

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 10 - Flora Vista Elementary School** *(circa 1955 – located on southeast Atkinson St.)*

I cannot see very well. Everything is blurry. Mother takes me to an eye doctor, and I get glasses for being nearsighted. I see much better now. The un-speckled students tease me for wearing them, but I make better grades.

The new school is built a few blocks away from Walnut. I walk to school. I know most of the 6<sup>th</sup> graders but it is very crowded. The teachers seem to think I am smart. That does not matter to me. I want to be outside playing ball. I get hurt playing tackle football. I do not like tackle football.

I try to high jump and land on my back along the edge of the pit. I can barely breathe but embarrassment makes me hide the hurt I feel. It takes a month or two for the pain to go away. I have difficulty breathing but I do not tell Mother.

Every day after school, I hurry home to listen to our big AM radio. Sgt Preston of the Yukon, Sky King, Lone Ranger, and Buck Rogers are some of my favorite daily serials. These stories are such a source of food for my imagination. Mother buys cans of applesauce by the case. I open and eat a can every afternoon.

This elementary school eventually is renamed Nancy Lopez Elementary who was born and raised about a block from the Walnut house. Her house was on my paper route.

I experience my first discrimination issue. I realize for years that Father hates “Mexicans”. He refers to them as “Mess-kins”. What Father thinks or says does not affect me much.

Several times while living at the Walnut place, I ride my bike through the north edge shortcut past Chahuahita Village to Hondo Park and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. I am chased and rocks are thrown at me. Generally, those times frighten me, so I stay away from that route. I still have Mexican friends at school.

I notice this beautiful girl in my class. She always smiles at me. She invites me to her birthday party in the springtime of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I tell her I will come. She lives about two blocks away in a mobile home (trailer house).

I tell Mother. A few hours later, Mother tells me I must ask permission from MomMom. I ask MomMom and she says no. “We do not mingle with Mexicans”, MomMom says. Mother forbids me to go to the party. I do not understand. I am confused and embarrassed to tell the beautiful girl.

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