

To: CCA / DeLuna Case
From: Susan Montez
Re: Rose (DeLuna) Rhoton
Date: July 19, 2004

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

Rose DeLuna Rhoton
[Material removed]

I met with Rose DeLuna Rhoton, the youngest sister of Carlos DeLuna, at a McDonald's restaurant located at [material removed], Houston, Texas, on July 17, 2004. The following are my impressions.

Rose is about five foot two (maybe shorter) and very slender. She has short black hair and wears glasses. She spoke slowly and emphatically. She was quite forceful, emphasizing words and phrases by repeating them, and using her hands for additional emphasis, throughout the meeting. [Material removed] I explained that I needed to meet with her two or maybe three more times, and she agreed. She signed three HIPPA releases without a question. She told me she wanted to clear her brother's name.

Rose stated that she never knew any of her grandparents, or even who they were. Rose's mother, Margarita, had six children with a man named Conejo: Vincent, Toni, Danny, Mary, Vicky and Becky. Rose referred to these siblings as "the six."

Rose has only seen Vincent, the oldest, two times in her life. Vincent left and never came back. He took care of himself. All of the six were close to their mother except Vincent. He did not come to their mother's funeral. Rose heard that he changed his name, got married and had a family. She did not know any details, but said that her sister Toni would know.

Toni was the second born and the first daughter. Rose said that Toni was a very strict

sister. She was very controlling. Toni's attitude is: "I'm better than you, and my kids are better than you." Toni graduated and left home. She married Joe PeZa, and they have two daughters: Diana, who has a son and a daughter, and Belinda, who has a baby and lives with Toni. Diana and Rose are close in age and hung out together as friends when they were growing up. Belinda was close to Carlos and hung out with him.

Rose said that when they were kids they lived in two different places in the Las Hermadas projects. It was some time later when the house on Rockford was purchased. When Margarita died, there wasn't much owing on her house on Rockford Street. Toni moved in and took over the house.

Danny Conejo was the third child born. Rose remembered Danny living with them when she was little. He worked in construction, and would stay with them from time to time. He was a good brother, who bought things for them and took them out to eat. He married a woman named Mary and he has two sons: Manny, who is married, and Francisco, who is not married. Danny and Mary live in Garland, Texas. Rose does not know if Danny graduated from high school.

The next child born to Margarita was Mary. Rose said she is closer to Mary than any of the other siblings. Mary is the sweetest sister. She does not hold grudges, and she is always there for you. She is a good, caring sister. Manuel and Carlos took advantage of her.

Mary got married right after she graduated. Her husband was Robert Arredondo. His mother had ten children. Mary and Robert had three sons: Max is divorced, has a daughter and lives with Mary; Robert is single and lives in Dallas but is moving to Houston in August; and Michael, who is married and has two children, Ashley and Baby Robert. Robert Sr. was killed in a car crash in Garland, Texas, when the children were all young. [Material removed] Mary never remarried. She was very close to their mother, Margarita. Rose said that she and Mary visit a

couple of times a year.

The next child born to Margarita was Vicky. Rose has never spent much time with Vicky. Vicky is the type of person who does not want to get involved. Rose said that she and Vicky talk on the phone occasionally and exchange birthday and Christmas cards. Rose did not know if Vicky had graduated from high school. Vicky has three children: Freddie, who is not married; Lisa, who is not married; and Noel, who is married.

Becky is the youngest of the six. She was the rebellious one, who would leave the house and stay out until late. She got pregnant at a young age, and Margarita kicked her out. Becky had a son, Joe. He is married and has kids. Becky later married a man named Salvador, who recently died of cancer. They had two children: Maria, who is married; and Jesse, who is married with children and lives with Becky. Rose said that she and Becky talk, but they are not close.

After divorcing Conejo, Margarita began a relationship with Joe DeLuna. Joe was younger than Margarita by 7 or 8 years, and a “real momma’s boy.” His mother was completely against the relationship and constantly nagged Joe to leave Margarita. Margarita had three children with Joe: Manuel, Carlos and Rose. Joe left Margarita when she was pregnant with Rose. Joe and Margarita were not married but Manuel, Carlos and Rose all used his name. Carlos looked like Joe DeLuna, and was their mother’s favorite. Margarita adored Carlos. Rose was not sure why, but thought it was possibly because Carlos had problems and was rebellious.

Rose never knew or saw Joe DeLuna. According to Rose’s older sister Toni, Carlos once went to meet Joe’s mother. She did not want to have anything to do with him, and did not want her son Joe to have anything to do with Carlos, Rose or Manuel.

Rose does not remember exactly when Blas Avalos came into their lives. She thought it was after Hurricane Celia, which destroyed Corpus Christi. **In the aftermath of the hurricane,**

the newspaper photographer took a picture of Rose and Carlos, carrying milk cartons. [Hurricane Celia was August 3, 1970 – Rose was 7 years old and Carlos was 8].

Blas and Margarita probably met in a bar. Margarita drank at that time, but by the time Rose was a teenager, she had stopped drinking. Rose never saw Margarita drunk. Rose does not remember exactly when Margarita and Blas married. He was a “weekend alcoholic” and an “okay” stepfather. He just wanted the kids to go to school and listen to their parents. He was on the sidelines. He only spanked them because Margarita told him to. It was not his own nature. He would drink on the weekends until he passed out. He would either drink at home, or at a friend’s house – an older man who lived nearby. The two of them would just sit and drink until they passed out.

Blas had a daughter from a previous relationship, whom he adored. Rose remembered going to visit that girl a few times, but did not remember her name.

Rose is the baby of the family. She was premature and weighed only four pounds at birth. Margarita was 41 years old when Rose was born. She was very strict, and she set the rules. She could not read or write, and did not speak English. Rose did not know where Margarita was born, but it might have been El Campo. Margarita was married at 12 or 13 years of age, and she had no formal education. Rose knew very little of Margarita’s life and never asked, because in their house, “You didn’t ask questions.” Rose said that Margarita worked as a house cleaner, but after she married Blas, she stayed home more.

The family never sat at a table together for meals. Blas and Margarita always ate first, and then the kids ate. Rose had only one memory of a happy meal. Margarita had made oatmeal for them, and Rose remembered sitting at the table with Manuel and Carlos, talking and laughing.

Rose said their home life was miserable. There was no physical abuse. It was all mental.

There was no loving, no hugs, no “good mornings.” Margarita just wanted the kids married and out of the house. It did not seem to bother her that Vincent left and never came back. What mattered was that he was out of the house.

Rose attended Tom Brown Junior High in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades. She did not attend Ray High School in Corpus Christi, but instead attended and graduated from Garland High School. Manuel dropped out of Tom Brown in the 8th or 9th grade, and Carlos either did not attend or dropped out of 8th grade at Tom Brown.

Rose loved school, because it got her away from the house. As a teenager, she took two busses to school. She had to get up at 4 a.m., make breakfast for Manuel and Carlos and herself and clean up the house before she could go to school. Education was an annoying burden to Margarita, because it required her to buy clothes and supplies for the kids. She did not think education was important at all. Rose was certain that, had there not been a law requiring children to go to school, none of them would have attended.

The family owned a TV when Manuel, Carlos and Rose were growing up, but they did not have a car. Manuel and Carlos got cars when they became teenagers.

Margarita favored the boys. The girls had to do exactly as they were told, or “we got the crap beat out of us, literally.” Margarita hit them with a belt, slapped them and pulled their hair. Rose said, “I had really long hair. It hurt.” The girls had to scrub the floors and walls, and wash clothes by hand. If Carlos or Manuel got into trouble, they would get hit and have to do some cleaning, but three hours later Margarita would be giving them ice cream. If they wanted to go out, she would let them. Rose remembered mowing and raking the lawn, while Carlos and Manuel were in the house watching TV, even after they’d started getting into trouble. Rose thought this was normal, that this was the way everybody lived. At this point, Rose stated that,

for a long time, she blamed their mother for Carlos getting the death penalty. She did not elaborate, and moved on to something else before I could clarify that statement.

Margarita suffered from kidney problems. When Carlos went to trial, she wound up in the hospital. The trial did her in. She knew that Carlos had been sentenced to death. She died on August 11, 1983, soon after her 61st birthday.

Rose gave me phone numbers for Toni, Becky, Vicky and Danny. She said that she had called all of them regarding me and Peso Chavez coming to talk with them. I thanked Rose for her time and we agreed to meet again during the coming week.