kind of a long ride home and that's how it kind of began.

Louis: And I knew that.

Lorraine: And then he started coming over for dinner. And the first thing I remember he said was, "You don't start until your mother sits at the table," then he showed them how you wash dishes and dry them properly, and Friday nights were our night. We'd go to Carson City, this little hamburger place, we didn't have money, and he'd sing all the way there and all the way back, and then we'd go back and there would be kids peeking around the corner to see if we'd kiss good night. You know with five children it was quite a whatever, and Mark was just a baby—he was only 22 months old.

Louis: I know he was a baby, I used to change his diaper.

Lorraine: I know. Anyway, so finally Louis proposed and all he said to me was, "All I want to do is see these children walk straight, I love you dearly, and when I get married I get married for the rest of my life." That was it. Being divorced, I couldn't be married in the church at that time, so we got our license, and we decided to go up to Virginia City.

So as we were getting ready to leave, my daughter, who was probably about 8-1/2 at that time, Margi?

Louis: Probably 10 years old.

Lorraine: 8-1/2, 9, she was there, and I'll never forget this coat she had on, and her hair and those green eyes, and she said, "You are going to marry my mother over my dead body!"

Murua: She said that?

Louis: You know what I said? "You wanna bet?"

Lorraine: Oh dear, it was something else, so my mother and father went with us to Virginia City. Of course, my mother wouldn't go to the ceremony because of her Catholicity but she did go to dinner with us afterward.

Murua: So the ceremony was a—

Lorraine: It was a civil ceremony, so anyway, off we start you know, of course then Teresa came along. That completed the six.

So we were married, and of course I couldn't go to communion because of the circumstances, but the kids went. It was our first trip to France in '72, after papa died, because Louis never got to see him again, and a dear friend, Fr. Kisic, who was Croatian, called me one day.

He said, "Lorraine, you bring me a bowl of *tripa* [tripe] over for lunch. I have a present for you." So he came over and he said, "I talked to the bishop and he is going to give a special dispensation because you have such a good marriage. You can go to communion tomorrow before you go to France."

That was a wonderful thing for us. And then later on, after my former husband passed away, we had a little ceremony at a little church in Verdi, where we married in the church.

Louis: We wanted to be married in the church.

Lorraine: The kids had champagne, they had the car all decorated, we had a big cake. So that is the story of that. Like I said, Louis, at that time, didn't go up through the restaurant business. When he was working in restaurants here in this country, his cousin came to him and said, "Louis, that life is too *frivola*. You must have a nice solid occupation. I just went into the custom cabinet business. You come with me and I'll make you a journeyman, okay?" That never happened. So Louis became a custom cabinet maker for 17 years. See all the work in the kitchen? That's his kitchen.

Louis: Look at all those things. I made everything.

Lorraine: So that was his third occupation.

Murua: What was the year when you first met? And the first wedding and the Verdi wedding?

Lorraine: We married in '55, so we probably met in '53.

Louis: Right away after you were here.

Lorraine: We married in '55, so I must have met him in '54.

Louis: Excuse me, we've been married 57 years, right?

Lorraine: 57 years the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. So it was May 19, 1955 that we were married. It was July the first, 1977, when we had our marriage blessed.

Louis: I think you're right.

Lorraine: And then we had our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at the New Saint Rose of Lima, in the little chapel, and Fr. Tom Donnelly was the one who built the church, he hosted it for us. And between he and my daughter Margi, who stood up and said "Don't marry over my dead body," they had this whole little story that they contrived, with music, about how she and the kids used to be. He had music about a boy and his stepfather and other beautiful music throughout—in fact, he recorded it for me. Then he ended up with the *Ave Maria* and he had us dance together at the end of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. And then we went out to our son's place in Washoe Valley and had a beautiful reception.

At any rate, to continue the story, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1957, Louis went to work not feeling too well. I worked a very short distance away in accounting, and his cousin was at Harrah's estimating a job, and you should never have anybody in there working machinery by themselves, but Louis went to put a piece of wood through a dado blade, and the thing went up and his hand went under the dado blade, and it shredded his fingers.

Louis: For seven months I had pins. Nothing to that one, but it got crooked and stayed there.

Lorraine: Anyway, we survived that. It was tough. I know I took on several different jobs, and he did some stuff.

Murua: We will go back to Louis' story. What were your jobs, Lorraine, up until Louis' Basque Corner?

Lorraine: Well, during the war I worked in the research department at Dow Chemical, in Pittsburg, California. We were testing samples. They were trying to reclaim ore from old mining operations. That was the whole thing. That's when I went to the University of California too, at the same time, because they offered that. After that, I went to work for a beverage company as a bookkeeper. Then after that, I came to Reno, and I worked for

Milton Industries for a period of time in accounting. I went up to that building on First Street at Milton Industries—it was a big operation, there were all various kinds of things, but it was still in accounting. Then I got the phone call from the girl who had just left the job at Alpine and decided she wasn't going to work there anymore, and she asked if I wanted a job to go talk to Ollie. So I worked there for nine years. I've worked in the insurance business, I've worked in the rug business—

Louis: Did you work for Louis Capurro?

Lorraine: Yeah, Louis Capurro, insurance. I worked in any number of places in the accounting department. Anyway, when this happened to Louis, we had a very dear friend, he was a judge here, he was Bearnais [France], from just above the Basque Country, wonderful man, and he and his wife who was Basque had been after Louis for I don't know how long.

Louis: Excuse me, he came from Pau. *Muy cerca de Mauleon* [very near Mauleon].

Lorraine: They had been after us, Louis, for ages to get back to the restaurant business. He said, "Louis, what you're doing...." And then after this happened, you know.... It was about the end of August, I think, something like that.

Louis: Yeah, that's right.

Lorraine: We got a phone call from him, and he said, "I think the old Lincoln Hotel is up for grabs. The gal that's in there is way behind, and why don't you go talk to Judge Barrett," because that was the owner. So we went over and he seemed pretty amenable to the idea. Of course, then came the subject of money, what were we going to do for money, because we had moved into this house in '62, and that happened in—

Louis: '67, we opened over there.

Lorraine: Yes, '67. At any rate, the judge, our friend, loaned us \$6,000.

Louis: No signing.

Lorraine: And our other friend, in Lovelock, Mr. Jauregui.

Louis: Freddy Jauregui.

Murua: Jauregui, the Basque name?

Louis: He lives very *cerca* [near], very close to Mauleon. Three kilometers from Mauleon. *Conozco la familia de toda la vida* [I've known the family my whole life]. We went to see him over there, you know.

Lorraine: And he gave us \$2,500.

Louis: We shook hands.

Lorraine: And I had a little bit of insurance money, not much.

Louis: For the health insurance, \$5,000 wasn't it?

Lorraine: That was living expenses for the house. Anyway, so that's what we started on, a wing and a prayer, believe me. And that place, I could write a whole book about that place. The tile was up, there wasn't anything in the bar except for the TV. They had taken all the stuff out. For a short period of time, after it was the Lincoln Bar, this Italian lady took over and her husband came from New York and he was a chef and they had these fancy drapes—big, gold drapes, and they were so dirty, you couldn't believe it. The walls took three cleanings. Up above they had hung, what was it? Artificial grape things, and so forth.

Louis: They draped the ceilings with burlap.

Lorraine: With burlap. We took that down and it was like taking a ton of dirt down. The kitchen, the stove, it took Louis three weeks to clean the stove.

Murua: Three weeks?

Lorraine: Three weeks, and then we went to the hotel.

Louis: And the lobby?

Lorraine: Oh, the lobby.

Murua: How was it?

Lorraine: They had a swinging door lobby. Anybody could go upstairs, and of course, as we knew from one of the fellows who lived across the street, he used to turn the sheets quite rapidly, sometimes, which means they had girls up there.

Louis: Plenty of *putas alli* [prostitutes there].

Lorraine: So afterwards, after we opened it, I had a friend who was a lieutenant in the police department, he phoned and he said, "Lorraine, I want to tell you how happy the police department is that you and Louis took over." And I told Judge Barrett that one day and he said, "You mean to tell me...?" and I thought, "Oh, come on."

Louis: Tell him what happened, too, because of that. They had a man, a pimp who used to have those girls working at the hotel. So I think him and another guy from Texas, they came along and said, "You better provide those girls back up there, or else." I was behind the bar, and I said, "See those two drinks in there? You finish them or don't finish them. I

want you out of here now! ... *Un txikito así* [A little guy like this]. They left their drinks in there, and said, “You’ll hear from us.” *Se fueron* [They left]. The same night, I was working at the bar, and [makes the sound of a bullet whishing by] through the window.

Lorraine: We had a bullet hole in the window.

Murua: A shot?

Louis: They tried to, they shoot through the window.

Lorraine: But that was the last that we heard from them, fortunately.

Murua: To intimidate you?

Louis: Yeah.

Lorraine: They tried to.

Louis: Then another lady came up over there to me and said, “You know, I’m kinda glad that you took this place up, but at the same time you’re missing something.” Let me tell you something, “I don’t miss you if you don’t show up.”

Lorraine: But it took us from September until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December to open the doors. That’s how much clean-up we had to do, and that didn’t even start with the hotel.

Murua: Were both of you doing that, or you had more people?

Lorraine: We had our son Jim until he got called to be in the service. We had Gary who helped us.

Louis: What was his name in there—the dishwasher? He used to clean up.

Lorraine: I don’t know, we had several people to help us, but it was a job. The place had been everything, it had been the bar. I know that there was a cleaners there at one time, and I know that there was the fellow who had his place out there in the parking lot.

Louis: Tell him how many layers of carpet there was up there.

Lorraine: Four carpets, one linoleum. The first year, believe it or not, we made \$10,000.

Louis: Poor Burt Fly, he was the one who did that.

Murua: \$10,000, so there was business.

Lorraine: I couldn't believe it. There really was. It took 17-18 hours a day to do it. And then, we decided...we didn't have air conditioning, we didn't have this, we didn't have that.

Louis: There was no freezer.

Lorraine: I looked here and I looked there, I looked at the bank, but we had only been in business for a short time, so finally I went to Barrett, and I said, "Look, this is your place, and we've got to do something to make it more profitable, if nothing else, okay?" So he went 50/50 with us on it.

Louis: He finally did.

Lorraine: So we finally got the air conditioning in, and we got a new front, and so forth downstairs, and then we tackled upstairs.

Louis: Do you remember Joe Rhegetti when he opened that restaurant?

Lorraine: Yeah.

Louis: Okay, a friend of ours opened a restaurant, Italian, up on South Virginia, and one day after six months in there, he closed the place, he couldn't do anything about it. So he tells me, "Hey Louis, you want a walk-in?"

Lorraine: A walk-in.

Louis: A walk-in? Yeah, I do. I say, "How much?" He says, "Well, come and get it, \$75."

Lorraine: The whole walk-in box refrigerator unit.

Louis: With more and everything else. So the next day I walk in there, and he and I, we take it out of there, we put it over there, it's still working, that thing in there.

Lorraine: Another thing too—we didn't have a large refrigerator, and we had this one friend who worked at the laundry and Hidden Valley Country Club.

Louis: That's right, they play golf over there.

Lorraine: Anyway, he said, "I think get rid of that great big refrigerator. They have one and I don't think it will cost you much." I mean, this is the way we did things.

Louis: 10 feet wide, five feet deep, six feet high, for \$75. We went pretty quickly up there before they changed their mind.



Lorraine: But anyway, we went upstairs and pulled up five layers of carpet. They only put more on top.

Louis: You won't believe it.

Lorraine: Every room had to be spackled or steamed, because there was some wallpaper. Then we got the place that Yvonne's mother had—remember, it closed—and we got some better furniture for not so much. Do you know what we charged for meals when we started? \$2.50.

Murua: \$2.50, what for?

Lorraine and Louis [simultaneously]: \$2.50 for the dinner.

Murua: For the dinner?

Lorraine: For the dinner.

Louis: Oh, another thing, too. Tell him what happened. Everybody used to come and say, "Louis, it's going to take you at least five years to pay the debt." She and I, we worked, and one year later we paid everything off and we had \$10,000 in the bank. Remember that? And she's the bookkeeper—me, I never make it.

Murua: It was from the beginning a restaurant and hotel?

Lorraine: Yes.

Louis: Yeah, hotel and restaurant.

Murua: It was \$2.50 for the dinner, and to spend the night, do you remember the price?

Lorraine: Oh dear, what was it we charged for the rooms?

Louis: I think it was \$45 a week.

Lorraine: Probably something like that.

Murua: \$45 a week?

Louis: Yeah, \$45 a week.

Murua: How many rooms did you have?

Louis: We used to have old people who used to work in the casino, who used to come there and live in there and that was good business for us.

Lorraine: We had some Basquos, too.

Louis: Yeah, we had quite a few Basque people living there.

Lorraine: I was just going to ask you a question that he just asked me. How many rooms? We had 23 rooms.

Louis: 33.

Lorraine: No, no.

Louis: We cut up the rooms on top.

Lorraine: We didn't use those. I think it was around 27, though.

Louis: Yeah, the other side of rooms we didn't use, because there was no advantage.

Lorraine: Before that, they used inside rooms, and I made one an office and storage upstairs. I didn't want inside rooms with no outside ventilation.

Louis: You know what? She and I reached 16-17 hours a day over there for at least five years, and then it slowed down after that. Believe me, we worked. She was working, I was in the kitchen, I was cleaning up.

Murua: You were in the kitchen and you were where?

Louis: Bookkeeping, making beds.

Lorraine: Making beds, washing dishes, hostessing, tending bar.

Louis: Tending bar, yeah.

Lorraine: Cleaning latrines.

Louis: We used to start work about 7:30 in the morning and close up the place sometimes at about 3 o'clock the next morning.

Lorraine: The university kids, we couldn't get them to go home.

Louis: They didn't want to go home.

Lorraine: We had a lot of aggie kids in those days—agricultural, which was associated with Basques, as you know, and, to this day, I still keep in touch with some of them.

Louis: The aggie club used to be there, sometimes 60 people at one time, kids. You remember the Sundowners? There was a group at the university, the Sundowners. Those

kids in there, they were rotten! Between 18-20 years old. They used to join up at Louis' Basque Corner in the evening, they'd pick up the drink [drinking sound effects], boom, and break the glass on the bar. Remember that day?

Lorraine: Yeah. We had a dance that night.

Louis: Yeah, they got up and said, "Louis, you need any help?" They walked out and never came back.

Lorraine: You're just lucky that you didn't have a lawsuit.

Louis: I'm gonna tell you the truth, they apologized, too. They apologized about that. And you remember the one in there who threw the wine in the check-in thing?

Lorraine: Oh, that was one of the fraternities.

Louis: He said, "Don't worry about it, Louis. Money cleans everything up." "Not at my house, if you don't clean yourself up, out!" The next day, that was a Monday, I remember, the whole group comes along and they repaint, they clean up. Little guy 5'3": *no tiene miedo de nada* [wasn't afraid of anything]. That was when I managed.

Lorraine: But we had so many good things. We had the food gourmet who came in, we were on TV. In fact, I taped his whole series. We've had writers who put us in their publications. It's really been very gratifying.

Louis: Come to think of it, we've had a lot of help from a lot of people in there. Remember the fourth ceiling we put in there, B.B. and I? He was a customer of ours and he helped me put the fourth ceiling to take out the lousy, gunny sack. We cleaned up. And the floor... what's his name? What's his name, for crying sake? Who did the floor for us?

Lorraine: Oh, Bandy?

Louis: George Bandy, yeah. He made the whole linoleum floor and did a beautiful job in there. The cost was practically nothing. He said, "Sir, I did that for a good man." So I tell him it takes a good man to know another. I remember that. We became very good friends.

Lorraine: Then we had incidents like a Basque group that came from the old country. They were in Mexico and they came up here. And their person who was helping them, left them; they were stranded. So we kept them in the hotel, we fed them, and we got them on their way. Then we had the ballet group from Biarritz, the Basque—we worked with them for the production. We've been very busy with the Basque club. We belong to the one in New York, we belong to the one in Los Banos, San Francisco, and Garderville.

Murua: In the beginning were the majority of your customers Basque? Or not as many?

Lorraine: We had a combination all the way through.

Louis: It was about 50/50.

Lorraine: Yeah, it was, and I used to love particularly when the Spanish Basque and some French Basque would come—

Louis: From Bizkaia.

Lorraine: And they would start singing. Singing against each other, you know. It was wonderful.

Murua: Singing against each other?

Lorraine: Yes, in competition. And remember Fr. Sallaberremborde when he brought the—

Louis: Yeah the *cura, de [unclear], cerca de Mauleon* [the priest, from (unclear) near Mauleon]. *Sallaberremborde murió de cáncer* [Sallaberremborde, he died of cancer].

Lorraine: He brought this group from St. Jean de Luz. They were just ordinary friends. One was a pharmacist, one was a teacher. They would just sort of sing together and they formed this group called “the fishermen” in Basque. And all of a sudden, one day, here arrives Fr. Sallaberremborde with a whole group. These are the things that would happen, and at lunch time we were singing, and then they came for dinner this one time, I’ll never forget it, and they started at the bar a little bit, then with each course of the dinner they would sing.

Louis: You know what, you remember when we went to Hendaye? We went to see those people, and everywhere we went we didn’t spend one penny.

Murua: Every place?

Louis: We didn’t spend one penny, they bought us drinks and everything.

Lorraine: They were very nice to us.

Louis: And remember the one from Bayonne? The one that called us the *Americains* [Americans] in St. Jean Pied de Port?

Lorraine: Oh, yes.

Louis: *Aux cheveux blancs* [White-haired].

Lorraine: This young man came from Bayonne to apprentice at this one French Basque restaurant in San Francisco and we were at a friend's house up in Lake Tahoe, and he happened to be up there for the weekend. Well, we went to France shortly after that, we were in St. Jean Pied de Port.

Louis: No, they come to eat in our place, I bought the meal, I pay.

Lorraine: So anyway, we were in... tell me the town where we met them in the restaurant.

Louis: What?

Lorraine: I know what it is.

Louis: What are we talking about now?

Lorraine: I know it, when we bumped into his family in the restaurant.

Louis: Yeah, that was Tellechea.

Lorraine: I know, but what was the town?

Louis: St. Jean Pied de Port.

Lorraine: All right, that's what I wanted.

Murua: St. Jean Pied de Port.

Lorraine: So we were sitting there and they had very high-backed chairs and all of a sudden, we kept hearing "*Americains, Americains?*" [Americans, Americans?] We looked over there and there he was with his mother and father. So they invited us to go to their place, which was Le Cheval Blanc in Bayonne. So in a few days we went down.

Louis: Excuse me, you know why they were there? They play handball and in St. Jean Pied de Port they had good betting, too. They bet and everything in there. The father and son were playing handball over there. So that's how we met over there.

Lorraine: So anyway, we went in and had an aperitif and everything. And then first we had—what did we have first? Probably soup, and then we had the *fruit de mer* [seafood].

Murua: Fruit de mer, seafood.

Lorraine: Well, we thought, that was dinner, you know. And then they came with the El Dorado.

Louis: Then they come with another plate with the *merluza con toda la...* [hake, with all the...], *una comida de miliardas* [a meal of (unclear)].

Lorraine: So then, after that, they make the *L'omellette Norvegian* [Baked Alaska]. Then they asked us if we like the eel. So they gave us a whole bunch of baby eels to take home.

Louis: *Una cesta con sea weeds* [a basket with sea weed] *y una docena de...* [and a dozen of...], what the hell is the name of that thing in Spanish?

Murua: Eel?

Louis: Eel, yeah. *No me acuerdo del nombre* [I don't remember the name].

Murua: *Anguila*. [Eel]

Lorraine: *Anguila*, that's right.

Louis: *Anguila, en frances anguille* [Anguila, in French anguille], right. *Y una docena de...* [and a dozen of...].

Murua: A dozen of eels.

Louis: *Vivas* [live], you remember? *Llegamos con esos en casa y mi madre dijo... Papa ya estaba...* [We got home with those and my mom said... Dad was there]

Lorraine: *La tia* too. [The aunt too]

Louis: *Mira eso, "Ay mama mia!" En seguida el hermano mío, chiquito, más joven, colgarlas allí, cortar y pelarlas allí vivas...* [She looked at that and said, "Ai ama mia!" and right away, my younger brother took them hung them, cut and peeled them alive] *Manolita* came there to eat too, *la hermana de mi hermana Manolita vino allí para cocinar, y ayudar a mi madre. Eso es la primera vez que comí estos* [My mother's sister, Manolita, came to cook and help my mother. That was the first time that I ever ate those].

Lorraine: That was the first time I ate them, too.

Louis: Boy, that's goooood! *Que buena la anguila* [how good the eel was!].

Lorraine: I ate horse meat over there too, which I had never eaten.

Louis: *Hemos pescado, hemos pillado muchas anguilas en el rio de Mauleon, porque vienen del mar, allí, y a la noche* [We fished a lot, we caught a lot of eels in the river in Mauleon, because they come from the sea there, and at night], in the season, you know, I'm going say it in English, in the season they come to the river. So what we do, we threw a rope with the hooks and we put *comida, tripa de gallinas, cualquier...* across the street,

*y a las cuatro de la mañana, anguilas, anguilas y anguilas, buenos, así de anguilas. Pero no dura, una semana es todo y no las vemos más para un año más, [food, chicken stomachs, whatever, and at four in the morning, eels, eels, and eels, like that with eels. But it doesn't last, only for a week, that's all and then we don't see them again for another year]. That was good, that stuff.*

Murua: Just a question about the name Erreguible. Erreguible, in my understanding the spelling in Basque should be Erreguibel, b-e-l at the end. Here you write –b-l-e.

Lorraine: That is French.

Louis: *Pero en Vasco es Iriguibel [But in Basque it is Iriguibel].*

Murua: The spelling is French spelling or Anglo-American spelling?

Lorraine: Well, what happened was, his family there, because it was the French version.

Louis: *Habia muchos Iriguibel [There were many Iriguibel].*

Lorraine: I-r-i-g-u-i, and here because they took the I as E, but he is the only one with “Erre” in his family.

Murua: He is the only one in the family with this spelling?

Louis: *Había un hermano de mi abuelo, era un tío de mi padre que cambió el nombre, Erreguibel, sabes por qué? [There was one of my grandfather's brothers, my dad's uncle who changed the name, Erreguibel, do you know why?]*

Murua: Why?

Louis: *Tenía a la frontera, [On the border] he had one cirie [sawmill], los arboles allí, cortaban allí, muy cerca de Valcarlos [trees there, they cut them there, very near Valcarlos].*

Lorraine: *Muy cerca de Pamplona [near Pamplona].*

Louis: *A la frontera en España. Tenía el nombre Iriguibel, pero como había mucha gente que Erreguibel, le cambió a Erreguibel. Después de eso... [On the Spanish border. His name was Iriguibel, but since so many people said it Erreguibel, he changed it to Erreguibel, and after that] do you remember the place where I used to be? Down there in the hotel? *Había un hotel del mismo nombre, tenía Iriguibel. Mi hermana vino a visitar y paramos allá, [There was a hotel with the same name, Iriguibel, and my sister came to visit so we stopped there], we went to eat something in there and mi hermana: “Es nuestro nombre”. Y sabes lo que dijo el hombre? Quieres que te pague la comida?” Yo le quería echar un puñetazo. Un joven... Fuimos afuera y nunca hemos parado en ese lugar. Teníamos el nombre, era natural que mi hermana le preguntara. Le preguntó en**

*español y todo. No, no.* [And my sister said, “This is our name.” And do you know what the man said? “Do you want me to pay for your meal? I wanted to give him a punch. A young guy... We went outside and never stopped there again. We had the same name, it was natural for her to ask him, she even asked him in Spanish. No, no.]

Murua: We didn’t talk about the period in which Louis arrived to Reno and opened the restaurant. I know, for instance, that you worked as a shepherd very briefly. So, I would like you to start telling me about that.

Louis: What I was doing over here, you mean?

Murua: When you arrived in Reno, as far as I know, your first job was to be a shepherd but just for one day. Why?

Lorraine: *Tio Justo* [Uncle Justo] was a sheep and wool buyer, and he was the one who was married to Louis’ aunt and he was the one obviously who had the idea that Louis was to come to be a shepherder. So, tell him about the day at Ormaechea’s.

Murua: Why did you work only one day as a shepherder?

Louis: Well, I went with my uncle up into Fallon on the Ormaechea ranch, a Spanish Basque. We worked all day long. There was I don’t know how many thousands of sheep, and we had to separate the little ones, the young ones from the mothers in some places.

Lorraine: How many sheep were there, approximately?

Louis: Over 30,000. It was a lot of people working in there, and I was one of those trying to get the little ones from the mother. We worked from about 8 o’clock in the morning until almost midnight. Then we went to eat. At six o’clock in the morning we wake up, everybody wakes up. I mean they call us to go, and here comes Mr. Ormaechea, and he said, “Louis, I’m gonna take you up to the sheep camp, up in Bridgeport, California.” I said, “Jesus.”

Lorraine: Here’s your dog, here’s what, 1,200 sheep?

Louis: So he told me: “1,200 sheep to take care of, a burro, a jackass, and the two dogs and a tent and everything is ready for you to go.” And I say, “No, I’m not going.”

Murua: Why?

Louis: My uncle, he said, “Your uncle, last night, he went back home.” “Oh yeah, you know what?” I said, “Take me to Fallon to the bus depot and I’m going back home, too.” “Oh, we cannot do that to you.” I say, “I can do that, I don’t want to go to sheep camp. I don’t know where Bridgeport is, I don’t even know up on the hill, I don’t know nothing about it. Except living for Reno, over here.” He said, “Well, okay, I’m going to take you, but your uncle is not going to be very happy.” I said, “Well, we’re going to discuss that.”



So I ended up in Reno. I didn't have enough money to pay the bus, my uncle was waiting, and he paid for the thing there. I entered the truck there to go home and he started bawling me out, like "*Esto no...*" [This, no...]. I said, "I'm going to tell you the truth. I never had any idea to go to sheep camp in the first place." "Why do you think I got you over here? I'm going to give you two weeks." He says, "If you find yourself a job, you can stay here. Otherwise, I send you back."

Murua: Back to the Basque Country?

Lorraine/Louis: Yeah.

Louis: So, at that time, I didn't know that I went over there with a green card already.

Lorraine: He came in on the quota.

Louis: I waited one year because of the quota.

Murua: So you had a green card?

Louis: Yeah, when I first come in, but I didn't know about it.

Lorraine: He didn't know what the application of it was.

Louis: My uncle never told me anything about that. I didn't know the laws over here, so I was supposed to go to sheep camp right away for three years. And I said, "Uh-oh, not me." So, my uncle was mad. "Two weeks. If you have a job, you can stay. Otherwise, I send you back." So, the next day I get up here, really early, and I walked through town all over the place asking for a job at all the casinos, hotels.

Murua: How did you apply for the jobs when you didn't speak English?

Louis: Applied for the what?

Murua: When you went asking for jobs at the casinos, the hotels, how did you manage with the language?

Louis: I couldn't even speak one word of English, okay, and some places people used to help me. Nobody wanted to hire me, because I couldn't speak English. So, I finally walked in there, five miles away, to the only French restaurant, called Eugene's. There was a Swiss man and an Italian guy. They both worked in Paris for many times, they went to Canada and they came back and bought it. Eugene sold his place, and then they came from Lake Tahoe and they moved to Reno and they took over. It was about 10 o'clock in the morning when I arrived in the place. I saw somebody cleaning up the front in there. You know what that guy looked like? It looked like a Basco. And I said, "*Euskalduna?*" [Are you Basque?]  
"*Bai*" [Yes].

Three brothers were working there, the Ornaga family, from St. Etienne de Baigorri. There was the old man, the one who was cleaning up in there, the one who was doing the dishes in that place in there for a long time. His name was Manex. Then, there was Raymond... Manex Ornaga, Raymond Ornaga, and Pierre Ornaga, three brothers. It used to be Ornaga and they changed to Arnaga. We'll come back to that.

So, Manex looked at me and he says, "You looking for work?"

"Sure, I am."

He said, "Well, Gilbert the owner, the cook, the chef, is coming over here within 10-15 minutes. He's going to be here, maybe you can talk to him."

So, okay, I could speak French, he was Swiss French and his partner was Joe Patruca, an Italian that speaks French, too. They worked in Paris before they went to Canada. He said, "You looking for a job?"

"Yeah, I am."

He said, "What kind of jobs?"

"Anything will be okay with me."

"Did you ever work in a kitchen?"

So I explained to him that I was a plumber in Bordeaux, France, and I worked to pay for the rent in my aunt's restaurant, in the hotel. To pay for the rent, I used to work in the kitchen with my aunt.

"What have you been doing?" I say,

"Well, seafood and stuff and so on and so forth." "So," he said, "when do you want to start?"

"Anytime."

He said, "Come back at 2 o'clock and I'll put you in the kitchen with me."

That's how it started. It took me until 2 o'clock in the morning to leave that place over there because there were 12 hours exactly that I worked. \$5.00 a day and one meal. I walked—no bus, no nothing. I couldn't even take a bus because I didn't know where I was taken. I walked back to Valley Road in Reno, Nevada, and I unlocked the door and my uncle said, "Where have you been?"

"Working."

"Working where?"

"Eugene's."

"Eugene's? What the hell were you doing over there?"

"I was working in the kitchen with the chef, Gilbert Rousseau."

Lorraine: Where did you learn to cook?

Louis: The next day, I was supposed to go at 2 o'clock. So, my uncle and my aunt say, "Well, you work at 2 o'clock?" "Yes. I'm gonna walk." "No, we gonna take you." They wanted to find out if I was telling the truth, and I said, "Good." So they took me over there, and they talked to Gilbert: "Yeah, I hired him yesterday, he seems to be pretty good in the kitchen." I was working with a Filipino guy with the seafood in the kitchen and I did quite a bit with seafood stuff in Bordeaux. He and I were working together and Gilbert was watching: "Pretty good." So they didn't come to pick me up at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Murua: They didn't go.

Louis: I had to walk.

Murua: How many miles?

Louis: About five miles.

Murua: It was on South Virginia?

Louis: Yeah, way down. So I went back home. He took the next day. I don't remember exactly what happened. He said something. Well, he charged me so much to stay in his house. So, the next day he said, "You owe me \$1,100 for the trip over here to this country." That's the only thing I heard. Before that, it was \$750. "So, you gonna give me so much per week when you get paid, to stay over here."

The first week I made \$29 in one week, and the first thing I did, two o'clock in the morning, I crossed the street to where they used to have a coffee shop open all night, I went over there with Pierre Ornaga and had bacon and eggs, "*xingarra eta arraultzea*" [bacon and eggs]. Pierre Ornaga had an old car and he took me back home. He took me many times back home. So, everything was okay. I stayed in that place for 10 months, 12 hours a day, \$5.00 a day and one meal. There was another, La Pochard, with a Breton from Bretania cook, French cook, but that's what he used to make ham stew.

Lorraine: Every day.

Louis: *Con patatas, jamon, carotas, es todo zanahorias ay, ay, ay todos los días la misma cosa.* [With potatoes, ham, carrots that's all, carrots, ay, ay, ay every day the same thing!] Every day the same thing.

Lorraine: How about your weekends when you helped at Gilbert's house?

Louis: Yeah. In the meantime, on Mondays we were closed. So, Jo Paturca said, "Tomorrow I'm gonna take you to my house. You can help us in there to clean up the windows." *Tenía una casa muy grande* [He had a very big house]. I went over there, I cleaned up all the windows. His wife made me a salad around noontime to eat. *L'eché, lechuga* [lettuce].

Murua: Only lettuce.

Lorraine: That's it.

Louis: Yeah, *es todo, ni paga ni nada eh* [that was all, no pay or anything]. So that went on for a few weeks, you know. After 10 months, I said—

Lorraine: You also did some plumbing for them.

Louis: Did what?

Lorraine: You also did some plumbing for them.

Louis: Did what?

Lorraine: Didn't you do some plumbing for them?

Louis: *Tenia...* [I had...]

Murua: In English.

Louis: Yeah, that's right. I forgot to tell you the brothers used to sleep—they built a shack on the back end and they were plumbing for the toilet and everything. "Louis, you get a day off on every Thursday and before I start working, go inside and do the plumbing." All the things I did for that place over there, you won't believe it. But I had a job, and I was at peace with my uncle because I used to pay so much, \$15 a week.

Murua: To stay over there?

Louis: To stay over there and eat over there.

Murua: I suppose that eventually you decided to leave.

Louis: His wife, Justo's wife, was my father's sister. She even told me one time, I better tell you that, she got mad at me or some stuff like that and she said to me: "Oh you French men, you think you own everything." *Viene del mismo pueblo. La abuela, la madre de ella, era mi abuela, era hermana de mi padre y me dijo en Francés [unclear] y no quería hablar francés conmigo. Español todo el tiempo. Y gracias a Dios que mi madre también hablaba eso. Eso, aparte* [She was from the same town. The grandmother, her mother, was my grandmother. She was my father's sister and she tells me that in French [unclear] and she didn't want to speak to me in French. Spanish all the time. Thank God my mom spoke that. Thus, aside...]

Murua: How long were you working in Eugene's and how long were you living with your uncle and aunt?

Louis: What?

Murua: How long were you staying with your uncle and aunt in that place?

Louis: I didn't last a long time up there. Before 10 months. You know we got a little bit tired. So one time I told my aunt Dolores, "Tía, I'm gonna pack up. I got a place to stay with Raymond Ornaga in Ryland Street. He's got an apartment with a kitchen, two beds, so we can cook and everything in there. Bathroom and everything and it only cost me \$10 a week." We used to pay \$20 a week between him and I for the apartment. When we had

a day off, we used to go to a nice coffee shop and go eat Corn Flakes and stuff like that, and *xingarra eta arraultzea* [bacon & eggs], ham... *Sabías lo que hacíamos?* [Do you know what we used to do?] Over there they used to put out the crackers so you could serve yourself if you want. So sometimes we used to stop in there and ask for a cup of coffee, and he and I would pick up the crackers and crack poom, crack poof, crack poof, *y comía todo el paquete* [I ate the whole pack]. Almost the whole thing. That was our pleasure to do that.

Lorraine: Anyway, on Monday he normally was supposed to have the day off, and so he had made plans to go to Lake Tahoe with Serge, right?

Louis: Oh yeah, on Monday that's how I stopped working there.

Lorraine: And he had—

Louis: At 2 o'clock in the morning I was in the kitchen taking the... how you call that?

Lorraine: The screens.

Louis: Yeah, the screens. Take them and I had a fork in there to get them out, to go down and clean them up and put them back. That was at 2 o'clock in the morning and that was Sunday night. Joe Patruca, they were having their dinner, and he came and he said: "Oh, we got a special party tomorrow and tomorrow you're gonna work."

Murua: Monday.

Louis: Monday. I say, "No I'm not." I said, "Serge and I..." because they knew Serge. He was our waiter, and a good friend, French, about the same age as me. We pick up a car and "Louis, let's go to Lake Tahoe and spend the day tomorrow." "Sure." So I told Joe Patruca, "Not tomorrow. I'm taking this Monday off and we're going to Lake Tahoe. I saw Lake Tahoe only once before and I want to go."

Lorraine: Let me interject something. He had had several successive Mondays that he was supposed to have off, but they pulled him in. He hadn't had any time off.

Louis: That was my day off. The other Mondays I was cleaning up the windows. So he ramped on top of the stove with the screen, left the screen down on top of the stove and I have the fork in my hand, and Joe Patruca started running over there: "You wanna kill me?"

Lorraine: He had a mad look in his eye.

Louis: I went over there and put the thing on the table next to them and I said, "You know, hey Joe, this is enough for you, I don't need it." Gilbert took me to the kitchen and he asked me, "What happened?" I say, "Well, I was cleaning up those things in there, he told me to go to work tomorrow, but I already planned to go to Lake Tahoe with my

friend, and I want to take a day off once in a while. So I say, "I quit. I don't want to work over here no more, not with that man in there." "No, Louis! You can stay over here but you have to talk to him." "No, I quit! First of all, \$5.00 for 10 months, one meal for 10 months, and the same thing every day of the week, that's enough for me."

Murua: After that what did you do for a living?

Louis: I never had to worry about that. The second day I was at home I received a telephone call from Andre. Andre used to have a restaurant up on Center Street.

Murua: Where? What street?

Lorraine/Louis: On Center Street.

Louis: Then, "Hey, Louis."

He was from *Palois* from Pau, so he said, "I heard that you quit Eugene's. Do you want to work here?"

"Okay, I can go back to the kitchen if you want."

And he said, "Okay, sure. Come on tomorrow about 8 o'clock in the morning and I'm gonna introduce you to the chef."

So I went over there, and when I went into the kitchen, the man was about 6' 5" big and *tenía un zapato así* [his shoe was like this]. *Alemán*.

Murua: German.

Louis: German, and he says: "You won't believe this. I am French and German." He was at the war and I was at the war, well I guess, the other side. He took me under his wing and he showed me how to cut meat.

[Phone rings.]

Murua: The German guy.

Louis: You wouldn't believe how nice a man he was. He took me under his wing and, believe me, he showed me what to do, how to cut meat. They bought a half a steer at one time and he showed me, "This piece is this, this piece is that."

He showed me how to cut it, and he'd make me cut it and he'd say, "You're doing pretty good at that thing, I see you know how to use your knife, good!"

And all the time he had a little something special for the two of us to eat. Then it was about three weeks I worked with him, something like that, when Andre comes to me and says, "Louis, I got a good idea for you. I know you are doing good in the kitchen, but let me tell you something, I'd like to put you in the bar, with the bartender."

Lorraine: The bar boy.

Louis: The bar boy. "You want to learn like that."

“Sure, I’m in the kitchen all the time, the bar is okay with me.”

So he put me in the bar. In the bar it was the same thing as in the kitchen. The bartender who was working there, the first day I work with him in the bar, he splits his tips with me. Then he took me at 2 o’clock in the morning, when they close up the place, to the Grand Café for breakfast. And I never see a thing like that in my life.

“What do you want to eat?” Ham and eggs. He ordered Corn Flakes and a banana.

I said: “That’s all you eat?”

And he said, “Yeah.” So they brought the stuff in there, he takes a hankie [laughter], you know why he was eating corn flakes and a banana? *No tenía dientes* [He didn’t have any teeth]. He didn’t have any teeth, so he says, “Don’t worry about it.”

And every night he took me in there he buys everything. And, then, pretty soon, I think after about a month, I was with him, or maybe less than a month, he said, “Louis, you know how to make those drinks, the most common drinks. You take this stand of the bar, and I’ll take this one over here.”

And he knew what he said: “I bet anything that you’re going to have all of the ladies.”

Lorraine: He was a pretty handsome young man.

Louis: That was the truth. The girls were like that, to the left of the bar where I was. And then, that’s what happened: \$18 a day plus the tips, I used to make an average of \$35 every day. At first, when I was working in the kitchen, I had to work from 8 o’clock in the morning. And, after that, I would start at 2-3 o’clock in the afternoon till 2 o’clock in the morning—about 10 hours. \$18 and all the food and drink I wanted.

Lorraine: And you were able to buy your car.

Louis: I saved every penny, and six months later I bought a Pontiac.

Murua: Pontiac? How much did it cost?

Louis: I paid cash \$4,200. I met her driving that car. She had a Pontiac, too. One of those little ones.

Murua: What was the name of this restaurant, this bar?

Louis: The name was André.

Murua: The name of the bar?

Louis: The same thing. André restaurant. And then from there we went to Big Hat. He quit there because Harrah’s Club bought that thing for Harrah’s Bingo, and then he took the Big Hat.

Murua: Where was the Big Hat?

Lorraine: That was on the corner of Moana and South Virginia.

Louis: Moana and South Virginia, Big Hat, and he took me with him to work over there. And there was an Italian waiter there that he told André: "If you don't take Louis with me, I quit." That's to tell you, I used to make more friends, that's on the side, too. You don't have to put this, but I used to sing pretty good.

Lorraine: Very well.

Louis: They had a piano player, Eutilio, in the Big Hat. One time Clark Gable came up from Lake Tahoe. He was making a movie. There were about seven or eight.

Murua: Do you know if the movie was *The Misfits*?

Lorraine: No. This was prior to that, way back before that.

Murua: Do you remember which movie he was filming?

Lorraine: I'm sure that Louis probably doesn't know.

Louis: The movie playing?

Lorraine: He was wondering if you knew the movie that he was in at Lake Tahoe when he came in there, but I'm sure you didn't know that.

Louis: I don't remember the thing.

Murua: Okay, tell me the story.

Lorraine: He had some beautiful women on his arm, anyway.

Louis: Outilio was playing like that and he said, "Hey Louis, sing *La Vie en Rose*." I used to love to sing that song. He started, Outilio, like that and they were all the way to the bar and I started singing. No more noise from the bar, everybody all started to listen to me singing. It makes me cry thinking about it. Anyway, he says, "I don't know what you're doing," Clark Gable says, "but you know I'm gonna take you with me to Hollywood." And I said, "No, no." He really wanted to take me with him. I used to love to sing. At the Santa Fe Hotel when I was working in there.

Lorraine: Santa Fe Hotel.

Murua: About Clark Gable: Did he give you a good tip after the singing?

Louis: Who?

Lorraine: Did Clark Gable tip you after the singing?



Louis: What do you mean? Did he put \$20 in the piano for me? Oh, yeah, you bet your life! Well, \$20, that was something. It took \$2.50 for a meal.

Lorraine: Well, this restaurant was the last place in Reno at that time. There was nothing but farms beyond there.

Louis: Farms, well, that is part of my life. That was beautiful. As a matter of fact, I used to stop at the Santa Fe Hotel, I used to work at the Santa Fe Hotel part-time.

Murua: In the Santa Fe Hotel? Doing what?

Louis: I used to help the cook in the kitchen and serve the tables.

Murua: After the Big Hat?

Louis: Oh, yeah. André sold the place and went to Las Vegas with his boy. He opened a place over there.

Lorraine: In between, you went to the Riverside.

Louis: Yeah, the Riverside. Two weeks I worked in there.

Murua: The Riverside is another restaurant?

Lorraine: Yeah, that was a big restaurant right there, near the river.

Louis: It was a casino, and the chef was from down south.

Lorraine: From South America, he was French.

Louis: He was French. His name was Louis.

Murua: Louis?

Louis: Like me. That's right, I worked there for a while.

Lorraine: Well, you went to work as a bus person. Ramon decided to make you a waiter.

Louis: Yeah. What was his name? The Maitre d'?

Lorraine: Ramon.

Louis: The Maitre d' put me as a bus boy to clean up the tables. One week later he comes to me and he says, "No, no, you got too much talent. I'm gonna put you as a waiter." It

was hard for me to write in English, so I used to go to the kitchen and write it in French for the chef.

Lorraine: It was white gloves thing. That's how fancy that place was.

Louis: We used to make Crêpes Suzette in front of the customers, flambé. I was talented, all right.

Murua: After Riverside you went to Santa Fe?

Lorraine: No.

Louis: Well, yes.

Lorraine: Mention one item there, though. They used to have entertainers that came there. So after it was all over, we used to be singing and so forth. And those were the days before Vegas, when the big stars used to come here, like John Wayne, Frank Sinatra, all that type of person. So, here Louis is working there.

Louis: John Wayne, Frank Sinatra....

Murua: Frank Sinatra, John Wayne were there?

Louis/Lorraine: Yeah.

Murua: Did you see them?

Louis: Rosemary Clooney, the big shots from Hollywood used to come.

Lorraine: Anyway, this one time they brought in, of all people—go ahead.

Louis: You see, that was in between Riverside Hotel, Santa Fe Hotel, and the [unclear]. I'm a little bit confused about the thing. I'm talking about something about 55 or 60 years ago.

Murua: I understand.

Lorraine: Anyway, here he is at the place and who comes in but the Compagnons de la Chanson, the ones that he was singing with in Paris. But he went on his spree.

Louis: There were eight singers and one lady singer, called Les Compagnons de la Chanson. Most of them were Basque from the South of France, and they used to sing in Paris, when I got out from the Army.

Lorraine: You talked about that, Louis.

Louis: From the army I was in there. Instead of recognizing me, they made me sing with them over there. They wanted to keep me with them.

Murua: But you met them in...?

Lorraine: In Paris

Murua: In Paris. But in Reno?

Lorraine: In Reno they were booked at the Riverside and they remembered him.

Louis: And I was working at the Riverside Hotel at that time. They made me sing over there, too.

Murua: So you are telling that you worked for a while in the Santa Fe Hotel. At that time, how many Basque restaurants, or motels or boarding houses were still in the area of Lake Street and Fourth Street, that area where Santa Fe and Louis' Basque Corner are? How many Basque restaurants, do you remember?

Lorraine: Just the one.

Murua: Just one?

Lorraine: Just one. Then the one across the street.

Louis: The Toscano.

Lorraine: The Toscano was an Italian name, but the Basques ran that.

Louis: Then there was the Txikito Club.

Lorraine: Yeah, that was a bar.

Louis: There were two Basque people who ran it. That was a bar.

Lorraine: Conseso [phonetic] and—

Louis: Conseso and Dolores.

Lorraine: Conseso and Dolores, they had a boarding house.

Murua: What was the name of the boarding house?

Lorraine: Conseso and Dolores what? What was their last name?

Murua: Was it on Fourth Street?

Lorraine: No, it was down right there where the railroad station is.

Louis: Son of a gun, what was it? Next to Harolds Club, on the same alley.

Lorraine: It went that way, but the front part of it was on—oh, isn't that terrible?

Louis: He had the name next to the Blue, the dancing place in there, and they used to have the pharmacy right next to it.

Lorraine: The pharmacy was there, yes.

Louis: Oh, are you thinking of the name of the street?

Lorraine: Yeah!

Murua: Never mind, it's not important. I have a list here of all the Basque restaurants and motels. I think that by that time they were already closed, but just in case, one is Alturas, do you remember Alturas?

Louis: Alturas?

Murua: Hotel Alturas Restaurant.

Louis: Cesar Alturas, that is what's his name, Maria, *es un pueblito Basco* [it's a small Basque town].

Lorraine: He's talking about a hotel.

Murua: But there was a hotel or restaurant back in the old times.

Lorraine: In Reno, the Alturas Hotel in Reno.

Murua: I read about that. And there was the Toscano, the Indart, the French Hotel, the Start, the Aitona....

Lorraine: They are prior, I think Catarina is the only one that had anything.

Louis: Etchart, Catherine Etchart. She used to have a hotel up on Second Street.

Lorraine: It was on Second Street.

Murua: Let's try to finish your story up until Louis' Basque Corner. So, the Riverside, Santa Fe, and from Santa Fe...?

Lorraine: How about your one day or week at the Mapes Hotel?

Louis: The what?

Lorraine: The Mapes Hotel. That was a short stay.

Louis: There was the one time, my cousin wanted to bring me, and take me to be a cabinet maker. And I was seventeen years with him. I built up my whole house.

Lorraine: Talk to him about when you went to the Mapes.

Louis: Yeah, that's when I was working during the day, and I used to go to the Mapes Hotel.

Lorraine: Oh, I see.

Louis: Yeah, to the Mapes Hotel.

Lorraine: All right, you better get to the Santa Fe then first, that's the next thing.

Louis: The son of the Santa Fe Hotel, I used to go over there, off and on, for almost four years at the Santa Fe. And I worked with Martin Esain, he used to own the place.

Murua: Martinez?

Louis: Martin Esain, he came from the Aldudes. *Sabes, allí arriba cerca de la frontera? Les Aldudes, cerca de Elizondo. Pasa la frontera Elizondo, Les Aldudes, St Jean Pied, St. What? St. Martin* [You know from there above close to the border? The Aldudes, near Elizondo, just over the border St. Jean Pied, St. What? St. Martin].

Murua: From Elizondo you go to Izpegui and from Izpegui to St. Etienne de Baigorri.

Louis: St. Etienne de Baigorri, yeah.

Lorraine: So did you work part time for Martin before you went to work for—?

Louis: Remember, I used to work as a cabinet maker during the day.

Lorraine: I know that, but I'm talking about prior to that time. You worked there.

Louis: Oh yeah, I was staying at the Santa Fe Hotel. I used to live upstairs. I'm not going to pay rent. The boss, Martin Esain, he was just like my father. You know, he took care of me, you won't believe it. He even went to visit in France with his nieces and nephew, he brought them over here. He went to France, and he gave me all the keys to the whole

hotel, to the bar, everything and I was only 22 years old. Remember that? I was 22, 23, 24....

Lorraine: Around 23.

Murua: So at that time you were a cabinet maker and at the Santa Fe Hotel?

Louis: He used to call me: "I got a party tonight, *Louis vient*, [come] come on over here and help me, I need help." That's when he had Joe, his nephew, Zubillaga, from Les Aldudes. He brought him over here with Anita, the sister, and, what was her name? She was married to Jose. Oh, for crying sake, I used to work with her. *Dos hermanas y un hermano* [two sisters and a brother]. Anita, Jose....

Lorraine: I'm sorry I can't remember her name. The tall one.

Murua: Never mind.

Louis: *Los nombres, ay ama mia!* [The names, ay ama mia!] *He trabajado con ella mucho tiempo* [I worked with her for a long time]. As a matter of fact, when we opened Louis' Basque Corner she came to help me in the kitchen... Etchemendy, what was her name?

Lorraine: Oh yeah, but she wasn't part of the family. She wasn't Joe's relative.

Louis: She was what?

Lorraine: She wasn't Joe's relative. You're talking about Beñat's wife.

Louis: Yeah, Beñat.

Lorraine: He was the bartender there.

Louis: She was married to Beñat Etchemendy, at any rate.

Murua: So your last job before Louis' Basque Corner was the Santa Fe and cabinet maker?

Louis: Cabinet maker, yeah.

Murua: And after Santa Fe, there wasn't any other restaurant?

Louis: No, Santa Fe and cabinet maker.

Murua: Okay. Last week we talked about the accident. Now I want to talk about Fourth Street. When you [Lorraine] arrived on Fourth Street to work, you arrived earlier because you worked for nine years at Alpine Glass. Was that on Fourth Street?

Louis: Yeah, it was across the street from the restaurant.

Murua: Was that in the '50s?

Lorraine: '52.

Murua: It was '52 when you started. Could you tell me how different the Fourth Street area was when you started working there?

Louis: That was beautiful, Fourth Street.

Lorraine: Next to Alpine Glass was the Milk Depot, they called it, where the lawn is now. Every morning, I can remember, the big head of one of the companies that carried all the vegetables and so forth, and one from the liquor company, you could always see them, every morning, go have their coffee there. On the corner was another little restaurant, right across from Louis' Basque Corner, on Evans Avenue. On the far corner there was a tire company. This Italian fellow had it.

Louis' Basque Corner was several things during its years. I know there was a cleaners there, an artist—oh dear, what's his name? A very prominent artist was there. He even used to have his little thing where the parking lot is. The trains were going at that time, where the big station place is. And everybody knew everybody, you know. On the little street, E Street that was to the east of Alpine, there was a Portuguese fellow who had this little shop. I can remember the first year that I wanted an advent wreath. That's this wreath you have before Christmas. I went down to Mas Maba, Lilly Maba, going towards Sparks, they stocked the flower shop there. And I went in and I asked Mas, I said, "This is what I want." He had never heard about it.

Louis: They were Chinese people.

Lorraine: So he went over to the little Portuguese fellow and he made the rim and so forth and so on, I remember that. Right next door was a little bar, and right next door Mary Quilici had her little coffee shop where everybody would go for their 10 o'clock coffee in the morning. Across the street, where Maury Moffet was, was the sign company. There was a sign company, remember? Maury Moffett. Then on the corner across the street was Albers. This was a place where went to get your hay for the horses and your barley and so forth.

Louis: Yeah, barley. You could buy anything to feed animals in there. It was a big place.

Lorraine: And then Louis says that right across the street was Pinky's Market. Well, Vince and Terese were dear, dear friends of ours for years, and they carried, in this little tiny grocery store, it was the only place that his uncle on the other side, Tio Justo, Renee's father... Renee's father's name?—would go.

Louis: Jesus.

Lorraine: Jesus, I knew it was a J. He was a shepherd, but a very particular man. I mean, he made his own wine. When he went to the store he had to have his sardines that are in oil from such and such a place.

Louis: Sardines, Portuguese.

Lorraine: And, then, he would go up to the meat counter and tell them exactly how he'd want the piece of meat.

Louis: *Una costillita fina* [a really thin steak].

Lorraine: I mean, he was that type of person. And they were there I don't know for how long. Let me stop and think. There was the other glass company right there by Wells Avenue.

Murua: What was the name of the other company?

Lorraine: What was the name of the glass company? Desert Glass.

Louis: Next to that big hotel, on the alley in there.

Lorraine: There's a used tire place right there now, it was right in the back of it there, all right.

Louis: That's it, next to Wells Avenue.

Lorraine: And wasn't there a... there was another little feed place in the back where people used to get eggs? Remember? Next to the river.

Louis: Yeah, God. She remembers all those.

Lorraine: Alpine had of course the main glass company, but then they had one where they took care of glass on automobiles and that type of thing, down the street.

Louis: Then the hotel.

Lorraine: Well, you're getting farther down now. I'm trying to think... Ben's mother, Ben that has Ben's liquors, she had another little place just beyond Wells Avenue, an old grocery store for years [Akert Market]. Then there was the old brewery, of course [Reno Brewing Company]. I think that should be revitalized for something. There was an Italian hotel, and the Highway 40 Club that was on Fourth Street.

Louis: The Highway 40 was a beautiful bar. They used to have music and everything, a lot of people. Fourth Street was very, very attractive to the people. It was.



Lorraine: Well, it was like another family at that time. I mean, everybody knew the other person and they associated with them.

Louis: That was a part of Reno, Fourth Street, East Fourth Street.

Lorraine: And of course the Halfway Club. I mean, that's been there forever. It's on Fourth Street and that's been there, my goodness, fifty-some years.

Louis: I've been 64 years in Reno, you've been here what? 50?

Lorraine: 52.

Louis: 52. Ok, that Halfway place in there. It still exists.

Lorraine: And it's still the same as it was. If you went by there, like somebody said to me, if I went by there and I was new in Reno I'd say, "Ooooooooooh," you know. But it's there, and, then the Coney Island.

Louis: The Coney Island on Fourth Street, too.

Lorraine: And of course, that's where they had the big fight, the Big Fight.

Louis: Yeah, boxing.

Murua: Where?

Lorraine: Oh my gracious, that was—

Murua: Where? In Coney Island?

Lorraine: No, let me stop and think. It was on this side.

Louis: *Jack Dempsey se ha peleado aquí, en Reno* [Jack Dempsey fought here in Reno].

Murua: With whom?

Louis: *Jack Dempsey, con el español* [Jack Dempsey with the Spaniard]

Murua: Which Spaniard?

Louis: *Como se llama?* [What's his name?]

Lorraine: The Basque.

Murua: Basque?

Lorraine: It starts with a 'P.'

Murua: [Paulino] Uzkudun? Uzkudun fought here in Reno?

Louis: Yeah, oh yeah.

Lorraine: And, then, they had the big one here in Reno.

Louis: *El campeonato* [the championship]. It lasted 24 rounds.

Lorraine: And then they had the big one between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries.

Louis: Oh gosh, *había mucha pelea aquí en Reno* [there were a lot of fights here in Reno]. Yeah, that's right.

Lorraine: Anyway, he won, of course. Of course, that was the whole world, and the one of the fellows that started one of these.... Where was it, where was the hotel that you stop in as you go to Las Vegas? That hotel that you stopped to eat at, anyway, this gentleman [Tex Rickard] had struck it rich down there, and he had lots of money, and he's the one that promoted this fight. And then there was also apparently, some kind of a park [Coney Island], where they had entertainment for the kids, and things like that in that area. Of course, that's going way back again.

Louis: You're not talking about the one on the corner of Sutro and that little bar in there, that was the fighter, was his brother...?

Lorraine: No, it was farther down than that, it was farther down.

Murua: There was more than one place for boxing, or only one place?

Lorraine: They rebuilt the second one because it had to be so much bigger, I know.

Louis: Over there, how they call? Where they have the horse shows, they used to have a ring in there too.

Lorraine: On Wells Avenue?

Louis: Wells Avenue, yeah.

Lorraine: Oh, the Livestock Center?

Louis: Where they got the rodeos.

Lorraine: Yeah. I said the Livestock Center.

Louis: Livestock, yeah, that's where they used to fight. They had a little ring in there.

Lorraine: And, of course, at that time, being that Fourth Street was the main artery, all these motels were considered A-1. Some of them were very, very nice at that time, for that period of time.

Louis: That was the most important highway there was from the East to the West.

Murua: For you was it the place for social life? When you went out to drink something, to take a coffee, you usually went to Fourth Street area places?

Lorraine: Well, even before that, yes.

Murua: Even before?

Lorraine: When I was at Alpine, like I say, they were all familiar faces.

Louis: What was the name of the little place in there, where they used to serve breakfast and coffee, next to Alpine Glass?

Lorraine: The Milk Depot.

Louis: Yeah, but the—

Lorraine: Oh, Mary Quilici's. Mary Quilici's was next door.

Louis: But what was the name of it?

Lorraine: Mary Quilici.

Louis: There was in there, there were three places very, very familiar, where people used to come and to have something to eat a little bit. And, then, I don't remember the thing, the Coffee Bar? No, no... Where Manuel Chavez used to work, too.

Lorraine: Oh, that was on the corner of Virginia and Fourth Street. That was a soda shop. And right across the street from there, if I recall, there was a hotel, that people passed. It was an upstairs place.

Louis: Le Pasteur. The guy used to own that place.

Lorraine: Because I remember the lady coming into Louis' and talking about it.

Louis: Yeah, for crying sake, yeah, that's right.

Lorraine: It was just upstairs there. Where Welsh's Bakery was.

Louis: The guy was limping. He had one wooden leg. He had an accident up at the ranch and they cut his leg, he had a peg leg. That's the one that had that place in there, like a motel.

Lorraine: The Alturas Bar.

Murua: Alturas Bar?

Louis: It was on Fourth Street, too.

Lorraine: Yeah, that was. What's her name? The one who was married to?

Louis: Zaticas.

Lorraine: No, it's the one, the widow in Gardnerville—her husband was a brother or something to them, and he had to sue them to get all his money.

Louis: You're not talking about Zaticas?

Lorraine: Zaticas, no, no. Zaticas was the one—

Louis: Helen was—

Lorraine: No, no, you know the one that married our [unclear], that became the chef at the J.T., that was in San Francisco for a while and he lived with us?

Louis: Oh, the one that went to San Francisco.

Lorraine: But what's the name of his in-laws?

Louis: The guy used to have the sheep up at Bridgeport over there? For crying out loud.

Murua: You are trying to remember the name of the owner of the Alturas Bar?

Lorraine: Yeah.

Murua: It was a Basque man?

Lorraine: Yeah. It's his wife who ran the bar.

Louis: She's Basque, yeah. The lady who used to run the hotel, she's Basque.

Lorraine: That's been there for years, and years, and years.

Murua: It was just a bar or was it a motel?

Lorraine: No, no, it was a bar with rooms upstairs. I don't know how they're rented. And, of course, I know just from the little bit that you hear that Pete, the attorney—

Murua: Echeverria?

Lorraine: Echeverria. Didn't his mother have a little boarding house of some kind there on Fourth Street? Remember, on Fourth as you're going west where the bus depot is right now, at one time there was a school there, and they lived, I think, very close to that place. And she had some kind of boarding there at her house. I'm almost sure.

Louis: Yeah, Pete's wife.

Lorraine: Pete's mother-in-law. Of course, they would know more about that, the daughter.

Murua: So you said that all the faces were familiar there on Fourth Street. Are you talking about Basque people and Basque bars? What other backgrounds did the people on Fourth Street have? I mean, were there many Italians, or Portuguese? Was it a mixture?

Lorraine: When I came to Reno in 1952 the population of the state of Nevada was predominantly Italian.

Louis: Italians.

Lorraine: They were the ones who came, they're the ones who bought all this land.

Louis: Sparks was *Italiano*.

Lorraine: As far as the Basque were concerned on Fourth Street, I wouldn't say that there were many.

Murua: So, there were Italians.

Louis: A lot of Italians.

Murua: What else?

Louis: All around Reno.

Lorraine: Chinese, we had Chinese.

Louis: All around Reno, all the farmers were Italians, practically 90%.

Lorraine: Except the Basco that you could have bought the land from and you didn't [laughter]. Oh dear, I'm trying to think.

Louis: Oh gosh, you know, when you're young you screw up everything.

Murua: We were talking about the background of the people on Fourth Street. So, Italian, Chinese, some Basque....

Lorraine: Jewish, there were Jewish people.

Louis: There was Portuguese, too.

Lorraine: Yeah, Portuguese.

Louis: On Fourth Street.

Lorraine: There were some Basques that owned one motel at one time.

Louis: Two motels, to the east of us.

Murua: Two Basco motels. Do you remember the name of them?

Lorraine: If I was going down the street I could point them out. I'll have to think.

Louis: Right on Fourth Street, two motels, a young couple. As a matter of fact, I think they came from Navarra, close to Pamplona, they knew each other in the old country. I remember the story about that, they knew each other in the Old Country, they both came over here separate and then they got married here and bought the hotel. *Como se llamaba... La cabeza, hombre, después de 85 años, sabes, se lleno de mucho* [What was his name... The head, man, after 85 years, you know, is filled with a lot].

Murua: No, but you are remembering many things.

Louis: She helped me to remember a lot of things.

Murua: Let's go back to Louis' Basque Corner. In the beginning, how many people started to work with you? In the first years how many people were in the staff? And after that, what were the changes?

Lorraine: I think that the highest number we ever had working for us, if I recall, was I'd say about 23.

Murua: 23 people working with you, including you?

Louis: Yeah, we had quite a few Bascos from Spanish.

Murua: That was not in the beginning. In the beginning, how many?

Lorraine: There was Louis and I, Jim, but very shortly he got called up to duty, probably one bartender. Let me stop and think. Louis and I, and Mrs. what's-her-name?

Louis: And Hilario was cooking.

Lorraine: Yeah, two in the kitchen, the dishwasher and the—

Louis: Y Juan Lavari.

Lorraine: Louis, he said when we first started. Juan wasn't there when we first started.

Murua: Initially, in the beginning.

Lorraine: Yes, I guess it was Juan and Hilario, you and I, the dishwasher.... Okay, that's five. One bartender.

Murua: Six.

Louis: One dishwasher, the one that stuttered.

Lorraine: Anyway, that's six. We had a maid for upstairs. Seven.

Louis: Evelyn.

Lorraine: And a clean-up person. Eight.

Louis: And then in the kitchen with me there was—what was her name? What was her name from Gardnerville?

Lorraine: Yeah, she just worked a week.

Louis: Yeah, but we started with that.

Lorraine: I know that, but we have to think.

Louis: Helena Etchemendy.

Lorraine: All right, and we haven't considered waitresses. We had Mary Beth. Who was the original waitress?

Louis: Teresa.

Lorraine: Teresa wasn't on the staff when we started.

Louis: Oh, when we started.

Lorraine: When we started... [calling] Mary Beth!

Mary Beth: What?

Lorraine: I have a question. Come up the hallway, please. She could probably tell you more about downstairs.

Louis: The first time, who was the woman who came...?

Lorraine [to Mary Beth]: When you were waitressing who else was waitressing, when we first started? Do you remember how many we had on the floor?

Mary Beth: I'd say four because you only had the one dining room.

Lorraine: Yeah, okay, that's what I needed to know.

Murua: Four waitresses? So, a total of about nine. The organization of the restaurant, I mean the place, did it change over time?

Lorraine: Yes, because when we started we had the bar, we had one dining room, a kitchen, and the back room. On the other side, in the front, we had a lobby. And behind that was a little room, where I did the bookkeeping. And of course, as I said, we were in there for a year and we just knew that we had to do something with it, as far as the quantity of people that were coming in and so forth. And, in fact, our opening night we couldn't believe the people that showed up. We were inundated. We had people on the sidewalk.

And the only thing I did was, I sent a little postcard to everybody I knew. That's when we tried to get money from the bank and this and that, but we hadn't been in business for that long, so finally Judge Barrett agreed to go half and half with us. So we changed the front, we made the second dining room, put in the air conditioning and a few other things downstairs, and then we tackled the hotel. And then, of course, we were able to generate more business that way.

Louis: All the work, I did in there.

Lorraine: Oh, he was putting up the walls and all that, Louis. That's right.

Murua: You were saying me that you were very busy, you worked a lot, about 17 hours a day.

Louis: The first day that we served in there, we opened the thing the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, two days before Christmas.

Lorraine: The 22<sup>nd</sup>.



Louis: The 22<sup>nd</sup> I mean, three days before Christmas, we opened, and that night we served three hundred people.

Murua: Three hundred?

Louis: The first night. And we didn't have but one tiny room. So we started serving at 6 o'clock and the second serving at 8 o'clock.

Murua: Could you tell me each of you, more or less, how was one day for you? I mean, what did you do to work 17 hours a day?

Lorraine: Well.

Murua: Wake up at what time?

Lorraine: We wake up...of course we had children still going to school, so we had some things on for them. They were mostly on their own; there were two of them.

Louis: We opened the place at 7:30 in the morning.

Lorraine: Yes. So, we were down there what? Seven.

Louis: Oh yeah, around 7 o'clock we used to go down there.

Lorraine: And, of course, he'd set up the kitchen and so forth. And you'd have to set up for the bar, you'd have to get all the tables ready. You have to get all the preparations of the food going. And then, in those days we had a lot of retired people who lived in all these little places that are gone now around Fourth Street, for all the motels, and they'd come in for their little glass of wine, or whatever.

Murua: In the morning?

Lorraine: So they'd be back and forth, at any rate. And then you'd have to be ready for lunch. And then, on my side of it, I had to help down there, and then get the money counted from the day before, and get ready to go to the bank, take care of anything that needed to be done up in the hotel. It was just a non-stop job. And then, of course, you had to make your purchases for the kitchen in-between, and I'd have to do things over the phone. Then, before you knew it, it was dinner time. Of course, that was your major part of the day.

Louis: If you want to know the truth, every time I think about it, I'm getting tired, only thinking what it is we did.

Lorraine: In those days we'd serve till 10 sometimes. Even 10:30. Into the evening area, there are people who have stayed over, they're at the bar, you're cleaning up, getting ready for the next day. In the meantime, Louis, at that time, at that point, he'd be in the

bar working, too. And, as I said, sometimes we had some university kids around, and we had a heck of a time getting them out of there.

Louis: 10:30 from the kitchen to the bar, and at three o'clock in the morning, go home.

Murua: Three o'clock in the morning.

Lorraine: That happened more than once.

Murua: Usually what time did you close?

Louis: We tried to close at midnight. It never happened. It never happened. When we had the kids from the university, to be able to close the door I used to take them to the Nugget in Sparks and bought them breakfast. That was the only way I could get them out.

Lorraine: But anyway, like I say, it was a full program. Did we close at all then when we first started?

Louis: What?

Lorraine: Did we close any shifts at all?

Louis: We went all the way through, Lorraine, we went all the way through.

Lorraine: Well, we didn't have lunch on Sunday.

Louis: Yeah, but once in a while you used to go take care of the kids while I was still in there.

Lorraine: I know.

Murua: The name of the restaurant or the hotel was from the beginning Louis' Basque Corner?

Lorraine: You know how we decided that? We were sitting with Josephine Gezelin.

Murua: Josephine?

Lorraine: Josephine Gezelin. She was a Basque lady who was married to the one that helped us to get the money to open. He was Gezelin but she was Basque. Anyway, we sat there trying to decide what.

Louis: He was a judge.

Lorraine: Anyway, we thought this name and that name and this way and that way. Well, we thought Louis' name should be on it, okay? I said well, it's Basque.

Louis: And it's on the corner.

Lorraine: And we're on the corner, so that's how it got to be Louis' Basque Corner.

Murua: And did you try from the beginning to give the restaurant, the bar, a Basque character?

Lorraine: Absolutely.

Murua: How was it?

Louis: Everything, everything.

Lorraine: Well, through the food, through the pictures that I had on the walls, the type of menu that we had, the type of food that we had. Also we had two *chisteras* [Jai Alai baskets] that we put on the bar.

Louis: I have four of them in the closet.

Lorraine: I know we let them [the new owners of Louis' Basque Corner] keep the other ones. There's this friend of ours that gave us, and we had the Basque kerchief decorated.

Louis: Oh, excuse me, why don't we show you for two minutes all the things in here.

Murua: No, afterwards, after we finish the recording.

Lorraine: And another thing too, that's when Etcheverry in San Francisco, Odette Etcheverry, just in her little back of her garage, had a little room, and she started importing Basque things and I got in touch with her. I had the most beautiful scape on the wall at that time, of them doing the warriors dance that they do, on the edge of the ocean. It was the most beautiful thing, and, then I would buy things from her. Then when we went to France we got the tablecloths, you know. And, we had *bota* bags [wineskin] that we sold, we had berets that we sold, books from the university that we sold. I know we contributed to the Basque cookbook.

Murua: From the beginning you had the big tables, the family-style dining?

Louis: The first time it was a long table, three long tables all the way across.

Lorraine: That's the only way we could do it in that room.

Louis: Anybody could sit down; we used to sit the people next to each other, too, and when it was full, they had to wait.

Murua: And did the American people like that way of dining? It's not usual for them.

Louis/Lorraine [simultaneously]: Oh, yeah.

Louis: Well, sometimes there was one that didn't want to sit down there, "Ma'am," I used to say like this, "Sir, I'm gonna tell you the truth. There are a lot of restaurants in Reno." I was maybe too frank with the people.

Lorraine: Yeah, but you did it with finesse.

Louis: That was really the way I said it, you know, like that. I didn't insult anybody, you know. Then you admit it, I mean it, most of them they come to try.

Murua: About the food, how did you manage to serve Basque-style food, being in Reno? I mean, the material, the food, is important for the Basque gastronomy.

Louis: The thing I find out, when I was working in the Old Country, I had a *tant* [aunt], my father's sister used to own a restaurant. Then I had the other one, the Le Quai de Bacalan, and Le Tour de France, two hotel and restaurants from two in the family. I guess in our family, they were generous in the kitchen. I had two uncles that used to go to, the—

Lorraine: The big boats.

Louis: Had big boats, you know.

Lorraine: Gliders, gliders.

Louis: Two of them, one used to go from France to Africa, the other one to the United States. They had [unclear] *va lejos* [goes far]. They were chefs. I mean, they were taking care of lots of cooks on those boats and they both ended up with a lot of money.

Lorraine: How many cooks did that one have, I forgot. You mentioned it.

Louis: 35 cooks in one big boat, they each served 1,200 people on the boat.

Lorraine: And I will say this, there isn't a member of Louis' family that I know, that isn't a wonderful cook. It just seems to be inherent thing, I guess.

Louis: I learn and I follow lots and lots of recipes from my mother, my aunt, Manolita. Oh, she was a good cook, that one there. It comes naturally, I guess.

Murua: Were you able to accomplish these recipes here in Reno? Because you didn't have the Basque foods.

Lorraine: No.

Murua: How did you manage to do Basque food with American food?

Lorraine: Of course we always had steak, lamb chops, that type of thing, but they just had to get used to the fact that the *tripa* [tripe] and the *lengua* [tongue] and so forth, they were educated there.

Louis: They used to love that kind of food.

Murua: Do you remember which dishes were the more successful in those days? In your restaurant.

Lorraine: One was the rabbit.

Louis: The rabbit, beef bourguignon, *las rabos* de beef [oxtails]. Old people would say “Yuck!” It’s pretty common they don’t stop eating. Okay, *Tripa Callos* [Tripe].

Lorraine: The oxtails, the *tripa* is—

Louis: That’s the *rabos*.

Murua: The tripes. American people can eat tripe or it is very strange for them?

Lorraine: Yeah.

Murua: It is hard to eat it?

Louis: I used to cook it. I start with 10 pounds a week, pretty soon it became 15, 20, 25 pounds a week.

Murua: Tripes.

Louis: *Tripa*, they clean up the thing.

Lorraine: And it’s mostly people that have it in their background, Italian people, Basque people and so forth, the others, the sweetbreads, though.

Louis: The sweetbreads, *gollard*.

Lorraine: The *gollard*, that’s very—

Louis: “What is, what is that?”

They ask you, “What is that?”

I say, “The glands of the neck of the animal.”

“Yuck!”

*Le comen un poco, y el dia siguiente vienen y te preguntan eso* [They eat a little and the next day they ask you for that]. That’s right, that’s the truth,

Murua: What about the drinks, because the Picon Punch is...

Lorraine: Of course, that's a big seller.

Murua: ... a very popular drink in Louis' Basque Corner. Myself, as a Basque, I didn't know about Picon Punch in the Basque Country. So, tell me the story about the Picon Punch.

Louis: The Picon Punch, that's one thing that we got. The pecan over here is a nut, but the Picon over there is a liquor, by the captain of the African Legion. That's a story, a true story. He contracted the fever, so he decided to get mix up in there.

Lorraine: Quinzana.

Louis: How do you call that thing in there, for crying sake? What he called Picon, his name was Picon, the *saison* [seasoning] he used to make in there. He made some.

Lorraine: Herbs.

Louis: Some to cure his sickness, you know, and if that worked, and it was made with herbs, they had the... God I don't remember the—

Lorraine: Quinine, Quinzana.

Louis: Quinzana yeah, Quinine, the roots of a tree. God, *no me acuerdo ya* [I don't remember anymore].

Lorraine: At any rate.

Louis: It's gonna come along. So he fixed this thing for himself, and then he went back to France. And in Bordeaux that's when he started with the Picon, and they saw him making the Picon, and that became the aperitif for the whole of France and Spain. The Picon was very famous ever since that.

Murua: It was famous as an aperitif in France and Spain?

Louis: Yeah, in France, so they start coming. It used to be the real stuff, but now, they lost the recipe I guess, so now they make the Picon.

Lorraine: They spoiled the recipe.

Louis: It's not complicated. They put some grenadine and brandy—

Lorraine: Orange.

Louis: Mixed-up orange.

Murua: So it's grenadine, orange—

Lorraine: Now this was the imported. They added orange to it and it is not the same.

Louis: That is the real Picon.

Lorraine: And the percentage is less, too.

Louis: So, now we use another one. What do we call that thing in there?

Lorraine: Well, it's the domestic one now. You put a very little bit of grenadine. Louis doesn't like any grenadine.

Louis: No, it's bitter, very bitter.

Lorraine: So you have to sweeten it. A little bit of grenadine, then you pour your Picon, then you put your seltzer water in it, and you stir it very well. Now this is when I take the lemon peel and put it around, but a lot of the bartenders don't do that, and then you bless it with a little bit of brandy on top. As a matter of fact, we got a phone call one time from Miami, Florida, and they said: "Someone is here asking for a Picon Punch and we don't know how to make it. Would you please tell us?"

Louis: Yeah, and we tell them.

Lorraine: Believe me, it's the aperitif of the Basque hotel in this country. You know, and Winnemucca coffee is the digestive.

Louis: *Es un completo con café Winnemucca y anis.* [unclear] *con un mano en las escaleras*, you know. [It's a set with coffee Winnemucca and anisette. [unclear] hand on the stairs, you know] That's the thing there we call it, you know. Who came up with that?

Lorraine: Mike?

Louis: Mike Olano that owned the hotel in—what's the name of the town, for crying sake?

Lorraine: Yerington.

Louis: *Que cabeza, también* [what a head].

Murua: Where is the town, in Nevada?

Lorraine: Yeah.

Murua: Gardnerville?

Louis: No, not Gardnerville.

Lorraine: It's on the way to Elko.

Murua: On the way to Elko... Winnemucca?

Louis/Lorraine: Winnemucca.

Louis: Mike owned the hotel in Winnemucca and he's the one who came up with that thing, and he called it "*el completo*" [the set] – that's the coffee, anisette, brandy, and a cigar, "*el completo*."

Lorraine: Yeah, that's the old country, that's the first time I ever saw that.

Murua: In the Basque Country we say *un completo* when we want a coffee, liquor and a cigar.

Louis: And he started that and now all the Basque people start serving that.

Murua: And the Picon Punch was first served in Louis' Basque Corner, in America I mean?

Lorraine: Oh, no, no, no.

Murua: Or in Reno, or you knew other places before you were serving it?

Lorraine: The first Picon Punch I ever had was in an Italian place on Broadway in San Francisco. I was working for an Italian gentleman in Pittsburg, California and I was going to San Francisco for a play or something, and he said: "Lorraine, you go to this place, you order the chicken risotto, you have one Picon."

Because I'd never heard of it, he said, "And then you drink a second Picon, by that time the risotto is beautiful."

But of course we say, "Two are the Picon and the third is the punch." Be very careful; they can be very potent.

Louis: Now I said Picon, but it's Tourani Amer [brand name].

Lorraine: Yeah, Tourani Amer.

Louis: The other was Picon Amer—Tourani Amer now, because it's the closest one to the real stuff.

Murua: You always had many customers, you ran a successful business. Why do you think it was so popular, Louis' Basque Corner? What was the clue?



Louis: Louis' Basque Corner, I'm gonna tell you exactly what happened one day in there, when Manny, Manuel Chavez and I were busy as hell.

Lorraine: And then I'll answer your question.

Louis: A party came of 41 people; they ordered 41 Picons. So we fill up the glasses. About ten minutes later, one guy comes back: "41 more!" Three times in a row, that night in there we served exactly 12 bottles of Picon. You know how much money we make, on that? A piece we used to pay about \$6.50 for the bottle, and for one Picon....

Lorraine: He wants to know why we were successful, I guess.

Murua: Yes, why was Louis' Basque Corner so popular? Why is still so popular?

Louis: Well, we push the Picon Punch to the people, you know, you gotta try that before you eat. It gives you more appetite. It's the truth. You drink one Picon, it makes you feel like eating, you know. A lot of people feel that way. And I knew then, I pushed the thing the most I could for that. And believe me, and as I keep on saying, if you've never had a Picon, you are allowed only two Picons, because the third one is the Punch. That comes from me, and then they laugh.

Lorraine: Overall, this is my opinion, it was a labor of love for us to begin with. I asked Louis here, about a year ago, one day, just out of the blue sky: "Did you ever think we'd fail?"

He looked at me and said, "No."

And that's his attitude; he isn't a failing person, to begin with. Secondly, I think we extended warmth of friendship as well as good food. You know, there's an ambience. I used to listen from up above, and I could tell the time the people sat at the table, they started having a little glass of wine, I could almost tell how the business was. There was something exuded there. And I always said, you come in as a stranger and you leave as a friend. And the very fact that people sit together. You never walk in the place that you don't meet someone, someone different.

Louis: And a lot of people they don't even know each other, by the time they finish the meal, they sit at the bar, two or three together.

Lorraine: The set-up of itself worked but then, it was—

Louis: It was like family.

Lorraine: Our staff were caring people, let's put it that way. We were a family. I think all that goes out along with ambience.

Louis: That's what it is.

Lorraine: What you exude and what your staff gives, backed by good food and something a little different, and then family-style, just the connotation of it says it's a togetherness. And the fact that it was Basque, I think, that very definitely made it distinctive. I think that's why the Basque hotels maintain as long as they keep everything going correctly. But it was a labor of love. It wasn't just a business.

Louis: That makes the people feel at ease. Just like they never see each other, but something you feel, like you say, ambience, it's like an electric shock to the people, you know. You enjoy it, you start talking like that. And every time I used to say to them, when we used to have a drink, "You better not to drink too much because you have some wine coming with the meal, too."

You know, "Oh, I think I can take that."  
And I used to say, "I know you do."

Lorraine: And let's face it, this man has had a personality always, from the beginning.

Louis: No matter what, I've made friends.

Lorraine: And he goes to the grocery store now and it's, "Hi Louis." He goes to church, it's—

Louis: I mean, I'm a natural. I don't beat around the bushes. *Lo digo franquamente* [I say it frankly]. That's what I do all the time.

Lorraine: And we've had our get-togethers. We've had Basque dances, when they came from the Old Country for that exhibition from Bordeaux. There were gatherings at our place. When we would have our Basque picnic here, we would serve a Basque breakfast. It was always something we were doing, and we worked closely with the club, too.

Murua: Were you involved, as you told me, in different Basque clubs?

Lorraine: Yeah, we belong to San Francisco, we belong to Los Banos, we belong to Gardnerville, we belong to Reno. I think that's it.

Murua: And associations in Reno that are not related to Basque but other associations, were you involved in the Fourth Street community? Do you have a relationship with the other businesses or the other neighbors?

Lorraine: Oh, yes.

Louis: As a matter of fact, we have a lot of people coming from San Francisco, from all over the place, in there, most of them a lot of business people. They come to Louis' Basque Corner because they enjoy the place. You remember, the chef, what's his name? The French chef in there, the Basco chef?

Lorraine: You mean the one that was at the Basque Center?

Louis: Yeah, they used to come from San Francisco, the big chef from the big place, the big restaurant over there, and, God, I forgot the name.

Lorraine: Well, he was wondering about our association with—

Louis: Gabriel.

Lorraine: Oh, Gabriel, okay.

Louis: He came from St. what was the name of the place? We went in there? *Jexux maitea!* [dear Jesus!]

Lorraine: Yeah, I know, but he wants to know what our associations with other people on Fourth Street might be.

Louis: Oh, on Fourth Street? We can brag about it by saying, all the people around Fourth Street came to Louis' Basque Corner. They are still coming. I mean it.

Lorraine: Well, we can go down the street there, you've got the police, I mean the fire department, they come in.

Louis: The police too, the mayor of Reno, too. There's some attraction, but the ambience now, it changed a little bit. I mean, with the new people, but it's still good because—

Lorraine: Well, we have Klaus, at the Bavarian World. We have the fellow that, the Toro fellow, that your slow mower with. We got the cowboy place [D Bar M Western Store]. Let's see, I'm trying to think. Oh, we've got Levrett's, we've got Landa.

Louis: Yeah, they're on Fourth Street, what's the name of that guy in there that used to have Flanigan's?

Lorraine: Oh, yeah, they took over Flanigan's. I don't know his name but he's in all the time [Ed Scalzo].

Louis: Yeah, he comes to our place all the time.

Lorraine: Then we've got the ones that have the quilts, where the bank used to be [Sandi Sullivan and Mike Sullivan, Windy Moon Quilts].

Murua: Anyway, you served drinks, people were drinking until late, some people got drunk, I suppose. Did you have any serious problems, late at night? Fights?

Lorraine: No, we really watched it pretty closely, to begin with.

Louis: We got lucky. One time... what was the name of that club from the University?

Lorraine: Oh well, yeah, the Sundowners.

Louis: A bunch of rich people and they think they own everything. Once they were in there and they were throwing drinks on the ceiling and everything.

Lorraine: That was a fraternity.

Louis: A fraternity, yeah. But, I mean, so, “We can do anything, money can buy anything.” So I say, “You want to know something, money won’t buy Louis. I want you people to get out of there and you better clean up all that mess over here.” That was Saturday night. Sunday morning they all come and clean up the whole dining room, remember?

Lorraine: Yeah, that’s a fraternity, but as far as being there late in the evening and so forth, we were very careful about people drinking too much. We asked them to leave, and take a cab, or get somebody to take them home.

Louis: The Sundowners they went overboard, the Sundowners they were a club from the University they all come in there, and they run around.

Lorraine: I think you told him this.

Louis: They drink a Picon and break the glass on the bar, like there. I got out of the bar, do you remember that?

Lorraine: Yeah.

Louis: I got out of the bar and I grabbed one, and I grabbed him by the arm, flip him over, and out. *Con el brazo así* [With his arm like that]. And I push him through the door, and I hit the fire hydrant and I come back in there and the other guys say, well. There were seven Basco guys at the bar, they all got together and started coming to the Sundowners. We got those people out of there right now. Never came back.

Lorraine: We didn’t have many incidents, we didn’t.

Louis: Things like that, no!

Lorraine: The only problem we did have at one time, was when they closed all the places on Lake Street, and all the little girlies decided to come to Fourth Street.

Murua: You mean the prostitutes?

Louis: Ah, yeah. *Las putas* [The prostitutes].

Lorraine: That was a time.

Murua: When was it?

Lorraine: Oh God, this has been what, maybe 20 years ago now?

Murua: How did you handle it?

Louis: Handle? The cops come along and they pick up. You know the people at the bar, they used to laugh about the one girl being picked up.

Lorraine: This would be at lunch time, particularly.

Murua: They were in the street? Out in the street?

Lorraine/Louis: Oh yeah, out in the street.

Louis: I keep on telling them, I say, "What's so funny to you people?" That girl maybe she had a... what do you call that sickness in there?

Lorraine: HIV.

Louis: Yeah, maybe the guy go with her and then he go with his wife, I mean.

Lorraine: It took us quite a little while; we finally got them taken care of.

Louis: I keep on talking to the girls. "You laughing at that, you like to get one of those girls, you don't know what you're gonna get."

So I stopped them. I used to be mad when customers start laughing when they see a girl picking up, "Oh, look at that one, oh look at this, and ay, ay, ay."

One time there were three or four on the sidewalk in there like that and they said, "Come on, come on, come on."

I went out and I start saying, "You want to fish, you better get out of there," and I called the girls over here. I do not want that.

"Oh, can't you have a little fun?"

"That's not fun to me, that's hurting the business, that's what you're doing."

Lorraine: We finally got rid of it, between that and the welfare situation down the street that was a problem. To begin with, of course Mark had the business then.

Murua: Welfare situation, what do you mean?

Lorraine: Oh, we have the St. Vincent's dining room which was Commercial Hardware. They sold out and the city took over that whole area back in there, where they're housing all the people that don't have a place to live. They do a pretty good job of it. In fact, I'm not anti-that.

Louis: It's pretty clean now.

Lorraine: Yeah, but for a while it was a problem. It was a problem, because they'd defecate in certain places.

Louis: Fourth Street is becoming like it was before.

Murua: It's becoming...?

Louis: Clean.

Lorraine: Yeah, it is. They built that one housing area in there where that, not Filipino, what it is? It's another ethnic restaurant and I understand that they have done more things further down the street and even have a little entertainment bit across from St. Vincent's.

Louis: At one time, the businesses dropped down quite a bit, because the ladies that used to come along, two or three got their purses stolen, remember that?

Lorraine: Okay.

Louis: You don't remember that? One lady that come along one time, she come crying, you know that somebody stole her purse right from the back door. And, you know, one of the customers that was with me, one of the bunch, the regular bunch that used to come with Zimmerman and those guys, one of them, he used to be a football player: "Come on Louis, let's catch up with those guys."

We ran and we had one in a head lock and the guy that stole the purse, and the others saw us coming and they threw the purse back on the floor in there. If he had caught those guys, the guy that was with me, he'd pick up those two guys in there, and he'd kill them.

Lorraine: No, he shouldn't do that.

Louis: You don't remember that?

Lorraine: No, I don't remember that; I was probably upstairs. That was an isolated incident.

Louis: Not only once, it happened two or three times. That's why the women didn't want to come in the evening to eat at Louis' Basque Corner. They were afraid.

Lorraine: Yeah, for a while there was a problem because of that. It affected business.

Murua: When was that when there were some problems and the atmosphere on Fourth Street wasn't so good? What time was that?

Louis: That was way back.

Lorraine: That was when we were still first in there. So I had to go back into the seventies, probably, eighties maybe.

Murua: You were talking about your vision, about the changing of Fourth Street.

Lorraine: I do, I feel it's more alive now.

Louis: Oh yeah, a lot more alive.

Lorraine: And I think there are enough people on it, who care about Fourth Street now.

Louis: Even the homeless now, they don't—

Lorraine: If you looked at those people, you knew that some of them were not just down and outers. They were people that something happened to—they lost their job, or something like that, and there's a need for it, and I say now, it's pretty much under control, I really do. Because, see, they wanted to put that place over here, over there, over here, over there, finally they chose good ole Fourth Street. I think there is a real potential, but I do think, and I've told Mr. Robert [Cashell], our mayor, that Fourth Street has always come last.

Louis: Not any more.

Lorraine: And I don't think that they have given a thought to it, what it was and what it could be. I look back at the fact that that little old trolley used to go up and down there. I mean, what an attraction that would be for tourists. Once all of these places were settled in to be a tourist attraction or a working place, that's attractive.

Louis: That Bob, he came to eat at Louis' Basque Corner. As a matter of fact, the last time he came to eat was, you know, with whom? With the one that passed away, what's his name?

Lorraine: Bill Raggio?

Louis: Bill Raggio and him—there were five people in the corner table having dinner together.

Lorraine: This was our illustrious state legislator.

Murua: You mentioned the trolley. Do you have a specific opinion about the transportation issue, on Fourth Street, how could they improve?

Lorraine: Right now, downtown they're running this little jitney bus that you can get on with no pay, that can take you to the various places.

Murua: Yes, those go from south to north.

Lorraine: Yeah, yeah. And what they've done to Victorian Avenue in Sparks, we're just an extension of that. Wouldn't that be wonderful if it could start in Sparks, and go all the way to Virginia Street?

Murua: Simple.

Lorraine: Simple, and it brings back an essence. Reno, just in the time I have been here, let alone the time that Louis has been here, has changed so much. I mean, it was a picaresque little western town.

Louis: And another thing too, Lorraine—

Lorraine: I can't think of the name, the attorney's name from San Francisco—he was from Nevada originally—anyway, he came in and I remember him saying, “Don't make a glass and chromium Virginia Street in Reno.”

And what is it. That part is, then we have our sheep camp wagon out there that I've had for ages, and we put it in the parade, you see, the rodeo parade. And the last time—this was two years ago, I can remember—as we were going down Virginia Street, we started on Liberty and were just going down to the railroad tracks, and there was such a mish-mash of stuff on Virginia Street. It made me sick. I mean, when I came here you had Harolds Club, you had the Nevada Club, you had something over here, you had this nice restaurant over here, and now, it's just, to me it was just honky-tonk.

Louis: They changed the things that we used to do. Instead of starting on Sixth Street, they start up there, the reverse.

Lorraine: Yeah, that's the rodeo parade. It just happened that one time, they did that.

Louis: And there was this confusion. What a mess it was. I had to turn the wagon in there, I was driving the truck, I had to turn the wagon in the middle of the people to go the other way. That was quite a job.

Lorraine: At any rate.

Louis: And the mayor was over there, too. He stopped in there, he got up, he said, “Hey, Louis!”

I said, “Jesus, the mayor.” He opened the place for me.

Lorraine: I told him one day, “Did you ever realize how many people know who you are in this town?” I said, “You've made a name for yourself.”

But at any rate, I don't think it's changed us, but I do feel, and I tell you I have a little book in here I'm gonna give you. I don't know, maybe you've seen it? Beth Miramon wrote it. She belonged to our group, this group I'm talking about, but she has



been a spokesman for Reno from day one. I wrote an article in the paper one day about various things on Fourth Street.

She read it, and she phoned me, and said, "Lorraine, I agree with you." And she'd be at the Historical Society. She had a tremendous love of the old place and what it was, and she just passed away. And I didn't realize that she had written this second book here, but I got a copy of it.

Murua: We will go later, when we finish the recording. So, you wrote articles for the newspaper?

Lorraine: Yeah, I wrote a couple.

Murua: What about? Fourth Street issues?

Lorraine: Yeah, I did. Well, journalism was my thing once upon a time. At any rate, in high school it was.

Murua: Do you remember what they were about, the articles? Do you remember the topic?

Lorraine: Well, it was primarily about the reinstatement of Fourth Street. I brought into it our part of it, too, and how we felt about it. I don't even know where I have the things right now but, as I said, I have a whole thing from when we were in this organization. Well, in the first place they got a grant. They went to a tremendous amount of trouble to get a grant. And we got an architect, and all these plans. I don't know whatever happened to them, and everything was set up to go. And I don't know whether the city didn't come forth on their part of it, or what it was, but I think the fact they put the lights on, as far as Wells Avenue was their contribution to it. But it was really done well.

Louis: Well, I'm kind of glad they put those lights in there. That changed everything.

Lorraine: I remember the architect was a woman. And she was the one who told me how we could take the paint off the bricks on the building without destroying the grouting in it. Because, when we first took over that building, it had signs painted here.

Louis: You should have seen that. It was a cacophony.

Murua: Tell me about this association, the Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association. You were members of this association?

Lorraine: Yes, we were.

Murua: What is it about, this association?

Lorraine: Well, it was about promoting Fourth Street. It was all the different people.

Louis: Yeah, we belonged to that club, all right.

Lorraine: There must have been a good 30-40 people that belonged to the club, I would say. And they were all interested in bringing up to what it should be.

Murua: Were you members from the beginning?

Lorraine: Yes.

Murua: Do you remember when it was founded?

Lorraine: Oh dear.

Murua: More or less?

Lorraine: It was probably in the seventies, I would think.

Louis: Yeah, we used to be members of the club in there.

Lorraine: They still do, what they call, their little charity runs on Christmas and Easter.

[phone rings]

Lorraine: This is a calm day.

Murua: A calm day?

Louis: Yeah, a little bit that phone rings every five minutes without stopping.

Murua: We are finishing. The last question, we were talking about the association. So the association was very active? I mean, how often—

Lorraine: Did we meet?

Murua: Yes, meetings or events, how much were you involved in that?

Lorraine: We met at least once a month, did we not? Yeah.

Louis: Yeah, once a month it was.

Lorraine: And usually we were at the Bavarian Inn. Klaus is a very strong person in this, a very good gentleman. They always had their Christmas party at Louis'.

Louis: And Fred's wife, she really does—

Lorraine: The lady that owns the repair shop, the car repair place, Fred's place there on Sixth Street.

Louis: Yeah, Fred's wife [Gaye Canepa].

Lorraine: She was a cracker jack. I mean, you'd be there at the council chambers at the city.

Louis: Even she moved stuff, I tell you, that woman.

Lorraine: She was terrific. She got more things done, but like I say, after we left the business for ten years, our son took over until he got sick, and somehow, I didn't used to get there, of course, I wasn't involved.

Louis: She was working for a lawyer once, and pretty soon, you know what she is doing now? Fixing the cars with her husband.

Lorraine: She was a very astute lady.

Louis: And she knows what she is doing, too.

Lorraine: Like I say, there was such an effort, and I can remember the night before the election when our mayor was elected, he happened to come to Louis' Basque Corner. So I went down to the corner and said, "Bob [Cashell], what are you gonna do for us?"

He said, "I won't forget you."

Well, we got lights.

Louis: I tell him, "You know what Bob, I'm gonna tell you the truth, I'm kind of glad you showed up because we need someone like you."

"Oh, Louis, you're right!"

Lorraine: They've got a big thing on their hands right now, with that fire department.

Louis: *Buen hombre* [good man].

Murua: What mayor are you talking about, the mayor that is the current mayor? What is the name?

Louis: Bob Cashell. I know that man for so many years, he used to own the...

Lorraine: Bordertown.

Louis: Bordertown, okay.

Lorraine: He came from Texas and took it over and made it a success.

Louis: There was a Basco guy that lived in our place that used to go over there, I mean, work for him. One day he got sick and Bob Cashell himself called me to find out how he is and if he was feeling better. He'd take him to work, and come back the next morning to take him to work, that's to tell you what kind of man he is. I remember, yeah.

Lorraine: Yeah, we had a couple that went back to the Old Country.

Murua: Well, we recorded already more than two hours. Thank you very much for your very interesting stories. Before finishing, do you have anything more to say about Louis' Basque Corner, about Fourth Street, about Reno? Would you like to say anything?

Louis: My opinion about Fourth Street: Fourth Street is changing a lot for the good. I hope it keeps going good on Fourth Street, that's my opinion.

Lorraine: And I personally feel that it needs a little more input from our city government. I realize there are cash shortages, and so forth, but I don't think we should be forgotten. And I still feel there is a very good possibility, if ever they got together with Sparks, that there could be something done to enjoin that property which again, would excite people to take some of the places that are a little dreary and do something with them.

Louis: They call Fourth Street a corridor that makes Reno and Sparks almost like one. That's the way I feel, too.