

Coral Way Elementary School Bilingual Program

Josefina Sanchez-Pando, March 13, 2008

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Interviewed by Richard Ruiz

Recorded by Bess DeFarber in Miami, Florida

For University of Arizona, Louise Greenfield

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Ruiz: This is an interview at the home of Dr. Josefina Sanchez-Pando. It's March 13, 2008. My name is Richard Ruiz, from the University of Arizona. Bess DeFarber is here also in the interview. So I'll ask you to go ahead and state your name for the record, and then we'll just go ahead and proceed.

Sanchez-Pando: All right. My name is Josefina Sanchez-Pando. I use that Pando at the end which you missed because at the time in which I was at Coral Way, and I was Bess' teacher, I was just Miss Sanchez. Once, when I was teaching a sixth-grade group, I had a policeman come to my door and knock and say, "You're under arrest. Is your name Josefina Sanchez?" "Yes." "Born in Havana, the 27th of August, 1927?" And I said, "Yes." "You're under arrest." And I said, "Officer, what did I do?" "You had an accident, you left the scene of the accident, and there were people that were very badly hurt." And I said, "And when was that?" "That was Wednesday, March so and so, 1964," let's say, for example. And I said, "Well, officer, you have the wrong Josefina. I have all those characteristics, but at that time, I promise you, I have thirty-five witnesses that I was teaching arithmetic at Coral Way Elementary." "What do you mean?" "I'm a teacher there, I was there, I was teaching, you can check. I was not the person in the accident, even if the name and birth and place of birth coincide." I called one of the pupils' fathers, who was an attorney, and I told him what was happening, and he talked to

the policeman. Next Monday, I went to court, and the judge told me to add another name to Sanchez. He said, "You Cubans have so many names. Don't you have another one?" I said, "What do you mean, 'don't I have another one'? Sanchez is my father's name, and Pando is my mother's name." "It behooves you to put it together, because from now on, you're Sanchez-Pando, lady, so you don't get into trouble." And the other lady was Sanchez because of marriage. Her name was Josefina Gonzalez. So from that day on at Coral Way, I'm Josefina Sanchez-Pando.

Ruiz: So actually Coral Way saved you from jail.

Sanchez-Pando: Absolutely! And thirty-five kids, who were my alibi, that I was really there.

Ruiz: You were at Coral Way.... The bilingual program at Coral Way started in '63?

Sanchez-Pando: September '63.

Ruiz: But you were there before that?

Sanchez-Pando: Yes, I was there since '61 as a Cuban aide. When we came over from Cuba, the teachers had no status here—even if I came over as being a professor at the University of Havana. I started here with no credentials, because they did not allow you to take any papers from Cuba. You were just examined, questioned, and Ford Foundation decided to place some money at the University of Miami for thirty persons who stated—some had their papers, I didn't—that they were teachers in Cuba, and that they had to get their certificate here. Then we went through all sorts.... I was very lucky to get into the first group, because I knew English, I taught English in Cuba, I taught English here. While my other companions were just as much a doctor as I was, a Ph.D., a chemist, but they did not speak English, and English was the barrier for them, as much as

it was a barrier for the children. But they learned. I was very lucky to get among the first thirty.

Ruiz: You can tell us something about the difference between Coral Way, once it became a bilingual program, and beforehand. There was a big transition? Was it a big difference?

Sanchez-Pando: It was a big transition. I got to Coral Way the 28th of October 1961. When I got there, there were some teachers as aides. There was Miss Piñeiro, and oh, what was the other lady's name? Another lady who worked with Miss Piñeiro. I got to Coral Way in a very cute way. I went to enroll my child, because I had just arrived from Cuba. She had been here a week or two before I came, because we were separated at the airport, and I could not take the flight, and I told her to come over alone. I had friends here, I called them, and somebody picked her up. And when I came, like about two weeks afterwards, I went to enroll her in school. When I got there, the office was pandemonium. There were two women, Mrs. Swarmer [phonetic], and what was the other lady's name? I don't remember. The counter was full of Spanish-speaking persons, kids crying, nobody knew English, and I went over and I took over. I said, "May I help you? May I help you? May I help you?" And I enrolled every kid, solved all their problems, and in an hour or two, Mrs. Swarmer was kissing me! She said, "[unclear, 06:09]. Why are you here?" I said, "I came to enroll my child." And it was the wrong school, because the boundary line was just across the street from where I was living. And she said, "No, no, she cannot come here, she has to go to Shenandoah. But **you can.**" I said, "What do you mean, 'you can'?" She said, "Would you come and help me every morning, please? There's going to be a position open, and I'm going to talk to

the principal. Just a moment. (raises voice, as if calling to someone) Mr. Logan, may I ask you a question? Can this lady come in? Look, sir, this is a woman who knows how to handle everything. Do you see that counter? There isn't a person left. She enrolled everybody. All the kids got quiet. Everything went.... I need her as the next teacher in this school!" So I got the job!, through the secretary. And he said, "Well, I don't have one here, lady, but I am due to get some money in fifteen days. Please, I'll call you." Fifteen days passed, and he hadn't called me. So I went over and said, "Mr. Logan, you told me in fifteen days you would have the position. I need the money, so I'm going to take a position at Saints Peter and Paul School"—which was not true. That was a substitute position for a friend of mine who was going to get maternity leave. It was not a full position for me, but it was something to start working. He said, "No, no, no! don't take it! I'll call downtown!" He called downtown, he got the money, and I started at Coral Way, November 7, '61.

Ruiz: So your being at Coral Way **also** was a bit of an accident. You made the mistake of going to the wrong school.

Sanchez-Pando: Yes, to take my child to the wrong school! My life has always been full of accidents and mistakes, but they have been, 95% of the time, very fortunate.

Ruiz: Let me ask you a little more about this transition between Coral Way before, and Coral Way after. Bess has told me a little bit about the issue of the whole Peter Pan experience. Can you say something about that, and just explain it a little bit more so people can understand what that means.

Sanchez-Pando: In Cuba, in 1961, Fidel passed a law, closing all the religious schools, and expelling the nuns and the priests. And he took over education, Communist style.

That made the parents want to just throw their kids out of Cuba. "I don't mind where they go, they've gotta get out of here." And through Monsignor Walsh, we got a bridge to send the children over, and the Catholic Services would pick 'em up here, and send them to schools where they could board. And if there weren't any, they were going to be made. Here in Miami, the experience was very.... I remember it clearly, it was heartbreaking. The community around Coral Way Elementary made themselves giants. They went to the police station, they got clearance from the police that they were good parents, and they would go at three o'clock and at five o'clock every afternoon to the airport to pick up children. They would sit on benches on one side of that room, and there would be another bench on the opposite side—long, long benches, the parents sitting on one side, and the children on the other. And then there were persons there from Immigration calling the names of the children and the status, if they came alone or if they came with a brother and sister—this was a cluster of three, that's a cluster of five, this is a one-child deal. And the one good thing that they did, they never separated kids. So if you went and you offered your home to board a child, and to help them out until their parents came—which could be two weeks, two years, seven years—that child was yours. The government helped you. You got a check, you got food stamps for the children. If there was an emergency of health, there was Children's Variety Hospital, as it was called at that time, that would take the child and wouldn't charge you. And those children remained in your home with Mrs. Smith or Dr. McCall, until their parents came. And they went to Coral Way Elementary. They also went to other schools in the surrounding neighborhood. And that's where the Cuban aides went to help. A Cuban aide was a teacher from Cuba who could speak English—better or worse—but could make herself or

himself understood—who was placed in a room with an American teacher, with a bunch of American children, and here was this angel person who came—because they weren't teachers, they were angels—to help Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Roberts with these creatures that had landed in **her** room, to be with **her** children, who came from **nowhere**, spoke a different language, behaved differently, did not like the food, **hated** the environment, were lonely or sad, and were afraid. That was a very different child from any other children that they had ever touched. And both the teachers and the whole system went berserk, because for a school district to absorb, in a year and a half, seventy-six **thousand** [76,000] children, you needed 76,000 desks, rooms to put those desks in. You needed a teacher for that room. You needed books which were nonexistent, books which they could not read. How could they get along in that classroom?! They were bothering the teacher and the other children, and sometimes they were not. Most of the time I would say 80% of the time they were highly, highly accepted by the other children, and by the teachers themselves. But there were cases in which they were not, and that made it very sad.

When the children kept on coming, those Cuban aides became “teachers” in quotations, because they were no longer serving Mrs. Smith in her room, translating for the kids, pulling them to a little group, interpreting for them what was going on, teaching them in Spanish what the teacher was saying in English, giving them some sort of background. At the same time that they were learning English, they had to learn subject matter. If they were talking about the stars and the planets, they had the vehicle, there was no language to communicate what was going on. And at that time, very intelligent principals—not all—but very intelligent principals gave the power to those Cuban

teachers who came over, and they had a room of their own. I never taught in anybody's room. I had a room of my own the minute I stepped in Coral Way, because the principal thought that I was capable enough to do it in both languages, and to help others move around and get to the organization of the deal.

At that time, before the bilingual project started—and it started only in Coral Way, and believe me **that** was a hard delivery! You really had to push to get that going. There were rooms in which a Cuban teacher, who was called a Cuban aide, because she wasn't a teacher, she had no papers here, and that's where the University of Miami saw a bridge. They saw a little hole, and they said, "Wow, look what's coming here!" And I tell you this because I belonged to the first group, and we were called the Marines at the university. We were called, "There comes a group of the Marines," because we were opening space for others to come behind us. We had a very rough time at the University of Miami: the roughest, the meanest, the most denigrating time that anybody—those first two groups of teachers—we sweated it out, we **were** Marines. Our corps paved the way for all the rest of the teachers of all the programs of all the bilingual things. We paid for it. We paid for it immensely, because in that group—in which we happened to have been thirty-three. Ford Foundation only placed money for thirty people. And when everybody took their tests and all the papers were clear, and, "What is your point? What is your category?" There were three persons at the end of the line [beyond] the thirtieth position, that had everything the same. So they called and said, "What do we do? How do we break the tie? Alphabetically? Eenie, meenie, miney, mo? Pull a string?" And Ford Foundation said, "No, take the other three." So we were thirty-three Marines.

When we got certified—and believe me, teachers nowadays gripe—in six months we went through the graduate record examination in education, and in everything else that you said you knew in Cuba and you had studied and you had it to your avail. After taking the graduate record, we took the national teachers' examination, which doesn't exist now. Then we took the Florida teachers' examination. Those three big monsters, in six months of training. Nobody at the university expected us to pass it. The day before the big, big test, I will never forget it. Dr. Vesponik [phonetic], who was the provost of the university at that time, and who was one of our four teachers, came in and said, "A pep rally! Now ladies"—he addressed the ladies—"I know how emotional all you Cuban ladies are, **but** tomorrow you're going to go through a great experience in your life, that nobody else has done, and this is a group of thirty-three persons. If they were North Americans, who had undergone all the learning needed to pass those tests here, out of the group of thirty-three, we would be very happy if twenty passed. But since **you** have not gone through the learning, and all of your experience is very empirical, we do not expect more than seven to pass, out of thirty-three. So when we get the grades back, I don't want any crying, I don't want any bickering, you just take what comes to you."

Wow, that was a gallon of very, very cold water. That was the wrong pep rally. I was always very outspoken in my group, so I stood up and said, "Dr. Vesponik, I'm ashamed of you. You know why? Because for the first time in **your** life, you have had the privilege of having sitting on the other side of the table, thirty-three **doctors** just as much as you are. And in my case, doctor, I have **two** doctorates, and I speak **four** languages, so I think I am four times better than you in languages, and twice better than you in knowledge. And you **dare**.... Like I am here, every one of these persons has one

or two doctorates from a university, that has been teaching for 250 years, like the University of Havana. I wish this University of Miami ever grew to be just a third of what we came from. You know what? Don't worry about us. We are going to surprise you. Ladies and gentlemen, today's class is over, let us go." We left. We took the test the next day, and the grades didn't come, and the grades didn't come, and the grades didn't come. We were just about to flip.

There was a girl working at the office, her name was Rita, who was a friend of ours from Cuba. She also had a doctorate. She was a secretary. We had asked Rita, when the grades come in, you've got to see them. Please call anybody who got flunked, so that we don't have to go. So that Vesponik can't say (in sing-song) "Hey, you didn't make it, you didn't make it!" And Rita never called.

One day we were all in class, and here comes Dr. Vesponik again, with tiny little pieces of transparent paper, like copy paper, the paper that you used to put in typewriters with carbon paper—that second piece of paper. I wish I had mine at hand—I have it someplace. Well, little strips, like that, very denigrating, that was all you were gonna get for those tests, a little piece of transparent paper, which said whether you made it or not. When he came in, everybody froze, and I told everybody, "He's gonna call out the names, and he's gonna flunk you. So don't you cry, don't you move—nothing. Don't anybody look at what you get. Let the person next to you look, and you just knock and say, 'You made it, you didn't make it.' If you didn't make it, get out." He starts, "So-and-So, So-and-So, So-and-So...." And you could hear the buddy next to you, "You made it! (gasp) You made it! (gasp) You made it!" Out of thirty-three, thirty-three passed. And the professors from the university up north came to see if the test had been

tampered with, or if they had thirty-three geniuses there. That was the beginning of bilingual education at the University of Miami. We made it, thirty-three out of thirty-three. Everybody got scholarships, up to a doctoral position, in all the universities up north. Princeton was the university that made the tests, and Yale, Harvard—anybody would take 'em, for the **outstanding** grades that thirty-three made out of thirty-three—English not being their native language. Out of those thirty-three, I would say twenty had the command of English that I could tell you was the fifth grade, and no more than that.

You know why we made it? Because the hard words in English, the educated words in English, are derived from Greek and Latin, and so is Spanish. And because of the derivations of the words, and going back to Greek or to Latin, everybody could make it. Now, it was horrible when you got a five-letter word that was really pure Anglo. There you knew it or you didn't know it. There was no way you could put that word. But nevertheless, we all made it.

Ruiz: Do you know where those teachers went, and do you know any of them still?

Sanchez-Pando: Very few left Miami. I remember Magdalena Garcia went to Princeton. She had a doctorate in mathematics. She was a wizard in mathematics. There were two persons who went up north. But the rest of them remained here, because their families were here, or part of the family was here, and part of the family was in Cuba. Everybody felt they were near home, being here: the temperature, the trees, the wild birds, the animals. Everywhere you went out of the city, you could say you were in Cuba. If you drove down to Homestead and you sat on the ground and you just looked around, you could have been in any province of Cuba. It was **near** home. In that situation, we were all expecting to go back as soon as possible. This was a transitory part

of your life, which would be a couple of years, but we **would** go back, and it would be easier to go back from here. The minute I got here, the very same minute I got here, before I even went to Coral Way, and I went to the refugee center, the person in charge of it was Steven Renfro [phonetic], and I had been Steven's teacher—his two boys had been my pupils in Cuba, and his wife was Cuban and she was a friend of mine. We had gone to elementary school together. And when I went there and I said, "Steven! what are you doing here?" "Josephine!" "I just came in!" "Let's go, let's go!" I had immediately there five or six jobs I could have taken at a university, up north, teaching at a university, and not having had to have gone through the denigration that we had to go [through] at the University of Miami. Miami was a little southern town that was a beach resort. And people here did not have the cosmopolitan know-how that exists up north. And we were strangers. Not all of us were blond and blue-eyed, or green-eyed like I am. Some were darker, and it was the enemy coming in. "Let the last American that leaves Miami carry the flag." And that was the slogan on big billboards. It was a time insulting. What you hear now of discrimination and the Mexican migrants coming over and everything, it was applied to us. First, at the very beginning, we were taken in with love, and "Oh, what comes here? What is this?" because Americans had a big, big heart. They can take in a lot of misery and help the persons when they're down. "There's an earthquake in Timbuktu. A hundred thousand people...." There we go! Help them! They have always been helpers, they have been a paternalizing society. But at the same time, in the bottom of their hearts, they have been a group of people that are fearful of others that might do, or might know, more than them. And when they realized that here comes a Cuban man who gets a job parking cars at a hotel in Miami Beach, and in ten weeks he's not parking

cars anymore, he is doing this, and in a year, he's the vice-president of the hotel. **That** is scary. **That** is frightening, the way that we took over, and the way we built this town. And the way we help culture, museums, the philharmonic, the symphony, the opera. They existed, but they were dwindling. Yes, let's say they were just dwindling. When we came over, we came over with a lot of knowledge, because the first people that came from Cuba, from 1959 to 1962, which was the problem of Kennedy and Khrushchev and all the things, the ammunition they had in Cuba, those three years the elite of a very cultured country came over. They were not the peasants, they were the elite. And even so, a peasant from Cuba would not be comparable to a peasant from Guatemala or Mexico, because our standards of education were much, much, much higher than any other South or Central American country. We were a combination of a piece of the best of Europe and the Creole, which would be the *criollo*, that had come out of the mixture and the acculturation of 200-300 years of **excellent** education in Cuba. I was a teacher in Cuba, and we're here at the same time that in Miami nobody would be teaching Spanish, the *centro especiales de inglés*, special English centers existed in Havana in every other school in which English was taught to the population. The only thing you had to be able to be or to have to go into one of those, you would have to be at least a fifth-grader and know how to read and write in Spanish. But if you weren't, I had in my room with the English Center, number 5, in Havana, I had lawyers, I had doctors, I had persons who wanted to learn another language—just as much as the little black Joe who just came out of fourth grade, and his mommy who was somebody's maid or somebody's cook, wanted the kid to learn another language. That was the idea that the population in Cuba had. There was the *Alliance Française*, in which you could go and learn French, and you

wouldn't even have to pay. The government of France had all those schools in Havana. So it was a cultured population that came over, and very humbly went to work doing whatever. I had doctors, friends of mine, magnificent surgeons, picking up tomatoes in Homestead. And I met them there and said, "Doctor, your hands! How are you doing that to your hands?!" "Josefina, I've got to eat." But there are things that you can't hide. You can't hide coffee, because it smells a lot. You cannot hide perfume, because you can smell it. And you cannot hide education, because it comes up. And they came up, and we all came up, and we made **this** city what it is now.

Ruiz: I was interested in not just whether they stayed in the area—it's actually a very interesting reason for staying in the area—but also if you know if they went into schools, or if they went to schools some other place.

Sanchez-Pando: I lost them. One of us went to Alaska.

Ruiz: So they scattered?

Sanchez-Pando: A couple of them scattered, but I would say 80% stayed here.

Ruiz: Do you have any kinds of materials of the experience that you had at the University of Miami in that program—whether it's the materials that they used, or rosters of the teachers, the thirty-three—anything like that?

Sanchez-Pando: I had every little bit of it. (sigh) And Hurricane Andrew destroyed them. There were no books in Spanish at the time, and we had to teach the kids the Spanish.

Ruiz: But I mean at the University of Miami. Perhaps at the University of Miami they might have records of that program.

Sanchez-Pando: I'm sure they do.

Ruiz: Was it called anything specific, any special name?

Sanchez-Pando: It was called.... Wait. Retraining—that was the first word.

Retraining Program for Cuban Professionals and Teachers—something of the kind.

Ruiz: We can try to find that.

Sanchez-Pando: It was housed at the—what's the name of the building, the first building as you come into the parking lot? We had a special office and everything. Look, at that time, the University of Miami was in great debt. They were bankrupt. And Dade County Public Schools made some sort of a treaty with them that Dade County Public Schools wanted the teachers here in Dade County to better themselves. Dade County Public Schools would pay the University of [Miami] half of what it cost to put a teacher through special courses to get them from a bachelor, to a master's, to get them to a doctoral program. They paid—because I went through that program—they would pay you the first six credits. Dade County Public Schools would pay. Josefina Sanchez-Pando didn't have to pay a penny. They paid the first six credits—if you got a “B” or better in the six credits, you automatically have the next six also free. If there was a “C” there, you would have to pay for half of it. The Dade County Public Schools would pay for it, **you** would pay for it. But if not.... I went through my master's and my doctorate's **free**, because believe me, I worked for those “A's” like there was no tomorrow, because I didn't have the money to pay. Had I not been fortunate enough to have been able to have made it, I wouldn't have done it, because I had no money to go through. And since we were so desperate, the whole group was so desperate for money, we worked like beasts. One of the things that pulled me through, I didn't type, I didn't know how to type. Ha! Who would do my papers for me? I had beautiful handwriting. My calligraphy was out

of this world. I had a couple of very intelligent professors at the university. And I traded for points. The work that we did in Coral Way, everything that was going to be taught in Spanish we took out of those English books. We translated it into Spanish—not that any of the administrators could read it, because they didn't know Spanish. I could have written there “go to hell” in Spanish, and they wouldn't know the difference. But it was written in [pen?]. So when an American teacher would put in her daily plans, “Arithmetic, Ginn and Company, Book 6, Page 125-130, subtracting and regrouping,” I would have to write **all** of what was going to be done in that book. And sometimes a subject matter would take fourteen pages out of written work, because you had to put there what the book said in English that I was going to say in Spanish, so that at the moment that I was delivering the lesson, I didn't have to hesitate, because I had it down there. So I traded all of that, and I got grades for that, so that I would go a little bit faster. Because the only, ooooooooh I was forgetting this. We were not considered bright enough to take more than six credits per semester, no matter what you did, no matter what you know, no matter how you proved yourself. Sometimes I had teachers in which, excuse me, I knew more than them, because that was the subject I taught at the University of Havana. I was a teacher at the university, and I had to re-take my same subjects. I talked to the dean once and said, “Look, doctor, please, give me the test for this and for that and for the other. I'll take the tests right now. And if I make less than 90 points, make me go through the class again. But if I don't, **don't let me sit there, listening, wasting my life away**, when we are only given the opportunity of six credits per semester.” We never got it. We went six credits per semester until we got 36, 40, 66 credits. You know how many semesters we had to sit there?! From 6:30 at night to 11:00, and then rush home,

be a mother, a wife, a teacher; do the homework for the university; do the translating for the school; correct the papers of the kids. Now come on, we proved ourselves great. I'm very proud, **very proud**, of having been part of that group.

Ruiz: Do you remember when Coral Way's bilingual program first started, how it started, what your role was when it started? Can you remember the first kids who walked in the door? Any of that?

Sanchez-Pando: Oh, that was forty-some years ago. I remember some of the kids, but not all of the kids. At that time, the program started in first, second, and third grades.

Ruiz: This was in 1963?

Sanchez-Pando: In 1963. With the promotion of the third graders from the '63-'64 course, we would then have a fourth grade the coming year, and it would be first, second, third, and fourth. And so on, until it got to sixth. So the group that started in third grade went through third, fourth, fifth, and sixth. The group that started in second grade, went through five years. And the group that started in first grade really, really took six years of Spanish. At that time, teachers were paired, one Cuban teacher to one North American teacher. Us having the privilege of speaking both languages, and the North American teacher not having the privilege, because they could not speak Spanish. It was very hard, very hard, to work with them, to understand things. Spelling rules in Spanish would not be true in English. Syntax cannot be compared, because adjectives in Spanish have gender and have number. It was **not** understandable. (raising voice) "What is **this** that I have in front of me?!" (resuming moderate volume) So we had to teach teachers, teach parents, and teach children that you can say the same thing in different ways in different languages. You can take the thought, you can teach the principle, but it's not the same

the way it is done. One fat boy, one fat girl, two fat boys, two fat girls—we only have “fat” in English. In Spanish we would have *gordo*, *gorda*, *gordos*, *gordas*. Oh no, that was too much. (raising voice) “What do you mean you have *gordo*, *gorda*?!” (raising voice even louder) “Well it is, it exists. Sorry! Sorry, but that’s the way it is, and that’s the way we’ve got to teach the kids.” (resuming moderate volume) The kids got it sooner than the parents and the teacher. Believe me, they just went like that (snaps fingers). I had such wonderful children, such **wonderful** children in Coral Way—very intelligent American children.

Ruiz: Was there some period before the program started—after you knew you were going to have the program, but before it started?

Sanchez-Pando: We had a summer.

Ruiz: Where there was like training or development or whatever?

Sanchez-Pando: We had development, not training. We had the summer of ’63 a training and material-making in Coral Way, the whole day. We were to write the objectives, we were to write the goals, we were to develop them, we were to develop the classes up to **a** class, **a** subject matter, a topic. We went and we wrote all of that. The North American teachers didn’t go through the whole summer, because they were going to keep on teaching the same curriculum in English, so they did not need that much training. The only training they would need, and needed tremendously, was the acculturation, that was not there, and it just wasn’t there. There were some of the teachers who were magnificent, and some who were very stubborn, who, in spite of them, it was a success.

There was a reaction also from the community. Most of our children came from the Bay Heights area, the near Coral Gables area, and the Shenandoah area, in which it was—here it was high socio-economic families. Persons who at that time, in those families, they had the best of the best. The Jewish community at Bay Heights did a lot for the program, a **tremendous**.... They were our backbones, because they knew of the importance of more than one language, because they taught their children Yiddish and they went to Hebrew school, and they knew more than one language, English plus “A,” “B,” or “C.” So if they could get English plus Spanish, mm, that was great, because they saw, they saw because they were merchants, their blood is full of work and commerce. They knew that the United States had to look to South America and Central America for markets. They knew that money would be coming up and down, and going up and down South America and Central America. And they also knew that if they could speak the language, they could sell better their products. They would understand the language of the enemy, and they could outwit them, outsell them, and win. And to do that, I had to know their language. I taught Spanish to about seven or eight couples at Bay Heights—the parents of my children. And I have never, never had more interested persons. I used to teach adults in Cuba, so it was no problem changing from a third-grade teacher to.... A parent I wasn’t going to teach them the same things, but I went every afternoon from four to six—because at 6:30 I was due to go to the university to study—to one of the houses. “Now we’ll meet today in Mrs. Fein’s house, and tomorrow in Mrs. So-and-So’s house, and [the day after]....” And I would have Daddy and Mother sitting at those tables. I would have dinner served for me, and I ate right there in the middle of the class, so that I could have eaten something before I went to the university. And they learned

Spanish. They learned Spanish. (raising volume) "Mrs. Sanchez! Because when Wendy comes home, and Susie comes home, they speak in Spanish and we don't know what they're saying." (volume returns to normal) Then I say, "That's fine. So then you know what they're saying, let's learn the language." And it started. And the spark came out from the school and the children into the community. And they saw that the Cuban people were beginning to do things and have things: opened drugstores, opened hospitals. The Pan-American Hospital was the first hospital here in Miami with fifty beds at that time, in which **all** of the doctors were Cubans; in which **all** of the nurses spoke Spanish. And this store and the other store, and this business and the other business. So if we're going to be in business, I'm going to learn your language, so that we can be equals. They started feeling less. And all of that came from the kids in Coral Way. And all of that came because they saw the magnificence of speaking more than one language. And afterwards, they understood that it was not only speaking a second language, it was living the second culture. And then we came into the American culture here, through food—as Cuban food is exquisite. They would like Cuban food, and they would eat Cuban food. Through music. Music is a universal language. And Spanish music is very pretty. And also the spirit that came with that music, that salsa, that cha-cha-cha, and all of the rest of the joie de vivre that the Cuban community had, because it could also—we were crying in our hearts, we were devastated when we could sing, we had enough heart to pull a joke, and to keep on going, and to laugh at ourselves and at our mistakes, and to learn from them.

Ruiz: Let me ask you about that professional development that you had in that summer. You said that you were given this professional development. Does that mean that there

was some kind of staffing already for the bilingual program? In other words, there was somebody in charge of it, there was a director of it, or somebody who was giving you that professional development, or how did that work?

Sanchez-Pando: They weren't giving us professional development, because we were professionally developed. We were trying to write in Spanish the curriculum that was going to be taught in September. "What are we gonna do?" "Well, we're gonna do this and this and that." And the echelon was Dr. Rojas—she was a Puerto Rican lady who was a teacher at some university in Puerto Rico; there was Paul Bell; there was Roseanne Klein [phonetic]; and there was Manita Cantero; and there was Ralph Robinette. You got it. Those were the five legs in which the platform was.... The five, being totally bilingual, the five of them spoke English and Spanish, equally well.

Ruiz: Did that also translate into eventually some kind of structure at Coral Way for the bilingual program? In other words, was the director or something like that?

Sanchez-Pando: The principal at Coral Way was Joseph Lee Logan. Coral Way was chosen by chance: eenie, meenie, miney, mo, boom! Coral Way. And at the same time, I told you at the beginning that the North American families were picking the children that were coming from Cuba. This was a rich community in which a family could bring two or more kids to their house, because they weren't going to starve. Their houses were big enough to add another bed, to have another child, and Coral Way was the school chosen. The parent school for the experiment was Auburndale. Auburndale Elementary would do the same thing to the children that were there, in English—(rapping table for emphasis) English, English, English, English, English. Dump 'em into English, total immersion, sink or swim. Let's see, in three years, what has come out of those children, how much

English have they learned, and how much subject matter? Do they know social studies? Do they know science? Do they know the curriculum of the fifth-grade science? Was the language barrier strong enough to prevent those children from learning? “They learned nothing in science. They learned nothing in social studies, because of the lack of the language to get the message through.” **Or** “Yeah! They swam! They didn’t sink!” But they did sink, because you can’t do it any other way, if you don’t know what they are saying. And I have the best Chinese teacher here, giving the most cultural lecture in Chinese, and I don’t know Chinese, I can’t get it, I’m gonna lose it. I might learn Chinese in three years—which was the time supposedly given to a child to be able to incorporate itself to the mainstream—three years. Yeah, sure, I can speak English. But what do I know about science? Because in the time I spent learning English, all the other kids were getting the subject matter and I wasn’t getting it, so I’m a fifth grader who doesn’t know from atoms that there are nine planets. You know? And since I wasn’t even taught in Spanish, *que hay nueva planetas*, then I didn’t know. I plain was a dumb Spanish ..., capable of speaking English at a fifth-grade level, but not knowing anything. And it worked. Coral Way, we spent ’63, ’64, ’65....

In ’67, Ford Foundation was pouring money into the University of Miami because we began with thirty-three, but the second group was sixty, and the third group was ninety. They were pouring money into that university, and Washington, “Aiii! Hello! We need money! Florida can’t feed these kids, teach these kids! Hello, we’re drowning!” And they started pouring money, and I mean **good** money, into Florida. Thank God they earmarked it, because if not, it would have been disseminated to buy chalk and new blackboards. But it did go into the programs. It went into the training.

And then Dade County Public Schools founded its own training **for** the teachers. So you became a teacher at May Walters Elementary School. Fine! This year you have to go to enough workshops, provided free of charge, by Dade County Public Schools, with a teacher to teach you how to do this or that or the other. And at the same time that they were taking subject matter at the university, they were doing what a normal teacher from the normal school that Horace Mann, your genius—I wish everybody knew in this United States who he is and what he did—it's not knowing, it's knowing to teach what you know. It's making it easy so that all of your knowledge, all of your experience, can be passed down to a child. How do you get to that person? Through love, through appreciation, character building, making them feel they're wonderful. And in the process of all of that, oh, we have this thing called subjects; and that thing called arithmetic. [unclear 58:07] for another. But for those thinkers, we can make it **wonderful**, if we just turn it around. And teachers were taught how to deal with the teaching of a subject matter. **How** do you teach social studies in third grade? You might know a lot of it, but if you don't know how to pass it on, it stays in you, and the only thing you do is you burden the kids with things they don't understand, and they will **hate** the subject at the end of the course. We don't care if they hate you, the teacher. You're not important. They will hate math for the rest of their lives. And math is.... No, no, no, no. You've **got** to learn **how** to teach. And that is one thing that at the universities here, in Dade County, I have not encountered good methods of teaching subject matter.

Ruiz: You had mentioned that you spent a lot of your time translating materials.

Sanchez-Pando: Uh-huh, that was [unclear 59:19].

Ruiz: Was there a time in that early period when you then got Spanish materials, got books or whatever?

Sanchez-Pando: Yes. I think, to the best of my knowledge, I think it was Ginn and Company that brought us down the first series of readers in Spanish that were used in the Puerto Rican schools. In Puerto Rico they were selling these books written in Spanish as readers. We started with readers, to get to a subject matter, to a social studies book or a science book, it took like about eight or ten years to get the publishing companies to feel that they had a market coming up, that there was going to be a need for this to be done, because you would be selling one million books! Oh, that's great! Because we ended being like around 170,000 kids. And that's some pretty money, 170,000 books. And in two years, they'd be destroyed, and you need another 175,000. And more kids are coming, more books are going to be sold.

In the year 1968, I remember that they had built a pod, a new building at Coral Way, which is square. It's on the left side, in front of Room 115, which was divided by one big wall into two rectangular humongous rooms. There were three teachers who were going to be put on one side, and three teachers on the other side. I was always, remember, the Marines. And when anything new came, "Miss Sanchez, you're gonna go." So Miss Sanchez went there. And in that pod was Ethel Mikes, Josefina Sanchez, and Rosaura Sotolongo, Anita Sotolongo. We went in there, and each one of us had a desk and a group of children facing that desk, and a blackboard—one to the right, one to the left, and one to the other corner. And there was a corner in which it was like a room for experiments. There were sinks and there were big tables where you could do things with plastic things. And we would all teach at the same time, 110 children in that room.

And we had to be keeping our voices to a point, pitch, and a tone, in which you wouldn't be bothering the other children, and they wouldn't be paying attention to your teaching but what was being taught by the other teacher. The subject matters were being taught in two languages, because for example I could be teaching social studies in Spanish to my group, and Mrs. Mikes could be teaching math in English to her group. And Mrs. Sotolongo would be teaching health, in Spanish, to her group. And we were all working like that. I raised my arms and was very much against it, and I was.... Mr. Gato was the person in charge, the director in charge of that. And I would tell him.... He was...His grandparents had been Cuban, and that is where the name Gato came from. And I was telling him, "You cannot.... We are experimenting with one medicine for one illness. You cannot put another experiment into one experiment, and **another** experiment into that experiment. You're feeding three medicines to the kids. You might kill them, but you don't know which of the three killed them. It can be a success—but you don't know which one of the three was the successful one. Was it 1? Was it 2 or 3? Was it the 3? Was it a combination of? Don't mix experiments!" But they did, and it worked. We had to make things work.

In that year, in that pod, we were exposed from the very beginning, it was an open experimental school in which anybody could come in and observe a teacher, a lesson, a class. I had from the minister of education of South Africa, and the minister of education from France, sitting in my room, in the back, while I was teaching a class. They would come in, you wouldn't know who they were. They would come in with an aide or with a big [unclear 64:29], and they would come in and sit in the back, observe, take notes, come in. The only thing they couldn't do was interrupt the class and be part of it, or

question the children or question the teachers. But they could be there and tape everything.

And here comes this gentleman. I was teaching a social studies class through art, because that was the joke of teaching something through a method that is not **the** common method. You want to teach both things—and I was teaching social studies, it was the period of history—I was teaching Spain at the moment—it was a period of history in which it was the Renaissance in Spain, and we were studying the painters. And I was teaching El Greco and I was teaching Velasquez. I had gotten, through somebody who had this magnificent thing, who they loaned it to us, an old lantern. Then you had slides that were glass, and it projected the image of what was in that glass. It was the most beautiful object that I had ever had in my life, and it had a collection of Greco paintings and Velasquez paintings. And it had a gadget in which you could close the vision and close the light so that you would get it to point just to one detail of the picture. I could make a picture go down to a hand, or to a flower in the picture—to a very little point. And I was teaching them the differences between the hands of Greco and Velasquez, the differences of the textures of the persons that they were painting. And I was over there teaching [unclear 66:50]. And I saw this gentleman writing [unclear]. And I kept on going. The class ended—rriiinggg! Everybody goes to recess. And I picked up my things and I was on my way out. He said, “Excuse me, where did you get that?” “Wasn’t it magnificent? Mr. So-and-So loaned it to us.” “How long have you had it?” “Oh, a couple of days, two, three, just for this week.” “How did you prepare? From what book or books did you.... What are your sources for your class?” Because I was teaching in Spanish. “Where did you get that?” And I said, “Sir, you’re looking at

the book, I **am** the book.” And he says, “You’re hired.” And I said, “I’m **what**?!” I was making, at that time, 5,500 dollars a year, teacher’s pay. Of course I could go to the grocery store and buy a chicken for 25 cents. And a gallon of milk cost 40 cents, so it’s all proportionate. But I was making 5,500 dollars a year. That was my contract for a year, divided into ten, because they would pay us for ten months. There was no pay for the summer. And the gentleman right there and then offered me 25,000 to go to New York! He said, “I want you to direct! to start getting: ‘Do this, do that!’ I’ll get you a whole lot of things, because we **need** to write those books in Spanish.” And I said, “You most certainly do, but I’m not going to be your teacher. Get yourself [unclear 68:40].” And **then** is when we started getting books of all the subject matter in Spanish. It started in ’68-’69, we got the first books. And I don’t remember—they were math and science, to the best of my recollection, that came in Spanish. Math was the first thing that came in Spanish. Because at the same time, it was the subject matter that needed less words.

Ruiz: You don’t happen to know if any of those books still exist there somewhere?

Sanchez-Pando: Doctor, when things are good, unfortunately, in this country, they are replaced. They are bettered, they are...you extrapolate from here.... When you have a good thing, it lasts a couple of years. But somebody has to come and ruin it and make it better. And in that betterment, it ruins that.

At the same time, there was a **magnificent** project going on at the beach at [Fire? 69:53] in which—Fire was a **big** school, and half of the school was empty, there were no children. Miami Beach at that time was a city of tourists and old retired persons. There were no young families, there were no children. So half the school was empty, and they gave us that half of the school to produce the Miami Linguistic Readers. I have never in

my life seen a better product at the end of everything. There was a team of writers there, a team of illustrators, and we used to go once a week on Mondays to check, move around the things that were being done, and drawn, and developed during a week. On Monday we would go and change it around. Robinette, Ralph Robinette was in charge of that development. And what came out of that series was the best series that I have seen for a non-North American-English-speaking person to learn how to read. Because you don't teach reading in Spanish as you teach reading in English, because both languages are different. They don't work the same, so you can't teach it the same. And these books were written to attack the problems of hearing, that the Spanish child has, that the North American child does not. Because in the development of his language at home, he picks up the short "I" and the long "I" immediately, because "my shoes don't fit on my feet." And those kids say it, "fit" and "feet." And it is nothing for them, because it's fit and feet. Oh! but don't give that to a Spanish child! Because he's going to have "feet" all the time, or "fit" all the time, because in Spanish we have five wonderful, round, middle vowels—*ah, eh, ee, oh, oo* [A-E-I-O-U]—that do not exist in English. Our Spanish *ah* is not "ay" and it's not "ahh." It's *ah*. And there's no *ah* in English. And "ee" is "eh." And it's not the "eh" of "egg." It's the "ay" of "elephant." "Ay," "eh." And those books were done, those first fourteen or fifteen readers dealt with only one vowel sound in the whole reader. "Nat the rat saw a fat cat." Ā, ā, ā, ā, ā—the whole book! And there wasn't one word that was not an ā. And the stories were **very** well developed. The drawings went in. "Biff and Tiff." Biff is a dog, like.... Let me see what he would be. He's a mutt, who is the father of Tiff. And Tiff is a very mischievous little dog that does all sorts of bad things that you can do in English with a short ī. And they'd play along,

and it's just a tiny reader. Like a big book being little, with a great big picture and three or four lines of caption underneath, sixteen, twenty pages long. And you deal with ī. And then the second book is "Nat the Rat," á, á. And the fourth book is "Tuck Duck," ū. There's no ū in Spanish. But you've got to teach 'em. But you can't teach 'em with "Dick and Jane." "Run Jane, run!" No, it doesn't! It comes into a North American child because he had heard the language five years at home before he goes to school and sits in front of that thing that's called a book, that has pictures and little googles down there, which are called letters. When you put them together, you make words. And then somebody tells you, "Read!"

Well, the Miami Linguistic Readers, at the end of.... We printed them ourselves here. We went through.... They were big books. There was music written for those. (hums) I try to remember one of those songs. A collection of everything that you need to teach reading: the big book, the tapes, the projection. It was all done here locally, by artists here. In those schools we duplicated, we drew, we did everything there. We got them out into the schools, it was working fine. Ginn and Company buys them, and then Ginn and Company adds color to the books, because they were black-and-white. We couldn't afford anything but black-and-white. And they were very good black-and-white books. Added one dab of color to the book. I remember "Nat the Rat" had red. And "Tuck Duck" had brown. And you know what? The books disappeared and they went into oblivion. And that magnificent project, that was done by people who knew the differences in the language, because they could speak both of them, and see where one carried on with the other, and knew that piggy-backed on that, and where one language

fought the other one, and then there is where you taught those folks ī, ī, ī; ā, ā, ā; ū, ū, ū;
and you got 'em!

Let me tell you, you can delete it from what we're taping, if it turns out to be a little reddish. I was standing at my door, Room 115 one day, and Miss Marta Sierra was walking down the hall, passing, with her first graders. My door was the last down that hall, and as the children walked down the line, a couple of them came back and told me, "Miss Sanchez! Miss Sanchez! C'm'ere! I'm gonna tell you how I know how to read!" Then I said, "What is it?" Somebody had taken a crayon and on one of the walls of the little house where the equipment for P.E. was put away, somebody had scribbled, "Tuck Duck can _uck." And the child decoded it beautifully and turned to me and said, "And what does this word mean?" And I said, "Ask Mrs. Richardson. She's your English teacher. I don't know, but you certainly decoded it **perfect!**" The sun came up perfect.

Ruiz: We'll try to find some of those readers. We'll see if we can find any of them somewhere.

Sanchez-Pando: I don't know. I had some of them. But everything got soiled with the hurricane.

Ruiz: Our time is quickly slipping away, so just let me ask you one more thing about parents and about community: what kind of relationship there was between the school and the community, especially the parents, if there were things that happened at the school?

Sanchez-Pando: The Latin parents that came in, as they came in, little by little dwindle, coming through Mexico and through here and through there, and the Freedom Flights and what have you, were very, very, very cooperative with the project. And anything they

had, they shared, because they saw the magnificent thing that they were doing for their children. Their children had not only learned English, they had not forgotten Spanish. They were fluent in the language of the grandparents who came down with them. They could communicate. The relationship between the Spanish-speaking parents and the school was magnificent. The relationship with the North American parents—different. Those parents that came from the Bay Height area, those parents that were better off economically, that had more and knew more, were fascinated with the program. They backed it 10,000%. They themselves, as I told you, got involved in learning Spanish. Spanish was added to the curriculum of junior college, to the curriculum of the English Center, to the curriculum of every high school here: Spanish for English speakers, Spanish 101, 102, and 103. There were Spanish lessons taught completely grammar, reading, writing, or they were just conversational Spanish: conversational Spanish for lawyers, conversational Spanish for this and that. And Spanish came into the curricula of the higher educational centers. And a lot, I would say 95% of that community that came, we had, at that time, a very strong Greek community around here. Those Greeks were **magnificent!** the way the mothers came in and helped. We had the most **wonderful** PTA that any school had in the fifty states of the United States. The first Christmas, the Christmas of '61, there were 178 Spanish kids at Coral Way. Out of those 178, I will tell you 160 had no parents here. And the PTA president, Mrs. Lagette [phonetic], I would never, **never** forget her. It was a very cold winter, extra cold for Miami, and those kids were shivering. They were just having three and four shirts, one on top [of the other], because they had come with tropical clothing. And besides, Fidel didn't let anybody come with more than forty-four pounds in a bag. Do you know what forty-four pounds

is? Two pairs of shoes and four other things. Because, I don't know why cloth weighs so much, but it does. So practically the children were naked. I was in Room 101, Mrs. Lagette knocked, "Miss Sanchez, may I come in?" She was coming for another project, and she looked at the children. After she looked at the children, she took me to the side and said, "Mrs. Sanchez, don't these parents know any better? Look, those children are shivering." I said "Mrs. Lagette, these children have no clothes. And here in this room, it's magnificent, because 101 is on top of the boiler room of the school, and that was a hot room. That was nice and cozy. Wait 'til you see the other rooms!" Ten minutes after, Mrs. Lagette comes in again with a big copy book, a pencil, and some measuring tape. "So-and-So, [come here]." "What are you doing, Mrs. Lagette?" "Oh, I have a project for the children." By that afternoon, she had called every mother in that PTA—all North Americans, because there were no Spanish parents in the PTA—told them the need. She went to Richards'—that was a store downtown that was comparable to a K-Mart. She went to Richards' and she bought a pair of shoes, three pairs of socks, three pairs of underwear, for the boys two pairs of pants, three shirts, one jacket, and one sweater, for every child. PTA clothed those children in the winter of '61, because they were not only shivering of loneliness, they were shivering of cold. It was cold here in Miami, and they had nothing to wear. That was the way they responded to the needs of those children. They responded with love, with the love that a mother would have given to their own child.

Yet there was a part of the Anglo community that hated our guts, that fought downtown at the board of education to have the program taken away for this, that, and every other thing. And they demanded that there be a room in Coral Way in which **their**

children would only be taught the curriculum in English, just like any other school, “with no getting around with that Spanish.” And they fought it so badly. Mrs. Richards taught that problem, and Mrs. Licours [phonetic] taught that problem in the little middle room, on top of the stairs as we come up, between Room 106 and 105. That small room there, there were twelve, fifteen children, but they existed. Twelve or fifteen children that were fourth graders, fifth graders, and sixth graders. And another little group of first, second, and third. So there was a first, second, and third group of North American children that were taught only in English. But you know, it was so cute, and so magnificent, that Mrs. Licour, who is a Cuban, taught one of those English groups for the English kids. Damned if they do, damned if they don’t. So there was a part of the community....

We had another big fight. In sixth grade, when I was with Mrs. Mikes in Rooms 110 and 109, that was another experiment. They tore down a wall, and we had a folding door. So that at some time during the day, we could open the door and have a group of sixty children. The teacher would stand where the fold came in, so it could be halfway in between this group and the other, and would teach whatever was going to be taught to the whole group. That experiment of the wall down was Mrs. Mikes and Mrs. Sanchez. And the room was right beside us. It was between 109 and 108, the little room of the non-Spanish-speakers/haters. They were the Ku Klux Klan of Coral Way. That’s how we Spanish teachers used to call them. Of course, just in our minds—the words were not spoken, but they were felt.

I was teaching a social studies class—here we go back again—little renaissance—to my painters, and I’m sorry, everything that Greco painted was a saint, or a virgin. A great part of what Morillo [phonetic], what Velasquez painted, were virgins and saints

and angels. And this lady took Mrs. Mikes and Mrs. Sanchez to court because we were teaching religion in the classroom. "We don't teach [religion]." "Yes! Holy Saint So-and-So! The Virgin [So-and-So]!" "That's what the picture is called. I can't call her 'Mary Feeding the Kid.'" And of course we won it. They did not want that to be taught. The Middle Ages, the Renaissance had to be skipped, because there was too much religion. We couldn't speak [unclear]. Well, of course we won, but it was an obstacle. So there were problems of religion.

Christmas! Ha, ha, ha. Christ-mass. I'm sorry, you can't take Christ out of the word. So the Jewish community didn't like it. They didn't want Christmas trees in the room. And Christmas is a very important part of the Latin American culture. And we were teaching how it is celebrated in different countries: in Sweden, the girls put some ribbons on their heads with candles; and in Africa they do this; and the other dah-dah they do.... "That is comparative religion!" No! that is culture! Christmas trees could not be put up. Well, we put up!

I had a wonderful intelligent—I don't know what became of him—brilliant child called.... He was a very important person. His grandparents were millionaires, the University of Miami.... Well, I'm going to say, Richter [phonetic], the Richter Library. I had Kevin Richter as my student. He was a teeny weenie devil! Tiny as they can come, and bright as anything. And he would say, "Miss Sanchez, people just don't understand what sexy language you have." And I said.... Every one of the kids in that room took a Spanish name for the class. He wasn't called Kevin, he was called Esteban. He chose Esteban, so he was called Esteban. And I used to call him, "Esteban Richter," when I called the roll. "Pilar Silverman?" When I called the roll, Pilar. They took the names of

very, very, very special saints. Ah-ha-ha! They liked it! And Kevin used to say, "I love Spanish because *mire maestra, el lapis, la pluma, la goma, van dentro de la cajita*. Can you imagine, Miss Sanchez, *el lapis*?" Only one boy is gonna have a lot of fun with *la goma, la pluma, and la cajita!*

Ruiz: But I do get the sense from the people we've been talking with, and with you, I think, that there was a lot of community support, a lot of parental support. There were some pockets of resistance....

Sanchez-Pando: There were pockets of resistance, but I told you, the support was magnificent. I have never in my life seen a PTA as those first PTAs. The things they gave the children, the parties they gave them, the lot of love they gave them. We went to everything that existed here. The field trips they paid for. They took those children around. They saw also how the Spanish community mothered those children that were motherless here. Saturdays and Sundays, I used to take sixteen to twenty kids to catechism at Saints Peter and Paul Church, with the consent of the North American parent that was housing the child. I would go to Mrs. Roberts' and Mrs. Smith's and pick up the kids and I would take them to catechism, to church. We would go to Key Biscayne, which was under development at that time, with some bait and some thread, and we would fish, right there. I could take them out at night, and we would all bring a big, big towel, sit on the sand, and look up at the stars and study the constellations, and think of the differences of movement in the stars. "And we can see this in this position here, but in Cuba you would see it in that other position. Now, if you write Mommy in your next letter, that three weeks from today we're going to be here, lying on the sand, looking at the constellations. If they do the same thing over there, we could talk. We

could look at the stars, and you could tell your Mommy and your Daddy how you miss them, and what is being done.” And we did that. And those children grew to be magnificent human beings, because they were nurtured in love, with the love that they found in the community, and the extra love that we gave them, because most everybody that was here at the time had had some big catastrophe happen in their own family, and the empathy was enormous, because I could feel how Esperanza was desperate to see her mother—because I didn’t have my mother either here. And I also wrote my mother, “Please look at the stars. We’re going to be watching them. So let’s see how much love we can feel that those stars are giving us.” I taught them how to look at the grass, and the beauty of the flowers that hide under the grass. Because we had nothing. And since they had nothing because we didn’t have money, we didn’t have parents, nothing, nothing, everything was something empty, we had to fill it with things that were free. And when we finished lunch at Coral Way, those big groups at the very beginning, we would go to the inner court and you eat all of your lunch, and you eat it properly, and we have five, six minutes left, we can go and sit on the grass and watch the flowers. “Oh, there are no flowers in the grass, Miss Sanchez!” “Oh yes there are. They’re very tiny. They’re under the leaves. But you can go and see. You can see how many things that nature gives you, that are free. How many things you can enjoy, how happy you can be, with things that don’t cost money, and that we can fill our lives with.” Believe me, those first 5-6 years, were tremendous years, tremendous years.

Another experience: I had a little boy called Raul Rodriguez. Raul was tiny also. I don’t know why, the rascals were tiny. The big ones were the good ones. The little ones, ehhh. But that’s it, comparing now. We had an arithmetic bee, mental arithmetic.

Stand 'em all up. "All right, $7 \times 3 - 4 \div 2$. What is it?" They were geniuses! We had a tie. He was the first one on the line, we got them by sizes. And if I gave you an example and you failed it, it would go next to the other team. The other team had ... And it was a tie, and this one didn't know it, and Rodriguez had to untie. And I said, "Next!" And he said, "What?! Huh?!" "Huh?! You weren't paying attention?!" The team lost. They wanted to eat him alive. And he started crying. I said, "Hey, Ricardo, it's not that important. You don't have to cry." He said, "No, class, I'm sorry. Again, I'm sorry. But you know, it's nearly three, and at three o'clock and at five o'clock, the planes that are coming from Cuba, land, and I thought, 'Three o'clock. Perhaps my mommy is coming in the plane that is going to land at three o'clock.' And at 3:30, I'll be here in the window waiting for her." That's the kind of children we had. The kind of children that Ernesto de la Fe. His father was in jail in Cuba in *Isla de Pinos*, which now is *La Isla de la Juventud*.. And between the Isle of Pines in Cuba, and the mainland, that water there is highly infested by sharks. And he was a witness to—he was going to see his daddy, and there was commotion—because they looked like barges, and the barge in which he was going with one of the guards, and the guard pushed the guy overboard, and he saw a shark eat the man. You could not speak of water, of sharks, or of animals that attack man without him coming to pieces, because he had seen that. They were children that were destroyed because their parents were away, or because....

I had another one who could not learn how to read. He just couldn't. He would freeze. There was nothing, no way, no method that to teach that child. And one day I said, "Ay *Dios mio*, ¿qué hago con este niño?. ¿Cómo lo enseño?" He turned back at me and snapped, "Don't call *Dios mio*. There is **no** *Dios mio*." And I said, "Don't say

that. I've never seen you like that. Don't say there is no *Dios*." "No, there isn't. And I know it." And I said, "All right, tell me, how do you know it?" "When we were leaving out of my grandmother's house, I had my two Dobermans, and I wanted to take them with me. And those men with bayonets killed them in front of me. And I kneeled in front of them and said, '*Dios mio*, don't let them kill my dogs!' And *Dios mio* let them kill my dogs. So there is no *Dios mio*." Those were the children that we had to teach. And they were magnificent. That problem was out of the world.

Ruiz: Unfortunately, we are out of time, and probably pretty close to out of tape. But I want to thank you for the interview and the hospitality, and I think we're going to have to continue this—probably some other time, when I come back.

Sanchez-Pando: Any time you want to.

Ruiz: There are just too many stories that we need to record.

Sanchez-Pando: Any time you want to. It is full, it is full....

[END OF INTERVIEW]