

Ralph Moya – December 9, 2011

Transcribed by Cynthia Martin

Life in Newkirk, New Mexico, during the 50s and 60s – tourists and travelers coming through town and attending their church on Sundays – fascinated by the “look” of the outsider, their clothes, style – his family ranch – driving cattle across Route 66 – gun culture and “Out West” – race and racism on Route 66 – tourist assumptions about Hispanics and Mexicans – the Texan attitude – defining “gringo” – changes in traffic and the use of Route 66 over the decades – fighting the I-40 bypass in Tucumcari – *moradas* and *penitentes* – some of the family names and businesses that were affected by the bypass – the magistrate court – the speed trap – Frugal Bottles – Jewish merchants from “back east” – Route 66 a part of the “Old West” – Route 66 today – abandoned buildings – a part of history

INTERVIEW BETWEEN DAVID K. DUNAWAY AND RALPH MOYA

Interview Date: December 9, 2011

Transcription date: January 3, 2012

DAVID: Tell me your name and when you were born and where you were raised.

RALPH: My name is Ralph Moya. I was born October the first, 1950, in Newkirk, New Mexico. Actually I was born in that little community. I was delivered by a midwife. Born and raised and lived in Newkirk all my life. We still own our ranch and we still are associated with the community there. As a matter of fact, my family right now placed the only church in that community under 501(c) corporation to preserve the history of it, and it is pretty dilapidated but we intend to renovate it. And the whole deal behind it is that we feel that as time progresses, history itself gets erased, and it is really nice to see when somebody comes out and wants to record the history and the life of those that had an influence on us of today. You know, back in the 50s and 60s. And Route 66 played a very important role in my upbringing, because actually Route 66 went right through the community where I was raised, where we had a ranch and also we lived in the community. And actually that was a way that we got to see a lot of people from different backgrounds, different cultures, they came from back east all the way to the West. And I recall that in the 50s what was amazing, and in the 60s, people used to always have this thing about always going on vacation. The whole family would get together and they would either hop in the station wagon or come in the car or get the little camping trailer, and we got to see all these people going through.

Amazing enough, some of the stories and memories that I have of Route 66 and the stranger from the outside, because we were a very small community, rural area, ranching, is I recall that on Sundays Newkirk, New Mexico, had a lot of little courts. They called them courts then. That means that you rented a room and you stayed there with your family overnight. Some, like the one down the line from the Phillips 66 station was a court where you could rent the room and also the garage to put your car in. It is still standing, amazing enough, today. And people would rent that, a bed, and probably no air conditioning, any of it. And then on the end there was another little motel, and in that motel people would stay overnight and on Sundays would come to the church. And in rural communities, like the church, it sits right a block away from Route 66, we would see these people coming that were outsiders in our community. And actually the Catholic church there in Newkirk was solid Hispanic, to be honest with you. So it was kind of interesting to see some of the Anglo people come in, and everybody in that church has their little pew. That means that your family either –it is amazing how things work from years and years ago, you know you have the first pew for one family, the second pew . . . it is kind of interesting how everybody played the role in the community, from the front all the way to the back. And you know, actually, tourists that would come would have to sit in the back because they were not members of the church, but were members of the

Catholic religion which is part of the church. And so one of the hardest things we used to do was turn around constantly to see these people, especially because, in many ways they dressed different. And other than my mom and my neighbors and—we knew everybody—and we were just nose-y little characters. It was more interesting watching the person sitting in the back who came from one of the courts to church than it was to pay attention to the priest anyway. And I recall mother was quite a character, she would just always pinch us, always, you know we'd turn around. There was--yikes! A pinch! And it was always on the bottom, so nobody would notice. But still, we would cross our eyes and try and hope to look and look and turn our head until we would finally turn around. Because one of the things that happens is usually the people that were the guests, the tourists, would leave before—you know, at the end of church they were at the back and they would leave and go on to their cars and drive off. And we wanted to see these different people, you know. Different characters. And that's a memory that I have from Route 66, especially in the religion aspect part.

DAVID: Now were the services conducted in Spanish?

RALPH: In Latin. Old Catholic church was Latin. And it was all Latin, one-hundred percent Latin. And of course, the little church had the . . . actually the church that we saw today, that church was actually a bar, and they converted it into a church later on.

DAVID: So it wasn't the church you were talking about?

RALPH: Yeah, that is the church. But that was converted into a church in the 20s, maybe the turn of the century.

DAVID: OK. Well, I am going to ask you to start way back there when you were a kid. Why don't you describe the inside of the church? What you would see as you would walk through the door, just pretty briefly, but give us a picture as if we were walking inside that church.

RALPH: Well, actually this is one of the churches that, being a bar at the turn of the century, you know, the old West bar, and they turned it into a church. As you walked into the church you went into the double doors, and as you went into the double doors on the left-hand side you had the bell that you would ring. You had the aisle in the middle, and on both sides you had the benches. And we happened to have gotten the benches from a church in Conchas Dam, and before that it didn't have benches like that. We only had whatever seats they would bring in. You know what I mean? And so now it was very well organized because the benches were real nice, you know. They are still today there. Then you would walk down and in the middle of the church there was a pot-bellied stove, and that had to be kept warm in the wintertime for people who came to the services. The church is adobe, so inside the church they used a line to keep the color on the walls. And then on the top you had what we would call, like a bell-type of roof, with wood. It is really nice-looking wood, we hope to restore that because now they have modernized it,

we hope to do that. And then of course you go to the front of the church, which was the saint and that would be the altar. The altar is no longer there because the Catholic church went modern and where the priest turned to face the congregation . . . well they did away with the old art of the altar.

DAVID: Now let me stop you for just a second here. When you walked in was it mainly as a child, you kind of can remember what it was like to go in there. What would it smell of?

RALPH: Mostly, sometimes in the winter it would smell like either pine or cedar, because you burn a lot of that. And also the fact is as you walked in, you started looking at the people that were there. You know what I mean? I mean, you came in late. Of course, people who had to do confessions had to come in early, because the priest would then hear the confession, so you had to get there early enough so that you can go to confession, and then receive the host at the middle of the mass. But as you walked in you usually saw mostly your neighbors, they were ranchers, and most of them were there with their families. And the smell, the smell of that wax, of those candles, are always in my memory. Anytime I go to an old church where they burn a lot of candles you can smell that, that distinct smell of wax.

DAVID: Is that how it was mostly lit?

RALPH: Yes. It was mostly lit by that, and then later they put in electricity. You know what I mean? But we had a lot of candles. Of course you had Joseph on one side of the altar and then on the other side you had Mary. And in between, between the sides, you had what we call the Stations of the Cross. Because the church was also used during Lent for doing the cross, the twelve steps, or whatever you call that of the Catholic church. We prayed during Lent time, that we would go there to meet there.

DAVID: Let's change the subject slightly, and talk about your very first memories of Route 66.

RALPH: Well, actually the first memory of Route 66, my family being ranchers, we had what we call a couple of ranches . . . well, we had actually two ranches on one side of the road, north, and we had two ranches on the other side of Route 66, which was on the south part of Route 66, Conchas Road. And in those days when we moved cattle, whether it be spring, whether it be autumn, where we moved cattle from one pasture to another, we walked them. We'd herd them all the way from one ranch to another. So what happens is as you came down, of course I-40 wasn't there, there was a solid road, as we came down with the cattle my dad would get his cows that he was going to take either when he was weaning, he would leave the calves in the corral, or whatever, and then we would move the cows, we would herd them across, which was five miles the other side of Route 66 North, and what was amazing was the old people, the old men would wind up stopping the traffic so our cows would go through. And that was my first time I

experienced where cattle were so afraid of the black tar, the black top of the Route 66, and also the line that was there, they were always afraid of that. And so it was always a challenge to get them across. And then we would get the elders, who were the gentlemen who were up in their 70s and 80s, and they were the ones in charge of stopping the traffic completely so that our cows can go through. And that's the way it was in the West, you know. There was nobody that was going to do any different, you know, we were going to get our cows across and that's the way it was. Because we'd done it for years, and we didn't have trucks, we didn't have trailers. And it was easier to take the whole herd. You'd take them, one to the pasture on the other side, and you'd bring the other ones back the other way.

DAVID: So how long would this cattle drive last?

RALPH: It was usually a one-day thing, you know. But the thing that was interesting, I recall, was the first time that I kind of got a little scared, I would say, was we had this gentleman—because we had the elders, and the elders, some of them would carry guns with them. They'd carry their little holster on the side, came right out of the 1800s, you know? And I recall this tourist who was trying to ease his way right through the middle of the herd as we were trying to cross, and we were having trouble trying to get the cows across the paving, because of the tar. We were trying to push them, and once one cow goes all of them go, but then you still got the ones that are real scared of the line, the white line or the yellow line. Anyway, this tourist decided he was going to go ahead and go through, and I remember this elder had his gun, and he took his gun and told the guy to stop, and he wouldn't. And when he started moving, he popped—he shot—the back end of the car. The car stood there and did not move. You know what I mean? He just stood there, until we got the last cattle across, and that's the way it was. Nobody was going to mess with the rancher. You know what I mean? We took our cows, and . . . And I recall that, very interesting, because that was like a little trauma for me.

DAVID: Did you farm, or was it just the ranch.

RALPH: All cattle. Cattle. Yeah. And then there's another incident that I recall. At one time I was with my dad, we had come into town, over to the gas station in Newkirk. And I remember we were at the gas station getting some gas for the little six-cylinder Dodge that we drove at the time. In the nearby town, which is Montoya, there was a storekeeper named Beasley, and he had a bar and a gas station, you know, the whole thing that they have. And he had gotten robbed. And he had, I think, a big car. I think it might have been a Caddie, you know? He jumped in his car, and he got the gun, and he caught him there in Newkirk. They stopped . . . and he'd start shootin' at them. Pulled them over until the police came over. He got his stuff back. But he faced them down with his own car and his own gun. It was fifteen miles away from Montoya. And I remember, anything that happened like that was a big event in the community, and so we talked a lot about it. It was interesting. Those are fond memories.

DAVID: Now, Bonnie and Clyde would do something similar across Oklahoma. Were there outlaws out in this part of the world?

RALPH: Yeah, but usually the outlaws better watch it. Because, you know, the old West always had their guns, you know what I mean? When I was growing up in the 50s and the 60s, the early 60s, not the late, people did carry their guns. You'd carry your guns in your truck, you'd carry your guns on the side, you carry your guns in the glove compartment, I mean, you didn't go anywhere without your guns. You know what I mean? So anything like that would happen, you had a way of defending yourself. And if you are going to come out to New Mexico and live in the desert, your environment produces a very strong character on you. And that character is, you know, you are gonna survive. Nobody's gonna take your property.

DAVID: That's well said. So what kind of traffic do you remember? What did it look like?

RALPH: It was a lot more cars, very little trucks. A lot of cars. And I recall my dad, we'd go out, my dad one time the ranching had gotten so, well, it was not as profitable as it is today, so he had to take a little side job working at the gas station there, to subsidize the income at home. Because there were eight of us living at home. And I remember that my dad used to do mechanical work, and most of the cars that were coming through were most – everybody had a car, or a station wagon, not very many pick-ups, and there was no semis, no eighteen-wheelers. You saw one or two once in awhile. But not like today. And usually in the summertime everybody and their families, everybody carried in their car, always, this water bag in the front made out of canvas. And everybody had their water bag in the front, and they would sell those canvas water bags everywhere. They were very popular. And then you saw some cars, people who had a little money, who had, especially in the 50s, who had an air conditioner stuck in the window. Like a little can where the wind would blow through. And I remember seeing that one Chevrolets and Fords. And that was the thing you would see all the time. Everybody was always dressed up. Especially when they were on vacation. It was amazing, the difference.

DAVID: What do you mean “dressed up”?

RALPH: I mean you could tell that their clothes were always, they always looked nice, you know. The women always looked nice, with a dress and everything, and men were also. You hardly ever saw a man with shorts on or cut offs, what we call them today. It was a lot different. You saw a lot of men with ties when I was growing up, I recall that. It is a lot of difference compared to now. Even though you might work at a bank now you go down I-40, you come out with your cut off and your tee shirt. It was a lot different then.

DAVID: Were you conscious of the difference between travelers and tourists? At some point Route 66 begins to fill with tourists.

RALPH: Right. Well, actually, you did. You would know who tourists were. Tourists were always nosing around the stores, and nosing around everything. It was like, everybody who usually came down Route 66 was going to, it was almost like a curiosity type of person, coming from Chicago, coming from back East. You know what I mean? That was interesting to see. And they were always curious about asking about the Old West. They were fascinated with the Old West, the Cowboy was one of the things . . . I remember one time we were at one of the gas stations there, my dad had his spurs on and his hat, and they took pictures of him and all that. It was kind of funny, you know. And for us it was normal life. You wore that stuff. It was nothing unusual. But to them it was very curiosity. They went into the gift . . . little shot glasses with New Mexico things on there, a yucca. I can remember all the gas stations had a little counter full of curios, and all of them said "New Mexico" or something from the area. And the tourists would buy up that as a souvenir to take with them. It was always interesting to see.

DAVID: Did you have much encounters with tourists?

RALPH: Yes, we did. Because what happened was, you know, we would-- especially when my dad was working at the gas station we'd go over and spend time with him. He would work there at night because they would run it 24 hours, and we would visit with some of the tourists. It was funny. Actually, I'm not . . . actually that was on Route 66, being in New Mexico, and being isolated from the big metropolitan areas, and most of the community in Newkirk being actually old Hispanic settlers and Anglos that came from back East, the first time I ever saw a black person was on the Route 66. Because, you know, that was the first time. And I recall that like it was yesterday.

DAVID: Tell me.

RALPH: It was funny because, it was interesting because I was raised with the Hispanic culture, and was raised around a lot of Anglos and raised around a lot of Native Americans, but I had never seen a black person in my life. And coming from the ranch, I think I was over with my dad at the station, he was working that day, and I remember the first time I saw the black person. And I kept, it was such a curiosity, I wanted to see if he was black all over or just on the face, and everything was just so different for me. And so it was interesting, you know? It's funny how things are different.

DAVID: Yes, people have changed. Do you remember any funny stories about meeting tourists or about them asking you odd things?

RALPH: Some of the tourists were funny, because they would think that, especially the ones that came from back East, they would ask us question and, kind of like right on the racial line, but it was curiosity, you know what I mean? They called us "little Mexicans." They would ask us all kinds of questions about New Mexico. Some of them would ask, living in Mexico, how is it? Did we go to school, as little Mexicans? And did

we speak English? (Laughs.) It was funny. We did, we spoke English, because when we went to school there that's the first thing they taught us. But actually at home we didn't speak English until we went to school, really. And so they would ask questions, in the line of curiosity of our background. And some of them would even ask what would we eat? Then, we'd say, like of course, whatever you do, you know. It was funny. It was just weird because it came out of Chicago, a lot, I remember.

DAVID: Now you said they bordered on being racial. Do you remember any of those questions or comments?

RALPH: Yeah. The thing they would ask, because I'm a light-complected Spanish person, or New Mexican or whatever, they would ask me "How come you're not so brown like the rest of the Mexicans?" And I would say, "Because, that's my mom and dad." You know, I didn't know how to say, you know? Especially the ones that would ask how did we like living in the United States, and it was funny because my family has been there almost 200 years before, and New Mexico had become a state in 1912 and they ask us these crazy questions. It was funny. I think one of the most racist things that I remember was, again, this was in the adjacent community, and this is a real interesting fact, we were again at the Beasley place, and my dad had gone in to buy a fan belt from this Beasley guy who had a gas station, because his alternator had broken. So we went in there, and I remember I went in there with my dad because I loved to get along with my dad right away because he would buy me a penny candy. And I think we went in, and my dad went in to Robert Beasley, was his name, a gentleman, an older man, and he asked him for the belt, you know, if he had it. And a white gentleman came in from back east, somewhere, and I remember he told him "Are you going to serve this Mexican first before me?" You know, cause my dad was there. And I recall the gentleman—the owner of the store—telling him "Not only am I going to serve him first, but I'm not serving you, and you get out of here." I recall that. Because I got scared. And I remember that comment to this day. It was a very interesting comment. Because he did, he asked him "How can you serve this Mexican first before me?" And the gentleman just told him, "Not only am I going to serve him first, but I'm not serving you. You leave." And he threw him out. And it was kind of harsh. And we got our fan belt and left.

DAVID: Was there a kind of tension out here between the Hispanics who had been here for generations like your family and those who came more recently, say, after World War II.

RALPH: Probably the native . . . in New Mexico you gotta remember one thing. If you, like some of our neighbors who run stores there on Route 66 would come from, one came from Arkansas and they came back in the 20s . . . and others came probably in the turn of the century, and they all had stores there. But in New Mexico no matter if you lived 50 years here, you're still an outsider, you still came from Arkansas. You know? And actually those people got to learn and got along with the regular natives which were us, the settlers of the Spanish people, but we did have a lot of difficulty with the Texans.

That was a little different. They had a little more of an attitude problem facing the racial issue, you know what I mean? They were a little more vocal on their comments, you know what I mean? Like “dirty Mexicans,” stuff like that, you know what I mean? And yet, amazing enough, I recall that some of them were a little more darker than I was, you know what I mean? As far as appearance, you know. (Chuckles.) And so you wondered and you said, that’s a lack of knowledge, because they don’t realize that a lot of the Spanish people are also from Europe. But that was mostly the earlier, the ones that came in the 60s and that area. But the older ones were not. They were pretty much entrenched with the Hispanic population. One of the things you must remember is that most of the Anglos that came here in the early 20s and in the early turn of the century spoke Spanish, or learned Spanish, either way. Because you had a lot of Spanish people that would not speak English. And it wasn’t until later that it reversed itself.

DAVID: Now did you ever hear that term “gringo”?

RALPH: Yeah.

DAVID: What did that mean?

RALPH: That means mostly a foreigner. That’s all it is, it’s really somebody that is different, and unique, from a different area geographically. That’s what we were always educated to believe.

DAVID: Were Texans gringos then?

RALPH: They were gringos when they were . . . yeah, they would call them gringos or they would call them other names when they got nasty. You know what I mean? New Mexicans, like I said, you know, the environment makes you strong, makes you mean. So, you know, as long as you got along with them and would work with you it was OK. But if you start being mean and racist, it turned on you. They’d turn on you, you know, and they weren’t afraid to put you in your place. You know. But “gringo” wasn’t a dirty word in any way. It was just a foreigner, that’s all it is. You know, a different person is all.

DAVID: Is it the same as Anglo?

RALPH: Yeah, it is the same category.

DAVID: Well, you are in a unique position to sort of talk about how the traffic on Route 66 changed, by decade.

RALPH: Yes, it has.

DAVID: And so I guess your first decade, that’s the 1950s.

RALPH: That's correct.

DAVID: So at that point you were riding the cattle herd across Route 66, and stopping the traffic. And probably from very young you were doing that.

RALPH: Right.

DAVID: And you would go to the gas station and see the cars coming in. Maybe we could sort of begin to go each decade. So the first one is the way you sort of learned it would be when you were young in the 50s, sort of normal. But then the 60s, how had things changed?

RALPH: Things changed a little different, because even though you saw a lot of cars coming through, but you started seeing more trucks, and you started seeing more business people, type. It wasn't like vacation type. And then in the 60s they also saw, I recall, there was a lot of different, migration was also there. Saw a lot of people moving in the 60s. It was more like going west or looking for jobs, so a lot more mixture of different types of things, business with vacationing with travelers. It's a lot of difference. And then you see, the 70s of course is a different era.

DAVID: OK, so the 60s is about more people moving, more trucks. What were the 70s like, if you remember way back then.

RALPH: The 70s I was in college most of the time, but again, the increase in trucking started to increase and I remember like for example in the 60s and the 50s everybody would stop and there was always like restaurants and gas stations. Everybody would stop, and stuff like that. And then you get to the 70s and in the 70s now you're looking like major towns, like Tucumcari, Santa Rosa, and little ones in between. And then finally the bypass came in. Actually, I was mayor of the City of Tucumcari when we dedicated the last part of Route 66, and we went up to I-40 in Tucumcari where I was mayor and I think we cut the ribbon at that time for last part of the west and the east part, the last I-40 four-lane road completed.

DAVID: Now, how did people look at that road, and the changes it would bring *before* it arrived? Were people worried?

RALPH: They were very worried, and actually had always been a battle, because I remember that when I was a kid we would visit with a couple of people in Tucumcari—I think they were the Lynns—and I think they had a pow wow and stuff like that, and I recall that one of the things that they, I think in Tucumcari was what they did was they really fought, it was before I-40, and I think what they were doing, they were trying to change the 54, one of the routes there in Tucumcari, and I remember people were up in arms because their businesses were all the motels and everything depending on that

Route 66, and I remember that they had quite a battle on it. And then when the bypass started coming in everybody was worried about the fact that they were going to dry up and die. I remember in Newkirk, some of the people were trying to stop the I-40 from coming through where it goes today, because there used to be a *morada* by the rest area which is a mile east of Newkirk, and there were some bodies buried there. And so some of the people that had businesses on Route 66 wanted the relatives of the people who had buried there at the *morada* not to sign a waiver for the highway to move their loved ones out of their grave. Hopefully they would keep it in the same area. But of course the highway at that time made a decision that if they could not get the signatures of the people that were buried in that *morada* there then they would go further south. Of course they visited with the relatives of the people that were buried there, and they dug up the graves, and they buried them in the regular cemetery that is in Newkirk right now. And so Route 66 went over there where they were buried. And I remember that became, like, trying to stop the I-40 from being built where it is today.

DAVID: What's a *morada*?

RALPH: A *morada* is, the *penitentes*, who is a religious order, a Catholic religious order, that came from the middle ages in Spain, or in Europe, and actually what happened, the brotherhood of the *morada*, which is the brothers, the *penitentes* were actually the ones when our families in the old days came to America with Spain, the brothers were the ones who administered the sacraments of the Catholic church to the family, because we were short on priests and everything else. Not only that, but actually all the family members that were members of the *morada*, the brothers would take care of the widows and children and other things when other members of that family would die. It is portrayed totally different, but that is what the whole organization was.

DAVID: And the *morada* was the place . . . what exactly was a *morada*?

RALPH: The *morada* is where the brothers would meet during Lent time and then trace the steps of Christ, and they would be there 40 days, and then of course the *penitentes*, we would go, the families that were Catholics—well, most of us were—go and provide like the meals and everything for them. And they would pray and do all kinds of sacrifice during the time of Lent. It was a very interesting organization, and actually the last *morada* was at our ranch, I mean that last *morada* that goes east, I think right there is one of the last ones, the farthest east, was there at our ranch there in Newkirk, up until recently, where Mother Nature has taken it back.

DAVID: So your family were *penitentes*?

RALPH: Yes. They were orders of the *penitentes*. Actually we still have receipts where they paid their dues, and they were like small fees. We have still got the receipts that Grandpa and Great-Grandpa would pay their membership, because you had to pay a

little membership, and we still have those receipts. We have, the, oh I don't know how you call it, like a ribbon or something like that was given to the brother.

DAVID: Now, we had gotten sidetracked here from the arrival . . . do you remember the day that, I guess if you cut the ribbon, do you remember the day that the bypass took place?

RALPH: Yes, we did. I remember. It was amazing because they open and the first trucks and everything came down from the, coming from the east, and they came this way. And then the other one went west. And we took it right on top of the bridge there is where we did the final dedication of I-40. It was I-40. What they said was this was the last part that joined the east and the west coast on the Route 66, it was the last last part. And that's where it happened. And I was mayor then, so it had to be back in the early 80s, it's when I was mayor of Tucumcari.

DAVID: What happened to Tucumcari and Newkirk when the freeway opened up.

RALPH: Tucumcari was a little more sustained because it has a lot of agriculture. Tucumcari has 40,000 acres of irrigated land. And then we have the railroad. So actually what happened with Tucumcari, the businesses along I-40 kind of dried up and died. Actually what happens, you wind up with franchise building right on the exits, you know what I mean? And then Tucumcari also had what we called infrastructure, what we had, the sewers, the water, everything. You know, gas and everything. And Newkirk didn't have that, you know. Newkirk only had every individual plot with their septic tank and their water, well, and electricity. So what happened in Tucumcari, once it got bypassed, and there were old ma and pop type of businesses, so those kind of people don't have that kind of money to be able to build right on the exit. You know, so what happens with those kind of businesses, they dry up.

DAVID: Where did the people go?

RALPH: Most of the people left. Some of the older gentlemen, like the Knowleses and the Wilkersons, they tried to survive, but of course they were already up in their age, and they kept the little stores on-and-off open, you know what I mean? But they were doing other kind of business. The Knowleses did drilling, the Wilkersons they more or less tried to run their little gas station with a tow truck, you know what I mean? Where that Route 66 station is, they were the Branches, and they moved to Albuquerque, and then they sold to Whiting Brothers because that was the closest to the exit. And then, now somebody else bought it and that's the only business left there. The bar on the far east of Newkirk tried to move closer behind the church, closer to I-40, but then it went for awhile but then it closed. You need a lot of money to keep operating, you know. The ma and pa thing is gone. You don't have that dollar coming in.

DAVID: So maybe we should talk a little about, you mentioned the Wilkersons, and the Knowleses, what was Knowles?

RALPH: Knowles was a Gulf Station. They had a Gulf Station, and you were going to, it had the typical old front of an old west building, with the windows in the front. And they sold a lot of gas. And they sold a lot of any products that they could sell there, you know, they sold chicken eggs. They sold candy, pops, everything. And you walk in there and usually there would be like this wood stove in the middle, and Miss Knowles was always in her chair there, where she slept during the day, you know, and take care of the chickens and everything there around the gas station. And so . . . and then once that got bypassed, well of course little by little she kept it open until she died, you know. And then there was the Cooks, who was a Humboldt Station, and they had a real good business when Route 66 was there, and then what happened is what they got bypassed they closed, they moved away to Albuquerque or to a bigger community. And then you had the De Bacas, who had, see De Bacas had a store, they also closed and they moved to Albuquerque. But they, see De Bacas came back now, in their old age. And then there was the Sandovals who had the bar, and they tried to move the bar closer to I-40, and not it is closed. We also had a magistrate judge there for speeding tickets.

DAVID: Oh, so you had a speed trap?

RALPH: I guess. (Laughing.) Because they had a magistrate judge in town too. You see, where you were at, that store? There's like a little, another little store who had, like, bottles, well that was a magistrate court there.

DAVID: Tell me about that store. It says "Frugal Bottles" on it. What is that sign, originally?

RALPH: Originally that was a magistrate judge. They built that little building for that, for courts. And it is a small little building, you know. And you go in there, and you're on top of the judge, you know, and the police. I think state troopers were bringing in the persons, you know, whatever, and they were given court and you paid your fine and you went on your way. Or if there was a little problem . . .

DAVID: Did the town depend on that for income?

RALPH: No, of course not. The guy who ran the court also ran the gas station and the store. You know what I mean? And then he would have little courts over there when the state police would bring somebody in.

DAVID: And then how often was that? Every day?

RALPH: Sometimes. It depends. I guess since the guy who run the gas station could run over to the magistrate court and have the court for your speeding, you know, back in

the 60s, it was no big deal. He was probably guilty, anyway. (Laughing.) What are you going to do? Argue with the police there with a gun in the middle of the west? No. (Laughs.) It's not like, you don't even have an attorney out there. (Laughs.)

DAVID: So, but then there is this sign painted on it that is mysterious. Frugal Bottles. Is that what it says? F-R-U-G-A-L?

RALPH: Yeah. It might be a misspell, I don't know, I never could figure it out, but what it was, some of the old bottles they would bring out of the dump and stuff like that they would sell there. From areas that they would dig up.

DAVID: After it was no longer a magistrate?

RALPH: Yeah. After the bypass I think the Wilkersons were the ones who made that. They started selling old bottles and stuff like that.

DAVID: Well now, the Wilkersons, Knowles, Cooks, these don't exactly sound like Hispanic . . .

RALPH: . . . names. No, they're not. The came in . . .

DAVID: How did that happen?

RALPH: A lot of them came in and established their own businesses there. Because also, remember along Route 66 if you look at the history, if you even look at that, you have a lot of mercantile stores. And a lot of those mercantiles, like in Montoya, you had a mercantile store, I think the Cohens used to have, who are Jewish, and then you go to Cuervo and you had the Bonnewitz (sp?) who are Jewish, and then you come here to Santa Rosa and you had the Moises (sp?) who are Jewish. And you had all these mercantiles if you follow I-40 that had a lot of the mercantiles were run by people who came from back east.

DAVID: And how did the Jewish merchants from back east get along with the local community?

RALPH: They did very well, because remember they all learned the Spanish. I remember when we used to go sell our . . . when . . . we used to have credit on some of these stores. We used to go over here to Cuervo and the Bonnewitz (unintelligible) was the one who owned the store and we would go there and they had a mercantile, that was a grocery store. In Montoya, that was a grocery store, and then Richardson wined up with the Montoya store, which is still there today. About ready to collapse but it's still there. And then you come here, the Moises had some store here.

DAVID: And so the relations between . . . they were much, say, more friendly or understanding than, for example, Texans?

RALPH: Yeah. They all blend in very well with the local Hispanics. And not only that, but also it's a way of surviving, you know. Anybody that comes out and lives in the Wild West, well that's the way to survive. You gotta get along with everybody, you know, because if you don't get along with anybody you ain't going to have any business because nobody's coming. You know what I mean? And everybody operated out of credit, more or less.

DAVID: And did any of those Jews intermarry with Hispanics?

RALPH: Not really, no, I don't think they did. They didn't.

DAVID: If they had kids the kids would leave, more or less?

RALPH: More or less. Uh-huh. Or they I guess some of them have stayed around. Well, I know that Bonnewitz or Stuart Holbrook, he didn't have any kids. He didn't have any kids at all. Actually, not very long ago they took down the warehouse there, it was a big warehouse.

DAVID: So those people aren't in the community anymore?

RALPH: No, they're all gone. I think maybe here in Santa Rosa the Moises still have some sort of connection, but they were ranchers also, you know, in the area.

DAVID: But they also ran a shop?

RALPH: Some kind of . . . I'm not very familiar with the ones here in Santa Rosa, but the ones in Cuervo and in Montoya and stuff like that, they had mercantile stores.

DAVID: Now, I was curious, behind Wilkerson's, if you go back about a block, there is a stone building there, a really small stone building. It is just, you know, there's Wilkerson's, then there's that trailer, turquoise trailer, and then right behind that there's a stone building. What is that building?

RALPH: I think that's a well, the well house.

DAVID: Really?

RALPH: I think that's what it is.

DAVID: That goes back a long way.

RALPH: Yeah, it was. That was when the De Bacas owned it before they sold it to the Wilkersons. Because the Wilkersons had a little store and garage on the east part of Newkirk, which is way up there. And then when the De Bacas moved to Albuquerque, C. De Bacas, then the Wilkersons bought the C. De Baca place. And then next was a gentleman, I never remember him, he got killed, but the store that's the . . . I don't know if you saw that building, that big store that still has a canopy that you go under, abandoned store still standing . . .

DAVID: Is that a gas station?

RALPH: That was a gas station. But that one in the 60s, the gentleman got killed. What was happening, the trains stopped there in Newkirk, and the trains at that time, they would be filled with ice, you know they had a compartment where they would fill it with ice to keep the product cold in the box car. And he would go up there and get ice to put in his refrigerator to keep cold pops, and I think he slipped and fell and got killed. And the day he died they closed that store, and it stayed closed.

DAVID: Wow. Never been opened since?

RALPH: It never did. I think someone came in and sold whatever they had.

DAVID: It's remarkably well-preserved.

RALPH: It is. But it is all stone too, and it has a roof. Any building that has a good roof will survive. Once the roof goes, the building goes. It doesn't matter what kind of building it is.

DAVID: So what does Route 66 mean today to a little town like Newkirk.

RALPH: Well, Route 66 today means to all of us who are still around, it means the glory days of the Route 66 were the days when we had a lot of people come in, a lot of people going, a big connection between the east and the west coast, a way of people making a living, a way of having stores for some of us isolated ranchers that were out in the middle of nowhere, where we go get or gas. It was a way of creating life, you know what I mean? And there was a lot of things. And also bringing a lot of information, what's going on in the world, because you saw different people, different backgrounds, you also bring all kinds of products. And a lot of people that traveled Route 66 winded up settling in New Mexico, too. You find a lot of old cars, back before they became so popular, all over the place. And not no more. They all sold. Good money there.

DAVID: Well, that's what it was back then. But what is it today, in 2011?

RALPH: In 2011, Route 66, it's sad to tell you the truth, is a lot of abandoned buildings. A lot of history still maybe not recorded as much as it should be. But most of it

is either still alive because people are still living that lived that era. And then you get to Santa Rosa and you see one or two buildings here and there, somebody preserving or somebody trying to keep it the old way, you know what I mean? But Route 66 is more of a history now, and also one of the most glorious times in American history of the east and the west connecting and sharing everything in between.

DAVID: It's also, I guess, economic development.

RALPH: It was a big economic development, Route 66 was in the old days. But when it got bypassed, then it became a different story.

DAVID: And yet in the Route 66 gas station, there is a whole wall of things about Route 66.

RALPH: Yeah.

DAVID: So she still depends on that.

RALPH Well, you do. Because actually you see a lot of people, like today, we see a lot of people driving down Route 66 today. And all of them are looking, searching for history and reliving the old days. You see people in their cars of the 50s coming down, they have their little camper on the back, and they got all kinds of stuff. And then you have the regular people who want to come from Chicago all the way back to California, going, trying to get into the Route, tracing the Route 66. It has become a very history-buff type of thing, a very exciting thing to kind of live that. Because there's enough buildings left, even though they're dilapidating, people are still coming, they get to see something. The problem is that those buildings are going sideways very rapidly. Even our church that we're going to renovate, it's going to cost us a lot to get it back. But we are going to because it has a lot of historical meanings to us.

DAVID: How about young people? Do the young people that arrive here know what Route 66 is and do they have an interest in it on its own?

RALPH: Very limited. Not like . . . I got a young boy, a nephew, that's actually 20 years old, he doesn't connect very much with it, other than what we have right now. But he didn't live that era. He wasn't there. And so most of it is what he sees on TV and what he . . . because like I get very excited about cars of the 50s, I have a whole bunch at home that I collect from the old days. He doesn't care. To him they're junk. And I said "Heck, no." I love my cars, my old 50s, they're so beautiful. And he goes "They're junk. You should sell them." And I said "No, I'm going to restore them" but of course I never do, you know? But he, there's a lot of difference in them, that young generation of the 20s and whatever, because they don't have that connection to it.

DAVID: How could we make that connection?

RALPH: A lot of the connection will become . . . there was like *American Graffiti* and stuff like that. Those movies that had those beautiful cars and all that. Some of the kids, even Jonas which is my boy, my nephew, he even gets into it. He likes that. He likes the idea of some of the history. But he likes more of the Old West, you know what I mean? But he doesn't know how much Route 66 is connected to the Old West, too. You know what I'm saying? And I think with time it will come, with him.

DAVID: That's a nice way of putting it. How would you say Route 66 is connected to the Old West.

RALPH: Route 66 is connected to the Old West because it is the first time actually where Route 66 is today, before Route 66, if we had of had time today I would have shown you where it went through our ranch. And at that time you had people coming from the west and as you went across somebody's ranch, you open and close gates and then you went down, it was a dirt road. And part of it still exists there in Newkirk. But it turns south and then it goes up a hill and goes toward Cuervo. It's not in the same route that Route 66 was. And also at that same time, it took a lot of the people that were now using covered wagons when the automobile was invented. Also some of the cars and everything was brought in through Route 66 and more merchants were brought in and more stuff, and we didn't have to depend so much on the railroad to ship stuff. And you also had the access of the Greyhound Bus. I remember the Greyhound Bus, when anybody came to visit us back in the old days, in the 50s and 60s, the Greyhound used to stop at every little town and pick up everybody that was there. I remember my mom's or my dad's family or friends would come down from California, Denver, or wherever, we'd go out to the gas station, the gas station there would sell you the ticket. Wherever there was what we'd call a Greyhound stop, and then you sit there and wait for your route bus to come, or when you took 'em you sat with them at that store on a bench outside of the store until the Greyhound come in. And in the wintertime when it was cold, the guy from the store would let you stay in the store, you know. Of course in those days nobody was interested in stealing, nobody would steal, because, that wasn't a behavior that was accepted, actually. It's not accepted today, but it's more practiced. Let's get real, you know.

DAVID: Thank you very much for all of your time and taking me through this. I am so glad that I got to see Newkirk and to meet and talk with you. Do I have your permission to use this interview in my writing and broadcasting?

RALPH: Yes. Sure, you have every right to use it. It is just, like I said, I am glad you are taking the time to record some of the history, because most of us that were growing up . . . look at me! I am already in my late 50s, well I'm 60 now. And to be honest with you, I am one of the youngest, from the Route 66 days. You're looking at the fact is that oral history only exists as long as that person lives. If somebody records it and writes it down, it is on to generations to come.

DAVID: Well, let's hope we can pass some of this history for the generations to come.

RALPH: I hope so. And you have my permission to use it as you want.

DAVID: Thank you very much.