

## Voices of Dixon: Lebeo Martinez

From the book  
**Voices of Dixon:**  
**Oral Histories from the Embudo Valley**  
Interviews and Editing by Harvey Frauenglass  
(ISBN: 978-1-62050-226-6)  
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Publisher: David Rigsby, P.O. Box 44, Embudo, NM 87531

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### **Lebeo Martinez**

(b. 1930)

Retired Owner of Lebeo's General Store  
Elder of Embudo Presbyterian Church  
Community Leader  
Interviewed January 3, 2003

#### Growing Up In Dixon

I'll be turning 73 in April, God willing, and I've lived in Dixon all my life. I was born in Dixon, I went away to school for a few years, came back, was able to make a living here and raise a family, and now I'm retired and living here in Dixon. I don't think I'll be leaving until I'm carried up to that place behind the store (the Presbyterian Cemetery).

My wife and I live in the house that used to be my parents' house. I was born across the lane in what used to be my grandma's house, my mother's mother. That's the house where Linda Griffith lives now. But really I'm almost next door to the house I was born in. Of course, there's a lot of difference in Dixon today compared to what it was seventy years ago, just like the rest of the world. But Dixon to

me has always been a good community and I am fortunate that I have been able to live most of my life here.

My mom and dad were both from Dixon. They were neighbors. My dad was José Paz Martinez and my mom was Solidea Duran. My mom came from a big family—she had four brothers and three sisters. My dad's family was smaller—he only had two sisters. One died as a teenager. The other married and raised a family, the José Ignacio Sanchez family here in town. My parents married in 1911. For some reason I wasn't born until 1930 and I am the oldest in the family. I have a younger brother and a younger sister. In the meantime my mom and dad raised a couple of foster children, two boys. Here's how that happened. My dad was working on the railroad up near Durango. The wife of a good friend of his died. The man asked my dad if he would help him raise the boys, who were then about 9 and 7 years old. So my dad brought them home and he and mother adopted them.

#### Changing Schools, Changing Churches

Of course at that time the whole town was pretty much Catholic, and Hispanic. And my mom and dad, like everyone else, had their own pew in the church, a pew my dad had built himself. But besides being a devout Catholic, my dad also believed in giving his kids a good education. He wasn't satisfied with what the boys were learning in the parochial school. So my dad enrolled them in the Presbyterian mission school across the road. The next Sunday my mom and dad went to church and found that the priest had taken their pew out of the church and put it on the front steps. Well, my dad went to talk to the priest, Father Küppers. My father said he had been a good Catholic all his life and always supported the church. Father Küppers said that as long as the boys were going to that school, the family was not welcome in the church. By the time I was born, my parents had already converted to the Presbyterian Church. So I was born in the Church and I'm still a Presbyterian.

I started at the Presbyterian School in Dixon 1935. At that time

the school went from kindergarten to the eighth grade. By the time I got to the seventh grade they discontinued the eighth grade. As the public school got better the Church began cutting back grades until in 1958 the school was closed. They were not trying to compete; they just wanted to be sure an adequate public school was available. I went seven years in Dixon, then to Allison-James Middle School in Santa Fe, and then to Menaul School in Albuquerque. I graduated from Menaul in 1949. There are many Menaul graduates living in Dixon. So actually I left town at thirteen to go to boarding school in Santa Fe. In those days Santa Fe was a long way from here and Albuquerque was twice as far. We would go in September and come back for Christmas vacation and then go back in January and come home in May. Then we would have to stay down there part of the summer to work for our tuition. They did charge tuition. Even the mission school here charged tuition. I'm not positive but I think it used to be two dollars a month—two dollars for me and then two dollars each for my brother and sister. My dad used to pay with a wagonload of wood or some vegetables from our garden or work around the building.

#### Earning a Living

My dad was like many other farmers in this town. He did outside work to support his family. Sometimes he was a migrant worker. Men went up to Colorado for the potato harvest. A lot of them went to herd sheep in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. But those were seasonal jobs. My dad also worked on the railroad. During the war my dad went to California, but instead of working in a factory, he worked in the fields. A group of people from Dixon used to go to California in the winter to harvest chile. Then they would come back and do their own chile crop in the summer. For example, my dad would go to Colorado for the potato harvest in September and October, come back to cut wood for the winter, pick up corn that was left in the field... just work the whole year around.

I grew up during the Depression. We never had any money; we

didn't know what money was. We didn't have any automobiles. All of us had good teams of horses and wagons and maybe an extra horse to saddle. And we always had plenty to eat. We raised our own meat, our own vegetables and fruit, and we used every bit of it. We never lost anything. I remember my dad going for the potato harvest and coming back with eighty dollars for two months work. And that was hard labor, digging up the potatoes. With those eighty dollars he would buy me a pair of shoes, my brother a pair of shoes, a jacket, and the stuff they needed in the house for the whole winter. We grew our own wheat and had it ground into flour.

There was a flour mill in Apodaca, but I don't remember my dad taking our wheat there. As I was growing up I remember taking the wheat to Peñasco. There was a big flourmill up there. I think the fellow who owned the mill in Apodaca died or got too old to work and the mill was discontinued.

We used to go up to Peñasco with a team of horses and a wagon and peddle our fruit and vegetables and bring back peas and flour and chickens and whatever they had. But no money. If you came back with two or three dollars you were doing great. They were tickled to get our fruit and chile and we were tickled to get their pumpkins and peas and wheat.

#### Our Lives Begin to Change

Let me tell you something that even my grandchildren don't believe. When I graduated from high school in 1949 I sent out twelve invitations to the graduation to my aunts and uncles. Each one of them gave me a dollar. Twelve dollars. Now just buying the announcements and sending them out costs you twelve dollars each. But after I came back from Menaul people started getting work at Los Alamos and things started getting a little better. During my years in high school in Albuquerque, from 1946 to 1949, the road to Dixon was paved. Electricity came into town. When I first went to high school in Albuquerque, at home we still had a kerosene lamp on the table. We had no running water. Have you heard this story? A long

time ago people used to go to the bathroom outside and eat inside. Now in 2000 people go to the bathroom inside and eat outside, with the barbecue and all the rest. (Laughs) That's how much the world has changed since I was growing up.

When I came back from high school my ambition was to help my younger brother and my little sister be able to go to Menaul. And we did that. Right after I finished high school the Korean War started and I was drafted. But I didn't serve because of my poor eyesight. One of my brothers served, for about six years. He was in the old type submarines, in the Mediterranean, in the Atlantic, and in the Pacific around Japan and Korea. My mother used to worry a lot. Sometimes we wouldn't hear from him for months. But he was okay.

#### Two Churches, One Community

I told you what happened between my father and the priest of the Dixon Catholic Church, Rev. Peter Küppers. After he retired from the Church he became the owner of La Obscurana orchard in Embudo, where you now live. He had a lot of influence in town. He did a good job for the church in Dixon; all the buildings they have next to the church are there because he had them built. Without him, they would not be there. Well, the summer before my senior year at Menaul I wanted to earn a little money. I wanted to buy some nice clothes to have in my last year. So I needed a job. At that time they were working on paving the road into Dixon. I thought I was too young to get a job, but I went over where they were working anyway to see if the contractor would hire me for the summer. The new road started right at the front gate of Father Küppers' orchard in Embudo. The morning I went down there he was out in the orchard. He knew who I was because we have always lived in this area and the Catholic Church is right across from us. And though we weren't Catholic we always knew the priest. And of course my grandparents and their family was Catholic. So Father Küppers knew me and my dad and that my dad had sent his sons to school across the road and left the Church. Anyway, he asked me what I was doing there and I said I

was looking for work. Then he asked me if I wanted to work for him. I said yes. I didn't care what it was; I just needed a job. "Okay," he said, "come and see me tomorrow." I did. For approximately ten weeks that summer I walked to Father Küppers' orchard every morning (about two miles) carrying my lunch bucket and I took care of his orchard, which is now your orchard. I watered, I weeded, I picked fruit, I fixed the water gates, whatever was needed. He paid me four dollars a day. I worked six days a week, I got twenty-four dollars every Saturday and I was very happy. About the second to the last week before the end of the summer it rained very hard and it kept me from working one day. But on Saturday when he paid me he gave me twenty-four dollars. I said, "Father, I'm sorry, but I only worked five days. You only owe me twenty."

He patted me on the shoulder and thanked me and said, "That's okay. I'm going to give you twenty-four dollars." Of course four extra dollars was great. But what I'm really trying to say is that the way you act, the way you present yourself, that's the way you're going to be treated. Even though we were not Catholics, he was very good to us. He and my father were friends. And when I had the store I got along very well with the priests.

At one point there were some hard feelings in this community between one side of the street and the other (the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church are on opposite sides of Highway 75 running through the center of Dixon). It was because of the nuns teaching in the Dixon public school. A group of local people sued the State Board of Education. The Dixon case, as it was called, went all the way to the New Mexico Supreme Court. I don't think the people had anything against the nuns. It was just that state funds were being used to teach religion in the public schools. (The Court ruled that the nuns could teach in the schools but they had to wear civilian clothes and not give religious instruction.) At the time I started working in the store there were still hard feelings between the Presbyterians and the Catholics. But fortunately people started forgetting the issue. Families started getting mixed. I married Grace Rendon, whose

family was Catholic. Her mom is still a very devout Catholic. But we never discuss or argue about religion. At the present time there are a lot of mixed marriages in town, which I think is healthy. In our case Grace decided to go with me to the Presbyterian Church, but that doesn't always happen. In some cases husband and wife keep their separate religions. But that's okay. There's only one God, right? It's like politics. Why should I get upset with you because you don't belong to the same party or think the way I do? It's a privilege to have differences. The same with religion. And this town is okay about differences in religions.

#### The Privilege of Working Indoors

When I graduated from Menaul and came home in the summer of 1949, nobody encouraged me to go to college. But I was happy with a high school diploma. Many people in my family had only gotten to the third or fourth grade. What they knew they had to learn on their own. So in that summer I just stayed around the house and helped my dad with the planting. In those days everybody planted. But what was in my mind was to get a job so I could help my younger brother and my sister go to Menaul. Nothing happened in the summer so I went to the potato harvest in Colorado. And I learned my lesson. (Laughs) I found out what it really means to work. It's one thing to work around the house, but to go over there and work under contract, digging potatoes all day long-- that's something else.

I came back and tried to get work at Los Alamos. The University of California ran the Lab. Zia Company maintained the buildings. And there was also construction. Guess who paid the most money? The construction people paid one dollar twenty-five an hour. University of California paid eighty cents an hour. Zia, I think, paid even less. Funny how this world is. I could have gotten a job at the Lab. I could have got a job with Zia. But no, I wanted to earn more money so I went to work with the construction guys. Within a year or a year and a half construction started getting a little scarce. The town was built and they were running out of construction work. I

never tried to get on with the Lab. I thought I'd try something else. So I went with a friend up to Utah and we worked in one of the government camps for about six weeks. While I was up there in the Salt Lake City area, Mr. and Mrs. Zellers, who owned the general store, wanted someone to work with them. They knew me and knew my dad and they asked him if I might want to work with them. My dad wrote to me. Well, I wanted to come home. I wanted to help my parents who were getting up in age. Working the store I would be close to them. So I came home and started working in the store in the summer of 1952. After working construction for three years, working in the store was blessing. I was in the shade. I could eat a banana once in a while, or drink a soda. I didn't get rained on. I didn't have to work in the hot sun. And in the winter it was nice and warm inside. That's really what made me go on with the work.

Within a few years I realized I could actually run the business. Before I knew it I had worked with the Zellers eighteen years. In June of 1970 they announced to me that they were going to retire and try to sell the store. "If we can't sell it," they said, "we're going to close it. If you want to buy it, we'll give you the first shot at it."

I wanted to take it but at the same time I was scared. And if I went somewhere else I would have to start all over again. Grace and I had gotten married young, had a family and raised our kids. Would you believe she went to nursing school when the kids were in high school and became a nurse? That was one of the best things that happened to our family. She had a good job. She worked twenty-four or twenty-six years at the Embudo Hospital, which later became Embudo Clinic. Well, in 1970 Zellers more or less twisted my arm. If I wanted to keep working there, I had to buy the business! (Laughs) I went home and told Grace and we decided to try it. I went to the bank. In round numbers what now is worth a hundred thousand dollars was worth twenty-five thousand then. My credit was good. I had worked for eighteen years and they knew I could probably run the store. So I went to the Small Business Administration and got a loan at seven percent for ten years. Then

we worked really hard and paid it off in seven years.

Even though Grace worked full-time as a nurse, she always helped out a couple of hours in the evening and even weekends. But we worked hard, we worked hard. I was the first one there in the morning, I was the last one to have lunch, and I was the last one to leave in the evening. And the thing I am very thankful for which doesn't happen in this world today: I never opened the store on Sunday. It wasn't because it was Sunday and I was that religious a person. It was because I needed a day off. Besides that the only other times I was closed was Thanksgiving and Christmas. But compared to working all day at Los Alamos breaking the ground with a pick, or in the rain, working in the store always seemed easy. Up there if you didn't work hard enough, you could be fired. Here I was my own boss.

I was successful, I guess. I had a business sense. We sold all kind of things. When people started getting electricity we sold stoves and refrigerators. We ordered them in. All kinds of hardware, building materials, everything. I made a lot of friends at the store. I helped a lot of people. Maybe some people didn't realize it then; later they did.

#### Changes in Dixon

I grew up when gasoline was 23 cents a gallon. I would buy five gallons a week and that was enough to run around town for the whole week. Bread was twenty cents a loaf. But the ladies in those days did not buy bread; they made tortillas. When I started working in the store in the 1950's I used to deliver groceries to people's houses. People didn't go to town. A lot of this came back to me the other night when we went to the party at the Padbergs'. The lady who used to own that house was one of my customers. In those days people did not come to the store whenever they wanted a frozen pizza or something like that. They came once a month and bought supplies for the whole month. Two fifty-pound bags or a hundred-pound bag of flour. Two or three buckets of lard. Two or three cans

of coffee. A case of condensed milk. A sack of potatoes, a sack of beans. They bought in big quantities, and I would deliver. The road only went as far as the acequia at Padbergs'. From the acequia there was an arroyo and just a little path to the house. So I would park by the bridge at the acequia and then haul everything to the house, about a hundred yards. That was probably half a pickup full of groceries. I would deliver two or three orders and fill up the whole pickup. Of course I labeled the boxes so the orders didn't get mixed up. And what's amazing is that with all those groceries, an order would only run about fifty or sixty dollars. Now one pizza can cost you twenty bucks. Even if you go to McDonald's you're going to end up spending plenty. (Laughs)

#### The New People

New people started coming into town in 1968, young people with beards and all that stuff. In the Seventies there was a big influx. And it's amazing; a lot of those people who came here then are still in the area. Of course, now they're all grown up (laughs) with children and grandchildren. There were also some that thought it was going to be easy for them here. They couldn't hack it and they left. The ones who really liked it, found they could make a living, grew up a little—they are still here and they're doing all right. I made a lot of good friends among them. I was able to help sometimes. For example, some would come to me and ask where they could find a place to live and I would send them some place where I knew there was a house to rent. Some would get a little check from grandma and they didn't have bank accounts and I would cash their checks. I never, never had a bad check. I made a lot of friends and it was really an eye-opener for me. I used to say at the store, "Hey, I learn from you and you learn from me. You learn about Dixon and I learn about how life is where you come from." And I still see a lot of the people I used to talk with when I ran the store. When they first came in I would say, "Welcome. You've come here and now we're going to be part of this town together."

## Voices of Dixon: Lebeo Martinez

I feel that it's good for you come into a place and like it and want to be part of it. You find a house that someone wants to sell and you buy it, that's the way it should be. Some people don't feel that way—we all know that. But I also felt in my last ten years at the store that if it hadn't been for the new families in Dixon, I would have never made it. My old customers were dying. And the new generation was different. Some of them left and never came back. And times have changed. It's a harder world. But for me it's been a good life.

### A Different Kind Of Town

When new people came into northern New Mexico and started settling in Taos and north of Taos and in Ojo Sarco back in the Seventies, there were big fights. Some people didn't want the newcomers. I know areas today where there is great pressure not to sell (to Anglos). For some reason Dixon was different. One of the reasons was that we always had through the years four or five families that came from a different (non-Hispanic) culture. They were very neighborly and they got along with the community. So when more people started coming in, let's say, we were already one-third there. So it wasn't as much a shock as having a newcomer move into Ojo Sarco. And here people just got used to having a mix of cultures.

Another thing. People like you came here because they liked this kind of community. Maybe you wanted to do something different with your life. You didn't come to make life easier for yourself. As a matter of fact, you are probably working harder as a small farmer than you ever did before.

*That's true. And that's my choice.*

When the Presbyterian Church closed Embudo Hospital in 1974 we had a local clinic in the facility. I was on the board of the clinic when we hired Liz Reidel (now the senior P.A. at the clinic). I was on the board when we hired Dr. Cohen (Karen Cohen, now a retired public health physician). I was privileged to do business with Paul Sowanik when he first came in town as a young "punk," (laughs), 24

years old, as I reminded him the other night at Padbergs' party. (He is now a successful acupuncturist in Taos and Dixon.) Roger Chilton got a kick out of it the other night when I called him "the oldest hippie in town." (Laughs) But they all know me and have known me for a long time and we are good friends. And there are many more. And I consider it a blessing to have been able to work all my life in Dixon and get to know so many good people.

I still remember when I met you on the airplane going from Albuquerque to Salt Lake City. That was when they gave you each a little bottle of wine so you wouldn't be scared of the ride on the small plane, taking off and landing at the small towns in between. I was going to see my brother in Logan. My brother was working for Utah State University. He grew up in this town, hoeing, cutting weeds, mowing alfalfa, feeding the pigs, doing the work we all did. He also went to Menaul High School. He really liked all kinds of sports. But after his junior year, he was too old to play football in his senior year. So he joined the Navy. Of course it was against my parents' wishes, but he joined without telling them. He took training in radio and was a radio man in a submarine. So in a sense you could say he was a high school dropout. He came back, went one year to St. Michael's College in Santa Fe, then got married. He had a good wife. She was a nurse, from Michigan. With her help and encouragement he finished school and started teaching mathematics in the Albuquerque area. He continued school part-time and got his master's degree. At one time he was repairing televisions on the side while working for the degree. Then he got a job teaching at Menaul School. He became the business manager and eventually became the president of the school. The coach who was my brother's high school football coach was still there. Now my brother became his boss.

By then he had two or three kids but started back to school at University of New Mexico to work on a Ph.D. The only reason he ended up in Logan was because he got a fellowship and it paid more than UNM. He got his Ph.D. from Utah State among all the Mormons, a Hispanic from Dixon with a Hispanic surname,

## Voices of Dixon: Lebeo Martinez

Martinez. He was the only faculty member with a Hispanic surname. They loved him and they gave him a job. (Laughs) That's rare, right? He stayed with them twenty-five years and retired as the dean of the college of education. Now what I'm really telling you is that can happen to anyone who really makes up his mind to do it.

*Perhaps there is something very special about this community? On our acequia out of thirty-four parciantes there are two PhDs and at least two people with Masters, all born here, all Hispanics.*

One of the Ph.D.s, Walter Archuleta, was a classmate of our son Jim here at the Mission School. That school closed when they were in the second grade. Then they went on to Menaul together. Jim is now an MD. Our daughter went to Menaul and then went to a Presbyterian Church college in Kansas. When she graduated she went to the University of Wisconsin. There she met a guy, got married, got her Masters degree, and they now live in Albuquerque.

It wasn't easy for our son to get into medical school. He just kept trying. After getting his undergraduate degree he took an extra year of chemistry to meet the requirements. He had the grades. But I think the only reason they took him was because they have to admit a certain number of minorities at UNM. And he was able to go straight through school. Naturally we supported him morally one hundred percent. Financially we did a lot of things. On the weekends we went to Albuquerque and my wife would clean his apartment and do his laundry. She would make him some tortillas. We would take him out to eat. We left him a little vehicle so he could have some transportation. But he was very good also; he got grants and loans and scholarships. And he had always been a good student. He had been valedictorian of his high school class. And our daughter was salutatorian of her class. We're very happy with both of them.

And we got to see new places because of them. Jim did some of his training in Greeley, north of Denver. We went up there to visit and spent time with him. He was also in a hospital in El Paso and we went there. That was great. He knew good restaurants in Juarez. He did some training in Martinez, California, up there by San Francisco.

We went there. He would go to school and Grace and I would take the underground into San Francisco. And I remember spending one Thanksgiving visiting our daughter in Madison, Wisconsin in three or four feet of snow, and seventeen below zero.

Besides that we now have a really mixed family. Our daughter's husband is from Milwaukee and he has become addicted to chile. My brother's wife is from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Our son's wife is a Hungarian girl who came from Connecticut. He met her in Arizona.

*There seems to be a great desire for education in Dixon.*

It started late. That's probably why I never went to college. If I had been born six or eight years later, I probably would have gone to school. My education came from the store. Running a general store in this town is almost like getting a college degree. (Laughs) I had thirty-two jobbers, thirty-two companies I did business with. After the kids left I kept two employees all the time. I had to stay on top of everything. Of course I learned to do everything from sweeping to washing the windows on the gasoline pumps. I did stocking, ordering, pricing, selling, collecting, getting upset (Laughs) because I bought too much or I didn't buy enough, or because they were going to give me one price and then charged me more, that kind of stuff. What I'm saying is that it doesn't matter where you live, or what you do, it's how you live, whether you like what you're doing. What would the world be like if we all had Ph.D.s? (Laughs) Or if none of us had them?

I can still see myself fifty-seven years ago in Dixon. I was fifteen. The only world we knew was Dixon. We were too narrow-minded. Now we know about different people, different cultures, and different ways of doing things. Even food. I had something at Padbergs' the other night, which I never had before and it was pretty good. I don't know who made it. Everything has changed, and everything is still changing. Even the churches are changing.

## Voices of Dixon: Lebeo Martinez

### The Future of Dixon

The kids in town are very smart. They know a lot about computers. But it bothers me that a lot of our kids don't want to work. I used to do the spring cleaning on the acequia. Now I hear that it is very hard to find young people to work and those you have you can't tell them what to do. We were in Tucson with our son for Christmas. I asked him, "Do you remember when we used to have to chop wood for heat?" But some of the kids now never have to do that.

It sort of scares me a little to think about the future. Is Dixon really going to remain here? In our case, our kids grew up here and they love it. But I'm sure, though maybe I shouldn't say it, that my daughter is never coming back to Dixon. Maybe the boy would, after he retires, but he's not going to come here and work in the field. I just hope now that whatever the young people learn here is beneficial, even if they don't stay here.

One thing that bothers me is the amount of farmland in this area that is not being used. People don't want to farm it and they don't want to sell it. I wish they could rent it or just get someone to come and use it for their own good. I would like to do that with our land. I would ask them to take care of the acequia, take care of the fences, and just plant whatever they want, I don't care. If you want to give me a bucket of chile, that would be all I need. But you don't find anybody.

### The Dixon Studio Tour

One of the things that has been an eye-opener for old timers in this community is the Dixon Tour. I feel real bad when people abuse it by selling on the side of the road. It would be nice if they gave a little money to the Tour to help pay for the advertising. I think the Studio Tour has given Dixon a very good name. I don't participate in it, though I did at the beginning when I had the store. (Thousands of people from New Mexico and surrounding states come to the annual arts and crafts tour in November, now in its 23rd year.)

### Closing the Store

At first I felt real bad when the store was closed. But now I see what's happening with the library and the community center there and I think it's great. The buildings are being used and for the benefit of the community, instead of having a sore spot in town with the windows boarded up. I go in there now and I have lots of memories. I know where everything was.

### Old Times, New Times

When I had the store I wanted to treat everybody right because I wanted their business. I don't care where you come from, I want your business. If I treat you right, you're going to treat me right. That's all there is to it. Now Grace and I go to a party like the New Year's Eve party at Padbergs', it's like a celebration of way back. Everybody knows us and we all talk. They know our kids and ask us when we visited them. There was a girl there I hadn't seen for twenty years. I recognized her and she recognized me. You renew acquaintances. Some of local kids that I knew as babies are all grown up.

I remember Dick and Jane Padberg first came to see me at the store. Dick had come to Mora to practice dentistry and there were some radical people there who didn't want Anglos and burned down their house. They asked me about a place to live in Dixon. I knew of a big house across from me that had one side empty. So they went to look at it. The guy living on the other side of the house was one of the Academia guys and he chased them away. Then he met me when I was going to work and said for me to quit sending him people there to rent. I said, "That's not your house. What's wrong with you? You rent there, too." And I said, "Buddy, you've got to look at the world in another way. One of these days you're going to be needing help, and you'll take whatever help anybody can give you." But he was all upset about it. To top it all off, he's related to me on my mother's side. Now he lives down in Española and he's still one of those radical guys.

## Voices of Dixon: Lebeo Martinez

I had a round with another guy when I bought the store. When I took over from Zellers my plan was to make a name for myself as the new owner and then I could do whatever I wanted do. So for a year or two I never changed the store's name. Well, he came in and asked me how come I never changed the name. In other words, how come I didn't take off the Anglo name and put up my own. I said, "First of all, I don't go to your house and interfere with your business. In the second place, I'm the owner, I know my business, and I'll do whatever I please. When I feel like it, when I want to, and when I think it's right, I'll change it." Well, he got mad as hell at me, but that was all right.

You see, when you're in business, even though the bank knew I had worked for Zellers, and I had good credit, I had to prove myself. It's Zellers store, but it's Lebeo Martinez paying the bills. And the same with the companies I bought from. I don't care that it's Zellers store, but it's that Lebeo Martinez is paying bills. So until you establish yourself, the name doesn't mean anything. Then I changed the name, and even after I retired and sold the business to George Zellers (son of the original owner) and his wife Kathy, people still called it "Lebeo's."

As I said, I've made a lot of friends and have good acquaintances. A few people have given me hard times, bad experiences, but that's the way of the world. And really and truly, of those who did give me a hard time, none of them are still in town.