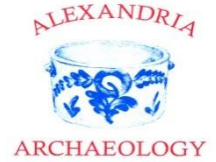




City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present, and Future*

Title: *Interview with Rodrigo A. Guajardo*

Date of Interview: *April 29, 2015*

Location of Interview: *John Reibling's home in Alexandria, VA*

Interviewer: *John Reibling*

Transcriber: *John Reibling*

Abstract: Rodrigo A. Guajardo was born December 31, 1957 in Chile. He immigrated to the U. S. in 1980 fearing for his life living under the Augusto Pinochet regime. During the interview he recalls his childhood and youth, life under the Pinochet regime, his early struggles here, his involvement as a volunteer for twenty-four years with the City of Alexandria Police Department, his extensive work history, and his invention that, can significantly solve the problem of corrosion while providing jobs for thousands of people all over the world. He speaks passionately about the freedom he has enjoyed since coming to the U.S.

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John Reibling:	So let me go ahead and get started here [sound of papers being sorted.] And you know that you will have the opportunity to look at the transcription—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo::	Yes sir.
JR:	And I can already tell that's going to be important cause—cause [Laughs] you're going to have to correct my spellings. Anyway—I've this little spiel here I'm going to say.
Introductions [00:58]	
JR:	Today is April the 29, 2015, and we are interviewing Mr. Rodrigo A. Guajardo. He's a long-time resident of Northern Virginia—let me test one more time to make sure it's running. [Checks audio recorder.] Okay. Long-time resident of Northern Virginia. Mr. Guajardo emigrated from Chile in 1980 and became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. in 1995. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer and President of EnviroQuantum whose tag line is, "We search for the future where the human memories went missing." Very interesting. This interview is being recorded at my home here in Alexandria as part of [The City of] Alexandria's oral history project entitled, "Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present, and Future." I am John Reibling, a volunteer with the City's Office of Historic Alexandria. So, do you mind if I call you Rodrigo?
Rodrigo Guarjardo	Yes, or Rod if you would.
JR:	Okay, great.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Rod, that is fine. I'm been called from anything from guacamole to Guantanamo so it doesn't matter to me anymore.
Childhood and Youth [02:33]	
JR:	[Laughs.] Okay. To start off with I'd like to ask you a few questions about your childhood and youth. Where are you from in Chile and, if you would, describe it.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Sure. I am originally from a city called Valparaiso which is, and it has been always the most important port in Valparaiso. It is a small city and I grew up there, and I went to school there, and it is where I have my friends. My father was in the [Chilean] Navy so we were in the right place. I started going to the Padres Franceses which is a French school, so I learned some French. Then, after a while we moved to Santiago. My father retired from the Navy, went to

	Santiago to start a new business and we move over there. So, I ended up going to the Marista Brothers [Instituto Alonso de Ercilla] where I finished my education. And I just have good memories from Valparaiso, from my friends and have just awesome memories from my childhood. My childhood was fantastic.
JR:	Great. And what activities did you participate in as a child or young adult?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	When I was a child, I was in the Boy Scouts and I played soccer. Hmm, I did other things. I was a gold medalist in 1969 in the Pan-American Games. I was very athletic all the time. I did gymnastics, swimming—you know, when you are a young bull you need to spend energy—and I did all that. And as I was growing, I got to do more, participating more in internal affairs in the country. No politics per sé, I never got involved in politics, I don't get involved in that, I just think it's noxious, but I was participating and I was helping. I was volunteering in the Red Cross. I volunteered for different groups to help people, feed people. Making clothing, pulling things together to take to different places—all kind of charities that you can possibly find—I just got involved in there.
JR:	And you were still in your teenage years at that point?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes. That was until I finished high school. When I finished high school, I attempted to study medicine and I realized I did not have the material to be a doctor, so I went traveling for three years. And then, I discovered that I wanted to be an engineer.
Siblings [05:13]	
JR:	And who were your siblings? Or can we talk about your siblings?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	A little bit, yeah, we can. I have a sister and a brother, and we have been united since ever. We're still in touch, we talk, now with Facetime [video service] and the technology, we have. We talk almost on a weekly basis, and sometimes on a daily basis. We keep that bond—they are all in Chile.
JR:	Okay. Have they ever been here?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	My brother has come several times with the family to visit, but we keep that separated—it's a long story.
JR:	Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	It was because of the dictatorship. So, we were able to salvage the family nucleus but keep it in separate parts to protect each other.

Life in Chile under General Augusto Pinochet [06:12]	
JR:	Okay, speaking of politics [Laughs] talk a little bit about General Augusto Pinochet. What was life like under Pinochet?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Well. There was really no politics in my life because when I was a teenager until, and politics was basically chaos.
JR:	Now you're saying politics?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Politics, I am sorry, politics was basically, a chaos. It was people fighting people, saying bad things about each other. The entire country was going back, back, back then. President [Salvador Guillermo Allende Gossens] Allende came. I met him personally once. I can say that Doctor Allende was an extraordinary guy, but the group of people he was involved with was literally a mafia. So, I respect the guy and I think he was a very well-intentioned person, but the gang he was with running around, it was no good. Ended up being a coup with Pinochet. After that happens, I was working in the Secretaria Nacional de la Juventud [Secretariat of Youth] helping to rebuild the country. I organized a, poster competition,—I designed a bunch of things, I designed for example a nut, a big one that read, "Let's rebuild our country" and a bolt so that the bolt can be used for putting in pencils or pens; and the nut — it was a plastic thing, as a paper weight, and I created a bunch of these things so we were selling them. I was doing a kite competition and blah, blah, blah. So I got very close within the—.
JR:	You said "kite"?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Kite, you know? To fly kites, competition, arts, and tried to organize the youth into doing good things, but at the same time generate some money to rebuild the country because the country was in shambles after the Socialists. I mean it was just outrageous. I mean, there was guys that they found in their house, you know, stacks this big of let's say, hundred dollar bills, that have not even been cut. They were printing the money for themselves and it was just corruption at the utmost highest level. Anyways, so these things started, and [pause] at one point I started to change because I started seeing things that I disagreed with. People start disappearing, people start getting tortured, and I have among them, some friends that I knew from childhood. I knew very well that were accused of things that were not true whatsoever. And then—.
JR:	This is 1973?
Rodrigo A.	Right after that, from 1973 to 1980. And I wrote a book called,

Guajardo:	hmm [pause] I do not know if I want to say the name, but I wrote a book were the nicest thing I said about the military in Chile, not necessarily about General Pinochet, General Pinochet had good intentions; but then again, things changed. Absolute power corrupts. And things just start turning bad, but in that book, aah, the nicest thing I said it was that the military in Chile was "mental castrated," so they throw me in jail because of that, but I was famous and I participated in TV [television.] It was difficult to hide me, until they started persecuting me, and my family. So, I had to run, and, in that time, because of the things that were happening, France was offering political asylum to all these people. So—.
JR:	You had to leave—excuse me—you had to leave because you used the phrase "mental—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Castrated.
JR:	Castrated.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	You know? When they cut the balls of the bull: that is castration.
JR:	Right.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	So I write a lot and to make sense of what I write, I use metaphors—.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	So basically I said that they were mental castrated—they didn't have the balls—.
JR:	Oh, oh okay I got it.
Decision to Leave Chile [11:53]	
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	So anyways, to make a long story short, I did not want to go to France because all the Socialists and Communists were going over there, and I didn't want anything to do with it. Finally, I managed to come to the United States, and that was the best thing that happens in my life, actually. The regime of Pinochet is a mix of—you know, yeah, he took the country out of the hole, I will not deny that, he put order in the country, but at a human cost that is beyond, I think; the limits of acceptability. I mean some of the things that he did, for example, his regime started killing every homosexual because they did not like homosexuals, so they killed them. I saw people shot in the street, I saw people killed right in front of my eyes and with that to me, I realized that I was living among barbarians. This is not a

	<p>civilized world and I am not like that, so I decided to leave. And besides that, because I participate and I spoke on TV, I made a lot of enemies. Ahh, you know I was a young guy, long hair, very idealistic and I wanted to fix the world. And yes I lacked the experience and the knowledge. It was just pure energy and wishful thinking; but I was doing something, and in countries like that when you raise your voice it is your death sentence.</p> <p>So I had to leave. But I tell you John that was the best thing that happened in my life. But at that time, it was the worst thing ever, but once I got here and I start joining this society, I realized why I could not come before; I could have come before but I did not. I did not know better.</p>
<p>Forty Months to Get Visa [12:09]</p>	
<p>JR:</p>	<p>So did you go—did you come the U.S. directly from Chile or—?</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>No. I had to work a long time. It took me forty months to get a visa because I was sort of a sought man by the military, I had to get visa so I made some changes in my life in order to get visa, and it took me forty months to obtain visa. By the time I obtained visa, I was flat broke so I had to work. I worked in the streets, I did a lot of jobs that in those country are denigrating. Those are jobs that are diminishing for a human being which in here, they are not. For example, being a waiter is the worst thing you can do; that says that you are a piece of junk. If you are a waiter, then you are nothing.</p>
<p>JR:</p>	<p>In Chile.</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>In Chile. It is like people look at you like a, you know, you are a sub-standard human being if you do that kind of job. I did all that kind of jobs to save money.</p>
<p>Trip to the U.S. [13:12]</p>	
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>So, I got enough money to buy a ticket in Paraguayan Airlines, it was the cheapest thing that could ever be seen, I mean you get into the plane and you will have chickens and goats and everything else, yes like in a—.</p>
<p>JR:</p>	<p>Panamanian Airlines?</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>No Paraguayan, from Paraguay.</p>
<p>JR:</p>	<p>Oh Paraguay. Okay.</p>

<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>So I went from Santiago to Asuncion, Paraguay, and to Miami [Florida.] I was very nervous because in the previous years, every time when I have a friend who was leaving the country, I used to go to the airport and tell them to let me carry their bags, and they laughed at me, "you're crazy"; they said. My nickname in Chile was El Loco, crazy guy. "Why do you want to do this?" they asked, "because one day it will be my bags"— I responded, and they laughed at me again. "Hey, do you want to carry my bags?" —they asked, "sure, I will carry your bags."</p> <p>I did that for years, until the day I carried my own bags. In that opportunity a friend of mine asked me to carry my bags. I said no, I have been waiting for very long years to do this, let me do it myself. So I, I got into the plane with no money. I was coming here with no money and I knew a little bit about the immigration process. I wrote myself a check for six thousand dollars so it looks like I was coming in with money. Which in fact, that check was going to be good as long as it stopped bouncing! Part of my family wanted to say goodbye because I did not want anybody to know I was leaving, but only my very close family. I was literally running for my life. They [the government] offered to kill me because I talked against them [the dictatorship] and I, since I worked with the government, I had access to records and to other people, so it was a very sticky situation.</p> <p>Anyways, I sat in the airplane and after the airplane took off and the announcements were made and all that, we left for Asuncion. Soon after take-off I heard: "The passenger, Rodrigo A. Guajardo, please identify yourself with the officer." You have no idea, John, something cold came to my body. It felt like rigor mortis was taking over me, and I started thinking: I cannot run here. There is no sense in trying to hide. What are you going to do in the plane—there is no way to run, so I start thinking fast: I know Paraguay, I know if I can run I can survive, in the jungle. I use to do a lot of things in Southern Chile, I used to live in the mountains, so I can survive in the jungle. I was thinking of that when a guy showed up and he asked, "Rodrigo?" I lifted my hand— and the guy handed me a package and then he left. It was like my soul coming back to my body. I opened the package and there was a tie and four dollars. My sister arrived late to the airport and brought me a tie because I was dressing like this, in a suit, shirt, but no tie; and that does not look</p>
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good in Chile. Here it is different, the society here it is more open, is more rational. Over there, they are not. So, when I saw that—it was a relief, [sound of exhaling], four dollars.

So, I arrive in Miami in June 6, 1980, D-Day [Anniversary of the Allies landing in Europe in World War II.] A friend of mine was waiting for me but not at the airport. Immigrations told me that I was bringing too much stuff. They got suspicious because I had winter and summer clothing, and my visa expired that same day. And the Immigration guy asked, "Why you are coming with a visa that expires so soon?" I said that my mother got sick and I could not come before, so I told the guy if I needed to come back tomorrow, then I will return tomorrow, I just wanted to have a good vacation."

"Do you know somebody here?" he asked. I said, "Yes, a friend of mine was supposed to pick me up". That was a Chilean guy who lives in Miami. He told me that when I arrived to Miami, call him and he will pick me up. I did not speak English, but I was talking to a Cuban guy from Immigration. You have no idea how nervous I was, and I know that when you get nervous, you act funny; so you need to get a hold of yourself, and pretend that you are in control. I did my best and I said that I would call my friend.

I called my friend and I said "Hey! This is Rodrigo" and they have him in the speaker so, I can hear, and they can hear us. He answered, "Rodrigo? Rodrigo who?" I said, "Rodrigo A. Guajardo, your neighbor from La Reina [where we used to live]. "Ah! Is that you?" and he started to insult me and he started to say, "You told me you were going to come before today. You made me wait like a year and you did not come!" I said, "Yes, my mom got sick." The he added, "Yeah, but you should have called me," and he started to treat me like crap in the telephone. The Immigration guy said, "He is really mad!" I said, "Oh, yes, because I have been telling him that I am coming, I am coming, but I did not." Then I asked my friend, "Well, I am at the airport, can you come and pick me up?" "Oh no! Hell no! It is eleven at night, so no, you come here anyway you can. If you do not have money, I will pay for the taxicab. Here's my address." He gave me his address.

So the immigration guy did pack my thing and said, "Go to Immigration and extend your Visa" Then I left. When I got to my friend's home, the entire family was up. As soon as I arrived he whispered saying. "How did I do? How did I do in the phone?" I said. "You did great." So the next day, I went to Immigration to renew my Visa.

JR:	Now wait a minute, so he was pretending—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes! He was pretending that he was waiting for me for years.
JR:	Ah, okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I was always telling him, "I am coming, I am coming, but I did not. Chileans are very, um; they jump into things very quickly— they are very smart. Quick smart because being intelligent and being smart are two different things. Smart is speed, as to intelligence is distance. But this guy was smart and intelligent.</p> <p>I got a Visa extension for three months, and then I was okay, but the funny thing is that I did not have any money, I just had four dollars in my pocket. My friend was one of the waiters at the Playboy Club in Miami, so he took me over the place to work as a busboy. He told me that all I needed to do, is pick up the dirty stuff and take it into the kitchen. You know? I am an engineer, therefore; I can do dishes. It was fun working at the Playboy Club, and at the end of the week, I got enough money to come to [Washington] D.C., where there was another guy who was going to help me here. By the end of that week—I do not remember exactly what week it was, but that week the "Bunny of the Month" [female model] went to that Playboy Club. So my friend put a chair down, sat me on it, and asked the Bunny of the Month to seat on my lap, and all the other Bunnies gathered around for a picture. That was the first picture I sent to Chile. [Laughter] After I came back [to Chile] my friends were saying, "Look at this guy! He is there for just two days, and look at what he is doing!" Of course that was all fake, but it was the way it came out.</p>
Washington and the Blue Dumpster [20:28]	
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Then I took an Air Florida plane and I flew to Washington about a week after. I arrived to the airport in D.C. were the other guy was waiting for me. Behind him it was a very pregnant woman—who looked like she has been crying a lot—and this man told me, "Rodrigo, I cannot, I cannot take you home." I said, "Man! I came here because you said that you can give me a job and, and you can hold me while I get on my feet!" He said, "I have problems, I cannot do this, so you are going to sleep at my place tonight, but tomorrow, I have to drop you off somewhere." That was not good. So, that night I really did not sleep very well. I did not speak any English even though I took twelve years of English in Chile, but you do not learn anything.</p>

	<p>I was told that when you say hello here in English, you say, "How do you do, sir?" but when you get here they go, "Hey man, what's up?" With that, I could not make the relationship between the languages.</p> <p>The next day my "friend" drove me to Georgetown. It was a Sunday morning about nine o'clock. He drove me in front of The Little Tavern, a little hamburger joint. Behind the place there were a blue and a green dumpster. I "lived" in the blue dumpster for three almost months.</p>
JR:	You lived in the—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I lived there with my sleeping bag. [Pause] I walked over, across the street to Rosslyn [in Arlington, Virginia], and I, um—I was digging in the trash of McDonald's for food. And, ah, [sighs] sorry. [Pause] It is a, a hard memory.</p>
JR:	Um huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>The guy who was running the McDonald's was a Peruvian guy, and he called the police on me several times because I was digging in his trash. I was arrested four times by D.C. Police "for stealing food." [Pause] I was never charged. I spent four days for it, in a D.C. jail. When I got out of jail the last time, I went to talk to the guy in McDonald's, and I asked him, "What am I doing to you? I am just eating the trash." In Chile, no one did that stuff. I did not know of the regulations here. So, the guy said to me, "You shouldn't do those things" I responded, "Look, I just came here, I have no idea, I'm hungry". He said, "Can you flip hamburgers?" I said, "of course!" so he gave me a job flipping hamburgers and that was my first job here, flipping hamburgers. Later on I got another job, and the way I got this job was really funny because one day I didn't wake up early enough in the dumpster, and I heard this loud, "Bam! Bam! Bam!", and the whole thing was shaking—the dumpster. I pulled open the plastic door out and I looked out. There it was this big truck with horns which was lifting the dumpster up. I yelled really loud, and all of a sudden I saw this black guy sticking his head out of the driver's window with big eyes, and he started insulting me in Spanish. He was really mad, and with every insult I had never heard in my life before, and all were coming out of that mouth.</p> <p>I was so happy that I had somebody speaking in Castellano [Spanish] to me! To make a long story short, that guy was a driver for Garcia's Trash Removal. He gave me a job, so I started picking</p>

	up trash. And that is the way I started here. [Pause]
JR:	You ever go back there?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I always go back. I am not afraid of the past. I think the past is what gives you strength. [Pause] So, I just get sometimes [Pause] a little emotional because there were really hard at times.
JR:	Um huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	But, those do not bother me now.
What Helped in Extreme Times [24:25]	
JR:	What got you through those three months?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I do not know. I think because I wanted do something with my life, I wanted to be somebody, I wanted to function in society. My grandfather was one of my biggest mentors, my father too, but my grandfather was the one who used to tell me, "The one who never surrenders, never lose. If you surrender, you are nothing." So I never surrender. He also told me, "You do not have to win. You need to survive first." So, he taught me about life, he taught me a lot of things. He used to tell me "Life is like a chess game. It doesn't matter how high you live your life, or how low you are, because just like in chess; at the end of the game, the king and pawn end up in the same box." And that has been with me all the time.
JR:	What was his name?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Víctor. He was a very simple man. He was a Sergeant in the Chilean Army and he got into the Chilean Army because he lost a bet. So because of losing a bet, he joined the Army. He was not a rich man by any means. He was not poor either, but he was a— [pause] he was one, one in a trillion men. I wrote about him many times, his teachings, his words I guess and my own desire to progress and triumph, pulled me over.
Move to Virginia [25:54]	
JR:	So ah, fascinating stuff. I got to tell you. So what—how did you wind up in Alexandria? You were in D.C. when you were living in the dumpster—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes, they drove me out of D.C.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A.	This guy who gave me a job also connect me with a lady from Peru,

Guajardo:	who used to live in Arlington. She had a basement, which was unfinished. I finished the basement and I lived there for a while. Then, another guy in construction who was renting an apartment in Watergate at Landmark—that was about two or three months after that, he asked me, "Why don't you come to live with me, and we share the rent? So that's how I ended up in Alexandria, living in Watergate [apartments] at Landmark.
JR:	What was the name of it?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Watergate at Landmark.
JR:	Oh Watergate at Landmark. Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	In that time, the train was there and there was no underpass. The only restaurant there was The Four Seasons [diner], and there was nothing else there. There was the train terminal. The track, the parking lot, a truck yard, and, by that time, I started driving eighteen wheelers. There was a standoff between the police and the teamsters [truckers.] I am a crazy guy, what else can I tell you John—they told me that they would give me a hundred bucks for every trailer [container] that I moved from the yard, out across the street. I got shot at my truck several times, but I did make good money. It was not a big deal.
JR:	Oh, the truckers were on strike?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes, and I did not understand exactly what was happening. My thing was, "Look I do not know what your point is, I do not know you, I do not know what your problem is. The only thing I am here for, is to make a living and I am going to do it. As long as it is honest, I am going to do it. So it was not a very nice situation, but in that time I was living there and it was almost nothing else going on in Alexandria.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Now if you go over there, you would never suspect that there was a train terminal there.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Eisenhower Avenue was not even paved. Van Dorn was one train line and when the train went through, you needed to wait for about an hour until those four hundred train carts passed. It was a different world.
JR:	Four hundred tracks?

Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Four hundred [rail] cars. I remember being waiting for an hour and fifteen or twenty minutes until the train finished passing, so we can cross the tracks towards what is now Kingstowne [Franconia, Virginia.] If you passed the tracks in Van Dorn, there was nothing there. Kingtowne did not exist. There was a guy with a shop on the right—he has a mechanical shop—and everything there was no man's land. It was 1980s, early 80s.
Early Impressions of Alexandria [29:07]	
JR:	So what do you remember were your first impressions of Alexandria? What were the easiest parts about settling here and what were the hardest parts?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	The hardest part I think, at the beginning, was missing the family.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	It was not the hardships. It was not that you did not have money to eat. It was not when they arrest you for eating trash. It was not that—it was not.— I missed home, talk to Dad, Mom, my friends, that world was fun. That was the hard part, and I had to live without it. It takes a lot from you.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I think that was the hardest part, for me. I used to write a lot. Send letters to Chile.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	One guy in in Watergate I remember, he owned a Lamborghini Countach. So I told—.
JR:	Lamborghini—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	A Lamborghini Countach. It's an Italian car. It is like a Formula One car. It is an awesome car. I mean you had to be multi-millionaire to have one of those. And I saw the nice car and the guy seating on it spoke Castellano [Spanish] and when I approached him he asked me if I wanted to see it. He told me, "Sit in there and let me take your picture." So he took a picture. It was a Polaroid picture. He gave me the picture. I am sitting in this super-duper car, you know, and I sent the picture back to Chile looking that I got a new car. People in Chile were thinking that during the following week I was going to be President because the way I was going, but it was all a fake.

JR:	Yeah.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	And that was part of fending off the bad times. You know that if you look like you are doing good, and you look happy, and you look upbeat; people think you are doing great. If you look beaten down, people can smell that a mile away. It is not in my personality to let other people know that I have weaknesses, because I do have weaknesses just like everybody else. I am very good covering up the bad times. And it helps.
JR:	It helps—it helped you get by?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	It helped me, yes.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Things started to get better, and I started meeting more people. At one point I separate from the Spanish group because I could not go to a restaurant and order anything because I did not know how to do it in English, my friends were always doing the speaking for me, and I figured out that I will never learn English that way. So I started doing my own thing. Going about and buying my own clothes. At the beginning it was tough because I had to consult the dictionary many times and I was a speaking like Tarzan, in little monosyllables here and there. People were correcting me a lot of times, and I appreciated that because I learned a lot of English this way. Right now I am writing publications in English and in Castellano. I think in English and I have reached a good level of communication. I never studied English per se, formally; but, I can understand and be understood perfectly well, so I think the communication piece was achieved.
JR:	So was there any kind of support system for folks like yourself back in those days of fellow Chileans or religious groups, refugee services or other community organizations that were available to you?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	If there were, I never saw them.
JR:	Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I was never aware of anything like that. When you come as I did, you do not come to find help. You come for an opportunity. Put me on the ground—I am going to walk. So, no; if it that was something available, I had no clue what it was. I never got anything from anybody. I was just so happy, so happy that this country let me in.

	<p>And by the way, at that time I was renewing my visa until I started my process for permanent residency. So things got a lot easier and better, being a permanent resident I was able to do more but, I was just happy as you can believe that the U.S. government let me stay. And actually, they gave me rights, something I never had before. Intangible but have more value than tangible.</p>
JR:	<p>Uh huh.</p>
<p>Nightmares [33:30]</p>	
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>So to me it was that. I got a lot of nightmares the first year. I was having this nightmares where I was waking up, and I thought that I was back in Chile, and people was going to kill me. I was sweaty and it took me a while to realize that I was not in Chile, and it was not a dream.</p>
JR:	<p>Uh huh.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Ah, but it was a bad, it was a nightmare every night, so very often I thought I was back in Chile and when I woke up I looked around. I thought I was dreaming and I was going to wake up and I was going to be back in that situation in Chile again. And then I realized that was not, and oh, it took a while to start sleeping good.</p>
JR:	<p>So um, back to the dumpster story, which is riveting. What time of year was it?</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I think it was July, or August because when I started working in McDonald's it was colder. So, that may have been August, September, or maybe, maybe later, I just remember that it was not as hot as when I came.</p>
JR:	<p>Uh huh.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I remember because I used to say that here it is very warm. In Chile it is never that warm. So it was colder there. Even in summer you may have seventy degrees, it is not, it is not hot there. Maybe now with a, global warming, it is warmer over there, but it was not so. Here, I just was breathing the air, the smell of the air. I never saw a squirrel in my life before and I was so amazed to see a squirrel. Those little things to me were the most awesome things in life. I saw squirrel today! I never saw snowing before in my life until I was working on those eighteen wheelers as I was telling you about the truckers. I was going to New York, taking some engine blocks to upstate New York, and I stop in a truck stop to fill gas and it start snow. I remember taking pictures of the snow in the air to send to Chile to say, "Look! Snow!"—like it was a big deal! My coworkers</p>

	<p>looked at me and said, "You are crazy, no wonder they call you "loco in Chile." So you understand that, when you are running for your life, these little things have a lot of meaning to you. It make the richness in your life; simple things.</p>
<p>Alexandria Police Department and Saint Elizabeth’s Hospital [36:12]</p>	
<p>JR:</p>	<p>So you already mentioned a couple of folks, but any particular places or people that you remember as really making a difference especially in your early years here when you got here?</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>Yes, in 1984 I started working for the Alexandria Police Department. By the way this is one [motions to pin on his sports jacket] of the medals—awards I got—you will see that in my resume. I got—I want to say a hundred, but I got dozens of awards, from the President, from many places. I think I did a good job. I was in a party in Oakwood [apartments]—there is no Oakwood anymore- right across of Van Dorn Street, two or three blocks from the Watergate at Landmark. This was a community—they used to call it Oakwood. Now it is called something else. So, I was in a party there with some friends I made there. I never drink, I never did drugs, I never got drunk in my life, I do not smoke, so I was drinking, just lemonade, things like that, and eating. Money was awfully scarce and I was sending money to Chile to help out my family. I made good money but I did not keep most of the money. I sent it for my family. Food was scarce, so I always went to these free things and get some food and took some leftovers for the week. While there, I went to the bathroom and while there, all of sudden I saw on the toilet paper roll holder, a wallet on top. I look at the wallet, I opened the wallet and there was a lot of money in the wallet. There were credit cards, there were some other things, and there was a driver's license and the guy on it just happened to be Bolivian. So, I took the wallet and I ask my friend to take me home to call. There was no cellular phones at that time. He had a phone, and I called the person on the wallet. I left my name, and I said that I found his wallet.</p>
<p>JR:</p>	<p>Un huh.</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>He asked, "Where was it?" I said, "In the bathroom at Oakwood." He said, "Oh yeah! I was there earlier and I could not figure where I lost it, let me go to get it." I met the guy and I showed the wallet to him. I said, "Check, check it out", and then he looked at the things in the wallet, but he did not look at the money. I said, "Look at the money, I did not touch your money." He said, "I do not care about the money." "Yeah," I said, "but I do not you want you to think I</p>

	<p>took money". He said "No. As a matter of fact, here is the money," and he pulled out the money—there was maybe seventy bucks—and he gave it to me. I said, "No, I did not call you for this." He said, "It's okay, my documents are what I want, my driver license, these things, and so on. The money it is okay." Then he asked me what do I do. I said, "Well, I am doing construction work, sewer work, whatever it comes my way." Then he said, "Would you like to work in the medical field?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Look, I need somebody who speaks Spanish to help with the Cuban Entrant Program at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital." You can see that in my resume. The work was with the crazy guys, with the Marielitos [Cubans who emigrated to the U.S. during the Mariel boatlift.] So, he got me a job there and shortly after, my English started to get pretty good. It was not perfect, but it was fairly good. He had been there, since 1976, I think he told me, before Charles Samarra was Chief of Police of the Alexandria Police Department, and before Cook was Chief. He was running the Translators Program. I went over there, and in 1984 I became an interpreter for the Alexandria Police Department.</p>
JR:	Now this guy from Bolivia—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes.
JR:	He was running the program.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes, the program.
JR:	What was his name?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I cannot remember his name. Years later, Emery Antonucci created the official Alexandria Police Volunteer Department, with Cal Fox, and some others, I worked with them. When they realized that I was also a software engineer, I started working in Vice and I started developing programs for them. They have a programs called Quick Query [QQ] which I created and wrote the code. It was to track stolen property. Then I met Detective Joe Morrash who is retired now. He was working at the Alexandria Police Department, he was a detective and he was—.</p>
JR:	Joe who?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Joe Morrash. He was detective and he was part time FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] so I start working with him in international ring thefts.</p>

JR:	How do you spell his name?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	M-O-R-R-A-S-H. He is retired in Miami now, in Florida somewhere. Ah, so I started working with him. I designed program for the pawn shops to track stolen merchandise, and I start doing a lot more work in the Police Department—not just that, but always as a volunteer. I loved to go into the street on patrol because in the ‘80s -trust me John- Alexandria was not what it is now. The crime rate was outrageous. We had homicides on a weekly basis and all that, so it was a really tough time for the Police. So, one of the good thing is seeing Alexandria the ways it is now, and knowing that I contributed in a small part to improve that, makes me feel good.
JR:	Un huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	So, I got a lot of awards that you will see on my resume, and I did that until I had my heart attack. I had a heart attack in 2006, I can't remember anymore. I do not remember things that are bad. There is no need for.
JR:	Un huh. So you were an interpreter?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Interpreter but I also worked assisting the Vice team, I assisted the detectives, I assist in anywhere, in the computer lab because I just had the knowledge and the experience, so I was able to be useful. I made a lot of friends. Most of my friends are now behind desks. Anyways that is what I did for twenty-four years. Then I got a recognition, a national recognition from Secretary Rumsfeld [Donald H. Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense, January 20, 2001 to December 18, 2006] and I also got two letters of recognition, one from President Bush, and one from President Clinton. That was nice. You know—.
JR:	For your work as—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	For my work as a volunteer at the Police Department in Alexandria.
JR:	So you were a volunteer this whole time?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	All the time. I will tell you why.
JR:	What was your day job? I mean what did you do for a living?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I had a company—it was called Consumer Consultant Services and I was helping Latinos to get things done in the American system—taxes, immigration problems, I was basically like a consultant to their problem to see how I can help them to resolve them. People

	had terrible debts with IRS [Internal Revenue Service]. I went with them to IRS. I negotiate their debts and provided them a bit of help; sort of an adviser if you wish.
JR:	So you worked with the Police Department as a volunteer.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes.
JR:	For twenty-four years.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Twenty-four years. Most of my shifts were twelve-hour shifts at night. I used to suffer insomnia in that time so I used to sleep about eight hours a week so I put out a lot of hours out there.
JR:	So did you ever work for the Police Department?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	No, I was never a policeman.
JR:	Okay you never—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	No, no, no, I was never a police officer. I assisted.
JR:	But you never actually got a paycheck from them.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	No, no, not ever, no, no. The reason for this is: I wanted to be a citizen. I became permanent resident first, and I wanted to become a citizen. That took nine and a half years. I did not want to do this just for the work permit. I wanted to be here, and be part of this society Within the citizenship material it was a very clear statement: when you are sworn as a citizen one of the conditions is that are you willing to give your life if necessary to defend the country against domestic and foreign enemies. That was one of the questions got stuck in my mind. Nineteen ninety-five, when I was sworn as a citizen, they did not ask me once, or twice, but three times, "Are you willing to give your life if necessary, to defend this country against foreign and domestic enemies?" I answered YES three times. From the very beginning of the '80s I knew that sooner or later, I would answer that, so I did not wanted to wait. This country gave me an opportunity. They accept me here for what I was, and gave me the opportunity of freedom. That is all they give you. They do not give you money, they do not give you anything else. But they give you freedom. And you do not really value freedom until you have it. One, because I never had it before, and I did not know what it was, but when you have it, you realize the value of it. So in a way to give back to the community, I volunteered for the Police Department, and that was the perfect job for me. So I volunteered

	for twenty-four years and I am very proud of it.
Issues Faced by the Alexandria Police Department [46:10]	
JR:	Uh huh. You should be. I wanted to bring this up—what were some of the issues that the Police Department was facing—one of the issues that was going on at the time was the emerging Central America neighborhoods in Alexandria and most notably over in Chirilagua—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Chirilagua.
JR:	Chirilagua in the West End in the [19]80s and [19]90s. What were some of the issues that you remember in your volunteer work?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Very, very clear. Chirilagua in the West End, where the low income population were, there was a lot of drug dealing. A lot. Cocaine—you name it—a lot of drug dealing. There was a lot of violence. There were many gangs. It was gang against gang, with machetes and other weapons. There was no one night that you can finish a shift taking a break. Prostitution, prostitution rings. I work with Vice—they took [me] as an interpreter because one day they broke up into a, a place where the prostitutes were there and they all spoke Spanish, so I need to communicate back and forth with Vice and them. Besides drugs, it was petty crime, assaults and things like that. Gangs and prostitution I think were the main problems. At one point was a rush of car-jackings and I wrote a program that could foretell what car had the highest possibility to be stolen, what brand, where, what time of the day and what day. So we work on that and it was just statistics—it’s nothing magic about it.
JR:	So, okay—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	So those things were to me the worst. It was a lot of violence. In that time it was not just Alexandria. D.C. was the same thing. They used to say in D.C., “You know why in D.C. snow doesn't last very long?” Because it get melted with the crossfire." Because there were killings every day in DC. The ‘80s was a rough time.
JR:	Yeah. So how did the Police Department's interaction with immigrant communities change during this period to respond to the needs of immigrants? In what ways do you feel that immigrant communities changed through their interactions with the Police Department and the larger city apparatus?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I think the Police Department made a very big effort to understand the community, especially Central American communities—the

Spanish communities—because they realized there was a cultural issue. For example, in South America drinking in the streets, sitting in the streets drinking or getting drunk, it is unfortunately part of the social activity. It is nothing wrong with it for them. Here there are laws. So many times the police arrest a lot of people, and the people get mad at the police because they think they were not doing anything wrong, so the police brought in a lot of people like me to help. I was not the only one. There was a bunch of people and we all worked on this explaining to them that in this country they cannot do this things. That is the law, there are certain regulations here. We explained, "This is why they are arresting you. Now, if you want to go home and drink yourself to death, you are free to do it; this is a free country, but there are rules and regulations." So we did a lot of community work, a lot of education. They—the police were not out to arrest people, they work to educate people.

I remember the drunk people in the street. We asked them to stop that, and we took the time to say, "Look you cannot do this. Do not do it. Please go home. You will be safe there. You can be assaulted here." Chirilagua was a really bad place. I always added, "If I see you again like this, we are going to arrest you." And that worked. And then the community recognized the cops. I used to remember nights when we were walking, we parked the car and we walked in these neighborhoods saying, "Hello, this is Officer so and so." So, I think the Police Department did an excellent job trying to understand other cultures. So, the culture shock was more explicable. We were able to close that gap. I was part of that and many other people where as well; men and women working together on this. As an interpreters I think that was a big part of what the Police Department did. They adopted the old style of walk the streets, shake neighbors' hands. I remember going down, close to Route One after hours, going into the neighborhood businesses, were was people working late and they asked the police when they saw us, "What happened?" "Nothing" we responded, "We just want to say hello and make sure you are okay, if you are safe here. Call if you need us." So, they wanted to be sure that the police did not come to arrest them, just to ask if you need help, We are here to help you. Now, obviously honest people appreciate that. Crooks do not. So the crooks got very nervous when the Police Department were making friends with the good people, and the good people start calling us when they saw the bad guys. So, the Police Department made a very conscious and meticulous effort to eradicate violence, crime, and you can see now that Alexandria is a wonderful place to live. Crime? There will always be crime—it's a

	human nature.
JR:	Uh huh. Now there's a program called V-I-P-S what was that? Volunteers in Police—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	In Police.
JR:	Police Service?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yeah.
JR:	Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I was part of that too. I think I got one medal for that too. The things with that for me was that I was not into titles and things like that. I just wanted to help. I did not care if you give me something or not for it. I did not care, I wanted to help. Basically my idea was that you opened the door of your home to me, so I am going to help you back. You do not have to pay me back. However; I still got a lot of awards.
JR:	Yeah. So there was a whole group of translators who—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes, there was ladies and gentlemen working, and of course there were some police officers that spoke Spanish, but the need was overwhelming.
JR:	Right.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yeah, so there were many of us working, yes. And we were treated like kings. At the Police Department we were treated like we were the Chief of Police. They were coaches. It was a wonderful experience in my life.
JR:	Yeah. So, did translation work continue to be important into the two thousands?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes.
JR:	Okay. Why? Why was it still important?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Because you do not solve the problem of immigration. Immigration is a growing problem.
JR:	Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	You know, constantly new people come in, and the people who come in are completely ignorant of what happens here. I can give you a couple examples of problems that we were able to solve

	<p>caused just because of the cultural differences. One day we got a call from a guy that was calling the police because another guy is putting trash in his bin. We went there and there was a Spanish guy at the site The caller was a resident, an American who told us that this person took several trash bags, and put it into his bin. Okay, well you do not do that here. When I talk to the Spanish person, I understood the situation. He said, he lives in the same street and there were many trash bags on the street, and that looked bad. So he picked up the trash off the street, and put it in the proper place. In his mind, the Spanish person was doing the right thing, he was cleaning the street where he lives. The other person was as well doing the right thing because the other person is not supposed to do that. So, how do you bridge this? You have to explain the American person what this other person thinks, and that was trying to do the right thing. Crossing that bridge of idiosyncrasy and handling linguistic and cultural differences was very important, and I think the Police Department put a lot of effort on that. Another time we got a call of a fight between a Spanish person and an American man right here in Alexandria, in Mount Vernon. Anyway, it was a fistfight, and what happened is that the American man said that the other person had insulted him. To make the long story short: Americans normally when they pay, they drop the money on the counter. For a Spanish person that is an insult. In Spanish culture, if you are going to hand something, you do it into the hand of the other person. Do not throw it because in the Spanish culture most of the times that is an affront. The other thing is when I am talking to you, I look you in the eyes. It is a sign of respect. If I am talking to you and you are not paying attention to me is disrespect.</p> <p>Well, oriental people is told that when you look at people in the eye is insulting to them. So the oriental person was being respectful to the Spanish guy—and the Spanish guy thought it was being disrespectful. This is another cultural issue that creates problems—both guys were doing the right thing. I am looking at you in the eye while talking and that way I am showing respect. And the other guy within his culture is showing respect by not looking you in the eye. That is a residual of a feudal system.</p>
JR:	A what?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Feudal. Feudal system. So you need to explain to the Spanish man that this is the way people act here. When they throw the money on the counter they are not insulting you. It is part of the American culture. Now, you look at this in another way. You need to change a little bit because wherever you go, you must do as they do there. So

	<p>you need to adjust your cultural mechanics. Now, the oriental person will not look at you in the eyes unless he understands that this part of his culture does not apply here, and then he would look at you in the eye. So, cultural barriers need to be broken sometime. I know that the Police Department did a lot, and I was very happy to be a part of that.</p>
<p>Other Work Experience [56:50]</p>	
JR:	<p>I don't think we've done justice to your work history here. Could you talk about the jobs that you had along the way, you know, that gave the opportunity to earn a living?</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Yes, I started in construction. I worked for a good time in construction, and after that I did work servicing the community through consulting services.</p>
JR:	<p>Uh huh.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>The company was called Consumer Consulting Services, C-C-S. I got a partner from Chile, and we did that for a while. Then I moved into—.</p>
JR:	<p>What did you say about Chile? I'm sorry.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I had a partner, a guy from Chile.</p>
JR:	<p>Oh okay. So—.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>He used to work for the World Bank, and we did this type of work. It was not bad, but it was not enough money because we served a population with very low income, so we could not charge a lot. Then, I was hired by a company Real Estate, a company that was selling properties in Leesburg, Virginia. At the same time, shortly after that, I got involved with an insurance group called Primerica. Originally it was known as A.L. Williams, and I sold life insurance and other financial products for them. So, I had to obtain my licenses in insurance, real estate, and a stock broker. I was now working on a higher level and earning more. I did that for a while, and in the meantime, I was doing some trucking. I drove eighteen wheelers all the way to Canada, California, and since I had insomnia, I could do that a lot</p>
JR:	<p>Were you a teamster?</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Well, I was not part of the Teamsters Union. I was not. I was just an opportunistic guy that when they needed a driver to go to Bronx or Fort Apache in New York, and no one else wanted to go there, I</p>

	<p>raised my hand and I went. And I make good money. If I knew where I was going, I would have never volunteered for that, but sometimes you got to be stupid, and I earn money that way. Later on, I opened another company called InfoTrek, which was a technology company. I had a division called GTS [Global Tactical Solutions.] We offered high-level specialized training for Law Enforcement. By this time, I had a lot of experience in law enforcement and also, we were contracting with different companies for IT [computer information technology] services. Among other clients, we served Marriott Corporation until 9-11 [the attacks on September 11, 2001] when these government contracts were terminated. I had Top Secret clearance and a Top Secret clearance facility, but because of 9-11 they cancelled a lot of these contracts. I do not know what the status was, but I think it was to create the Department of Homeland Security. That was a bad time because I lost four contracts and, I lost a lot.</p>
<p>Development of the AVERTER [Acronym for His Invention] [01:00:31]</p>	
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>By this time I have been working on my own product, the Averter. It took me five years to figure out the formula. It took me another five years to synthesize the formula—and I have pictures of all of this—. Then I started to look for funding and I got started, but I made a mistake. I trusted the people that gave me money to get started, promising that they will bring the rest of the money later. It never happened, so it were rough times. Right now I have a contract with an investor, and hopefully in the next thirty days or so, I will be back on my feet again. I will be building a manufacturing facility in Mexico, in Morocco, Spain, Chile, and Senegal. As a matter of fact, the Embassy of Senegal called me today and the Embassy of Paraguay did the same. My product is a game-changer, and I am ready to jump into that. In the meantime after my heart attack, I could not find a job. Well actually no. I did find jobs in Afghanistan, to which my wife said, "No way." It was a well-paying job, but I could not go. I also found a job to go to Iraq because of my expertise and knowledge. I could not go either. Then I found a job as Executive Vice President of Bank of Santander in Spain—.</p>
<p>JR:</p>	<p>Santan—?</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>Santander. It's a bank, an International Bank of Spain. I applied for the job in Santander thinking that the job was here. I was accepted, but the job was in Spain. My wife would not move there. So, I worked in different things here and there until I got this part time job of interpreting for medical facilities. I have been doing this for</p>

	<p>the last three years part-time because that is what this is, a part-time job. I was unable to find a more substantial job. If you read my resume I have a lot in there. I used to get this thing of, "You are overqualified for the job." I did not understand, if I am overqualified for the job, they were getting the best guy in town for half of the money —how can that be bad for the company? One guy told me once something that makes a lot of sense. He said, Yes, you are over overqualified. If you come to work here you are going to do a hell of a good job, but as soon as other companies discover you, there are going hire you somewhere else. They are going to pull you away and pay you probably double and I cannot afford to compete with them and I cannot afford to lose a guy like that, so I am better off not hiring you. I realized that that was not good for me. Anyways, after that I kept on working on my product. I opened a company in Mexico and a company in Chile. Those companies are dormant right now waiting for funding, but as soon as the funding comes, we are going! I am opening a company right now in Spain. Let me tell you John, I knocked on the doors in the United States to do this here. I talked to people in Alexandria, I talked to congressmen, I talked to Governors, I talk to everybody to create jobs in the United States and what I found was that I could not find somebody who wanted to help this country. What I found was people always asking first, "What is in for me?" These lobbyists, they just want to get paid. They want this and they want that. I tried to work with a couple of them, but got nowhere. Basically I say, if you going to help your fellow citizens, you need to jump over politics. That is why I told you John from the very beginning, "I don't want anything to do with politics."</p>
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>So, I was invited by the Prime Minister of Morocco a couple years ago, and we have been working on that since. We have an outstanding invitation from the President of Senegal and from the President of Paraguay. The way this work is—we want to create plantations in the low cost countries. The plants I used to not grow in the United States. The climate here will kill them. I am trying to see if I can do something in Texas, Mississippi, but the nature of the plant and the biota does not support these plant's life unless you use a greenhouse, which explodes the costs way too much. So, having plantations outside the United States like, in Mexico for example, or Paraguay, Morocco, or Senegal it's a lot cheaper. Then I can bring the Averter semi-processed to the United States and do the high-tech here.</p>

JR:	When you say averter—how do you spell that?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	A-V-E-R-T-E-R. It's an acronym of my invention. I can send it to you if you want it.
JR:	Okay, it's on your website?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	No, no the acronym and how I came up with it is not on the website, that is part of my personal files, but I can I can send it to you. I am going to take note so I can remember it. You are going to laugh of it, but that is what it is.
Family in the U. S. [01:05:54]	
JR:	Great. We haven't talked about your family, here. Would you mind talking about how you met your wife?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes, I met my wife in at the American Red Cross in 1990 when I volunteered for the Gulf War.
JR:	From Chile or—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	No. No-no-no here. The Gulf War, Desert Storm.
JR:	You volunteered to go there?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I volunteered but I was not accepted. I met then someone who used to work for a company called SEMCOR, which then turned into Titan Systems. He contacted me, and his wife used to work for the Red Cross. I went over there to work with the Red Cross in the POW [Prisoner of War] and MIA [Missing in Action] Units. There was also a program called the Boat People, work about of a half million refugees from South Vietnam. In the POW and MIA Units were trying to find lost people during the Desert Storm War. So I built a phonetic compiler because I realized that—.
JR:	You built a what?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	A phonetic compiler—.
JR:	Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	It was a software program that, messaged the data in a way that I can kind of send the data back in its original form. I will give you an example. Somalians running from Somalia come to the United States. They go to a refugee camp first in France. Then, the French Red Cross came with the names for them in French, in a phonetical manifestation. I do not write Arabic, so if you say your name is

	<p>Hassam I am going to write H-A-S-A-MS or S-A-M and after a phonetical expression of the name is written, it was sent to the United States from Geneva, Switzerland, and Geneva translates that name into the English version. So we ended up with guys with seventeen different names. I figured out that would not be good, so I start working and building this compiler, while my wife—my current wife and my only wife, was working with the boat people. So, I met her there. I was having so much success finding lost people because I started looking at [other] ethnicities, tribal distribution and tribal customs, and the way the African acts, not only using inner linguistics within the group, but also I looked into their idiosyncrasies as well. I figured out for example that such and such tribe will do taxi cabs in America, and every member of that tribe will do taxi cabs. Then I started to look into the taxi cabs in D.C. [District of Columbia], in the National Airport and I talked to the guys. Then they told me, "Oh yeah! That guy changed his name to Joe." This way, I started finding lost people who their family over there were trying to locate them here, or they were trying to locate the family in Somalia. Red Cross had this wonderful thing on putting people together.</p>
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Once, we got messages that said, "This letter is for Joe, lives in Chicago, specifically United States." And, my wife-to-be asked me, "Can you do something with this?" And that it was how I met her. She was alone and not going out seriously with any guy in that time, and I was working hard, making money and sending money to Chile to my family. I was not in my mind getting married or anything like that, I just wanted to work. So we started working together and we started and finding people. We became good friends. She had a boyfriend—.</p>
JR:	Where was she from?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	She's from West Virginia.
JR:	Okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Is "Howdy" girl. Howdy! West Virginia girl. So we became friends. I visited her home, met the family but we were just friends. She had a boyfriend or something, the guy was in the Peace Corps in Africa for two and a half years, in Chad. He met someone there and I do not know the details, but this guy finally got married over there, and then, one thing brought another and after a while, we both had the</p>

	<p>same desire of having a family. We got along very well and we were really good friends. We had good times and everything and after a year and half or two years, we got serious, then we started going out, and we got married. We are now close to twenty-three years married. We have three kids. And we have been together in the ups and downs.</p>
JR:	<p>Okay.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>By the way, her boss says that it took two wars to put us together, the Gulf War and the Vietnam War because we were working in those two wars at the same time.</p>
JR:	<p>You mentioned boat people from—,</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Vietnam.</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>I can remember things like, for example, I remember when the printing was invented and by who. I can tell you who invented nylon, and what year. I can tell you things like that, but if you ask for my children's or my wife's birthday, I am lost! So, when I filled out my, my Top Secret application, I got two agents coming saying that they have some problems with my dates. They told me, "You said that you went to Italy in such year." "Yeah," I said. "I went with my wife after our marriage. She was pregnant." But the dates I gave did not match. I had to call my wife and ask when did we get to Italy? I was three years off. The guys told me that it was normal. Guys do not remember dates very well.</p> <p>I am kind of thankful for that.</p>
<p>Playing Soccer [01:12:46]</p>	
JR:	<p>So, like me, your wife is your memory [laughs.] Okay, I'm going to ask just a few more questions about heritage. I got to ask you this one—when did you play professional soccer?</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>In Chile.</p>
JR:	<p>Oh you were still in Chile?</p>
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Yes, in Chile. Early days. When I came here I play soccer as well but it was just an activity. In Chile is not a good career. It was a looked down type of activity. If you are a soccer player, you probably could not make it in society Chile is a very classist society. They do not discriminate racially, but they do discriminate socially.</p>

JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	If you are a waiter you're sub-human. If you didn't go to the university and got a type of diploma, you're nothing. And they demonstrate that. I learned different here and I, can make comparisons. It is just sad, but that is the way it is.
Visits Back to Chile and Significance of Chilean Traditions [01:13:45]	
JR:	So, how often do you go back to Chile?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Well right now, I have not gone since 2008 because of economical situations, and I do not have money to re-build the company there, but I used to go to Chile between two and four times every year. I used to go about twenty times a year to Mexico and I traveled to Canada, maybe two times a year. Um, what else? I went to Argentina as well. I was spending three weeks out the month out of the U.S. at that time. Right now I am going to start traveling again. And it is going to be less difficult. When the kids were little, we had an au pair from Mexico helping my wife, so there was two women in the house taking care of the little ones, so the man of the house could go and do his stuff. Now I have twenty-one year old, sixteen and fifteen year olds and they want to travel as well. So I am planning to plan some trips together now. I am going to Chile, I will say at least, two times a year. I am not looking forward to these long trips anymore, they are too time consuming. John, there are two ways to traveling in a plane: First class and cattle. If you do not have money for first class, you go in the cattle section and there is where you are sitting like this [demonstrates] for eleven hours. You can straighten only your fingers and if you want to go somewhere, you need to jump over one or two guys. It is just not fun. So, I am trying to minimize my trips now.
JR:	Gotcha. So, have you tried to maintain any traditions from Chile here in the United States?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	To be honest, no. I don't have very proud memories from my native country because of the political establishment and the dictatorship. It was right during my younger life when all my dreams went broken because of these people. They basically robbed me of my future. The best thing that ever happen to me, it was coming here. I was able to take the broken pieces of my life and put them back together and rebuild my life. Now, I do keep in touch with all my fellow students from school? You bet. We have a website, we communicate. There are hundred and two of us that we are in constant communication. When I go to Chile, I sit with them, we

	have dinner, we talk about the good times, and the things we did together—.
JR:	This is your alumni—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	My alumni, my high school's one.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Yes, and with some of my friends from the university as well. Some of them are here. Some of them are in other countries. That was my personal world, my personal contacts—I still keep that intact.
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I write once a month for my school website, my ex-school. I write an article every month. I have been doing this for years, for many years. I have thousands of readers. But customs or traditions? Like what? I learned that politicians lie. I learned that the police were corrupted. I learned that government was out to rob you of everything. I left the original home behind because of this.
JR:	Uh huh.
Freedom - an Invaluable Thing [01:17:10]	
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	I adopted the things of this country. I was welcomed to accept them. It is a change. You know, I understood freedom in a different way. One day—the first time I was able to vote for a president, I was at five o'clock [a.m.] at the voting place. They were not even open yet. They were just starting to set some tables up to sell stuff. And the guy at the poll said, "Hey! This thing does not start for at least an hour and half more." I responded, "It is okay, I want to be here". He said, "You are crazy!" I said, "No, you do not understand. I could not vote in Chile. There was a call for vote by the Dictator, and because I voted for the wrong guy, I was marked. They cut my ID and they marked me off as an enemy, and they persecuted me because of that. Here, I can vote for anybody I want. Nobody is going to shoot me when I come out of the voting place. Nobody is even going to question me. You have no idea what kind of power that is. To be honest John, I had no idea who I voted for, I don't even remember who was running for President at that time, and I did not care. The point is, this was the first time in my life that I was going to exercise my inherent right, and nobody is going to kill me for that. Those are the little things that I learned, you know? Freedom, it is an invaluable thing that those people over there do not understand. And not only in Chile, I have been in many

	countries and it is the same.
Significance of Chilean Organizations in the Metropolitan Area [01:18:44]	
JR:	So, okay. So, is there—I got to ask you this, is there a community here of fellow immigrants in the metropolitan area that come together to talk current events back home or issues facing the community here in the U. S. Do you participate in any—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	No I do not. I know they exist and in early times, I touched bases with them but I realized that some of the folks that are in these things, have personal political agendas that they brought from Chile. They are people that I do not want to be associated with for different reasons. Safety, personal safety, personal protection, family protection. They were doing here exactly the things for what I run out of that country. I detest that and I am against doing it here. So, I did not want to have anything to do with them, I do not want to do anything whatsoever with these groups. I know they exist and they have contacted me many times, but I have very politely declined. I left that trash behind my life and I am not going back to it. I have a new life. I have a new understanding of society. I am happy with it. I am proactive. I do not want to go back into the trash. So no, John, I am sure there is many groups and I am sure there are good ones, but even with the ones I got in touch with, but no thanks. No.
Comments about Chilean History and Culture [01:20:17]	
JR:	So what do you want for your children in terms of their heritage, in terms of Chile?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Well, I took my children to Chile when they were little. I hope to take them back again. I have been talking to them about some of my heritage things. Some of them that meaningful. For example, about the coat of arms of Chile. It says, "By the reason or by the force." Well, that is a very anti-democratic thing. It's You do it or I make you do it—that is basically what it is. You do it or you die. But if you understand why is that the way they think, and how it came along, you are going to understand it. For example in Chile the people say—"I do not understand why you people hate black people or Indian people, why do you have this problem?" Well, until the year I came here in 1980, there was no black people in Chile. There were no Indian people. There were almost no people from other countries. You never lived or worked with them, so never it was problems with that there. Here is different. Chile abolished slavery in 1810. In 1810 they took all the Africans slaves, they gave them

	<p>money, a lot of money and sent them back to Africa, so they can have good and dignified life with good money. They paid very generously, and they apologized to them for being enslaved, and they got them out of slavery. For all the old and sick people, they had a place to keep them in, a place called La Quintrala until the last one of them died. So, I say, you cannot understand something you have not lived through. You criticize that why this people fight among themselves? Well, now many-many years later, Koreans started to go to Chile and my friends say, "We got a lot of problems with Koreans. We hate Koreans." And I said to that, "Well, remember when you ask me about hating people? I do not hate anybody. And they told me, "Yeah, but you were in the police and police hate people." I responded, "Look, I am not bias. If I am going to hate somebody, I am going to hate everybody equally." [laughs] But I don't. Now, it is difficult to live with people with different cultures. When you live in a culture that everybody is of the same culture and everybody do the same thing, you do not have many bumps. When you live in a society, with hundreds of different cultures and everybody has different beliefs, you bump into things. Then, you need to open your mind and say, "Okay, I do not like this," but you need to know from where things are coming from. That is why I like history John, because history tells you things that people do not understand but they are too lazy, they do not go back in history and they do not learn. You know? It is the same endemic problems that brought down the Roman Empire, are happening today.</p>
<p>BioHumaNomics and the Pursuit of His Dream to Reverse Migration [01:23:06]</p>	
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>I wrote an economic philosophy—an economic model that I call BioHumaNomics [see internet article entitled, "El Humanitario Engendrador de Infiernos - BioHumaNomics".] It talks about when Plato created the state of the republic. He was talking about city-states, little cities were that you can apply that principle. We do not live in city-states anymore. We live in a country with hundreds of millions of people. The original concept of Republic does not fit. We took a little thing and tried to fit it in a big thing. They did not have a Congress. They did not have a Senate. They did not have Presidents at that time. So you are talking about an ancient thing, and adjusting it to the new one. So my idea of BioHumaNomics I have been trying to make people understand that you need to adapt or die. That is what species do in nature. You adapt and you evolve, if not; you disappear. But this is an emotional and mental development that you need to learn, and learning, it takes time,</p>

	<p>effort, and it hurts, but if you're not willing to do that, then you are not evolving. So I don't know, maybe it is that I am just a dreamer. When people ask me if I want to buy a mansion, I say no, I do not want to buy a mansion. I want to buy my own planet. That is what I want, my own planet. What do I want a mansion for? What do I want an island for? I want my own planet. Of course that is never going happen, but you know? When you set your sight high and even if you get halfway there, it would be better if you set your sights low. Yes, I got a lot of dreams. My grandfather Víctor told me once, "You need to be a dreamer to succeed in life, but you need to run faster than your dreams so you can catch them."</p>
JR:	[Laughs]
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Things like that, you know always revolve in my mind. It is not that the dream is impossible. It's that you're not running fast enough to catch your dreams. So, what are you going to do about it? That type of philosophy in my life, so now I want to fix the world. I want to create—just for the record, when we open a plantation in any place, we hire about twenty thousand people. In order to support one of these positions, you need another seven people. So, when we open a plantation we hire around hundred and sixty thousand people. Something politicians like extremely much. However, politicians in other countries, they receive you with open arms. I was given a tour of Morocco by the highest person there, and they still asking for us to go there. Here in the United States, the politicians are at the level of "What is in it for me first?" So I got disgusted about this. I did not give up on this country. This is my country, I will not give up, but I am going to have to work around this, but I found a good group of people that want to help this country, and we are going to do something good. Now I have a system, an economic system to make this at last, because if I have a hundred and sixty thousand people, how I am going to support them? So, I got a system to maintain this deal for twenty years and it seems to be working fine. So far, the people I am talking to are decision makers, you know? Prime Ministers make decisions, they can make decisions. But yes, one of my dreams is to reverse immigration to Mexico.</p>
JR:	Is what—?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	To reverse immigration. I am currently writing a paper about it.
JR:	Oh where people want to go back—?
Rodrigo A.	Yeah, Mexicans come here with no documents, no education, no

<p>Guajardo:</p>	<p>language, no nothing, and they will make a living. This is a technified society, highly technological. You have little or no chance to really make it good, unless you got some education. Look, I am an engineer and I had a hard time from the very beginning trying to climb up in this society. If you got nothing, and been illiterate in your own language, what are chances are? So why don't we build huge plantations in Mexico and bring the people back over there. In Mexico, the pay for this type of work is five dollars and twenty-five cents a day. If I pay the guys sixteen dollars a day, it will be a very well pay. Why do you want to go to United States when in Mexico you can make very good money, very good living, and you don't have to be running from immigration?</p>
<p>JR:</p>	<p>Now these plantations would be producing what?</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>It would be Agavecea plantations, probably Fourcroydes Lem. There is another specie called Sisalana, another specie called Agave Azul or Weber, and there are a few species that I can use. I extract the sap of this plants and I make a magical process and I can create my product which is permanent solution for corrosion. Most people do not know what the cost of corrosion is. It is the highest cost in anything else in the planet. Wars, hunger, health, these do not even compare to the cost of corrosion. Everything corrodes—ninety-eight percent of things in the planet including you and me, will corrode. For example, you know that our roads infrastructure and bridge infrastructure are pitiful. They are corrosion, nothing but corrosion. This new product basically can extend four times the life of the equipment. If a bridge will last for twenty years, by using my product it is going to last eighty years. And the cost to the industry is amazingly low. I will give you an example. A one-thousand horsepower boiler would process probably about forty-three million gallons of water per year. The cost of maintenance is about twenty-four to twenty-five thousand dollars per year. With my product, the cost goes to one hundred and sixty-eight dollars a year. Of course I do not sell it at that price because I will not make any money. So I am going to sell it for a hundred and ten dollars per gallon. And I am still saving sixty-five percent of the maintenance cost of the boiler. So, there's an extreme advantage to this, a strategic advantage to this, but at the same time, I think I have a moral and ethical obligation to help the less fortunate. So what I am doing with my BioHumaNomics is creating jobs for the people who cannot get good jobs. If you are illiterate, or you have never gone to school because you did not have the opportunity. It's not a crime being uneducated, it is just a condition. So I will give you a job</p>

	<p>where you just need to be able to talk and communicate. I teach you how to do this. And have done that in Mexico. I am paying them what nobody pays them. You have no idea the loyalty of this people when finally they see that they can educate their kids. I have a non-profit in Mexico. I have one in Chile. I have one here and I have one in Spain. They are closed because I have no money right now, but they will be soon open. So, I give back to the human being. The human capital to me is paramount. I do not care if I make a trillion dollars tomorrow—when I get to go to the box, I will go naked like a pawn. So—.</p>
JR:	Naked with what?
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Like a pawn, you know? Like chess, the king and the pawn.
JR:	Oh okay.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>Yes, I am going there, so whatever toys I can get here I will enjoy, but I will pass. I have been working in a lot of literature trying to show people how we can do this without good piece or sacrifice. We can do this, and not lose anything by giving more to people. So my idea is to create this to create jobs not only outside the United States for the needy people, because we also have needy people here. We can do this, I am absolutely convinced. I am not just convinced because I believe so, it is because I have got specific plans. It is hard to find people who actually look at the plans, and start analyzing and questioning your plan. Why this? Why that? How exactly are you going to do this? How exactly are you going to do that? I have not found people that are interested out of their heart to help fellow citizens. For them it is always "Me first, me second, me third. If there is something left, maybe for the other guy, but I do not have time for that." That is what I see.</p>
JR:	Uh huh.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	<p>And when you help somebody who really needs it; you have no idea how good that is. There is a woman in Mexico that her husband is not working now, but he used to work for me. She told me once, "This is the best job that my husband had in his life. I kick him out of bed every day so he goes to work, because I told him that if he lose this job I will divorce him!" [Laughs.] Listen to this. I not only have the worker, but I also have their families. When we open this jobs we just do not pay them well, we treat them well, like a family. We take care of their families. I make less money than other people yes. But the satisfaction I get out of this, nobody gets. At the end if I</p>

	<p>have to take something with me when I have to go to the Oven, or wherever I am going to go, I am going to take satisfaction with me—I think I can carry satisfaction over there. I cannot carry clothing or food, but I think I can take satisfaction with me. I will pass the whatever customs service you have to pass after death, whether you go to heaven or to the Oven. I think I may be able to pass that.</p>
<p>Comments about the Future and His Thoughts on Management [01:33:05]</p>	
<p>JR:</p>	<p>[Laughs.] Okay well we've covered a lot of ground. Anything else that you would like to say about your experience here or Chile or the future?</p>
<p>Rodrigo A. Guajardo:</p>	<p>The future, I like the future. I like the future because I am an endless optimistic guy. I am in love with my own vision of the future. I want to help people. I want to see happy kids getting education, I want a father going home and be happy because he can feed the kids that night, and you know they are going to get an education. I want to be able to help the economy in some sense. I just look what is happening right now in Baltimore [Maryland], the riots that occurred in April 2015 it just break my heart! Is not racism, it is not crime, it is everything together. Is not the crime, the crime is connected. Everything is connected, so we need to start looking at this things in several areas at the same time. Fighting corruption, fighting crime, fighting this, fighting that—makes no sense to me. It's like, since the human being is able to hold something in their hand we have wars and crime—that will never end. It is in our nature. But what we can do, is minimize that, by taking—you take for example Baltimore. You have got lack of education, lack of opportunities, lack of preparation. Whether it is police brutality or not—I'm a little biased on that, because I did serve for Police Department for twenty-four years, and I am not going to say that there is no brutality but I do not say that is an endemic problem or is something that people do wanting to do. Policemen also have feelings and they have a human limit. When the crooks put you over the limit it is natural to react. It is politics problems, it is education, it is a lot of things. Instead saying, "We are going to fight crime" what we need to do in my view, is to listen, to find out why the crime happened? There are people who has nothing else to lose so they steal. There are other people who are lazy and do not want to work, so they jump somebody. So there is a psychic piece here that I think people is not looking at, or do not care about. When I built my companies I look into these things. In southern Mexico, for example, my biggest problem when I started</p>

several years ago—it was alcoholism. The guys were getting drunk and did not show up to work. So instead of punishing the guy and fired the guy for this, I create a program. And the program is to show "look what you are doing to yourself and what the effects on your family is, and if you continue doing this, look where you are going to end up." And a lot of these people say, "You know what? I lost my job because I am drinking too much and I lost all my friends." Yes, and because your friends are making a good living for them and their families and they do not want people like you around. So, there is more than just "I had no opportunities".

I do not have money to invest right now but if you ask me to invest in Baltimore, I would say, not now. I would not invest a penny in Baltimore the way it is now. When I go to a country, I do a country analysis. I do an evaluation of the country and I can give you material on it—I spend about six months and at least a half million dollars doing an evaluation because I look at everything. If I want to open an industry here, I want it open at least for twenty years when the first worker comes here. Here is a guy who has family and dreams, and he wants a house and educate his kids. I have a moral and ethical responsibility to that guy. To guarantee him safety, and well-being. And the only way I can do this is guaranteeing him a good job for the next twenty years. I cannot fix your life. You are going to take care of that yourself. But if I give you the tools and the opportunity, and you are up to it, I am going fix not only your life, but your family's life. And you will be able to appreciate that. I do not see this in this society. I get a job because they pay me more. That's all there is to it. Instant gratification. We invented the selfie. Me-me-me-me and that's it. I'm not saying do not be selfish—I always say in my documentation that it is okay to be greedy because greed is a moral force. It is an engine to push you ahead, but cut it in half. So what I do to my high level employees? Someone who is making six hundred dollars an hour? If you are paying your employees twenty dollars an hour, everybody hates you because they say that the boss never do anything, and you are doing the job, and you are getting paid twenty dollars an hour. The boss is doing nothing and getting six hundred dollars an hour. I said look, instead of making six hundred dollars an hour, make five hundred dollars an hour. This is out of ignorance perhaps, but surely it is because of low salaries. You can take a hundred dollars off per hour of your salary, and give ten bucks increase to ten of your employees. When you get employees saying, "This guy took money out of his paycheck to give me a thirty-three percent increment." Now he likes you. They used to hate you, but now you are a good guy. Now, how

	<p>bad is going be for you to go from six hundred dollars an hour to five hundred dollars an hour? Come on, John. You can make the sacrifice and get a lot more out of that. So, my executives have to give part of their checks to benefit the less earning ones, and I obligate my employees to donate twenty hours a year to community service. Everybody does more than that. I think that everybody has to have ingrained in themselves that they are using the society to make a living, and they need to feed back to it a little bit. When we eat chickens, we first feed them to eat them. But what we need do is to make more chickens and we feed them. It is a balance. I think that is what we need to start thinking about. I am going to go down into the soil in a few more years. I think I have at least twenty years of effective life, and I want to write enough so maybe some crazy guy in the future read my things and maybe make sense of them, and maybe somehow in the future I can make society start taking a little deviation from its bad habits, and end up in a better place. I will never know but it does not matter.</p>
JR:	Well that's probably a good place to stop. Thank you very much.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	My pleasure Sir. Do you have my card?
JR:	Rodrigo this has been very inspirational—.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Thank you, do you have my card?
JR:	No I don't.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Okay, that have my cell number and my email and if you need information and if you need any more material I'll be glad let you do have it. Pick up my resume. What can I say John? I tell people that I don't get older, I age to perfection and I get worn out. When I die, I am going to be worn out, not old. Getting old is in your body, age is in your head. Yes, the body does not understand that sometimes, but what the heck! We keep on pushing. So, I want to do as much as I can before I go.
JR:	And I think you will. Thank you.
Rodrigo A. Guajardo:	Thank you sir. I will be seeing you John and if you need anything from me feel free to call me or email me.
End of Interview 01:40:54.	