

TAPE LOG COVER SHEET

Fieldworker Suzanne North Date ND 21 APR 01

Artsist/Informant Willis Lopez Time 11:

Recording Location Lowndes Co. DUI School - E. Park Ave, Valdosta, GA

Project UNSC 4900 field project / interview for material

Other People Present n/a

General Subject Latin dance clubs Specific Subject Maria's (per Willis)

Cultural Group \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Used Sony hand-held recorder

Stereo \_\_\_\_\_ Dolby \_\_\_\_\_ Tape Brand/Length SONY 90 min.

High Bias \_\_\_\_\_ Normal/Low Bias  Metal \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Tape Used: Side 1 45 minutes/all Side 2 Approximately 10 minutes

Summary Description of Recording Context/Technical Assessment of Tape Quality:

Tape is clear and easily followed. V-O-R voice activated recording failed to pick Willis' voice up when he spoke softly or low; some gaps follow on tape.

Summary Description of Tape Contents:

Comprehensive interview followed predetermined questions, ranging from Willis Lopez's ethnic background to his club scene experience and incorporating information on his views of and desires for Maria's events and future business.



## Appendix A: Interview Questions

**A. INFORMANT BACKGROUND:**

- name
- place of birth/ethnic background
- has Willis ever heard the term Nuyorican? Does he identify with this label? What does it mean to him?
- What brought Willis to Valdosta?
- How long has he been here?
- Dance club experience prior to Maria's—positions held, effects of work

**B. INFORMANT'S TAKE ON VALDOSTA AND INTENTIONS FOR MARIA'S LOUNGE:**

- What is Willis' view of the Hispanic culture in Valdosta in terms of:  
makeup?  
Size?  
cultural identity and strength?
- When did Willis begin working at Maria's?
- How did he come to work at or organize Latin Dance nights at Maria's?
- What were the original intentions of Maria's Latin dances on Saturday nights? Were these his intentions, Maria's intentions, or a collaborative intention?
- Was there a goal or a motive behind these intentions in beginning Latin nights at Maria's?
- Does Willis have weekly intentions or goals for the event or an overall aspiration that is different from that of the beginning?

**C. INFORMANT ON MARIA'S LATIN DANCE NIGHT—THE EVENT AND PARTICIPANTS:**

- What is Willis' perception of the audience in terms of ethnicity and class of participants?
- Why is there the mix of people that comes?
- Are there regulars? How do they break down?
- Does the music Willis selects reflect the mix of regular participants or participants in general?
- Do many participants arrive knowing how to dance Latin?
- How do participants learn to dance Latin?
- Does Willis notice if there's any prestige given to the "good" dancers of an event group? How is this prestige demonstrated?
- How much individual creativity is allowed or experienced in Latin dance at Maria's on Saturdays? How does a person's ethnicity effect this?
- What is the importance of traditionality of music and comportment at Maria's?
- Why the dress code for the dance floor?
- How does dress at Maria's compare to that of a club scene up north or in Miami?
- How is the event tempered by the South GA scene?
- Does Willis cater to any group of people to energize or effect the work being done?

**D. SOME CURIOSITY OVER SPECIFICS:**

- In reference to "Casa de Maria": Is the event designed to feel like a house party? Are they trying to create a particular atmosphere? Is there a word for "lounge" that translates more literally from English to Spanish?
- Was the mural on the wall there before Latin dance nights began? Does it affect the atmosphere on Saturday nights at the club?
- Does Maria's advertise for Saturday nights? How?
- In reference to the fight three weeks ago: It was handled very well and quite differently from other bar fights I've seen. Quiet and organization were maintained across the board. A lot of times in bars across town, fighting folks are separated and allowed to continue socializing; this couple at Maria's was escorted out. Why?

**E. ABOUT MARIA'S PERSONNEL AND ATMOSPHERE:**

- What is Willis' position at Maria's?
- Where's the DJ from?
- How closely do the two work together?
- Who comes up with the play order?
- Do the other Saturday night personnel come with Willis? Are the same folks working through the week as on Saturday night?



## Appendix B: Tape Transcription

*Note:* The transcription that follows is imperfect. I deliberately did not include “uh” or “um” speech pauses, but I did endeavor to carefully place and punctuate Willis Lopez’s signature, “You know,” which I didn’t pay attention to until actually transcribing our interview. My own contemplative responses are largely omitted from the transcription unless commentary generated impromptu questions. Also, I recorded the interview with a V-O-R capable recorder (never again!)—a capability that I used from the beginning of the interview in order to save tape during vocal pauses. At times Willis’ voice dropped below the recording range of the V-O-R recording activation, and consequent gaps occur throughout the taped interview. Such gaps are designated by ellipses throughout the interview transcription. Gaps in thought are similarly notated. (Please refer to continuity of speech to distinguish between both)

The *Willis Lopez Interview* generally followed questions outlined in Appendix A. Notes are provided in [brackets] with reference to questions and/or comments put forth throughout the interview in order that readers may listen to the recorded interview (Tape: *Willis Lopez Interview*) while they simultaneously follow printed dialogue in accordance with the predetermined query.

**SIDE A:**

[Regarding the term Newyorican and its meaning]

It’s basically for folks that are born in New York, grow up in New York and not at the island, whose parents are from Puerto Rico.

[Time spent in New York]

I was born and raised there. I was there ‘til I was eighteen.

[Why and how long in Valdosta]

(laughs) I’ve been in Valdosta now about 13 years, and I came because my wife was doing an internship, and it was either work at a hospital for no money or go into the military and make some money. So, I decided to do the military thing, and they stationed us here.

[Wow. That’s pretty cool. That’s what brought my mom and my step-dad down here. Dance club experience prior to Maria’s]

Well, I used to teach dance at Arthur Murray’s or one of those dance schools when I was really young. I taught ballroom dancing. I didn’t like that at all. And, but you know, living in New York, I spent most of my time in Latin clubs, and when I arrived here, I was introduced to people that were of Latin descent, and we decided to start throwing dances out at the base. So we started a club, and we would throw dances out there, and we would have really good turn-outs. The problem with doing them at the base was that everyone did not have access to the base. And so we had looked for a place in town that we could do it to see if we could spread. Most of the people that would come to the Latin parties were Latin, Asians, but I’ve always wanted to get the music out to non-Hispanics, and I thought that this was a good way to do it—for us to be somewhere downtown and introduce the music. Because I know a lot people really enjoy the music. They stay away from it because they don’t know what’s being



said. But if you were to just sit them down there and listen to the music, you could see that they feel the music, you know, that they're moving, even though they're just sitting in the chair. And so I wanted to bring that out. And so I started the dance classes to incorporate them into the Latin night that we have there at Maria's, so that people would be willing to come if they knew how to dance.

Well I think that people just—not everyone—but people who are interested in dancing are attracted to upbeat kinds of music. And that's what a lot of Latin music is: It's just upbeat. So, most people that are interested in dancing are going to be . . . either be . . . And I think that's why a lot of party people for example, you know, they get into the Calypso music, and they get into what I call the island music, the tropical sound—and of course, that's what Latin music is. It's a mixture of all that.

[On cultural identity]

I think that there's a large Mexican population here. Probably next we'd have Puerto Ricans, and then it splinters off from there. As far as the whole identity thing: I don't think that we have it. I think in Valdosta, there's not really anything to tie everyone into something that has to do with just Latinos yet. I think it's kinda like just a lotta different cultures, you know. We have them splintered off; they all do their own thing. And that's one of the things early on that I envisioned with doing Maria's was that to give them an opportunity to come, sample the music—each other's music—but also to network with one another. You know, find out who people are from going to the club, being able to talk with them, find out what they do, and then be able to use each other's resources to assist them with whatever kinds of things they need.

[On intercultural prejudice]

I do. I do. I think that . . . My brother's in Virginia Beach; he sees it there. And I think I see it here. I don't know that it's uh—I don't know that it's uh . . . I guess it is a prejudice when people react that way to different folks, then I guess it is a prejudice, but I don't think it's a hatred or anything.

[So maybe not necessarily a hatred so much as a preference for their own strength as a culture?]

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. And I think that that's normal. Most cultures feel that.

[Starting date for Maria's]

We're going on . . . I would . . . I don't have a starting date, but I remember I talked with this lady who just celebrated her birthday not long ago, and I talked with her. And it seemed like it was only yesterday, or it seemed like three months ago, that we had just celebrated her birthday. She had celebrated at Maria's. And she's not Hispanic, you know. Actually, she's more into the Country-Western night. But she came to Latin night, and she really enjoyed herself, and it was her birthday. But, I think we're going on—we finished two years, we're pushing three years.

[Overlap]

My motivation is just bringing out the music. You know, a lot of people are a lot smarter than I am, you know. They're a lot deeper than I am. They're into all the social . . . or not the social, but everything else that goes with it, and I just wanted to bring the music. I think if you bring the music, everything else'll follow, you know. That there will be a mutual



respect for the different personalities, and everything will fall into place. You know, that's when things happen.

[Fabric of music/networking/perception of audience]

I think our largest population is the Mexican population that comes. It's sort of a . . . I don't know what it is that I'm trying to say. I think that, ultimately, my thoughts on the situation is that I want to get it to just be a melting pot of people and not necessarily want one dominant group there. I'd like it to be somewhere where everybody can just come who enjoys that type of music. I think when we first started, it was mostly non-Mexican, and the transition has come about to where now the population has grown to be more Mexican. And we're also now we're starting to advertise on radio stations here in town to draw in more of the non-Hispanic people. So, I don't know if that answers your question. But it started off with a large mixture of different types of Hispanics, and then the Mexican population has come in, and they're a big part of the people that come there now.

[What lends itself to the Mexican-dominant shift]

I think that we have a large Mexican population here, and they don't really have anywhere to go. Especially with a lot of them who do not speak English. The migrant workers. And whereas a lot of the other Spanish cultures, you know, they're pretty much established here, they have a lot of friends here, they have a lot of avenues that they can follow. I think a lot of the Mexican population does not have that. They work all the time, and then they want to go and party. And so, that's where that attraction comes in. And so once they start telling their friends about this place, I think that's why the transition is happening.

[About regulars]

It's mixed up. I think that, again, I think with the Mexican population being the dominant group there now, I think you would have a lot of those regulars. But we have pretty much . . . about every Saturday night. That goes across the board, you know, from non-Hispanics to Hispanics to Mexicans to Filipinos . . . We have certain folks that come fairly regularly.

[About the least represented ethnic group (blacks)]

I think the reason for that is that, again, we haven't advertised in those areas. I think that once we advertise, because we really have done no advertising. The only advertising we've done has been by word of mouth. I think that as we up the advertising in different segments of the population, that those will—that number will grow also. Because there's a lot in common there. I think that that will grow.

[I comment on a group of black clubbers who left confused.]

Well my job there is to make sure that people that come in who I have not seen before feel welcome. And to make sure that if they have any problems that they know they can talk with someone to make sure that the problems are taken care of. Usually when I see a group like that, I make it a point to go over and speak with them. The thing about it is one of the things that I tell them is that I never listen to the words. I don't know what half of those songs, what they're saying. Because, you know, my thing's the music; it's not what's being said. Unless it's a real slow song and I'm in that type of mood when I'm sitting down have nothing to do, and I just happen to listen to the words, I very rarely listen to what's being said in there. It's



the actual . . . I tune into. So, you know, I try to express that to a lot of people who come in there. I say, "Don't worry about it. If it makes you move, move!" That's the best way to enjoy yourself there.

[How to learn to dance if you don't know how]

I think that a lot of the people who are there don't know how to dance. A lot of people, you know, that doesn't keep them from getting out on the dance floor. You know? I always—I don't know if you've been there when I've made the announcement, "You don't need a partner. You don't need to know how to dance. Music moves you; you come out here." You know, because we want people to just come and have a good time. Not to be so caught up into whether I can do this or I can't do this and, you know? That's another reason why I offer the classes. 'Cause I want them to have a basic knowledge of the dance. And then, you know, as they come, they practice and dance with different people.

[On Wednesday night classes]

Yeah. This time around. Last time it was Tuesdays; this time it's Wednesdays. I'm gonna start May the second. And I teach 'em two dances in six lessons. And all the classes have been pretty, really successful there, you know. . . . They bring their friends, and so it's not just a dance class, it's kinda like—all of the people that come just kind of feel like, you know, they want to be there. They don't want to miss the class, you know. We have a lot of fun. And, again, it's another avenue to make people comfortable when they come.

[How to learn if not by class: The person next to you]

Right. You just come on up and do it. And we have a lot of people who can dance who at one point didn't know how to dance. And so, you know, if I find somebody who really wants to learn how to dance, hey, I'll put them together with somebody who'll be more than happy to teach them how to dance—at least, you know, to do a couple of steps there so they can feel comfortable.

[Good dancers and prestige]

No. I think that . . . I don't know about prestige. I think that it's more of an intimidation factor a lot of times. I think that for somebody who sees someone who can really dance, they would feel like, you know, that person would never want to dance with me. You know? I guess that would be true for some people just like with anything else. But, for the most part, I know people there who—lots of people that go there that can dance, who are willing to dance with anybody, you know, anybody who wants to learn, they're willing to go out there and just, you know, teach them how to do it.

And the problem also it there's a lot of people who can't dance, who want to show other people how to dance when they can't dance, which is where I have a problem because then they pick up really bad habits, but on the other hand, they're out on the dance floor, you know? But on the other side of that, even though they're out on the dance floor, they can't pick up a beat because this person here can't dance. And so it's like a catch-22, going back and forth. And so I don't want them to leave frustrated because the only person that they danced with that night couldn't dance and they figure now, "Well, I just can't dance. I'm never gonna do this again."

[How to ID an intimidated participant]



It's not like that. It's more of an, "I don't wanna dance," kind of thing. 'Cause I try to, you know, go around and, you know, people that I see that I kind of, you know, I'm up on the stage, and I look up over the audience, and I see them—that they're there, and it's kind of like they're looking out like, "You know, I wish I was out there," kind of a look. You know? And I'll go out, and I'll say, "Come on, let's dance." And they're like, "No, no, no, no, no, no." So those are the kinds of things that make me feel that they're intimidated.

Although later on in the evening after they've had a few drinks, you know, a lot of times they'll loosen up, and I'll go back and ask them again, and usually they'll dance at that point. But some people, they're just really self-conscious and aren't gonna get up there.

[Ethnicity effect on creativity on dance floor]

I think that everyone is individual. And I know a lot of really good, non-Hispanic dancers. As a matter of fact, a couple of people that I've taught in my class who didn't do any Latin at all are now really good dancers. I think it's the individual. I think it's the confidence that they have. And I also think it's the confidence of progression.

For example, this one young lady—she had never danced Latin before—she took my class. She was so advanced that she would kind of stay afterwards so that I could move because the class was moving too slow for her. And she had never done Latin dance before in her whole entire life. And from that point on, she gets out on the dance floor and she just has a confidence about her that—and of course it didn't all happen at once. You know, she would come and dance with this person, and dance with this person, and dance with this person, and dance with this person. And it gradually grew to now she'll just get out there—if she has somebody, fine. If she doesn't have somebody, fine. She'll dance with me, and she'll dance with this non-Hispanic man who doesn't have a beat. As a matter of fact, I use her a lot of times when people come in from, men come in from, like, Tifton and places like that. Business men, people like that. You know, I'll ask her to go ahead and dance with them. She'll pull them right out on the dance floor just to make sure that they have a good time. They at least get out there and move a little bit.

The confidence comes from confidence in a person. And of course the degree of how long they've been dancing, you know. But the other thing is if you're at home you'll have a little bit more confidence than you . . . Like me—even though I know I can dance, a lot of times when I go to other places, I'm still kind of a little shy, you know. I mean after a certain point the music just, something comes on, and I just have to do it. But, you know, I'm not as free in other places as I am here. Because I'm comfortable here. It's like my house.

[Music's effect on participant behavior, esp. re: non-Hispanics]

I don't know. I think that people, some people, are just naturally reserved when they go into new situations, and some people are just, "Hey. I'm here. I'm here to party, and I don't care who's here." You know, I think that it's an individual thing. We try to play a rotating mixture of music so that everyone gets to hear their music. And we catch a lot of flack for that because then you have one group who doesn't like this particular music, and then you have this group who doesn't like this particular music.

[On the dress code]

(Clears throat) I do a dress code. And it's getting ready to get tightened up. And part of the dress code I did at first was no hats. And I catch a lot of flack for that, but there's a reason for that. Women when they go out to party like to get dressed up. And there's a big imbalance when you have women who come in in these very nice dresses and you have guys



come with cutoff T-shirts and shorts on. So what that does is that . . . out of place. I think there's a certain psychology that has to do with when you dress up that you act a different way.

I just talked with them last Saturday night about the dress code. I said I'm gonna tighten up on the dress code again because we have again the ladies who are dressing up in dresses and fix themselves up, and then you have these guys in wrinkled up T-shirts with dogs on the back and pool sticks and that kind of stuff. And I said no.

From the business point of view—and it's not my business, but I always try to treat it as if it were my business—wherever the women go, the men are gonna go anyway. And so you want to sort of cater to the ladies to make sure that they feel comfortable, that nobody is harassing them, that they can dress up if they want to so that they feel comfortable in order to come. So my shift is to make sure that they're comfortable. They guys, you know, they're gonna come regardless. And so to this point, Maria and I have been kind of bumping heads on the dress code—but I had to tell her again to cut out the sneakers, the shorts, and I want these guys in either dress shirts or collared shirt on. I'm not gonna allow them to come in anymore. It has to be a slow transition. Probably by the end of May is when we'll kick part of that in. But I'm not gonna do that anymore. You know, I want people to come there; I want them to have a good time. And I think when people dress up, they act a little better.

A lot of guys come in there and they smell bad because they haven't been home; they've been working out in the sun all day. And so what happens is they come into the place, and it's like, "Oh, man, this guy's, you know, really . . ." The other thing is is when they come in dressed like that, they don't have the, "Hey I'm dressed up, I wanna look good, I wanna impress." They're more into, "Hey, I wanna fight." You know. So they end up getting drunk, and then pushing and shoving and getting into these altercations with one another, which again drives away the family people. You know, the husbands and wives that come in; and the ladies don't want to be in situations there where a fight's gonna break out at any time. That's why, you know, I started with the hats. And it's still today, it's a problem. But that's the way it's gonna be.

[Effects of South GA on Maria's Latin nights]

Over two hundred people a few times. People aren't aware of the music. And part of it is because we're here. You wouldn't have that problem if you were in Miami because everybody in Miami would know, you know, about the Latin scene. And in NY. Even in places like Tallahassee and Jacksonville—those places have a couple of places, but they're not, it's not really big there. Basically I guess because we're down south, and we don't have those large pops of Latins and the different backgrounds. So I think it's probably tempered by ignorance. You know, they've never been subject to it. Plus there's no real advertisement going around.

We're just into having a good time. Just partying. You know. I want people to come there who want to dance, want to have a good time, know how to behave. We've gotten to the point where we don't let a lot of people in. If they come in and they're looking like they're already drunk, and they've had too much to drink, we don't let them in. If they're inside and they're staggering around, we put em right out. We just want people who want to party, you know, want to have a good time, behave themselves, and respect each other. That's all.

[Back to dress]

Oh, yeah. Oh, no. There's no question there. Hey. I've been dressed, and I couldn't get into a lot of places because I didn't have a collared shirt on. I mean, I had a nice—a very nice T-shirt on. But because I didn't have a collared shirt, they wouldn't let me in, you know?



Some places you have to go in, if you're a gentleman, you have to go in with a tie and a jacket. Of course, that, we'd never do that here. But I don't think that is too much to ask—to have someone come in at least looking appropriate.

[Casa de Maria versus Maria's Lounge]

I've never. When I started saying Maria's House, I never consciously said it for any particular reason, except that I liked the way that it sounded. I mean, you're here; she's inviting you into her home kinda like thing. But it wasn't it because I want to turn it into a house party or because I want you to feel any particular way when you come in here. But I like the way that it sounded, and it came out one day, and I just started using it ever since.

[About the mural]

Yah. That was there from when they opened up. That was there.

[Advertising]

Yeah, well right now—I think what happened was that she tried the Latin night, and they didn't expect it to be as big as it is. And it's their biggest night there. And they're in the middle of construction now, and what they're trying to do is bring the whole lounge into . . . Not many people know that it's there. And they're waiting to do the renovations before they start the advertisement because it will be the new Maria's.

Maria's—she's been here for years, and she's had a lot of controversy with her establishments. She was at one point—one of the places that she moved into, I think that place there may have been a gay club at one point, which for a lot people that was negative. Also she used to have a pretty rough crowd when she was at Park Avenue/Northside . . . I think it was Park Avenue.

Anyway, it's always been associated with being a really rough place. And I think a lot of those people that used to frequent it now are older, so they're a lot more laid back. So now we have the new Latin night coming in. So one of the things that I don't tolerate is folks fighting or even looking like they're gonna fight.

[Reference club fight, second visit]

Well, I don't like getting involved with—I don't like the security aspect of it. I think that a lot times the security people that we have there, and I always talk with them because we got different people that come in different nights, any problems whatsoever we take them right outside. I don't want anything happening in here. We handle it right outside. Whether you can speak Spanish or not, if there's a thing, we grab them, we pull them outside, and then we figure out what it is out there. And then if they're people who are not regulars, you know, then we tell them, "You can't come back." If they are regulars, like that night where the girl was pushed down on the table and stuff—both of those people there were regulars, and I had to talk with all of them outside, including the young lady because she was a big part of what had happened. And I said, "Look, you know, I don't wanna keep you guys from coming in here. But this is it. If you have another static, you better take it outside because if it happens inside the club again, you and you and you will go." "No, no, no, no, no!" It's bad business I think.

I've made them come down on the people that are drunk because usually . . . And it's mostly, you know, I'll tell you it's mostly a lot of the Mexicans who come in and drink too much and they have problems with other people from outside and meet up in there and then because they're drinking they don't know how to act, and they go ahead and they start some stuff by saying something or bumping somebody or something like that.



We've been there almost three years, and I can think of maybe . . . oh, real fights. That one was a push. A one-push thing. But there's never been anybody who's been punched in the face or anything like that since we've been here.

I tell them, hey, you jump on it right away. And that's why I spend most of my time up on the stage—so I can see what's going on. And we stay in contact with one another.

Again, it goes back to making sure that the ladies feel comfortable when they're there. They're not gonna wanna go someplace where drunk men may follow the women to the bathroom. They'll wait outside the restroom until they come out of the restroom and, you know, kind of corner them over there. So I make sure there's security. I walk back to the bathrooms.

You know, you have the farm workers and the migrant worker mentality that comes in there too. You know, they've been drinking, so they're . . . You know, I have a lot of frustration in those aspects. There's people urinating in the garbage can. Well they're used to being outside and just peeing on a tree kind of thing, you know. And I get really upset with them, you know. You know, what is wrong with you? "Oh, I had to go . . ." Man, I catch you doing that again, you're out of here. It's a frustration of mine just because, you know, I guess people come from different situations, and I don't know if it's they don't know any better, or they don't care, or they've been drinking too much. You know, it's sort of like a catch-22 because it's a business. Their business is to sell alcohol, you know. So I'm constantly fighting that because if I see you getting drunk than I'm going to put you out. They want you to drink, but don't drink too much, you know, where you're going to get yourself killed in the car or get yourself a DUI or, you know, that kind of stuff. Let us know. We'll call a cab or whatever. We call lots of cabs over there to take people home, so.

[Willis' position and personnel]

I run the show, basically. I make sure that everything runs smoothly. It's not even—I wasn't hired for that. I'm not even getting paid for that type of thing. I've always been in a situation where I want everybody to have a good time, and anybody who's disrupting folks having a good time then I have a problem with. And I'm taking care of this and taking care of that.

We have Pablo at the door; he does a good job there. And then we have one security guy, and that's not enough. You know, one security person is not enough to, you know, check the outside, make sure there's nobody trying to break into somebody's car or hassling one of the ladies that are leaving. You know, that's a lot. So I take it upon myself to just kind of stay on top of things and kind of know what's going on. So I'm constantly walking back and forth, checking with the doors—Have you seen anything? I check with the waitresses—Is everybody treating you alright? Is somebody drinking too much? You know, that kind of stuff. Just to make sure that everyone has a good time.

[Who is Logan?]

Logan is the manager of the club.

[What's the DJ's name?]

Louis.

[Do you know where he's from?]

He's from Puerto Rico.

[Do you work with him picking music for the night?]

Well, for example, he was in the hospital this last Saturday, so I had to pick the music. I don't like DJ-ing, you know. But I pretty much leave it up to him to play whatever. You don't



want to be doing the job and have everybody tell you how to do your job. You know. I just ask him to mix it up really well and just play, you know, and try to two of this song, two of this song, two of this song, and rotate so that, you know, everybody at least will know, well it's coming, kind of thing.

[So you kind of suggest or direct kind of a pattern, but he still picks the play order?]

Right. And you know, if someone asks for something in particular, I'll let him know. And sometimes I want to listen to something, I'll let him know.

[Requests are okay?]

No. We try not to do that. I've made several announcements, too, because it upsets him. And I try to kind of be in the way, you know, if somebody's coming up to the stage.

[What about the short, well-dressed man who came in my first visit with a stack of CDs and made a bee-line for the stage?]

Well that's Javier. That's Javier. And a lot of times he brings in Mexican music. There's certain people who it's okay. You know? There's certain people who . . . for example, if they're regulars, and they know how things work, and they have a CD, you know, "Hey, can you play this one song for me?" We'll usually say okay. But if it's people we've never seen before, "Hey, why don't you play that kind of music?" We'll say okay. "Hey, why don't play this kind of music?" We'll say okay, it's coming. And just forget them because if you open it up to everybody, everybody will be coming up there, and nobody will be happy.

[Saturday-specific crew or not?]

No, several of them work during the week. That's their staff. The only people that come in are Louis and myself for Latin night. And we're not, we're not staff there. We come in just to do Latin night.

[Caribbean Latin: Maria's mix in a club—the difference]

Mostly in the music. They'll party anywhere. I don't think it's the actual location, but it's the music that's gonna attract different people. If we were doing a primarily Mexican thing, then most of the music we're gonna play is gonna be Ranchero music and cumbia . . .

## **SIDE B**

[Continued from end SIDE A]

And if you're going to do the tropical thing, then you're gonna do more of salsa and merengue and cumbias and bachatas and those kinds of things, so. Whereas we try to cater to everybody, we incorporate all of that, plus we incorporate English music too. You know, sometimes we'll go in there, and we'll play some Rock-n-Roll, you know—we'll have people doing the twist and stuff like that. And sometimes the people will come in, and we'll have booty music going on. And sometimes they'll come in, and we'll have some R-n-B. You know? So we do a lot of different, you know, a lot of different kinds of music to make it a melting pot. We just try to get good music in there—whatever it is, try to be danceable and you know.

\*Discussion that isn't outlined on the interview questions sheet follows regarding: Targeted renovation completion date; club smoking and washing/airing clothes and CDs; Willis' performance as the one in charge on Saturdays and the affect he has on creating a comfortable atmosphere; and Willis' original goal of attracting 100 people a night, which has now changed to accommodate 200 people a night on a consistent basis.\*



TAPE LOG COVER SHEET

Fieldworker Suzanne North Date WD 24 APR 01  
 Artists/Informant Willis Lopez Time 11:  
 Recording Location Lowndes Co. DUI School - Frank Ave, Valdosta, GA  
 Project NIJSC 4900 field project / interview for material  
 Other People Present n/a  
 General Subject Latin dance clubs Specific Subject Maria's (per Willis)

Cultural Group \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Used Sony hand-held recorder

Stereo \_\_\_\_\_ Dolby \_\_\_\_\_ Tape Brand/Length SONY 90 min.

High Bias \_\_\_\_\_ ~~Normal~~ Low Bias  Metal \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Tape Used: Side 1 45 minutes/all Side 2 Approximately 10 minutes

Summary Description of Recording Context/Technical Assessment of Tape Quality:

Tape is clear and easily followed. V-O-R voice activated recording failed to pick Willis' voice up when he spoke softly or low; some gaps follow on tape.

Summary Description of Tape Contents:

Comprehensive interview followed predetermined questions, ranging from Willis Lopez's ethnic background to his club scene experience and incorporating information on his views of and desires for Maria's events and future business.



Willis Lopez Interview

April, 2001

by Suzanne M. North  
for MUS 4900

## Appendix B: Tape Transcription

*Note:* The transcription that follows is imperfect. I deliberately did not include "uh" or "um" speech pauses, but I did endeavor to carefully place and punctuate Willis Lopez's signature, "You know," which I didn't pay attention to until actually transcribing our interview. My own contemplative responses are largely omitted from the transcription unless commentary generated impromptu questions. Also, I recorded the interview with a V-O-R capable recorder (never again!)—a capability that I used from the beginning of the interview in order to save tape during vocal pauses. At times Willis' voice dropped below the recording range of the V-O-R recording activation, and consequent gaps occur throughout the taped interview. Such gaps are designated by ellipses throughout the interview transcription. Gaps in thought are similarly notated. (Please refer to continuity of speech to distinguish between both)

The *Willis Lopez Interview* generally followed questions outlined in Appendix A. Notes are provided in [brackets] with reference to questions and/or comments put forth throughout the interview in order that readers may listen to the recorded interview (Tape: *Willis Lopez Interview*) while they simultaneously follow printed dialogue in accordance with the predetermined query.

### SIDE A:

[Regarding the term Newyorican and its meaning]

It's basically for folks that are born in New York, grow up in New York and not at the island, whose parents are from Puerto Rico.

[Time spent in New York]

I was born and raised there. I was there 'til I was eighteen.

[Why and how long in Valdosta]

(laughs) I've been in Valdosta now about 13 years, and I came because my wife was doing an internship, and it was either work at a hospital for no money or go into the military and make some money. So, I decided to do the military thing, and they stationed us here.

[Wow. That's pretty cool. That's what brought my mom and my step-dad down here. Dance club experience prior to Maria's]

Well, I used to teach dance at Arthur Murray's or one of those dance schools when I was really young. I taught ballroom dancing. I didn't like that at all. And, but you know, living in New York, I spent most of my time in Latin clubs, and when I arrived here, I was introduced to people that were of Latin descent, and we decided to start throwing dances out at the base. So we started a club, and we would throw dances out there, and we would have really good turn-outs. The problem with doing them at the base was that everyone did not have access to the base. And so we had looked for a place in town that we could do it to see if we could spread. Most of the people that would come to the Latin parties were Latin, Asians, but I've always wanted to get the music out to non-Hispanics, and I thought that this was a good way to do it—for us to be somewhere downtown and introduce the music. Because I know a lot people really enjoy the music. They stay away from it because they don't know what's being



## Willis Lopez Interview

said. But if you were to just sit them down there and listen to the music, you could see that they feel the music, you know, that they're moving, even though they're just sitting in the chair. And so I wanted to bring that out. And so I started the dance classes to incorporate them into the Latin night that we have there at Maria's, so that people would be willing to come if they knew how to dance.

Well I think that people just—not everyone—but people who are interested in dancing are attracted to upbeat kinds of music. And that's what a lot of Latin music is: It's just upbeat. So, most people that are interested in dancing are going to be . . . either be . . . And I think that's why a lot of party people for example, you know, they get into the Calypso music, and they get into what I call the island music, the tropical sound—and of course, that's what Latin music is. It's a mixture of all that.

[On cultural identity]

I think that there's a large Mexican population here. Probably next we'd have Puerto Ricans, and then it splinters off from there. As far as the whole identity thing: I don't think that we have it. I think in Valdosta, there's not really anything to tie everyone into something that has to do with just Latinos yet. I think it's kinda like just a lota different cultures, you know. We have them splintered off; they all do their own thing. And that's one of the things early on that I envisioned with doing Maria's was that to give them an opportunity to come, sample the music—each other's music—but also to network with one another. You know, find out who people are from going to the club, being able to talk with them, find out what they do, and then be able to use each other's resources to assist them with whatever kinds of things they need.

[On intercultural prejudice]

I do. I do. I think that . . . My brother's in Virginia Beach; he sees it there. And I think I see it here. I don't know that it's uh—I don't know that it's uh . . . I guess it is a prejudice when people react that way to different folks, then I guess it is a prejudice, but I don't think it's a hatred or anything.

[So maybe not necessarily a hatred so much as a preference for their own strength as a culture?]

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. And I think that that's normal. Most cultures feel that.

[Starting date for Maria's]

We're going on . . . I would . . . I don't have a starting date, but I remember I talked with this lady who just celebrated her birthday not long ago, and I talked with her. And it seemed like it was only yesterday, or it seemed like three months ago, that we had just celebrated her birthday. She had celebrated at Maria's. And she's not Hispanic, you know. Actually, she's more into the Country-Western night. But she came to Latin night, and she really enjoyed herself, and it was her birthday. But, I think we're going on—we finished two years, we're pushing three years.

[Overlap]

My motivation is just bringing out the music. You know, a lot of people are a lot smarter than I am, you know. They're a lot deeper than I am. They're into all the social . . . or not the social, but everything else that goes with it, and I just wanted to bring the music. I think if you bring the music, everything else'll follow, you know. That there will be a mutual



## Willis Lopez Interview

respect for the different personalities, and everything will fall into place. You know, that's when things happen.

[Fabric of music/networking/perception of audience]

I think our largest population is the Mexican population that comes. It's sort of a . . . I don't know what it is that I'm trying to say. I think that, ultimately, my thoughts on the situation is that I want to get it to just be a melting pot of people and not necessarily want one dominant group there. I'd like it to be somewhere where everybody can just come who enjoys that type of music. I think when we first started, it was mostly non-Mexican, and the transition has come about to where now the population has grown to be more Mexican. And we're also now we're starting to advertise on radio stations here in town to draw in more of the non-Hispanic people. So, I don't know if that answers your question. But it started off with a large mixture of different types of Hispanics, and then the Mexican population has come in, and they're a big part of the people that come there now.

[What lends itself to the Mexican-dominant shift]

I think that we have a large Mexican population here, and they don't really have anywhere to go. Especially with a lot of them who do not speak English. The migrant workers. And whereas a lot of the other Spanish cultures, you know, they're pretty much established here, they have a lot of friends here, they have a lot of avenues that they can follow. I think a lot of the Mexican population does not have that. They work all the time, and then they want to go and party. And so, that's where that attraction comes in. And so once they start telling their friends about this place, I think that's why the transition is happening.

[About regulars]

It's mixed up. I think that, again, I think with the Mexican population being the dominant group there now, I think you would have a lot of those regulars. But we have pretty much . . . about every Saturday night. That goes across the board, you know, from non-Hispanics to Hispanics to Mexicans to Filipinos . . . We have certain folks that come fairly regularly.

[About the least represented ethnic group (blacks)]

I think the reason for that is that, again, we haven't advertised in those areas. I think that once we advertise, because we really have done no advertising. The only advertising we've done has been by word of mouth. I think that as we up the advertising in different segments of the population, that those will—that number will grow also. Because there's a lot in common there. I think that that will grow.

[I comment on a group of black clubbers who left confused.]

Well my job there is to make sure that people that come in who I have not seen before feel welcome. And to make sure that if they have any problems that they know they can talk with someone to make sure that the problems are taken care of. Usually when I see a group like that, I make it a point to go over and speak with them. The thing about it is one of the things that I tell them is that I never listen to the words. I don't know what half of those songs, what they're saying. Because, you know, my thing's the music; it's not what's being said. Unless it's a real slow song and I'm in that type of mood when I'm sitting down have nothing to do, and I just happen to listen to the words, I very rarely listen to what's being said in there. It's



## Willis Lopez Interview

the actual . . . I tune into. So, you know, I try to express that to a lot of people who come in there. I say, "Don't worry about it. If it makes you move, move!" That's the best way to enjoy yourself there.

[How to learn to dance if you don't know how]

I think that a lot of the people who are there don't know how to dance. A lot of people, you know, that doesn't keep them from getting out on the dance floor. You know? I always—I don't know if you've been there when I've made the announcement, "You don't need a partner. You don't need to know how to dance. Music moves you; you come out here." You know, because we want people to just come and have a good time. Not to be so caught up into whether I can do this or I can't do this and, you know? That's another reason why I offer the classes. 'Cause I want them to have a basic knowledge of the dance. And then, you know, as they come, they practice and dance with different people.

[On Wednesday night classes]

Yeah. This time around. Last time it was Tuesdays; this time it's Wednesdays. I'm gonna start May the second. And I teach 'em two dances in six lessons. And all the classes have been pretty, really successful there, you know. . . . They bring their friends, and so it's not just a dance class, it's kinda like—all of the people that come just kind of feel like, you know, they want to be there. They don't want to miss the class, you know. We have a lot of fun. And, again, it's another avenue to make people comfortable when they come.

[How to learn if not by class: The person next to you]

Right. You just come on up and do it. And we have a lot of people who can dance who at one point didn't know how to dance. And so, you know, if I find somebody who really wants to learn how to dance, hey, I'll put them together with somebody who'll be more than happy to teach them how to dance—at least, you know, to do a couple of steps there so they can feel comfortable.

[Good dancers and prestige]

No. I think that . . . I don't know about prestige. I think that it's more of an intimidation factor a lot of times. I think that for somebody who sees someone who can really dance, they would feel like, you know, that person would never want to dance with me. You know? I guess that would be true for some people just like with anything else. But, for the most part, I know people there who—lots of people that go there that can dance, who are willing to dance with anybody, you know, anybody who wants to learn, they're willing to go out there and just, you know, teach them how to do it.

And the problem also it there's a lot of people who can't dance, who want to show other people how to dance when they can't dance, which is where I have a problem because then they pick up really bad habits, but on the other hand, they're out on the dance floor, you know? But on the other side of that, even though they're out on the dance floor, they can't pick up a beat because this person here can't dance. And so it's like a catch-22, going back and forth. And so I don't want them to leave frustrated because the only person that they danced with that night couldn't dance and they figure now, "Well, I just can't dance. I'm never gonna do this again."

[How to ID an intimidated participant]



## Willis Lopez Interview

It's not like that. It's more of an, "I don't wanna dance," kind of thing. 'Cause I try to, you know, go around and, you know, people that I see that I kind of, you know, I'm up on the stage, and I look up over the audience, and I see them—that they're there, and it's kind of like they're looking out like, "You know, I wish I was out there," kind of a look. You know? And I'll go out, and I'll say, "Come on, let's dance." And they're like, "No, no, no, no, no, no." So those are the kinds of things that make me feel that they're intimidated.

Although later on in the evening after they've had a few drinks, you know, a lot of times they'll loosen up, and I'll go back and ask them again, and usually they'll dance at that point. But some people, they're just really self-conscious and aren't gonna get up there.

[Ethnicity effect on creativity on dance floor]

I think that everyone is individual. And I know a lot of really good, non-Hispanic dancers. As a matter of fact, a couple of people that I've taught in my class who didn't do any Latin at all are now really good dancers. I think it's the individual. I think it's the confidence that they have. And I also think it's the confidence of progression.

For example, this one young lady—she had never danced Latin before—she took my class. She was so advanced that she would kind of stay afterwards so that I could move because the class was moving too slow for her. And she had never done Latin dance before in her whole entire life. And from that point on, she gets out on the dance floor and she just has a confidence about her that—and of course it didn't all happen at once. You know, she would come and dance with this person, and dance with this person, and dance with this person, and dance with this person. And it gradually grew to now she'll just get out there—if she has somebody, fine. If she doesn't have somebody, fine. She'll dance with me, and she'll dance with this non-Hispanic man who doesn't have a beat. As a matter of fact, I use her a lot of times when people come in from, men come in from, like, Tifton and places like that. Business men, people like that. You know, I'll ask her to go ahead and dance with them. She'll pull them right out on the dance floor just to make sure that they have a good time. They at least get out there and move a little bit.

The confidence comes from confidence in a person. And of course the degree of how long they've been dancing, you know. But the other thing is if you're at home you'll have a little bit more confidence than you . . . Like me—even though I know I can dance, a lot of times when I go to other places, I'm still kind of a little shy, you know. I mean after a certain point the music just, something comes on, and I just have to do it. But, you know, I'm not as free in other places as I am here. Because I'm comfortable here. It's like my house.

[Music's effect on participant behavior, esp. re: non-Hispanics]

I don't know. I think that people, some people, are just naturally reserved when they go into new situations, and some people are just, "Hey. I'm here. I'm here to party, and I don't care who's here." You know, I think that it's an individual thing. We try to play a rotating mixture of music so that everyone gets to hear their music. And we catch a lot of flack for that because then you have one group who doesn't like this particular music, and then you have this group who doesn't like this particular music.

[On the dress code]

(Clears throat) I do a dress code. And it's getting ready to get tightened up. And part of the dress code I did at first was no hats. And I catch a lot of flack for that, but there's a reason for that. Women when they go out to party like to get dressed up. And there's a big imbalance when you have women who come in in these very nice dresses and you have guys



## Willis Lopez Interview

come with cutoff T-shirts and shorts on. So what that does is that . . . out of place. I think there's a certain psychology that has to do with when you dress up that you act a different way.

I just talked with them last Saturday night about the dress code. I said I'm gonna tighten up on the dress code again because we have again the ladies who are dressing up in dresses and fix themselves up, and then you have these guys in wrinkled up T-shirts with dogs on the back and pool sticks and that kind of stuff. And I said no.

From the business point of view—and it's not my business, but I always try to treat it as if it were my business—wherever the women go, the men are gonna go anyway. And so you want to sort of cater to the ladies to make sure that they feel comfortable, that nobody is harassing them, that they can dress up if they want to so that they feel comfortable in order to come. So my shift is to make sure that they're comfortable. They guys, you know, they're gonna come regardless. And so to this point, Maria and I have been kind of bumping heads on the dress code—but I had to tell her again to cut out the sneakers, the shorts, and I want these guys in either dress shirts or collared shirt on. I'm not gonna allow them to come in anymore. It has to be a slow transition. Probably by the end of May is when we'll kick part of that in. But I'm not gonna do that anymore. You know, I want people to come there; I want them to have a good time. And I think when people dress up, they act a little better.

A lot of guys come in there and they smell bad because they haven't been home; they've been working out in the sun all day. And so what happens is they come into the place, and it's like, "Oh, man, this guy's, you know, really . . ." The other thing is is when they come in dressed like that, they don't have the, "Hey I'm dressed up, I wanna look good, I wanna impress." They're more into, "Hey, I wanna fight." You know. So they end up getting drunk, and then pushing and shoving and getting into these altercations with one another, which again drives away the family people. You know, the husbands and wives that come in; and the ladies don't want to be in situations there where a fight's gonna break out at any time. That's why, you know, I started with the hats. And it's still today, it's a problem. But that's the way it's gonna be.

[Effects of South GA on Maria's Latin nights]

Over two hundred people a few times. People aren't aware of the music. And part of it is because we're here. You wouldn't have that problem if you were in Miami because everybody in Miami would know, you know, about the Latin scene. And in NY. Even in places like Tallahassee and Jacksonville—those places have a couple of places, but they're not, it's not really big there. Basically I guess because we're down south, and we don't have those large pops of Latins and the different backgrounds. So I think it's probably tempered by ignorance. You know, they've never been subject to it. Plus there's no real advertisement going around.

We're just into having a good time. Just partying. You know. I want people to come there who want to dance, want to have a good time, know how to behave. We've gotten to the point where we don't let a lot of people in. If they come in and they're looking like they're already drunk, and they've had too much to drink, we don't let them in. If they're inside and they're staggering around, we put em right out. We just want people who want to party, you know, want to have a good time, behave themselves, and respect each other. That's all.

[Back to dress]

Oh, yeah. Oh, no. There's no question there. Hey. I've been dressed, and I couldn't get into a lot of places because I didn't have a collared shirt on. I mean, I had a nice—a very nice T-shirt on. But because I didn't have a collared shirt, they wouldn't let me in, you know?



## Willis Lopez Interview

Some places you have to go in, if you're a gentleman, you have to go in with a tie and a jacket. Of course, that, we'd never do that here. But I don't think that is too much to ask—to have someone come in at least looking appropriate.

[Casa de Maria versus Maria's Lounge]

I've never. When I started saying Maria's House, I never consciously said it for any particular reason, except that I liked the way that it sounded. I mean, you're here; she's inviting you into her home kinda like thing. But it wasn't it because I want to turn it into a house party or because I want you to feel any particular way when you come in here. But I like the way that it sounded, and it came out one day, and I just started using it ever since.

[About the mural]

Yah. That was there from when they opened up. That was there.

[Advertising]

Yeah, well right now—I think what happened was that she tried the Latin night, and they didn't expect it to be as big as it is. And it's their biggest night there. And they're in the middle of construction now, and what they're trying to do is bring the whole lounge into . . . Not many people know that it's there. And they're waiting to do the renovations before they start the advertisement because it will be the new Maria's.

Maria's—she's been here for years, and she's had a lot of controversy with her establishments. She was at one point—one of the places that she moved into, I think that place there may have been a gay club at one point, which for a lot people that was negative. Also she used to have a pretty rough crowd when she was at Park Avenue/Northside . . . I think it was Park Avenue.

Anyway, it's always been associated with being a really rough place. And I think a lot of those people that used to frequent it now are older, so they're a lot more laid back. So now we have the new Latin night coming in. So one of the things that I don't tolerate is folks fighting or even looking like they're gonna fight.

[Reference club fight, second visit]

Well, I don't like getting involved with—I don't like the security aspect of it. I think that a lot times the security people that we have there, and I always talk with them because we got different people that come in different nights, any problems whatsoever we take them right outside. I don't want anything happening in here. We handle it right outside. Whether you can speak Spanish or not, if there's a thing, we grab them, we pull them outside, and then we figure out what it is out there. And then if they're people who are not regulars, you know, then we tell them, "You can't come back." If they are regulars, like that night where the girl was pushed down on the table and stuff—both of those people there were regulars, and I had to talk with all of them outside, including the young lady because she was a big part of what had happened. And I said, "Look, you know, I don't wanna keep you guys from coming in here. But this is it. If you have another static, you better take it outside because if it happens inside the club again, you and you and you will go." "No, no, no, no, no!" It's bad business I think.

I've made them come down on the people that are drunk because usually . . . And it's mostly, you know, I'll tell you it's mostly a lot of the Mexicans who come in and drink too much and they have problems with other people from outside and meet up in there and then because they're drinking they don't know how to act, and they go ahead and they start some stuff by saying something or bumping somebody or something like that.



## Willis Lopez Interview

We've been there almost three years, and I can think of maybe . . . oh, real fights. That one was a push. A one-push thing. But there's never been anybody who's been punched in the face or anything like that since we've been here.

I tell them, hey, you jump on it right away. And that's why I spend most of my time up on the stage—so I can see what's going on. And we stay in contact with one another.

Again, it goes back to making sure that the ladies feel comfortable when they're there. They're not gonna wanna go someplace where drunk men may follow the women to the bathroom. They'll wait outside the restroom until they come out of the restroom and, you know, kind of corner them over there. So I make sure there's security. I walk back to the bathrooms.

You know, you have the farm workers and the migrant worker mentality that comes in there too. You know, they've been drinking, so they're . . . You know, I have a lot of frustration in those aspects. There's people urinating in the garbage can. Well they're used to being outside and just peeing on a tree kind of thing, you know. And I get really upset with them, you know. You know, what is wrong with you? "Oh, I had to go . . ." Man, I catch you doing that again, you're out of here. It's a frustration of mine just because, you know, I guess people come from different situations, and I don't know if it's they don't know any better, or they don't care, or they've been drinking too much. You know, it's sort of like a catch-22 because it's a business. Their business is to sell alcohol, you know. So I'm constantly fighting that because if I see you getting drunk than I'm going to put you out. They want you to drink, but don't drink too much, you know, where you're going to get yourself killed in the car or get yourself a DUI or, you know, that kind of stuff. Let us know. We'll call a cab or whatever. We call lots of cabs over there to take people home, so.

[Willis' position and personnel]

I run the show, basically. I make sure that everything runs smoothly. It's not even—I wasn't hired for that. I'm not even getting paid for that type of thing. I've always been in a situation where I want everybody to have a good time, and anybody who's disrupting folks having a good time then I have a problem with. And I'm taking care of this and taking care of that.

We have Pablo at the door; he does a good job there. And then we have one security guy, and that's not enough. You know, one security person is not enough to, you know, check the outside, make sure there's nobody trying to break into somebody's car or hassling one of the ladies that are leaving. You know, that's a lot. So I take it upon myself to just kind of stay on top of things and kind of know what's going on. So I'm constantly walking back and forth, checking with the doors—Have you seen anything? I check with the waitresses—Is everybody treating you alright? Is somebody drinking too much? You know, that kind of stuff. Just to make sure that everyone has a good time.

[Who is Logan?]

Logan is the manager of the club.

[What's the DJ's name?]

Louis.

[Do you know where he's from?]

He's from Puerto Rico.

[Do you work with him picking music for the night?]

Well, for example, he was in the hospital this last Saturday, so I had to pick the music. I don't like DJ-ing, you know. But I pretty much leave it up to him to play whatever. You don't



## Willis Lopez Interview

want to be doing the job and have everybody tell you how to do your job. You know. I just ask him to mix it up really well and just play, you know, and try to two of this song, two of this song, two of this song, and rotate so that, you know, everybody at least will know, well it's coming, kind of thing.

[So you kind of suggest or direct kind of a pattern, but he still picks the play order?]

Right. And you know, if someone asks for something in particular, I'll let him know. And sometimes I want to listen to something, I'll let him know.

[Requests are okay?]

No. We try not to do that. I've made several announcements, too, because it upsets him. And I try to kind of be in the way, you know, if somebody's coming up to the stage.

[What about the short, well-dressed man who came in my first visit with a stack of CDs and made a bee-line for the stage?]

Well that's Javier. That's Javier. And a lot of times he brings in Mexican music. There's certain people who it's okay. You know? There's certain people who . . . for example, if they're regulars, and they know how things work, and they have a CD, you know, "Hey, can you play this one song for me?" We'll usually say okay. But if it's people we've never seen before, "Hey, why don't you play that kind of music?" We'll say okay. "Hey, why don't play this kind of music?" We'll say okay, it's coming. And just forget them because if you open it up to everybody, everybody will be coming up there, and nobody will be happy.

[Saturday-specific crew or not?]

No, several of them work during the week. That's their staff. The only people that come in are Louis and myself for Latin night. And we're not, we're not staff there. We come in just to do Latin night.

[Caribbean Latin: Maria's mix in a club—the difference]

Mostly in the music. They'll party anywhere. I don't think it's the actual location, but it's the music that's gonna attract different people. If we were doing a primarily Mexican thing, then most of the music we're gonna play is gonna be Ranchero music and cumbia . . .

## **SIDE B**

[Continued from end SIDE A]

And if you're going to do the tropical thing, then you're gonna do more of salsa and merengue and cumbias and bachatas and those kinds of things, so. Whereas we try to cater to everybody, we incorporate all of that, plus we incorporate English music too. You know, sometimes we'll go in there, and we'll play some Rock-n-Roll, you know—we'll have people doing the twist and stuff like that . . . And sometimes the people will come in, and we'll have booty music going on. And sometimes they'll come in, and we'll have some R-n-B. You know? So we do a lot of different, you know, a lot of different kinds of music to make it a melting pot. We just try to get good music in there—whatever it is, try to be danceable and you know.

\*Discussion that isn't outlined on the interview questions sheet follows regarding: Targeted renovation completion date; club smoking and washing/airing clothes and CDs; Willis' performance as the one in charge on Saturdays and the affect he has on creating a comfortable atmosphere; and Willis' original goal of attracting 100 people a night, which has now changed to accommodate 200 people a night on a consistent basis.\*



## Interview Questions

### **A. INFORMANT BACKGROUND:**

- name
- place of birth/ethnic background
- has Willis ever heard the term Nuyorican? Does he identify with this label? What does it mean to him?
- What brought Willis to Valdosta?
- How long has he been here?
- Dance club experience prior to Maria's—positions held, effects of work

### **B. INFORMANT'S TAKE ON VALDOSTA AND INTENTIONS FOR MARIA'S LOUNGE:**

- What is Willis' view of the Hispanic culture in Valdosta in terms of:  
makeup?  
Size?  
cultural identity and strength?
- When did Willis begin working at Maria's?
- How did he come to work at or organize Latin Dance nights at Maria's?
- What were the original intentions of Maria's Latin dances on Saturday nights? Were these his intentions, Maria's intentions, or a collaborative intention?
- Was there a goal or a motive behind these intentions in beginning Latin nights at Maria's?
- Does Willis have weekly intentions or goals for the event or an overall aspiration that is different from that of the beginning?

### **C. INFORMANT ON MARIA'S LATIN DANCE NIGHT—THE EVENT AND PARTICIPANTS:**

- What is Willis' perception of the audience in terms of ethnicity and class of participants?
- Why is there the mix of people that comes?
- Are there regulars? How do they break down?
- Does the music Willis selects reflect the mix of regular participants or participants in general?
  
- Do many participants arrive knowing how to dance Latin?
- How do participants learn to dance Latin?
- Does Willis notice if there's any prestige given to the "good" dancers of an event group? How is this prestige demonstrated?
- How much individual creativity is allowed or experienced in Latin dance at Maria's on Saturdays? How does a person's ethnicity effect this?
  
- What is the importance of traditionality of music and comportment at Maria's?
- Why the dress code for the dance floor?
- How does dress at Maria's compare to that of a club scene up north or in Miami?
- How is the event tempered by the South GA scene?
- Does Willis cater to any group of people to energize or effect the work being done?

### **D. SOME CURIOSITY OVER SPECIFICS:**

- In reference to "Casa de Maria": Is the event designed to feel like a house party? Are they trying to create a particular atmosphere? Is there a word for "lounge" that translates more literally from English to Spanish?



- Was the mural on the wall there before Latin dance nights began? Does it affect the atmosphere on Saturday nights at the club?
- Does Maria's advertise for Saturday nights? How?
- In reference to the fight three weeks ago: It was handled very well and quite differently from other bar fights I've seen. Quiet and organization were maintained across the board. A lot of times in bars across town, fighting folks are seperated and allowed to continue socializing; this couple at Maria's was escorted out. Why?

**E. ABOUT MARIA'S PERSONNEL AND ATMOSPHERE:**

- What is Willis' position at Maria's?
- Where's the DJ from?
- How closely do the two work together?
- Who comes up with the play order?
- Do the other Saturday night personnel come with Willis? Are the same folks working through the week as on Saturday night?











