

Ricardo Eugenio Diaz Valenzuela Interview

**Where were you born?**

Santiago, Chile.

**In what year?**

September 3, 1940.

**What name were you born with?**

Ricardo Eugenio Diaz. The last name, Diaz, is my father. The other, my mother.

**And when you came to the United States, you just went Diaz?**

Only Ricardo E. Diaz. So when I put my middle initial name, E. for Eugenio. So it's Ricardo E. Diaz.

**How old were you when you left Chile?**

Oh, thirty-nine.

**What was your occupation or job in Chile?**

For the last year few years I was secretary of a city.

**What other types of work did you do there?**

Working for the state, companies, things like that because I worked for the administrative houses.

**So you helped build them?**

No, I work in the city. I did paperwork for the houses of many people.

**What were your reasons for leaving Chile?**

Because there I was a millionaire, and I wanted to spend my money.

[laughter]

Because of the economic situation. Very bad economic situation for there after the coup, it went from worse to horrible.

**Who was the President at that time?**

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It was dictatorship of Pinochet.

**After he got into office, the economic situation worsened?**

Very bad for the state workers.

**Did you have your pay go down, your hours cut, stuff like that?**

I worked the same, 40 hours a week, but the money was not good. Very little money.

**And that changed when he got into office, or was it always bad?**

When he take the position, everything bad.

**Were you married at that time?**

I was married in 1966. I had my three kids.

**Were they all born in Chile?**

Yes

**Did your wife have a job then to?**

She work at home.

**What country did you travel to America from, and in what year?**

From Chile to here I went.

**I thought you said that you went to Florida or Texas . . . ?**

They start in the airplane to Florida, and then to Dallas, and Dallas to Tucson.

**So when you checked-in in Florida, did you have to show them your green card or work permit?**

I don't have any green card. When I come in I bring my ID from Chile. But when I came over here into the Florida, the immigration, they call me there for my name and everything and they give a green card to me and my family.

**So the immigration office selected you? You put your name in a system and then they picked you? Did they pick lots of people, or did they just pick you?**

I care about no one.

[laughter]

**So you got your family and everyone was okay?**

Right away in one check.

**And this happened when you landed in Tucson or when you landed in Florida?**

When I land in Tucson I received a green card. They gave me right away. They had to take pictures, a long examination and everything.

**Where was that?**

In Miami. They take me all this. When I come to Tucson until we later come to Miami.

**So you flew into Florida, then they stopped you, processed you, and took photos, and all that stuff. Now how did you get your paperwork from Chile? Because you worked for the government, did they give you a license to come over?**

No, I put application in over there, then it goes straight to United States for coming to work over here.

**So you put in an application for citizenship?**

No, for work, for residence.

**And it was you, your wife, the three kids, the five of you?**

Mhmmm.

**And this was what year?**

Seventy-nine. I put application in '78. . . I don't remember.

**Well it sounds like you didn't have to wait very long.**

I wait about six months.

**Did you have to leave any pets behind? Number seven says "When you left, were you forced . . ." and you didn't have to leave anyone in your immediate family.**

Oh, my father, my mother, my father and his work.

**Are they still there?**

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There are in cemetery. They pass away, but I still have my brother and sisters and nephews.

**Is all your family still over there or did anybody come with you?**

Alone with my wife.

**How many brothers and sisters do you have?**

I have two sisters and one brother. My brother is the older one with the other two sisters.

**Were you the baby?**

No, no, no. I was the baby for fourteen years. After fourteen years, my mom, she got another baby. It was many months and I was the baby for fourteen years.

**Once you got here, how did you get around? Did you buy a car, did you have family?**

My brother-in-law, he made an arrangement from traveling to Chile to here.

**Did you find that most people were helpful? I know you said in one place, they spoke Spanish, right?**

At the airport, some people would be panicking because they have a lot of trouble, huge lines and \_\_\_ was a little more difficult because only American people. So all people panic.

**Why did you choose the United States?**

Because here where living my brother-in-law. I asked him to bring me over her. I go to here to you blah, blah, blah, blah.

**Did he say that he could find you jobs?**

Yeah.

**The same thing is then true for why you ended up in Arizona. Your brother-in-law arranged everything. Did your wife want to come?**

She was a little yes, a little not – in between.

**How did you learn to speak English?**

I don't know. I learned a little bit in the SER. The organization teach English for six months a year and they pay for it. I think now they teach it, but they don't pay. Before

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they pay \$100 a month. That's good. Or a week I don't remember. It was good. I remember not much. We had one teacher all the time he was sick, sick, sick, sick. So I learn a little bit. But the I learn over hear from my coworkers, my bosses.

### **When did you start at the historical society?**

1990. I got over here, I started with SER, later I worked for Estes Company, and Mr Ronald Reagan President, and they lay off many labors; I don't know for what reason. I go out. I start looking for any kind of job, then I found one cleaning company, then I was pedos. Later after one year in a house, almost one year working over here, another state worker, he left. They don't come to me because they don't want pick evenings or nothing cause they had another government, but the government have a six-month probation. Everybody love me. Very, very nice Raymond.

### **What is your life like now that you live in the United States?**

It's very hard for the money. Everything is so expensive. So many . . . But I think it is much better than over there because there's a little more comfortable for the money and work. So I now I'm in it for the money because my wife doesn't have the benefits. If I go out, I have to the medical insurance for eight years. It's about \$400. I don't have \$400.

### **What is your favorite memory of Chile?**

My country. Everything is nice over there. The \_\_\_, White Mountain, Santiago is beautiful city, the South of Chile is beautiful. Everything is nice and beautiful. I miss it. Living over here, I miss it, the winter over there is so cold. You know today the different the \_\_\_/. You know when, when it's 0 or below, the hotter day is about 27 or 28. The hotter. The middle is about 18, 19 are very beautiful. The 0 is very cold. A couple day ago, I come from my sisters house, where the maximum was 6 degrees. Very cold. \_\_\_. I go to visit three or four times. It's a little difficult because it's very expensive to get there. The ticket is about \$1,300.

### **Is the dollar worth more down there?**

The money is much better. The dollar than the peso. About 530 peso for one dollar. You got to get a lot of dollars. They go very fast in some places.

### **So you miss the cold weather?**

The cold weather in Chile. Over here, it's so hot!

### **Did it snow in Santiago?**

It snow sometime, but the mountain almost all the time. You can see the mountain wind and snow on the top all the time. Sometime when it hot, it disappear a little. From Santiago if you look the east, it's snowing sometime, but if your look a little to the North,

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it's higher and you can see the wind. But the sad thing now is that you don't see much on the mountain from the pollution. But you see the mountain; beautiful. But if you see the mountain when it rain, it turn all the air beautiful, so close. It green and flowery on the mountain – you see everything. But not in Santiago there are 56 million people.

### **How many were there when you were living there?**

About three. Two and half or three. So many cars, so many people, so many factories. The pollution is everywhere.

### **Do you want to stay in the US?**

Oh yes. I would like to be in the United States because I want to come back to Chile, but we have five grandchildren and they are very, very young right now. The oldest is eight or nine. Another is three. One granddaughter is three. And the little at one year three months. So we just have to stay here and miss it a lot.

### **Do your three kids live in Tucson?**

They live in over here Tucson. My daughter, their mother. . . they live here in someplace close to their grandmother. My son, he live over there, far away in Camino Verde. You know the new casino of the Sun. One or two more miles to the north and west. It's way far out there between in Valencia and Ajo. It's reasonable. To my wife, sometimes he say "Ah! It's so hot here. I want to go back to Chile!". And I tell him "You are not going to miss it!".

### **You were the first family to get a Habitat for Humanity House built. Did you and your family work alongside the people, or was it here when you got here?**

No! It was so difficult. I \_\_\_ to the family for the habitat and the habitat was going to be built by volunteer people. They take for 8 months. So many. "What are we doing?" "We came because I work with her". Nobody show up. Nobody show up. It was very, very hard time.

### **Did you have to get the people to help?**

No, the churches. One woman in the mass, we need her for Habitat for Humanity. No money. When it started so many people, and they know nothing. We needed carpenters, we needed a teacher. We need everybody. A few people, they know something. Other people, they know nothing. So it was so difficult. But finally, after 8 months, they give me my house.

### **Where did you live in the meantime?**

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No, I lived in the same place in very small trailers. In the same lot, we lived in the trailer, because we had to take care of the land for the house to make sure that none of it gets stolen.

### **Did the house work when you got in?**

Yeah, I did the electricity with my brother through-out the house. One friend of ours made the plumbing, another for walls. So he need more time so he can try different plan. so one made the walls, another made the plumbing, he made electricity.

So finally they give me the house on March 2 or 22. It's something like that.

### **Do you and your wife live in this house right now?**

Of course, we live in it right now because we take care of the kids. For eight years, take care of one, then take care of another, then another, then the other.

### **What year did you move in?**

1992. It was 1992.

### **Are you going to keep it and retire here?**

Oh yes. I will live over here. Now I don't have to pay no money to buy another house.