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## Sanchez, Enrique Oral History Interview: Members of the Hispanic Community (English)

Andrea Peschiera

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Interview with  
Enrique Sanchez

1993 Summer History Project  
Subject: The Hispanic Community in Holland, MI

Interviewed August 9, 1993  
by Andrea Peschiera

Translated by Shannon Vanderspool

ES--Enrique Sanchez--the interviewee  
AP--Andrea Peschiera--the interviewer

(Beginning of the interview--side A of the tape)

AP: For now and for future reference, please state your full name.

ES: My name is Enrique Sanchez Gonzales

AP: Your address?

ES: I live at 244 E. 16th.

AP: And the day and place of birth.

ES: [date removed], 1924. The place of my birth was in Puerto del Callao [Pebble Harbor] in the republic of Peru.

AP: Was it an urban neighborhood?

ES: Yes. The Callao is an urban harbor in where--in which there were approximately some 200,000 inhabitants. It was that when I was born. That was many years ago.

AP: In what year did you arrive in Holland?

ES: I had the privilege of arriving in this city of Holland approximately nine years ago.

AP: And how many people came with you?

ES: Well, the opportunity to come here was personal. I came alone. My wife had already come before.

AP: Before coming to Holland, describe what you expected to find.

ES: Well, everything according to the stories, the information, and the news from the radio and the newspapers. One always expects to find the city beautiful, and as a matter of fact I found a very beautiful city in Holland.

AP: When did you arrive?

ES: I arrived in, to be more precise, on February 8 in 1985.

AP: If you could, tell me the first impressions that you had of the city.

ES: It's been approximately nine years since I came here to Holland. I had the impression of a small, welcoming town. Very attractive people in the sense of familiarity. It's a very friendly people, a very sincere people with the people that I was able to have the opportunity by whom to be interviewed. I had the opportunity here in Holland to visit many interesting places, and that further on, if there's an opportunity, I'll relate to you.

AP: Please tell me your first site of residence in Holland.

ES: Upon arriving in Holland, with the motive of a special visit to my son, the Reverend Walter Sanchez Neira, I lodged in his house. I stayed there, on 22nd St. On 22nd St. was the first location where we resided.

AP: In which part of the city did you establish yourself?

ES: We're established now, at the address that I told you earlier, at 244 E. 16th. We've been living there for approximately some seven years now.

AP: Could you describe that neighborhood?

ES: Of course! In the place where we're living we're surrounded by a very friendly neighborhood. [The people are from] American roots, and we only have a little bit of contact by way of hellos because of work schedules. But it's a beautiful community in which we are living.

AP: Describe why you came to Holland.

ES: Well, the story is rather emotional because I lived in Peru. I want to tell you that I'm a minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Peru, I have been pastor in the church of the Lord, and with the motive of the sickness of my son, the Reverend Walter Sanchez, who was the pastor of the Iglesia Ebenezer de las Asambleas de Dios [Ebenezer Church of the Assemblies of God] in Holland--with the motive of his sickness he invited me to be able to visit Holland, and to be able to be the assistant of the Reverend Walter Sanchez. That was the motive which brought me here to Holland, to be able to help in the ministry of the preaching of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Hispanic community located over here in Holland.

AP: What were the conditions in Peru?

ES: I repeat that being in Peru I was also pastor of the church, minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I was working in the ministry for many years, but with the motive of the sickness of my son, again, is why I'm here in this city. I came for three months. But I don't know if this is the time to tell you, but I was only able to accompany my son a few months because after ten months, my son, the Reverend Walter Sanchez, parted for eternity to be with God.

AP: Thank you. Describe your first job in the city of Holland.

ES: Well, you have already heard and pardon the redundancy but the primary

thing that I came to do and in which I'm still occupied is preaching the Gospel, of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a minister. I'm in the same job, in the same work, here in Ebenezer, located now at 157 W. 10th.

AP: What types of things do you do here?

ES: Well, I have in the church the position of giving the word of God that speaks of the ministers, ministerial gifts. I'm in charge of the church. I'm the pastor of the church in which, in addition to the pastorate, I also have the administration that also is a gift of the work of God, a ministry. Those are the two duties that I have apart from the labor of teaching and the care of the departments of the church, which are (also) the youth, the adults, the elderly.

AP: And how many members do you have in your church?

ES: We're approximately at 120 members of the Iglesia Ebenezer [Ebenezer Church]. But we have a floating attendance of some 180 [people], because apart from the members we have many visitors. So, we have a floating attendance of some 180 people among (also) youth and adults.

AP: And what did you do in Peru before coming here?

ES: Before coming to this beautiful city of Holland, this pretty city, (and) I was in the same work in the pastorate of the church, the ministry of the church, and I was very busy in the things of God.

AP: Doing the same things that you do here?

ES: That's it.

AP: When you arrived in Holland, how much English did you speak?

ES: Well, in terms of the English language, very little. I had very little knowledge of the English language.

AP: Did you attend school in Holland?

ES: It was a privilege to come to this city of Holland, to be able to find a wide opening to be able to learn the English language. For that which I had in relation to my son, the Reverend Walter Sanchez, he also was one of the members of Community Education over here in Holland. Working in this department of education and working with the migrants, he was able to connect me with the Department of Education in Community Education in which I was able to study for the space of three years. Very efficient teachers. During these three years that I spent in Community Education learning the English language, it was for me a special experience, to get to know more closely the conducting of these programs of bilingual education, in which, well, I'm very grateful to the authorities here in Holland, Michigan.

AP: I don't remember if you said for how many years.

ES: Three years I was in Community Education.

AP: What are your impressions about the school system?

ES: Very interesting, it's very good, and it's a system in which, well, it gives all the facilities to be able to learn the English language. For me it was a surprise, and a help to be able to have teachers like I had in that the system it's very interesting, very plausible, in which we can say that it's one of the very special methods and anyone could learn English with this system.

AP: How do you feel about the competition in the school system in Holland, in the area of bilingual education?

ES: In terms of competition I didn't--in Community Education, I didn't find any competition because they [the students] are unique. And they have a system, they have an elaborate program, that I believe comes from the direction of education, and it's a program that has a very special balance. And I see above all that every time there's more interest in this program of bilingual education. Therefore, and I repeat, I reiterate, my congratulations: I don't find any competition. If we should have to speak of competition, we would have to speak of competition at the level of other countries. But here everything is right, very good.

AP: Very good. Describe the organization of which you are a member.

ES: I'm a member of the Asambleas de Dios [Assemblies of God]. This is an organization that is busy in preaching the Gospel, of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the worldly level. The Asambleas de Dios mobilizes itself with the message of the Gospel because there's an interest, and the interest of the Asambleas de Dios is that the souls of as many men as women of different ages, children, young adults, adults, come to find happiness, and they can leave all that concerns and impedes the happiness of the home. And it's precisely that interest of the Asambleas de Dios that all the homes come to find in Jesus Christ, well, the solution to all their problems.

AP: Are you a member of another organization?

ES: No, absolutely not.

AP: Well then, in the past, have you always been a member of only the Asambleas de Dios?

ES: When I came to this city of Holland, well, I still belonged to the Asambleas de Dios. Participating with other denominations, but giving emphasis always to the Asambleas de Dios.

AP: What types of activities do you do?

ES: Well, one of my principal [activities] is the teaching of the Bible, the word of God in addition to the evangelization in general services, in public services. Later, also, is carried out the systematic study of the word of God. We already have that responsibility as part of it all. As I already told you in previous lines, I have the administration of all the church.

AP: Would you tell me about your education in Peru?

ES: Why not? I had the privilege to complete primary studies [grade school], later the secondary studies [high school]. Later I also prepared myself in the Biblical institutes and so to be able to come to have the level were we are now, in the pastorate of the church after completing all these theological studies in which we prepared ourselves for the Biblical teaching of the word of God. In addition to that, I have completed, well, studies relating to administration in that which concerns the accounting part I have learned this management called accounting, administration, public relations in terms of the radio, in terms of television, in terms of newspapers. All this training and all this work I have brought to pass in Peru.

AP: During your years in Holland, describe the changes that you have seen there in the Hispanic community during its growth.

ES: It's fantastic! It's something marvelous. In '85 when I came to Holland it was for me something very admirable to see a city like Holland, small but with a big future and in effect like a prophecy. Little by little I've seen it grow, widen, expand, like an urban city, and also like a populated city, in population. I've seen other races that also are coming here to Holland and this calls my attention very much, because it's a town with a great future where I've seen, in these last nine years, a fantastic change.

AP: Are there other smaller changes, as in ethnic traditions or in employment, that you have seen?

ES: Ah, well, when things expanded, when things grow in gigantic steps, then surge, well, problems like the scarcity of--for example--housing, right? But I also see that [people are] trying to solve all these problems of housing and work for which, well, the city of Holland has some authorities with a lot of vision, and from this microphone we can congratulate all the authorities that today are governing the city of Holland.

AP: Throughout the years, how do you feel that Holland has responded to the Hispanic community?

ES: In a marvelous way, giving them opportunities to learn the language; later, in what is the housing problem; later, in work; well, the Hispanic population living here in Holland has many benefits, in which, well, it's something very interesting to know that here we find a huge support for our Hispanic community. All we have to do is understand, and appreciate, and respond to all these good opportunities that [Holland] gives us.

AP: Describe the biggest challenge that you've encountered in Holland.



ES: As a minister of the Gospel, and as a person also, I have a challenge, which is, precisely, to fight [against] all that is bad. The Bible calls it "sin," as are drugs, the alcoholic life, divorce, abandoned [children?]. That is the biggest challenge that we have for our youth, if they're going to be on the right track of the good, and on the path of honesty. The challenge that we have today is that the homes must be more united, for the family to have more communion, and so that the children can be, later, good citizens, and can support, and can, well, contribute, for this community of Holland, well, the good and not the bad. The challenge for us in this opportunity is that we must fight, we must work in order to counteract all the bad that is infiltrating (here) this city of Holland.

AP: What do you feel that the Hispanic community has to offer to Holland?

ES: In this moment, the Hispanic community upon arriving here, our little grain of sand could be the language, it could be the work hands in the fields, and prepared people, also, that arrive from our Hispanic countries. Already being professionals, they have much to contribute. All we need is the opportunity.

AP: And what has it offered in the past, the community?

ES: Well, in the past, in the time that I've been here, and for reference's sake, the Hispanic community has been able to contribute, to collaborate with its little grain of sand in the hand of work, in the jobs, and also in the language.

AP: Describe the changes that you would like to see in the city.

ES: In the city, urban, well, I see that changes are [being made] in giant steps. They are [making many things easier]. Well, we would like to see in Holland, well, more parks where the children can [play] awhile. We would like to take advantage of the same opportunity that [a park] would remain as a reminder for the future that here we enjoy many [things that make life easier] in that which concerns the [food] help for children, especially for Hispanics. But we need more. This is our desire, our wish. There would be more parks, more help, for that which refers to our children.

AP: The majority of Hispanics want these changes?

ES: I think that if we were to do a survey, well, I think that they'd be with me, referring to these changes, not so much changes but an expansion. Holland is taking large steps forward: in changes, no, only that which we have already shown, knowing, well, that its authorities are directing this town in great advances, as much culturally as economically. Because I'm seeing that there are many negotiations, many commercial firms, that are lifting up our stores, our centers of work. On my part, I congratulate all the authorities that give these [things that make

life easier] to carry forward these advances, culturally as well as commercially, and socially also.

AP: Describe what you see in the future for Holland and its community.

ES: For the future, what could we tell you for the future? We would like to see for the future in Holland a united Hispanic community; a Hispanic community that looks for God; a Hispanic community that serves God; a Hispanic community where the homes are examples so that others can also look at [such] places. The Hispanic community has the opportunity now to go forward because of the [blessings] we have and if we want more, well, we can give our support with our good testimony.

AP: Describe the traditions you celebrate as a family, or, also, as a community.

ES: Upon arriving in Holland, as a Peruvian, well, we came with many traditions, such as our foods, for example. We bring with regard to our foods other traditions of ours...also is our dress; our manner in which we dress; and we always try to guard our traditions that help our community. Because there are traditions--you know--instead of helping us, well, they enclose us in a circle as if we were rather slaves to the traditions, and I believe that the traditions, well, we should preserve them at a certain level, and here in Holland I've seen very interesting traditions, like each year you celebrate a festival where so many groups of schools come. It's in the... a celebration. Can you help me remember the date it is that you celebrate over here? A good festivity.

AP: In May.

ES: It's in May. What's this celebration called?

AP: Tulip--

ES: Tulip Time, very good. That's a tradition that, over the nine years that I've been here, I've seen, and that you preserve it in a very special way. I congratulate you.

AP: Can you describe some of the food or about some of the traditions that you celebrate?

ES: Mmm-hm. As I said, [we were making] Peruvian foods. My wife, well, is an expert cook in all those kinds. But sometimes we didn't find what we needed to season all these Peruvian foods, and even now we're, well, subjected to what we have in the market and we're familiarizing ourselves with what is offered here for what's called seasonings.

AP: Have the traditions changed, your traditions?

ES: Well, that they've changed, no, but instead I have stopped practicing them and that changes the situation a little.

AP: And they've changed because there aren't seasonings, and the--?

ES: The types.

AP: Yes.

ES: Mm-hmm. Yes, that's the primary reason for which we keep eating, well,



the potato to the huancaína [?], the oyuguitos of charqui, and roast lamb, and other foods that I don't want to mention because it would "open" our appetites.

AP: Describe your experience of religion, or your faith, in your life.

ES: Well, I lived without God, and without hope, for many years. I was a young man. I was 19 years old, but with many illusions of being able to serve God, to know God more. But the world dragged me down mistaken paths. But one day I found Jesus Christ as my Savior. The sacred scripture says that God so loved the world that he gave his son, Jesus Christ, so that he that believes in him would not be lost, would have eternal life. He didn't speak to me of religion, he didn't speak to me of denomination. He spoke to me as a person that had died on the cross at Calvary to save me, and to give me happiness. It's what I was looking for, and I found in Christ happiness and eternal life in Christ Jesus. Because if there's something real and something true it's that we have been born to die, and while we live in this world, we have to prepare ourselves for eternity.

This has been my experience, and I continue proclaiming what I have lived, what I have experienced; that for the person who is a drug addict, who is immoral, who is a person who lives on the margin of the law can only find the solution to his problems in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I tell you that from experience, and I tell you that because I've seen many miracles coming to lost men coming to be found to be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

AP: How do you perceive the religious development of other Hispanics since the time that they arrived in the community of Holland?

ES: The Hispanics that arrive in this city of Holland always come with their faith, their faith in God, and try to locate themselves or relocate themselves inside their faith, inside their beliefs, and they look for just the church where they can meet to praise and to read the Bible, and to continue forward. Here in the church where I pastor, Ebenezer Asambleas de Dios, located at 157 W. 10th, many of us Hispanics meet, and they come from different places looking for exactly this desire and so they go, growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

AP: Tell me why the family, the extended family, is so important for Hispanics.

ES: The family is very important. The family is one of the preoccupations in the part of God's heart in [the hope] that the family become permanently united, that as many of the parents as children carry on in harmony, carry on communicating, to be able as such to understand each other and to solve the problems that the youth encounter. I believe that (the success of) the family is based in its communication. I have my wife. And God gave us four children, and from experience I can tell you that

there is nothing better than communication in the family to solve many problems. And this communication brings us to understand each other, to comprehend each other, through the communication like we need with God.

AP: Please, describe your family.

ES: Well, God gave us four children. My wife, she is Peruvian. Well, my oldest son, Walter Sanchez, he was a minister of God, and he studied medicine in Peru. Then, my second son's name is Enrique, same as the one who's speaking now, his father. He is an electrical engineer and he works in Peru with an American firm. He is in charge of telecommunications. Then [there's] the third son, who is Daniel, Daniel Sanchez. He has completed the accounting studies to be a public accountant in Peru. He has his own business. He has his own work. And finally, my last child, Ruth, she was an expert in languages, and also was in charge of teaching and taking care of children. And those are my four children: Walter, Enrique, Daniel, and Ruth. Well, about them, (and) you know how families are, they multiply and now we already have grandchildren and one great-grandson.

AP: And where do your children live?

ES: Well, Walter and Ruth, well, they already departed for eternity to be with God. It's been nine years since Walter died, and my daughter Ruth, it's been nine months since she died too. They lived here in Holland. But they're already in the presence of God, and I can say that because they also parted with their faith in Jesus Christ. We still have, well, Enrique and Daniel. They live in Peru. They work in Peru. They have their family too, and those are the two sons that we have living in Peru.

AP: What are your hopes for your sons and also for your grandchildren?

ES: Well, first and foremost that they be good children; that they continue being good children; that they never depart from the path of God; that they follow the path of God. And for our grandchildren, well, my hope is that they prepare themselves, that they educate themselves; and that they grow up in the fear of God; and that they can be, later, good citizens, good Christians; and if they come to be a parent, good parents in the family. But meanwhile, well, this is our desire and our wish that our family, also for all Hispanics--that Hispanic families be happy, and that they be very united.

AP: Describe something about your life that you would like to share with generations that follow.

ES: Well, if there's something in my life [about which] I can testify and give a testimony that can serve for our generations that come, it is to follow the advice of [your] parents. Parents give advice to their children. And sometimes through the disobedience of the children the

parents have to suffer pain, bitterness, weeping, longing, but there's something more beautiful than being obedient to [your] parents, and therefore as a priority being obedient to God. The parents that are obedient to God will be able to inculcate their children to obedience to God. Because I want to tell you that with the authority of the Bible one can only see happiness through obedience. When we obey God; when we obey our parents; when we submit ourselves to our authorities; when we submit ourselves to our family, be it the husband or the wife, then will there be much happiness and progress for the Hispanic family. And therefore for all that can hear this report, well I tell them, "Be obedient to God, to your parents, and [go] forward in the name of Jesus."

AP: Is there anything more that you would like to share?

ES: (And), of course! I would like to give thanks to Ms. Andrea Peschiera for this intervention, for this dialogue that we have been able to spend these minutes in that which has been very agreeable. And if in something I can contribute with this report for the good of the community and for the good of the posterity of the town of Holland, well, here I leave inserted all that I have spoken and I thank Ms. Andrea, and the department of education from where she comes--

AP: Hope College.

ES: It's something very interesting that Ms. Andrea comes and gives her time for this report. Other teachers have also come from Hope College, and have been able to converse with us, and we over here as Iglesia Ebenezer also have given the opportunity so that they can here be able to hear some bits of information and how they get about, and how the church goes. Well, we're at your service, ladies and gentlemen of Hope College. Thanks, Andrea.

AP: Thanks to you, Mr. Sanchez.

(end of the interview)