

Interviewee: Alex Azan Chaviano
Interviewer: Miguel Gonzalez-Pando
Date: March 1997
FIU Number: 522

AAC= Alex Azan Chaviano

MGP= Miguel Gonzalez-Pando

[51:03]

MGP= The first time you heard anything about the possibility of you being sent to the United States.

AAC= ok so you are asking me to take a little while, the time machine back to early [19]60s. We were twelve, thirteen years old. It was a time of a great deal of excitement when we heard about the possibilities of the trip. When you are that young, everything that looks new is exciting, you know? And the thinking was...

MGP= Hablame mas en primera persona

AAC =The thinking that I had, the thinking that I had let me personalize it well... was that the trip was going to take place with my parents and my family. I was not going to school. It was an opportunity to come. And all my friends, all my friends, all of them, with a few, maybe two or three exceptions out of a class of [19]42 - I went to the Maristas of Santa Clara- were coming or had already left. Two of my greatest friends left September 13th, 1962, and some have come in come in the summer and some had come in [19]61. So it was a terrible... a lot of excitement. Good deal of excitement waiting for the opportunity to come. Then I will never forget I'm coming, walking with a friend of mine, one afternoon about 5:00 PM about a block away from home, September 28th, 1962, my mother is at the corner. I looked at her, you know, and when she looked at me. I knew, I knew that my telegram had come in, because it was a different look. I cannot describe it to you what kind of look it was, but the look, the way she did it maybe because she held it very long. Maybe because she didn't blink. Maybe it's because like, for example, sometimes she would see me coming down the block. She look at me and keep doing, but she kept looking at me and I knew, in my heart, that my telegram was in. Sure enough, my telegram was in. And a lot of excitement, then had to say goodbye to all my friends, we were going to meet later on; or better yet, I was going to come back in six months when that thing was over. You know, when Fidel was out, we were coming back. So it was like a trip. I had five days to come to take the plane. My departure was on October 4th.

MGP= Before the departure, let's go back to Santa Clara. What did your parents tell you?

AAC =Before that, they were telling me, you know, we're going to try to send you. You're going to have to go before we do because we don't have permission to leave. Your brothers are older than you are, and they're already in military age. We have to set things straight. We

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have to see what we do with the house so that they can keep the house. Then. we will join you as soon as we can, will join you. I expected them to join me as soon as they could and I have no doubt that they were going to do whatever they needed to do to come and join me. So they took pains to explain to me you are going to the United States for an opportunity. We're not sending you because we don't love you anymore, quite the opposite, we want you to have an opportunity. We don't want you to waste here. This is going to be a waste land, and as long as this government is in power, you're not going to have an opportunity to do anything with your life. We want to give you the opportunity we want to help you have the opportunity to continue your education. I will join you as fast as we can. I had a childhood, dreamt childhood, with a lot of family, and going to the beach with the family and going to having cookouts at the beach, and then going to the farm where my mother is from and doing a cookout at the farm. All that kind of stuff. It was a wonderful, a lot of love, a lot of love. I never doubted that they were telling me the truth. I felt their love. There was not a problem for me in believing, I knew why I was coming. I was very, very knowledgeable of the reasons willing to come.

MGP= So you get to XX [inaudible 56:33] this was Santa Clara.

AAC =We had to go on October 4th, my trip. So when we get to the airport, you have to present like a million papers to get out. We have forgotten to take me out of the rationing card to the rationing list, the food rationing list. So at the airport they told me, if he doesn't get off. His name off the rationing list, he cannot leave. But the guy, it was run by the military and the guy said if you come tomorrow. If you make the trip and you do this today, and you come tomorrow morning, and there is a place for him, I will let him go. We took off to Santa Clara again and my father spent, my father and my mother, spent the whole day going to the community of the defense going to displace is going to... Finally, everything was done. We set back to Havana the following morning again early in the 11:00 o'clock at night. and I remember the last time that I saw Santa Clara, the park. I don't know if you ever been there, but it has a huge colonial park and I remember driving by and leaving so. And then we came in the morning. The guy, he let me in and there was a place. Something really, really interesting happened, that I will never forget in my life. I had a lot of papers to give, and my father had practiced with me. If I ask you for this thing, which one is it? Now give me this. You know whatever you and I had 'em all with me. So if you recall the Havana airport Jose Marti, had a crystal window, a crystal pain dividing the people leaving and their families on the other side. The nickname for that was "La pecera". Fish bowl. I am looking at the glass to see if I could see my father, my mother, where on the other side. The person in front of me to have their business then. And when I didn't move the Sergeant hollered, and when he hollered, it kind of shook me up and then he started asking me the papers and I wasn't able to find the ones he wanted. One my father did was when he saw me in trouble. He knocked on the door on that because you could see me, they let him in. He took all the papers all the

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way from my hand without making eye contact. He gave them one by one, then he turned around and walked out without making eye contact, and got to the other side. Let me tell you, by the time my father got to my uncles house in the middle section of Havana. He was delirious in fever. He spent three days, three days delirious, with a fever that almost killed them. An emotional fever. So that effort that he made, to me, forever will symbolize the sacrifice of letting the youngest one, go.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by Ximena Valdivia, July 6, 2020.