**Interviews with Residents of El Paso del Norte**

**Conducted by Kate Darby in El Paso, 2007-2009**

**Interviewer:** Yeah? And what did you think about the smoke from ASARCO? Did you notice it?

**Respondent 1:** Oh yeah. It used to bad way around the 50s and the 60s. It used to be bad. You know sometimes it would just come out a little bit of smoke, but sometimes [unaudible] a lot of white clouds.

**Respondent 2:** Juarez. . . ’95 I went back [to El Paso]. . . .The problem or whatever you can call it is that we used to live in the Southeast from Juarez and there were like the same as this, actually, my neighbors here right now were my neighbors living in Juarez. . . .The problem that I had is that my mom used to volunteer in Anapra and she used to do a lot of work there, so that’s the problem that we had because my mom used to come. . . so it was easier for us to be in this school here in Anapra. So I went to elementary and I went to the secondary school in Anapra – all of us. And we used to do a lot of work here with my mom and I remember it was in the municipal swimming team. And then my mom work hard to get Olympic sized pool here in Anapra. So we used to have a life here even though we used to live in the other side of town. We used to take 2 buses and walk a lot, a lot, a lot. We walk a lot from the house to take one bus and another bus in downtown, then from where we stopped we used to walk a lot, like, I think 6 miles, far away. And very close to ASARCO. My elementary school and my secondary school, it was just right across from ASARCO. And the pool was right across from ASARCO. And I used to spend the whole summer in the pool. So I kind of grew up very close to ASARCO.

**Interviewer:** What did you think?

**Respondent 2:** When I was growing up I used to have a lot of, in my eyes, a lot of infections, a lot of. . .it was hard to breathe. The most important was that I used to hear a lot of complaints from the people. And then I remember the school used to shake because they used to dynamite ASARCO. So we were like in an emergency state. And I remember the people there because we used to have a lot of friends there and we used to go to the houses like they were our houses because my mom knew a lot of people. And I remember they were complaining and it’s in my mind all the time – they were complaining that they used to put their clothes to dry and their clothes get all dirty. I remember everybody, all the time, complaining about the shocks and the smelling. Ooh. It was like you had something in your mouth – like I always say metal, but my mom used to say the metal doesn’t taste like anything. Like rust or something. All the time. Then I grew up. But I remember my brother who was very little, he used to work for a very prominent lawyer and he remembers that there was agreements between people in Juarez that they were dying and they were very sick, but they had to be secret – the agreements. But he remembers and he used to talk to us – they were secret, but he used to talk to us.

**Respondent 3:** I grew up in El Paso, well, went to high school in El Paso for two of my four years of high school and remember the plume going over and everything, but never really thought much about it other than the sulfur taste in your mouth that you’d get.

**Respondent 3:** Yeah, because you could actually taste the sulfur and we know that if you were tasting it, you’d be spitting it up at night. It can’t be healthy. Kids would, a lot of kids that I knew, kids younger than me, when they’d be playing outside, when it’d get that bad, their parents would tell them to go inside. . . .They knew that it was not safe. Even though they can’t prove it and they had no data. If you could taste something that strong, sulfur, you know that that can’t be good for you. And of course, if there’s sulfur in the air, then what else is there?

I went to El Paso High and yeah, you could see the plume going all over the city and hitting on a different place usually southeast, somewhere southeast usually, although a lot of times it went that way but it could go all the way over the mountain and land somewhere, even in northeast El Paso and land in a different place. . . . It was really wild. Then at night, they’d really crank it up. In the dark, you could really see the plume. If there was moonlight or just the city lights and say, “look at that sucker.” At like midnight, you know, they really cranked the thing up. I had a friend Paul [xxx] announced the Sun Bowl games, not Sun Bowl but football games and he said that he had the direct line to ASARCO, because it’s right there, ASARCO, to call them up and say “Hey, we’re at a football game, stop for 3 hours” And they’d stop for 3 hours until all the tourists went home and then they’d crank it back up. That was a funny story. . . .

My house, where I live on the other side of the mountain, has 47 ppm arsenic. So it’s contaminated. But where am I going to go live? The only thing that I can do that’s different is we do a lot of wet wiping instead of dusting, and we have hardwood floors. So they’re a big difference. We don’t sweep, we use a Swiffer mop. We just do things a little bit different. But there’s a lot of people who are exposed even today. See in 1970 the City of El Paso sued ASARCO and that lawsuit lasted, I think for 8 years. One of the outcomes is that Smeltertown was removed from El Paso, but what they don’t talk about is what the lead – they were looking at lead, arsenic, cadmium and zinc. And they found all of those materials – some on city property, some on houses on mission hills and sunset heights. And they levels that they found are very, very big. But you know what? After the tests were done, nobody told the homeowners “You’re contaminated, clean your house this way.” The health department [. . .] never told people what was in their homes. But it all became part of the public record. And kids that lived outside of the Smeltertown were also showing high levels of lead. Some 40, some 30, some 16, you know back then I think the standard was what 20 or 40, but now it’s less and less. So I looked at that, I had my kids tested. The youngest one tested higher than the one who was older. They have an age difference of 2 years, but I think. The one that has the higher lead content was born in 92 and you know, I don’t know what kinds of health effects he’s going to have. But I know that we cool our house using evaporative air and when that smoke would come over, we would smell it inside the house.

**Respondent 4:** When we moved to our house at [xx] Los Angeles St., that was actually next to the grocery store, so it was down in the valley where the smoke was, and I remember everything really. Because when I was a young boy, I’d exercise a lot. I liked to play sports and there were times when we had to stop playing sports in our neighborhood and also at school. I participated in track and field and we would curtail our activities because the plume would be coming down on the field.