

Michael Diaz

Interviewed by Hannah Hudak

September 27, 2022

Interviewed conducted over video conference

Transcribed by Hannah Hudak

[Hannah Hudak]: Hello, this is Hannah Hudak. The date is September 27, 2022. The current time is 2 o'clock, 2:00 p.m. Um, I am currently at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, University in Corpus Christi, Texas. Uh, via Zoom I have Michael Diaz who is currently located at the Whitehead Memorial Museum in Del Rio, Texas. Um, Mr. Diaz. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

[Michael Diaz]: Yes.

[Hudak]: Okay great. Uh, before we start, I wanted to let you know that not only will I be asking you questions concerning the events of the flood, but I will also be asking questions about the Del Rio community, as well as questions pertaining to your life.

[Diaz]: Okay.

[Hudak]: Okay. Anyways, let's get started. Um, are you originally from Del Rio?

[Diaz]: Yes.

[Hudak]: Growing up who did you live with?

[Diaz]: I lived with my mother.

[Hudak]: Could you tell what life was like growing up?

[Diaz]: Well, it was very carefree. Spent a lot of times outdoors, we didn't have too many electronics games like kids do now. So we spent most of our time outdoors playing, it was—I mean when you're a kid everything is really carefree so it was uh nothing too—it wasn't really like a bad life growing up.

[Hudak]: Do you have any like unique experiences that you think are—you know, unique to Del Rio?

[Diaz]: Well you know, like celebrating—we celebrate a lot of Mexican traditions, Mexican holidays like Dias Dieciséis Los Septembire [Mexican Independence Day] and Cinco De Mayo [celebration of Mexico's victory at the Battle of Puebla] here in Del Rio. So, I remember as a kid

going to those celebrations, that was always fun and what I thought was unique.

[Hudak]: How would you describe the Del Rio community? Because I know it's a small town. Do you feel that small town love in the community?

[Diaz]: Yeah its—you know everyone kind of knows each other even if you don't directly know someone, you know someone who knows that person. (laughs) Everyone really knows like the families around Del Rio. Especially in the older parts like San Felipe [neighborhood in Del Rio]. Where everyone knew who the families were in there. It's real—it's like a relax setting. It's not like the larger cities where everyone is in a hurry to get everywhere, or to get somewhere. You know, here in Del Rio if you need to go to the store, or anywhere, it's like five to ten minutes away from anywhere. So you wanna go to your house to the store, from your house to the mall, to get groceries, it's really just like five to ten minute drive. So it's a real small community.

[Hudak]: So, you are currently the director at the Whitehead Memorial Museum, correct?

[Diaz]: Yes.

[Hudak]: What are some things you do at the museum?

[Diaz]: So our—our main mission is to preserve the history of Val Verde County and the city of Del Rio. So that's what we do. We also do a lot of community events to involve the community and get them involved in—the preservation of history, also educating them on our history, educating the youth. So we do field trips, we have historical fairs, programs like that to get the community and youth involved in learning about our history.

[Hudak]: Could you give me a brief, like history about the museum and why it was created?

[Diaz]: Sure. It was in the nineteen—early 1960s. Della Whitehead, from the Whitehead family, they were a notable ranching family here in Del Rio. Um, they noticed that there was no museum or place to house artifacts or show the history of Del Rio. So they actually purchased the old parish store, which is now our um—general admission or main entrance. They purchased the old parish store and made that into the museum. And then, they opened that up and donated the museum, in a joint trust to the city and the county. So the museum itself is owned by both the city and the county, but it is run by a nonprofit organization called the Whitehead Memorial Museum. So we do have a board of trustees. There's twelve of them, they hire the director and then I hire the staff. And right now we have a staff of four. The museum has expanded to—right now it's on two acres of land...

[Hudak]: Oh wow!

[Diaz]: It has over eighteen buildings and, more than—probably about forty exhibits.

[Hudak]: And you mentioned that the museum has events. Could you talk about some of these events?

[Diaz]: Yes. So we have, in the spring, we have our Dino Days. Which kids come, or students from other areas will come, and see Dinosaur George from San Antonio. He comes brings all his fossils and dinosaur replicas, and we teach the kids about that kind of pre-history. We also have archaeology fair in Fall. Students again, also come to museum and we have different presenters. Such as the Bear County Buffalo Soldiers. We have the Texas Camel Corps, Doug Baum will actually bring two camels to museum for the kids to see. You know, a lot of kids in Del Rio will never have the chance to see a camel in real life, so this is—it's very exciting for them to see that. So different presenters like that have to do with the history and archaeology will come to the museum for our archaeology fair. Our community events we have like a movie nights. So we do in the summer, every last Friday, for four months we give out, or we have a free movie for the kids and families to come see. During spring break, we have an activity for the kids to come—we usually do arts and crafts, art, rock art. We show them how they—the indigenous used to use rocks and different colors to paint on the walls. In July, we have our museum days. So every Saturday in July is actually free to Del Rio residents. So, if they don't have a chance to come in or they see that our admission price is a little bit too high of them. They can always come in during those Saturdays and come in for free.

[6:11]

[Hudak]: Growing up, did you go to the museum and these events?

[Diaz]: No, to tell you the truth, not really. When I was a kid, I think I may have come during field trip one time. But I can't remember coming you know—as a teenager or in high school [unintelligible] to the museum. And that's one of the things that I want to change is to make sure that, the kids aren't coming just for a field trip maybe just once a year or once in their, time in school. I want to make sure they're coming multiple times, and it's something that they come back and wanna come back to the museum.

[Hudak]: What kind of made you interested in your—like career?

[Diaz]: Well, you know I've always had an interest in history. My mother and my uncle, were very also interested in—in history. My uncle was an history teacher, at the local high school here in Del Rio. And it's always just been a passion of mine. I actually, when I (laughs) first graduated high school, and I went to college at UTSA [University of Texas at San Antonio], I actually got my degree in biology.

[Hudak]: Oh wow! (laughs)

[Diaz]: (laughs) Yeah, so it's like on the other side of the spectrum of history. Because history and biology are two different sides. And, yeah so kind of—kind of fell into this position. I came back to Del Rio, I started volunteering at the museum. From a volunteer I went to marketing

and promotions. So I started their Facebook and their Twitter page, and doing all of their flyers. So I was that for a couple years. And then the—the director at the time decided to retire, and I put my name in the hat and I was chosen.

[8:03]

[Hudak]: And what year did you start working for the museum?

[Diaz]: In twenty—at the end of 2013.

[Hudak]: Oh, so almost ten years.

[Diaz]: Yes. Yeah, ten years coming up.

[Hudak]: What made you want to come back to Del Rio and pursue a volunteer-ship and career?

[Diaz]: You know I have—my plan was to always come back to Del Rio my hometown, I love it. Um, I like San Antonio, it's nice but—you know everyone is in a hurry to go everywhere. The traffic is real bad. And you know, here in Del Rio it's not as bad. It's like I said, before—it's very calm and not as fast paced, so that's why my plan was to always come back to Del Rio.

[Hudak]: Okay, and—so when the flood occurred in Del Rio, how old were you when it happened?

[Diaz]: I believe I was fifteen. Yeah, I remember I was a freshman at the time.

[Hudak]: And you witnessed the flood, like firsthand?

[Diaz]: Yeah, we—so the majority of the flooding happened in south Del Rio, in the San Felipe neighborhood. But we did have some flooding in the north side near where I lived. So I lived, in the Buena Vista neighborhood, and right across from where I live, there's a dried creekbed called the Cienegas Creek. And for the most part, 99% of the time its dry and only kind of floods when it rains. And during the flood of '96, I mean that—that creek-bed was full, it was real full. There was some flooding on the north side so we did get to see that.

[Hudak]: You know when the rainfall began, did you and like your family—and like I guess your friends as well. Did anybody have an idea that the rainfall would be so detrimental to the city?

[9:58]

[Diaz]: No. We had no idea. So when we woke up the next morning. We had gone outside and we saw the dry creek-bed was full of water, and it was—it was actually was flowing kind of fast. We have seen some cars stuck—because the creekbed crosses a road by where I live. And there

were some cars that was stuck in there. But, yeah, we had even then we had no idea the devastation that happened in the San Felipe neighborhood. We didn't know, we had no idea.

[Hudak]: Would you say that Del Rio as a city is very vulnerable to flooding?

[10:44]

[Diaz]: Yes, just because we have the creek and at that time there were all of houses that were built right on the creek. Then you know since it so dry here for so so long. That when it does rain, the water doesn't soak into the ground as fast as it would is if it would if it was—you know [unintelligible] rain would usually just holds it and it flood, so yeah. There are certain parts of the town that when it—there's a heavier rain, it's going to—the streets will flood.

[Hudak]: And prior to the flood, did any like serious flooding happen before?

[Diaz]: I don't believe so. I think the last flood was—the last major flood was maybe in the '30s, '35, somewhere around there. But there had—there hadn't been a major event, like the one that happened in '98.

[Hudak]: So you mentioned that you experienced some rainfall in your area, but did you experience any damage to your property?

[11:46]

[Diaz]: No. We were—we were lucky enough that um where I live, it's a little bit higher than the flood area. So the—you know the water reached up to maybe up to our driveway and to our back porch. We didn't get any water inside the house.

[Hudak]: And, did you lose power? Did you lose water during the event?

[Diaz]: Yes. So, um, I don't think we lost power, but the flood waters did contaminate the pumping station where the city gets its water from (Hudak acknowledges). So they did have to shut water off to the whole city for quite a while. So the city was left without—some [unintelligible] were left without power. And, but the majority of all the city was left without any kind of drinking water.

[Hudak]: So what did you guys do to, you know deal with this?

[Diaz]: So the, the city actually had to bring in, um [pause] bottled water. I know, I think H-E-B brought in tankers full of water, the National Guard came in and they were just delivering tons of gallons of bottled water to everybody because—I mean, you have your whole city and you can't drink any of the water. So, that's what the government did to help out.

[13:05]

[Hudak]: And, do you know any like family or friends that probably experienced the flood so much worse? You know, what did they have to deal with?

[Diaz]: I, remember my uncle lived—in the San Felipe neighborhood. So the San Felipe neighborhood was the one that was hit the hardest, because that where the creek runs through. And, this happened—it was over night so you have to think it's dark, you know the power went out. He remembers hearing people screaming as the water was rising...

[Hudak]: Oh wow.

[Diaz]: So—and he that he—that's one thing that he never forgot was sounds of the people screaming. So that kind of when you think about its kind of hard to hear and think about.

[Hudak]: And what area did he live in? What part of town?

[Diaz]: It was in San Felipe (Hudak acknowledges). In the—which is the south—the east south part of town.

[14:02]

[Hudak]: And, you know, after the events of the flood. You know, how did the community feel?

[Diaz]: So I know that, even though the community was devastated because there were people who passed away to the flood. Even though after it, a lot of people came together to help each other out. So I remember, school just had started or was about to start. And I was in the marching band, and some of our friends in the band, you know they had their houses flooded out. So we decide to get together and actually go over there and help a few of our friends. So when we went. You know, we saw all of the devastation. Houses full of mud, full of debris. Cars and vehicles turned over, cars in the creek that were pushed by the flood waters. But the people, the neighbors everyone came together to help each other out. So all you saw was, you know, people who may not even know those families, but they were out there helping them. Cleaning up the mess. I remember also me and my mom we went to help at the Red Cross. So there was a vacant building where the Red Cross had setup, and they were taking in clothing and food donations for those who lost—you know everything. Cause there were houses that were swept to the foundation. So, yeah the community came together to help each other out.

[15:35]

[Hudak]: And you mentioned that school was kind of going on at the time—did school get cancelled, did like people have to go into work?

[Diaz]: Yeah, I know the school did get cancelled for—I'm not sure how long. Honestly maybe a week or two. I don't know if people were going back to work. My mom was a teacher at the time so schools cancelled she was off of work. I'm not sure if other jobs probably had to close down, because no power or water for a while. So it was kind of hard to run a business at that time too.

[Hudak]: And you said you helped out with the Red Cross, did you do anything else to help out the community?

[Diaz]: That was basically it. We helped at the Red Cross, we did like sorting of different clothing that was coming in. So we would sort shoes, belts, pants, shirts. Again also, me and a couple friends went to the (brief pause) the hard-hit areas and we helped our friends. You know just, take all—everything out of the house. Because, you know when the flood waters come in and everything gets wet and muddy. So you're taking out old couches, and sofas, and bed, and there's trash and [tree] limbs everywhere. So we helped our friends doing that too.

[Hudak]: And do you think if a similar kind of rainfall happened today, do you think Del Rio would be ready or prepared for it?

[17:18]

[Diaz]: You know I'm not sure. (Pause) If it were to happen, all of a sudden like it did in '98, without any kind of warning. I'm not sure. If there were some type of preparation and we had forecast, that we know it's going to flood. There's going to be heavy, heavy rainfall with potential flooding. Yeah, you know the government, you know, the city and the county, they have learned from it so they can put an emergency plan into action.

[Hudak]: And if this did happen like tomorrow let's say, do you think the community would help each other out like they did back in the day?

[Diaz]: Oh yeah. I 100% believe that will happen. That you know, like I said when you live in a small community, and everybody kind of knows everybody or you know somebody who knows your family. Yeah, usually when some tragedy like that happens the community will come together.

[18:25]

[Hudak]: So today, would you say that—you know people that experienced the event, do you think they still remember it?

[Diaz]: Yeah. I believe so. When we had the 20th anniversary of the flood happened, there was a gathering at the Brown Plaza in San Felipe and the had people who lived through it—you know, kind of tell their story and what they remember. So there are people who are still around who remember what happened.

[Hudak]: And you mentioned it was a—like a memorial for this. Are these constant, do these happen [a lot]? Like are there more memorials that have occurred?

[19:08]

[Diaz]: When the flood first happened, right after it. They had kind of a semi-permanent memorial at the mall. One section, they had the pictures of the people who passed away. After a few years, you know that was taken down and moved. And then nothing really happened until—there was a large memorial, its 20 year anniversary. We actually put up—the museum actually put up an exhibit. When I first became director, we didn't have any kind of exhibit on the flood. So I decided to—you know, something that we needed to share with our visitors and youth who didn't know anything about it. So that's another way of memorializing those people who passed away and the event.

[Hudak]: What kind of information is on this exhibit?

[20:00]

[Diaz]: So we have some pictures, we have some video that was taken after the flood, so all of the aftermath. We actually have some artifacts such as the canned water and glass bottled water that the beer companies were making. Instead of making beer they stooped and started bottling water and canning water. We also have the actual rain gauge that was used by the National Weather Service to measure the official rain amount that fell during the flood, and also the charts that were on that rain gauge.

[Hudak]: You said you spent some time living in San Antonio. Would people in San Antonio ever heard about the flood?

[Diaz]: Maybe some have. I know it was a year or two after '98, San Antonio had their own kind of big flooding event. Yeah, but I'm not sure if it's a big of a deal outside of Del Rio as it is inside to the people in Del Rio.

[Hudak]: So I know Del Rio was a city that was hit [by the flood], but did surrounding cities face something similar?

[Diaz]: Yes. I know across the border in Mexico. They also lost a lot of building and—I'm sure some people passed away also. But they also have bad flooding in Acuña across the border in Mexico, so I know that they were also heavily affected by the flood.

[Hudak]: And you mentioned that Del Rio has a lot of water, like rivers, and the lake. Do you think not only did the lake and the water like play a part, but do you think that the infrastructure of the city also played a part in the flooding?

[22:11]

[Diaz]: Yeah, I mean it probably did. I know one of the reasons why it flooded a lot in San Felipe areas was because there was all of debris that was damming up the water, and that debris all of a sudden broke so a huge wall of water came into the streets and wherever the creek was at. On the Northside, you know there's flood plains and flood areas where the city has tried to build around but with all that water it still reached overreached the flood plains and hit some of the houses in the area.

[Hudak]: So I know that Laughlin Air Force Base is outside of Del Rio, did they face anything with the flood and the rainfall?

[Diaz]: Yeah. So, they also—they did get some flooding over there. They always had some kind of flooding, some sort of flooding issues but with all the rain that poured down that night. I know their airfield where they had their planes were flooded. There was debris on the runway. So they also got affected by this too.

[Hudak]: Is there any information that you like to add about the flood that I might've missed?

[23:40]

[Diaz]: Let's see. It was an event that not too many people were expecting. It kind of happened real quick, and the hard part of it was it happened at night. So a lot of people were sleeping—like I said in the San Felipe area, they got out of bed and there was water all the way up to their bed, so they're standing in water. You know stories of cars being pushed off the street into the creek. People on their roofs you know, trying to stay dry from the rising waters. You know, it affected a lot of people here in Del Rio, and there's still a lot of people who remember it. Like I said before the '98 flood, the major flood happened in the 30's so there's really no one now who remembers that. But there are more popped now that remember the flood of '98.

[24:53]

[Hudak]: So you mentioned that many people lost their homes, what happened to them? Did they have temporary shelter?

[Diaz]: Yeah, so actually FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] came in and they built some like mobile homes or some trailer homes out on some land, so they had to move those people onto those FEMA lots—or those FEMA homes because they said that a lot of these homes that washed away were right on the creek—the banks of the creek. Because people had their homes there, you know. And after the flood, when you have nothing but a concrete foundation and everything is gone, you know they had to put people somewhere because they actually lost their home, they lost everything they had.

[Hudak]: Do you know if these temporary homes are still around? Or are they kind of like you know, like not around anymore in Del Rio?

[Diaz]: I believe they are. They allowed the people—FEMA allowed the people to stay there for a good amount of time. After a certain amount of years passed, they gave the option to the people to actually buy trailer or move out to another permanent home

[26:17]

[Hudak]: So, you know when the events of the flood happened and you had to go back to school. Did the school sit you guys down and mention like “If you guys need help, we can help you.” Like what did they do coming back?

[Diaz]: I can’t really remember if there was a lot of—I’m sure the counselors were there to help anyone that needed help. Because you know a lot of people either lost family members, or items, or their home. I just remember being kind of tough going back, you know after not being in school for a few weeks and then noticing it—and everyone coming back and talking about all the devastation that happened.

[Hudak]: Do you have any more stories from people that you knew that had insane experiences with the events of the flood?

[Diaz]: I just really remember my uncle experience of hearing the people screaming at night. I know a lot of people had a hard time. I heard of people walking out to see what was going on and they walked right into the flood—the flood waters and begin swept away, and like having to hold on to tree limbs and trees because the water—the current was actually kind of strong.

[28:05]

[Hudak]: So kind of going back to the museum, I actually have some more question about it. Would you say that the Del Rio community largely visits the museum and its events?

[Diaz]: Yeah. They community event people do come. We do get a lot of kids from the—like school tours when they come to do tours. The majority of our visiting, our visitors are from out of town.

[Hudak]: Oh wow. (Pause) Why do they visit the museum? Just to see it or is there something going on that they want to see specially?

[Diaz]: So you know it really depends. There’s a lot of people—we get a lot of retirees who are traveling. So wherever they go, whatever city their traveling or visiting, they like to visit the museum in that location and city. We are the only full-time museum Del Rio so a lot of them will come over here for that. Then you get your history buffs who love history, love history museums. So they come to the museum to you know, just to learn the history of Del Rio. We do

get some, because we have—we actually have Judge Roy Bean and his son buried here on our grounds, so there are some people who want to come to the museum and see just to see the head stones and where he's buried at. So there's multiple reasons why people come to the museum.

[Hudak]: Do you talk to the people that come to the museum?

[Diaz]: Yeah. Whenever I get a chance, and we usually do have a chance to chat with our visitors, yes.

[30:03]

[Hudak]: Do you maybe know where they're coming from? Like what places—you know, are they from within the state or from like beyond? Where are they from?

[Diaz]: So we actually get people from everywhere. From inside of Texas. From different states—in the United States. And we actually get from different countries, so we've had people from Mexico and Canada. We've had Japan, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Europe. A little bit of everywhere.

[Hudak]: And quick question, what is your like favorite exhibit at the museum?

[Diaz]: So my favorite exhibit is our schoolhouse. And the schoolhouse—it shows the, actually two different school districts that Del Rio had at one time and the consolidation. So before—before I started, there was really no history of the school system here in Del Rio. It's very widely known in Del Rio about that history that had to do with segregation. So I thought it would be a really good idea to have an exhibit, a permanent exhibit in the museum. Not only to share that with our youth so they know how the school system was from pre-1970, and also our visitors who come in from around the world or around the United States can see how Del Rio is also part of that segregated school district.

[Hudak]: And, what exhibit would you say your probably the most proud of?

[31:46]

[Diaz]: I would probably have to say the same exhibit. I put a lot of time and effort into researching that, and uh—I actually had so family members donate some of their memorabilia. So I have my mother's junior high diplomas in there. My uncle's letterman jacket is in there. Because the school districted, when they consolidated, the San Felipe Independent School District no longer existed. So a lot of the items are from that independent school district which is no longer here is very cherished.

[32:29]

[Hudak]: So I've been to the museum a few times myself and I remember you guys have animals at the museum? How did that come about?

[Diaz]: So yes, the pervious director she did have some animals. So sometimes people would want to donate, usually they were birds, birds to the museum so she would take them in. I know we did at one time also have prairie dogs in the back in a small enclosure. But they were just there so the kids could, again lot of times, kids from Del Rio may not have the chance to leave Del Rio and see certain animals or other museums so that's why we have those items here in the museum.

[33:16]

[Hudak]: So you mentioned a lot of the things you have at the museums are donations. What has been the most interesting donations you've gotten?

[Diaz]: It's been—there's been a lot of donations that people bring in. I remember—it's kind of funny because people they think just because they have something old its museum worthy (both laugh), sometimes it's not. Like we had, so a lady came in and she brought in some rocks. That looked like they were maybe skulls or one time have been skulls. They were just, you know with erosion they were just shaped differently. So she thought those were interesting and she brought those to us to look like.

[Hudak]: Did you guys take those in?

[Diaz]: Yeah, we took them in just because they look—they were very interesting (both laugh). You know, they kind of—you don't see a rock like that so we put them in our cave exhibit just to show the kind of rock formations that may happen with erosion over time. A lot of people like to drop off different kind of typewriters. We had some clothing dropped off, like a mariachi outfit that belonged to a little boy from the 1930s.

[Hudak]: Oh wow.

[Diaz]: Just a little, you know a little of everything. We had—one of the clinics closed down. Older clinic, and they actually had in their storeroom some old medical equipment that looked like it was maybe the '30s or '40s. So they donated that to us, that was very interesting because—like I said my background was in science so I like seeing all of that, all that stuff (both laugh).

[35:00]

[Hudak]: Also from what I remember going to the museum—I remember there's like an old train cart? Could you explain to me why that was there?

[Diaz]: Yes! So, that was the caboose, that's our caboose exhibit. It's an actual caboose that they brought into the museum. So, you know the train—the reason they have that here because the train was a—the train and railroad was a very big part in Del Rio's history to have brought people to Del Rio. You know before the train came—the railroad came to Del Rio, you had 200—300 people. After the railroad came in, they built the train station. The population skyrocket to about 2000 people. So it's a very important part of our history. So we show the—we have the caboose, it was donated to the museum. We show it because you know nowadays, you won't see a caboose on a train. They don't use them anymore. Before they used them, there was a reason to have a caboose to make sure everything was okay on the back of the train. Now if you look on a train, you see it's like a small little yellow box which is a computer that basically does the same thing what a caboose would've done back in the day.

[36:12]

[Hudak]: Who donated the caboose?

[Diaz]: I'm not 100% sure. I would probably have to say it was—it had to been the railroad. Maybe Union Pacific.

[Hudak]: You mention you have some employees at the museum. Do you know what their favorite exhibits probably are?

[Diaz]: You know that's a very good question, I don't know (both laugh). Yeah, we have four employees. I know—well our maintenance, our head of maintenance team is Gus Rodriguez. He is very into—his parents or his dad was a sheep shearer, contractor. So he grew up sheep shearing also, and we do have some sheep shearing exhibits and some machines. So I know he really likes that. Whenever we have visitors, and they have questions about the sheep shearing industry or sheep shearing equipment, he's out there taking to them about that. So he knows a lot about that. Our front desk associate Kelley, she is a—she's an artist. So I know she does like—we have an art corner that has a little bit of different art that was donated to the museum. So yeah, she likes those kinds of exhibits that come in.

[37:30]

[Hudak]: So you know before you worked at the museum, did events really occur that often than they do now?

[Diaz]: The kind of events that had mainly were their fundraisers. So they, the museum—we still do them today. The museum has two major fundraisers. In the spring we have Cajun Fest, and in the fall we have October Fest. That was really about it. What I came in, I made sure I wanted to do more community events, or community programs where the community can come in for free and not having to pay. So we do have a lot of events where we ask for a small fee. But I try to do more events where those that maybe cannot afford the fee can still come in and enjoy the museum.

[38:27]

[Hudak]: What would you say—what made you say “Wow, people like this. We should do these more often.”

[Diaz]: When you get feedback, when they say, “Thank you so much for doing this event, we had a great time, we loved it, we’re so glad you’re doing this!” That’s how you can tell that something’s working, when you get the feedback from the community, from this people who actually go the events. They like that kind of event, you know they like learning or seeing what we’re doing. So it’s really the feedback from the people that let us know what we’re doing is working.

[Hudak]: And would you say these events are usually attended by Del Rioans?

[Diaz]: Yes. Yeah, the majority of our events are the locals who are coming.

[Hudak]: And would you say that you always see the same people coming back?

[Diaz]: Sometimes yeah, it’s nice to see the same people coming back but it’s also nice to see new faces. So it’s exciting to see both, the faces you’ve seen before because you know you’re doing something right because they’re coming back, and to see the new faces, it’s also good to see them because, that’s someone maybe that we reached out that has not been to the museum yet and will return at a different event also.

[39:46]

[Hudak]: So is there anything about the museum that you would like to share? Anything I haven’t asked?

[Diaz]: Just that we are a [unintelligible] private nonprofit. We depend on our business sponsors, and we depend on the community to keep us running. That’s also one of the reason we do our free events, because the community really does support the museum and we also want to give back. So as a way to say thank you, we do those free events. Whenever we ask for donations—or we have little donation jar, people are always put money in there. Now with electronic funds and Cash app [mobile payment service], people using that too. And you would be surprised, even during a free event people will give a small donation as a thank you for doing that. So that’s one of the reason why we do this, a thank you to them because they really do support us.

[Hudak]: Kind of going back to the flood, would you say that the impact of the flood is being forgotten by the newer generations?

[41:00]

[Diaz]: By the newer generation? Yes. By the younger kids—anyone who was born maybe after 1998. Where they don't know anything about it, unless they learned about it in school or here in the museum. The people who experienced it, my generation we still remember it. There's people who when it rains—when there's a heavy rain we kind of get kind of nervous, like we don't want that to happen again. So it's still on the mind of people.

[Hudak]: Again, for younger generations how would explain the impact that the flood had on the city?

[Diaz]: So we just show them like [unintelligible], they were canning water instead of beer. So we actually have one of those cans. We have also like a beer bottle filled with water instead of beer. So we show them. "Look we couldn't drink water from the sink how you do now. We had to go get gallons of water and they had to bring water to us." You know we just try to show them. We have a video played on loop of all the devastations so they get to see all the houses that were destroyed, they get to see the helicopters that were coming in to lift cars out of the creek. So that's one way we try to share and keep that history alive with the younger generation now.

[42:39]

[Hudak]: You mentioned there's an exhibit at the museum about the event, have you gotten comments from people attending the museum about it? Like "Wow this is—I never knew about this."

[Diaz]: Yeah. So when we first opened it up, we had a lot of people come in because they wanted to see what we had. You know they were very surprised with the pictures we had and everything, and they really liked it. It was a good memorial to the people who passed away. Yeah, they'll be people who come in who didn't even know that the flood was here. You know the younger generation of Del Rio, they see it and they're like "Wow, we heard about the flood but we didn't really know it was that bad." We've heard some stories from families, but looking at the pictures and seeing the devastation kind of adds onto the stories that were told by their family.

[Hudak]: Lastly, is there anything else you that you want to add?

[Diaz]: I think we already went through everything. (Hudak laughs) The museum is here for—we are here for our community. We try to preserve our history here in Del Rio and showcase it. We preserve for our youth to learn from. The flood was an event that affected a lot of people here in Del Rio. Like I said, every time there's a heavy rain they're like, "Oh my, is it going to flood again like '98?" You know, people bring it up again because it's still on their minds. But besides that, we kind of went through everyone so it's real good.

[Hudak]: Well Michael, thank you so much for talking with me. I learned so much.

[Diaz]: Of course, thank you for inviting me to be interviewed. I'm glad to help out.