

Chapter 6 – Gustavo – Physician, New Generation

Gustavo Arenas Martinez is a physician (general practitioner) in Tampico, a seaport and oil refining city on the Gulf Coast of Mexico in the state of Tamaulipas.

He is thirty years old. “In some ways I am part of the new generation of Mexicans. In some ways I look at things differently than my father and in many ways we look at things the same way.

General Differences

Ideas about medicine

My father, who is also a physician, and I have different ideas about the philosophy of medicine. For example, he used to think that we had to preserve all the parts of the human body and not replace them. My generation believes that if a part of your body is bothering you and you have to replace it with another organ or part, then do it. For instance, a knee replacement or organ replacement. He has the idea that the human body has the power to fix itself and I don't believe so. Sometimes that works and sometimes it does not. You actually have to fix the problem. You use your hands.

I am a general practitioner, in Spanish a *medico general*, I graduated at twenty-five. Medical school is six years. Four years of training and one of internship and one of social service. I graduated from the *Universidad Noreste* in Tampico.

Americans are familiar with the medical schools in Guadalajara (University of Guadalajara) and UNAM in Mexico City. Would you say that the quality of the medical education is as good in Tampico at Universidad Noreste as in the other universities?

Most definitely, and not just because I went there. The physicians and teachers there came from the other universities like University of Guadalajara and UNAM. Earlier in Tampico they didn't have a medical school. This is a new school, maybe ten years old. Before that, people from Tampico and Tamaulipas had to leave to become doctors. Now, thanks to this school, they don't have to. The medical education in Tampico is really great.

Sometimes it doesn't have anything to do with the school. It just has to do with yourself. How much do you want to be a physician? If you want to study, you can be a great physician in any school. It's all about you. You have to make a commitment to yourself about what you want to do with your life. It's what you want to do with your life. You have to make a commitment to yourself about what you want to do with your life. That's what I think.

That brings up a philosophical idea. Americans have the perception of Mexicans being more fatalistic, less positive-thinking, and less individualistic than we are. Some of the people I have talked to say the Mexican mentality is more positive, more 'yes we can' than older people. What do you think about this?

Maybe. At the time people used to be more *conservador* (conservative) or afraid of change. They worked individually. It sounds kind of selfish, but that was the way it was. The modern generation thinks differently. They open to suggestions; they have to listen to ideas from people from other countries. They are willing to learn about the mistakes of our fathers. We have to learn from the mistakes of everybody. I think that is a good thing for us. We are not perfect people. And American people don't think we are perfect (laughs).

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Most Mexicans are aware of the misconceptions many Americans have about their country and that many Americans think Mexico is a third-world country. For the most part (some Mexicans are, of course, angered by these generalizations), most Mexican people accept that is how Americans think. While they are saddened by our ignorance, they accept it as part of whom we are. They are generally quite willing to explain their culture to any American who is willing to listen with an open mind. The main exception to this, in my personal experience, has been tour operators, guides and taxi drivers – the very people most Americans encounter on their limited trips to Mexico. Perhaps it is because these operators have encountered so many uniformed Americans that they have just gotten tired of straightening us out. I have heard more stereotypes promoted by tourist guides than people in any other profession.

Yeah, I think we are really optimistic and we always try to make things better – the modern generation. We are always thinking about new markets. Like I told you yesterday, you may know the all the people here on the border, but you really need to know the real people from Mexico (the interior). We are very different than the people on the border. You can notice a difference.

Border People And Illegals

I have heard from most everyone I have talked to, "If you want to work in Mexico you can work." Yet there are many Mexicans coming to the United States to work. What is your idea?

It's real easy. I understand when people, –you can say they run out of Mexico – because they want to have a job, and they come to the US to find a job. They work illegally. I think that is worse than what they could do in Mexico. If you really want to work, if you really want to make some money, get to work! You don't have to go to the United States so you can get a job and the pay is better. If you really want to work, you can work. You just have to find it and you have to do a good effort.

They want to go the easy way. They are mediocre people. That is the way I see it. That's why they cross the border and try to find a job in the U.S. That's the people that the American people know the most. All the skills these people have are not the same skills that the rest of the Mexican people have. That's why American people only see the things that these people have to show and they don't see what the rest of Mexican people have to show.

That's a very interesting topic. How could you describe the differences between the people on the border and the people in the interior? I know there are differences from state to state, just as there are in the United States, but what can you say in general?

I see it like this. The Mexican people who live on the *frontera* (the border), they work in the US or they have some kind of business that doesn't give them really good money, just enough to live. They don't have any aspirations. They conform to what they have, so they don't need so much. I'm not saying it is bad. All the people around them are the same, so they get used to it. That's a difference you can notice if you go farther from the border, there are people who have aspirations.

For example, my father used to be a really poor guy. He went to the medical school and he became a traumatologist and now he has his own hospital. He knew from the beginning that he really needed to do something with his life. He made a commitment to himself. The way I see it, that's a difference between people on the border and the people who live in real Mexico

[AUTHOR'S NOTE: 'real Mexico' was an exact quote. Gustavo was more open than many Mexicans in that he voiced this prejudice. It is common, though not often spoken to foreigners. I knew an executive of a medium-sized corporation in Mexico City who always said he was from 'Mexico' which means Mexico D.F., although he was born and raised in Matamoros, Tamaulipas on the border would have meant a loss of status and status is so very important in Mexican business and society in general. Naturally, the Mexicans I interviewed who live on the border have a different view.

So your father's story is a Horacio Alger story. In the United States that is a stereotype, a symbol. Is there a symbolic story like that in Mexico?

I know quite a few people like that, who began like that. At the first you didn't have anything, but with hard work, they attained much.

OK, can you tell me any real stories like that?

OK! Sure. I love to tell stories like this. Right now I work in the distribution of medical implants and things like that. There was this guy who worked with a company that distributed them. He was a really poor guy before he started working for them. He worked

hard and he became very successful. Then the company went out of business. He was really down for awhile and then he committed with himself and found more work. Now he is doing really well and financially strong.

I've talked to a lot of people who have really good jobs, but they are also selling Amway or Avon. Is this common? Is it common for Mexicans to have two jobs?

In Mexico we have one job. They practically work all day. They work from 8 AM to 2 PM. Then you go to lunch. Then they come back at 4 PM and work until 7 PM or 6 PM. It depends on where you live. If you live in Mexico, they get off earlier. I go to work at 8 AM and get off at 6 PM. If you have a part-time job, it probably makes you a really small amount of money. They have part-time jobs. But it is not common. Most of the people only have one job.

The Mexican work-week is officially 48 hours and is a six day work week, right?

Correct.

Middle Class

Do you feel that overall the middle class is growing or shrinking?

It depends on how you see it. If you mean are there more poor than rich?

How would you define middle-class?

There are the poor and the rich and there is the middle. The way I see it the middle-class is always expecting something better. They have aspirations. Once you are in middle-class you can jump into another class.

Some people have said that middle-class threshold is you have a job making the equivalent of \$10,000, a car and a place to live.

[Gustavo looked at me quizzically. I found this was a common reaction, as the quantification of the middle-class is not something commonly express].

The way I see it, the people in the middle-class have an education. The really low-class are the people who cross the border and they suddenly became middle-class by your definition because they have a car and a house and money. But they don't have any education. So I would not call them middle-class. They don't have any title that says they are physician, lawyer or a degree. You need first an education.

When you are in the middle-class you can jump to a higher class. All the people who live on the border are not middle-class. They are below that. They don't have an education.

They suddenly want to jump from point B to point D or something like that. That's not possible.

Thank you. That is a different definition than anyone else has given me. My definition may have come from an American perspective. In the United States, we take education for granted, so we use these other ways to define middle-class. Let's explore this difference in society, if we may. In the United States, some say that we are more materialistic than Mexican society. That means we place more value on money, car and prestige than people. Do you feel that is correct?

That depends on where you live. For example, in Monterrey, people are really materialistic. They are, how you say, *ostentoso* (ostentatious). They really like to show off what they have. You always want people to see what you've got. Your car, your house. That's the kind of people in Monterrey. I do not like the people in Monterrey. Maybe some people from Mexico City are the same way. But the rest, I think they are not like that.

One thing that everyone has said is that family is the most important thing. I am trying to clarify that. People in the United States will say the same thing, but there are differences in what they mean. Can you explain what you think people in Mexico mean when they say family is so important?

In Mexico when you say "family" you mean an extended family – grandparents, cousins, and cousins of the cousins. It is huge. Is this right?

Of course.

In the United States we generally mean a nuclear family – say five people.

Yes, I think so. A family of five.

Do you use the term, "family values" in Mexico?

Sure. All the time.

What do you mean by that phrase?

Family values, you set them in your own family. Or your parents teach them to you. They can go as far as you want. It depends on how big your family is. In Mexico, it is like a tradition. My family is really big – forty people on my father's side.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The gist of this discussion with Gustavo and others, is that the phrase, "family values," does not mean the same thing in both cultures. In the USA, it is generally used to denote a set of generally conservative political and religious beliefs. In Mexico it is more personal, used as a way of expressing the customs and traditions of an

individual family unit. While those beliefs may coincide with the American definition, that is coincidental.

Most Mexicans I have talked to has extolled the virtue of the extended family. Do you see any negative aspects of the extended family? For example, is there envy?

That's true. That's why I am telling you, that's why you have to decide how far your values go. You can get your values to go to your grandparents or fifth cousin. That happens with most families. They have troubles with money or an inheritance. Everybody wants a part of it. That's where the problems begin. And yet we have the other kind of family who really thinks that the family values are really important.

So, like people anywhere, there are two sides – there is a positive side and a negative side. I imagine it is very hard to say no (if you inherit some money or have a job to fill) to your cousin versus a stranger, right?

Yes, you can take me for example. I work with my sister. I didn't have a job for a long time. I went to Spain to go to school. It didn't work out. I came back to Mexico. I was unemployed. So my sister hired me. Right now, I am the manager. She helped me because she considered the family values in this family, if one member had a problem, you help them. You always help them first, instead of a stranger. We do that. We analyze [scrutinize] a stranger very much before we offer them a job. But if we have someone in the family that needs help first, we help them first. That is what we do.

This is a very touchy question. I had a friend who was a gringo who married a Mexican and was fluent in Spanish and understood the Mexican culture very well. But when he was fired from his position, his wife told him there was no point in appealing it. Basically, he was fired because he was a gringo, an outsider, and some members of the board did not trust a gringo to be in charge.

Yes, that is true. I know what you are saying. The people with the old way of thinking believe that because he is a gringo, he doesn't have a right to complain, or to criticize. Yeah, that's true. But I think your friend is the perfect person to see what is wrong with our people, because he sees it from another point of view. He is a gringo and sees what is wrong with Mexican people; the Mexican people don't want to accept the criticism. That is why the Mexican people sometimes reject this kind of person. They aren't supposed to do that. They are supposed to take what he is saying so they can fix the problems. Instead, they begin to hate him. Exactly. They hate him. And sometimes the Mexican people do this.

Do you think it is more common that the Mexican people will resent a foreigner making comments about the society?

Okay, yes, they do. It depends where you go. If you go to Monterrey, you probably get that. If you go to Mexico City, you probably get that. If you go to the provinces [anywhere outside Mexico City], people are different and really nice.

In the United States, people who live in New York City they think that the rest of the country is “the provinces.” Has this attitude changed since you were a little boy?

It is the same.

Do you feel that the people in Mexico City don't understand the people in the rest of the country?

No, I don't think so. I think they understand, but they have a closed mind, they are not open to other people who are not from there. There is envy. It is a really false circle. It is like a vicious circle.

Since all the news reporters are based in Mexico City, do you feel that they don't get a good impression of the rest of the county?

No, I don't think so. It depends on the person. They have the value to respect what the people think. For example there was a reporter who was murdered about two weeks ago. They killed him because they didn't respect what he was trained to show, what he was trained to tell. If you are a reporter, your work is to tell everything that you see. But when people don't have any education, they don't respect others. People who has an education, they respect him, that's his job.

What do you think about the people in the United States?

The United States has very nice people. It depends on how they see you. We [my family] travel to the United States very often. We travel to Florida, to the Rocky Mountains; we get across the USA so we can get to Canada. We always stop in a lot of places. People really treat you nice. It all depends on how they see you. If they see you like, the typical Mexican stereotype, the guy with *sombrero*, the sandals, they will treat you differently. All the times I have been here, the people treat me nice.

The impression that Americans have is that the whole country is violent. What do you think?

There are some spots (Mexico City, Tijuana, Cd. Juarez, Culiacan) where the crime is very high, but it is only spots. It is because the narco-dealers are making a mess of Mexico. In some places, yes, they are violent. They don't know how to treat people from other countries. But if you go to Tampico, or most of Mexico, that won't happen. We have crime, as does every city in the world. People really respect others. This happens in Mexico City because there are a lot of people who don't have an education, people who want to make some easy money. So they rob. But that doesn't happen in Tampico, or the rest of the county.

Since you have traveled so much in the United States, what are some of the biggest misconceptions Americans have about Mexico or the Mexican people?

[Gustavo thought long and hard about this before answering]. Hmm. They think we are like those people who cross the border [illegal immigrants]. They think all Mexicans are like that. That is the biggest one.

Another one is that they think we are a violent people. We are not. Except in some places.

Sometimes they define us like really poor people. [His voice got very sad when he said this, like his feelings were hurt]. We aren't. We actually have expectations and aspirations. We are really good businesspeople. There are a lot of wealthy people in Mexico. Of course we have more poor people than really rich people or even middle-class people, but that doesn't mean that Mexicans are all poor, or that Mexico is a really poor country.

I think that's it.

Most Americans who have been to Mexico have been to Cancún or other resort areas. The Mexicans they know are the waiter, the busboy...

The bartender [laughing].

Yeah, they know the bartender really well. So, when you have meet American people, like when you are traveling or in Tampico, it that generally the case, that their knowledge of the people came from their experiences as tourists?

Yes, you could say that.

Is it safe to say that doesn't give them a true picture of the Mexican people?

Yes.

Returning to safety. One thing I have noticed is that you see children playing in the square of smaller towns at night, without adult supervision.

Even in the street.

Would you still see that in Tampico?

Yes. We divide the city, like in small towns. It is one city with different small towns. We call that *colonias*. It depends on which *colonia* you live. In some the security is really good. Children can play at night and in the parks and nothing ever happens. But there are some *colonias* where there they have a little bit of crime. That's where things like kidnappings happen. It's like in the United States; I think you have the same problem, like in the rest of the world.

True. But in the United States, even in the small towns, you don't see children playing in the parks unsupervised at night. In the United States we are just more afraid in general. One of the things we fear is child molesters. In your opinion, are there more or less of this type of person in Mexico?

I don't know actually the difference. But, yeah, I have heard of this kind of people. But they are not common. It happens in the bigger cities, but not in the small town.

We have a big alcohol and drug problem in the USA. Other people have told me that drugs are not as big a problem in Mexico as alcohol. Some people say that people spend a big percentage of their income on alcohol.

Yes, that's true. That is true. Here is one example. We have a ranch. We used to have a worker who spent all of his wages on alcohol. The family really didn't get to eat because they didn't have the money. The wife came to us and asked my father to give the money to her instead of her husband because after he left the ranch he went to the *cantina* and spent all his money. The husband came to us and made a big scene. He quit. He found another job and did the same thing. After that he died from cirrhosis. Fortunately the children, they grew up and took care of the mother. They are fishermen. I won't say their life is really, really great, they are poor, but they have a better life now. That's what happens with people who don't have an education.

Once again, it all comes back to education. Are there government programs to help people with education or basic living expenses?

You can see the state government has the vision to improve the education level. They are always making these programs to give the kids an education.

They always try to help with their land, so they can work with cows or agriculture or something like that. But the programs don't usually have the effect the government wants. It's because the people don't have the values to appreciate what the government tries to make for them. Sometimes they don't take the help and keep on living the way they were. Sometimes they take it, but I can say that some people demand it like it is an obligation from the government. The problem with the government is that they don't explain what the program is really about – what the conditions are. I think that's the mistake the government made. They don't explain what the family has to do to get into these programs. And now the family thinks it is an obligation from the government. I think the problem was in miscommunication.

Is that like the becas [scholarships] for attending school?

Yes, that is another program. The government made a program. The amount of help depended on how many people are in your family. The government gave them a check for awhile, but they stopped. The people who had been getting the money staged protests. They asked, "Why don't you give us the money anymore?" The government answered, "If we just give you money, you will never get any better. You won't ever make the

efforts to get better, to have any aspirations, to use that money to grow. You will be a dependant of the government. People have to take this help to make something better. But they don't.

As I understood the program you are talking about, it was supposed to work like this: if you were a carpenter, for instance, you were supposed to take the money to buy new tools. But it didn't work like that. People just took the money. Is that what you are saying?

Yes.

The government stopped that program, yes?

Yes. Now they have social programs for the children instead of adults. These are programs to help the children get an education. That is how the modern generation thinks. We don't have to make an investment in the adults. We have to make an investment in the children, because they are going to be the Mexico of tomorrow. We have to make an investment in them. That is why the government makes programs for schools. Beca is a scholarship. This is a federal program. There is a program in every part of Mexico, but it is administered by the state government. So it is different in each state, but it is in every state.

Speaking of the differences between the states, some people have told me that northern states are more progressive than southern states. Do you think this is true?

Yes, because we are more in contact with the American citizens. I see the United States and I see the best country in the world. That's how I see it. When I turn back and see the states in southern Mexico, the people there are really poor. The traditions are really different. They are more Indian. They look like Aztecas or Mayas and their actions are like their ancestors. They don't have the same aspirations as the northern people. They love the place where they live, and they try to connect this tradition to the world. They have had some success with this. The people who live there really conserve the idea of the small town and the old traditions.

The difference may be that they are so far from the border and don't have as much contact with American people, so they keep their characteristics or traditions. They get influence more from South America than from the United States.

Some people would argue that holding on to these old traditions is valuable in order to keep the culture of Mexico alive. The old culture includes the Aztecs and other indigenous people. Some people worry that the modern culture is changing the Mexican culture and the old culture is being lost. How do you feel about that?

I don't think so. As I said in the beginning, it all has to do with values. Family values. They all have their own values. The people have to go the same way as their ancestors. So they have to keep this tradition and culture. They keep a rich tradition. Maybe they are

not rich in money, but they are rich in culture. They keep the culture and they teach this culture to the tourists. It won't change the culture. They don't get influence in that way. They maybe can get an influence in making a little business, for example you can make a little restaurant and sell the food your ancestors made. They can make a promotion about what their culture is, but I don't think it will change the culture.

Would you say that Mexican people are more aware of their far past – their roots from ancient times, from Spanish times, than Americans?

No. Again, it is all about the balance. It is all about the individual. Some people are more aware than others. For instance in my family, my mother's family came from Oaxaca. We have an interesting story. The last name of my mother's family was Ramirez-Coso. He was a pirate. He made a mess with the Indian girls and you know, [laughs soundly] well that is how my family was born. So when they tell me about this, they wake up an interest. So I travel to those places and try to get a feeling for it. Some people do that and others don't. Some people just don't care. I think that there are more people who don't care about the culture than those who do.

Is there much prejudice or discrimination against darker-skinned people?

Sure. In every part of Mexico. It is like we are a racist people. For in Mexico or Monterrey, if you are dark-skinned, they give you a look. You think, why do you have to give me a look? We are both Mexicans. You weren't born in a pool full of gold. But, yes, some people are really racist against dark-skinned people.

Do you think this has changed since you were a kid?

No. It is the same way.

Is it true that when somebody advertises for an employee, when they put the phrase, 'buen presentación', does it really mean, 'no dark-skinned people'?

Sometimes. You have to be handsome. You have to make a good presentation. You have to make a good impression to the people. For example if it is a job for a receptionist for a doctor or a lawyer, and your receptionist is really, really, beautiful, I can assure you that you will have lots of business. But if your receptionist is a woman who is not good-looking, it will affect your business. That's why people sometimes put these announcements about hiring people with good presentations or good-looking people.

People who are disabled, in the United States we have lots of laws requiring equal treatment and so on. The Spanish word I know is minusválido, which is in itself demeaning. How are they treated in Mexico?

[CELIA – I COULD NOT FIND THIS WORD IN ANY OF MY DICTIONARIES, CAN YOU CHECK THE SPELLING, PLEASE?]

Descapatisado is the word I use. Yes, you respect them very well. We don't. We get these kinds of problems very much. Again, it is all about the values, the education. Maybe this guy doesn't have legs and has to walk five blocks to the hospital because somebody else parked right by the door. There are a lot of people like that. They don't care.

In the United States, there are special classes and schools for some of these kids, although many times we try to integrate them into regular classes. How is it done in Mexico?

There are some places where there are special schools, but, no, it is not like here. The family would take care of the child.

How do you deal with a parent who needs long-term care, Alzheimer's patients, for instance? Is there shame if the family puts the parent in a nursing home?

No. But we don't have many places for these people, like you do here. If we have places, they are private places, and they charge you really high. You are probably paying about a thousand dollars a month to put your parent in there.

[AUTHOR'S INTERJECTION] While I was writing this, news stories began circulating about the "growing" movement of building long-term-care facilities in Mexico, not for the Mexican market, but for the gringo market. Naturally, there was a project in San Miguel de Allende, as well as one in San Luis Potosí and other cities.

That is inexpensive by US standards. My mother, for instance pays five thousand a month.

Yes, I understand. For example, a poor family, if a member of the family has somebody who has Alzheimer's or some senile problems, they don't have the money to pay that. The government has hospitals, but they don't have hospitals that actually work in that area. They have hospitals for long-term, but they mix people with other pathologies. What happens? They tend to *chocar* (collide) - they don't interact. So that starts a fight, so things get physical. The government doesn't care. They should. But they don't. So only in private hospitals do they have special areas for people who suffer from Alzheimer's or other pathologies.

Are there many of these private hospitals?

They exist, but there are not very many. For instance in Guadalajara, there is a really nice place for these people. It is not only for those who suffer from Alzheimer's. It is a place where old people go when their families don't want them in the house anymore, so they send them there.

[AUTHOR; S INTERJECTION] – This is the first person to suggest that not every family takes care of their parents in perpetuity. The belief that the family must always take care

of their elders is so ingrained in the Mexican culture that it could be like the elephant in the living room where no one will admit that they don't do what is accepted.

In Tampico, I own a really big house. My father and I talked about making this place a home for people who suffer from Alzheimer's. We want to do something nice with this house. We talk a lot about medical attention and about the government hospitals. I am sorry for using this word, but the way the government runs this sucks. So we are really angry about it. So we want to make a change. We want to make something different. Something for people who don't have much money to pay for that sort of thing. So we were converting our house into what we call an *asilo* (asylum).

[AUTHOR'S INTERJECTION] Often words do not translate exactly. For instance, while "*asilo*" is the word used by Gustavo and the correct translation is "asylum," that word has such a negative connotation in US English that it is seldom used. The meaning of the word should be more like "nursing home," which also has a different meaning in Mexican Spanish than what it does in US English.

There are doctors and nurses to take care of the old people. We were trying to make our house into an asylum. We were going to design areas where old people have pathologies and other areas where they were healthy people, but just wanted someone to take care of them. But we never did it because the bank didn't want to lend any money on the idea.

And now, that is a problem in Mexico. We don't have places like this.

So you are saying there is not shame in putting your mother in a nursing home? Is it because the nursing homes are no good?

No, that's not the problem. It is because the Mexican families are really paternalistic. They always want to keep the family in the same group. They don't like the idea of sending family to a psychiatric hospital (if they have psychiatric problems) or into an old folks home if they have dementia.

Are the IMSS hospitals overall good or bad?

We pronounce them like "Imps" but more softly, like "Ems" with an accent on the first letter. That is hard to say. It depends on the hospital. These hospitals have really good surgeons. But if you don't get the material, you can't be a good doctor. So that is the problem with the IMSS. They don't have enough money to get the implants or the gasses or the material used to clean wounds. So that is really a problem.

I've heard that the same doctor will work at the IMSS in the morning and in private practice in the afternoon. So you could see the same doctor in private practice that you saw at the IMSS?

Yes, that is often the case.

I talked to a woman in Morelia who, although she had private insurance, preferred to go to the IMSS, because she felt she got really good care there. Does that sound right to you?

Yes, it is quite possible. As I told you, it all depends on the hospital and the city. There are some hospitals of the IMSS that are really, really good. Even if they don't have all the materials, the attention, the personal attention is great. The doctors speak to you. That is important. Sometimes the doctor's don't care. They don't speak to you. You don't understand. In some hospitals the doctors and nurses really speak to you and care.

Do you think there will ever be a situation in Mexico like there is in the United States where doctors will worry about getting sued by patients? For instance, if I were your patient and wanted to sue you, could I?

Sure.

Really?

Of course. But I don't think most people would. Only how you call, vicious people would demand money. I don't think many people would do that.

So doctors' fear of being sued exists, but on a small scale?

I would say so. But there are a lot of doctors who are afraid of that. This culture [of people who sue doctors] is beginning to grow. Mexican people saw it in America so it began. We don't have a big problem with that – yet. [He was emphatic on the 'yet,' and laughed.].

Is private health insurance becoming more common in Mexico?

Yes, but the problem with medical insurance is that the companies are like the Mafia [again, he expressed a great deal of emotion when he used that word]. They set the price **they** want to pay. They tell you what to charge. The doctors don't have the right to charge what they want to charge. They tell you what to charge. I don't think that is fair. Some doctor's don't take medical insurance because they don't want to be told what they can charge.

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW