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Dana Sales interviewed by Nicholas Nasser

Speakers: Dana Sales, Nicholas Nasser

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Scope and Contents: In this interview, originally recorded via Zoom, Dana Sales speaks with Watsonville is in the Heart team member, Nicholas Nasser. Dana discusses his experiences growing-up and working on a rural farm outside of Watsonville as well as the differences between rural and urban areas of the Pajaro Valley in regards to his experiences attending primary and secondary schools in both settings. Dana provides an overview of his father, Florendo Macadangdang Sales' migration and labor histories— these include immigrating from the Philippines in 1929, working as an agricultural laborer, serving in the US Navy, and eventually opening his own barbershop on Main Street in downtown Watsonville. He also speaks about his mother, Dora Esther Tomlinson's work in Watsonville canneries and her family's experiences as migrant laborers during The Great Depression. Throughout the interview, Dana reflects on race and racism including his parents' silences about discrimination they faced and his own experiences with systemic racism during high school and when he attended the Naval Academy. Finally, Dana provides in-depth insight into the urban redevelopment of downtown Watsonville during the 1980s which destroyed many minority-owned businesses including his father's barbershop. Dana speaks about his efforts to stop urban development and preserve agricultural spaces in Watsonville through his careers in real estate and his tenure on the Watsonville City Planning Commission.

Nicholas Nasser 00:00

Start. Um. Okay, perfect. All right, we're recording now. So, I was just gonna ask, you know, what's your full name? Your— and just give a little bit about your background.

Dana Sales 00:13

Full name is Dana Macadangdang, oh let me get through to this. Dana Macadangdang Sales, which is kind of interesting in itself because in Filipino, and in Spanish I'm sure it's Sales, even though it's spelled S, A, L, E, S, but what's interesting about that is I've talked to people and the first time they ever heard my last name was when I went to elementary school. And you can imagine at that time, all of the teachers were Caucasian, and they looked at a role sheet, and it looked like Dana, Dana Sales. So, my entire life, you know, up until probably high school, all I ever heard was Dana Sales, and it wasn't until I started meeting more Hispanic teachers and other people that have be—I realized, well, it's probably Sales, because for the longest time the Philippines was a part of Spain.

Nicholas Nasser 01:04

And do you go by Sales now? Or do you stick with Sales?

Dana Sales 01:08

Wow. So, that's that's kind of, I guess we could start off with there. So, like your early childhood in Watsonville—Um, could you just give me a general background to that?

Dana Sales 01:08

You know, I actually stick with Sales. I hear both, and I have no problem with both because I believe that originally it was Sales, but my entire life had been called Dana Sales.

Dana Sales 01:29

You know, I was I was born in Watsonville. My entire—all my brothers and sisters were too, and actually I'm number 8 of 10 kids. When we—they grew up in what would now be kind of like the Lower Main area of Watsonville, the southern edge of Watsonville—Watsonville on what was then called Bridge Street, now it's called Riverside Drive. And actually, I drive by my parents original house on the corner of Lincoln and Bridge, or Lincoln and Riverside, almost every day. And it was like a, probably about an 800 square foot house, and what they bought—left that in 1955, and moved out to the country, and I was born the next year. So literally, I was the first child born out of the country. There were three of us, and so it was a completely different childhood than my older brothers and sisters because they literally literally lived in the middle of town. Walk to the corner store, Watsonville High School was across the street, and I grew up on a five acre farm on Lakeview Road, went to a rural school called Salsipuedes. And what's interesting, looking over some of the questions about the neighborhood and stuff is there was no neighborhood, we were all farmers, you know, we lived on five acres, the next guy next door was on five acres, the guy next—on the other side was 38 acres. So, it's kind of like we didn't have a neighborhood, like you would think of and pretty much the only kids we played with was brothers and sisters.

Nicholas Nasser 03:03

Wow.

Dana Sales 03:03

So, and being farmers, you know, we grew up on a farm, and my dad used to say that the reason he bought the farm was because—to keep us out of trouble because when you when you're a little farmer, small farmer, there's always work to do. And so that's how I grew up was being, you know, working on a small farm, and and we never had a lot of money. Never went on vacations. Never did a little league or any kind of youth sports because there was too much work to be done on the farm, and when we weren't working on our farm, we worked for our neighbors because they actually paid us. And what was interesting about that was we'd worked summers for the neighbors picking strawberries, oallieberries, cherry tomatoes,

zucchini, and my mom would take all our paychecks and save them up to buy school clothes at the end of summer cause that's when we got our new set of clothes for school to start. So, as far as the neighborhood goes, and being involved in a lot of stuff, we were pretty much just wrapped up on working on the farm.

Nicholas Nasser 04:12

Oh, I mean, how does that—so, I guess we could jump from there to school. I mean, what was school like, like in a rural community? How would you, you know, you learned this thing about your name, you know, growing up, you know, all your Caucasian teachers calling you Sales, you know, what was school like for you? How did that kind of affect you?

Dana Sales 04:31

You know, what's interesting about that is that reading through some of the questions, it talked about, where did you feel comfortable and welcomed? And actually it was school. That's where I met, you know, all the other kids and all the other people. We would walk down the hill and catch the school bus, and it was a kind of at the time it was a—everybody knew everybody at the school because it was our own little community. It wasn't a big Unified School District yet. It was a one school district and so we'd get on the bus go to school. That having—being number 8 of 10 kids, my entire school life was oh, I know your brother, I know your sister, or if you're half as good as this sister, you'll do fine. Or don't be—my mother used to always say, don't be like your brother, you know, think you'd hear that kind of stuff, but I really enjoyed school. It was probably the—it wasn't physical work because that's what you did all day at home, because of the farm, but it was more using your mind, and I really excelled at school, I really enjoyed it there. And made made—thats where I made my friends, and that's the only place I really saw my friends because that was our chance to be together. So, school for me was a great, the comfortable place and a good experience.

Nicholas Nasser 05:50

What did it look like?

Dana Sales 05:53

Well, that being a rural school, it was it was a K through 8, which pretty much don't exist anymore. And you know, single story K through eight, there was a regular part of the school, which they call the lower part of the campus, was the kindergarten through fifth grad, and then there was a baseball field and a big open field, and then the other— they had a sixth, seventh and eighth grade at the other end of the campus. And the whole thing was probably on about probably 15 or 20 acres, and so it was a lot of open space. And we were in the middle of, you know, one side, lets see on two sides, three sides was farms, and then on the other side was just a small subdivision of about five homes. So, we were in a rural school in a rural district, and everybody got to know everybody and, and all the teachers knew all the families. So, that

was another thing that was nice about it was that we weren't in a big school. And that's where all my brothers and sisters went. My mother eventually became a school bus driver, and so she got to know a lot of people, but that was when I was in high school already. So, actually going to high school was a whole another big experience because that was coming into town, but it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it.

Nicholas Nasser 07:16

Was it in— what— so you—so what community was where—did you go to high school in Watsonville?

Dana Sales 07:22

Yeah. Watsonville High.

Nicholas Nasser 07:23

But you went to elementary school and middle school in a rural district outside of Watsonville?

Dana Sales 07:28

Yes, yes. Actually, at the time I was in elementary school. I think it was probably in about the fifth grade that they unified and became Pajaro Valley Unified, and what happened then was about I think six independent districts became the one unified district, and because you had Pajaro, which was its own little district. Salsipuedes, which is where I went, one school district. The in town had their own district, Freedom had their own districts. So, you had a conglomeration of—and even out in Corralitos, they had their own little district, but they all came together to become Pajaro Valley, and that happened when I was in about the fourth or fifth grade.

Nicholas Nasser 08:13

Wow, you know, speaking on that kind of, when you went to high school, how did you see kind of like this community, like change, you know, like you were saying how everyone knew each other, everyone knew your family, did that change at all going into high school, and in Watsonville?

Dana Sales 08:28

That changed a lot because it used to be I knew everybody, and I knew all my—the cousins who were there and all the teachers very well. And they, there was a lot of communication between the teachers, so they knew what was coming and and my parents, my mother especially, would go to every PTA night, and get to know our teachers. And it was almost embarrassing, because you know, the way she was what she told the teacher, if you have any problems with my kids, you make sure I know about it because you can give them hell, and they're going to catch it when they get home. So, that was the kind of a situation it was in the

elementary school, but then going to Watsonville High was kind of like holy cow, what is this? Coming from a small rural district, and then all of a sudden being in one of the biggest high schools in the Monterey Bay Area, and literally being from the small school, was kind of a disadvantage, because you didn't know a lot of people and some of the bigger schools, and bigger districts that merged in and came together, you were you became a small fish in a big pond. So it wasn't—but I had a good time there too.

Nicholas Nasser 09:37

Um, what so, you know, you're saying about your parents a little bit kind of about how your mom who like really, like, instilled into you some like these kinds of like, Oh, if you do anything wrong at school, you'll feel it back at the house. Could you tell me a little about like your relationship with your parents and a little bit of their story, especially relating Watsonville?

Dana Sales 09:56

Yeah, actually, my mother was she worked—my earliest memories was she worked out in the canneries, which was a big deal back in back in the day in Watsonville, that we were the frozen food capital of the world. And she worked in the canneries, and eventually became a school bus driver when the—with the school district, and she did that for almost 30 years, after working in the canneries, plus we worked on our farm. So, it's kind of like working all the time. My dad was a barber, and this was the f— now my mom was born in Silver City, New Mexico. And her maiden name was Tomlinson, and her father came from Connecticut. So, but she would tell stories, even to this day, she just turned 95 just about two weeks ago, and she talked about how she'd probably been to about 35 of the 50 states because during the Depression, they became migrant workers, and just find a job where you can wherever you can find a job kind of situation. So she grew up in real poverty, she would tell stories about camping out on the beaches, just because that's where you found a place to live. And she would—we would drive down to Southern California to visit somebody and she—we'd drive through Long Beach, and she would tell me about Signal Hill, which is where the oil rigs were because that's what Long Beach was first, was a lot of oil rigs, and they discovered oil. So, she would tell all these stories, whenever you go somewhere about well, your uncle did this, or or your brother did that or when I was a kid, and you would hear these stories about going through that time of her life.

Dana Sales 11:39

Now my father immigrated to—was born in 1910 and immigrated to the America in 1929. He was 19 years old, came to work. I was told you had to have a sponsor then to come to work in the ag. fields, and his sponsor was Andy Madalora, who was a farmer, Filipino farmer in Salinas. And the story is, now dad never told me this, but the story I've heard is, he spent about two weeks in the field and said, this is not for me. So, he decided to try something else and went to barber school school, and he was a barber for the rest of his life. Owned a barber shop down and on what was Bridge Street, but then, when they widened Riverside to make it a

major highway, they actually condemned the property he was in. So that broke up the—him and two other—two or three other partners got together and they had this Filipino barbershop, and then he bought his own land on Main Street, right across from City Hall at the time. And I can remember to this day, him sitting in his brand new barber shop and his brand new barber chair, looking at across the street at City Hall and saying, they'll never gonna force me to move now, because I'm on Main Street. And I told a story at one of the gath—Filipino Watsonville is in the Heart meetings at the library, and I pointed out that one of the ironies is that he—I can remember that vividly him telling me that, and eventually, in the 80s, the city of Watsonville, condemned the entire 200 block under the guise of urban renewal. And the city manager at the time was saying things like, I've got developers who want to put in new shopping center here, it's going to draw a bunch of people downtown. It's what we need to get rid of this blight is what they called it, which is kind of like—Oh, I hate to say this kind of thing, but it's kind of like you'd find an area that is a majority minority owned, and it's suddenly blight. Because the 200 block of Watsonville at the time, which is where the City Hall is, the city civic plaza, and the post office are now was the highest density of minority-owned businesses in Santa Cruz County.

Nicholas Nasser 14:09

Wow.

Dana Sales 14:10

That's where Daylite Market was, which was Chinese owned. My father owned his barber shop there. There a couple of tire shops, there were some Chinese restaurants there. You know, it's a lot of minority-owned businesses, and they tore the whole thing down because they had developers who wanted to develop it, but then they didn't do anything to relocate anybody. You know, it's pretty much they shut down all these businesses and left people to fend for themselves. Really successful businesses still exist is De La Comida Market, started on the 200 block of Watsonville, but it was another business that was forced out. They were luckily they relocated into the industrial part of Watsonville, and they have done very well.

Dana Sales 14:53

But my dad was a barber, and so when all of us kids and mom are working in the fields all day and night, he was cutting hair on Main Street. And which kind of didn't seem right to us because he had the easy job, but now that I look back, he, for what he had to work with, he did very well, because as an immigrant who came with nothing, and created his own career, served in the Navy, came back to Watsonville. And he helped make those payments on that farm and the payments on that barber—he on that land with the barbershop was, and did very well. But I can remember times when you go to bed hungry, just because it's that's the way it was. We never, ever thought of ourselves as poor. You don't realize it until you're—you've moved on, but that's the way it was. So unfortunately, when my—when the city decided to redevelop the downtown, it was about maybe a year later, my dad had his first heart attack

because it kind of messed up his whole concept and plan of his future, his retirement, but that was the beginning of the end. So yeah, dad worked a lot. We used to see him, because of the nature of how he worked, he would go to work at about seven o'clock in the morning, and we never knew when he was going to come home because if there was a head to cut. It's not like it was a barber shop that opened up at 9 and closed at 6. If there were people who were lined up at 8, 9, 10 o'clock at night, he was gonna stay and cut their hair, because you can't turn business away. Yeah, he was barely squeaking by making payments on properties and trying to get ahead. So, you know, we saw him usually on Sundays when barbershops are closed, and the hard part about that was he would come home and give us a list of things we needed to do. So it just seemed like we're working all the time. Which is probably why I really like school because it was my excuse not to be on the farm.

Nicholas Nasser 17:12

Yeah, wow. Um, you know, that's—and he was from the Philippines, right?

Dana Sales 17:17

MmmHm

Nicholas Nasser 17:17

Just making sure, and he—okay. I mean, I figured and then you're—so your mom was she was born in New Mexico?

Dana Sales 17:24

Yes.

Nicholas Nasser 17:25

And what's her—What's her heritage? You know, I know she was going through the—and her father's from Connecticut?

Dana Sales 17:32

Yes.

Nicholas Nasser 17:32

Okay.

Dana Sales 17:33

Her father is from Connecticut. Her mother, I believe was from Silver City, and that's where they met, and her maiden name was Lopez. And we—that's one of those things where we don't know a lot about our—the family beyond my mom and dad. My mom would tell us that my God—my grandfather on her side was a baker. That was his trade, but when jobs got hard

to find, he pretty much did anything that you could do to get by. And on my father's side, I know that my grandfather worked in the sugarcane in Hawai'i, which was kind of a stepping stone from the Philippines, to Hawaii to the United States, but he pretty much stayed in Hawai'i, and then came to the United States in his later years, and eventually went back to the Philippines, and that's where he passed away, but he was a laborer.

Nicholas Nasser 18:31

Wow, and they met, where did your parents meet?

Dana Sales 18:34

Watsonville

Nicholas Nasser 18:35

Wow, and what what around what time?

Dana Sales 18:38

This probably would have been—I'm really not sure. My oldest, my oldest brother is about 77. So probably around 77, 75 years ago, something like that. So that's—

Nicholas Nasser 19:01

I mean, you know, forgive me if this is a sensitive topic, but was your father around during the Watsonville race riots?

Dana Sales 19:08

You know, when I saw— what was the year of that again?

Nicholas Nasser 19:12

I think 30, 30 to—in between 30 and 33.

Dana Sales 19:15

That was right then because he came in 1929. So, it was right when all that upheaval was happening, and you know, my mother being from New Mexico, and her father being from Connecticut. They were right in the middle of it, because he was a Filipino with a white woman. And one of the things I pointed out to people when we talk about the history is that—now this is something my parents never talked about struggle, or divisiveness, or racism as they experienced it, but one time I was in a family gathering and it was my mom and two of her sisters were there, and one of the sisters actually said, you don't know what your mom went through, you know, we all went through because the strange oddest thing is of, I believe four or five sisters together married Filipinos, and they're all white. And this this aunt was telling me, yeah, we used to walk down the street, and because we were dating Filipino men or being

seen with Filipino men, you know, we were called monkey lovers, and we were, you know, we were literally spat at, or just the racism was enormous. So it was, but my parents never talked about that stuff. I learned about it from an aunt.

Nicholas Nasser 20:40

Why do you think they never talked about it?

Dana Sales 20:43

You know, I think it's because they didn't want to taint our view of the opportunity of America. I really believe that they even even having gone through that kind of an experience, I think that they always taught us that you could do anything you want to do. You know, the doors are open, the opportunities are there, and you just have to take the—you know, work hard, study hard, and you can really make yourself into something when we're here in America. So, I think that's probably why they never talked about it because they didn't want to taint our outlook or optimism.

Nicholas Nasser 21:18

And how did that—how did—what was your kind of first experiences with racism in Watsonville? You know, how did you—how did that affect you? And especially with your parents, not hiding it, per se, but not wanting to taint kind of that experience, how did—what was kind of was there like a awakening moment for you?

Dana Sales 21:36

Yeah, there was. Actually, remember, I talked about how much I love school.

Nicholas Nasser 21:40

MmmHmm

Dana Sales 21:41

I did, I did very, very well, in school, especially elementary school, to the point where, when I graduated, I had straight A's, and I was the guy who got up and gave the speech at graduation. There was no such thing as a valedictorian, but I was the guy they chose to give the speech at graduation. And, but then I got the Watsonville high, and in my freshman year, you know, I had—I wanted to be a scientist, I wanted to, you know, be a chemical engineer or something like that, and and I started taking classes, and what happens is a guidance counselor, which would come in at the end of your eighth grade year, and start talking to people and setting you up for classes. Well, what I found was, if I wanted to be on a track to go to college and do the things I wanted to do, you know, you got to take chemistry, and biology, and and algebra, and geometry, and trigonometry, and all those types of things. But I found myself taking things like, I was signed up for woodshop, and basic mathematics, and you know, just, I looked at my, at

my schedule, and I actually went to the counselor, and said, you know, this is not going to get me where I want to go. This doesn't make sense to me. And at the time, I think it was—they had a program called I think, it was XYZ. And I'm not sure which was the higher which was the low but like, X was vocational school. Y was average student. Z was college bound. Well, I had been placed in the lower level, even though I had great grades, even though I had done very well. The—so I went to the counselor, and I'm sitting in front of this counselor, and the counselor says to me, you know, I don't understand why you're worried about this, I mean, you're getting great grades. I said, yeah, but they're not the gr— the courses I need to be in to go where I want to go, to do what I want to do. And so I complained, and I pushed and I pushed, and I got reassigned to a new counselor, and then all of a sudden, I started getting into the classes I wanted. And the bottom line is I had been placed there because one of the other things that that first counselor said, well, you know, our experience is that that that Mexicans and Filipinos have a hard time with the higher level courses. So, it had nothing to do with what I was able to do, had to do with where I came from and what I looked like. That was the eye opener for me. That was where I began to see. This is not right, because I didn't I didn't experience that in my little country school, but then that was a program in high school. So yeah, it was that was the big eye opener for me.

Nicholas Nasser 24:39

Wow. I mean, and how did that kind of—so, I assume that you did well, you know, moving forward into high school, and so, in terms of not not necessarily kind of, like direct racism placed against you that you faced, did you feel that like even when you kind of did have like these opportunities, you're doing these great classes, did you feel like there's still things holding you back? You know, I was just [unintelligible] about that, or did you feel, you know, like in the time that you could, like, do whatever you want to—were your dreams ever crushed by other people?

Dana Sales 25:14

No, no, they weren't not at that time, not in Watsonville High School. Once I got over that hurdle. It was like smooth sailing. I did very well, in W—at Watsonville High ended up student body vice president, my senior year, actually led a statewide organization on Califor—California Association of Student Councils, I was the president. So, it's kind of like once I got into the opportunity, again, I took off and excelled and did very well, eventually becoming—I received a congressional nomination to the Naval Academy, and that's where I went, that's where I went to college. Now, that's a whole other story because, here we go again, it's another—the other obvious or glaring example of racism, or probably more corruption than racism, actually. When I applied to the Naval Academy, I had applied a year and a half ahead of my graduation from Watsonville High because that's what I wanted to do. And so I did the application process, had good grades participated in school, politics, leadership, statewide leadership, varsity sports, band, worked at the Fox Theater, almost full

time, and st—still did very well, and it got to the point where the academy actually assigned a person to me and—because they wanted me to apply. And this is about a year before the actual appointment, and so I met with this person, we— he got to know me, I got to know him. We went through the process together, I ended up meeting people up at Moffett Field, who were coordinators for admission to the Academy. And we did—we jumped through all the hoops—the hoops, we did everything that was necessary, dotted the T's, crossed the I's, and then come to find out I didn't get the nomination, the Congressional nomination that you need to get into Annapolis. So, it all of a sudden is like whoa, wait a minute, what happened here, even the academy was upset with it. So, out of the blue I—uh another Congress person decides to give me a nomi— a another—one of their nominations. Well, it turns out this nom—because the academy wanted me. So, the nomination came from Shirley Chisholm, of Brooklyn, New York.

Nicholas Nasser 27:59

Wow.

Dana Sales 28:00

Well, Shirley Chisholm, if you know much about American political history and civil rights, is a major player. She's the first black woman to run for president. She actually beat the system to be elected to Congress in the first place. So, got the nomination got into the academy, and come to find out about two and a half years later, the congressman who didn't give me the nomination, got upset in his bid for re election. And somehow, my issue came up, the fact that I didn't get a nomination because he had—every congressperson gets 10 nominations. Turns out that the year that I didn't get one, he gave his 10 nominations and none of his nominations were accepted at the academy. So, he had a person who was ready to go ready to—you know, the academy wanted me and then to find out that he didn't get any nominations and didn't nominate me. Well, when this came up during his campaign, and I hadn't I hadn't have no idea how this all came—came to light to me afterwards, but his time his nominations went to all white applicants, some of them had not even applied to the academy. Some of them didn't have the grades or the background to go to the academy. So, that became a campaign issue. So, his field representative the guy who ran his office in Salinas said well this you know, Mr. Sales didn't get his application in on time. Well, that was another nail in the coffin because the academy wanted me so bad that this person they assigned to me, made sure to send everything in certified mail, and it had my—his field representative signature on the certified mail a month before it was due. So, this guy was upset, and he was upset by Leon Panetta. So, here's there was another example of there's something wrong with this picture.

Nicholas Nasser 30:17

And what what year was this all in? What, like decade?

Dana Sales 30:21

This was in the mid 70s. I graduated from Watsonville. High in 74. I was the Naval Academy class was 78.

Nicholas Nasser 30:30

And did you want to—what kind of career did you want to pursue when you went into the Naval Academy?

Dana Sales 30:36

I wanted to be a well, when you get go to the academy, you have a choice of becoming a surface warfare, which is a regular sailor, Marine Corps, or Navy Air, and at the time, I had spent the last the third year at the academy, they actually let you try each one out. So, I spent a week at Quantico, Virginia with the Marine Corps. I spent a a week in Pensacola, Florida, actually got to fly a jet and helicopters, and spent a week in New London, Connecticut, and was on a submarine for a week, and then Newport, Rhode Island was on the surface warfare. Regular ship, a cruiser, and that's what I that's what I liked. I liked being regular Navy.

Nicholas Nasser 31:29

And did this—and did you—how did this kind of, you know, like, this, you know, this whole thing has been, it's—you have a crazy story, you know, it's the— it's just with the congressional nominations, the fact that you kind of, you know, didn't let anything stop you, which I think is very admirable, but, you know, when you were in the Navy, and like the surface warfare, kind of how was that—how was that experience, you know, did you ever want to— kind of like, what would your parents think? What did your friends think? Just how did it kind of how can you, like, picture it out, expand it a little bit?

Dana Sales 32:07

This is this is a whole other story. Actually, when that came down, when the they found out that the Congressman lost his seat. He was the, I believe, the minority whip of the Republican Party at the time, and traditionally, Republicans are very pro defense, pro military, and I managed to get some poor grades on a one semester. So, I was sent before an academic board, which—and usually what happens, you go to an academic board and they tell you, come on Mr. Sales, you need to buckle down, you need to go to summer school, you need to get your grades back up, and they set out a plan for you to succeed. Well, I get the—and what I was told that this was in the middle of my junior year, second class year, and then I get a notification from my company officer, that you're going to be recommended for separation from the Academy, which is like, what, you're supposed— you know, this is a program we're supposed to help you finish off and get back on track. Well, I went up to talk to my company officer and talked to him for about an hour and a half, and he says to me—now this gets into systemic racism.

Dana Sales 33:29

He says to me, you know, Mr. Sales, I've been told to recommend that you be separated from the Academy, but having talked to you looking at your record, knowing how you feel about this, I wasn't gonna go to the board, the academic group, and tell them that you should be retained and you know, you're worthy of being an Academy graduate. So, I end up going to this academy, you know, this academic board, and what it is is three people, academic dean, the Commandant of Midshipman, the highest ranking marine at the Academy, and my company officers sitting next to me. The guy who is supposed to be my advocate. When we walk into the room, and he says—the the captain, soon to be Rear Admiral, who's the commandant running the show, says Mr. Sales, you've been recommended for separation from the Academy, and—but I see here that your company officer says that you should be retained. And he looks at my company officer and says you were given orders, and the company officer says, he was a lieutenant in the Navy, says you know, I had a long conversation with Mr. Sales. I feel he's a true asset to the Navy and to the Naval Academy, and goes on and on. And again, the commandant looks at him and says, you've been given an order. Mr. Sales, you will be separated from the Academy, and he looks at the—my company officer and says, we'll talk to you later.

Dana Sales 35:21

Apparently, the word had come down from above that I needed to be separated from the—or or I was being blackballed by the Navy, and I believe in my deepest of hearts that it was because I had upset the cart a bit when the Congressman lost his seat. So, when you talk about systemic racism and the how Congress acts, it's—I have a hard time denying those things, when you've seen it happen. After that I, because I was being separated, I actually went to the process of separation for the Academy, had to go meet with a commander who was uh in charge of that process, and he pulls up in my file, he says, lets take a look here, and believe it or not, this is happening on my 21st birthday. So, he opens up my file, and he first sees my birthday, he says, oh my god. Well, let me give you a hug, and this commander gets up and gives me a hug. He says, I'm looking at your file, and you have a true aptitude for the service. You have been chosen actually had been chosen to be part of the academy leadership, your senior first class year. I don't know what's going on here, but I'm sorry, and I apologize. This is coming from a commander in the Navy. So, that was it. That was my naval career. Now, another thing I kind of skipped over here was when I was a plebe. In the Naval Academy in West Point, when you're there for your first year, it's kind of it's kind of like hazing, but it's not because that you're under constant pressure. To you know, being yelled at being screamed at, having to literally run through the halls whenever you're in the dormitory, and there was a thing called come around, where the two plebes would have to, you're a plebe your freshman year, the two plebes would have to go to an upperclassman's room, and they would hit you with questions. This was every night, every weeknight, and it's like, you had to

pick two front page articles in the paper, you had to know the menu for the next 24 hours to the word. You know, because they would publish it, and you would have to go out and be able to tell an upperclassman. Like right now, I would have to be able to tell you, what's for dinner tomorrow night. And when I say dinner, it's like, roast beef with such and such gravy, such and such potatoes, such and such prepared carrots, and you know, to the to the word. And so I ended up in a situation where one of my upperclassmen, my squad leader, a first class officer, said Mr. Sales, I want you to give our table a report on the Marine Corps, and you've got three days to work on it, and when we get together in three days at the dinner table, you can give that report. Well, I got together with another one of the upperclassmen who was very much a Marine, he was—had been a Marine was in the academy, become an officer. And we went at it, I memorized everything you could possibly want to know about being a Marine. And so I ended up sitting at attention, you know, which is what you do at the academy your plebe year, and giving this report and after about 25 minutes of just non stop giving the history of the Marine Corps. That first classmen says, Mr. Sales stop. You've gone way before —way beyond anything I expected. As far as I'm concerned, you can carry on for the rest of the rest of the month and carrying on is you don't have to sit at attention. You don't have to, all that stuff. Well, I ended up with one of the other upperclassmen, a second class person, a third year person saying, I want Mr. Sales to come around to my room tomorrow night. So, I ended up having to go to this guy's room, and this person looks me in the face, there's there's two upperclassmen there. Remember, I said that the plebes would go in pairs to the get peppered with questions as usual. The minute we walk in the door, the upper— one of the upperclassmen, says, Mr. Jones, you're excused, which is the other plebe. So, I'm there by myself. And this second class, soon to become naval officer, Jr. says—he begins to just nail into me and didn't ask me any questions but made a statement. The statement was, I don't care what the first classmen said, our squad leader said, I don't give a damn. As far as I'm concerned, people like you are supposed to be serving us at that table. You do not be need to be—shouldn't be officers in the Navy or the Marine Corps. You know, you look around you, and you won't see Filipinos sitting at the table. They're the ones walking around with the trays in their hands. So, you can count on me to do everything—I don't care about what our squad leader thinks. I'm going to do everything I can to get you out of this academy because it's not for people like you.

Nicholas Nasser 40:59

Wow.

Dana Sales 41:00

And when this happened, his roommate is sitting there on his bunk, literally like this. Head down, bowed down, and that was probably the biggest example of silence is complicity because I knew that that person didn't agree with what was being said to me, but the fact that he just sat there silently, just things like that. You know, you—but you know, when I got out of the Academy, I ended up leaving the Academy opened up my n—my first business two years

later, owned a printing company for 10 years, got involved in politics, got involved with the Chamber of Commerce, headed a couple of service clubs. Just this last year finished 35 years as a school board trustee, but—so it's been a colorful and eventful life. And the more I think about it, I think of things, I know that when we get done here, there'll be things I should have talked about this or should have thought about this, but there's so much that has happened and the little things that you see happen in your life that sometimes you can't ignore.

Nicholas Nasser 42:20

You know, we always could do another interview. I'd be more than happy to talk to you. I'm just think, you know, there's I'm just still so curious, you know, after— where did you go after college? You know, you brought up how did, you know, after—so you left after your third year, so you were 21?

Dana Sales 42:39

Yeah, I was actually I was 15 months from commissioning. I had already ordered you know when you graduate from the Naval Academy, you end up getting a sword you know because you're an officer, you get the big class ring and all that stuff. That had already been ordered. I was ready to cruise into my senior year you know it's but I ended up coming back home and going to—I actually went to Cabrillo College for the the course that I didn't do well at I went to Cabrillo. Took— retook that and two higher level courses, went back to—went to New Congressman Panetta, and he nominated me has his first choice to be readmitted to the academy to finish off my last year and they would not consider my nomination.

Nicholas Nasser 43:29

Wow.

Dana Sales 43:29

Yeah. Wow.

Nicholas Nasser 43:31

That—

Dana Sales 43:33

Everyone was surprised.

Nicholas Nasser 43:34

Yeah.

Dana Sales 43:35

So be—yeah, but remember, I said blackballed by the Navy?

Dana Sales 43:40

Yeah so I ended up doing uh—finishing up some courses I took a Cabrillo. Opened—A friend of mine who had I had worked for when I was in the movie, working at the Fox Theater, said, You know, I got a part time job at a printing company when I was going to Cabrillo. And the guy who owned the printing company made me his manager within three months, and this is my first job out of the Navy, and it's like he just made me, you know, because of the way I work with people my experience and stuff like that. Then another friend who had worked with at the movie theaters, said, let's start our own company. He became my financial backing and I opened up a printing company and had offices in Watsonville and Scotts Valley. Then about eight years later, I got my real estate license, and I've been selling real estate for 33 years and been very, very successful at it. I've actually managed three different companies and not managing now but I'm just selling a lot of real estate. And as you know, it's you know, we used to joke that you'll never be busier than when you leave town. Well, as we got closer to this interview in the hour before we got online, I got two counteroffers on offers I put off for buyers and offer on one of my listings. So, all of a sudden, it's like, as soon as I hang up with you, I gotta jump back into work, but yeah, that's it's been a—and I got into politics, you know, being a Pajaro Valley trustee and then a County Board of Education trustee.

Nicholas Nasser 43:40

Yeah.

Dana Sales 43:47

And, you know, like, if you have to work, please like if you need to— if you need to work, we could finish whenever whenever you feel comfortable—

Dana Sales 44:53

Oh no, we're good. We're good.

Nicholas Nasser 45:01

Alright. Awesome because, you know, I just, I mean, you know, there's these—So you ended up—so where are you located in Watsonville area right now?

Dana Sales 45:41

Uh, actually I sell real estate from Monterey to mostly Scotts Valley. I'm like the expert of Watsonville. People consider me Mr. Watsonville, when it comes to questions and knowing about the market and stuff like that, but I do a lot of—matter of fact, one of the counter offers I'm writing up this evening is San Jose, and because of my background, I ended up, my experience, I ended up working for a developer who has built 150 units subdivision in

Watsonville. And he liked me so much that I ended up selling two subdivisions for him in Menlo Park, and he's Palo Alto.

Nicholas Nasser 46:23

Wow.

Dana Sales 46:23

So yeah, it's been crazy.

Nicholas Nasser 46:27

You know, it just —when you got back, and you started your printing company, and everything, did you ever, I mean, what kind of ties did you still keep to the community, especially in your time, how did it change? How did you see Watsonville change in that period? When you left and when you came back, and you started, you started your first business and everything, how did the—how did you see these kind of like shifts?

Dana Sales 46:50

You know, when when I left, you know, I was just a high school student. You know, that's another whole nother story because having been a guy who worked on the farm all the time and never got n—there were never any vacations. And matter of fact, my parents very first real vacation was to go to Hawai'i to meet me on my ship when it was pulling in to Hawai'i, and that was after they'd been married for 30, you know, probably 30 years, because they didn't go on vacations, but because my ship was coming into Hawai'i, they wanted to be there. You know, and that's another interesting thing is growing up in Watsonville, and working all the time, and not doing any sports except in high school. I had never seen snow. So, I get—when I was at the Academy, the very first time I saw snow falling out— this is in Annapolis Maryland, snow falling outside. I just like I literally went to the window, pulled up the shades, and my two roommates are going, what is it? I said, it's snowing. Now they were both in Pennsylvania. So they were like, yeah. So, you know, there was this country kid who went to the, you know, the big city or whatever. It was—and that was incredible because I had never—now you you were from did you say Massachusetts?

Nicholas Nasser 46:59

I'm from New York City.

Dana Sales 48:13

Oh, New York. Oh, there you go. My daughter went to NYU.

Nicholas Nasser 48:16

Oh, nice.

Dana Sales 48:17

And but the uh—I had never seen humidity before, felt humidity before. So, my very first week in Annapolis, it was over 100 degrees and 100% humidity, and I'm thinking to myself, what the hell?

Nicholas Nasser 48:36

No, Annapolis, I've been there a couple times, and I mean, not Annapolis, but just in Maryland, and it's it's definitely a whole different climate than Santa Cruz, Watsonville. You know, you couldn't ask for a better climate here.

Dana Sales 48:50

Oh, yeah, this is the place. That's why it's great to sell houses here, but what was different when I came back was I went from being the high school student who left to go to the academy, to coming back and opening my own business and being—becoming a community leader, especially in the business area. I got onto the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce. I founded the Junior Chamber of Commerce chapter. Got on the board of the Central Business Improvement District, which was the downtown area agency. So, all of a sudden I went to becoming a kind of a civic busybody and was appointed to the City Planning Commission, literally within five years of coming back.

Nicholas Nasser 49:32

Wow.

Dana Sales 49:33

So, all of a sudden I was in the middle of, you know, what was happening in Watsonville, and watching it grow. Trying to save the downtown, you know, and and keep businesses thriving there, and that's when I ended up getting involved with trying to save the 200 block because the city decided that they were gonna rehabilitate urban renewal that block, and I got very involved did that and that actually catapulted me, as far as recognition because I fought the city of Watsonville very hard. So, that pretty much took me into politics. And but, yeah, I've always been involved in the chamber, always been involved with trying to promote business, and my whole thing was spending all that time on the school board was just making sure that kids have opportunities, and they don't see the type of systemic racism that I've seen.

Nicholas Nasser 50:33

Yeah. I mean, yeah, that's, and that was your motivation. I was about to ask that, you know, like, why, you know, you obviously had opportunities just to be purely successful, you know, with your, I don't know, background, but it just seemed like you got more—as you got more and more involved with, like the community. How did you how did you kind of like see those those

ties like strengthen as you're kind of influenced grew within, you know, like fighting, you know, the, the 200 block—

Dana Sales 51:01

Yeah.

Nicholas Nasser 51:01

uh rehabilitation program?

Dana Sales 51:04

You know, that that was interesting, because it was a, it was kind of like a David and Goliath situation where you had a bunch of minority owned businesses who—and they did not want to sell, they didn't want the city to take over their land, and against the city council, and I had already been seated on the planning commission at that time. And so they were like, city council was not upset because here you have this guy on the planning commission saying that we don't know our business and I literally call them on the table and said, no, if you follow your own—what part of planning is this? Because if you look at the planning of a city, yes, I'm I'm I can be very analytical. It's sometimes— It's you don't want to argue with me, because I'm into the history and the process and how things are supposed to work. And if you look at how a city is planned, it's supposed to be like a five year plan a ten year plan, the City Planning Commission right now should probably be looking at Watsonville, 2050. You know, what do you see as, you know, growth and housing and things like that.

Dana Sales 52:05

Well, what happened in this situation was I was a planning commission, and you had a city council say, we're gonna to get rid of all these businesses and put in a shopping center, and then me say, well, wait a minute, what part of planning is this, you did not plan this, you're not even looking at—you're literally looking at taking land and handing it to a developer and taking it from people. So, I confronted them, and there was a lot of people going back and forth, and that's where you start building your reputation and having people coming out of the woodwork saying, we like what you're doing, we believe in what you're doing, and we think you should be more involved. So, that's when you start building those relationships, getting—and it's probably one of the hardest things for Filipinos, and Asians in general because that's not how we're seen. So, I see so much where they expect Filipinos and other Asians to just accept things the way they are, and move onward, and so it was kind of different that I actually stood up to them and said, no, you're wrong, and I think that was helpful. And so you know, it's that led to a lot of other opportunities for me, because that's when people said, You need to be more involved in leadership, you need to be and you started—I started meeting people who had the same kind of feelings. Unfortunately, they're not Filipinos, but you want to make that impact and tell people that you have the sovereign—this gets back to my parents, these opportunities are

there, you have to take the opportunities. So it's it's an interesting thing to go through, and I think, to hopefully be a role model, that you can do this kind of stuff, and that you shouldn't be excluded from this kind of stuff, and to call it out when you see it. And so, you know, because there's a lot of debate right now about systemic racism, and a lot of denial about systemic racism, but if you've been part of the system, or been a victim of the system, that's your opportunity to really call things like that out. One of the nice things about being from Watsonville is it's a very mixed community. When I was at Watsonville High, you know, the, the Japanese, Filipinos, Mexican, Hispanic, and white. We all got along great. It was just like kind of a class, that kind of an organised situation, and I just—you know, that's one of the highlights, I think was the—of my life seeing so many people have so many different backgrounds and cultures come together, and work together.

Nicholas Nasser 54:52

Yeah, I mean, you know, my first impressions, especially being in Santa Cruz, and not Watsonville are is that, you know, and also just being a university student is that Santa Cruz isn't a very diverse place, you know, and especially the university technically yes, but you know, and I was gonna kind of bring that kind of into it today, you know, you saw Watsonville, and you have all these memories of being like a super diverse, you know, like place where there was systemic racism, but I feel like at the same time, you didn't feel the brunt of it like your parents did. You know, I could I make that assumption, but how do you see Watsonville now? You know, well, how do you see the composition, like the demographics? And like, how do you kind of—and do you think that Watson has gotten better? You know, do you think it's gotten worse? What what's your opinions on kind of like the—and also the social climate too just how do you think Watsonville has changed moving forward?

Dana Sales 55:56

You know, I'm hopeful, I think probably, because you've seen so many minorities grow and get more involved. That used to be, you know, a good old boys network here, and it wasn't Hispanic, it wasn't Filipino, it wasn't Japanese, and Chinese. And it's kind of when I, when I talked about being on the, on the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce. I served on that board for nine years, but I was never given the opportunity to become President of the Chamber of Commerce, which is, and there were people who wanted me to have that position, but there were also powers to be within the organization that were like, yeah, I don't know if we're ready for this yet. But but now, what you'll find is a chamber that's more accepting and has more—you know, is a better reflection of the greater part of the community. So, I think that that's hopeful, I think that what we need to do is keeping a tab on that one group, regardless of who it is, doesn't stifle other opinions and other perspectives. And that's my whole thing is at least bringing everybody's perspective to the table, and hearing it and understanding it or trying to understand it. One of the things I learned as a school board trustee was, I may vehemently disagree with another trustee. But I also think about what, what was this—what brought them

to this position in their life? You know, I've got my position, I grew up as a relatively poor person, growing up on a farm, picking berries, and you know, what school for me was the way out, but I may be looking at somebody across the table, who, whose family owned that farm for four generations, and really never pit—you know, grew the berries, but didn't pick them, you know, that's—or you know, that it's all different, and but we have to have everybody at the table. And I think for me, being able to tell people that you don't have to be in a caste system where you inherit a position. Everything is—I see everything as opportunities. So, I think I'm hopeful.

Nicholas Nasser 58:09

What does your mom think? How does she—you know, she's 95? Right?

Dana Sales 58:14

Yeah. Umm—

Nicholas Nasser 58:16

How is she, I mean, how has she kind of seen, how has she seen this change? And how has she seen you grow and develop? What does she feel?

Dana Sales 58:26

You know, I think that um she is just thrilled, because she has seen the extreme, you know, in her in her lifetime, you know, she has seen where—well, when her and my, my father got married, was when my dad was in the Navy as a barber, and he was stationed in Seattle, Washington. They could legally be married in Washington. They couldn't be married in California. You know, when I talked about my dad owning that barber shop and owning a house, in the beginning, in his lifetime, there were time he could not own property. So, huge changes, but again, that's probably where it comes from, as you've seen people who were given an opportunity, and jumped on it, and ran with it, and changed their situation in life, and I think that she has seen all that happen. It's probably hard for her because growing up during the Depression, you know, you it's very a tough life to live, having gone through that, and when she moved to Watsonville, Watsonville became home. When we bought that farm, when her my dad bought the farm out on Lakeview. She lived there for 50 years, literally 50 years and I sold the property after that because we were all grown up and we're tired of chasing cows when they got loose, but it broke her heart to finally sell the farm because for her that was finally home after having been all over the place, and now actually she's spending time with a sister up in the Sierras, a niece up in Washington, Oregon, and some sometimes here in Watsonville. So, it's like that was she lost that base. So, that's kind of what she misses, but she's also loving the fact that she's visiting all these great, great grandchildren.

Nicholas Nasser 1:00:25

Yeah.

Dana Sales 1:00:28

So—

Nicholas Nasser 1:00:28

Wow, I mean, you know, it just seems like, you know, Watsonville, she finally found some place to call home, you know, and it's—have you seen Watsonville like that your whole life as well? Has it always been home?

Dana Sales 1:00:43

Yes, it has. Actually, the only time I've really lived for an extended period of time away from Watsonville was at the Naval Academy, and it—that made a great impression on me, it was a incredible place. As as much of its as it is a low point, it was also a high point. Part of what made it possible, even though I did well in school at Salsipuedes, and Watsonville High, when I got the to the Academy, I saw a level of being challenged, the few—I think that very few people see, because you're pushed so hard. And the reason they push you so hard is because you're when you graduate, you're literally commanding people, you're put in command, leadership, of ships, and submarines and aircraft, and platoons of Marines. So, they really push you hard, and when I got out of the academy and came back home, it all seemed easy compared to that. So I had such a—it made such an impact on me, and it makes such an impact on I think people who go there, that I've never missed a reunion. And to this day, you know, even though I missed that last year of college, you know, that last year at the academy, my roommates, and my classmates, or my shipmates, they— we we've not lost touch, I'm part of everything that goes on with the class. So it's, it's kind of interesting.

Nicholas Nasser 1:02:12

You know, I was gonna say, I was actually just about to ask, you know, your classmates growing up in Watsonville, in high school, in elementary school, you know, going from a rural place where—a rural school everyone knows each other, into a high school, a big high school where no—you didn't know anyone, you know, coming from a small area, and going into the into the Naval Academy, where you had brothers for life, and also people who put you through incredible discrimination. You know, if—have you have you are you still keep in touch with I know, of course, Naval Academy, but from the other two schools, do you still keep in touch with those people and everything and still have kind of a community here?

Dana Sales 1:02:51

Yeah, we do. Matter of fact, that's one of the interesting things about Facebook [unintelligible]. Yeah, there's like an Watsonville High class of 7—74 group. And there's just recently, somebody started a Salsipuedes Elementary School group. Now, and Salsipuedes ceased to

exist about 10 years ago, it became the Charter School for the Arts, and Alianza Charter School. So, it literally stopped existing, and I used to joke with people that I'm so old that the elementary school I went through doesn't exist anymore. But yeah, there there are still people where we talk about Salsi kids, you know, we were the Salsi kids, and the Watsonville High, we're already working on trying to figure out our 50th reunion. So yeah, so but yeah, we—one of the things about Watsonville is a lot of people, when you've gone to college, pretty much, it's kinda like you'd go somewhere else to make a living because at the time in the mid 70s, or the early or late 70s, you—there wasn't a lot of opportunity for people with a college education. It's because we're a rural farming town. Now, you'll you'll hear, you know, Driscoll needs people with degrees in technology, and and information, and ag has become a very technical career now, and some some aspects of it. So, there are jobs here now, but back then is kind of like if you have a degree in mathematics, or science or whatever, you went to San Jose or Los Angeles or someplace with a job for it, but that's kind of opening up now, I think, because Watsonville is more diverse, business wise.

Nicholas Nasser 1:04:34

You know, it's it's also interesting, you're talking about this kind of like economic change, you know, like the whole Silicon Valley, developing, you know, the whole, and kind of Watsonville isn't in between those places, you know, like Santa Cruz and Silicon Valley, but they're all kind of interconnected, and to kind of like see this, I don't know, rural town and the whole—and from Watsonville downwards along the Monterey Bay, they're also rural communities, and farms. Um, you know, how kind of have you seen—have you seen like a contrast between like this huge boom, like development of like this tech, you know, like of Silicon Valley pretty much with also the growth of Watsonville. You know, could, have you—I don't know, what are your opinions about that?

Dana Sales 1:05:19

Well, actually, it's my opinions are kind of counter to what you would—most people would think coming from a real estate agent, real estate broker. I actually worked on a campaign about 10 years ago called measure U. And what measure U did was we voluntarily put together agriculture people, the Chamber of Commerce, different business groups, planning groups, and said, we do not want Watsonville to become what Salinas is doing, where they're annexing more and more land, and building more thousands of houses. Same thing, if you go down to Solidad and Gonzalez. It used to be these sleepy little agricultural towns, and there seems—you see the signs, you know, new subdivision, new subdivision, new subdivision. So, we actually got together and said, we're going to draw a line, an imaginary line around the city of Watsonville, and say, the city may not grow, may not develop beyond these lines, because we value the historic and beauty of our Valley, and the real beauty of it is as an agricultural open space, and we don't want to lose that. That's what we saw, that's what history will show you in San Jose. Used to be, you know, you think of things like the Pruneyard, it is called

Pruneyard, because that's a part of Campbell area, I think, used to be orchards. Most of the older people will say, yeah, I remember when San Jose was— Del Monte, canning company, is from San Jose, because it was in the middle of all that fruit, and that,—but then it grew without control, and our thing here is to try to stop that from happening here. We see people talk about historically, what's happened in San Jose, and I see what's happening now in the Salinas Valley, and I don't want to see that happen here.

Nicholas Nasser 1:07:12

Yeah.

Dana Sales 1:07:12

Which is kind of weird for a guy who sells houses.

Nicholas Nasser 1:07:15

I was gonna say, yeah—

Dana Sales 1:07:16

Real beauty of the place is our agriculture and our open space.

Nicholas Nasser 1:07:24

You know, that's it's like I was interested in your take, you know, being a real estate agent, and also being involved in the community with like, arguably, one of the biggest growing areas in California now, Silicon Valley. I just—is there anything else you would like to go back and touch on before I kind of, I don't know, move on. I have—I think I have a couple more questions, but if there's anything else that you'd like to, I don't know—

Dana Sales 1:07:56

Not that I can think of, why don't we go ahead, and—I can't think of anything off the top of my head.

Nicholas Nasser 1:08:01

Okay, perfect. So I was just gonna—a couple wrap up questions, and maybe we can go back a little bit, you know, just to visualize kind of Watsonville, you know, in your childhood. You know, if you wanted to take a walk down Main Street, when you were in high school, or an elementary school with your family, you know, as opposed to right now, you know, how would you kind of see like this, this change, you know, just to visualize it?

Dana Sales 1:08:30

Well, actually the, wh—I can vividly remember back in the days when, you know, going back to the early 70s, and that was back in the time when you saw all these older cars going up. They

used to actually cruise Main Street. Only they weren't old cars then, but people used to cruise Main Street, kind of like you saw in American Graffiti, the movie, and things like sidewalk sales. This was before big shopping areas, shopping centers, used to be a Penny's downtown and Ford's department store, and every Thursday night was called a sidewalk sale. And all the merchants would actually push all their merchandise out onto the sidewalk, and it would go till about like nine o'clock at night. Everyone was open till nine o'clock at night because being a rural farm town, people couldn't make it in during the daytime because they were all working. So, it would every Thursday night where it would come alive, the downtown because people everyone was out walking up and down the sidewalks that were full of merchandise, and then going to these little coffee shops. Kind of like the Miramar and the Gold Eagle Cafe and these little you know Mom and Pop type restaurants. So, that's that's what I vividly remember is that that time in that place. Now moving forward to where we are now. It's It's hopeful that they could do some kind of planning that would bring that back. It's hard because of shopping centers now, and people not wanting to come into the downtown's, which has been a problem for almost all older downtown's, but I know the city of Watsonville is trying to do something to bring people back into town, and redoing traffic patterns, and relocating highways and stuff like that. So, the potential could be there, and I know that the city of Watsonville is working hard to try to, to reconfigure the city hall area, but I wish them luck. I'd love to see it happen, but it's just the hard thing to do.

Nicholas Nasser 1:10:38

I was also going to ask ,you brought up you're you're one of 8—10? 10?

Dana Sales 1:10:43

10, I'm number 8.

Nicholas Nasser 1:10:46

I was gonna say, and you said your first—how many of your siblings were born in Watsonville, as opposed to the rural area? It was eight to two? or three? I'm not sure.

Dana Sales 1:10:57

Well, actually, we were all born in the same hospital in Watsonville, but there were um these—growing up in the actual in town, were seven, and then the last three grew up—well, actually, a few of them moved out to the farm too, but I was the first one. The last we were born when we lived on the farm.

Nicholas Nasser 1:11:20

And what do those age differences look like?

Dana Sales 1:11:24

Oh, my oldest brother, I believe is 77, and my youngest brother is about 63.

Nicholas Nasser 1:11:34

Oh. So, that's a that's, kind of a, that's like a almost a little less than 10 year span. I was getting—or—

Dana Sales 1:11:44

No, about 15. Closer to 15.

Nicholas Nasser 1:11:46

15 year span. Yeah, I don't know I was—I was gonna ask, for your family that your older, your older siblings that kind of that kind of stayed in the Watsonville area, how did their lives when you talk to them versus their life trajectories in their career paths, like differ from the you and your other siblings that grew up in a rural area and the ones who moved from Watsonville to the rural area to the farm?

Dana Sales 1:12:13

Um, actually, my younger brother ended up moving to North Carolina, and works in medical sales, medical supply sales. My—I've got another brother who is just a little bit older than me who is a registered nurse at Watsonville Hospital. My oldest brother lives—is retired, and lives in Southern California. Worked for McDonnell Douglas Aircraft, he was a Marine. The—my sister, Vicki, the oldest girl, actually owned the beauty shop inside of Ford's department store, became— [Unknown], and she retired, and moved up to the Sierras. That's where my mom is a lot of the time now. So we—there's only, I believe three of us left here in town. I've got another brother, who was a teacher's aide for the school district for a long time. He retired about five years ago, he lives here in town, my brother, the nurse, lives here in town, and I live in town. Everybody else is all over the place.

Nicholas Nasser 1:13:24

Yeah, hopefully we get to interview them.

Dana Sales 1:13:28

Especially the older ones.

Nicholas Nasser 1:13:31

I was just—that's, you know, to have this kind of like this family, like this network of every—of people to have like, these experiences with Watsonville like, and the community and to have like, even these little differences, with everyone leaving or staying it's just it just, you know, mind opening, you know, just to—I'm just trying to think, you know, is your—if you have nine

siblings, you know, how —who did you tend to be like, who are you closest to? Or if you're equally closest to them? Or how did how did that kind of work?

Dana Sales 1:14:09

You know, because they've moved so much all over the place, I have uh, my brother, the nurse I don't see very often at all, but he's pretty much working all the time, or sleeping, and my brother who retired from the school district, we have breakfast every other week. So, we just touch bases and see what's going on, but I have a brother who worked at the railroad here, and eventually that job took him to Oakland, and then Oma—Denver, and Omaha, and back to Sacramento. Now, we actually have probably the closest, and we would get together a couple times a year and play a lot of golf. Even though I'm a really bad golfer. I don't play golf, it's what it gets down to, but when he retired he took up golf in a big way, and he's just wanted me to get involved in some tournaments. So, we did that for a while. So, I don't spend a lot of time with my brothers and sisters at all, mostly just, you know, the couple of times with the brother in Sacramento, and then lunch or breakfast every other week with my other brother, but that's about it. We're not, we don't get together a lot. Unfortunately, when you get to our age, you get together when somebody passes away. That's when you see everybody.

Nicholas Nasser 1:15:29

How is it—how is it growing up with nine siblings? You know, how is it how is your house? What did it look like?

Dana Sales 1:15:37

It was crazy, you know, that what it was being on a farm with that's the only thing, remember it's for me is that there was all this stuff to do. So, it's not like we could fool around or anything because there was always weeds to hoe, and crops to water, and that kind of stuff. And we—what was probably the best part was we would have, like on Sunday, having a barbecue, because that was probably the only one time when everybody was there at the same time because that's when dad wasn't working. So, Sunday barbecues were a lot of fun, and back in the day, you know, being Filipinos, we every once in a while we'd butcher a goat too, you know, and so that was—and when we did that all of a sudden, all the uncles and aunts and everybody would come in, and it was a big event. So, that was good, but mostly we were busy working and keeping the farm going.

Nicholas Nasser 1:16:38

Yeah, I was gonna ask what kind of food did you eat? And kind of how did those those big social events like, could you describe them at all to me?

Dana Sales 1:16:45

You know, there was my father's brother Rosario, his younger brother, actually, my dad was the oldest in his family. Two of my uncle's came also over to the United States, and his family and our family grew up together. He was always—he was a career army, so he was in Fort Ord a lot, and was in Marina and Seaside. So, a lot of times they would drive to our house for barbecues on Sundays. Or we would go to their house and do barbecues, now they lived in town, you know, Marina is not a farm town, and he was a soldier, but that was we had, I have two cousins who are very close in age, and one's a retired pharmacist, the other one is a r—still an active fire captain in Marina. And we would get together probably at least once a month, maybe more than that on Sundays, and have a, you know, my aunt was Japanese, Auntie Yoko. And so—and she was a great cook. She's one of those people where you walk in the door, and immediately she would get out of her chair and go into the kitchen and start cooking. That was just her way of saying welcome. And so, you know, of course, when ever my uncle's came over, we [unintelligible] in our house, we'd always have lots of Filipino food, actually, at both places, and at my uncle's house, Filipino and Japanese food. So, you know, that's when, you know, if we talk to Filipinos, you know, our uh pancit and lumpia and with all the things you'll see on Facebook and our group page—there's actually I joined a group on Facebook called Filipino cooking and is constantly somebody cooking something, so it takes you back, and but we don't cook it a lot. I've I've finally, you know, having grown up in California, my dad did cooking, my mom did cooking. We didn't do a lot of cooking as kids, but now I've got Facebook, I mean, uh Google and I can pull up recipes and I'm beginning to cook some Filipino food myself, so. Adobo, you know, there's so many ways of fixing Adobo.

Nicholas Nasser 1:19:05

No, um that's, you know, I was also just kind of, I can't, it's hard for me to like think, you know, I growing up in an urban area, it's hard to imagine growing up on a farm. And I have two two brothers. I don't have I don't have, you know, that big of a family. And it's just, it's really kind of, it's really interesting to see how you kind of had like these struggles growing up, you know, these money struggles, but in the time, you know, you're not necessarily you didn't really think about it until after, until later. And you still have all these like amazing memories, you know, and it just, it just seems to me like you really took advantage of your situation. You know, you did—you used the best. You used—you took the most opportunities you possibly could, and was that your parents goal? You know, did they want you to stay in Watsonville? Did they kind of, or they just wanted you to have this, like you said before, like the best version of the American Dream for yourself?

Dana Sales 1:20:11

No, their thing was the best version of the American dream, it was all you ever heard was, do good in school, get good grades, that was part of my mom's whole thing with her teachers saying, if he messes up, I want to know, you know, because to them, and I think you'll see in our culture, it's all about education. It's all about what you're able to do, and even probably

make—that has something to do with me being a trustee for so long, is that I want to see people have opportunities. You can't make someone successful, but you can give them the opportunity to be successful, and I think that's really probably the most important thing that they put into our minds, and the most important thing I can put in the opportunities we can give to other people.

Nicholas Nasser 1:20:55

And you made a career out of that.

Dana Sales 1:20:58

Yeah.

Nicholas Nasser 1:20:59

That's, that's great. Um, I don't know. Is there is there anything else? Is there any other stories that you'd like to share? I know, I know you're busy, and we always could do another interview. Would be more than happy if you remember anything or want to go over any of the other questions. I'm just thinking, Is there anything—is there anything else you'd like to say?

Dana Sales 1:21:22

Not off the top of my head, but if I do think of something, I'll send you a text or an email, and we'll do this again.

Nicholas Nasser 1:21:29

All right, it was it was great to meet you. I mean, I don't want to if you I don't want to cut you off short if you if we have anything else.

Dana Sales 1:21:36

Oh, no, no. Okay.

Nicholas Nasser 1:21:38

I know you're busy, but anyway, it was it was wonderful to meet you, and hopefully we get to talk again soon. It was great listening to your story.

Dana Sales 1:21:45

Great. Thank you, Nick.

Nicholas Nasser 1:21:47

No problem. Thank you. Alright, take care. I'm just ending the recording.