

Interview with

Tensia Trejo

March 19, 2005

by Kristi Hawthorne

for the

Highway 101 Association

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

**Interview with Tensia Trejo on March 19, 2005 at her home in Del Mar, California.
Interviewer and transcriber: Kristi Hawthorne.**

Kristi: Today is March 19, 2005. I'm Kristi Hawthorne and I'm here with Tensia Trejo in her home in Del Mar. Can you tell me your full name?

Tensia: Well my full name is Hortencia Moriel Trejo, but everybody knows me as Tensia. I keep the Moriel because that's the way the history books here in Del Mar refer to me.

Kristi: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Tensia: I was born here in Del Mar in 1927.

Kristi: And your parents' names?

Tensia: My parents were Miguel and Blasa Moriel. They came here from Chihuahua, Mexico during the revolution years. My father came to Del Mar and worked with the railroad. He met a man here who invited him to bring his family for a visit. At that time my mother was living in Barstow. He brought here and like everyone who comes to Del Mar, she fell in love with Del Mar and moved here to Del Mar in 1919.

Kristi: What period of time have you lived on or near the 101?

Tensia: All of my life.

Kristi: Where was your first home?

Tensia: My first home was right here in Del Mar. Then we lived a while in Solana Beach. Then I got married I lived in Solana Beach while we built this house and then we came back to Del Mar.

Kristi: Do you remember your first trip on the 101?

Tensia: Actually the first memory, as I was thinking back, when we lived in Del Mar and we would go to St. James Church and my mother would place a little blanket on the lawn and sit me there and I enjoyed the cars on the highway, because it was the only highway between Oceanside or San Clemente and La Jolla at that time. This was something that she knew kept me busy, watching the cars. So that's from the time that I have recollection and then as I got a little older my father would take us on Sunday drives and of course we headed on the 101 north, most of the time. We had to go on Highway 101 because Carlsbad had "big hens" at the Twin Inns Restaurant. So we'd go by there and go to Oceanside to the pier and spend a little while at the beach and then head back. There were times that we would go over to the Mission at San Luis Rey, Oceanside and then head back on the El Camino Real and I didn't like that, it was too windy and bumpy for me. I used to tell him, the other road is pretty and smooth, that's how I referred to the Highway 101, pretty and smooth.

Kristi: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

Tensia: Yes, I had 4 brothers and 2 sisters.

Kristi: Do they still live in the area?

Tensia: Two of them. A brother Steve and a sister Frances live close by. We lost our brother Pete about 8 years ago and the oldest brother, Telesforo "Tom" lives in Las Vegas, a sister, Teresa, in Henderson, and another brother, Miuo, in Arizona. They're scattered but we see each other often.

Kristi: What kind of car did your dad have?

Tensia: As a child I remember it only as a large car. A big convertible.

Kristi: Do you remember the first time you drove on the 101 yourself?

Tensia: The first time I drove on the 101 I was probably 18, because at that time you couldn't get an early license, you had to wait until you were a certain age. Before then we did all of our travel north and south, either going to San Diego or Encinitas and Oceanside, to the theaters. We would go on the Greyhound Bus. The Greyhound Bus came by every fifteen minutes and so it was great transportation.

Kristi: Where would you catch the bus?

Tensia: In Solana Beach or here in Del Mar in front of the drug store. San Diego, when I was growing up, had four large theaters that we used to like to go to see the movies.

Kristi: Where did you go to school?

Tensia: I went to school at San Dieguito High School. I graduated from San Dieguito High.

Kristi: Did you ride the bus to school?

Tensia: Yes, we had buses. At that time no students drove. Then when I was in high school, of course the war years came and even the very few that would drive stopped driving because the gas was rationed.

Kristi: Can you think of a significant event or a memorable happening on the 101 that sticks out in your memory?

Tensia: There were several. The first was the building of the 1937 racetrack and that brought on a lot of traffic. It also brought on more than 11 gas stations in Del Mar. There was very heavy traffic, but I tell people we didn't have the temperament that drivers have today.

Kristi: No road rage.

Tensia: No road rage. UCSD is where the roads met, we called that Five Points, and from there to the races, it was bumper-to-bumper. If you ran out of gas, you just kind of let the car roll to

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

the right and somebody got out of their car and the men all pushed to the very first station, got back in their cars and left. It was never like it is today. Then the war years came and the races stopped for the duration of the war and then we had the military trucks. Huge convoys that came sometimes all day long, sometimes into the night. We used to like to stand by the road and wave to the young boys in the trucks. We were teenagers and that was one thing we'd spend a lot of time actually standing on the Highway 101. The Highway 101 goes over the Del Mar Bridge, over the tracks, we would stand there and watch the train carry the heavy artillery and the heavy tanks and the big guns.

Kristi: Do you remember seeing President Roosevelt when he came by?

Tensia: No, we did not. I believe that he went by during a weekday and we were in school. We just thought it was kind of dumb for them not let us out, because we missed him.

Kristi: Do you think of a particular person when you think of the road? Is there someone that you went to visit or someone that you saw?

Tensia: No, the communities were so small that practically everyone on the road you knew, whether they were from Del Mar, Encinitas or Carlsbad, you knew them. To go to any large shopping center, everybody went to San Diego because that was where the shopping centers were, downtown San Diego. When we went to church at St. James, which was the only church on Highway 101 at that time, we did see the movie stars.

Kristi: Whom did you see?

Tensia: Well, I'll tell you, the two people that I always saw, this was at St. James, itself, the two ushers, who ushered you and collected the baskets, was Pat O'Brien and Bing Crosby. As a child I didn't know. They were just two men who did their jobs until I got a little older and started seeing movies. A lot of the Hollywood stars and their families who were Catholic, this is where they attended, even the ones that lived in Rancho Santa Fe, Douglas Fairbanks, they all came to this church because it was the only one, other than the Mission to the north. It was a little, small church, half of what it is today. Today it's the beautiful Del Mar Library.

Kristi: I'm trying to think if there's a church that's on the 101 now.

Tensia: On the 101 now... let's see. No. St. John's is a block away. Oceanside, St. Mary's, is a block away. I don't believe on the 101 there's another church.

Kristi: In Oceanside there was a little Episcopal Church called Grace Chapel and they moved it to West Street. So St. James is probably the only one left on the original 101.

Tensia: The original church, because see, now we're inland ourselves. The new St. James is inland. St. James moved to Solana Beach was in the late 1960s. So a lot of people would time their driving from San Diego to Los Angeles to stop for the 11:00 mass, going the opposite direction, they would also stop.

Kristi: Can you recall any of the businesses that were downtown?

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

Tensia: Yes. Of course there was the Hotel Del Mar, then the drugstore.

Kristi: Did it have a name?

Tensia: The Del Mar Drugstore.

Kristi: Who owned it?

Tensia: Different people owned the drugstore. I remember Nick Giordano, whom I knew well. I do know that Fred Stronger had the little liquor store next to it and then there was a little barbershop owned by Mr. Wilson. There were different businesses.

Kristi: Was there a market downtown?

Tensia: Yes, we had a market. The market, "Owen's Market" was where Bully's is today. During World War II we had a USO on Stratford Square, just south of the drugstore. The whole lower section of the building was converted into a USO.

Kristi: What about restaurants?

Tensia: Today it's called En Fuego. It was Latienda in 1936. It was just south of Bully's.

Kristi: Were there gas stations on the west side?

Tensia: There was one on the west side, a Union 76.

Kristi: So all the rest were on the east side?

Tensia: Yes. All the way as you came into 9th Street until you got to 15th Street, one station right after the other.

Kristi: Was there enough business to keep them operating?

Tensia: Oh yes, because there was such a long stretch between San Diego and Oceanside. And the Five Points I mentioned where UCSD Library is, there was a gas station there, but there were five roads that met there, so as people came by and saw lines waiting, they just kept going hoping to make it to Del Mar. Solana Beach had a Standard on the west side and then there wasn't anymore until Cardiff and Encinitas. But they were very far and few between. Del Mar was the gasoline alley.

Kristi: Do you remember any bad accidents?

Tensia: Here on the 101 there weren't as many bad accidents as there was in Leucadia. Leucadia was known as Slaughter Alley. They had the eucalyptus trees in the middle of the road and there were a lot of bad, bad accidents there. But here in Del Mar maybe one or two but half the time they were creeping through the town, they weren't going fast enough to get into a bad

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

accident.

Kristi: Do you know what the speed limit through town was?

Tensia: I believe it was 45 and then I think it became highway speed to 55. But it very seldom could be used at that. Once you left Del Mar, past the hotel, you could go at a little faster pace. Every town was the same 35 or 45.

Kristi: What about highway patrol officers?

Tensia: The Highway Patrol worked out of Oceanside. My husband knew them quite well. He learned to drive before I did and he was born and raised in Carlsbad. Of course he drove to Oceanside High School and he used to kind of avoid Highway 101 once they started driving because the policemen at Oceanside were very strict on the Highway. They covered from Oceanside to Sorrento Valley Road. Do you know where the Del Mar Bridge is on the south end? They would make their turn there and head back north again.

Kristi: Did you have a county sheriff?

Tensia: The county sheriff worked differently. They weren't on the road. The county sheriffs were just called when there was something else that went wrong. The Highway Patrol totally controlled Highway 101 because it was a Highway and it come under their jurisdiction.

Kristi: Did you ever get a ticket?

Tensia: Not on Highway 101. I didn't get a ticket until my 50th birthday and it was not on Highway 101! It was on Jimmy Durante Boulevard. I was driving a van and I had my hair cut even shorter than now and it was at the time when the officers had it in for the surfers and he stopped me. He was surprised I was a girl but then at that time he felt he had to give me a ticket. He gave me a ticket and I took it to court because he put there that I was a man when he checked male/female. So I explained to the judge what I thought was the reason he stopped me because I wasn't speeding or anything else. So he threw it out.

Kristi: What is your husband's name?

Tensia: Jenary Trejo.

Kristi: How did you meet him?

Tensia: After the war he came to live with his sister. I had known him through high school. He was a very good football player for Oceanside High School and every time they came to play us they just trounced us!

Kristi: When did you buy this house that you live in now?

Tensia: We bought the property in 1952 but right after they put a moratorium because we had no sewer on this street, only septic tanks. So they kept us without being able to build until 1957.

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

One of our neighbors was the first mayor, Tom Douglas, and he got all the homeowners together and six of us paid for all of the sewer and contracted the few who had not, that when they built, they had to reimburse us and we finally got our money back. So then in 1958 and we moved here in 1959.

Kristi: How did the new Highway impact Del Mar?

Tensia: Well, it was great. It took a lot of the through traffic away. So now the people coming to Del Mar were either going through here because they planned to stop, the races or the fair, the restaurants, it was just coming and visiting Del Mar. It was a very popular tourist town.

Kristi: It didn't have a negative impact?

Tensia: No. The one good part as fast as I-5 opened these gas station disappeared which was fine. It became a better little town. We still continue, even to this day, the traffic. One reason for it is the Torrey Pines Mesa has developed into so many workplaces and people on the coastline stay on the coast route to go there. So we have the morning and evening traffic and to us who have lived here all of our lives, it's no big deal.

Kristi: What was a favorite trip or destination?

Tensia: We spent a lot of time going to San Diego to the movies, or shopping, or went to Lane Field for the baseball games. There were times we would take the Greyhound and times we would take the train, unless somebody who was going was old enough to drive, we would go with that person.

Kristi: Did Del Mar have a train station?

Tensia: Yes, Del Mar had a train station. For two years Highway 101 was what is now Coast Boulevard and 15th Street while they were building the bridge just north of the center of town. That was known as the 101 and then when they opened the new road, they moved all of the signs and everything.

Kristi: What year was that?

Tensia: 1927. A few years ago John Daley brought five 101 Historical signs to me seeing if the city would allow them to be placed on Camino Del Mar. I went to the city and I asked permission to put them in. Of course the first thing they said, "how are you going to pay for them?" I said, "They've been paid. I had donations for all six signs." So then they asked me, "Where do you want to put them?" So I told them, "One at the north entrance, one at the South entrance. I want one in front of St. James." Because there was an original one and I happen to have both pictures, the old and the new. "One on the bridge and the other one I want in front of the Power-house." Well, that really threw them for a loop. "Why would it be at the Power-house?" I said, "Because officially for two years that was Highway 101." Once the new road was completed they moved it, but that officially was once the road. They didn't believe me, they actually looked it up to make sure and then they said, "Oh, you were right." I said, "Why wouldn't you believe me!" But anyway, we did put up those beautiful signs. They thought they

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

were beautiful, too.

Kristi: During the racing season did the traffic get heavy?

Tensia: It did back then and it still does. People still prefer to come this route, 101 and Camino Del Mar, than the I-5. I-5 not only has the racing traffic, it also has the normal highway traffic. So during the races they do come through here. Most of the time when they leave they head for the freeway because it's easier .

Kristi: Do you remember the first stop sign?

Tensia: There was one. It was the first lights that were installed at Solana Beach. I used to work for Bank of America, which was on the north end of the Solana Plaza, and we had one lady, Catalina Gonzales, she owned El Jacal, a little Mexican restaurant in Eden Gardens. Well, when Catalina got on the road everybody got off! The lights were in place and the lights went on one morning and we knew roughly what time she would head for the bank with her deposit. We were all waiting. The lumberyard was far back enough that you could see cars coming and somebody said, "Oh my god, here comes Catalina!" Catalina came to the lights. She just went through as if nothing had ever changed! I always remember that because she could have gotten killed. But I think everyone was always very much aware of her driving.

Kristi: What year was that, do you think?

Tensia: This must have been 1947 or 1948, somewhere in there.

Kristi: Did the Bank of America sit right on the 101?

Tensia: Yes. It sat right on the 101 and sometimes we would get some minor accidents there. We never had a serious accident because there was a stop sign. One time there were two men in a convertible and they got stopped at the stop sign. An officer had followed them. When they stopped at the stop sign the passenger took off and ran and he was naked! The Bank with all the big windows let you see what was going on! "Hey, this guy is naked!" And he ran towards the beach. What happened, we don't know. The officer had the driver pulled over. I guess the officer had seen the naked guy and this was the reason for the infraction.

Kristi: This was while you were still working?

Tensia: Yes, this was while I was working. I was a teller and I was just looking out the window.

Kristi: How long did you work at the bank?

Tensia: I worked 1945 to 1947 and then I got married. Then I went back and I went back as a trainer. After the war there was a lot of transition that went on and they would get a new teller or a new bookkeeper and I would go in and work as many days until I got them started. I never worked on Tuesdays and that turned out great because there was a bank robbery there at the bank. Two men lined up all the tellers and customers with shotguns. They took off on Highway 101.

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

Kristi: What year was that?

Tensia: I think that was 1949.

Kristi: Did the naked guy happen in the 40's too?

Tensia: Yes.

Kristi: Well, I've heard lots of stories but no naked men stories, so that's a first! Did the weather ever impact the 101?

Tensia: Only when it rained very hard. I tell people today that I think when we had the worst rain, the worst floods were not the years that recorded a high volume of rain, it was the years that the rain came all at one time. Highway 101, of course, as you got down along the beach section, past the first bridge, that would sometimes be impassable because the water would be so high. But other than that, you just drove slowly because it really rained. Cardiff section of 101 sometimes had to be closed.

Kristi: Did the railroad intersect the 101?

Tensia: Up until 1927. In 1927 the new bridge was finished.

Kristi: You mentioned the stoplight in Solana Beach, but what about in Del Mar?

Tensia: Some time at 15th Street.

Kristi: You mentioned there was as many as nine gas stations?

Tensia: Eleven.

Kristi: Del Mar isn't very big.

Tensia: All but one on the east side of the road. Sometimes people would say there were 12 and I might be missing one somewhere, but I count 11.

Kristi: Do you remember the names of the gas stations owners?

Tensia: Well at one time I knew them all, but I can't remember. Probably the minute you leave they'll all come to mind! Bill Gravel owned the Richfield, Fred Grasky, Standard Oil and a Mobile and Union. Others were independent stations.

Kristi: Taking a trip north to Oceanside, what can you remember?

Tensia: Starting from Solana Beach, the little plaza in Solana Beach. Leaving Solana Beach on the ocean side was Seaside Village; it was a motel. Then the next thing we saw was the Self Realization Temple in Encinitas. In fact, when we were going to school one day the bus driver

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

was driving north and he said, “Everybody look and see the temple.” The temple was down on the beach. They had a big slide and it just slid. It never flipped or anything, it just slid right down to the beach. Before that, Cardiff had several restaurants. The best known was “George’s.” There was a little pier with a restaurant, just south of San Elijo, opening to the ocean.

Kristi: What year would that have been?

Tensia: In the 30s and the 40s. One year big waves came and that was the end of the restaurant. George rebuilt so to avoid damage from the rain just like the restaurants do today. Like I said, then there was the temple, the golden temple. Then during the holidays, was the Cozens had a big Christmas tree just across the La Paloma Theater. Lights were put out on it. In fact, my oldest brother did the lighting. He worked for Mr. Tanner and he was the one that wired it for the Christmas lights. Then of course the La Paloma Theater, where we spent so many hours of our lives. Then moving up to Carlsbad. We didn’t pay attention to anything but the hen and then before you know the eggs hatched to four little chicks and then it went to four roosters. The roosters disappeared. Not too long ago we went to the Magee House, the historical house in Carlsbad, and this lady that went to school with my husband, she said, “Do you want to see where one of the roosters is?” “You’ve got the rooster?” She had one in the closet of the Magee house. The rest they don’t know what happened to the chicks or the hens. The big hen was probably broken up. I think it was made of cement, it was huge. It was nesting. To us she was alive when we were kids. You could tell the cars that had children because they went at a creeping pace so the kids could see the chickens. Then at Oceanside we would go to the pier and of course that was very popular. On the Fourth of July, many people, even with the fair here, many people went to Oceanside to the pier because their fireworks were outstanding.

Kristi: Did Del Mar ever have a parade?

Tensia: Not when it was 101.

Kristi: Well, I think that wraps it up. Do you have anything you would like to add?

Tensia: Yes, Highway 101 and El Camino Real. I was busy raising my sons when the California Legislature passed a bill naming the Highway 101 and El Camino Real as the same road and it is not. There are some sections that it does meet and merge and then there are some sections that it does not. Here in our specific place from UCSD from San Clemente they were totally separate. El Camino Real cut right through Camp Pendleton, inland, Junipero Serra wanted fresh water for his crew and for his animals. So staying inland they would get fresh water from places like the San Dieguito River.

Kristi: What are the boundaries of Del Mar?

Tensia: The boundary to the north is Villa De La Valle or when we grew up it was Border Drive. To the south it ends at the light just before Sorrento Valley Road, before the bridge. Two miles by two miles, as they say.

Kristi: What is the population?

Interview with Tensia Trejo, March 19, 2005

Tensia: We are just short of 5,000.