

Frederico Juanzallez
56 years old
Hadley, MA
July 2, 2014

(Freddy works for David Mokrezki, the youngest tobacco farmer that we interviewed. He has known David most of his life as he also worked on David's father's farm. David is present for much of the interview and adds to it occasionally)

We want to talk with everyone, not just the boss or the kids.

Shall we start?

What is your name?

F: Frederico.

Thanks for your time...How old are you?

F: my age?

How old?

F: Maybe 56?

Same as him?

F: Him? 58? (doesn't seem sure of answer...says 58—but not clear if he means the year or his age—Darcy seems to think he is referring to the year).

I speak very little Spanish...

Do you speak a little English too

F: No I don't know a lot—I understand more than I speak.

It's perfect that you just speak Spanish, because in the future if I have to transcribe this, not a problem.

So tell me... where are you from, Frederico?

(Muffled noise).

F: I have been here twenty years.

But why where you here and not somewhere else—another farm?

F: I worked at another farm for a week. I met this farmer here and he gave me work, so I stayed. I liked it. They give me the little house. There were five of us. One moved (or died?) one left. I have been here 3 years now in the little house. My friends went to Chicago, Georgia, and I ended up here alone.

Do you have family here?

F: No they are fin Mexico. I have a kid here— I have three kids—one in Pennsylvania. And the wife in Mexico. I have

F: I married in 80. 15th July. 33 years.

It's hard.

Tell me about a typical day here.

Have you done all the different things in tobacco—plant it, weed it, sucker it... ?

F: We do it all. Cut it, take it down. We do it all. I like the work.

Tell us about it. We don't know what your day is like.

F: It's nice. It's good here. I like this farm. I worked in (mushrooms? "los hongos" — not sure what he said here) (noise).

F: I worked for a while...California, Washington— apples. Yakima.

When you were young?

How old were you at your first farm—in California?

F: I worked in grapes. Immigration was always trying to get us. We'd have to hide from them. Then I came, I married an American in Pennsylvania. In California you work a lot for little money. Hard work, too hot.

I like it here better. They pay better. Here... bad in Florida too. Georgia. Ooof.

Do you like the winters here?

F: I like it —I like the cold.

What do you do when it's cold?

Laughing.

F: I go to see my family in Mexico.

Sometimes 4 or 5 months. (Laughing.) Lots of beer. A lot of (bar hopping?) People get married—beer is cheap there—they give it away.

Yeah but he pays her a lot. (?) He's a very generous guy...

F: It's good here. (can't understand).

How is the boss?

F: She's [the boss —referring to boss as a 'she"—not clear) a good person.

He's a cabron. Laughing.

What about the other boss?

F: ... She gets mad a lot... (Chava?)

Noise... (around 9:30 lots of noise—can't understand or hear anything through 9:56

F: ... six hundred pounds.

That's how we got our starts, is doing the sheds.

Frederico—do you have a strong Latin community here?

F: I have friends... (can't hear)

Amherst...

Do you have parties with other friends?

F: I have parties with the boss here. We buy a case of beer...

You're off work right?

They got that for you—we're taking beer from you.

F: My favorite, eh? It's good. I can drink my 20 beers.

Only that?

F: A case...With Chava, more than two case.

So how is your life here different than California.

F: I like it better here. There you work a lot for little money. In California, they used to pay 6 pesos/ 6 dollars per hour—but this is years ago. I worked in a melon business—they paid well. I liked it. And the people above... (can't understand). ... Cotton. (noise)

Snakes?

F: A lot of snakes there? Weeds in the cotton. But there's a lot of poisonous things there in California? (noise).

San Diego.

In Vermont, we have no snakes. No poisonous insects. Nothing poisonous in Vermont. But in Mexico too.

Do you want to continue in tobacco?

F: Yes, while I can. While I can do it. I like to cut tobacco.

What part of this farm... (noise).

F: ... (noise) (can't understand)

What season is your favorite?

F: Favorite? Tobacco here. Peppers.

August probably. (noise).

F: I like all of them. I even like the snow. I like the cold.

F: ... beer?

I've got one for you. I've got another one for you.

Do you like to smoke?

(noise, chatter)

(David 's father walks into the building and we do some introductions.)

Wait a second..he's getting interviewed. This is my dad. (Chatter. Laughter. Introductions to dad).

F: When I was little, ... skinny. 15 years. 17 years. (Referring to his boss?)

He is like your son.

F: Yes. I like them a lot. I call him my son.

Does he have kids in Mexico?

F: I have two kids. Three. Two in Mexico. One in Pennsylvania. Born July 28, 1990. Another born 20 September, 1992. The other in May. In five years. Two died little. A little girl. And a little boy. The first ones.

And all live in Mexico or work here?

F: I have... there were 10 years. It's been five years. I'm missing... (can't understand). I'm talking to her, to see if I can fix it... (noise).

(muffled noise/talking).

But here it's okay. You have papers.

F: For the kids I have them. I'm talking about...Aurelia (?)
(noise) (talking)

F: Mississippi? Mexico City—four hours. From Leon... an hour and a half.

Other cities?

F: I've gone to immigration to Boston. New York. Have been there—not to work, but gone through. I know San Francisco—have a lot of family there. Lots of construction.

He has seen more of the country than most people who live here... Arizona, Oregon, Washington, TN, GA, FL, Utah

F: Georgia, Florida.

That's very cool. And you always worked on farms?

F: Always? Sometimes in But more in farms. Sometimes cutting apples. But usually farms. ... (can't understand) Factories... working making plastic bottles. I didn't like that. Good work in Springfield. Cleaning offices. I didn't like it. (can't understand).... Horses... (noise)

F: (Chatter... speaking about music... guitars...)

We play music, we write, we do this stuff.
And you talk with people... (laughter).

He is like a dad to you.

(noise, muffled...noise)
(laughter)

F: This is good to play (or “He’s good to play.”)

I’m going to turn this off. Thanks very much.

F: Oh it’s nothing. I hope it goes well. I don’t like factories. I like animals, I like the fields.

But you can only work here, right? You can’t go to town, go to movies. Because of immigration.

F: Wyoming... a lot of...(can’t understand).