

[Material that is irrelevant to Los Tocayos Carlos and contains sensitive personal information about one or more persons has been removed.]

OLIVIA ESCOBEDO

This is the interview of Olivia Escobedo, done by Tamara Theiss, at the request of Professor Jim Liebman, Columbia University, on February 27, 2005. My name is Olivia Escobedo. I currently live in Lakeland, Florida. **[Material removed]**

I grew up in Southeast Texas, in a small town called Victoria, Texas. I grew up in a very strict household, where my parents enforced many rules that kept me from socializing the way I wanted to, but also instilled a strong work ethic in me. My father was Mexican Indian, and my mother was Spanish and French. They were both U.S. citizens. My father learned the English language and encouraged me to do the same when I was young. I had good grades in high school, and worked hard, but was frustrated at my parent's restrictions. During my senior year of high school, I rebelled and left home, moving to San Francisco where I lived on my own. I worked in San Francisco for a couple of years for the telephone company, and met my husband there. My husband was in the military. We married and with our first child, moved to Europe after my husband returned from a tour of duty in Vietnam. We eventually divorced after we returned to the states, and when I was about 23, I moved myself and my daughter back to southeast Texas to be near my family home. We found a home in Corpus Christi, Texas.

I found work at a local hospital working in the emergency room. Eventually I began to work as a dispatcher for the Corpus Christi Sheriff's Department. When I joined their office, I was one of only 3 women who worked for the Sheriff's Office. I worked graveyard shifts for the Sheriff's Department as a dispatcher in addition to my day job. As one of the only women on the police force, every day was a battle.

I remember listening to the Corpus Christi officers talk about their cases during my shift. Back at that time, they talked about women without much respect for what female victims went through. I remember the officers commenting that this or that complaining victim had been drunk, or sleeping around when something happened to her. I used to speak up and challenge the male officers about the way they talked about the women in their cases. Finally one of them said to me "fine, if you think you can do better, then take the exam, and see how you do with these cases." I took him up on his challenge, and eventually qualified for a position as a patrol officer, then an investigator.

I was most interested in sex offenses, and specialized in investigating sex offenses. There were times, however, when based on my night shift hours, and the officer rotation, that I would have to respond to other kinds of calls.

I worked under Paul Rivera and Eddie Garza. Today I feel grateful to them because they taught me how to investigate a crime. They taught me everything I know about how to work up a case. They really acted as my mentors when I worked at the Sheriff's Department. Garza and Rivera taught me to go down every rabbit hole to see where it led, no matter what the result. They taught me to investigate every angle and every lead in a case, even if it didn't pan out.

I also worked with our prosecutor Ken Botary on cases. Ken was an extremely thorough and meticulous prosecutor. Ken investigated and prosecuted cases so thoroughly that he made sure no stone would be left unturned. Ken was so meticulous that he was almost annoying, always asking us to make sure every lead was followed, so that he knew all the evidence that existed.

I remember working on the Dahlia Saucedo case with Eddie Garza, Paul Rivera, and Ken Botary, in 1979. I was not the lead investigator, but assisted with the case. I recall handling the forensic evidence in that case. I recall going out to the scene with the investigators and finding the van with the body of Ms.

Sauceda in it and her little girl. That case was a terrible case because of the way that Ms. Saucedo had been cut, and that the little girl had been in the van with her. I remember that there was a lot of news about that case because of Ms. Saucedo's injuries and the little girl being in the van. I vaguely remember that there were a couple of suspects in that case besides Mr. Garza, who was arrested and charged with the murder. I recall the eyewitness Pete Olivarez, who was also under suspicion for the murder. I remember that Carlos Hernandez was also questioned, along with Olivarez and Garza, and that all three men were given polygraph exams. Mr. Garza was the one who was prosecuted because Mr. Olivarez was an eyewitness and said that he had seen Garza kill Ms. Saucedo. I left the Sheriff's Department in 1984 or 1985, before Mr. Carlos Hernandez was charged with Ms. Saucedo's murder.

In 1983, I had been promoted to the position of investigator, and was on the rotation of officers who responded to calls for violent crimes. Although I specialized in investigating sex crimes, I became the lead investigator on the Wanda Lopez case because I just happened to be working as the lead investigator on the night shift when her 911 call came in. I remember that I had only been at work for a few minutes when her call came in. I recall that it was a "robbery in progress" which justified sending an investigator and a lot of police to look for the suspect. I remember that Sigmor gas station.

When I got out to the gas station, there were police cars everywhere. The neighborhood was literally saturated with police, fanning out looking for Mr. DeLuna. Mr. DeLuna had been reported by witnesses to have run out behind the gas station in a northern direction, right into the residential neighborhood behind the gas station.

As the lead investigator, my first responsibility was to secure the crime scene. I think I responded around 7 p.m. to the scene, and it took me at least three hours to process everything. I had to do everything myself. Back then, we didn't have any crime scene technicians or equipment. The responding investigator had to do everything on his or her own. I remember that all we had was a little kit we carried around in the trunks of our cars. We didn't have any police tape to secure the scenes. We just had to yell at people to stay back and not step on our crime scenes. I think I had the help of a fingerprint technician, but no one else.

I remember coming into the gas station. Ms. Lopez was already being treated by the emergency response people. She couldn't talk to anyone. She had been stabbed over and over again. I remember that there was blood everywhere inside the gas station. You could tell from all the blood that DeLuna had grabbed Ms. Lopez and dragged her over from behind the counter to where the coolers were, stabbing her as he went.

I remember listening to Ms. Lopez screaming on the tape when DeLuna grabbed her. She had called once to say that there was a man outside with a knife, then I remember when she called back, trying to talk in a low voice so DeLuna wouldn't know who she was talking too. Then you could hear her all of a sudden saying she would give him what he wanted, then her screaming as he attacked her.

Because my responsibility was to process the crime scene, I remained in the store working while the rest of the police were outside looking for DeLuna. I remember that there were police cars everywhere, at the station and all around the neighborhood around the station, looking for DeLuna. I could hear their progress on my radio. The police were responding to calls saying that people had spotted someone hiding under a truck that was parked on the street a couple blocks behind the gas station. Then I heard on the radio when DeLuna was pulled out from under the truck. I think that the police brought DeLuna back to the gas station right away so the witnesses could look at him. DeLuna was sober when they found him. He did not have any blood on him. I did not take part in the identification of DeLuna by the witnesses because I was inside the station working on the crime scene. Both at the station and back at the Sheriff's Department, I didn't really have contact with DeLuna. First I was too busy working on the crime scene, then later at the Sheriff's Department, DeLuna was mirandized and wouldn't talk to anyone. That's why I didn't interrogate

him.

I don't remember Carlos Hernandez being involved in the Lopez case at all. I would have remembered if he was at all under suspicion, because we were extremely thorough investigating the case and preparing our prosecution of Carlos DeLuna. I remember feeling very emotional and personally invested in that case because the victim, Wanda Lopez reminded me of myself, a single mother, on her own, working a night shift to make ends meet. Because of my attachment to the case, I recall making sure that we ran down every piece of information we had, to make sure DeLuna would be convicted. Ken Botary was just as meticulous, and I know for a fact that if Ken knew of Carlos Hernandez being involved, or if Hernandez's name had come up in the investigation, Ken would have made sure that I followed that lead.

I don't remember knowing about Carlos Hernandez generally, in addition to being specifically connected to the DeLuna case. I remember hearing about the Casino Club, but not specifically with respect to the DeLuna/Lopez case. When I was with the Sheriff's Department, everyone knew about the Casino Club. The Casino Club was well known as a Hispanic hangout and a place where a lot of bad things and bad people hung out. I remember assuming that if I got called out to the Casino Club, I could expect some sort of trouble from someone.

I was proud of the job I did with Wanda Lopez' case. I remember making sure that I ran down every lead and investigated every angle to make sure that DeLuna was convicted. I even remember visiting DeLuna's employer to look at his pay stubs to see how much money he made that week. DeLuna claimed that the money he had on him when he was arrested was money he made at work that week. I knew that couldn't be true because DeLuna didn't have any time to make any money. He had just gotten out of prison. He was always in prison. I knew that DeLuna had most recently been in prison for raping his old cellmate's mother, who had kindly taken him in the last time he was released. That was the kind of person he was. The money that DeLuna had on him could not be explained by the pay stubs from his employer. I was very thorough about investigating DeLuna's claim. DeLuna had the exact same amount that was missing from the cash drawer at the gas station. I think it was about \$80.

I saved the newspaper clippings from the case, and especially the articles when DeLuna was executed. Our unit closed that case efficiently and quickly, and got the right result. I'm confident that we got the right person because DeLuna was identified clearly by the eyewitnesses. They were sure he was the right man, so there was no possibility of misidentification. We did a good job with that case, and I remember feeling satisfied that we had gotten rid of a terrible person when DeLuna was executed.