

HIST 6384: Oral History
Fall 2010

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

A Taste of Houston

A Part of the Culinary Crossroads Project
UH Center for Public History

Interviewee: Yolanda Black Navarro

Interview Date: November 1, 2010

Place: Flores Neighborhood Library

Interviewer: Mikaela Selley

Transcriber: Mikaela Selley

Keywords: Villa Arcos Restaurant, Yolanda Black Navarro, Velia Arcos Rodriguez Duran, Navigation Boulevard, Second Ward, East End, Food Industry in Houston, Women Chefs, Food, Velia's Café , Marie's Cafe

Abstract:

Yolanda Black Navarro was born in Houston, TX in 1947. The eldest of six children Ms. Navarro grew up in Second Ward located in Houston's East End. She attended Our Lady of Guadalupe School and Incarnate Word Academy. In 1972 she received a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Houston. Juggling community activism, politics and her own family (one son, Christian C. Navarro) Ms. Navarro initially played an administrative role at Villa Arcos Restaurant. Her mother, Velia Arcos Rodriguez Duran, a single parent, worked in restaurants and bakeries for much of Ms. Navarro's childhood before opening Villa Arcos Restaurant in 1977. From its start Ms. Navarro assisted her mother with financial and administrative duties for the restaurant. Velia passed away in 1990 and Ms. Navarro officially took over the restaurant in 1997. Since then she has worked full-time as owner, manager and cashier at the restaurant. The topics raised in the interview include the opening of Villa Arcos Restaurant, the history the Second Ward,

women in the food industry, Latinas in the restaurant business, and Ms. Navarro's personal awards and activism in the community.

She was interviewed on November 1, 2010 at Flores Neighborhood Library, 110 North Milby, Houston TX 77003. The interview was conducted by Mikaela Selley on behalf of the Oral History of Houston Project, Center for Public History, University of Houston. The interview is available at M.D. Anderson Library on the main campus of the university.

