

Argonaut High School  
Oral History Interview  
Biographical Sketch

Subjects full name: RAYMOND MANUEL VISCARRA

Address: 112 BROADWAY  
JACKSON CA 95642

Telephone: Home: 223-1825 Work: —

Date of birth: 23 JAN 30 Place of birth: SACRAMENTO CA

Date of marriage: 14 JAN 55 Place of marriage: TACOMA WA

Name of spouse: PATRICIA

date of birth: 6 JULY 32 Place of birth: ROCKLAND OH

Subject occupation: Retired

Spouse occupation: Retired

Name of mother: NORMA VISCARRA

Date of birth: 20 feb 1913 Place of birth: JACKSON

Occupation: House wife

Name of father: MANUEL VISCARRA

Date of birth: 28 MAR 1898 Place of birth: Los Mochis Sinaloa Mex

Occupation: MINER KENNEDY & ARGONAUT

Subject's children and dates of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Leslye Marie 10 Sept 1963

Subject's brothers and sisters and dates of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Subject's primary and secondary education: (Schools attended and dates) JACKSON Elementary 1936-1943

JACKSON UNION High 1943-1947

Subject's higher education: (Schools attended, graduation date, majors, degrees) College of Pacific 1947-1951

Subject's profession or occupations: (Job, dates, where) \_\_\_\_\_

United States Air Force 1951-1981

Military service: (Branch, rank, dates of service) \_\_\_\_\_

USAF Colonel 1951-1981

Civic and community activities: (Offices held, activities, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Aurora County Cancer Volunteer driver

Miscellaneous information: \_\_\_\_\_

American Legion Post #108 Ambulance  
Committee Vice Chairman.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Summary

Name of interviewee: Raymond Viscarra  
DOB: January 23, 1930  
Relationship to mines: Father's employee  
Name of Father: Manuel Viscarra  
DOB: March 25, 1889  
Died: April, 1971  
Worked in Kennedy from about 1930 until it closed.  
Job: Skip tender  
Worked in Argonaut after Kennedy closed until it closed.  
Job: Skip tender, caretaker

Raymond was initially contacted in February, 1997. On May 8, 1997 was the official interview. He was interviewed in his home, 112 Broadway, Jackson, CA, at 6:00 PM. The interview was recorded. Unfortunately, the recording did not turn out. Due to conflicting schedules, another interview was never able to take place. The following summary will be from memory.

### *Summary:*

Ray lived in Jackson while his father worked in the mines. He remembers going to the Kennedy and watching the daily life of the mines. He said that, "As a kid, it was all magic." It was mystifying how a man could disappear into the shafts and not come out until the end of his shift. Ray said that his father worked the graveyard shift most of the time because it paid a few cents more. Ray never actually worked in the mines, and never went into a shaft. He made it clear that he has never had the desire to work in a mine, but thinks that mining was the birth of Amador County. He talked about how the mining industry made way for other things to come in, such as grocery stores, hotels, gas stations etc. He said that everything moved in to support the mines, and the miners. Ray remembers that his father did not talk about his job very much. He doesn't remember the strikes very clearly. He said that mining was a competitive industry because there were always men waiting for jobs. If a miner got sick, he had to work or he would lose his job. If a miner got hurt, he would lose his job if he couldn't work. Ray's father was injured once, and Ray remembers that he went to work right a way. He should have focused on his injuries, but his job didn't allow him to. If a miner died, many men would be chasing after his position. The main thing that Ray stressed was that the life of Amador County was slow. It's development was slow paced, but that was normal. Making a trip to Sacramento would make the newspapers because one would go about every five months. He said that it was rare to visit neighboring towns often. His graduating class was 17 students, which he remembers was a big class for what the school was used to. Going to the movies was a treat for kids his age. On certain days of the week there would be something playing at the theater, and the kids would anxiously go to see their favorite hero win the battle. He said that kids didn't have very much free time. He would get up, go to

school, play sports, come home, do his homework, and the day was over. There wasn't much time to get bored, especially when he and his friends found extra time to go fishing. He said that his dad made enough money at the mine to support the family, but none was left over for extras. They got by, but without luxuries. When the mines closed, the businesses that were built off of them still thrived. The grocery stores, the mill, and small business kept the town alive. Ray believes that the mining time of Amador County is important in history because it made this county what it is today.

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Subjects full name: Raymond Manuel Viscarra

Address: 112 Broadway Jackson, CA 95642

Telephone: Home: 223-1825

Date of birth: January 23, 1930

Place of birth: Sacramento, CA

Date of marriage: January 14, 1955

Place of marriage: Tacoma, WA

Name of spouse: Patricia

Date of birth: July 6, 1932

Place of birth: Rockland, OH

Subject occupation: Retired

Spouse occupation: Retired

Name of mother: Norma Viscarra

Date of birth: February 20, 1913

Place of birth: Jackson, CA

Occupation: Housewife

Name of father: Manuel Viscarra

Date of birth: March 28, 1898

Place of birth: Los Mochis Sinaloa,

Mexico

Occupation: Miner - Kennedy & Argonaut

Subject's children and dates of birth: Leslye Marie                      September 10, 1963

Subject's primary and secondary education:

Jackson Elementary 1936-1943, Jackson Union High School 1943-1947

Subject's higher education: College of Pacific 1947-1951

Subject's profession or occupations: United States Air Force 1951-1981

Military service: USAF Colonel 1951-1981

Civic and community activities: Amador County Cancer Volunteer - driver

Miscellaneous information: American Legion Post #108 Ambulance Committee Vice  
Chairman

## Kennedy Mine Questionnaire

Did you know anyone that worked at the mine?

My father and others

What jobs did they have?

Skip tender

Do you know how many hours a day they worked? Hours a week? Days a week?  
10-12 per day, 48-55 hours per week, 5-6 days per week, no overtime but an extra \$0.05 for graveyard shift

What were the working conditions like in the Kennedy Mine, and other mines?  
Bare minimum, no medical, someone was always available to take your job

Would you be able to describe a typical working day at the Kennedy Mine?  
Walk to work, change clothes, put in your shift, eat on job, finish, shower, change, walk home

What was it like to live in a mining town or county?  
very slow pace

What was it like to travel from one town to the next?  
No traffic, no reason to go on like a vacation.

What kind of entertainment was there in Amador County?  
Radio, movies, parades.

What were the other main industries in the county at this time?  
None, later lumber.

Were there many different ethnic groups in Amador County?  
Italians, Serbians, French, Chinese

Where did they live and what jobs or services did they provide?  
Manual labor, small areas around town.

Do you remember the gambling halls and other businesses that were in Jackson before 1942, when the mines closed down?  
Yes.

Did you know anyone that worked in them? Did the mining industry help keep them in business?  
Yes.

Where did you buy your groceries?  
Safeway (Sammies now)

Where did you buy your gasoline?  
Standard (Petkovich Park now)

Where did you buy your clothes?  
Tam's.

Where the boarding houses operating when you were here and where were they located?  
Yes, all over town.

Did most men/families have a car?  
No.

What ranching and farming big in Amador County?  
No.

What can you remember about the labor strikes against the mine owners?  
Riots on Kennedy Grade.