

## **Everyday Echo Street: A Summer Diary**

Conceived and Directed by Susan Mogul

(video, approx. 30 min., 1993)

Saturday, September 18, 6 - 10 pm

Sunday, September 19, 4 - 7 pm

Armando's Restaurant

231 North Avenue 50

Los Angeles

*Everyday Echo Street: A Summer Diary is a very personal portrait of my experiences and relationships in Highland Park, a neighborhood I have lived in for 12 years. I have combined documentary and diaristic footage I shot between Memorial Day and July Fourth of this year in order to interweave and comment upon my private and public lives.*

*Like other past work, Everyday Echo Street maintains a strong sense of humor throughout. But it is my first work to also explore more painful aspects of my identity that I have tended to conceal in the past. This is not coincidental with trying to come to terms with middle-age and coming to my own definition of "home."*

This project was made possible by a generous grant from  
The Ford Foundation

In 1988 I went to live in Budapest for a month simply because I was intrigued with Eastern Europe. The “wall” had not come down yet. Most visitors from the West were those who had relatives living in Budapest. I did not. Throughout my stay, people kept asking me the same questions:

“Why are you in Budapest? Do you have family here?”

“No.”

“Then why are you here, *alone* in Budapest?”

This question, when slightly altered is more poignant now as I finish *Everyday Echo Street*, my summer diary of Highland Park, a neighborhood I have lived *alone* in for 12 years. “Why are you here, living alone in Highland Park?” is the question my diary asks and attempts to answer. “Am I a tourist in my own community?”

Although I have lived in Los Angeles since 1973, and Highland Park since 1981, I had never thought of Highland Park as “my neighborhood” or “home.” Echo Street, the Mexican-American working-class block I live on is *not* like the Long Island Jewish middle-class suburban block where I was raised.

I am 43, have lived alone most of my adult life, never married nor have I had any children. My parents and five adult siblings live 3,000 miles away. Most are married, have children and own their own homes. My life is not like theirs. So what is *my* definition of home?

The process of making *Everyday Echo Street* was intense and revelatory for I had to confront my everyday life, both past and present. Which ultimately meant I also had to confront loss — the loss of childhood and the “letting go” of my original experience of home and family.

I now realize that, over the last 12 years I actually have staked out and defined a very clear sense of neighborhood within a one-mile radius of my one-bedroom apartment on Echo Street. I developed various kinds of relationships with individuals of different ages and nationalities: the Nassar brothers at Green Valley Produce; Rosie Sanchez at Armando’s Restaurant; Reverend Cruver and Grace Proffitt of the Pillar of Fire Church who live next door; and the Escalante family who live in my courtyard building. These are some of the people and places that have provided me with a sense of family, home and neighborhood in Highland Park; *I really do not live alone on Echo Street.*

*Everyday Echo Street: A Summer Diary* is dedicated to the memory of Larry E. Taylor, 1948-1969.

*Susan Mogul*

*Armando's is one of the classiest restaurants around and I've eaten all over — New York, London, Africa ... and Rosie Sanchez (one of the owners) is not only a beautiful person she's also very entertaining.*

Eddie "the Animal" Lopez, the heavyweight fighter from Highland Park

### Armando's Restaurant

A personal view by Susan Mogul  
September, 1993

I don't remember how I first came upon Armando's restaurant. It was shortly after I moved to Highland Park in June, 1981. It is only two blocks from my place so I probably discovered it on a neighborhood walk. Going to Armando's has never been like going to a restaurant; it has always been like stopping by to visit a friend whose door is always open. This friend is Rosie Sanchez — owner, cashier, waitress and down-home *maitre d'*. Her mother, Teresa Sanchez, is the head cook and is the only woman I have ever called Mama. I call my own mother "mom."

Early on I got into the routine of ordering Rosie's Special Burrito usually *para llevar* (to-go). This burrito is bursting at the seams with rice, beans, guacamole, a chile relleno and a generous amount of meat (I take the carne asada). It is not a hand held item. It is to be eaten on a plate and is almost equivalent to two meals. This burrito like all of the other dishes here come with Mama's home-made chips and two kinds of cold salsa — mild and hot.

Years ago I said to Rosie, "The food here is so good and the prices are so low, more people should know about your place. Why don't you advertise?"

"I know," she replied, "you're absolutely right. But if we had more customers it would be much too much work for my mother."

Rosie, her mother, as well as Tere, another cook, are extremely warm, fun loving and accommodating people. They have always been more than willing to tailor a burrito or any other dish to my wishes. Since I prefer a wet burrito, generous amounts of *salsa rojo* (red sauce) which contains small pieces of meat are always poured over the outside of my burrito as well as inside.

Rosie and I have been gossiping over the counter for years. Usually about men. But way back she warned me about one of her sisters. She confided that one of her five sisters charges more for a burrito than she does. So one day when I came in for my *usual* the "other sister" rang up my bill. It was hard for me to contest the day's 50¢ price increase as \$3 for a full meal had always felt practically like stealing food from this fine establishment.

During the period I was shooting *Everyday Echo Street*, I began coming to Armando's more frequently. I was at the restaurant several times a week — either to film or to eat. Now I was spending lots of time with Rosie, not just dropping in and out. We were still gossiping but we were also becoming closer. And I wasn't getting food *para llevar* (to-go) anymore. I was eating with Rosie at the round table by the window, the table reserved for family members only.

Other recommendations: When I have a bad cold I order the *cocido pollo* (chicken soup). It is made from scratch like the rest of the food here. Armando's generous servings of soup include a chicken leg, carrots, and big pieces of potato and/or zucchini. Ray Aguilar (aka "the guy in the gazebo" in *Everyday Echo Street*) comes almost every Sunday morning from Eagle Rock for Armando's weekend specialty, menudo (tripe soup). Since I fancy Ray I was also tempted to try *menudo para los crudos*, a soup famous for curing hangovers. I like Ray and like the menudo too.