

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

THE RANCH HOUSE ON SAN MIGUEL ISLAND

The San Miguel island ranch house was built in 1906 for Captain W. G. Waters who had leased the island since the 1890s from the government for sheep raising, paying rent of \$5.00 per year. In 1906 a large steamer was wrecked on San Miguel and its cargo of tongue and groove pine flooring provided the original building material. The house was built by John Russell who became caretaker of the island for Bob Brooks after Captain Waters' death.

The house itself was a single row of nine rooms, 120 feet long. Some rooms were connected with interior sliding doors and others only by hinged doors from the covered porch that ran the length of the building. The outside wall faced toward Bat Rock, at the west end of Cuyler's Harbor, and indirectly toward Point Concepcion, "the cradle of the winds." Because of the constant winds that blew sand against this outer wall, its only windows were fixed ships' portholes and its only door was a four-vane revolving one at the west end which the wind turned without piling sand against the entry. From this door ingress was into a large utility area including a laundry, butcher shop, woodshed and storeroom where perishable food was spread on large tables to prevent its molding from dampness. In line east of this were, successively, the kitchen, dining room, two dormitory bedrooms used by the sheepshearers, another bedroom, the living room and the master bedroom. South of this bedroom was a small wing containing the house's only clothes closet and bathroom; this was accessible both from the master bedroom and the porch

*Draft of an introduction written by Helen C. Smith
for a proposed work on Mrs. Herbert Lester*

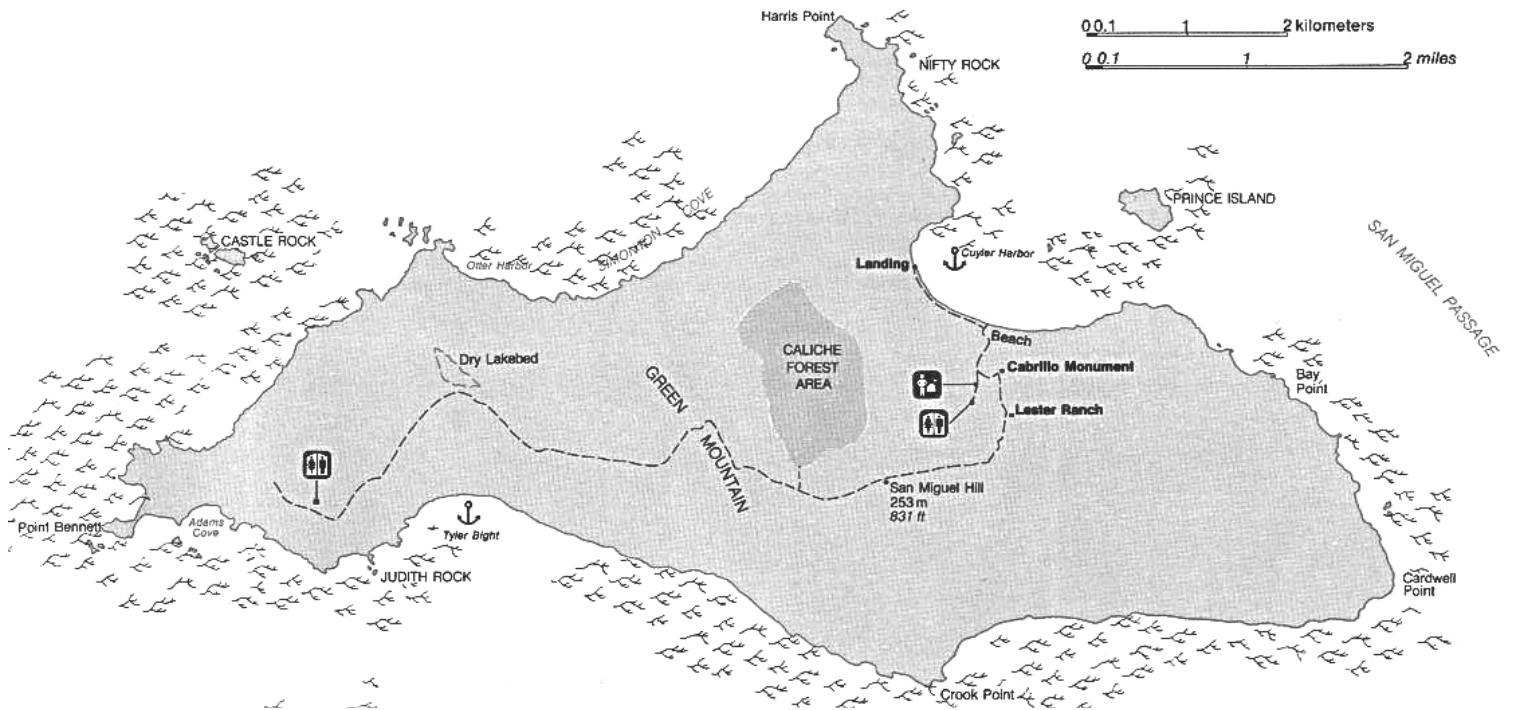


IMAGE SOURCE PAGE: <http://www.channel.islands.national-park>



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Figure 1 Channel Island maps

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NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: December 1, 1969

SUBJECT: House and life on San Miguel Island

HS: I am Helen Smith. I am recording an interview with Mrs. Herbert Lester in her home at 1812 Loma St., Santa Barbara. Mrs. Lester will talk about the arrangements in her house, furnishings and so forth. Mrs. Lester, let's discuss the dining room.

EL: Fine.

HS: You have a china closet against the east wall.

EL: That's right.

HS: Inside the porthole.

EL: That's right.

HS: And the other corner?

EL: That has a little, that has the famous barrel.

HS: Tell me about the barrel. Do you remember the date of it?

EL: I don't remember the date but it was pre-Prohibition.

HS: It was then before 1933, I think.

EL: Oh absolutely, and it was so weather beaten, you know. It was found on the beach. On the, go up the canyon road, you know. Cuyler's Harbor is here, and just the other side of the trail, in that little hollow. That's where Herbie found it one day in the summer.

HS: That would be south. Didn't you say it was buried in the sand?

EL: Oh, it was, and I think just a little bit of the barrel was exposed. He moved the sand and tried to push it, you know, and found it was heavy. So he came up to the ranch house for a brace and bit. And he went down to this thing and screwed it—you know how you use those things?

HS: You bore a hole.

EL: You bore a hole, well, that's right—and out squirted this virgin whiskey, untrammeled by Prohibition days.

HS: Did he have any idea where it had come from?

EL: Oh yes, yes. Well, in John Russell's day—he built the house and everything—there had been a flour, flour and whiskey steamer had been wrecked on the island.

HS: Do you remember the name of it?

EL: No, I don't. I have a record somewhere but I couldn't tell you offhand. And John Russell found the flour but he never found any whiskey. The house, Herbie said, they had piles of hundred-pound sacks of this flour.

HS: It didn't get wet?

EL: No. Well, they put it out to dry but they used it at any rate. It was some ten or fifteen years later Herbie finds this barrel of whiskey. Fifty gallons, so it was very exciting, this little incident. He couldn't move it so he drained off, siphoned off, I believe was the word and brought it up the house. We didn't have containers to put it in, so the sheepshearers were due for shipping fairly soon, so he said, "I'll write into Bob to bring out some containers to get it up." So he wrote him and Bob arrived with the shearers for the shipping of the lambs. And he brought five-gallon tins, I think they were, or bottles.

HS: Were they glass or metal?

EL: Metal I think they were. Yes, because on account things are so easily broken on the island. That it was better although glass would probably have been better for the whiskey. So he brought these up. Then it was a question—Of course, we had all these Indians and hands that arrived, too, and the question of getting this precious stuff up to the house undetected. The scheme was they decide to take these things down in a steamer trunk; they strapped the steamer trunk to the sled. While the men were unloading the supplies for the weeks—

HS: This was on the beach of Cuyler's Harbor?

EL: Yes, that's right. Herbie and Bob went over with the sled and—

HS: This was the sand sled pulled by the horse?

EL: Yes, that's right. They put the whiskey, they siphoned some off into these five-gallon tanks. They had to make several trips. But they took them up, you see, in this trunk so the shearers—we would have had a riot there, you know.

HS: Not much shearing done.

EL: No, they got them up the house. It was quite fun, quite exciting. They brought them up the house and stowed them away. Herbie gave Bob half of it, half of it. He took it in with him.

HS: After the barrel was emptied, it was brought up and put in the corner of the dining room.

EL: Yes, he thought it would be a nice souvenir.

HS: Occasional table.

EL: Which was used for the children's (pause) record player, you know; it wasn't a record player, it was a phonograph in those days. This was back in the days of the wind-up phonograph. Then do you remember the layout of the dining room? We called it more or less the ship room. We had ships, pictures of ships there. We had one of the *Berengaria*.

HS: You know where that is?

EL: Yes, I do. Do you know how we got it? Herbie had written to the Cunard Line. He wanted to get the *Lusitania* that went down during WWI. He wanted to get a picture of that. So he wrote them a very charming letter describing how he had travelled many times on their steamers and would they be willing to send him a picture of the *Lusitania* for the ranch house? He got a letter back from them saying they were sorry they didn't have any copies of the *Lusitania* but they would send the *Berengaria* if that would suit. He said that would be fine. So presently Bob said that this picture had arrived from the east and it took the side of a house, he didn't know how he was ever going to get up here. It was all crated and framed. Oh, it was framed in a beautiful frame. Bob was just furious. He said, ". . . side of a house! What in the world are you sending for?" It arrived and we put it up in the living room. We finally got different pictures; we had those two famous French boats. What were the names of them?

HS: Not the *Île de France*?

EL: I don't think so. They were twin boats; they came out just before the war, during the war.

HS: World War I? I don't remember. What became of those pictures? Do you know?

EL: No. I think Bob Brooks had those. Then we had *Custer's Last Stand*—Do you remember, we had it on the side. It was back alongside—

HS: In the living room?

EL: No, it wasn't in the living room. It was in the dining room. It was in the back of the barrel here. The barrel was here and here was the picture.

HS: No, I don't remember.

EL: That was a large picture; he got that from Santa Barbara somewhere. Bob has that and he was going to bring it over here to me. I didn't know where I'd put it. It's an interesting thing. I ought to have a museum in order to keep all my things. Anyway we had *Custer's Last Stand*. There were four other boat pictures of the big, big liners. I had some of my father's racing boat pictures, you know, from the East. Yachts. And then I have that bookcase here in my bedroom. It was over the—see, here's the dining room, the door was here into the dining room and up over the, on the wall was a bookshelf, a handmade one.

HS: Is it that small one there?

EL: No, that's one Betsy made me. No, this is a hand-carved one. It's over there in my room; you'll see it. And it hung on the wall and then underneath that I had pieces of china. We collected some of the nice pieces that had relics of the island. There was a nice hunting china set there that Herbie liked very much.

HS: It was there when we came. I wonder who it had belonged to.

EL: Oh, I think Captain Waters probably. It was a good bone china. I had several pieces. All my nice pieces, I used this bookshelf to put my knick knacks and silver pieces. Underneath that there was a table which I had a thing to cool cake in, you know, and a sideboard thing. Back of the chair here in the dining room under the *Berengaria* there was a little chest of drawers. Do you remember a small, hand-made chest of drawers about the size of this table.

HS: About two feet wide?

EL: Yeah, I had things that were sort of a service table that had things on it.

HS: What was in the northwest corner of the dining room?

EL: Oh, I think chairs, you know. We had to have someplace—and then there was a door out to the porch from the dining room.

HS: Yes, another sliding door.

EL: No, that was an opening door. The kitchen door opened. Those doors. It was just the doors between the rooms that were sliding.

HS: Oh, I see. Perhaps you better describe the kitchen on tape. You've already drawn a picture of it but let's describe it starting with the corner of the kitchen nearest the revolving door.

EL: Right up there was a little sliding door into the cooler closet. Alongside there was a table which had my flour bin, you know, a big thing, and then another big drawer for supplies. And the table that I used for my cooking and my baking and stuff, and over that was the cabinet with all the dry stuff, like baking powder and vanilla and all these things like that. And the stove was next.

HS: Was that the usual wood cook stove with the warming oven above and the baking oven below? Does it have a warming oven above?

EL: No, no, no. This was a flat one. A flat top, a small one, it just had an oven.

HS: While we are on the subject of the kitchen, we might as well discuss food. Did you bake your own bread?

EL: Yes.

HS: You must have ordered six sacks of flour.

EL: Oh, we never had less than a hundred pounds or two hundred pounds at a time. [We] usually had about six-month supply of food. (interruption) Well, Herbie—once a month when he knew the boat was coming in he would ask me for my list. He would make his list of the outdoor things, what he needed for the shops, and I would make my list and he would put it with his, the main thing, in his neat handwriting. What nice writing he had. We really got the main things like a sack of potatoes, a hundred pounds, and a side of bacon, side of ham, and a crate of eggs. Of course we had chickens but they didn't—there'd be perhaps enough for boiled eggs in the morning just that the family used. When the boat came in they always sent us selected groceries, green stuff and fruit. We would have a case of oranges, perhaps a case of spinach, cases of tomatoes.

HS: Are these tins?

EL: Tins, yes. And string beans, we were very fond of string beans. I used to make a nice salad with onions in it, you know. We had oil and vinegar, a big jar of oil, a big jar of Mazola and vinegar. We used vinegar quite a lot with the bacon and the ham. If it got moldy or anything like that you had to wash it off. Herbie was very particular about washing it off in vinegar, the mold. They lasted a month, six weeks.

HS: Without refrigeration?

EL: Oh, yes. Of course, it was degrees colder on the island. It was cooler there; it was really cool at night. One thing, when we got fresh vegetables they all had to be spread out on the tables. We had these large—in the larder, in the supply cupboard, you know that room I told you about here—we had large tables. Even the potatoes had to come out and be all spread out not one touching the other.

HS: The fruit too?

EL: The fruit. Even sometimes whenever the boat come in we'd have half a dozen or a dozen loaves of bread because Herbie was—even though I made bread and biscuits, he liked to have some store bread once in awhile, French bread and that. We would have to take the wrappings off of them otherwise they got moldy. We used them all up but they got stale; we would water them and then put them in the oven and they would soften up. And let's see, oh yeah, cans of six cans or twelve cans of Borden evaporated milk. The doctor said Borden milk was the best to have for the children at that time, evaporated, so we got that.

HS: You didn't have a cow did you?

EL: No, no, they had them there in the past.

HS: What about meat? Did you have any beef? Did you have any cattle that you could butcher?

EL: No. Occasionally we would get some from Santa Rosa. The *Vaquero* would come over. They brought the supplies; mostly it came with the *Vaquero*. They would bring us a side of beef or something like that. We had fish from the fishermen that came in. We had all the staple things come over on the boat.

HS: You ate a lot of mutton and lamb then?

EL: Oh, yes. I made curried lamb. Herbie was very fond of that. He liked béarnaise sauce; he said one day to me, "Can you make béarnaise sauce?" So I got my Fannie Farmer Cookbook and found how to make béarnaise sauce and made that. So that all worked out, cheered up the lamb. Personally, I like lamb better than beef. I would rather live on a sheep ranch than a beef ranch. I'd get awfully tired of beef, I think.

HS: That island lamb is so delicious; it has a slightly wild tang.

EL: Yes. Oh, Herbie told me, he said that you'll find that the lamb doesn't taste like the mainland. I discovered the reason why, because the sheepshearers used to cook it in thick grease. (laughter)

HS: Fried it, you mean?

EL: Yes, fried it in grease. I broil it, you see, or roast it and it tastes just like any other.

HS: I didn't think it did. I thought it had a wild tang that was different from some of the foods they ate. Naturally flavored with sage, perhaps.

EL: Yes. Of course it was fresher. But it was no worse than our island eggs; they were really fresh. Then you get the Bolton eggs that were supposed to be fresh but they weren't. I mean they weren't as fresh as the ones you would get out of the nest. The way we did, you know, over there with the meat, Herbie'd kill a sheep or lamb. The first thing we ate was the liver and the heart and the kidneys. That was the first day. We scalded, we were told you scald these things in boiling water and it takes the animal taste off. So we would scald them and then fry them. When I broiled the chops they tasted like chops. They may have had a fresher taste, you know, but they didn't taste—well, the way the sheepshearers cooked them you wouldn't know that you were eating lamb.

HS: It was probably rancid grease used to cook them.

EL: Never forget Bob Ord's cooking. What he would choose—he would come up and visit us and he would say, "Have you got any meat?" And we would say, "No, we haven't got anything." Then he would walk into the butcher shop and he would find old kind of pieces that Herbie would maybe give to the birds or to the animals, you know. And Bob would say, "Oh, this is just fine." Then he would take it off and—really rancid. One day he fried some fat on my stove and it just about—(laughs)

HS: It isn't pleasant. He didn't live with you?

EL: Oh no, Bob Ord, he came over from the mainland occasionally.

HS: Oh, I see. I thought you meant he was camping on the island.

EL: Oh, no. He'd arrive and—

HS: Did you bake a lot of bread at a time or did you bake nearly every day?

EL: Oh no, I didn't bake bread every day. I baked biscuits mostly, biscuits and quick biscuits I made. No, I made bread about once a week. The potato bread I made

because the yeast that you use for ordinary bread on the mainland you couldn't use there because it wouldn't keep fresh, no refrigeration. It wouldn't keep. The people, the Agees from San Nicolas, showed me how to make potato bread. I'd make some of them be bread and some would be biscuits, raised biscuits. We had pancakes for the men when they were there. They'd have pancakes for breakfast every day.

HS: It must have been quite a project cooking for the sheepshearers. How many came at a time?

EL: At least six or eight, possibly ten.

HS: You didn't serve them the kind of food that they were used to. You served them the regular menu of the house, didn't you?

EL: Yes, but I did make their special dishes. I learned how to do them.

HS: Were they all Basque?

EL: No, some of them were real Indians.

HS: What kind of Indians, Santa Barbara County?

EL: Yes.

HS: Chumash.

EL: There was one, Clemente. We had one man, his name was Clemente and he claimed that his family owned Clemente Island. Yeah, he was quite a person but his name was Clemente.

HS: I suppose they ate beans.

EL: Oh yes, beans. As soon as the boat was due—when I would hear the boat whistle I'd start sorting beans and make a big pot of beans and a big gallon thing of coffee.

HS: Did they eat rice also? Did they like rice?

EL: Spanish rice, I used to make that. And I made hot sauce. I used to make it very hot. I never ate it myself. I found if I didn't make it very hot I'd never have any left, so I made it as hot as I could possibly do it.

HS: (Laughter) A little would go a long way.

EL: I put these little red peppers that were so hot. I never ate any of this. But then I had to fry it, fry the rice and mix the rice. I'd make great big things of it so that it would last

when I'd cook this because it took several hours to cook it. When I had a gang there, I had to keep—

HS: Did you feed the shearers three times a day?

EL: Oh yes, three times a day. They used to have a coffee break in the middle of the morning. Arno would come up and take a thing of coffee down to the shed. But, he usually got the breakfast for me. They had breakfast about five in the morning.

HS: What would they eat? Oatmeal?

EL: What they didn't eat! They weren't satisfied unless the table was just loaded, more than anybody could possibly eat. I used to get it ready the night before, at least the things—I would make cereal for them. I would have it in the boiler on the back of the stove, double boiler. Then I would measure out the pancakes, dry. Arno would mix it up in the morning and make it into the batter. Then they'd have either the chops fried and bacon or ham, and eggs, and biscuits or bread, fruit and jam.

HS: Did they have a big meal at noon and at night?

EL: Oh, yes. They had to have meat three times a day. They had steak or pieces of meat. They also had the beans for breakfast, too. For lunch the same. (laughter) I seldom now buy lamb here; it's so expensive it just burns me up.

HS: Yeah, you're used to getting it free.

EL: Well, I always cooked two legs of lamb when the sheepshearers were here. We all had our special parts of the meat, you know, of the animal.

HS: Do your girls like lamb now?

EL: Oh yes, oh yes. They liked it. I think they liked lamb better than any meat. They'd rather have it, but we can't afford it.

HS: Did you raise a garden?

EL: Yes, we tried to. We managed to have in the little garden in the front there: carrots, onions and beets. We had—the old John Russell that was there before us had had a really big potato patch. He really could grow good potatoes. For anybody who was a real farmer, but we from the east we didn't know much about it but we were bound to try out.

HS: But the water from the well was so poor that it seems as if the vegetables wouldn't have liked to be watered with it. It was rather alkaline, wasn't it?

EL: Yes, but you know when I came over here, after I left the island, and whenever I came I had to put salt in water. The water here was so flat it took me years to get over the island taste. I got so accustomed to the island taste. And then I even put salt in my coffee or tea. Yes, because it was flat! Anything I drank over here, the water was flat as a pancake. But anyway the garden we planted and struggled over. We found we had to plant it several times before we got going on it. We found that the birds ate it up. So the sheepshearers, I guess it was Arno—he wasn't a shearers, he was a handyman, you know, and he said what you have to do is, to plant a garden you must, after the seeds are in the ground and coming out you have to make a clothes line with little bits of linen on it. I see them here when you try to get a lawn, you have to do it so the birds won't come in. That's what we did and then we were able to have carrots and beets.

HS: Do you remember what time of year you planted them?

EL: In the spring of the year when the water was—

HS: There's so much fog there and all of these things requires sunshine, I'm surprised anything grew.

EL: I know. Well we managed to get some. They weren't large examples. (interruption) They didn't have any homes, the Indians, you know. They were so happy to have home cooking and being in a family like we were and treated like one of the family and they liked anything that I cooked. Cake, they loved cake, jam and sweets. Occasionally I would have a birthday party for one of them. They then would all have a birthday one right after the other. So I would have to make a cake for them.

HS: How long did they spend on the island each time?

EL: Shearing they were usually there three weeks and for the shipping they were there about ten days.

HS: Where did they go when they left the island?

EL: Oh, they used to make a tour of the—see, when we first went over they, they would start from Santa Cruz and come over to us. Then they would go to San Nicolas. They would make the tour. They were transients; they went to all the islands.

HS: Santa Rosa has its own—

EL: They weren't shearers. They didn't have sheep; they had cattle. But the first year that we were there—Clemente had been taken over by the navy. They didn't go to that island. They had a regular circuit.

HS: That still wouldn't use up all the year unless you sheared more than once a year. Did you?

EL: No, we only did it once a year. No, they were there only once a year. Twice a year is all the occasion they'd come.

HS: In our drawing of the house we have two rooms that were used as dormitory bedrooms by the shearers.

EL: Yes, and occasionally we'd use them for a guest and the children used them occasionally for play room if the weather was bad. In the winter time they used them.

HS: Were they large rooms?

EL: Well, they were all about the same size, except the two largest rooms were the kitchen and our bedroom.

HS: Larger than the living room?

EL: It was. All those four rooms.

HS: The two shared rooms, the children's bedroom and the living room—

EL: Were all the same size just about.

HS: Both the children always slept in the same bedroom?

EL: Mm-hm.

HS: Did they study in there?

EL: Oh, no. If it was in the winter time I think sometimes I would have Betsy, she would do her lessons. I have a picture of her doing her lessons there. But they used the little schoolhouse across the yard.

HS: What did the living room look like when you came to the island? It had a fireplace, didn't it?

EL: No, it didn't have a fireplace. No, Herbie built it.

HS: I didn't know this.

EL: Oh yes.

HS: Out of brick?

EL: Yes, he was going to make it of the island stones, then he discovered that the stones were not fireproof or they would crumble or something.

HS: They would expand and explode.

EL: So we got, well, he took—there were some bricks up on Green Mountain, I think they were.

HS: Were those left from Captain [George] Nidever's house?

EL: Possibly.

HS: There's a corner of it left; it's exposed now and you could see that it was built of bricks.

EL: Well, that's where he got them. Then a friend brought us over some brick. The half stones, you know, the Indian half stones, they are Indian headstones from—

HS: Flat slabs?

EL: Yes, they were from the graveyards; they were Indian stones.

HS: Are they granite, do you know?

EL: Sandstone, I think.

HS: They were used as markers.

EL: Yeah, markers.

HS: Not put inside?

EL: No, they were markers. We did all the stones before the fireplace was built. We put all the stones he'd collected that he was going to make into the fireplace, we put them it into the foundation. So they were all stone from the ground up.

HS: Those weren't all Indian.

EL: No, he picked them carefully from the beach so they wouldn't have air pockets and things. No, he got pictures of fireplaces and made designs of a fireplace before he started. Do you remember the little, he put a hook. A hook! He put a hook in the fireplace to put a kettle. We never got the kettle but we were planning to. A lot of things like that. Building that fireplace was so exact every brick was measured into place. He'd never laid a brick you know.

HS: The fireplace is still standing.

EL: In the foundation when it's pulled to pieces someday you will find a little Gerber's can of vegetables, the children's.

HS: Marianne?

EL: Marianne's. I think a needle—I mean, a thimble and a dime. These were, Herbie always said in the corner stone you always put something there. I forgot if we put a letter in there or not. Some day when the house is razed—

HS: I hope those things will never be discovered.

EL: I hope not.

HS: The fireplace was in the north wall.

EL: You want that picture? (tape off) The andirons you see, Herbie made them out of the hub of a wagon. And then a pitchfork went in between and these brass balls were from the bed, the corner post of a bed. He took them off an old bed up in the attic.

HS All this material was on the island?

EL: Absolutely on the island. You see the pitch fork? And then this thing around here, the little fender, that was one of those—what's it called, a cycle?

HS: A sickle for cutting grass? Did he make the fireplace tools? The poker?

EL: Yeah, I have a poker here too. Betsy found it when she was over there. She brought it over. He made it out at Channel Island. (movement)

HS: Now we're on. The safe stands to the left side of the fireplace. The safe that you now have in your kitchen with the telephone on it.

EL: Yes, that's my telephone table.

HS: Where did the safe come from?

EL: That came from the *Cuba*.

HS: The *Cuba* was a merchant ship?

EL: Mmmm.

HS: Who salvaged that? Was that Captain Waters

EL: No, no, no, that was Ira Eaton. It was after. Let's see, the *Cuba* was something like, it went between 1920-1925 somewhere.

HS: The ship was supposed to have a lot of money on board.

EL: Yes, it was supposed to have cubes of gold and stuff like that.

HS: Ingots, bars of gold. Of course they weren't in the safe because you said this was the captain's—

EL: This was the captain's safe. It was made in England.

HS: Yes, I noticed; a lot of them are. Above the safe to the left of the fireplace as you face it are the racks for the heavy guns.

EL: Yes. And this is the picture of a whale—these fishermen that used to come over, the Locko brothers, that's one of their boats in the parlor with the whale. This is a picture of the whale.

HS: Is that a photograph or a painting?

EL: It is a photograph of a painting. Betsy has that; I gave it to her; she has it down at her house. I've given her a lot of things that she wanted. I didn't think she would be interested in my relics.

HS: How many guns did Herb have? Are they all in this picture? There seems to be about ten.

EL: There are some over here.

HS: That's the rack that's still there, the one on the side.

EL: You can't see the whale gun over here.

HS: Was that in the house also when you came there?

EL: Yes. Oh, no, the whale gun?

HS: Where did that come from?

EL: Oh, Herbie bought that from Al Heider (?), a man that used to bring over the sheepshearers on the *Lenora*. He used to bring the sheepshearers and he also took the—

HS: Was it a harpoon gun?

EL: Yeah, yes, it shoots a harpoon. Betsy has that, too. I gave it to her and she has it over a mantel piece. I wanted to keep it but it fits her house so much better. You should go and see her house.

HS: I will. What is this thing that looks like a wasp's nest hanging down?

EL: Oh, Herbie was always getting souvenirs off the beach and stuff. No, that's a thing boats used to anchor, not an anchor, a float. It's a big float. This is the mission painting that he had; it's over there. That's a Hammer, I believe, one of the famous paintings, an artist, a Santa Barbara artist. These are pictures, what do you call those?

HS: Currier and Ives.

EL: Yes. He was very fond of those, Herbie. This brass kettle was found up in the attic.

HS: That's not the one you have by your fireplace now?

EL: Yes, same one. We can't see it here on this picture but there was a big brass bowl too. This one over there, that's the one there. We had that in the dining room. (tape turned off) I brought all my books.

HS: On the south wall. No, the east wall—that would be where your bookcase was, full of books, as I remember

EL: Full of books. And then Herbie had a desk on one side and I had one, either side of the front door. I had a desk on this side and he had that. We spent our evenings he writing at his desk and I writing on this.

HS: You had oil lamps?

EL: Yes.

HS: Were they Aladdin lamps or just usual?

EL: We had a regular, little, squat lamp that he always brought in and had it on his place and I had an old fashioned lamp. I brought a lamp over, a beautiful lamp from Cape Cod. I'd bought it before I was married. I was planning to have it electrified so I could use it in my apartment. Going to the island—it had a lovely stone—not a stone, but a marble base, you know those kind, and brass handle. So when we were going to be married and I was going to the island I didn't have it electrified. I thought it would be just fine for the island. Mother packed it beautifully in the suitcase and wrapped it so it wouldn't break. When we packed to come over we were going to load the boat with our things. My new husband, he thought he could do better on the packing so he took this thing out of the suitcase that was beautifully wrapped and wrapped it in a coat and stuck it in the back of the car. When we got to the dock in San Pedro unloading things, Herbie or Bob grabbed the coat like this and pulled it up and down the thing went, smashed into smithereens. Could have been used for a candle stick.

HS: What were the seats in the living room, couches?

EL: Well, we had a couch under my bookshelves. Then they were rattan chairs. They looked like that there—arm chairs. In the dining room we had ones without arms, but in the living room there were several. He had one and I had one. I think that's all besides the sofa that was in there. We had an Indian rug and we put it on the table. Do you remember the large table in the living room? There's a picture of it.

HS: Oh yes, I see.

EL: We had book ends there. There's an Italian box, leather. This Indian rug was on there; that was a wedding present. There's kind of an Indian artifact there, kind of a pestle. And beside the guns Herbie had all kinds of little gadgets that he liked; he was very fond of this little glass cup. It was red and black, red and white, you know. We had some milk glass too. Everything in the living room had a very significant feeling. Each was picked out with a great deal of care. This was the thing to put his gun in; this is a gun thing. See you can't see this. The whale gun, I told you about that. Let's see, we each had a table which was turned into a desk. Herbie had one facing our bedroom, and I had mine facing the door to the children's room. See the door was right there. I would work on Marianne's lessons, correct her lessons and prepare for the next day, or write letters. We used to keep a letter, sort of a diary letter, it would keep going. I would write it every day and then when the boat came in then I would seal it. But I wouldn't seal it until the boat came in and was ready to send it off because there might be something to add.

HS: Those were saved for you, weren't they? You have them back now?

EL: Yes, I do. Yes, I got that habit from my grandmother years ago over at Cape Cod when I visited her there. The mailman would bring the mail. He would go all the way up the road and then he would come back. We had a chance to look at our mail. Grandmother never closed her mail until she had seen her mail. So I got that same habit. Herbie used to think that was a very silly thing that when I finished a letter I should seal it. We didn't know when the boat was coming in, and there might be something I wanted to say.

HS: It's quite reasonable. (laughs) How late did you stay up at night working at your desk?

EL: Well, about ten o'clock, not later usually.

HS: You had to get up early in the morning, I suppose.

EL: Well, we went to bed earlier until we had the weather station. We had to give a ten o'clock weather report. Then we went to bed. During the war we liked to listen to the ten o'clock news. We did have a radio.

HS: Now we come to the description of the master bedroom.

EL: Oh, we had one of those—what do you call those? Mahogany old fashioned sleigh beds.

HS: Was that on the island when you came here?

EL: No, it wasn't. We had an old birch—it was yellow—when we first landed there. But then we were given this other later. We had a, over our bed was a bear flag that—Herbie was very fond of California when we first came. Even an Englishman friend came and Herbie asked him, he wanted to know what we liked or something and he said, "Oh, do bring us or send us a bear flag." He liked that. He loved bears, of course, so he had that bear flag over our bed. And then I had a paisley shawl from my grandmother that was over the foot of the bed. That's right.

HS: On the leather trunk?

EL: Yes, the one that he had found up in the attic. He brought it down.

HS: Did it have anything in it when he found it?

EL: I don't think so. I don't remember that he found anything in it.

HS: It was rather large.

EL: Yes. It was in very good shape. Then we had at the other corner on one side of the bed, my side, towards the garden there was my bureau. It was one of those maple bureaus. It was nothing very important. And then the other side of the door—in the trunk we kept our winter supplies and Herbie's uniforms that he liked and his African safari hat, you know, and our flags and different things that weren't used often.

HS: What other furniture was there in the bedroom? Another bureau, I suppose.

EL: There were just two bureaus. That funny one that had my, we were talking about—

HS: The one that John Russell had built.

EL: Right, and it had three, four—the drawers, you could see one, it was handmade because the drawers weren't uniform the way they would make it in a manufactured thing. It was more, that top thing I told you about had a layer about this deep. Herbie had his small important things he kept there. Then he had his clothes in the next two drawers and I had the big bottom drawer, quite a deep one that I used for my bed linen and towels and things like that.

HS: Was there a closet in the room?

EL: Oh yes, well, not in the room. There was a clothes closet. There was a little hall between our room and the bathroom. There facing the garden was this—quite a good size—closet, and it had a little window there out to the garden.

HS: It was not a porthole?

EL: No, it was a window, a small window, as I remember. But it was a good size closet that you could keep things. In fact, it was the only clothes closet in the whole house.

HS: What kind of rugs were on the floor.

EL: We didn't have any. The ones I brought over from the mainland, I mean when I came—I think I was given a wedding present, two of those braided rugs from New England. I had one on my side of the bed and one on Herbie's.

HS: The bathroom fixtures, were those taken out of a ship?

EL: No, I think they were built in by John Russell when he built the house.

HS: I remember the corner hand bowl in the bathroom.

EL: They were in the house when I came. There was running water; it was cold water when we first came. Cold water was running; there wasn't any hot water in this place. We were given a hot water boiler for a wedding present. We put it in the kitchen

HS: The stove heated the water?

EL: Yes.

HS: The water for the bathroom probably came from that water tank just outside.

EL: No, it came from the kettle and he put a pipe right through. I think he found the easiest way to do it was up in the attic, you know, through the attic and came down.

HS: That must have been a long run for the hot water.

EL: Oh, yes, it was.

HS: Over a hundred feet.

EL: It took quite awhile to get hot. The bathtub that was in there was one of those old-fashioned ones. On the mainland it ordinarily would have had some of those feet you stand up on. But it didn't have feet, I don't know what happened. It was set on two boards, beams that were rounded out and it was set on that. It was just cold water. When I first went to the island before the hot water heater came, we had to

boil water on the stove in the kitchen in one of those galvanized things and bring it all the way into the bathroom, carry it in. (laughs)

HS: On the porch?

EL: On the porch and dump it in the bathtub. In the cold weather when I was first there we put the cold water and boiled it and had the bath right there in the kitchen the first few times. When we were by ourselves we did that, but when we had company we didn't. We brought the water all the way—and then there was a proper toilet there, one of those old-fashioned things with a long chain. Of course when the wind didn't blow and the tanks on the roof were empty, we couldn't use it.

HS: Can you remember what furniture and fittings were in the house when you first arrived?

EL: What kind of fittings?

HS: Well, the kitchen stove.

EL: Kitchen stove was there. And oh, do you remember there was a hand pump over by the sink, of course. That pumped up the rain water from the rainwater tank, the cistern. I used it for my hair. I didn't drink it because I liked the other kind of water.

HS: You would have to boil it to drink?

EL: Yes. Herbie used to clean it out every year before the rains came. Our little white mice were thankful.

HS: Was there much winter rain during the time you lived there?

EL: Oh, yes.

HS: You have no idea how many inches fell, I suppose.

EL: Oh yes, at times there was seventeen, eighteen inches Herbie said that one couldn't live without eighteen inches and anything below eighteen inches was—

HS: I wonder if it is raining that much every winter now. I don't think it is.

EL: No, well you see when we left there—they had had a drought, there'd been a seven-year drought. We had a weather station over there [for] the weather people. I remember asking him about weather. He said the cycle of rain, every seven years you will find you have more. (phone rings) The rain, sometimes it would rain for a week or two weeks at a time, and we didn't even go to the porch, the children and I. Herbie would go off. He had to take care of the animals and he had to bring in wood. But it

would be weeks sometimes. February, I think, it was the rainiest weather. It would practically be the whole month it would be rain.

HS: What was the foggiest time, summer?

EL: April, May, sometimes we didn't see the sun for a month. It would come through for just a little.

HS: Speaking of firewood, we didn't discuss the wood supply.

EL: Oh, we used ironwood.

HS: I wonder if the ironwood is all gone.

EL: There were roots of the trees.

HS: Did they have to be dug out?

EL: Yes. We would go and dig them out then we would go with the sled and gather them up.

HS: Those probably were trees before the sheep came, ate the bark and ate the leaves.

EL: (microphone distortion) . . . came to visit us on the island. They told us how to look for Indian things, artifacts. We found the graves there and we were particular and careful not to disturb them or we were finding things on the surface. When we found anything important Herbie would write to the museums and get somebody out to excavate them.

HS: Mr. Rogers ever come over?

EL: Yes, he did. Yes, he did.

HS: And Mr. [Phil C.] Orr?

EL: No, Mr. Orr, that was before Mr. Orr's day. David Banks Rogers just came over and Mr. Bernard Hoffman—Bernard Hoffman¹ was the head of the history museum, natural history. But Rogers came over quite a number of times. Hoffmann came over; he was a botanist. He came over to look for flowers.

HS: I think Mr. Rogers' book was published in 1928. He had already written his book and must have known a lot about the area.

¹ Ralph Hoffmann was named director of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in 1925. Bernard Hoffman was a well-known photo journalist for *Life* magazine.

EL: Yes. It was quite a number of years, very interesting man. He knew a lot about Indians that he told us.

HS: Did he stay with you?

EL: Yes, oh yes. They stayed at the ranch house. Bernard Hoffman stayed, came over with one of his daughters one time.

HS: Was he the man who fell off the ledge?

EL: Yes, he was. That was a bad day.

HS: Did you ever have any troubles besides Bob Brooks sitting on the spike? Did you ever have any crisis where you needed help suddenly and couldn't get it?

EL: No. No, except when Hoffmann died. But no, we had lots of red cross supplies and things like that but we never needed any. We were always well. When people came over they'd get lost in the fog and have to spend the night in a cave.

HS: Caves? Are caves there?

EL: Oh, yes.

HS: Where?

EL: Oh, around by the beach and down the barrancas, too. (interruption) . . . around the island, when we had to leave.

HS: The children.

EL: Yes. Marianne was eleven and a half and Betsy was eight. They were old enough then to take a trip around, but most of the time I told them they were too young.

HS: They never went far from the house, did they?

EL: No, well, we'd go on picnics and excursions around, either on a sled, sometimes on horseback. We never went too far.

HS: Were there any burros on the island when you lived there?

EL: No.

HS: There are some now.

EL: Well, I understood the [U.S.] Navy brought them over. Maybe there was that woman, the one that the husband got shot up, don't you know?

HS: Well, you wouldn't know, the sea elephants that were on the west end, or is that the east end?

EL: No, it was the west end. And the sea lions are supposed to be one of the largest sea lion rookeries on the coast, San Miguel.

HS: But someone has said recently that the sea elephants have only recently come back there. They've always been on San Nicolas.

EL: San Nicolas, yeah. Well, they were, Herbie'd find some, I don't think there were as many there as there were of the sea lions. But he did see evidence while we were there of the sea otter coming back. He noted one or two, I think.

HS: Did he? They don't go ashore, do they?

EL: No, but he'd see them off—and killer whales. He was very much interested in all those things. You know what he did with that bell? Every time anything would happen, he'd ring the bell. That was either to send us in to lunch or if anybody wanted to—beside being used for the school bell, it was also used for the—

HS: You mean when a boat came or animals—?

EL: Anything unusual happened and he wanted to rally the family or the people together, why, we would all gather.

HS: What happened to the school bell?

EL: Well, I sold it. Bob brought it over. Herbie bought it for \$10 and I got \$25 or \$30 for it. I'm sorry I did, in a way now, but I didn't know where to put it. So many of those things—

HS: Someone might have stolen it if you'd have kept it.

EL: Yes, I know.

END OF SESSION

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: June 19, 1966

SUBJECT: Channel Island residents, museum artifacts, death of Ralph Hoffmann

HS: Mrs. Lester, let's start by talking about your neighbors and the various islands and your relations with them. Let's start with San Nicolas; it's the furthest out, loneliest. Do you know the Agees? You said the Agees were living there when you did.

EL: Yes.

HS: How did they come by it? Did Mrs. Agee's parents get the lease from the government?

EL: No, no. They were employed by Robert Brooks that owns San Miguel.

HS: Oh. They had the same arrangement that you did?

EL: Yes. The mother and father were there.

HS: Mrs. Agee's parents?

EL: Yes, and her brother. And when I went over—when Herbie and I had been married, Herbie said he got word from Bob. We had to go over to the island sooner than we expected because they had had some trouble on San Nicolas Island. Margaret Agee's brother had shot a fisherman and he had to go on trial at Ventura. So we had to take charge of the shearing at that time because Bob couldn't.

HS: Did you often see the Agees?

- EL: Well, they came over several times during our years on the island.
- HS: You had sometimes mentioned that Mrs. Agee gave you household hints.
- EL: Oh, she did. She gave a wonderful help on preserving eggs, so the case of eggs would last longer after the shearers left. She told us of a very good way instead of putting them down in a water glass as Herbie had done and they were successful. She said this was much better and they had a better flavor.
- HS: What was her method?
- EL: Well, you got a kettle of boiling water and you put a dozen eggs in. And you just barely put them in and let them scald for a few minutes. Then put them back in their cartons. So we did this. We did a whole case of them. But we found some weeks later when we took them out to use them, they exploded, they were perfectly bad. Rotten you might say. So that's that. She was an ardent follower of Aimee McPherson². She used to read the bible walking up and down the porch there at San Miguel.
- Her husband wasn't allowed to smoke. It was very against the rules and he was very good about it. They were, both of them supposed to be, but when he got off with the men Herbie said he smoked and had a little glass of beer.
- HS: She must have had trouble going to Aimee's services. She didn't get ashore very often, did she?
- EL: No, they didn't but I don't know what—she had different arrangements. She went over more often and I think their island is eighty miles out from San Pedro. Straight out you know? But they probably went in regardless on fishermen's boats.
- HS: How did they come to visit you?
- EL: Well, they came to help at shearing time the year after Marianne was born. And she was only thirteen months and my husband thought and Bob Brooks that I would have too much to do with taking care of the baby and the shearers. Since I wasn't an expert on ranch life and taking care of men and my husband thinking that the baby was all important, I mustn't be a neglectful mother.
- HS: (laughs) Aren't you glad she came to help you?
- EL: Yes, I am. She was very kind and she showed me how to bake bread, too. We made bread; she showed me how to make potato bread. And also she gave me a very useful recipe for making an eggless, milkless cake which, during war time—well, it wasn't

² Evangelist who lived in Los Angeles, California.

war time then. But living on an island where you couldn't always get eggs—we'd have eggs enough for the family's breakfast, you know, with our chickens and that. But making a cake where you need four or five or more it wasn't easy. So she gave me this recipe that was like a spice cake. I have it in there in my book. Two pounds of raisins—we used to get a carton of raisins. We always had raisins and prunes and apricots and dried apples. So we had all these ingredients for making a spice cake and it came to be the standard.

HS: Is that the birthday cake that you made so often when the shearers were there?

EL: No.

HS: It sounds pretty fancy for them.

EL: No, but it was a large loaf cake. No, I made a cake that would take two or three eggs. Of course, when they were there we had a whole case of eggs so there was no problem. But when we were there on our own—Then she showed me how to make this potato bread.

HS: Did the Agees have any children?

EL: Yes, they had one little girl. What was her name? Margaret. That was the time, you know, Marianne was only thirteen months old and I had a system with her. She was not very hard—I used to put her in our bedroom and close the door into the bathroom—of course, we would put all sorts of things away. But, she was at that age not yet able to open a door. So when I closed the bathroom door she was perfectly safe and she couldn't climb up onto any bureaus. She wasn't high enough. So she and the little Agee girl—she was three I think or four—I let them play in there together. Well, the little Agee girl had to go to the bathroom and she opened the door and forgot to close it. Of course, we didn't know that. Marianne got into lye and burned her mouth, really something.

HS: How soon did you find out?

EL: She came dashing in, she spit it out. She didn't swallow it otherwise she would have burned—The men and Herbie, all the men were down working in the yard down on the beach getting up things. I didn't know what to do. She had her mouth all burned all around here. Very fortunate that she didn't—so it just shows the dangers of the home. I thought everything had been under control.

HS: How did the Agees handle the education of their little girl?

EL: They had a teacher come over. They had a teacher.

HS: For the one child?

EL: Yes.

HS: There weren't any other people on the island?

EL: No. They had to have a teacher there; the mother wasn't able to teach them.

HS: Do you remember any other incidents or connections?

EL: Well, I know at one time Margaret's father and mother were out on some excursion on their island with their sled like we had on San Miguel—stupid not to know that name—and he wasn't very familiar with horses, I guess, and their habits. So he was walking on the wrong side, according to Herbie, he was walking on the wrong side of the sled. And the runner ran over one of his ankles or feet. He returned to the house. They didn't know any first aid. They didn't know what to do so he just took himself to bed. They had no communication anymore than we did on San Miguel. I don't know the details of what his wife tried to do, but anyway he stayed off his feet. They didn't have anybody there. For a number of weeks they didn't get ahold of anyone, and his leg became infected and it had to be amputated.

HS: Did he go back to the island after that?

EL: Oh yes, they lived on the island. Yes, they came back to the island. They bought the island from Bob. After we'd been there for awhile Bob wanted to get rid of it.

HS: They bought the island or they bought the lease?

EL: They bought the lease.

HS: I thought that they were in charge of it at one time.

EL: Well, they were, but they got it from Bob. They paid it off. What he did was he let them buy the sheep and things by not paying them or something. I don't know.

HS: They left San Nicolas before you left San Miguel, didn't they?

EL: Oh, yes. They had to; the [U.S.] Navy took it over.

HS: Do you remember when that was? Before it happened to San Miguel?

EL: Oh yes, it was five or six years. Well, they got tired of it. I don't know.

HS: Arthur Sanger always said that they couldn't stand the trip out there. They didn't like being isolated. They were subject to sea sickness and they hated the trip. They weren't as well prepared as you easterners were, were they?

EL: No. There were so many—well, I don't think they were what I call good sports. I think when you decide—I knew when I went out to the island it wasn't going to be an easy thing after all. I wasn't in my first youth; I had a French beau. No, he was a Spanish young man in New York. He was a summer visitor in Rye where I lived. When I was working in the library—I thought it was quite cunning—he used to call me "Little flower of autumn" because when we got on the train on Monday morning I always had a big bouquet of flowers to take to the library. This was his foreign, his Latin way of expressing that I was still a charmingly young person, but I was not in the first bloom. He didn't want to say you were passé, you know, or something like that. (laughs) Well, that was that. Let's see what else did I—that really had nothing to do with the island.

HS: Are you in touch with any of the Agees still?

EL: No, I haven't seen them; I'd like to see them in a way. It would be sort of fun. I saw them once or twice. They came to see me once when I was on the mainland with one of the children, but they weren't in tune with us.

HS: Let's go to Santa Rosa Island.

EL: Well, of course, you know when I went to the island we went over on the *Vaquero*—

HS: From San Pedro?

EL: Yes. The day when Herbie and I went over the Vail family, at least Ed Vail and his wife Brownie, were on the boat. We were given one of the master's state room. They were very jolly; I can see Ed with his sombrero hat.

HS: This was just a vacation for them?

EL: Oh yes, we were migrating over there with all our worldly goods. They got off at Santa Rosa when we stopped there early in the morning. We went on.

HS: Did you get to go ashore on Santa Rosa or didn't you care about it?

EL: No, we didn't go ashore. We were more interested in getting to San Miguel that trip. I did go on other occasions during my twelve years on the island.

HS: How did you get over there? Was it by accident when a fishermen came along?

EL: Oh no, no. It was on our way home or on the way into town, you know. The *Vaquero* would pick us up, pick either the sheep at shearing or shipping, they'd stop. They would load their cattle while we had our sheep as part of it, you know.

HS: Did you ever stay overnight at Santa Rosa?

EL: It seems to me I did once, one time when Betsy was born; I had the two children. We had to stay over for some reason.

HS: Is there a nice house there?

EL: Oh, yes.

HS: Is that built at that harbor where everybody stops?

EL: It's up a little way. They had a real school there, too, you know.

HS: Those are the only buildings on the island, aren't they? On Santa Rosa?

EL: I think at the time they had a master's house, they had a house for the Vails and then they had bunkhouses for the—

HS: But they weren't far apart?

EL: No. They had barns for the horses and they had a schoolhouse.

HS: You spoke of getting meat from them.

EL: Yes. Occasionally when they would come—See, when we first went to San Miguel, every six weeks, a month or six weeks, the *Vaquero* would stop with our mail and supplies. Occasionally they would bring us a piece of meat.

HS: Would you exchange mutton or beef?

EL: Yes, we would exchange.

HS: None of the Vails lived on the island, did they?

EL: No, but they used to stay and spend vacations, weekends.

HS: Which members of the family were living then?

EL: When we knew them there was Ed and—who did I say that man was?

HS: Russ.

EL: Russ. Well, of course, he had a number, their last brother died last year. The last one, Mason, I think his name was—I don't remember how many. But the twins—you know, Russ Vail had twin boys; his wife was Anita. Ed Vail had a little girl, Mary; she was seven when I knew them. Brownie helped and took care of me when Marianne was born; I had to go to the mainland. She and her nurse used to come down and bathe and prepare Marianne for the day.

HS: In Santa Barbara?

EL: No. I didn't come to Santa Barbara till after Betsy was born. No, I used to go into Los Angeles because Bob Brooks was there. They lived there. They lived in Beverly Hills.

HS: So did the Vails, didn't they?

EL: They didn't migrate to Santa Barbara till after.

HS: I forgot to ask you if you ever went out to San Nicolas?

EL: Well, I never got off the boat. I went there, I stopped in there while they were picking up some people there or sheep or wool or something.

HS: Did Herb ever go over there?

EL: Oh yes, he went over numbers of times. In fact, he went over before I went to the island. I think he stayed on San Nicolas with the Agees. He knew them a great deal more than I. You see, the next year, after I had been over there a year, I had a child. I had Marianne and I was like any modern mother with a child. I couldn't run around. I was in the position of having to tend to business. I didn't see a great deal of San Miguel Island until the girls were quite old. Of course, that first year when we first went over I walked over the island with Herbie. We excavated.

HS: What was your connection with Santa Cruz Island?

EL: Well, I only stopped there; I never went on the island. Herbie did, he was much more gregarious than I. And didn't I tell you that story about describing myself like a New Englander? How one time Agnes came up—you weren't along. She had a party of paying guests on *The Dreamer* and she came up with—I think Arno was there. He used to stay very often between shearing and shipping to help get the island in good order. He was there one time when Agnes appeared. Herbie said, "They are coming up!" So he dashed off as he always did, rushed out the gate to meet these guests and Agnes and Art came in with their crowd and she started to introduce me around and I said, "How do you do?" (lowers voice) and froze, just like that. Herbie said to me, "My, you are not very enthusiastic." Here was Agnes throwing her arms around Arno.

HS: I know; I can prove that. I have a snapshot of a group of people in the yard and Agnes has her arms around Arno's shoulders.

EL: I mean, he was a nice person and all. I couldn't imagine wanting to throw my arms—

HS: Agnes was showing how familiar she was. She couldn't throw her arms around you.

EL: No. Herbie was always embracing everybody. I didn't mind it. He was always so enthusiastic. I know, I just couldn't help it; that was my nature. Herbie always said, "You certainly don't act as if you're pleased to see these visitors." "Well," I said, "I am. I just wait." You know how she used to come in and get Marianne to read. Did she ever do that when you were there?

HS: No. When I visited I did it on my own. I think I was probably escorted up and introduced, but I came back myself and I spent the night with you, and they were all back on *The Dreamer*.

EL: Well, she was so ridiculous. She was so funny and she'd bring all these—
(microphone goes out)

HS: —Santa Cruz Island.

EL: Well, I can't tell you very much about it. Our friend Lenox Tierney (?) used to love Santa Cruz Island. He used to say it was a beautiful island. The foliages and streams, it really was out of this world.

HS: It is. He is the artist who painted the picture on the mantel of the ranch house that you have at San Miguel.

EL: Well, I can tell you a little story of the sheepshearers. Now you know, they used to be a group of shearers that came to our island. They would make the rounds in the spring. I think they started at Santa Cruz, then they'd come to San Miguel, and then San Nicolas. When Clemente Island was still a sheep ranch they would go there. They made a circle. Well, so they started; the gang this spring they went to Santa Cruz Island. When they came over to San Miguel they were very much disturbed because they had an experience with their clothes over on Santa Cruz. They were rough looking people, but they were very clean, keeping their clothes in order and doing their washing. All that was very important. Whenever they arrived at an island, first thing they would do or when they finished would be to see that their clothes were all in order. They did some washing—one week they were there in Santa Cruz they hung up their laundry on the line. Well, some wild boars got after their clothes and ate them, chewed them up. They were very distressed when they came to San Miguel; they had to do some repairing of their clothes.

HS: Did you help them?

EL: Oh no, I provided patches, material to patch. We always had ample patching material and threads and needles and scissors.

HS: Were these their work clothes?

EL: Yes, it was their work clothes. I hope they weren't their best ones; I can't remember that. They did have quite a problem on Santa Cruz about the wild boars, I heard about them. They sent us a wild boar once to San Miguel. We had it for a while. I forgot the name Herbie gave it.

HS: You mean as a pet?

EL: Yes, he sent him a little pet, a little boar.

HS: They're not wild, of course. They've gone native, haven't they? They sort of revert back to razor backs. They are skinny and fast and fierce.

EL: Well, that's the only story. Whenever I would go into the mainland we usually had to stop at Santa Cruz. We talked to some of the people that would come on board. But I never went ashore usually because when I did go ashore I had the children, one or two children. It was kind of hard to climb down a boat and get into a skiff. I wasn't adventuresome in that respect.

HS: I wonder if they were still making wine when you were living on San Miguel. That winery they had in the old days was quite well known. Did they ever send you any?

EL: No, no they didn't. The Cares had sold part of their island to Stanton, Edward Stanton I believe his name was—I'll go on with the shearers, the day they were mending their clothes on San Miguel. My little daughter, Marianne, came in; she had been naughty that one morning. I had taken away scissors from her because she used them in not a good fashion. So when the men were there mending, she was determined to get the scissors. I put them up high so she couldn't reach them. I was cooking supper. She came in and she said, "Clemente needs some scissors; he's mending clothes that got eaten by some boars on Santa Cruz." So I handed the scissors to Marianne and went on with my cooking, and I never thought anything more about it. Marianne must have been six or seven at this time. Presently I looked out the kitchen window and here was Marianne standing in the middle of the patio right by the bell, jumping up in the air shearing her hair off! Her hair went one way and the scissors the other. She was jumping this way and her hair was flying this way. She was right where the doors opened; that's what she wanted the scissors for. So her father comes out and grabs her and puts her in her room. She sheared one side of her hair.

HS: All little girls have to go through that period. They always do it wrong. I know their specialty is cutting the bangs off right against the scalp. Fortunately it grows out.

EL: Well, so that was that for that little incident.

HS: I think you said that the first of the long list of scientists who came up to the island was Ralph Hoffmann from the museum of natural history in Santa Barbara.

EL: Yes. That first year that we were on the island, we'd just been there about three weeks and the shearers were there. We weren't unpacked; we had trunks and boxes. Things were not unpacked when Ralph Hoffmann came with his daughter. It was Ellen, no, it wasn't Ellen; I think it was Ellena Hoffmann. Herbie didn't have his guest books unpacked which he wanted to get everybody—They are not listed on the first trip, but he made a number of trips.

HS: Was he an ornithologist?

EL: A botanist, the time he was killed on San Miguel Island. You want that story now, no?

HS: Yes, go ahead and cover it. This was only in 1932, I believe, so it wasn't much later.

EL: Oh, I think it was thirty-three because it was before Betsy was born. One time he did come over before this. He came that one time and then he came one time with Mrs. Laura Knight, you know, who lived in Montecito. She hired a boat to bring them all out. He came in the summer time when Herbie wrote in and told him about having found the elephants. He found these fossil bones and one that was six feet in diameter a—

HS: Was it a leg bone?

EL: No, it was a tusk! Tusk! Six feet. And then he found a tusk, I mean a tooth that was fourteen inches. And he left them there because he didn't want to take them out of the ground. He wrote in to tell Hoffmann about them and he came over to explore this before sending over Dr. Rogers, David B. Rogers, you know, who was the Indian-fossil-bone man. That summer that he came we had—it must have been later than thirty-three, it must have been thirty-four or -five because Betsy was born. Yes, I remember, because these friends of ours, the McMillens, came over from Los Angeles with their two sons to visit us, and they spent two weeks on the island. Our friend Steve Stevens brought them over on his boat *Ruby*. When he came to pick them up two weeks after—this was in August—he brought over Mr. Ralph Hoffmann. He thought he would give Hoffmann a break in price because he had to come for these other people. Mr. Hoffmann brought Mr. Daniels with him who was a friend of his. They sent Mr. Daniels over to supervise Dr. Hoffmann because he was known for being rash in his excavations. He would take chances. So this day we were all around. Steve arrived in the harbor and he came up and he just came with himself.

HS: Who is Steve?

El: Steve Stevens . He was, his real name is U. F. Stevens, but we always called him Steve. He came and he said I brought Ralph Hoffmann and Mr. Daniels but I took them over to that little cove there on the side of Cuyler's. Mr. Hoffmann wanted to hunt for some special flowers he wanted to pick. Mr. Daniels went with him and they got off there. They'll be around presently. Well, we all sat around and talked and visited. Fog began to come in. Still there was no sign of Hoffmann or Daniels. When the fog was quite thick, here Mr. Daniels arrived but no Mr. Hoffmann. He said that they had planned to meet at the top. Mr. Hoffmann was coming around the one side and he was to meet him at the top. But he said, "I didn't meet him. I don't know what happened. I thought I better come on over to the ranch house. He may have circled around the island more." He was disturbed not to find him. This got to be quite dark. So they decided to go out and look for him. They went out. Steve and Mr. McMillen went up on horseback on ridge around the top of the Island, and Herbie took young Jim McMillen—the oldest boy, he didn't take the younger one. He went along the beach looking and Herbie found him on the cave right down on the beach and they had to lift him. How was that? He took him off so the water wouldn't wash him out. High tide. They came up and came home. Next morning Steve went out and they went around to get him. They wouldn't go over land; they couldn't pick him up with the sled. Steve decided to take the boat around and get him. They got him and then the McMillens went in on the boat. Yes, they decided to go all together.

HS: They never brought him to the house?

EL: No, they never brought him up to the house. So they thought it would be too difficult. And then Herbie wrote a report to the coroner and they never came over to investigate it because Herbie gave such a full detailed account. Of course, we had—what do you call it—witnesses. The McMillens were all there.

HS: Was Herb a deputy sheriff at that time?

EL: I think he was. So they just took his word for it. Herbie made a cross and we always called it the Hoffmann Bluff. I suppose the cross is no longer there. Herbie used to fix it up every year that the cross got blown down. It was right over there where we used to go and get beads. Bead factory.

HS: We might mention here the story you told me about the box that you kept the guns in for so long.

EL: Oh yes, that was a coffin! That was a coffin and Betsy slept on it for awhile when she came over to Santa Barbara, yes. We used it for a sofa.

HS: Where did you find it?

EL: Well, that was up in the attic at the ranch house. You see, at one time during the stay of John Russell and his wife on the island—they lived there seventeen years—

HS: As employees of Captain Waters?

EL: Yes. And Bob Brooks, too, and he—Somebody died over there.

HS: Was it an employee or a guest? Do you know anything about that?

EL: Oh yes, he was a sheepshearer. Yes. He died there and until they had a boat come in to get him, they had to bury him. They had to bury him in the little garden close to the house in that little square with the fence. John made this coffin to put this man in. They buried it in the garden. When the boat came for him they dug it up and took the man out. They put the coffin up for another occasion.

HS: How did they get it in the attic? Did they put it in from the outside?

EL: I don't know; I wasn't here.

HS: Oh, I know, but I thought perhaps (microphone goes out). Herb never used it?

EL: It was never used by anybody.

HS: Did you keep the guns in it when Betsy was sleeping on it?

EL: (microphone goes out) I liked him but my husband didn't get to like him.

HS: I noticed in the first guestbook for the year 1930 David Banks Rogers was on the Island the nineteenth of August. Do you remember his first visit?

EL: Oh yes, he came over to look for artifacts and he didn't come for any special reason. Just to visit.

HS: Did he stay long with you? He stayed in the house, I suppose.

EL: Oh, yes, he stayed in the house. We had a good visit with him. Herbie, of course, was very much interested in knowing about the artifacts on the island. He told us a good ways how to find them you know, how to get them out of the ground without disturbing the burials.

HS: Did he come often?

EL: Well, he came two or three times. We always enjoyed his visits. And then he came to visit me when I was on the mainland waiting for Marianne when I was staying with my cousins in San Fernando.

HS: You don't remember any anecdotes or connections with him?

EL: Not especially, not until he came over to get the imperial elephant tusks that Herbie found. He had written to Hoffmann and that was the time of the tragedy then. And then after that Rogers came over to get them out. I have those pictures of them at the place they dug them out.

HS: I would like to see them sometime.

EL: And he took them in, a tooth and these tusks, and he asked Herbie—this is why Herbie didn't like him. Marianne was a baby and he had come over to get the tusks and after he had had them he said he would like to buy them from Herbie. And Herbie didn't want to sell them. But he said, "If you want them you can give a present to my little girl, to Marianne. You can make a donation." He said, "The museum gave me so much money for the trip and I have seventeen dollars left and I want you to have it." So Herbie thought that was a small donation. So that was the—I don't mind. What bothers me is that they have never put those tusks. I often wondered what happened to them. Whether Rogers sold them somewhere else or whether they have them in the museum because they have never been put out.

HS: They talk so much about the dwarf mammoth. They have a restoration that kind of composite that's made of bones from different islands.

EL: They never said anything about these elephants that Herbie found. I always wondered. I would like to ask but they said that they were in the cellar or something.
(microphone goes out)

END OF SESSION

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: Unrecorded

SUBJECT: Schooling for Marianne, animals on the island

Recording begins mid-conversation.

HS: You were saying that when Marianne was four, you began to think about her schooling.

EL: Yes. Well, I was visiting with Mrs. Hammond, Mrs. Gardner Hammond in Montecito.

HS: This would have been about 1936?

EL: Yes, something like that. And she introduced me to Mrs. James Ord, whose sister, Mrs. Wright, had a little school in San Francisco. Mrs. Wright was visiting her sister and I met her and I was telling her that Marianne was now four and I was wondering about starting her schooling.

HS: She already knew how to read, didn't she?

EL: Oh, no. No, but she knew how to make puzzles and things like that.

HS: Could she write?

EL: No, well, a few letters, like A and B, printing. So Mrs. Wright told me to give her these blocks and show her how to do the kindergarten work. Or maybe she was really ready to start school; I don't exactly remember. Anyway, Mrs. Wright said she would send me some material. She sent me kindergarten material for Marianne and we started it and she did very well. She did a puzzle of George Washington with 300 pieces, I think it was—

HS: This was a jigsaw puzzle?

EL: A jigsaw puzzle. Well then, when Marianne—the following summer when Herbie went to town, we were in the midst of this school. Herbie usually took his vacation—we always had to take them separately because we couldn't leave the island alone. We always had to have somebody with us, but we each wanted one of us to be there to protect—

HS: Well, the responsibilities, yes.

EL: So when he went ashore just before the shearers came to do his shopping, he was given a doll's house by the Vail's for the children. That was in Santa Barbara. And, he was loading the boat and some of his good friends from the *News Press* were there to see Herbie load this playhouse and all his equipment that he had.

HS: Was the play house knocked down?

EL: Oh, yes, it was in panels. And so, they wrote it up as not a playhouse but a schoolhouse. Herbie told them Marianne had begun school, and so they were the ones that described it as a schoolhouse. When Herbie set it up in the patio we used it as a schoolhouse. He put in a table for Marianne and I had a picture of George Washington that I had had in my own home back in Rye, New York. When I was a child that was one of my school things; I thought it was important to have the father of the country there. And, we had a blackboard where we'd have our lessons. I had a table for her, and then when Betsy came along, I added a table for her. But the first year with Marianne, I started in. Mrs. Wright told me that the way to teach her to read was to have a combination of visuals, objects, you know, and then phonetics. So, for phonetics we would make rhymes of the different sounds like ail, pail, sail, and then I would describe the meanings of a-l-e and a-i-l. I think this was the way Marianne really got her poetry in because we did this rhythm so much. And by the way, when she was a little girl I used to read to her. When she was about a year old I started. It worried me because the island, although you'd say to a child, you couldn't say here's a church because there weren't things. How was she going to learn the names of things? So I really started the visual education before they were doing it in the schools here because I got lots of picture books. That's the way I started; I don't know whether it was my own idea or somebody's, but I got all kinds of picture books of animals and home life and cities so that I could—you couldn't say, well, here's a school, because she didn't see it. Or a pine tree, we only had two trees on the island, and we had chickens and horses and dogs and mice and foxes and eagles.

HS: Sea lions.

EL: Sea lions. But we had, I don't know whether I ever told you about the Amos and Andy, the two—that the Vails gave to us?

HS: No, I don't think you did. They were ravens?

EL: They were ravens; they came over from Santa Rosa. The Vails brought them over. We called them Amos and Andy.

HS: Had they been taken out of the nest when they were quite young?

EL: Yes, I think so. Herbie built a cage for them there in the little square garden off our bedroom. Well, to go on—I was sort of backtracking on Marianne, the background of getting her ready to school, giving her a background of vocabulary.

HS: Well, you must have read to her all her life.

EL: Oh, I did! I used to read, you know, I had a Mother Goose book my mother sent me.

HS: Were you read to when you were a child?

EL: Yes. And, I'd sit her on my lap in the kitchen while I was cooking supper, you know. So many mothers say they never have time to read to their children. Well, I *made* time. I did it while I was watching potatoes bake or stewing stew, you know. And, so I just got a tremendous amount of pictures and read to her and she used to say to me, "Would you read to me?" and she really meant, Will you sing to me? because I would sort of sing these Mother Goose rhymes and I think that's what got her into the rhythm of writing. Now, the two children are quite different. Betsy, although I started them the same way, Betsy didn't want it, wasn't ready to read until after she was six. Marianne was reading by Christmas; we started when she was five. She didn't have to do as the schools up here; she could start before she was six because her birthday came in February. So by Christmas, she was reading little books, you know, and doing very well. But, the end of the year, it was really amazing. I was getting ready to go into the mainland and my bags and trunks were packed; we had to wait until the boat came, but we had to be ready. And, Marianne came into the kitchen one day and she was just over six, well, about six and five months and she had *Alice in Wonderland*—she came into me and I had no idea how much a child should know in the first year of school, so she came in and began reading little portions of *Alice in Wonderland* she thought I would enjoy. And I thought to myself, She's reading this awfully well, I don't know—and then she'd tell me a little something about Bambi. When we actually got to the mainland, I had her checked at the county school and they said she was reading at third grade ability.

HS: In one year?

EL: In one year. Well, I worked so tremendously hard because I had been a librarian, a children's librarian back in New York, but I had no idea how much a child was supposed to cover in one year.

HS: Well, you know what they do now? A child covers as much as he can and ones that can do more are put into accelerated classes.

EL: Well, I know. I was reading through an article the other day where it said they thought that it was cruel, really, to start little ones reading and so forth when they were only two or three years old because they didn't give them any chance of being—
(tape interrupted)

Well, you'll have to ask me some questions.

HS: During Marianne's first year in school, were you an accredited teacher at that time? Did this start immediately?

EL: Oh, no. No. In fact, no, I wasn't really accredited. They asked me if I didn't want to be accredited and I could be paid to teach my child. But I didn't feel, being a conscientious New Englander, I didn't feel that I was competent to be a teacher.

HS: You were probably thinking you couldn't have taught a class of thirty.

EL: Yeah.

HS: Well, a lot of the publicity said that you were, you know?

EL: Oh, yes, I know. Well, that's the story. Now, it isn't true. But, I was a librarian; I wasn't a top librarian, I was an assistant in New York. I was a senior assistant in the New York Public Library and I had to take four examinations in order to reach this position. They don't do it out here the way they did there. You couldn't go into be a librarian. You had to take an entrance examination to the public library. You were supposed to have general information. You took a general information examination. Then the second examination I had to take I had to have an English literature—I had to have a literature and a general information, library economy, and a language.

HS: What was your language, French?

EL: French.

HS: Well, to return to the school, did you bring Marianne in every year to be tested?

EL: Once a year she was tested, and every year leapt two or three grades.

HS: Well, you taught Betsy also, didn't you?

- EL: Oh, I did. And Betsy—Marianne went to, she entered La Cumbre Junior High at eleven and a half.
- HS: That was seventh grade?
- EL: Yes, seventh grade. And she was reading then at college ability.
- HS: How was her arithmetic?
- EL: Well, her arithmetic was just seventh grade. But she had difficulty with arithmetic through the years because—she was unfortunate in that seventh grade year because, you see, living on the island she had none of the children's diseases. So when she was in the ninth grade, she had whooping cough which took out a whole semester of school. She had whooping cough and she was starting algebra, so she never caught up, although I had her tutored by a young college man. But she was then at the teenage time where she was more interested in knowing what *he* was doing. She was trying to—she did exactly what I did when I was a girl—(chuckle)
- HS: (chuckle) Most of us. Were you given a curriculum course to follow by the school?
- EL: Oh, yes. Yes, I was given the material each year. Let's see, she had the first grade workbooks and I also had an outline of what she was to accomplish each year. And she did it, she accomplished all that, and she was a great reader. Oh, after that first year when I took her in and they told me that she was third grade, I didn't do anymore about reading. I just let her go ahead on her reading. I supplied the books and—oh, when we came in each year to have her tested and all, before we went back, we used to go to the library and they would get a collection of books to bring out. You know, extra reading, the library would give us a collection of books from the public library. And we had records, too. They gave us a phonograph, you know, for her to have music.
- HS: How long could you keep the books?
- EL: All that year. We kept them a whole year.
- HS: Privileged members of the library!
- EL: Well, when I was working in the library, they used to give out books to the different schools here. But now, I don't know whether it's lack of funds or what it is—
- HS: More schools, perhaps.
- EL: They don't have enough books to supply all the schools. But, we were allowed to keep books. They had a county collection, you know, in the public library and we

were allowed to take them. Marianne would choose her own books. She was extremely interested in history when she was over there to study.

HS: You mean world history or—

EL: Oh, yes. Did I ever tell you about her writing a story? She wrote a history book when she was—she called it *Glimpses of History*. I think that's quite a title because she wrote from Socrates to Amelia Earhart, covered all that period, I mean, a little bit, you see. To my mind what was so amazing was that she realized that she couldn't really write a whole history of all these people, so they were just little glimpses. I have the book in there.

HS: What grade was she in? How old was she?

EL: Well, she was nine or ten when she did this. And she finished the sixth grade when we left the island, I mean, according to the books and everything. Of course, her reading was beyond that. Did I tell you one of the little schemes I had in teaching her how to write and to spell, her writing penmanship? First I took the titles of Shakespeare, his plays, and I put them down because it bored me to write "See the cat run. There goes the dog." So I just got an idea that it would be sort of fun to teach her at least the titles of Shakespeare's plays. Well, I didn't expect her to read them, you know, or anything like that, but I thought she'll be familiar with these things whether she ever reads them or not later on. I wasn't going to push her into anything like this. And, after we got all the titles in our writing, then I began to put quotations from Shakespeare on her writing things. So, in having done this, she discovered my *Lambs' Tales from Shakespeare*. She found that and read all the plays in that form. She just devoured books. When she was nine years old she read *Gone with the Wind* in two days. And she not only read it, she lived it. Somebody sent her the paper dolls of it. You know, it was being played, it was written, all sorts of things, so she had paper dolls and she lived it and she read it. She read it through quickly, you know, and then she just—

HS: Wasn't it at about that time that Mr. Hammond brought George Putnam out?

EL: Yes. And, he wanted her to write a book.

HS: I have a clipping from the *Los Angeles Times* about that. What subject did he expect her to write on?

EL: Well, her life on the island. You see, his own son, he brought over his *David Goes Voyaging* and *David Goes to Buffumland*. And the interesting thought, you know, George Putnam was a next-door neighbor of mine in Rye, New York. He knew my brothers. In fact, before I was married and went to the island when he and his son

went on this trip to Greenland, the *Morrisey* was out in the harbor waiting to take them aboard to go on their trip. We all went—the visitors, you know, were the club people there at the American Yacht Club on Milton Point in Rye. We all went out in launches and boats to see the ship that they were all going on, and this little boy of twelve, David was only about twelve when he went—

HS: Did he come to the island later with his father?

EL: No, he never did. No. But then, you know, his father married Amelia Earhart.

HS: Yes.

EL: Well, he came and spent a night over there and talked to me; he told me what to do, how to get Marianne to write her story. He said to have her write a composition, you see. I would give her a subject, you know, different things that she would write about that she did. For instance, one of the things, when the children were in school over there and we'd have an interruption—George would arrive with mail—I didn't let the children miss their school. I'd simply say, "Well, this is going to be a school excursion. I expect you to write it up, write a composition about what we did today," because of course, we couldn't actually go on with the school work, although Marianne could do her arithmetic or any of that sort of thing. And so, that is the way we did. And, she wrote about Green Mountain —here's a story, one of her lesson books here: *A Map of the Desert and Rocky Mountain*. This is some of her school work. (reads from book) "This map is to represent the country of the Rocky Mountains and the Plains when the Indians lived there. They hadn't as much food as the sea people I expect, but Indians could choose either to live in the Rocky Mountains or on the shore. I would choose the shore. Do you know why? Because I could play on the sand." (chuckles) Here's a picture of the Indians.

HS: Were the children very much aware of the fact that lots of Indians had lived on the island?

EL: Oh, yes. Oh, did I ever read you this poem of Marianne's, her imaginary poem of the Indian, the saga of the Indians on San Miguel?

HS: I don't think so. I'd like to see it sometime. We won't put it on the tape, but—

EL: No, but it is purely imaginary. (microphone movement noises)

HS: Do you remember what year Doctor and Mrs. Cockerell visited the island?

EL: Oh. (door squeaks, someone says, "Oh, excuse me." microphone noises) I could get the date later.

HS: How long did they stay with you?

EL: About three weeks, two or three weeks. He was a zoologist from, he was emeritus from the University of Colorado and a zoologist and he was particularly interested in bees.

HS: Yes, Dr. Theodore Cockerell.

EL: Yes. Theodore D. Cockerell I think his name was. And—

HS: When people, excuse me, when people came to stay with you like that, did you house them and feed them?

EL: Oh, yes.

HS: Did they bring supplies or was this just part of your—

EL: Well, they mostly always brought supplies. I don't remember that the Cockerells did more than, they probably brought us a few goodies. Luxuries.

HS: Did they help you with the catering, as it were?

EL: Not really. I think Mrs. did, but Mr.—he was quite elder—Marianne called him Dr. Gray Beard. And, when we met them, they came over, they were coming by boat. A fisherman we told them of, one of our good fishermen friends was to bring them over—I can't remember his name right this minute; I have it down somewhere. But, he couldn't bring them because it was bad weather, so they called George Hammond and they knew about George. We hadn't asked him because we thought it was kind of embarrassing to ask him to come over, so we didn't. But, they called him because they wanted to get over and they couldn't come by boat. So, they arrived and we went out and met them. It was a lovely spring, the flowers were still there, the green hadn't turned. So, when they arrived, the wind was blowing and George's Waco plane landed, the *Red Gaily*. When they got off the plane, Mrs. Cockerell and Dr. Cockerell and Marianne and Betsy, we all joined hands and we ran around the roses. You know, we were so gay.

HS: Had they met you before?

EL: Oh, yes, we had met them several times; I met them in town. In fact, the children saw one of their first movies with the Cockerells. We met them and then we invited them to come over and visit us, you see. We met them the summer before and then we made plans. I have quite a few letters and things. It was delightful where Dr. Cockerell wrote in our guest book.

HS: Was he collecting all kinds of insects or just bees?

EL: Well, he collected all sorts but it was mainly—and butterflies—but, I think *she* was interested in butterflies. And they brought over, you know, one of these fly catcher things, a butterfly net. But I had this vision of us all dancing. See, Marianne called Dr. Cockerell Dr. Gray Beard.

HS: This must have been quite late in your stay then, I suppose.

EL: Well, it was around—oh, the children were quite young; they must have been seven and six, I think probably. Six, seven (phone rings) Oh, boy.

HS: (adjusts microphone) How many varieties of bees did you say that Dr. Cockerell found on the island?

EL: Nineteen.

HS: Do you remember bees that deposited wild honey there? Did you ever gather any wild honey?

EL: No.

HS: Oh. Well, some of these were wasps, I suppose.

EL: Yes, I suppose they were. While they were on the island, Marianne used to go out with him. The children did, but I didn't always go out with them but they went sometimes, and Marianne found a bug that Dr. Cockerell said was a new bug, that he hadn't, had never been discovered before, so he named it for the Lester family: *Lestra*.

HS: You don't remember what kind of bug it was?

EL: No, it was sort of a black one, a large black bug and it's probably in one of his pamphlets that we have. Well, to go on with the history of the Cockerells on the island, we had a delightful time, and when they finally left, they went back with this fisherman that they were going to go with. Dr. Cockerell had told us that he was not a good sailor, but he was going to go with—Hans! Hans, the man's name is. Hans what? The fisherman's name was Hans and we liked him very much.

HS: Where did he come from, Summerland?

EL: No, he came from San Pedro, but he was a Dane, I think. I've lost track; I'd love to see him again. Very interesting—we named one of our horses for him. Hans, yes. A new horse that came over there we named him Hans in honor of Hans [Josefson]. But, to go on with this trip, so finally Hans came in the harbor, and the Cockerells went down with their baggage and went on board and went off with him. Well, we got a letter from them shortly after they returned to the mainland thanking us for our

hospitality. And they said, "Well, it was a very fortunate thing that we flew over with George Hammond, because if we'd have come with Hans, we never would have left the island." Dr. Cockerell was so sick he had to be tied to the boat. He was so sick he never would have left! He wouldn't have faced going on a boat again. So, we'd have had him for a permanent guest. (laughter) I thought that was an interesting little item.

HS: Yes. You speak of the horses on the island. Were there any horses when you came there?

EL: Oh, yes, there were. There were five horses. There was the Sparky, Spark plug—

HS: Were they all work horses? Or, what kind of horses were they, do you know?

EL: Well, actually, there were two, there was the team: there was Nellie and Buck. That was the team.

HS: What kind of horses were they? Weren't there some Percheron? I seem to remember—Percheron, gray, dappled gray.

EL: Well, that was the roan. What did we call the roan? We had a special name for him. Well, the sheepshearers called him Roanie, but we had another name for him. But, Nellie and Buck were the team, and they were truck horses. They were actually truck horses, although Nellie was used some now in the saddle. And there was the roan and, oh, dear little Sparky, Spark plug. She was quite old then; he was, he was a man, Spark plug. White, just like a little kitten. Herbie used to stand in the gate and call him when he wanted to go out.

HS: Did they run loose?

EL: Yes, they run. They were in the pasture, you know. And, he'd call. He'd want to go out with Sparky, go riding. He'd go out and he'd call him and he'd come up to the gate like a dog or a kitty. (laughter) And then there was Fred. He was named for, he was the loco horse. He was Fred's horse, the Indian, Fred Manjel. Nobody else could ride him, because he was so wild. He was loco—

HS: Well, Fred didn't live on the island, did he?

EL: Oh, no. He was one of the few sheepshearers that came over every year by year.

HS: Were there any of those horses left when you left the island?

EL: Oh, yes. Well, now—Buck and Nellie died, and then Hans came over to take the place of—Nellie died first.

HS: Were they brought on the *Vaquero*?

- EL: Yes. They came over and they were thrown overboard and had to swim ashore.
- HS: They came from the mainland or Santa Rosa?
- EL: Santa Rosa.
- HS: Had the other horses come from Santa Rosa originally?
- EL: Oh, I don't know. See, there was Buck and Nellie, and Sparky and Roan, and Hans. Well, when we first got there, there were four and then we got this other Hans. I think he took the place—Hans was the last one and we named him.
- HS: Did the Vails give him to you or—
- EL: Well, I don't know what transaction Bob made about them.
- HS: Were they all used?
- EL: Oh, yes.
- HS: How were they used? Besides hauling the firewood in, and hauling the wool down to the beach?
- EL: Oh, for the roundup. We had to have them for the roundup, sheep roundups. You see, when the shearers came, they came in late March or early April for the shearing, and when the men arrived, it took them several days to get their equipment ready. They had to get the knives ready and that.
- HS: Tell about the roundup.
- EL: The roundup. Well, when they arrived, as I said, it took them a day or two to sharpen their knives and to get their clothes in order before the roundup. Then early in the morning, they had to start out at about five o'clock. All the riders, four of them, would go off on horseback.
- HS: Did Herb go with them?
- EL: He didn't ride. He and Arno and perhaps one or two others, and Bob if he was there, there'd be the four riders and then there would be three or four men on foot to help in the drive. And, they'd go out in the different sections of the island and then they'd meet—
- HS: Would the sheep have scattered all over the island, or was there only pasturage in certain parts?

EL: Well, they'd scatter all over the island, but they'd go, for instance, they'd have a roundup towards the west end. They'd go over there; they'd go way over there. And then, it was a very awesome time, at least. I was given to understand, and the children, that when the sheep began to appear that we must be very silent and keep in the house or in the patio. Nobody, because if the sheep were, what do they call it?

HS: Stampeded? They do that with cattle.

EL: Stampeded, yeah, why, it was a serious offense.

HS: Well, when they gathered them at the west end, did they drive them clear back to the—

EL: Oh yes, yes. And then the riders would be there and you could see them coming over the hillside there and you could see them rushing. Jenny, the other day, was watching the TV and I said, "That reminds me of the roundup." It was wonderful to see how they'd head them off, you know. The sheep go along, and there's one, the leader and the others follow this one sheep. So it's important for the riders, for the leader of the shearers to be able to keep them in—And the great thing was the walkers all had big gunny sacks which they held in their hands and they all would yell, "Yooo-hoo! Yooo-hoo!" like that. (laughs)

HS: Sounds like a bullfight. Well, did they use dogs? Your dogs weren't sheep dogs.

EL: No, no, no. No, they weren't sheep dogs. No, they didn't use dogs; it was just the men, the four men. I think the riders would go out and get them and the men would hide in a barranca or something and wait for them to appear. Then they would keep them, close in and keep them in order.

HS: Did they gather them all at once and bring them inside the corrals?

EL: Well, you see, they would usually have about two or three roundups before they could get them all in. They'd go to the west end one time, then they'd go to the east end the next.

HS: But, did they bring in a group and shear them and then turn them loose?

EL: Oh, no. They would bring them all in.

HS: How many were there, usually?

EL: Well, when we first went out over there, there were about 2000 sheep. But then, the government cut us down to 1500 because the sheep were eating off the vegetation. So then they cut us to 1500, and then—then of course, the lamb crop.

HS: I wonder if the wool paid. Wool was very, very cheap during the 1930s.

EL: Well, you see, the island was a great gold mine, really, because he had no expenses. He paid very little to the government; I don't know exactly how much it was that he paid.

HS: I think you said Captain Waters paid \$5 a year.

EL: Yeah, something like that. Well, I don't know—Well, even if he paid \$500 it would be cheap because he didn't have to have anybody watching them. And, there was nothing to disturb the animals like there would be on the mainland, nobody to steal them.

HS: Nobody did steal them, did they?

EL: No, not while we were there. Herbie always had a system. Anybody that wanted meat, if they came up to the island, came up to the ranch house, we'd give them meat. We didn't want them shooting in the herd, because they wouldn't know the type of one to shoot. They could kill one of the breeders or they could kill an old buck, you see, the sheep were marked specially so people who knew the sheep would know which ones to—

HS: Were they painted?

EL: No, their tails were cut in different lengths. The wethers, that was the meat, those were the ones that were fixed or marked for market. They were called wethers. And then—Oh no, you're not going to wear that costume! (microphone adjusted) You see, after the sheep were in the pastures, then they'd be sheared—

HS: This is the corral near the shed?

EL: The corral, yes, the shearing shed. And, well, I was telling about the marking of them, the wether. And then the ewe were the mothers, you know, they were cut—in the new crop of lambs that came in, each one had to be cut. They chose the ones that would be good for breeding. They'd know, they could tell; Bob and Herbie did that.

HS: What kind of sheep were they?

EL: They were the Merinos and the Rambouillet. That's how the house was named the Rambouillet. The reason, did you ever know the reason for—

HS: Well, I know there is a big forest south of Paris, a hunting preserve of French kings, I think.

EL: Well, the thing was there's a little town called Rambouillet, the village of Rambouillet, and my husband was billeted there during the war. That is why we named the house the Rancho Rambouillet.

HS: Oh, also the fact there were some Rambouillet sheep.

EL: Sheep, yes. You see, we thought that was appropriate because there were some sheep there named the same as this little village where he had been billeted during World War I. And so—they were chosen, you see, when they were cutting the lambs, they would say now here, this is a breeder. And so that ewe, that lamb, would be cut; they'd leave no tail, practically no tail, so she could be serviced. They call it being serviced. (chuckles) And the other, the wether, had a tail this long. They had long tails, about this long. They'd cut them off up to about here. And the little ones were cut off very short. So they could tell, that's the way you could tell which was which.

HS: And then there were the rams.

EL: Then the rams, well, they were cut in the same manner as the ones that they were going to keep, the ewes. Well, the ewes and then the rams were cut longer tails than the other. There would be three—And then, of course, they fixed the ones that were going to be marketed; they fattened them up. They were kept, after they were sheared the bucks or rams were left in the pasture after the shearing was over.

HS: In the big pasture below the house.

EL: Yes, that was all pasture and they were kept there until shipping, the rams were. The ewes were turned out to pasture, because in June they, see, the rams were kept there in the pasture so they could not be, because they wanted to have the lamb crop all come at the same season. And I believe the sheep, they would drop the lambs—they'd start in December or January to drop the lambs. And then, let's see, they were left about six weeks, I guess, six weeks or two months in the pasture while they couldn't run—then they were turned loose after shipping.

HS: Was there any trouble with lambing? The weather wasn't really severe enough.

EL: No, the only trouble with the lambing was the fact of the eagles and the ravens getting after them. When the mother would be down having her, you know, down with the arrival of the lamb, she was down sick or whatever they'd call it—

HS: She was confined. (chuckles) I don't know what they call that.

EL: Well, they speak of it as being down with a lamb. The ravens and eagles would come and pluck the mother's eyes out.

HS: I've heard these tales. What kind of eagles did you have? Did they nest on the island?

EL: Yes.

HS: Were they golden?

EL: Well, there weren't as many golden ones as there were the bald eagles. And you know, we had two, we had three pet eagles on the island. We had Uncle Sam and we had Lindy and Cabrillo. Herbie got them when they were babies on the nest. He'd go out and—

HS: Did they nest up high?

EL: Yes, up on the rocks, on the cliff. He'd go and get them while the mother was off; he'd go and get an eagle and he'd bring them home. He had a room in the shearing shed in which he kept his pet eagles and fed them meat. He got them so that he could tether them and feed them by hand. But, and then you see, when the mother sheep had its eyes picked out, then she would get lost, you know. And, that's how the eagles and the ravens would kill them because they couldn't find their way around.

HS: I suppose they might get the lamb, too, then.

EL: So that was the only thing. And Herbie used to poison these animals. He'd take an old carcass that he'd see and put strichnine on and he'd kill them that way. Sometimes he'd shoot ravens. That's the only reason he did it was because of the lambs. (microphone noise) Well, the first year that we were over there on the island shearing, shearing—or that first spring that the sheepshearers were there and Bob was there—

HS: Didn't they arrive about the same time you did on your first trip to the island?

EL: Well, we came over without Bob; we arrived there in, with the sheepshearers. We came over and they came over about three weeks later. Herbie had to, we had to take charge of the sheepshearers because there had been an incident on San Nicolas Island where the Agees were. Mrs. Agee's brother had shot and killed a fisherman on San Nicolas Island and Bob had to be at the trial. So he couldn't be there and that's why we went over to the island sooner. A week after I was married we went over. And, so I guess it was the shearing, shipping that we were talking with Bob; he came over then.

HS: That would have been later in the year?

EL: Later, that was about June. And he said—we were talking about what we needed and wanted and everything, and Herbie said to Bob, "I know how to milk a cow. How

about having a cow here? John Russell had a cow and he also had a bull, but they had trouble with the bull. They had, down by the flagpole there was a summer house that I never saw while, when John was there they had a little summer house on the bluff somewhere.

HS: He probably built it.

EL: Yeah. And they had a bull there in John Russell's time, and somebody was out in the field and he was marooned in this summer house because— (phone rings)

HS: Marooned in the summer house. You said John Russell had to come down—

EL: Down and get this man from, I think there was a man, I'm not sure but it must have been a man because there weren't, very seldom any women, except Mrs. Russell was on the island, too. But the bull was tame, was a pet of John's, but anybody else was— (chuckles) So, well, they were talking on this subject, and Herbie said that he thought it would be nice for us to have a cow. And Bob said, "Fine. I'll have one over on the next boat." So when the next boat came, we were looking forward to a cow. We got a milk pail and we never got a cow. That's the cow story! (laughter) Found that the cow was complicated, because we *would* have to have a bull. Just one cow would—

HS: Not very economical because you can't very well take the cow ashore. (laughter)

EL: No. We always had a big laugh; oh yes, we're going to get a cow. (laughter) We got a pail, right? The next boat— (laughter)

HS: Cows are not automatic.

EL: No. And the eagles I told you about. Beside the eagles we had Renard the Fox. I think Herbie told me while I was in for one of the vacations either with Marianne or with both girls, when we came back, Herbie wrote us a letter and said, "I have a little pet, a little surprise for you. We have Renard the Fox. I fixed a little barrel with a hole in it." You've seen it, I'm sure you must have seen the little barrel with a tiny hole for a—it was right next to the harness room. It was a little, white, round thing where he had an island fox which he called Renard the Fox. And, I must tell you another little incident about it. Maybe you'd better shut this off—(tape interrupted) I have here the scientific mice, you know. Here we are; this one here! I could read this and then maybe it would go—

HS: If it's all written down, we don't need to. Don't read anything, just talk because we can always refer to that.

EL: Well, I call them scientific mice because we had them here—first, you know, our cats killed the rat—Herbie brought over a pair of doves when we came back with

Marianne when she was a baby. They lived in a cage there in the little garden by our room.

HS: Do you remember what kind of doves they were?

EL: Mourning doves. And Herbie loved, you know, he was quite scientific. If his father had lived he probably would have been a scientist. He'd gone through college and so forth. But he loved all sorts of nature. So he was keen on them and we got this pair that produced at least fifteen or twenty little doves.

HS: Did you turn them loose?

EL: We may have, I don't remember. But anyway, our cats killed them and Herbie was very distracted so he proceeded to kill all the cats.

HS: Were these cats on the island when you came? They were wild, not tame.

EL: Yes. We had one house cat or two, you know, that were house cats. And then there were wild cats. You see, the mother cat would have kittens and they became wild. They ran all over the island. Well, he got mad because they killed all his doves, so he killed all the cats around, and then we were overrun by mice. And we had to send for cats after that. But we—it's all in here—one time I went into the mainland and Herbie said, "Well, we don't want cats on the island. Let's see if you go to one of these pest houses and see if we can get something that will not kill the birds but will keep the mice down. So I went and they said no, there was no way of doing this without the animals being destroyed, too.

HS: The birds, you mean?

EL: Well, even the horses and anything. Even the children would get—

HS: We're talking about poison.

EL: Yes, poison. So what I did was to get some little traps; I got a dozen of these little small traps, snap traps, and brought them home and Herbie set them out on the porch there.

HS: It was a hopeless battle, wasn't it?

EL: Well, it was. It was just like a, they used to come, we used to sit at night writing in the living room, and he'd set the traps and they'd go click! click! click! He'd go out and empty them and set them again and they go click! click! click! This went all evening long. He'd kill them by the hundreds. Then he finally got a couple of five-gallon cans and put them in the ground, dug a ditch and stuck these cans around the house there and put stuff in them, and in the morning they would be filled with mice.

HS: Good heavens! You said they also fell in the cistern.

EL: Yes. Oh yes, they did. We never drank the water from the cisterns because they were—our guests used to. They liked it better than the other water, but (chuckles). And, then we discovered, I called somebody from the museum, the natural history museum came over and were looking for the white foot mice, and we said that we had them. But, we had been killing them off at this great rate and we didn't realize that they were such an important thing. They had to have examples of them to take—

HS: Well, you hadn't decimated the population, I'm sure.

EL: Oh, no! But that was the story of the scientific mice. I thought it was quite interesting because we, here they were a pest! And then we, oh, well, to finish off, we had to ask the coast guard to bring us a mother cat and we asked George Hammond to bring us a cat, and a fisherman, and they all brought over a mother cat. And in three weeks, we had fifteen kittens. So the population came all over again. (laughter)

END OF SESSION

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
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Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: Unrecorded

SUBJECT: Herbert Lester, World War II, family plans, suicide

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Mrs. Herbert Lester in her home in Santa Barbara. Mrs. Lester, I think you started to tell how you first met your husband.

EL: Oh, yes. Well, we met through my roommate who was living with me at 72 East 86th Street in New York City. I was working in the public library, and she and I had this apartment together. In the summer, we wanted to sublet our apartment. She knew Herbie's sister, his twin sister, Edith; she was in the real estate business. And so Alabam—we used to call this girl Alabam Dumont—she went to Edith and told her that we wanted to rent the apartment. So she sent her brother Herb up to look at it.

HS: Did he take the apartment?

EL: No. No, this is very interesting. He was interested in it and he said he would like to take it. He asked me to have my brother Roger Sherman who is a lawyer draw up a lease so it would all be in black and white. And then after a few weeks, he didn't take the apartment because he was called away on business out of town, so he didn't take the apartment. Then when he came back to town he called me up and we discovered that we knew a lot of people in common. He had learned his trade of machine tool business in Vermont at the Maxwell Everts Machine Company. He went through the machine tool company there for the Manny, Maxwell and Moore. So he said when he came to see me after he hadn't taken the apartment, he thought I was a good sport that I hadn't held him to his contract.

HS: Was it signed by that time?

EL: Oh, yes. Oh, he had had it, but it wasn't consummated. He always said that he thought my brother was very strict and that he made out a very hard and fast contract. (chuckles) In all that following winter we visited, you know, went out on dates. He used to come and see me all dressed up in his morning coat and top hat, in fashionable New York fashion.

HS: Striped pants?

EL: Striped pants.

HS: Wing collar?

EL: Wing collar.

HS: Bow tie?

EL: Bow tie, and his little moustaches all waxed up. We'd go to all the little restaurants and have dinner and then we'd go to the theater and visit. We found when he was a boy that he lived in Greenwich, Connecticut, which was only a couple of stations away. You see, Rye, Port Chester, and Greenwich. All through his childhood he was really, really next door to me. But I never met him in those days till after the war, and in '28 we met. Oh no, it was '27, '26, yeah, '27. Then in October of '28 he went out west; his friend, Bob Brooks, told him about the island. They had met at Walter Reed Hospital and he had told him about the island. He was always fascinated about the wide open spaces and—

HS: Had he ever been west before?

EL: No.

HS: Did Bob have the lease on the island then?

EL: Yes. But when Herb came out West, Bob was in Europe with his wife and so he sent word to Herb that his friend Norman Evans in Lancaster had an apple ranch and he could go out there. He was there until Bob got back in 1929 and—

HS: Was he working out there?

EL: Yes, he was pruning apples, things like that. But he didn't care for the desert. Then when Bob got back he went into see him and he said, "Well now, I'm going out to shear in March. Would you like to come out?" and Herb said yes, he would. So he went out with the gang for shearing and he was fascinated by the island, just

fascinated. While they were there, Bob had a scrap with his man, the workman that was in charge of the island.

HS: Do you remember his name?

EL: No, I don't. He was a war veteran, World War I veteran, and they had words so Bob fired him and came and said to Herbie, "Well, I guess if you want to stay you can stay. We'll leave you on the island and you'll have the island." So Herbie stayed on the island and he loved it and he got ready for shipping. And then, I came out in July to visit my sister.

HS: In 1928?

EL: No, this was '29. In the summer of '29 in July [I came to] visit my sister Anne Remsen in La Jolla. Herbie knew I was coming out and when I arrived, why, Bob sent out for him and he came in. When he did this he lost his chance on the island because Bob had to give it to somebody else, and those people had to stay as long as they wished. So then Herbie stayed and visited with my sister and me and then he went off in the middle of August with this Bill Winnager (?), a seal fisherman from Oregon. Oh, while Herbie was visiting us in La Jolla, he went out on a swordfishing trip with the sword fisherman from San Diego. They went out for a week swordfishing and had a wonderful time. His name was Captain Sealy. After he came back and visited some more, he went out to meet Bill Winnager. They went up fishing and he almost got drowned up there when he [fell] out. He was up near Eureka, and he was out in a skiff and it capsized. Herbie was thrown out. He went on a rock, I think it was. He was rescued anyway. He decided to leave the ship and go into the redwoods and do some wood chopping. He loved to chop wood. When he lived in Greenwich he and his friend used to go chopping wood and hunting chipmunks and things like that. So he was there, but he worked in this sawmill for about a month or so. He got—I don't know, he hurt his thigh. You know, he had been injured during the war; he had a hernia from his World War I activities. This work in the lumber yards was too much for him.

HS: Where was this?

EL: Up in Eureka, up around there near the sequoia, up in the redwoods. He loved it, he enjoyed it so much. Oh, by the way, [I have] some of my letters that he wrote me from there that would tell a description of his life in the redwoods. So he came back to L.A. and he told Bob that he'd like to come out to the island. I think, as I remember now, he was willing to give Arno, oh, not Arno, but Clemente man, he gave him a month's—I mean, Herbie was willing to have Bob pay him off, to give him a month's salary. That seemed a lot of money to this Indian and he was on a diet of—

HS: I suppose that came out of Herb's earnings.

EL: Yes, it came out of his [salary]. As I remember now, that was what he did. He gave him a month's wages extra, I mean an extra month's wages, and bought him off that way. And so Herbie wrote me a letter; oh, I had letters back and forth. I went back to New York. I left in September, I got back, and I had to be back at my library job on the first of October. I was gone three months. I took an extra month, August, and then I was having such a good time that I asked for another month off. I pleaded that I was sick or my sister was sick or something or other, and so I got an extra month and didn't get back till October. Then I knew that Herbie liked, that we had a sort of an understanding, and I went about sort of collecting my affairs and my belongings and visiting and so forth. Then around Christmas, before the New Year he told me that he got this, it was all set. He wrote my mother a letter—although I was well over twenty-one, he wrote my mother for my heart and hand in an old-fashioned—(laughs). Mother was pleased, I think. But, my family all thought I was a little queer that I wanted to go out and live on an island. I thought, well, it would be a great adventure. And coming from a pioneer family, you know pioneers, there didn't seem to be other adventures around. I'd been working in the New York Public Library about twelve years and I thought it would be fun to live on an island—an adventure.

HS: Did you come out after Christmas?

EL: I left New York on my brother's birthday, the fourth of March 1930 and arrived in L.A. the ninth—Oh, this is quite interesting, this business I remember. I went to the Brooks' house for an overnight or something. Bob said my sister was in La Jolla and I went down there. When I got to their house, she and her children were about to set off for Escondido in the back country, Hubbard Grove in winter. They had snow there and she wanted to get away from it all in La Jolla. So the very next day we put everything in a car and dashed down to this resort, Hubbard Grove, Escondido. Well, Bob Brooks had to send in for Herbie and he had to bring out some people to take care of the island while he was gone. He had Clemente and Buster; Buster was an Indian boy and Clemente was one of the shearers. And let's see—Herbie got out, he had been up there about a week, ten days, and Herbie got into town on the boat, the *Tara*. It came out for him and he didn't ask, he got into town and he—

HS: Santa Barbara or San Pedro?

EL: San Pedro. He came in and he went right up to L.A., instead of contacting Bob right away and finding out about where I was. He knew my sister's address because he'd been out there the summer before. So he goes right up to L.A., gets on a bus, a Pickwick bus—it went down to San Diego—and went to my sister's house in La Jolla and nobody was there, the house was shut up. (laughs) So, he had to go and telephone

to Bob; when he got in he didn't telephone to find out where I was. And Bob told him we were out there in Hubbard's Grove. So he called me up. He had to call up there and it was raining and I had to go—my sister had a cottage in this place and I had to go to the main building to answer the phone and he was there. It was late at night then, so we said we'd come in and get him. The next morning I went into town with my sister's boyfriend that she had, a wild man, and we rode in and got Herbie and brought him back up to the house. And then, we visited with sister Anne. Herbie and I went into San Diego and put in our intensions to marry. In those days you had to have five days—I don't know whether they do that now or not.

HS: I think it's three days.

EL: It was five days then, and so we put in our intensions to marry. And we did some shopping, things for the island, got material for curtains. Herbie had a list out and went shopping and did a lot of things and got ready. And then, oh, my sister said she thought it would be fun, instead of being married in La Jolla, and we kind of didn't want to wait five days—Well, Bob, I guess, had had word there was trouble on San Nicolas Island; he wanted us to get out to the island—So, my sister thought it would be fun to take this trip out to Yuma, Arizona. And I said well, my father's birthday is coming up in two or three days, the twentieth of March, and since my father couldn't be there, he was dead and all, I mean this would be a nice, special day. So we all piled into my sister's car; she had one of these Franklin cars that went in the desert. And then we had a friend, Clea McGlaughlin, and her boyfriend. We had two carloads and we went out to Yuma and got married there in this little church, St. Paul's Episcopal church; Reverend Deacon Dixon, I think his name was. Anyway then, we had no celebration. Oh, my sister and her friend drove the car so fast and Herbie had just come out off the island, he was scared out of his wits going through the desert traveling at break neck speed.

HS: You probably went over the old plank road, too, didn't you? That was frightening.

EL: Yes. And so instead of having even a formal dinner or breakfast somewhere, we didn't stop to eat anything. We had our wedding breakfast or lunch; [it] was hot dogs at a hot dog stand on the road. Wasn't that romantic? Very romantic. (interruption)

HS: To make a broad jump to get up to the time that you were still living on the island on December 7, 1941.

EL: Yes, when we went to war.

HS: Because we went to war on December 8. What happened then? Up to that point you were a family living there, alone.

EL: Well, what happened, and you know Pearl Harbor, the seventh, Sunday morning. It was a beautiful day on the island and I was listening to the philharmonic in New York. I was sitting right there, the door was open to the living room, Herbie was sitting there by his desk, and I was sitting on the porch there listening to the philharmonic, and it was broken in: the Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor! And Herbie had just said, "Oh, it's a beautiful day. George Hammond or David Gray will certainly fly over to see us," and we hadn't seen them since Thanksgiving. We hadn't seen them and we hadn't had any mail or anything like that and we thought, well, this is the day that we should hear. And then, as I was listening to the philharmonic and all, over the radio came: the Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor! "Well," Herbie said, "that means no George Hammond or David Gray. They'll be grounded; there'll be no planes over here." So that was that. So we listened in to all the news, you know, that was going on, and we put black things in our windows in the portholes on that side where the Japs could be and—

HS: Did you do that right away?

EL: Oh, yes. Right away. Yes, we had that very day, or was it the next day? I don't remember, but it was very exciting. There was a plane that flew over and we thought it might be a Jap reconnoitering around. It flew around and they didn't land; it flew over and just circled the island and we thought—it was a black plane—and we thought, oh, it must be a Jap. So I didn't get the answer to that until I came over to the mainland. It wasn't that at all; it was Bessie Owen had flown over with a friend to show her the island.

HS: Oh.

EL: And we had all this thing built up—

HS: That was what you found out after you moved ashore?

EL: Yes. And so then, of course, we didn't expect anybody to come. We just listened in every day and kept the news on. We didn't get—this is something interesting—we didn't get news from Santa Barbara. It was cut off from us but we got news from New York and different parts of the country on our radio.

HS: You mean, before Pearl Harbor you had received news from Santa Barbara?

EL: Oh, yes. We had the regular news, but it was blacked out. You see, the West Coast was blacked out; they thought the Japs would be landing in Santa Barbara. We were all, we didn't know—Pearl Harbor and all the fleet had been destroyed.

HS: I suppose you were no longer sending your weather reports?

EL: No, we couldn't do any of those things, but we kept our written records. But it was very funny: we got word of the situation, the war, from New York and from, oh, the Middle West. It's too bad I can't remember just where they were but they weren't anywhere around in California.

HS: Did you have a short wave radio or was it a regular radio?

EL: It was a, it was on a battery, you know, Silver Tone radio, very good one. George Hammond had given it to us one Christmas, he and his mother. But then of course, Christmas came and it was the strangest Christmas. Santa Claus didn't come, but fortunately Herbie had been very forehanded and before, when George came over or David 'round Thanksgiving with our Thanksgiving dinner that he brought us, turkey and that, Herbie sent in an order for a Christmas present for the children, a present for each of them. He got a farm yard for Betsy and he got *The Oregon Trail*, a book, for Marianne and those hurricane lamps for me.

HS: Oh, the ones on your mantle here?

EL: Um-hmm, they were my last Christmas present on the island. And so, they came—I mean they had come to see us before the Thanksgiving dinner. I mean, they say they came in October, some date in October. I could see. It would probably be in the guest book but I haven't got it here. So Herbie had given them this order which they brought to us at Thanksgiving. So we had a package, one package.

HS: Meanwhile no one came out between Pearl Harbor day and Christmas? Nobody came, not even a fisherman?

EL: No, but the day after Christmas a plane came with our Christmas things. Oh, well, I had made things for the children. I made doll clothes, and I think I knit Herbie a pair of socks out of scraps of worsted; I used to make him ones of many colors like the bible stories you know. (laughs) And I made him, perhaps I had made him a little sack, a little bag for his tobacco, you know, a little one, a little gray sack with a red trimmings or something, his name embroidered on it. So I made him something and I had something made for the children. But it was very strange not having a post, a Christmas card or anything for Christmas day. So it seems—we heard this after; I didn't know at the time, of course—but David Gray—I think George was away and he—of course in Santa Barbara immediately the navy took over in the war and it was mobilized. It was organized for war and so nobody could do anything without a permit from the navy. David, I think it was that came, or George or either one of them—I think George was away—but one of them called up the navy and they said, "There's a family on San Miguel Island with two little children and perhaps they want to come in," and "You know, being out there, they might be afraid to be there and

they should be, and we have a lot of Christmas things they haven't had." So the day after Christmas, David Gray flew over with a navy lieutenant or somebody.

HS: Did he have his own plane to bring them over?

EL: Yes, and all the Christmas things. Then they asked us if we wanted to come in and we said no we wanted to stay. They brought us newspapers and things and there was a picture of the children looking into the sky for Santa Claus who didn't come. The Santa Barbara paper—(laughs) Santa Claus couldn't come on account of war. So, that was that. Well then, shortly after, I don't remember, it's probably in the guest book, the dates the navy sent over three navy boys to guard us

HS: Was that why they were sent, not to be sentries?

EL: Yes. No, they were supposed to be lookouts. Well, they had one gun among them and here Herbie had an arsenal of about twenty-one guns and enough artillery to keep off the Japanese navy for quite a while. And we were looking around the island everyday and we scanned the sky and the harbor and we saw a boat that looked very much like a submarine.

HS: Of course it did.

EL: And it was sunk, all you could see was sort of the top and a stack. And we felt sure that that was a Jap submarine outside the harbor. In about January, I think it was, the navy arrived, these three boys.

HS: Do you suppose that could have been a submarine? When was it that Elwood was shelled?

EL: Well, that was shelled in around—in the spring, wasn't it?

HS: It seems to me a little later.

EL: Later in February, March, somewhere around there. And so, everything went along. Oh, these navy boys—they were, of course, billeted on us and they paid. They said, oh, that they were going in every week. They would be on the island a week or two weeks, I forget just how much it was, but the boat would come out for them and they would have relief.

HS: They were always brought out by ship?

EL: Yes, one of the coast, a P- one of the, what do they call those boats, those P- so and so? It's somewhere. Anyway, one time the commander would come in and—

HS: They all landed at Tylers and had to walk up the path?

EL: Yes, but these boys would say, oh well, "They're gonna build us a house and we're gonna have showers and lots of water" and this and that. And we said, "Well, that sounds very good but you don't know, the life on the island, nothing goes according to plan."

HS: Did the boys enjoy it or not?

EL: Not. No, they didn't like it too much.

HS: Of course, they were on duty all the time, I suppose.

EL: They had to watch out. I got one of the boys to tutor Marianne in math because I had extra duties of looking after them, you know

HS: Didn't you have to cook for them?

EL: Yes, I had to cook for them and they didn't like—they didn't behave like the usual visitors that came to the island. They were boys, young boys from home where their mothers had always been good cooks and not expected them to do anything.

HS: Did they spend their evenings with you?

EL: Well, sometimes. Yes.

HS: They lived in the house, didn't they?

EL: Oh yes, they lived in the house in the rooms where the shearers lived. They were nice but the first thing they did when they got there was the gun. They took their gun out and began shooting at ravens and anything like this [just] outside that door. Herbie was frightened to death that they'd shoot a horse or a sheep or even one of the children. They were sort of just kids almost out of school, and they didn't have any—so he wasn't at all impressed by them. He said the navy certainly isn't like the army; they don't have the discipline. Well, one day, of course the fishermen once in a while would be out, and this fisherman, early in March, I think it was the third—[it] was Herbie's birthday—that we were all having dinner, luncheon, and Herbie looked out the window and he saw a boat approaching and he said, "Oh, that's Steve, our good friend from Santa Barbara."

HS: What was his last name?

EL: Stevens. U. F. Stevens, we called him Steve. And he had his boat, the *Ruby*, and Herbie said, "Oh, I've got to get a horse and go down and meet him." And, he was

very much excited and he was mad because the navy boys never offered to do anything. He said, "I've got to get you some kindling wood before I go down. I have to cut you up some kindling wood so you can have dinner or get things ready." And so he dashed out in his excitement out to the wood pile and the navy boys all sat around like a set of bumps on a log. It made Herbie awfully mad. He sort of said, I mean his attitude was: I'll show them up; they can be so uncooperative. And so, they didn't offer to say, "Mr. Lester, let us do it." They had none of that. So he dashed out there and started cutting wood. I went in the living room fussing around and the next thing I knew Herbie came in and he had cut off two fingers of his left hand, these two fingers. He cut them off here, near the second joint right up here.

HS: The second and third fingers.

EL: And the navy boys called in. We had the radio phone and they called in to the navy and had them send out a plane for Herbie. They bandaged his fingers, but he lost a great deal of blood. They sent a doctor out on a small plane. It was so small they didn't have room enough to put Herbie on! They tied him to one of the wings of the boat and flew him to San Pedro.

HS: I remember that. What about the fisherman, did he come up to the house?

EL: Steve, I think so. I don't remember. I think he came up. He was a friend, you know, he had some kind of permit to go fishing. All this excitement happened; of course Herbie didn't go down to see him or anything. I don't know whether Steve came up or not. I forgot about that. All the excitement—it took about a couple of hours before the plane arrived and took Herbie off. We went off and watched him go. When they got him into San Pedro and the navy found out that he wasn't a navy man, they washed their hands of it. They said they couldn't do anything about it. So I don't know whether Herbie called his friend Commander Thomas of the *Hermes* and he came and got Herbie and took him to the hospital.

HS: The coast guard?

EL: Yes, he was down there; he was a friend of Herbie's. He was down there in San Pedro and he came wherever they were, wherever Herbie was that the navy people couldn't attend to him, and he took him to the hospital.

HS: What hospital did they go to, the navy hospital?

EL: Oh, I don't know. I never did get the answer to that, what it was. But anyway, they doctored Herbie up for it and they gave him some of this new medicine, this penicillin that hadn't—it was just new.

HS: I thought it was a sulfur.

EL: Well, it was a form of penicillin. It wasn't sulfur drug. I have the letter somewhere where Herbie describes what it was. And it was a sulfur drug, the first use of penicillin; it was very new. It was very new on the market and it was doctored up. They had to do it for whatever. And then I think it was Bob took him up to—or Commander Thomas, I don't know—anyway he got up to Santa Barbara. And he went to see our doctor there, Dr. Lawrence Eader, who took him right off this stuff because he knew Herbie's war record. I mean that he'd been a veteran in the war and this stuff was too strong for him. So he took him off this, but it seemed to work. You know, I've heard since that a lot of people in the early days of this sulfur drug, it put them in a depression.

HS: I had heard that, too. Apparently they didn't really realize it or tell them.

EL: No. They didn't tell him that he would be—well the shock of having, well anybody that has a shock, an experience of a shock, they didn't know in those days so much about shock as they do today. I know they know how to deal with them. Well, the only thing I regret is that Dr. Eader didn't tell him that he would feel this result of this sulfur or his accident for some time, that he wouldn't be normal, he wouldn't be himself for many months. I know my mother's often said that when you have a shock that it takes you really six months to a year to get over it. So this was, well Herbie came back; he lost a great deal of blood and he—

HS: How long was he down in San Pedro?

EL: Well, I don't think he was there more than a day or two. No, no, he came up to Santa Barbara and stayed with Bob Brooks. And he told me, he said, "You know, I didn't seem to be able to get enough to eat." He was hungry, you know, whether he'd lost blood or he was weak. Some people are not big eaters; I think mainland people aren't. Well, they don't eat as hearty you might say.

HS: Well, people who do a lot of physical labor probably eat more.

EL: Labor more, yes. And you see he had lost a lot of blood. He complained when he got back to the island; they came back with the shearers. You see, he was in town about three weeks. This accident happened on the third of March and he was back by the end of the last week of March. And his fingers were all bandaged up. He was all right; he worked some but his hands were awkward, you know. He was unable to do the things at shearing time that he always loved, cutting the lambs—he didn't have the strength in his hands. You have to hold the sheep with one hand and cut with the other. Well this hand, the left hand, was the hand that you hold with—

HS: You operate with the right hand.

EL: Well, he didn't have the power in his hand. This depressed him; it bothered him that he couldn't do it. But, he got through shearing alright and the men went off and we had our usual good time, just a couple of months in between the shipping and shearing. And the children had school. I think Arno stayed with us. He usually did between shearing and shipping, to help get the fences all fixed up. For the round up of taking the lambs to market all the pastures had to be well fenced. After shearing we usually kept the bucks in the pasture until after shipping because we wanted the lambs to come in at the same time.

And well then this tragedy happened on the island. Herbie was despondent. At least I didn't, he didn't seem so to me. He said to me the night before this happened, he said, "Well, you never change." And the day before, that day before he kept going down to the flag pole to see if the boat came in and it didn't come in that day. So then that evening he said, "My, you never change. You're just the same as the day you came over to the island. This was the eighteenth of June '42 and it was the last day of school for the children. I was washing breakfast dishes when Herbie came in. I think one of the boys was there in the kitchen either drying the dishes or talking to me, I don't know. And Herbie came in and asked for a piece of paper; he was going to write a letter. I don't know why he didn't have any, but he came in and asked for a piece of paper. I went and I got it or the boys gave him a piece of paper, and he went in and was writing a letter. I finished the dishes and I had the children's school, got their exercise done and ready for school to open for the day, the last day of school. And Herbie came out and he said, "I've got to go. We're out of wood for the fire for cooking and so I want to go out and find some iron wood." I didn't think anything about it; he often did this. He said he was going to walk, and I said, "Well, aren't you going to take the team?" Oh, he said no team because if the boat comes in the boys will need it to go down and meet the boat. That was a good answer so I didn't think anything about it. And then as he was going off I said to him, "Herbie, if you got a letter to mail, you've got it in your pocket. Why do you leave it in your pocket?" You see, he was going to take the letter along with him, and so when I said this to him—and I mean it didn't ring a bell with me at all—so he went back into the house and did something with the letter.

HS: Did he burn it?

EL: No, he didn't burn it. He put it in the safe but I didn't know it at the time. But then he went off and he kissed us all goodbye and went off. I was reading and Betsy and I were having a reading lesson out in the garden there. We heard the whistle of the boat coming—I think it was the *Tara* that came. So the boys got the team and went down

to meet it and when they came up Herbie wasn't with them. I thought, well something must be amiss with Herbie because he should have heard the boat coming in.

Wherever he was he could have gone down to the harbor and come up with them but he didn't, and that made me think, well, something's happened. What's happened? And so I told Bob that he'd gone off. So he and the children went looking for him over toward this Gibraltar, you know that point up that way. He often went that direction and they walked around till dark and they didn't find him.

HS: That was fairly early in the day when they started, wasn't it?

EL: What? Oh well, when we heard the boat, I suppose it was around two in the afternoon; it was probably about four or five when they came up. And then they went up and looked for him; it was dark and they didn't find him. Well, while they were gone, I looked around for this letter because when the boys went out, I couldn't find the letter. I thought well if he had the letter—there wasn't any letter around. So I thought when he hadn't turned up, well, I thought, what happened to that letter? And when Bob and they were out I went and looked and found it, this letter in the safe there, and opened it, of course, and read the letter. It told the story what was going to happen, what happened, so I knew it when they came back. They didn't go—they went out the next morning, Bob and the boys, and found him. The children didn't go then. They found him. Betsy was very upset about it but Marianne was very cool and—we left that door open. You, I should say.

HS: Yes, I did.

EL: Then I don't know if this had any working on Herbie's mind or not what he had planned, if he had planned this. I had no intimation of it, but a year or so before all this sad business of the war and Herbie's accident, there was a man, a surveyor from Santa Barbara, Mr. Frank Ferlorn, who came over to visit us. I don't remember if he came to do some surveying or what it was, but anyway he visited us. Herbie was charmed with him. He told us that one time when he was a young man he lost the sight of one of his eyes, and I think this had happened just before or just after he was married. He lost the sight of one eye and he was terribly upset about it. He decided that he didn't want to be a burden to his wife, so he went and got a pistol and decided to end it, end his misery. He didn't feel that he was, that he would be a handicap to his wife. So he brought this pistol, told Herbie about this pistol and he asked Herbie if he'd like to have it. He said he'd send it over to him. But he said he didn't do what he had planned to do with the pistol and he had the pistol.

HS: He wanted to add it to his gun collection?

EL: Yes, he wanted to add it; Herbie was such a gun lover and all. In fact, everybody that had any guns or anything they were always anxious to add them to Herbie's collection. So the Ferlorns sent Herbie this gun. He said he changed his mind and he was glad that he had, he was living. So this sad event for Herbie when this accident to his hands occurred and [he] was so upset about it and feeling that—well, in the letter that he left me that I found he had told me what he was going to do. He told me his eyesight, that he couldn't read the instruments of the weather station and he was worried. He thought he was going to lose his eyesight and be inefficient (sic) and be a burden to me and his family so he decided on this sad—event, tragic—

HS: Tragic solution.

EL: Tragic solution, yes, that's the word. We found this when, after they found him the following day we decided to bury Herbie right there where he was. Arno built a casket right there and wrapped him in an American flag and we put a crucifix from the Holy Land that his sister had sent us—it had always hung up in our living room—we put that in, and Bob put the gun in, too. He said he never wanted to see it again and I certainly didn't.

HS: No. He wasn't brought back to the house?

EL: No. And then the children went to the mainland with Bob the next day. Bob had to go in and attend to things. I had to stay, as much as I liked to just run off and hide under something or other, I realized that I just had to pack up my belongings, and that we did. After all this tragedy we still had to live and I had the children to live for. I knew that other people in tragic circumstances had just run away from things and been sorry later that they'd left or given away things. So, I decided that I'd stay till the next boat or till Bob could send out for me. I went in on the coast guard. I stayed, let's see, from the eighteenth of June till the Fourth of July; that was practically three weeks. In many ways it was a very calming situation for me because I was able to think about myself and feel sorry for myself and—

HS: Get over it—

EL: And get over the feeling. I had nobody around. So often in a tragedy like this people will come, neighbors will come and feel sorry for you, and they'll say you mustn't do this, you know—

HS: They're a nuisance.

EL: They're a perfect nuisance. I just had a very good time really, this sounds awful to say, but I had a good time feeling sorry for myself to my heart's content and feeling

that I didn't have to show off and hold my feelings for people, you know. I really got myself together and I didn't have—I had many letters, wonderful letters from people. One boy, you know, Lennox Teany, he knew that I had so much faith and all and he said, "Well, if anybody can, you can certainly bear up under your problems." So I stayed and I went over our affairs, packed things and Arno packed all my china—I didn't have one single thing broken.

HS: Did they still have the barrels the things had come in? They probably did.

EL: Well, I have still a few things. We packed Herbie's guns up in the famous box that was used for a casket.

HS: Yes, I think we have that on another tape.

EL: And you know Betsy used it for a bed. (laughs)

HS: There's one other thing we should get straight here, if this hadn't happened, how long would you have continued to stay on the island?

EL: Oh, this is something—well I had planned, and this is what I hoped—I don't know whether I told you about this but this is something that I felt would be a good way to end off our story.

HS: The tape is going; you want to go on now?

EL: We better turn it over. Well, I knew that the children would soon have to go to the mainland to school but I felt that we could send them probably—if we still wanted for some years we could perhaps—now Marianne was getting ready for junior high, that she could go to boarding school.

HS: There was no question, what I'm trying to get at, there was no question of the government forcing you to leave the island?

EL: No. Oh, no.

HS: So many of the stories about Herbie have said he was being forced to leave the island and couldn't bear to leave.

EL: No. No, that wasn't—

HS: That's what I wanted to get straight.

EL: No, that wasn't at all what happened, I mean it wasn't. That was just pure fiction that people have put up, but this is what I had planned. I thought that this would be a good

way of ending up the story. I mean, it could be stuck in anyplace you want it, but it seemed to me, having lived in the East and coming from a large family and we had such fun having house parties that I thought that when the girls would have to go into boarding school that they could come over at Christmastime and holiday times and even summer, come over to the island and bring some of their school friends.

HS: Oh, that would have been great.

EL: This [was] my picture of what would happen, and this is one of the ways I thought we could end the story, but history planned it otherwise, you see.

HS: Yes, it did.

EL: But this thing came to me a few months ago that this would be such fun. We could have boys and girls from perhaps the Thatcher school or the children could go to the Marymont, and then come home and have these wonderful—and I would, of course, would be rehearsing my, my—(laugh)

HS: What, your role as chaperone?

EL: Chaperone, and what I'd had is we could use the shearing shed for a ballroom floor and have the Victrola going, and you know, it would have been a very gay—

HS: Oh, it was playful. The children would have had a wonderful time.

EL: The children would have a wonderful time. It would have been great.

HS: The parents would have envied them.

EL: I mean, we could have had a crowd, a dozen or so like, you know, very often Judge Westwick he came over with fifteen or sixteen of his court—

HS: Officials?

EL: Officials, and spent the night. And you know they all sat around having a good time and all. So that was my solution for the children; it would be great fun.

HS: There's one other thing I would like to go into. It goes back to after the accident. You were having a hard enough time waiting on the navy boys when Herb was there. When he was gone in San Pedro and Santa Barbara with his injured hand, how did you get along?

EL: Well, I worked with the navy boys, they—

HS: They finally helped?

EL: Yes, they finally helped and they felt sorry, you know. I mean I guess they felt—They got the wood. They washed the dishes. In fact, in this period of time when Herbie was injured, I think Arno [and] the men were very kind and helpful. Of course, I being a woman was different. Herbie was brought up a military man and he expected the routine of an army barracks and they were military—what's the word I want?

HS: Discipline?

EL: Yeah, discipline. No, the discipline and respect for his elders—

HS: These navy boys apparently didn't have anybody in charge; there were just three boys, none of them outranked the other. Nobody had any authority.

EL: No, no. Oh, did I ever tell you the little incident about—every week or so they'd come out and they'd have time off. Well, one time the relief ship came and brought these other boys back and they had a young officer, young lieutenant. He was, I don't know, a junior lieutenant; he came up and they had dinner at the house and he said, "Oh, I can pilot the boat through the narrows. I know just how to" do this and that and the other. Herbie said, "Well maybe you think you can and maybe it's—" And he said, "Oh well, we'll be off in the morning. We'll have dinner now and the boys can come down. We'll all sleep on the boat and leave early in the morning." So this is what happened. They went off and we went to bed, and about six o'clock in the morning I hear somebody come walking up to the house yelling: "Ho! Give us some coffee. Give us some blankets. We're shipwrecked."

HS: This is the U.S. Navy?

EL: Yeah! They were stuck on the sand spit over here.

HS: The one opposite—?

EL: Santa Rosa. We're stuck. They'd gone too near there and they'd got stuck; they were stuck good and proper. They had to get a tow boat from San Pedro to get them off. We had them there for two or three days. We had to go with the model T car we had and we drove over there. Fortunately, if we hadn't had the car it would have taken them all day to get back and forth. They came up to the house and they brought their cook and the cook took over the kitchen and fed them. But this business, we're stuck on the sand bar. Oh, what a big laugh we had!

END OF SESSION

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
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Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: Unrecorded

SUBJECT: Ord family and other guests, and John Russell

EL: Did I tell you about I ever tell you about the Reavis from Bakersfield.

HS: No. First let's spell their names so we get it right.

EL: I think it's R-E-A-V-I-S. Reavis.

HS: Reavis. (pause) We have to capture on this microphone.

EL: Just trying to think about what the name of their boat was. Reavis. (pause)

HS: Was he a professor?

EL: No. No, they made a good many trips. They used to come two or three times a year. I think he made eleven or twelve visits to us and they always came with a number of friends, very jolly people. They didn't have any children of their own.

HS: Did they stay at the house or stay on their boat?

EL: I think they stayed once anyway, and then we used to go down on their boat. One time we met them, I remember, and Mrs. Reavis [and I] were walking; we walked down to the flagpole to see what was going on and then walking back Marianne was talking to Mrs. Reavis. I was walking along with Betsy and they had some other friends. I don't remember the names of them. But anyway Marianne was discussing about college. She was around nine or ten. Betsy was about six or seven and she was a great lover of, a fan you might say, of Joe Lewis because her father used to listen to

the fights. And we were talking and arguing and Marianne as I said was talking about college people and who was college material, and Betsy said, "I think Joe Lewis was college material. And I don't see why girls can't be prize fighters." (laughter)

HS: I just thought of someone that we haven't said much about and that's Bob Ord. All we told about him was that he ate the scraps of rancid mutton fat, I think. But if you could go back and describe the family and—

EL: Yes, you know that family. The only one left of the Ords is a Mrs.—she's Mrs. Wrightson's (sp?) daughter. She's living in the old Ord house in Santa Barbara and she's made it—sometime I must go there—but it's been made a historical monument. At least the Native Sons of California have bought a monument, a plaque, and put it up. And, she invited me to go because I knew her mother; her mother was the children's teacher. At least she was my adviser and confidant [providing] help and encouragement in every way.

HS: I didn't realize that she was Bob Ord's, what, sister?

EL: Sister-in-law. I mean there were three sisters, the three Hasma (sp?) sisters, Helen Hasma didn't marry and she flew over with George Hammond. Also she came with Bessie Owen—she's since died, you know. And then there was Mrs. James Ord.

HS: Well, was this the Ord family for whom Fort Ord is named?

EL: Yes, it is. They belong to that family and they're supposed to be related to the kings of England. They were—

HS: How?

EL: Well, they were supposed to be, what do you call this kind of spurious—

HS: Morganatic?³

EL: Morganatic marriages, something like that.

HS: You don't remember which king?

EL: No, but they came over and, of course, Bob Ord could speak beautiful English, king's English, could quote from the bible. And he respected me, but he could swear like a

³ A legal marriage between a person of royal or noble birth and a partner of lower rank, in which it is agreed that no titles or estates of the royal or noble partner are to be shared by the partner of inferior rank nor by any of the offspring of the marriage. *American Heritage Dictionary*, (accessed June 2011) <http://www.answers.com/topic/morganatic#ixzz1OoVNSU9n>

trooper and say whatever—I mean he would cap any challenge that might come up in the course of a conversation. When we first came out to the island and how Herbie got the job on the island with Bob Brooks—this is the way it really occurred. I don't know if I ever told you this.

HS: I don't think so.

EL: Well, see, when Herbie came out in '28, he had met Bob—

HS: Bob Brooks?

EL: Bob Brooks, yes. They met in the war [at] Walter Reed Hospital and then he told Herbie about the island. He was thrilled because he had always wanted to go to, oh, [where he could] shoot guns; he wanted to go to big, open spaces. So when the Depression was on and he wasn't happy in the business, he wrote Bob and he came out to California. Bob wasn't in California; he and his wife had gone to Europe. So he gave Herbie the name of a Mr. Evans who had a ranch in Antelope Valley.

HS: Now, I think we covered that.

EL: Well anyway, to go on—I have to sort of reminisce just a bit in order to get it, but you don't have to put it on till you're ready to.

HS: Well, we might as well.

EL: So Bob Brooks comes back from Europe and Herbie comes in town to see him and he said, "Well now, we're going out shearing; would you like to come?" This is March of '29 and Herbie said yes, fine, he'd love to come. Well, the man that was in charge there was a soldier that had been in the service, and he was kind of ornery, from the descriptions I've heard. I don't know what his name is. He and Bob had words, and so Bob fired him. But Bob Ord told me—and then he told Herbie that he could have the job, see. "Well you wanted to stay; this man is going; you can stay on. It's your job." So then Bob Ord comes into the picture after we are married and get over there. He describes this fellow that was there on the island. He said, "Well, I arrived one day in the harbor and this ornery soldier met me and he said I had no business on the island." And Bob said, "Well I have, this is a government island and I have a perfect right on the island." And they went on and, I mean nothing really occurred but this man said he would shoot him. He was sort of challenging, he thought, to Bob. And so Bob said, "All right. Would you like to meet me at the west end?" And he'd be ready to do it, you know. So this is the story Bob said to me, said to him, "Well come on, [I'll] meet you—" He wouldn't do it in the house there and everything, but he'd go

over to the west end and they could shoot it out. (laughter) That's the typical Bobbie, Bob Ord story.

HS: So they didn't.

EL: Oh, no. No, but—

HS: Well then that man was fired?

EL: That man was fired and Herbie got the job and he stayed on there. And, that summer I came out to visit my sister. And Bob Brooks said, "Don't kid. She didn't come out to see her sister."

HS: Yes, which was probably true. Now *that* we covered, I think, on our last tape.

EL: Well, I had to have a bonafide reason. I did want to come out to see my sister but I probably, you know—

HS: Hoped.

EL: Well you know, I mean, for instance, I couldn't have come to this party if you didn't invite me to spend a couple of nights with you. And so I had a place to stay going to my sister's there in La Jolla and I spent the summer with her. And Herbie came over and visited with us and he lost his job on the island.

HS: I remember that.

EL: And then he went up north swordfishing and then he bought back the job, you know. (laughter)

HS: How did Mr. Ord live? What did he do ashore?

EL: I don't really know. Well, his business was this selling guano, going to the islands and collecting guano.

HS: What islands?

EL: Well, he used to come over and get it off Prince Island right in front of ours.

HS: Oh, I didn't know that

EL: Did I ever tell you about how he kidded Bob one time? Bob was, I don't know, it was before I was on the island. I don't know whether Herbie was there during this period before I came. But it was in the spring of the year and Bob was out with the men and

he ran short of something or he needed some equipment, so he had to go back to the mainland to get it. See? Well, Bob Ord was in the harbor. And Bob Brooks asked him if he would run him in, and Bob Ord said, "I will if you and your men will pack fifty sacks of guano for me." (laughter) I think it was fifty.

HS: Did they?

EL: Yes. They had to do that before he would take them because he wasn't going to make a trip without taking in some guano.

HS: Well, I never knew that that was his business.

EL: Oh yes, that was mainly his business. I don't know, did I ever tell you (laughs) his visitation, when he came to see me one time when I was staying at one of my summer visits on the mainland from the island? I came in one summer and I was staying at the De la Guerra Hotel. I usually stayed at George Hammond's but then I'd stay a few days at this De la Guerra Hotel on De la Guerra Street, a nice, clean, little hotel.

HS: I think I've seen it. It's still there.

EL: Yeah, it's still there but it's changed its name. It's the Allen Hotel now. But anyway I was staying there—I think the girls were with me. Bob Ord knew I was there and he came one evening to call, formal call, and he was dressed in a Prince Albert coat. Oh, yes.

HS: Striped pants?

EL: Yes, he was dressed in this long thing, you know.

HS: Where'd he get it?

EL: I don't know. I don't know. (laughter) I mean, I walked down the stairs and I see him.

HS: Wing collar, I suppose? Elegant! (chuckles) What kind of boat did he have?

EL: The *Runkadore*.

HS: Was it a sail boat?

EL: Yes. Well, it was a sailboat but it had an engine in it. And it landed on the rocks on Santa Cruz, I think the end of it was.

HS: Was he usually traveling alone in it? Or did he bring people with him?

EL: Mostly, I don't remember his ever having many people, maybe he had one, but most always he would be alone. And, he always was very thoughtful. He'd bring me a watermelon or he'd bring us some magazines, but he usually, as I say, he could swear and he could be rude and he'd tell you any kind of a story you were willing to listen to.

HS: How did he get along with your girls? Did they like him?

EL: Oh, yes. He was cheerful and pleasant to them; I think he used to bring them candy. And there was, I don't know if you ever knew this family, an old Santa Barbara family that—the Cornwalls. There were two or three brothers; I don't know how many. I knew two brothers anyway and the wife of one. One had a grocery store on Anapamu just off State and the yachtsmen and people and fishermen would go there to get their supplies because he was open on Sundays.

HS: Yeah.

EL: And to come out to the islands. And they, Bob Ord would tell him they were going to the islands so Mr. Cornwall usually sent a sack of candy to the children or something. And then his brother I don't think—was a shoe man. His wife just died the other day and I feel quite sad because she's one more link of the old-timers that you—still working in the shop. Her husband died, oh, in '44. She was 78 but she didn't look it, boy, I thought. She had a heart attack a couple of weeks ago and died.

HS: Do you remember anything else about Mr. Ord and the others?

EL: Well, his little house down on, he called, Billy Goat's Flat is where he lived. What did he call it? Did I ever tell you the name he called the place he lived [at] Billy Goat's Flat? The "Rest for the Weary," I think it is.

HS: Did he own it?

EL: Oh, yes. He owned it and the thing that's amazing about him is, I don't think he didn't like women, you know, and he was truly a man's man. He used to talk about, well, he was never disrespectful to me but he was just a man's man. He thought women were just a nuisance. They were, well, they weren't good sports in other words. They'd badger you and boss and things like that. So he never married or if he did, it didn't last long. But in his last years he did marry!

HS: Oh dear.

EL: Well, this is the funniest part of it all: the woman he married was over eighty. She married him because he had to have somebody look after him. He was in a wheelchair

the last time I saw him, it was most pathetic. He married this woman. She didn't know him as Bob. I mean, it was more or less at that time he wasn't much more than a cabbage really, because he'd had strokes and things and he could hardly talk. In his right mind he never would have married anybody, you see. But she had to, it was funny about her, too. She married him because she couldn't take care of him because it wouldn't be proper. (laughs)

HS: My, my. Had he realized what he was doing he would never have done it.

EL: Oh, of course not! But I mean the woman never knew Bob Ord as a person, you know. The humor of it all, she couldn't possibly—

HS: Did he have any money? I mean, did he leave anything?

EL: Well, he left her the little house. And, she cleaned up the house. When I used to go and see him I always was so annoyed that I didn't know how to take shorthand. It was just a shame. I used to try and get him to write down his memoirs because he really should have. So many of his anecdotes have just gone.

HS: How old was he when he died?

EL: Oh, I think he must have been nearly ninety; he was in his eighties. And yes, he was pretty old. Another anecdote about him was when I'd come in, his sisters-in-law, I usually called up the Ords and Mrs. Ord or Miss Hasma would say, "Oh yes, Bob is in the hospital. And we'll take you over to see him because he's clean. You can see him in the hospital because he's clean." They never liked to take him to the house where he lived because he was always, you know—

HS: Well, I think you said he wasn't very clean when he was on the island.

EL: No, he wasn't, and he had a little house and the floors were running with ants and things. But he used to have quite a garden. When I first came over from the mainland, he'd give me a big bunch of flowers. I've got an old basket that he gave me one time—it's quite a sturdy basket—filled with vegetables.

HS: You were telling about a young man who came out that you found had connections with your family. What was his name?

EL: Oh, you mean professor—

HS: The one you mentioned this morning.

EL: Yeah. That was, his name was Harper, Fletcher Harper Swift.

HS: Oh, yes, that's the name.

EL: Fletcher Harper Swift. My mother engaged him for the summer to tutor my brothers in whatever subject they had not done well in in school. So we girls, he was a young, I suppose he wasn't more than his early twenties. I think he tutored them for at least two or three years every summer. He'd come down and sometimes he'd go out sailing with us. Well then, my brothers kept in touch with him, [my] brother Herbert. And when I got married, why, I guess my brother wrote him about it. He was living then in Berkeley in the Department of Education in Berkeley in the university. He was married with some children, young people. Of course, he was an elderly person. I mean I was middle, you know, fairly young. It was non-descript ages but he was decidedly in his, he must have been at least ten or fifteen years older than I, because I was a little child when he was with us. And say fifteen, twenty years later he was late fifties or sixties and so he corresponded with me and was interested in the children. He sent me books for them. He sent me a very nice school dictionary for Marianne, that Thorndike's, you know. Then he wrote and said he was going to be in Santa Barbara for some reason and he would like to come over and see us. I think we arranged with George Hammond and he did fly out to see us. [He] flew over and he kept in touch and kept me informed with educational things for my children when I was teaching them.

HS: Did he play with them?

EL: I don't remember. I think they just spent the day. George never spent the night there except when his plane had any trouble. One time George stayed with us, he had to. He brought over George Putnam, you know, who was married to Amelia Earhart; it was just soon after that time that she was lost. But he came over. And—he wasn't married to her, he was married to somebody else or he was interested in somebody; her name was, I think her name was James, Mrs. James. But Putnam came and he talked to me, of course. George Putnam had been a neighbor of mine back East when I was a girl; he was a friend of my brothers and lived right up the hill from where we lived in Rye. So he was interested, and when he could come over and see us, he wanted to get Marianne to write a book like his son David had written: *David Goes Voyaging* and *David Goes to Buffumland*. They went on the *Morrissey* and they went with captain—What was his name? Oh, I have it written down. I'll write it to you, the name of the captain. But anyway I, this was long before, he asked me to get Marianne to write a book as his son had done. He told me how to go about it because she was only about six or seven at the time. He said the way he did, his son kept a diary on these trips; he was twelve, I think. They left from the yacht club in Rye where I lived before I was married, before I had any idea of going to the island. This

Morrissey was in the harbor and they left from the American Yacht Club in Rye on Milton Point.

HS: It must have been strange to see people on the island that you had known in another incarnation.

EL: Yeah, it was funny. And I went on the *Morrissey* before he left and watched them. I had a friend staying with me, a very interesting librarian, and she said, "Let us"—Erica Wheatley—let's hide. Let's be stowaways, and the chef at the club had made them a great big cake to send on this trip. So of course, I was very much interested and thrilled to see the Putnams. And, he told me how to [encourage] Marianne: the way to do is to get her to write every day a composition or something [about] what she's doing on the island. So what I used to do was to say, "Now write about Green Mountain" or write about something, you know. And that way then they can put it together and make it into a story. You know, I did do this; I had quite a bit done. Well, you see the reason he wanted us to do it this way was to get her spontaneous writing, nothing stilted, because the child couldn't really write a connected story, although she did. Did I ever tell you about her writing a book of history?

HS: Yes, yes.

EL: She called it *Glimpses of History* and I thought that was a very smart way because realizing that she couldn't really write a complete story. But she wrote, she started with Socrates and ended with Amelia Earhart. You know, just little anecdotes of them. (laughter) Then there was another family, I'll have to give you their names to insert. I was thinking about it last night coming over. There was a couple that flew over; they were on their honeymoon, and I know I have their name in our guest book. They were from Rye, New York, and they were people of means. They had a real, it was way back twenty years ago when we were on the island and flying really wasn't people [oriented]. There weren't very many private planes or commercial planes for carrying passengers, and these people had a real plane that was like a real compartment, like a real passenger plane. I think they had a kitchen—I mean it was really decked out; it was a fabulous rich man's look.

HS: Did they have any trouble landing it?

EL: No. It wasn't as big, you know, as they have now. George Hammond flew over with them, escorted them kind of. And oh, they had—we were impressed—they had curtains and it was just like a real train parlor car effect.

HS: Did they stay long?

EL: No, they only stayed a few hours, but it was really quite interesting—I know who they are and I will—

HS: Oh, we'll fill that in later. I can type that in.

EL: But they were from Rye, New York, our home town. They were some youngsters that I hadn't seen in years and I didn't know they were married. They were married and came on their honeymoon. (laughs)

HS: Can you think of any other interesting visitors? Official or unofficial?

EL: Well, oh, we hadn't been over there too many years, it was a fisherman that we became very fond of and Herbie asked him if we could have our mail sent to him. He was George Nolton and they lived in Redondo Beach. This we knew. It was before Betsy was born so it was back in '32 or '33, early. And, it was just before the—well we knew George for quite a while, knew him and his wife. They had a boy about Marianne's age and I was, I guess, going to have Betsy. They used to bring our mail and we had fun. Well, that summer he brought his mother over who was an elderly person, quite elderly, and we went on a picnic, went over to Gibraltar. She rode Sparky, our horse. We thought it was quite amazing, a woman of her age riding a horse. She wanted to ride because it was too far for her to walk. Then about when Thanksgiving time came around George came over with a gift from her for our Thanksgiving dinner. She sent a goose, Mother Goose. Well, we made a pet of the goose. Herbie couldn't kill it. She was alive because she didn't want to send a dressed one very well before [Thanksgiving]; it was probably a week or ten days before. And so we kept her for a pet and she lived on the island the rest of the time that we were there. Mother Goose, and she'd walk around. I made cake with her eggs and she sometimes would—we had chickens and I never saw anything [so funny]. I can see it in my mind's eye: the goose, Mother Goose walking with a big old rooster, the rooster of the flock. Mother Goose took charge of the rooster and wouldn't let anyone come near him. She'd go (makes goose sound).

HS: Oh, dear! Geese are ferocious.

EL: I mean, he was a boyfriend and they'd walk like two old people. She must have been ten or twelve years old when she left us. Old Mother Goose was our friend for many years. Oh the Reavises, one time the Reavises came over one Christmas and brought Santa Claus; he brought us gifts and everything. They said the children had never seen Santa Claus so they got somebody dressed up as Santa Claus in a Santa Claus costume.

HS: That was a nice thing to do, wasn't it? How long did Santa Claus stay?

EL: Well, he had lunch with us. They flew over this time; they couldn't come over in their yacht because it was wintertime. So they flew over and they spent the day, brought us gifts, had a load of, I forget, there were a number of people came with them. But they had fun, the children had fun seeing Santa Claus. He actually visited us on the island.

HS: Did John Russell ever come to the island while you were living there?

EL: Oh yes, they did. Well, he came over the first year or two that I was there. I know he came once and maybe he came twice; he came the first year we were there. He came over after we were married. I think I told you about how we happened to go over early for shearing because Bob had to attend to that business on—

HS: Was it a lawsuit?

EL: No, this young man killed a fisherman, you know, and he had to go to the trial in Ventura. So he asked Herbie if he'd come over and take charge. Well, I think John Russell came over with the men that time. And, he was a carpenter. Of course, he could do a lot of helping with the fences and things. Herbie was thrilled with his coming and he said to me—I was working on the kitchen getting supper and all and Herbie came in to me and he said, "Oh, I want you to step outside and see what John is [doing]. He's over there in the workshop." So I went out and there was John kneeling down in the workshop saying his prayers for being back on the island. I mean, it was a very touching scene.

HS: How long had it been since he had lived there, do you know?

EL: Well, I imagine it must have been, well, I think that he worked for Bob a few years. He and his wife lived there seventeen years, longer than I did.

HS: Both before and after Captain Waters died?

EL: Yeah. They were there before, oh yes, they built the house. He built the house for Captain Waters.

HS: Did they all live in the house then?

EL: Who?

HS: Captain Waters and Mr. and Mrs. Russell?

EL: Well, Captain Waters didn't live over there anymore than Bob Brooks. He'd come over for shearing and shipping.

HS: What sort of person was John Russell?

EL: He was a just a kindly Irish person, you know, a carpenter.

HS: He lived there seventeen years?

EL: He and his wife.

HS: He was always working, wasn't he, building furniture?

HS: Building furniture. Of course, when you were over there—Do you remember that big, old dresser/cupboard in our room?

HS: Just vaguely. You described it on one of the tapes, you said that the drawers were not all the same size.

EL: No, the drawers were not all one size. And you lifted up the top and you had—I think John made it. It certainly was a handmade thing. Of course, it was too big and cumbersome for me to have taken it over. I'd like to have had it though. I don't know where I'd have put it.

HS: No. Outside I suppose. You never met Captain Waters, did you?

EL: No. No, no.

HS: Did you ever hear anything about him, what sort of person he was?

EL: Well, they say he was a squatter, that he didn't own the island.

HS: He didn't own the island. That was government—

EL: He didn't but he was a squatter on the island. I understand he got the release from the Mexicans before we owned San Miguel. We always used to say that San Miguel wasn't a part of California—

HS: No, all these island because they were not mentioned in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. But that was a *long* time ago.

EL: Well you see, Bob Brooks had owned the island, had had the island from about 1915. He bought it. Captain Waters had it from say 1890 or 188-something or other until 1915.

HS: But the house wasn't built until—

EL: Well yes, it was built there. It was built around 1900, I would imagine.

HS: I wonder where he lived before that, no, where his help lived.

EL: I don't know. They probably lived in the lean-to, shacks, what not.

HS: You don't know who he had looking after the island before he had John Russell, do you? This seems to be an unclear period; nobody seems to know anything about Captain Waters. Why was he called captain for one thing, do you know?

EL: No. Well you know, so many people that followed the sea were given [that title]. I think that even Bob Ord was known as Captain Ord or something.

HS: Had Captain Waters had a career at sea?

EL: Well, I think he was in the service of some sort.

HS: He didn't marry, did he?

EL: I don't know, but he had a girlfriend.

HS: You told me about the girl who hid in the attic to keep away from the dangerous sheep shearers.

EL: Yes. And then she'd come down and the—what do you call it? He had a trap door—

HS: In the bedroom.

EL: Yeah, in our bedroom. You could see the place where it was, you know.

HS: Had it been nailed shut?

EL: It had been nailed up shut.

HS: Did John Russell tell you that?

EL: I imagine he didn't tell me, he told Herbie, or either Bob Brooks or John Russell told Herbie. Did I ever tell you about the man that, the sheep shearer before our time that John Russell told Herbie about? This man came over and he was in love and a girl had jilted him, this woman had. So he was despondent and he took a pair of shears and cut his throat.

HS: No, I never heard that.

EL: No? Well he did, and he missed the juggler vein somewhere or other. They tied him down on the floor in the dining room and Mrs. Russell got flour in the flour bin and—

HS: Got it to make a clot, I suppose.

EL: That's all she had. They kept him tied up, I think, until the boat came in.

HS: He didn't come back, I imagine.

EL: Oh, I don't imagine so; I don't remember. That's a tale of the island that—

HS: If you could remember any other stories that John Russell told either you or your husband, it would be very interesting.

Ell: Well, I know I have—I think next week when Jennifer is away I'm really going to get working on my, every time I open my box of letters or box of stuff I find something, a little juicy bit.

HS: That reminds you. You don't remember any of those tales then?

EL: Well, there—Herbie has a lot of letters from gun lovers like himself and then he also has, he had—Did I ever tell you about his trip to Africa by mail?

HS: You told me, but we didn't get it on the tape. Let's do that.

EL: Oh well, he corresponded with the various Indians in Africa and India where—

HS: You had letters from travel, from safari—

EL: They were tour people but they were ones that had escorted the Prince of Wales on these trips. I mean they were official court, and I have dozens. I ran into Herbie's correspondence with these people—

HS: I think I saw some of them.

EL: Planning these trips. I think it might be interesting to list these various places where they came from. I can't give them to you offhand.

HS: No. There was a story also about Haile Selassie, and that we don't have on the tape. That's very funny.

EL: Well, Herbie was very fond of Haile Selassie. He felt very, very sad and concerned about Haile Selassie because when the Italians were going over there and bombing him—he thought it was very bad, very cruel, very unsportsmanlike to attack a little country, brave little country like that. And he admired Haile Selassie. And so Herbie enjoyed kind of fixing up costumes and somebody, some young man left on the island an old blanket. It had a lot of different colors.

HS: It sounds like a Hudson Bay blanket.

EL: Well, it was red and green and blue and yellow, in stripes.

HS: Yes.

EL: Herbie had this big thing, and he said to me one day, he said he wanted me to put some epaulettes here on his shoulder on his sweatshirts and maybe make a patch on his pants. He'd liked that. So I did and then he had these epaulettes on. And then one day we had some guests—I don't remember who they were—having lunch with us or staying with us and they asked Herbie what these things were, what this signified. Herbie was kind of fond of, he liked to tell tall stories, you know, made up things. You know him. So he decided to concoct this story about Haile Selassie. He said, "Well you know, I wrote to Haile Selassie and I told him that I was so sorry that he was having this trouble with Italy, and I offered him my arsenal of guns. I had quite a few but I thought I might be able to help him at least and show my interest and concern. So I wrote him and I had a letter back from Haile Selassie, very grateful." But he said, "What was my amazement one day as I opened my bedroom door one morning I found these sweatshirts with these epaulettes that he had sent me with a letter saying that he had sent these with his appreciation of my thoughts." It was just for fun. (laughter)

HS: Did they believe him?

EL: I don't know. (laughter) I don't know.

HS: They may have wondered at first.

EL: But they all wanted to know what service he belonged to or what these were for.

HS: I think I have a picture of him in a sweatshirt with epaulettes on the shoulders.

EL: Um-hmm.

HS: Well, it's cool!

END OF SESSION

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Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: December 1, 1969

SUBJECT: Guests and sheepshearers on San Miguel Island

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Mrs. Herbert Lester in her home in Santa Barbara. It is December 1, 1969. We are looking through the first guest book that the Lesters kept on the island after they moved there. What's the first entry?

EL: June 5, 1930, and our first guest was a friend from Oregon, A. D. Winnager of *Trawler Pacific*, the name of his boat, Cushing, Oregon. And then his wife, Lilo Winnager, Cushing, Oregon. She was a most unique person.

HS: Had you ever met them before?

EL: Never. Herbie had met them. When he came to see me before we were married, the year before when I was visiting my sister in La Jolla—after he came from the island and visited with me that summer of '29, he went off fishing with this Bill Winnager. They went up to Oregon looking for fishing and seal fishing; when they got some fish they were looking for seals because in Oregon they got a bounty on them. But in California they were protected, so they couldn't. And you know what they did? They sold some things to the Chinamen for rejuvenation.

HS: In Oregon?

EL: No. After they'd collected these, Bill gave them to Herbie and asked him to contact these Chinamen in San Francisco and he did—way after he was shipwrecked. Well, that was the first time Herbie met this Bill. Then I went back East and then I came back later. I left New York on the third of March 1930, and we were married on the twentieth. And these people came out, and he brought his wife this time. It was the

first time I'd seen a woman dressed up like a man. She had on blue jeans like people wear now. She was a little tiny woman and she told me the wildest stories. She said that she'd been married, this was her second husband; she'd had another husband and the other husband got the children. Then one time when the husband came to see her, she told him to get out or she'd shoot him. She was very persistent. Well, when they stayed with us a few days, she was the first person to tell me the things that I didn't have on a ranch. You see, Herbie and I were both New Yorkers from the East and we knew nothing about ranching or what was the custom. She went into my, the, butcher shop and laundry. She said, "Mercy, you only have one tub! You should have two galvanized tubs, one to wash in, one to rinse and a second rinse." See? Herbie and I didn't ask for these things because we didn't know; so that was something I could write and say that was needed.

HS: Was there nothing like that left on the island when you came there? No equipment?

EL: No equipment, just the very simple things. And of course, the workmen, the regular Indians or Mexicans, were accustomed to living a rustic, a rough-tumble life. But we, coming from New York and all, we didn't want to show our ignorance of things that we didn't know about. What this young woman told me was—

HS: What else did she suggest?

EL: She suggested extra pots and pans and we'd be talking and Herbie'd say, "Oh, I've got to cut some wood for the fire," and she said, "Oh, I'll go out and help you." So she took the axe and went out, chopping wood. And then Herbie said, "We need some meat." She said, "I'll go with you," and she went out with the men and they brought home the sheep and she helped skin them.

HS: She probably helped shoot the seals.

EL: And one day they came up and had dinner and went back to their boat because they didn't like to leave it in the harbor; but they invited us down for lunch on the boat. So I went down there and she was sitting skinning a seal.

HS: Sea lion, probably.

EL: Well, she had it all skinned down, you know, and she had a cigar that she was smoking.

HS: Did they often come to visit you after that?

EL: No, this was the first and only [time]; she never came back. You know, I became pregnant when she was there and she told me what to do and how she had taken care

of cows that were pregnant. (laughter) She really was a character! And then she told me how one time when her husband was off fishing that she had to stay home and look after her children. She said, "I dug a roadway from our house with a pick and axe." I never—coming from the East, to meet a person that knew all the ways of living on a ranch and living on her own! She said, "I supported myself while Bill was away. I cut wood for the farmers, people around, and"—

HS: Well, really, there are not too many women like that around, even on ranches. Most of the ranchers' wives that I know did what you did. They did woman's work.

EL: Yes, but this woman—I never have really seen anybody like her. I've gotten a little rusty on all the stories that she told me, but she was a delightful character. She looked like a little boy. I suppose she was my age or younger; she probably was in her middle thirties. She said, "Oh, I'm as good as any man. I just shoot 'em up if they don't behave. I had to keep a gun handy, in case." Well, that's that.

HS: Are they still living, do you think?

EL: I don't know. I'd just love to know. I often wonder, and that's one of the reasons I try to keep my name in the telephone book, as the Herbert Lesters, so that anybody coming through—and I do, it's amazing in the last year or two people have come and looked in the book for me.

HS: Who was the second visitor?

EL: The second visitor was, that was the thirteenth of June, William J.—Oh, I remember him; he was a geologist from Cal Tech, Pasadena—Keminter. He was a very interesting man and Herbie kept a correspondence with him. And along with the same man was this Sterling Emerson, a botanist from Cal Tech, Pasadena. This man was the head man and he brought this young man. I think he was a student. And then the next one who came was Nita M. Vail from Los Angeles and Santa Rosa Island. They came over. The whole Vail family visited us on the twenty-fifth: Mrs. Vail; Margaret Louise Vail, the daughter from Beverly Hills; Al Vail, Beverly Hills; Daisy I. Morris of Los Angeles. These all came on the boat, the twenty-fifth: Mrs. Clarissa A. Brown, Los Angeles; Hazel Wagoner of Los Angeles, and Russ Vail.

HS: What boat did they come on?

EL: They came on the *Vaquero*. They went back to their island. They brought over supplies to us. You know, I'd only been there three months. We came in March; I landed on my father's birthday. I was married on the twentieth of March and we arrived on the twenty-ninth of March. Three months. These people came, and I

remember Mrs. Vail said she thought that I ought to go in for the big event three months before. My doctor, when I went in in June, when the people came in for—the sheepshearers came in June for shipping the lambs to market—I went in to see a doctor. Bob Brooks and his wife were married for ten years and they had no children, but she was going to have a blessed event and she could tell me what to do and who to go to and all about it. I guess that may have been the day they brought me back.

HS: There are some more guests in that party.

EL: Yes, on that same day, the twenty-fifth. Beverly P. Digman, Los Angeles; Helen P. Crane, Los Angeles.

HS: Do you remember these people?

EL: No, I don't remember them.

HS: Then we don't need to record them.

EL: Robert Brooks, I remember. Oh, he puts down for his address Chelsea Mud Flats, from Boston. That's where he came from. Oh, here, this was a great friend of ours, this man Hans Josefson. He was a fisherman on the boat *Fiji*. He came on the twenty-seventh of July and through the years, for many years he'd come and was a very good friend of Herbie's. We named one of our horses after Hans. And there were two Japs who came. This is a Japanese, I don't know what his name is, fish boat *Angel*. And then another good friend of ours was U. F. Stevens. He was one of our best friends, the boat *Ruby*, Summerland, California, and he was our best friend and still is. One of our first friends. And this man that came was one that Herbie felt stole one of his guns.

HS: On that visit?

EL: No, not on this visit. When he came over once before we were married, when Herbie was first there, just before Herbie came in to see me in '29, he went out to this boat. This man came into the harbor and Herbie invited him up to the house. Herbie had been setting out strichnine to kill ravens because the ravens were killing the sheep. He almost died with strichnine poisoning. He was kind of unconscious; he went to bed in his room and while he was there unconscious—he'd invited this man to visit, and while he was unconscious, this man walked off with a big gun.

HS: That seems a stupid thing to do, doesn't it, to steal something off an island when there are no other strangers near?

EL: Yes. I have no real proof of this but Herbie told me. But the man, instead of helping Herbie and being worried about him, left him there and he might have died. Anyway, he came in again. This was just before we were married that this happened.

HS: I wonder how it happened.

EL: Well, you see, men are very stupid when they—putting his fingers in his mouth, you know. I remember one time when my father got poison oak or poison ivy because he was cutting poison ivy one time and then he cut his nails with the same knife. Men do those strange things.

On the fifteenth of August, I don't remember this man's name; he's from San Pedro. But we had quantities of people. Then on August 19, David Banks Rogers, the curator of Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, came to visit us from California.

HS: Did he stay over?

EL: Yes, he stayed with us. He came more than once. And this is John Merritt who also came with Rogers from the museum. And Marvin Floyd from Summerland. They were fishermen; Rogers used to come over with them. Steve Stevens, our friend, used to bring the men from Santa Barbara. We had some boys from Pomona College that came, three or four of them, here, visitors. September 2, 1931: There's Houston Kittrell. They were Boy Scouts; he had some Boy Scouts. These are all scouts; a whole array of them came. September 30: Oh, here's somebody I want—they'd be very helpful in this. Herbert Vincent from Shell Oil Company. He was in the war and in the RAF. He was an Englishman and Herbie was very fond of him. They had quite a correspondence. He came back in December. And this Edward Griswold, a student from Cal Tech. This kid said, "My second visit. I like it, the island, Lester, and in fact the whole place." You know, so often the people that would come would write a little comment on us. Herbie put in little notes, too. "Some killer whales came into the harbor." And here's one of the Coast Guard officer in charge. C. G. 259, this is the *Hermes*. I remember Williams, Lt. Williams, bosun. San Pedro, home address. These people came back many times. (conversation) These were all the men from the coast guard that came up on March 7, '31. That was after Marianne arrived.

HS: Did you have to entertain all these people?

EL: Oh, yes. Oh, here's a thing that we put in here of the *Vaquero*. Herbie asked for them to bring him some cartridges for his gun, and Al Morris, on the *Vaquero* tells what the cargo is: 200 heads of cattle, beef, 500 yearlings, calves, yearlings.

HS: Whatever happened to the *Vaquero*? Did it sink?

EL: Yes, but they've got a second. *Vaquero II* is going now, calling at the islands. It doesn't go to our island but it goes over to Santa Rosa. Here's some more; this is 1931. March twenty-fourth: Raymond Arrietta from Gardena, California. He made his mark and Herbie put his name in. Arno Ducazan, Gardena; March 24, Fred Banjel, San Jose, California, Jacinto; and Frank Garibaldi from Broadway, Los Angeles. Frenchy—oh, yes, I remember Frenchy. And Clemente Watchina. Clemente claimed that his family owned San Clemente Island at one time. He was an Indian, quite a character. And here's Jesus Spenzola (?)

HS: What address does Clemente give?

EL: He gives 647½ North Spring Street, L.A. That's his writing. And this Frenchy, oh my, what a character he was, kind of a tough guy.

HS: Clemente's last name is W-A-T-C-H-I-N-A.

EL: He was an Indian, a real Indian. And so was Fred Manjel, M-A-N-J-E-L.

HS: Do you know where they were from, where they originated?

EL: No, they never did tell us who they were. Clemente was the only one. Arrietta, he was the leader, he was the *captain*. He was a real Indian, and he loved Herbie. He gave Herbie—I don't know whether I ever told you about his giving Herbie a knife. I'm so mad I've lost it! Somebody walked off with it. I had it in here. And I've got a toy, Marianne's first toy, a little china figurine, that he gave her. When he left he said, "I'm not going to—I'm an old man and I may never come again, and I will give you my knife." Herbie liked him. (phone rings)

And this was somebody that Herbie loved very much, James "Papa" Grande. He was the turkey ranch man when Herbie lived, before we were married, when he first came out to California, he was in Palmdale. He had a turkey ranch, Papa Grande. I have a picture of Marianne being held by Papa Grande.

HS: May I read this? Here on June 6, 1931 is, "The first time that John Russell came back to the island"—after he had left, I guess. Do you remember that visit?

EL: Yes, very well. He didn't bring his wife. She couldn't come back. He said, "No, my wife never wanted to come back to the island after she left."

HS: Did he say why?

EL: It made her too sad.

HS: Why did he leave?

EL: He got too old. I think they got too old. He was quite old, then, elderly. And now that I'm elderly, he doesn't look so old.

HS: How did he come?

EL: He came on the boat with the sheepshearers.

HS: Here's a coast guard patrol boat—no, he was there on June 6 not the fourth. But they may have all come on the same day.

EL: They came all on the same boat, probably the *Vaquero* dropped them off.

HS: I was just wondering if it was this coast guard patrol boat that came in on June 4.

EL: Didn't Bob Brooks sign? Sometimes he didn't. He probably didn't and Herbie left that [space] for him to put in and he never did.

HS: And this Standard Oil Company geologist came on the same day, too. How long did John Russell stay then?

EL: Oh, he stayed the week. You see, they came for shipping; it was the shipping time.

HS: Was this the first time you had ever met him? How did he look? What did he appear like?

EL: Yes, first time. Well, he was a jolly, cheerful Irishman, homelike and rather superstitious, you know, if you know Irish people. We had an old Irish cook at home.

HS: You mean he believed in saints?

EL: Saints, yes. I was getting supper that night that he came. Herbie said, "Come out here. I want you to meet John." And we walked out onto that walk, the boardwalk where the house is, you know. Each room goes off.

HS: You mean a veranda?

EL: Yes, veranda. What's it called, monk's walk—isn't there something like that? Anyway, Herbie said, "John is over in the workshop." And he looked, and he said, "Look. John is saying his prayers. He just got on the island, and he's saying a prayer because he's so happy to be back to see his island."

HS: How long had he been away then, do you know? There had been an interruption between him and Herb, hadn't there?

EL: Oh, yes. But John, after he left the island, as I understand, he used to come over a little bit every year because he was a good carpenter. I guess Bob liked him for that reason, that he knew the ways of the island.

HS: Who was living on the island at that time looking after the sheep?

EL: After John Russell left, I believe Bob had a number of workmen there, and—did I ever tell you how Herbie got the island?

HS: Yes, we have that on another tape. Did John Russell ever tell about building the house? Do you remember?

EL: Well, I know he used to tell Herbie that when he was building it, he told Captain Waters that he'd build it as long as Captain Waters would bring over doors and framework and windows.

HS: That was probably quite a long time, wasn't it?

EL: Yes. Well, the house is 120 feet long.

HS: Yes, that's what I meant. Wasn't some of the, weren't some of the, the portholes, for instance—

EL: They were from one of the shipwrecked boats. I don't know whether it was on the "wreck," as they called it, the lumber ship that was wrecked on the island that had all the lumber, the tongue and groove that the house was made with.

HS: What was the name of the ship? Do you know?

EL: I have it somewhere, and I should [know].

HS: It doesn't matter. We can look it up. I remember you told me he built some furniture.

EL: Oh, yes, we had some wonderful [furniture]. Do you remember when you were over there visiting us, there was an enormous chest of drawers. It was made like nothing you've ever seen before. It had very large deep drawers and then on top there was a narrow drawer and a lid that sort of opened up.

HS: I don't remember how it opened. I don't suppose I went around opening your bedroom furniture.

EL: Well, it was painted black, painted or stained black, and it had little round pulls that looked like buttons, to pull out the drawers. They were large, husky looking. Do you remember the—we never opened the door very much, but there was a door from our bedroom out into the little garden where the fig tree was. The door was built like some of the modern houses on the mainland that have the bottom and it was divided in two where you could open the top window and leave the—

HS: Oh, a Dutch door. I don't remember that.

EL: A Dutch door. We never really used that very much, but that was it. I remember Herbie opening the door and showing us this. And of course, you know about the whirly door, the shop door, at the other end of the [house].

HS: Yes. It was stuck the last time I saw it. The wind had piled up [sand] against it, and it was partly broken. It had four vanes and two were broken, and a kind of axle.

EL: Yes, a kind of axle that it whirled on.

HS: Theoretically that was the front door, wasn't it? But who went to the front door?

EL: Yes, it was. But I don't know; I don't think we considered it the front door.

HS: As you came up from Cuyler's it really was, and that was the anchorage.

EL: Yes, it was a short cut into the yard or out to the sheep sheds. And then you remember there was a butcher shop and it had a real heavy door, to keep the meat in, and two doors in the laundry.

HS: I don't remember. I wish I'd looked around more.

EL: Oh, you know, I have pictures where it shows the kitchen. I have very few pictures of the kitchen part of the house, but I remember seeing it—the old table that I used to cook on. The marble top, and then they had a cabinet on top, a glass thing. Oh, I know. When I came to visit you last year—remember when we went over and met this family where Jenny stayed, and they had a table just like what we had on the island.

HS: It was a so-called kitchen table with bins underneath?

EL: Yes, bins underneath, for flour. And you know where that table was? Out from that table there was another door, a sliding door into a cooler. It kept cool and it had netting, a fly screen. (conversation)

HS: Well, here's August 24. This is apparently the first visit of the *Dreamer* after you lived there. This is interesting. It says, Owner: Arthur Sanger. Who wrote this?

EL: Arthur did.

HS: But he wasn't the owner. It belonged to Agnes, didn't it?

EL: No, I think it originally belonged to his father and mother. Did you ever know the father and mother? The first year or two when he came over his father and mother were on the boat.

HS: Both of them? I thought the father had died.

EL: No.

HS: They're not here [in guest register].

EL: They were unable to climb up [the steep path to the ranch house]. You see, this was the mother, owner, Benjamin Franklin Hopkins. Did they come with them? They must have, it's the same date. Well, yes, Arthur Sanger was the owner, but his mother was on board.

HS: I've seen pictures of his mother on the *Dreamer* but not of his father.

EL: It seems to me his father was there, too.

HS: Levi Giddings, he apparently came with them. Somebody named Mrs. Urban Fuller Stevens.

EL: That was Steve's wife; they came on their own boat, Steve's boat.

HS: They happened to be there at the same time.

EL: And this Frank Lockwood. I've got lots of letters of his. He used to write. He was an Englishman. A couple of years ago he came by to see me. I've got his address. I must write to him.

HS: He still lives in Los Angeles?

EL: No, he lives in Palos Verdes.

HS: That's a familiar name, Joseph Barbieri. Why is it familiar? Do you remember him?

EL: Don't remember him. It's a man, though, from Pasadena. His name was John somebody. It wasn't Barbieri, though. He did that picture, and I'm trying to rack my brain. I thought I would see it; I know he came with the Sangers or the Griswolds.

HS: This map of the island is not dated, so he could have come another year. It gives the date of the discovery, 1542. Here are the shearers again.

EL: The Agees. She came over and cooked for us, the Agees, that year, 1932. They brought her over to help cook because Marianne was so little that they thought that she could help.

HS: I remember, we have that on tape. You told me about that, how she gave you some helpful hits for housewives.

EL: (laughter) Yes, about the eggs and so forth.

HS: Here's another message from Arthur [Sanger].

EL: Yes, "my fourth visit. I'm giving Herbie the little Indian stone whale,"—that one I have here—"as a token of our friendship."

HS: Apparently everybody on the *Dreamer* didn't sign.

EL: No. Here's somebody who came over and wrote a story.

HS: This is Mrs. Agee again: "One islander visiting another from San Nicolas Island. Here nearly three weeks and we have so enjoyed really knowing Herb and Elise."

EL: Yes. Hasn't spelled it right.

HS: Maybe she thought your name was Elsie. (conversation and pause)

The tape is on again. Let's hear about Betsy's arrival.

EL: Well, you know I met these friends, Mr. and Mrs. H. Arden Edwards of Los Angeles. He was a principal; he's dead now, so if I say the wrong things it won't make so much difference. Well, he had a son. He was the principal of a school. He and his wife came over with the Sangers for their first visit, and then when they came I told them that I was pregnant. Mrs. Edwards offered to look after Marianne who was then about three years old.

HS: To stay on the island?

EL: No, no. When I went in, when I left the island, they would take charge of her when I had to go to the hospital. So I thanked them very much and then I left the island just five weeks before Betsy was born, left in November just before my birthday, I think. The coast guard came in and I went in and when I got on board he said, "Well, we have to go over to San Nicolas to pick up the Edwards," that they were over there. So we went and picked up the Edwards and they said, "Well, we'll still do this, look after Marianne when the baby comes." So we went in and separated, they went their way and I went mine.

They wrote me and said, after I'd been there, they wrote and asked me—I think they asked me when we were on board ship whether I would come and have Thanksgiving with them, or else they got in touch with me and said, "We're going to have a house party over Thanksgiving in Antelope Valley" in their Indian Museum. Of course, I told them that I'd have to ask my doctor if I could go. So I called my doctor and he knew I was away from home, away from the island, away from my family, and so he said, "You come in and I'll tell you whether you can go or not; but you accept in the meantime because you can always say you can't go." So I did this; I went on a Tuesday to see the doctor and he said, "I don't think the child will be born this month." This was about the end of November. Wednesday was the next day, and I was to go. They were going to go out Wednesday and they were going to pick me up. He said, "If you go and drive quite slowly and carefully and rest when you get out there, it will be all right. I don't see why you shouldn't go." So I went, looking as large as life and my friends, when they saw me, were a little worried but we went and had a lovely Thanksgiving.

They had other friends; I forgot how many were there, but there was a big spread. On Friday they all went looking for Indian relics, but they wouldn't let me go so I stayed home with Marianne and we rested and fussed around. We were all going back to town on Sunday. Friday was fine; they went on their trip and came back and we visited. Then Saturday morning everything went along peacefully and then I went in to rest Saturday afternoon after lunch. Marianne and I were having our nap, and then something queer happened. The water broke. With Marianne, I'd had no symptoms whatsoever, so I had no idea what was going on. So I went into my hostess and said, "something queer." And she said, "I think it's time we got into the car and went to town." They were not expecting to leave until next day, so they had to leave everything and dash me in. We had a regular Paul Revere's ride. I think if Betsy had been a boy I would have named her Paul Revere, because having driven out carefully on the way, this time we just went—I wasn't in any pain. In fact, I know I'm not superstitious and yet I often wonder, because I felt so good and well that I felt as though I was going to a tennis match, as if I was going to a tournament, and no pain. They were worried about whether I should be going, so they stopped at a hospital en

route and the people said, "Well, as long as she isn't in labor, no pain, it's okay. It's all right for her to go on." So we got into town about 5:30. We left about 2:30 or 3:00, got in about 5:30. I was so busy calling Bob Brooks and calling my doctor and everything and he told me what to do, to go over to the hospital. By the time I got to the hospital I was starving, no pains but I was ravenously hungry. I was so sorry afterwards I hadn't had a good meal.

So I told the doctor I was hungry and he said, "You can have a cup of tea and toast." He said, "You've had a long trip and I think you should rest. Your other child was ten days late, this child is ten days early, and you'll have the child in the morning." So of course, I did what my doctor told me. I went to bed. There was a poor lady in the next bed to me; she'd just lost a baby and she was feeling low. So I had my tea, feeling nothing. They'd come in and see me and everything was going fine. The nurse came in once and she said, "You're fussing this lady and I think we'd better get you up into the room near the delivery room." So we went up there and everything was fine and all of a sudden she came and looked at me and she said, "Oh, the baby's right there!" It only took two pains, half an hour. I didn't have any pains at all. The doctor didn't get there in time. From there almost immediately the baby was born.

HS: I think I should ask you: How old were you?

EL: Oh, I was forty-two.

HS: I thought you were getting on. That's pretty good, isn't it?

EL: What was so funny was that I was feeling so good and I never had any [pains]. My friend—when I had Marianne—she hadn't had any children, Hope Brooks hadn't, and we were very much interested about this new experience. (tape off)

HS: You were going to tell me about the time in the fall or the late summer of 1934 when Herb went into the Veterans' Hospital.

EL: Yes, for a hernia operation. Our second daughter, Betsy, was born the end of, in December '33 and that spring when I took her back on the coast guard [ship] when she was two and a half [months], just before we left the mainland I had a letter from my sister-in-law telling us that she was on her way around the world and she was going to stop in San Pedro and Los Angeles and she wanted to see Herbie and the children and wondered if we could [meet]. But I had to get back to the island and I was very anxious for Herbie to come in and see his sister. I wanted him, suggested his taking Marianne in. She was three years old but she was too much for him to do so he went in and had a visit which proved his last visit with his sister. Then when he came home, back to the island, he had to go into the hospital for a hernia operation.

He had been sewed up before but he had gotten worse and so Bob Brooks arranged for his going to the hospital. It was the Santa Fe Hospital. Herbie didn't want to go to a veterans' hospital—I suppose I shouldn't say this, but he said that when there was no war going on the doctors in the veterans' places were more or less like butchers. He didn't want to be cut up by a butcher and so he went to the Santa Fe which was for his, I think its accident compensation. We got this boy who came back, Joe Bartholeski, came back to stay with me while Herbie was on the mainland.

HS: Where was he from?

EL: He was from Los Angeles. He was here—he came over to stay with Herbie when I went in with Betsy.

HS: Oh, that's the one he calls "the boy"!

EL: Yes, the boy. Oh, he was a character. He never shaved or washed the entire time. His clothes would stand up and sometimes George Hammond would come and say, "Let's take Joe. Let's all go swimming and he can have a bath." He never cut his hair and he looked like one of these now—he was only twenty. I think he had his twenty-first birthday at our house. Well, he stayed on when he heard that Herbie had to go in. He didn't want to go home because his parents made him work and he didn't have to work on the island.

HS: I judged from some of the letters that Herb wrote at the time that the boy plunged in and worked with a will at first and then pretty soon he was not doing anything at all, just wandering around picking up Indian relics.

EL: Well, he never shaved and never took a bath and he looked like a little old man. His hair was blond, he was a blond, and his beard got down as long as this, curly, reddish-blond, and his hair was up in the air. He stayed, as I told you, and then he wanted to stay on. He didn't want to go in after Herbie got back, because he had to pay his parents board if he worked. They were Austrians, I think, or Polish. He stayed and stayed and finally when Herbie got back from the hospital and he had to leave, he went in on the boat to San Pedro and when he got off the boat he told us that people said, "Who is that little old man?" You see, his hair was blond and it was long; he had a long Santa Clause beard. I've had a letter from him recently and he's promised to come by.

HS: He's the one who shortened his name to Johan Barthol?

EL: Yes. And they say, Well, you know when I met this man up here, he said that he was peculiar and I said, "Well, I'm not surprised."

HS: What happened? How long was Herb ashore? Six weeks?

EL: Six weeks, yes.

HS: How did you get along with this—

EL: Well, Joe had to do the chores, and I think we had Arno there, too, and I think George Hammond came in and we had some of our usual summer visitors. By the way, did I show you the article about the Reavis' boat, *Miss June*? They counted that they'd made twelve trips to the island. It's enumerated in one of the guest books.

HS: I wouldn't be surprised if the *Dreamer* was there that often. Of course, they came before you did.

EL: Oh, yes, they used to come for years. But Joe was really a character. He used to go fishing and he used to go—

HS: Did he chop the wood?

EL: Oh, yes, he chopped the wood and, but, oh, dear. I'm dying to see him. He's married and has some children and I guess he's turned out pretty well. I think that during this period that Herbie was away, we had some *News Press* people who came. Jim Murray came over one time and brought some people. You know, during the war—no, this was before the war. He used to bring people over to see the island, when he wanted to get an article about us or something. So he came over, and the children were out riding horseback. Betsy couldn't have been on that trip, she was less than a year old. But another trip that he came over, when she was about seven, six or seven, he came over and the girls were riding and Betsy went in the patio there, on the horse Hans, and went through that little gate, you know. Betsy turned around and was in there, and I don't know, Jim left her for a minute and the horse bolted. And he ran out and caught her before she fell on the ground. He went through that thing like a shot out of a gun, and around the corner of the house, Jim after him, and he caught her. Did you see the watering trough in the pasture for the sheep? It wasn't always filled with water; we kept it filled when the sheep were in the pasture. That was really a scary moment, and Herbie wasn't there. He was on the mainland and he certainly would have had—

HS: Yes, he always charged you with looking after the children. As I told you, I'm supposed to find out something about Captain Waters. Do you remember anything that was told to you about him? Did John Russell ever talk about him?

EL: No. You know, John Russell only stayed about a week or so, and we were awfully busy shipping.

HS: Was he working?

EL: Oh, yes, he worked. He mended fences.

HS: But he only came back that one time?

EL: One time, yes. There was a story that what's-his-name [Captain Waters] had a lady friend that lived up in the attic.

HS: Lived there? What a terrible life.

EL: Well, that was her room and then there was a trapdoor that came down into our bedroom, what later became our bedroom and had been his bedroom, and when he was in his room, this woman used to come down. This is the story; I don't know how true it is.

HS: Who told you? It wasn't John Russell, was it?

EL: No, I think it was Herbie told it. He got it from John Russell. Have I ever told you about the man, one of the sheepshearers, when John Russell and his wife were there, who was kind of lovesick, a lovesick sheepshearer? He decided that he was going to end it all, so he took a pair of shears and he cut his neck, but he opened them too wide and he didn't catch the jugular vein. So John and I guess some of the other men tied this man down on the floor of the dining room and Mrs. Russell came out with a flour sifter and she sifted his neck, this way, and it saved his life and he didn't die. That was a way of stopping the blood.

HS: I've heard of stopping it with egg membrane and with spider webs, but I never heard of flour. It would clot, I suppose. They didn't sew him up?

EL: No. Herbie wasn't there. Herbie was a natural doctor. And then, you know, the time that Herbie found the whiskey? Well, when John Russell was on the island, that boat that had the whiskey was wrecked in Cuyler's Harbor. I don't remember the name; we'll have to get the name. It was full of flour. They had great sacks that John Russell salvaged and brought them up to the house. I guess they had plenty of flour for many years. There was supposed to be a boat with flour and whiskey, but they never found any whiskey until years later and then Herbie found one, this big barrel of whiskey. I'll never forget that. He came up to the house to get a brace and bit. I think I've told you before about this. How he wrote in to Bob and told him to bring out some things to siphon off the whiskey [into]?

HS: Yes, I have it on another tape—so they could carry it looking innocent.

EL: I had a steamer trunk and they tied that onto the sled and took the five-gallon things of whiskey.

HS: How many times did the Cockerells come out there?

EL: Oh, only once. They stayed about three weeks, two or three weeks. We had a wonderful time with them.

HS: They wrote quite often, didn't they?

EL: Yes, and they sent us all his writings. They were very much interested in the children. Have I ever told you about—that Marianne discovered a beetle that had never been discovered before and Dr. Cockerell named it *Lesteri*? He put it, I think, in one of his articles that he wrote on the island, about Marianne's beetle. They used to go out with their nets to get bees; he found nineteen varieties of bees there. And did you realize that they had many little humming birds over there? Herbie loved them. They used to cluster around the red geraniums planted there, dear little things. (pause)

HS: We were speaking of, 1937, wasn't it, when Bob Brooks sat on the spike when they were building the pier.

EL: Well, I'll tell you what happened. The men all arrived on the boat Saturday, the sheepshearers, mostly Indians and Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and they're very superstitious. They're more like children. We used to have a lot of fun with them. They arrived Saturday, and Sunday they didn't want to work because they said it was bad luck to work on Sunday. Sometimes when they were there they had to; to finish up they had to do it. But since they'd arrived the day before and they didn't have all their equipment ready, they always spent a day about sharpening their knives and getting their clothes in order. They'd probably come over from Santa Cruz Island. You see, they make the round when they start on the shearing and shipping. It was shipping time, in June—end of May, early June. They didn't want to start work so Bob said, "We'll have a picnic down at the beach, and we'll look over what's to be done to build up the pier for shipping the lambs." So we made sandwiches of meat and we had a big thing for a picnic down there. The men wandered around and Bob jumped up on this pier. He was looking at the thing when he fell and this big spike went in his hip, and he not only cut one artery but three! And apparently the bolt was still in the wound and Herbie didn't pull it out. He said, "Well, I'm going to take you up to the house."

HS: You mean it came off the pier? He was able to stand up? Oh, I thought it was a piece of construction steel.

EL: No, it was a bolt. He fell on the pier and this bolt that was sticking up ran into him. Just before this happened, there were two fishing boats that passed fairly near Prince Island, going up the coast. Herbie said, "Well, the rest of you people stay down here and finish your picnic and I'll take Bob up and fix him up." So he put him on the sled and took him up to the house and started working. I had the needle right there in the cupboard—it's a wool sack needle—and a piece of fishing line. He put this in a solution of Lysol; that was the only disinfectant we had. He had a little hand basin and he plunked the whole works in. Then he put him out over in his bedroom and started to work. I went up too; I was standing by and telling Bob funny stories. We had this old doctor's book that came out of the ark; it had some really pretty good homeopathic ideas. I read some of the things and one of the things it said was that you could easily get lockjaw and terrible poisoning and all. We didn't have any anesthetic, so Herbie gave him a big shot of whisky to sort of put him out or make him drunk.

HS: You know what they told me that night when we heard all about it, when you were ashore? I think Bob said, "I drank half a bottle of whisky and Herb drank the other half." That's what Bob said.

EL: Herbie probably had to take a shot himself in order to steady his nerves to do the thing. After we talked about it—you know, the human flesh is very tough—and he used this needle because it had a curve on it, like an upholstery needle. So he took two stitches and pulled the thing together. As I say, I was telling funny stories although I was very distressed, thinking of all the gory things I'd read in this doctor's book that came out of the ark, as I said. Herbie, of course, was a natural doctor and knew what to do. He had seen these boats so Herbie told the sheepshearers—(dog interrupts) We had lots of dogs on the island, so it works in very well. The little Scotties, we had a pair of little Scotties and we had Pomo, and pet eagles and pet foxes—Anyway, we told the sheepshearers to saddle up and ride around the island to see if they could find these boats. They'd disappeared; they didn't find them so the only thing to do was to raise the flag on the flagpole upside down, which was the international distress signal. And that flew thirteen days and nights and nobody came. The boat was due to come back. When they'd leave—at that time we didn't have a telephone; after this accident we got a telephone. Hope Brooks wanted to be in touch with her beloved. But we didn't and they were ordered to be back in thirteen days or twelve days, and they came. Herbie took Bob in and the doctors said that Herbie'd done such a good job that there was nothing for them to do. It healed up.

HS: I remember a few little embellishments on that story. I remember Bob saying, "Look at that mattress!" The bloody mattress had been thrown out into the patio.

EL: Yes, I should have said that. I never saw so much blood in my life. It looked like big gobs of liver. Oh, that mattress! We did have to throw it away, burn it up. Herbie took it away.

HS: I remember Bob said, "I lay on my stomach for thirteen days, and I never want to see another *Readers' Digest* in my life!" I guess that was about all he had to read. And another thing he said was that at the Cottage Hospital they said it had healed beautifully, they were lucky. But the next time, "Pack it, don't sew it up," if you have another puncture wound.

EL: After this accident, we got surgical equipment and never needed it after that. You know, when I was married one of the things I brought [to the island]—one of my best friends gave me a satchel with all kinds of medications, but we didn't think about surgical needles. I don't know why; it was all equipped with all kinds of medications. We didn't ourselves have to use any of it. All our friends and visitors and workmen, people were always in need of some medication or bandages.

HS: It's a wonder there weren't more broken bones and splinters and gashes and things like that.

EL: Well, we were very particular ourselves. One of the rules of the island was to always tell where you were going, in which direction you were going, east, west, north, or south, because the fog could come in all of a sudden. You'd be out walking and we had some of our people that came, a boatload of visitors. There was a woman who was a snake charmer; she'd been down in Mexico. They got lost; they spent a night in one of the caves.

HS: I wonder if that was the woman Arthur [Sanger] told about—something about shooting herself in the foot?

EL: Oh, that was after our day, after we were over there. Oh, yes, that woman—she used a gun for a walking stick. I don't know just where, but she was out shooting and she was a lady—she was like my Oregon friend, a handywoman. And she used it for a walking stick and I think probably slipped on a, going down and it went off and shot her in the foot. That was after we left, one of the trips that Art did. Did he ever tell you about his setting fire to the house? Not our house, but he'd made a fire in the navy house. He burned that. He got into quite hot water with Bob and the navy; I didn't think he would ever go over there again. I don't think he was allowed after that.

HS: How could he set the house on fire?

EL: You see, the navy built a house right out, a little house there, and they were cooking or something and they spilled some grease or something. He probably wouldn't tell it, but I heard about it; I think Agnes told us once. (conversation) I always think of Agnes and Art trudging along with their knapsacks and their shovels and their screens. They really went to town on that [artifact collecting] in a business-like way.

HS: Do you remember Herman Strandt? He was over at San Miguel and did the same thing.

EL: It was really wrong. They really destroyed the value of the artifacts because they didn't know where they came from.

HS: They didn't dig at all scientifically; of course, nobody did in those days, I guess. But they didn't keep track of things, although Arthur always seems to be able to say what island the things came from. But they didn't remember the depth.

EL: Yes. You know that big pestle there? I found that myself. All I saw of it was the barest little round bit like a round stone. We'd had a good many of the scientists who had been over to the island who could tell us how to go about digging, finding things, you know. They said, "Now, if you see a stone in the ground apparently and it looks interesting, you dig carefully around with your finger, down and down and down, and expose it that way carefully." And that's what I did and it got longer and longer and longer and I got this big long thing out.

HS: It's more than a foot long, isn't it?

EL: Yes. It's one of the first pieces I ever found. I'm very proud of that.

HS: Do you know where Arno found that big doughnut that you have?

EL: Yes, he did. I think he found it on the way to the west end, near the center of the island where most of the Indian village sites were. The only other one I have we use as an ashtray [paint bowl].

HS: You have one of those carved killer whales?

EL: Oh, yes. I put it away in my room because I had workmen here. I have lost things. I lost that knife of Arrietta's. I started telling you about that the other evening. He said Herbie admired it, a handmade knife and it had a white stone handle. He said, "Herbie, I know you like this. I old man and may not come back next year. You keep it. If I come back, all right. If I don't come back, you keep it for you." And he never did come back. He just had a sense that he was old. He was an awfully nice Indian; he was a real Indian. Now, the next in line who should have been the leader

was Fred Manjel, but he didn't come from apparently—I always took it that he wasn't of the tribe, he wasn't a leader. He was a good worker but he never would take the initiative to do anything. I remember one time I was alone with him; the others, I don't know why, had gone off on some roundup or something. They'd finished their shearing; they'd finished all the work. Fred was around and came lunch time, everybody else was gone; they had taken picnics and gone off, and he was there at the house. I wanted to cook him some lunch. Of course we had some beans, horse beans and hot sauce and stuff, but I wanted some meat, and we had a whole sheep hanging up in the butcher shop. So I said to him, "Fred, go get me some meat." He went out and saw this beautiful carcass, meat, hanging up there, but he said he didn't know how to do it [butcher]. He wouldn't do it because he didn't know how to cut it down properly. Now, if he'd been there alone, on his own, he probably would have taken a knife and hacked it off and cooked it. But he was too shy and didn't have the security to do it; he didn't want to show his ignorance. He had an awfully big smile. Did you ever see Fred? He was a real Indian, too. He was one of the best shearers; he could shear well. You know, they always said the shearers had to be very strong, especially in the back, because they had to hold the sheep. He had a big strong back. He loved his meat; his favorite part of the meat was the sheep's head.

One of the very first excitements I had on the island, when I first went there, Arno got up and usually cooked the men's breakfast early in the morning. I used to get it ready, get the stuff all measured out and he would do it. I remember the men had all gone one morning, soon after I was on the island, they had gone to work and I came into the kitchen and I opened the oven door and I saw this great big sheep's head with the eyes and everything in it. O-o-h-h, I was very startled! And then I found out that this was Fred's special delicacy; he always had the head of the sheep. Each one of us, you know, we all got so that we each had his special part of the sheep. Betsy always liked the tail, sheep's tail; cut that off, you know, and get it nice and brown. I liked the kidneys and I also liked the liver. We used to cook the liver first and the heart and the kidneys. The first meal after an animal was killed was liver and kidneys and heart; I never could eat heart. Did you ever eat a heart?

HS: Oh, yes. I don't think it's particularly good, just muscle. It works hard and is rather dense.

EL: I never could see eating a heart. I didn't like brains either, or the other delicacies—the mountain sheep, the mountain oysters.

HS: I recently had some of those with friends in San Diego County—delicious. We had them for breakfast several mornings.

EL: Yes, it's a great delicacy, but I couldn't come to eating those either. You know, I learned about them years before I ever thought of going to San Miguel Island. I had this girlfriend in World War I; she was in the navy, my best friend, and was in the censor's office and translated codes down at the battery [NYC]. One evening she was working late in the office way downtown in New York, and she had to go out to dinner. A very amusing person and very proper and prim, she went to this restaurant and got a menu and read it. The waiter came up and she said, "What are these?" He didn't want to tell her; he didn't know what to say. He said, "They're mountain oysters. They're sort of like oysters, mountain oysters." But she argued and tried to get him to tell her just what they were, and she goes breezing back to the office, opens the door, and here all this room full of officers and men and maybe one or two girls were there. "I went to this restaurant and the waiter wouldn't tell me what these things were—mountain oysters, he said they were." She screamed this out. The one or two girls there kind of went up to her, took her outside, and they explained—and then she told me. That was a good fifty years ago. Wasn't it, the veterans had their fifty-first anniversary of the Legion? (pause)

HS: Mrs. Lester, you were telling me last night just before we turned the tape off that you would like to describe how people came out to have wild parties on the island, that you were usually the only woman, and how you dealt with them.

EL: When I first came over, I didn't know quite how to deal with it. Everybody came, for instance like when the sheepshearers came, and Bob. He always brought a jug of wine for the men, maybe several, and the men each brought their things. After I'd been on the island for a number of years, I discovered that the best way to do to get them fed and taken care of and not getting too rambunctious was to be sure and have everything cooked and ready to set on the table within half an hour after they got there.

HS: You cut short the cocktail hour, in other words. I suppose that some people didn't realize that they felt free and uninhibited and away from their usual responsibilities when they came to the island, but it was your home and you had to carry on as usual.

EL: Yes, and I didn't want a whole lot of rambunctious goings-on. Judge Westbrook used to come over with all his friends and they'd bring their wine and all. But going back to the sheepshearers, after they'd had their first excitement and all and plenty to [drink], and then they went to sleep, then Bob used to dole them out their amount. They'd have a glass of wine.

HS: Was this before supper or after?

EL: Well, as the days progressed, as long as the wine lasted, they'd have a glass. I learned to feed them. The men liked to have something and Bob brought over a certain amount and then he would dole them out their rations so that they wouldn't get too gay, and they could do their work. Of course, the wine didn't last more maybe than three or four days.

HS: Did they take it with them out in the fields when they were working?

EL: Oh, no, after the day's work. But they didn't have enough. That first night they usually had expended most.

HS: I wonder if they did that on every island. As you said, they traveled from island to island.

EL: I imagine so. It was just the routine.

HS: Of course, the islands were different. In many cases they didn't stay with their hosts.

EL: No, they had bunkhouses. But you see, our place was built in a bunkhouse sort of way. The kitchen was one end of the house and our quarters were the other end, and in between there were several bunkrooms for the men.

In any case, even when we had our social guests that would come over, I managed if I knew. I used to get busy and get a meal on, so that they didn't get too—You see, when I was a girl at home, my father didn't believe in [drinking]. He never drank. He only drank at weddings and funerals, and then he thought it was proper to get drunk. Otherwise, we were frugal and he used to serve things at a dinner party and all, but it wasn't the routine of having it as it is today. It was more a tea party. So I wasn't accustomed to dealing with men. Of course, my father went to his clubs and had a lot of his social doings with men. It wasn't the cocktail age when I was a girl. So this island business with the men and being the only woman most of the time—I think there were only, one year Mrs. Agee came over to help when Marianne was a baby. I had very few women [there] and most of the time there would be stag parties.

HS: The more I think it over, the more marvelous it seems to me that you were able to feed all the visitors you had. It's hard enough on land to be prepared for unexpected guests, but there never was a time when you didn't welcome people in and feed them, and they probably didn't think anything about it and also didn't realize how many guests you had. I don't know how you did it.

EL: Well, of course we always had a three- to six-month supply of canned things and it became a custom that most all—we never asked—but people always brought something along with them.

HS: Especially in Depression days; that was a custom.

EL: They brought vegetables and things, but we always had plenty of meat. It's quite a different story, I think, now in the 1960s, that I'm paying for all the free meat that I had on the island. Anyway, I wasn't a teenager, after all, when I went over to the island. I wasn't an experienced housewife. There were lots of things that I did without, as I spoke of a while back to you about meeting this young woman from Oregon. She told me a lot about what a person should have, that was of course necessary on a farm. Never having been [on a farm], I just knew nothing about it. When I was a girl in New York, I used to go and order, and engage servants for my mother or go to the grocery. Whatever the cook asked me—I'd go down and interview her and she'd tell me what to get and I would get them.

HS: Well, you had somewhat the same situation when you made those famous lists, only someone was going to bring them.

EL: Oh, yes. Did I ever tell you about this wonderful list that I made one day? Herbie thought I had really committed the worst sin in creation. I made a list and I wanted some packages of Jello, because the children liked it and it was considered good for them. So I put down on my list that I wanted a dozen, not one of every kind, but just a dozen packages, and instead of putting down one dozen, I put twelve dozen. And Herbie looked at this list and he said, "My gracious, ordering a hundred and forty-four?" And I said, "Bob will just laugh and he'll say, 'What? Elise thinks she's starting a store?'" I was really reprimanded for this unpardonable sin. Herbie had a delightful way, his interest in people and things, and he had a great sense of humor in many ways. But after this incident, I thought to myself, He doesn't have too much of a sense of humor about life and things. So, it kind of worried me so I thought I must work on my children's sense of humor.

HS: There's not much you can do about it, if they're not born with the capacity.

EL: No. Well, the only thing I could think of, being a librarian—I racked my brains—was to get Edward Lear's *Nonsense Book*. And I ordered one for Marianne, and the children have enjoyed it. You know, it had these limericks and things, and I thought that might cultivate their sense of humor, sense of fun, lighten up the—

HS: I think Herb got much more serious after he was married and took on the responsibilities of the head of a family. He never wrote you a letter in which he didn't say: don't go near the cliffs, don't get out of sight of the house, and things like that, whereas, he hadn't been like that before.

EL: Oh, no. Did I ever tell you about the first time when I went in [to the mainland] after I was married? I had to go and see the doctor about starting a family, and he gave me a list of things to get for him and things for me and things that he wanted very much. He said that all his life he'd always wanted some carpet slippers, so he put down carpet slippers and he put down the size, his shoe size, and then he wanted sox. Sox were 11, I think, and shoes were 8. When I got down to going shopping and everything—he told me where to go, some of these outlets for the navy, places like that—and I went into this men's shop and said I wanted some carpet slippers. What size? Oh, 11. I got the size 11 or very near, these enormous things. I twisted the sox and the shoes. So we had a big laugh when I brought home these. I had no more idea of what sizes for men's clothes—

HS: And yet he'd tried his best to make it as particular as he could. It reminds me of a letter I was reading yesterday, one of Herb's letters, in which he says, "All my love, yours, Herbie." And the next sentence is, "Please bring one box of carpet tacks."
(laughter)

EL: Yes, isn't that a man for you? He was very exact. You see, he would incorporate my lists with his. I'd make the food list and he would copy it down in his very charming handwriting, legible. But that's always tickled me. And any time I'd make any mistake, in cooking or keeping house, he would say I thought you loved to keep house, I thought you were such a good cook, but you burn the cakes! I know it's somewhere in the thing about the first birthday cake that I baked on the island.

HS: I don't remember if we got it on tape. Whose birthday was it?

EL: One of the men. I was going to make a cake, you know, with this wood stove and everything. I had a Fanny Farmer Cookbook and I wanted to make a cake and I told Arno, my kitchen helper, cheerful and gay as he always was, to make me a good hot fire because I had to bake the cake and it had to be—

END OF SESSION

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Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. HERBERT (ELIZABETH "ELISE") LESTER

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: June 5, 1970

SUBJECT: Management of San Miguel Island, first English mass

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Mrs. Herbert Lester at her home in Santa Barbara. Today is Friday the fifth of June, 1970. I'd like to ask you, Mrs. Lester, to discuss the arrangements under which you and your husband took over the management of the [San Miguel] Island. Did you have a written contract with Bob Brooks, the lessee?

EL: No, we didn't. Herbie went over with Bob before I was married, when he came to California, because he had met Bob Brooks when he was in the service. They met at the Walter Reed Hospital; they'd both been injured in World War I. Bob told him about his island and Herbie, who always loved the great open spaces and wanted to go to Africa when he was [young], was thrilled with Bob's description and said he hoped some day to go out there.

HS: How long had Bob had lease of the island? Did he have it during World War I? And before that?

EL: Yes, he did and before that. He had a partner. Now, what was the partner's name? Well, we'll have to put that in sometime.

HS: You don't remember when he first leased it?

EL: Well, he took it over soon after the—let's see, Bob, I think, graduated from Harvard around 1912 and he went into the wool business when he came out here. He and his partner—Captain Waters, I think, still had the island until Bob and his friend took it over. The reason, my husband said, that Bob took over the island from Captain Waters was because the captain was getting too old to manage it so that's the reason he relinquished it.

HS: Then at that time John Russell and his wife were living there.

EL: Yes, and they lived there for seventeen years and they built the house, you know. John Russell had been a carpenter. He was in the service at one time; I don't know what war he was in but I think he was regular army, a service man. And so he built the house like a barracks. He wasn't an architect; he was sort of a master carpenter, a good carpenter. The house was built substantially, and he went over to this wreck that was at Tyler's Bight. It was the famous boat that had wrecked on the island with tons of—it was a lumber schooner.

HS: Can you tell the name of it?

EL: I can't right now. It's among Herbie's letters. He's got a list somewhere among his papers of all the boats that were wrecked on the island. He had the names of them.

HS: I have a friend who has a list of all the shipwrecks in the last hundred years on the California coast. We could pick out the ones that were wrecked on San Miguel.

EL: Yes. And so John told Captain Waters that he would build a house and put as long a building as the captain would send over windows and door frames. He had to send over the doors and the window frames.

HS: You said the house was built around 1908. Are you sure it was that late?

EL: Somewhere around there, oh, yes.

HS: I wonder where Russell lived before that.

EL: Russell was Captain Water's man in charge of the island, and Captain Waters had the island from the nineties. He was a squatter before he got the lease from Mexico.

HS: There had to be a house of some kind.

EL: He may have made a small house and kept adding to it. He'd put on a room and the captain would send him over windows and doors. He inserted on the windward side, he put the portholes along the—is that the north side?

HS: I'm always turned around. The house is on the east side of the island.

EL: Yes, it's toward the east side because the east end is toward Santa Rosa.

HS: Cuyler's Harbor faces the mainland. So it would be the northeast side and that would get the wind from Point Concepcion.

EL: Yes. You know, they used to say that San Miguel was the wind factory of the coast. When we started the weather bureau for the U. S. Weather [Bureau] in 1940, they were very anxious to have a weather station there because they felt that San Miguel was the weather breeder

HS: I always understood that Point Concepcion was where the winds were born.

EL: Well, of course Point Concepcion came on to us, the first island. (pause) So when Herbie went out to the island, he had, not a written agreement with Bob, but he was supposed to get what Bob paid his regular man, the man that had been in charge before, which was \$75 a month. Herbie, not knowing what such workmen would get, coming from the east, he loved the island and he was so anxious to be there that he accepted without any qualms that his friend would keep a gentleman's agreement.

HS: Well, actually it really didn't matter what he had promised to pay him because he didn't pay anything. Did he ever pay a salary?

EL: I never saw any real paychecks. He was supposed to put the money in the bank for us. He paid for both children [maternity care]; and I had a life insurance with the Travellers Insurance Company. I had an endowment and I had been paying on that for about five years and it had at least fifteen years to go and so Bob promised to keep that up. Of course, we couldn't send in the quarterly payments because we never knew when a boat was coming, so Bob promised to pay those quarterly payments. I think it was something like \$18.90 for the quarter.

HS: Did he pay it?

EL: Yes, he did, because I was able to buy my present house where I'm living with the money I had saved. When the policy matured several years after I got here to the mainland, it was just due and paid up in full. Bob had always paid it. I think he felt that he was putting at least a little security.

HS: Well, of course, right after they made their agreements the Depression got much worse. People were beginning to realize something bad had happened in October of '29, but by 1930 it wasn't bad yet.

EL: No, but you know, I always felt and Herbie did, whether we sensed it or not, we felt when we discovered the Depression really hit, we realized that we had been like the rats that leave a ship when they know it's going to sink. We actually didn't feel the Depression when we were over there because we didn't need any money. But of course, Bob came over one day and said he'd have to reduce Herbie's \$75. He didn't

say how much; I think as I remember Herbie telling me that he wasn't going to pay him any salary for a while but just give us our food.

HS: But he provided you with other supplies?

EL: Oh, yes, with all our necessities of life. We didn't have to face the bread lines of New York or sell apples, and Herbie came to me and said what Bob had said to him about conditions. I said to Herbie, "I think we'd better just stay here because what would we do going to the mainland with no job and really no place to go and not having much cash to live on; and here we have no rent." I thought it was best to stay.

HS: Was that about the time that Herb was trying to interest friends in taking over the island?

EL: Yes, when Bob told him this, he had a very dear friend in Freeport, Long Island, Hugh Rockwell, who was an inventor. He was a very enthusiastic person. He had his own yacht that he used to sail around in the eastern waters and cruise. He was a very outgoing and interesting person and he'd been a very good friend to Herbie. Herbie had full confidence in him and he invited him to come and visit us the second year we were on the island after Marianne was born. They came in August of '31. Herbie at one time asked Hugh what his compensation, labor laws—whether they would cover him if he stayed on the island, regardless whether he was paid or not. He said, "I do know that California laws are very strict about labor," but he didn't like to press any charges with his friend because Bob Brooks was not only his employer but he was a very good friend. They'd been in World War I together, and Herbie felt that the security was something. Then Bob paid my insurance, so that was that, and he paid all expenses of both children being born. When I went in town every year for my vacation, he gave me my spending money, whenever I had to pay board, and then he gave me several hundred dollars probably—I don't remember the exact amount—he gave me whatever I [needed].

HS: I suppose he did the same thing with Herb then?

EL: Yes, he had a vacation and he always had, Bob always gave him the wherewithal. When Herbie used to come in he usually visited with Bob, so that always saved on the rent. But everybody was in the same [boat]; the mainland people were really up against it. We really felt very fortunate to be there when we heard all about our friends. I know we had friends back east in Rye, where one friend of ours had started building a very handsome home and they had to give it up. To my mind it sounded very extraordinary, this house that they were building. They had a full set of bathrooms all in a row, some six or eight bathrooms. They needed all this, you see, before the crash and everybody had so much money and then they went in for all sorts

of lavish things. After, when the crash came, Herbie said to me, "Well, you know, I don't really have much sympathy for these working people. In the days of the twenties, they were making a great deal of money and buying silk shirts at \$20 apiece and \$30 apiece instead of putting a little money in the bank for a rainy day. They spent everything that they got as if it was going to go on and on and on." So Herbie used to talk about how wonderful it was to be on the island with the nature and the beautiful sunsets that we'd see. The best part of our year over there, the loveliest weather for seeing the mainland, was October, November, and December. Sometimes mornings we'd have these gorgeous sunrises, and Herbie would say, "Come on out and see," and there would be the mainland with the mountains. And then in the evening, the setting of the sun. I was not an artist and I used to wish I was so that I could catch some of the lovely landscapes, the color.

HS: You know, one of the hardest things to paint is a sunrise or a sunset. Even though you do a true rendition of it, it doesn't look real. It's too dramatic.

EL: Too dramatic, I suppose. But you know you sort of feel—well, I've not considered myself an artist but I've always loved beautiful things in art in a more intellectual way. I don't pretend to be able to be an art critic, but I have a great feeling for nature's beauty. And in the spring of the year, too, we'd have the plovers, you know, migrant birds. He [Herbie] went out one time with his shotgun and got fifteen birds and we cooked them and had a dinner.

HS: How many of you were there? Did you have guests?

EL: I don't think so. I think Herbie and the children and I were there, possibly Arno. Arno usually was there only in the spring to get ready for shipping and shearing, except when Herbie would have to go into town for some reason. He was over with us when he went in for his operation.

HS: Where did Arno live when he wasn't on an island?

EL: Oh, he lived in Gardena. He was quite the beau, I believe, of Gardena, from the stories he used to tell me. Oh, he was funny, he was perfectly funny. I wish I could draw a word picture of him, a description of Arno. He really thought he was quite a ladykiller and he was far from beauty. Of course, he was not young, but he still had a way with the ladies. Poor soul, he only had one or two teeth in his mouth; he really was quite a character and a caricature of a—When he'd come over, I used to draw him out to find out how he'd been faring with the fair sex. I've often wondered what had happened to him. After we left the island, he stayed on for awhile, alone.

HS: The sheep were there. The last sheep were taken off in '53, I think. Did Bob have the lease up through then?

EL: Yes. But I wonder, I'm wondering if there aren't a few of the old [sheep]. You see, when we'd have a roundup there, they never got in all the sheep. There was always some wild sheep that were hiding in the barrancas and canyons, and every year that we were there one or two of these wild sheep would be corralled in with their long shaggy hair. They hadn't been sheared for a number of years, maybe.

HS: That was seventeen years ago when the last sheep were taken off. People have said that no, there are no sheep left but there are burros there.

EL: Now who ever brought burros over?

HS: I don't know, but when I was there last in '63, I didn't see them, but we had a couple of boys from UCLA with us and they saw six burros. Somebody brought over burros.

EL: Maybe the army did to cart up [their stuff]. The navy might have. You know, when the navy boys came after Pearl Harbor, when three of them were sent over to be billeted on the island, they were so sure that the navy was going to take care of them in a luxurious manner. They were soon going to have running water in their shack that they said was going to be built, and they were going into town once a week, and they were having all of these wonderful things. Well, we used to say, "The island is different. Maybe you may get all these things, but we wonder," because at times [because of] the weather the boat didn't come if the weather was bad and they couldn't land. So they had to learn finally how it was.

HS: It's just a shame that none of them were romantic enough to appreciate it, wasn't it? It was just an uncomfortable duty to them.

EL: Well, you see, they were raw recruits just out from their mothers' arms and the mothers kept them well fed and they were never required to lift a hand. But it wasn't the rule of the island. Everybody that came to the island, of course, carried their weight. We didn't especially ask them to but when they saw that we were doing everything for their comfort and we were interested in them, they were happy to jump in, help pull up a barge, unload skiffs, harness horses. You know, little Sparky was so tame after a while Herbie would stand in the entrance of the patio, yard, and just call or whistle for Sparky and he'd be down at the other end of the field and he would come up without Herbie having to go and get him. For some of them sometimes he'd have to go with a feed bag and they'd all come running, but old Sparky would come.

HS: One thing we never mentioned was the Ford, the car.

EL: Oh, haven't we ever talked of it, the Model T?

HS: Was it a Model T or a Model A? I believe it was a Model A. Model T was that early, tall, spindly car.

EL: This looked like a fire engine. It was red, you know, a touring car.

HS: Whose idea was it?

EL: Well, Bob Brooks sent it over. Did you ever hear how it got up to the top of the path?

HS: No, I was wondering. Did it arrive, on the *Vaquero*? How did they get it ashore?

EL: Yes. I wasn't there because I was busy looking after the commissary department and kitchen, getting ready for the invasion of the sheepshearers, and so I don't know actually how it got off the boat onto the beach, but I do know how they got it up the canyon road. I heard that it came with power, gas power. Whatever it had, it couldn't have been very strong because they had to hitch the team of horses to it. And then they had to have men pushing it and they had to have some other men enlarging the trail up the canyon road in order that it could get up there. So with the horses and everybody pushing and pulling, it finally got to the top. It never went down again; it sailed around the top of the island.

HS: It's probably still there.

EL: Yes, well, it was thrown into a—as I understand, I heard that the navy, whoever the personnel that was over there, dumped it in a gully, barranca.

HS: I just can't imagine how they would get it ashore because there was no raft. They couldn't get it on the pier, could they?

EL: Well, they might have. I'll tell you what they probably did. It was at shipping time, and the barge that takes the sheep out to the boat they tow out there with a winch. They could have pulled it up to the pier and pulled it over.

HS: Then they probably drove on the wet sand that was firm enough for a car. They couldn't drive in the dry sand.

EL: Oh, yes. It probably was low tide.

HS: Was it used much when it finally got up there?

EL: Oh, yes. We used it all the time. I know we went out at least once a week for ironwood, because we wanted to get a good stack of ironwood into prepare for the winter.

HS: Was there ever any trouble with it?

EL: I don't remember it ever being really cranked. They used to push it and then it would get started. I have pictures of it. Did you ever hear of the magazine *Spot* that started publication—it came out, the first issue, just before Pearl Harbor, in between? It was in November shortly before Pearl Harbor this group of men, photographers and editors of this new magazine, they'd heard about us on the island and they came over for the new magazine they called *The Spot*. I have one copy of it. It must have had very little capital and push behind it because the makeup and the paper was very cheap. I have it there, but it's all in pieces. It's disintegrated in the years. It didn't publish very long because during the war; after Pearl Harbor and all, they didn't have the circulation and it was hard to get it going. It was a picture magazine like *Life*. I suppose the idea of *The Spot* was spot pictures. In the magazine, the pictures they took of us—they had a photographer and they sent us over pictures that they used in the magazine. Then we got the magazine. I don't think Herbie ever saw the magazine; I think it came after he died.

HS: I suppose they had to bring the gasoline in drums?

EL: Oh, yes, they had drums. And there was always this business—Herbie used to say when we got all this modern equipment that when something went wrong and we'd have to call into George Hammond or one of the boats, we'd have to mend it. We couldn't go to a service station and get oil. We had to send in for it and it might be a week or two before anything came and Herbie would say, "Gosh, I wish they wouldn't bring any of this modern stuff. We got along perfectly well without it."

HS: It really was silly to bring a car to the island, wasn't it?

EL: Yes. But we could get about the island better. I remember so well during the war when the boys were stationed on the island, one day their boat went on the rocks, went on the sandspit there between the east point, on the east point across from Santa Rosa. I remember so well the young men and their boat. The night before, they came and had dinner with us. The young officers [j.g.s], oh, yes, he knew the channel. They had dinner with us and the boys went down after dinner, the ones that were going ashore and the new ones that they brought over remained here. They went back to the boat. The next day I was awakened about half past five or six when I heard voices coming up across the field yelling, "Bring us some blankets! Give us some coffee! We're shipwrecked!" So we got the old Model T or Model A and got

in there and swooped down and found them on the sandspit, stuck there well. They had to send for a tow to pull them off from San Pedro. They couldn't get off and they finally had to send for them. They were there two or three days. The cook from the boat came up and took over the kitchen for me; we had to feed all these personnel.

HS: How big a ship was she?

EL: She was one of those small, one they call those PT boats. Well, you know it was very surprising that they made these young officers so quickly. I can remember back in World War I when they were training men for the navy at Pelham Bay in New York. The men in the regular army would say, "Mother, take down your service flag; your boy's in Pelham Bay." They called them, what—three-month wonders?

HS: They called them 90-day wonders. They called them that in World War II.

EL: They did? I remember one time my brother-in-law that married my sister, he was in the navy, fought the war of the Great Lakes. He was stationed out in the Great Lakes. Are we still going?

HS: Yes. Do you want to tell about the first English mass that was celebrated on San Miguel? It was January 12, 1936.

EL: Oh, yes. Well, that was McKinley Helm, George Hammond's brother-in-law. He had married Frances Hammond, his sister. McKinley Helm was an Episcopal priest and he came over. Herbie's sister had gone around the world in 1933—it was the early spring of '34 she went around the world with some of her dear friends in New York. They stopped in San Pedro and she brought Herbie a crucifix from the Holy Land. We had it in our living room; Herbie was very happy when he received this crucifix from his sister and he put it up in our living room and told George Hammond. He said, "I'll bring my brother-in-law over and we'll have a service. You've never had a church service."

HS: Not since [Juan Rodriguez] Cabrillo was there, probably.

EL: No. So we all gathered into our living room and we brought the children in. They, of course, couldn't—it was a Communion and we had a Eucharist, and he brought over the host and we had a real service.

HS: Who was there? Do you remember?

EL: Marianne and Betsy and George Hammond and Katherine Hammond, his wife; Herbie and George and myself and David Gray were the four communicants. [This is described by Rev. Helm in guest book.] It was very impressive and it meant a great

deal to me because one thing I missed on the island was my church. But you know, we knew George and he and his mother gave us our first radio and I used to listen to the Church of the Air on Sunday morning. Then when Herbie died, we put the crucifix—it was buried with him. Did you know that?

HS: Yes, I read the account of it last night.

EL: I thought as much as I loved the crucifix, and seeing it was Herbie's and that his sister had sent it, I thought it was most appropriate; and since we couldn't have the real offices of the church, I thought that was blessed over there in the Holy Land and he should have it. Of course, you know I read the burial service for Herbie, didn't you? And Marianne went with me.

HS: Bob was there?

EL: Yes, and Marianne. Betsy didn't go. She was too upset. He was wrapped in the American flag, and the navy boys shot the salute. I don't know how, what the traditional volley is, the conventional tribute to those that have fallen in the line of duty. But Herbie did on the island; he never shirked a duty while he was there.
(pause)

HS: Do you have a guest book that goes up to 1942?

EL: Yes, I have. It isn't [complete]. We have July 1941 and we have February 1942, when Ray King Wood, USCG 41, San Pedro, called; of Waverly, Ohio. And then on March first—

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: DON MEADOWS

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: February 13, 1970

SUBJECT: City of Orange plaza tour

Orange County historian Phi Brigandi provided the editorial additions found in the footnotes processing the transcript in 2010.

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Don Meadows in his car on the Orange Plaza. We are going to do a local tour of the Plaza and Don will describe what he remembers about the buildings here. This is February 13—in fact, it's Friday the thirteenth, 1970. Would you like to start, Don?

DM: Okay. Well, perhaps I could start out by saying that I came to Orange in 1903 and grew up in this town, and so what I'm going to talk about this morning is the Plaza as I remember it in 1903, which would be about sixty-seven years ago. We are parked in the northwest corner of the Plaza Square, right in front of, I guess it's 59 Plaza Square.

HS: The entrance to the upstairs building⁴ [at NW angle] is 58 Plaza.

DM: It is? Well, I think probably it was the one right in the corner, because that was the location of the old *Orange News*, which was published by a man named James Fullerton. He was a Democrat, and there were two papers in the town and the other paper, the *Orange Post*, which my dad worked on first then later purchased, was in the opposite corner of the Plaza, the southwest corner. This is 59—or next to 59 is the location of the old *Orange News*.

HS: It must be 60 because I see a stairway that's marked 60½ that goes upstairs. The gray brick building on the corner.⁵

DM: Oh, yes, I see, and there's a number 71 on the corner next to it.⁶ Well, that was a frame building, had an old Washington handpress in it, a lot of battered type.

⁴ Jorn Block—Ed.

⁵ Gunther Building—Ed.

⁶ Masonic Temple—Ed.

HS: You're talking about number 60?

DM: Yes, probably about Number 60. Then, moving around to the right⁷—I suppose we might as well work it that way—the next number is 71. That's the stairs that go upstairs to the present Masonic Temple but in 1904 there wasn't anything in that area up until we got right to the corner of North Glassell Street where the Circle Beauty College is located now. And there was a frame building in there, a little, well, it had a false front on it, had a peaked roof but a square front and that was owned by a man named either Bonnell or Brownell.⁸ I can't remember which it was, but it was a little kind of a general store. The Brownell store, much before my time by a matter of probably ten years, was owned by a man named Crowder and when Crowder owned the store it was the site of the, or it was the location of the first robbery in Orange.⁹ That is entirely another story, which I don't know whether has been recorded or not. If it isn't, why, I've some notes on it at home. But behind this Brownell store—it was just a little place—and behind it was an open space.

HS: Excuse me. What is "behind" it? Are we still on the Plaza?

DM: We're still on the Plaza. That is, Brownell's store was on the northwest corner of Plaza Square and North Glassell Street, just a little frame building. And behind that, west of it, was an open spot, and out in the center of it—this wasn't in operation when I came here—but before that there was a well owned by a man named Ed Honey, and they supplied the town with water. No windmill, but he had a horse that would go 'round and around AND AROUND and pump the water up. That was located, now, what would probably be the Christian Science Reading Room. I can't see a number on it, but it would be just to the east of 73 Plaza Square. Of course, the *News* was in there and, incidentally, my father in 1907 with a man named George Wright bought the *Orange News* and kept it for several months, and then they sold out to Hart and Cramer and they changed it from a weekly to a daily; and that was the beginning of the *Orange Daily News*. That was back in 1907; well, Hart and Cramer took over in 1908.

HS: We might make a comment on Monroe Sharpless's office [#73]. Monroe Sharpless is the son of B. H. Sharpless who had the avocado grove on north Newport Boulevard [Tustin] near you and patented the Sharpless avocado.

DM: Oh, is he in here? I didn't know that. I never had any of that tie up at all. You see, I can remember more about the town as it was in 1903 and '04 and '05 than I can later, because I went through kindergarten and elementary school and high school here in Orange and then in 1917 I went up to Pomona College and more or less just lost contact with the town for a good thirty or forty years. There were a lot of changes that took place although the folks were still living here until 1931.

Well, I might as well stay on this corner, because this brick building that is now the Masonic Temple was built by C. B. Campbell and I don't remember the exact date it was built but it

⁷ East—Ed.

⁸ Orin K. Brownell—Ed.

⁹ It took place in 1880.—Ed.

was probably along about 1900. No, probably around 1910¹⁰, because they tore down the old Brownell store¹¹ and dug a hole in the ground. It has a basement under the building; and then either Campbell ran out of money or something happened, because that vacant basement, open basement, stood there for a year or eighteen months before they finally went ahead and finished the building. The Masons didn't buy the Campbell Block until quite some time later.¹² Incidentally, with this Campbell Block which is now the Masonic Temple, upstairs was a big room with a stage at one end. While I was in high school there were four operettas that were put on [there] and I was in each one of them.

HS: You could probably name them, then.

DM: Well, I could. The first one, I think, was *The Windmills of Holland*. No, I guess the first one was *The Merry Milkmaid*. This was a big town, you know, and the next I think was *Princess Bonnie*; my junior year I think it was *The Little Tycoon*. That's incidental. I can get all the dope at home because I saved all the programs.

Then to swing around to the left—that would be moving south, because we're parked in the northwest corner of the Plaza Square—the building that we're facing is, used to be called and was built by a man named Jorn, J-O-R-N. It was called the Jorn Block. That was put up probably, well, it's contemporary with the Campbell Block but it's also, I think, just a little bit younger by maybe a year or so.¹³ It was a good-size building, as it stands now, at least in 1917 because I remember we had a meeting upstairs here when I was in high school. But before that time—well, the car is facing west and where the Jorn Building is now, clear down to the corner, there wasn't anything at all, just an open field with one exception. Right in the middle of it was a round kiosk type of building, a bandstand. On Saturdays sometimes, when they could drum up enough people to get into it, they'd have band concerts and we'd come around and sit on the ground and listen to the band concerts. It was given by the Orange Volunteer Band. I remember one time, maybe this is a true story, but anyway, the band director after a number said, "Well, our next number is going to be 'The Stars and Stripes Forever,'" and somebody in the band pops up, pipes up and says, "We can't! I just got through playing it!" (laughter) Of course, maybe that's just a story, but I can say this much about it: it had lots of rhythm and it had a lot of noise, but whether it was really classical music I don't know.

HS: Where did people sit to hear the band concert? Was there grass?

DM: Well, there was in the winter after the weeds came up, but after a few concerts it was just bare ground. Everybody would just stand around, or they had benches over here in the Plaza and they'd sit on the benches or around on the curb. There might be another interesting thing. Up until 1908 the Plaza Square around the Plaza wasn't paved, it was just a dirt street. All of the buildings, business buildings around the Plaza, would take all their trash and stuff and bring it out into the middle of the street on the corners and every morning they'd bring out

¹⁰ It was 1912.—Ed.

¹¹ Brownell went down in 1909.—Ed.

¹² This was in 1923.—Ed.

¹³ Structure was built in 1908.—Ed.

their old papers and crates and things and burn them on the street, which was quite okay because—I remember the first automobile in town was owned by a man named Schaffert. It was an old Buick White Streak. I don't suppose he could make over ten or twelve miles an hour, but he drove around the Plaza back before it was paved and stirred up a lot of dust and things. The village cop, who was the only one, the whole police force, whose name was R. J. Fyffe and he was mounted on a bicycle and he chased out after Schaffert because Schaffert was exceeding the speed limit around the Plaza. Schaffert ran away from him. He came around here and turned here and went out West Chapman and Fyffe came pedaling back on his bicycle. Schaffert lived here in town and when he came back in town, he was cited for exceeding the speed limit.

That takes care of the Jorn Building here, which would be on the northwest corner of the Plaza Square and West Chapman Avenue, at the right angle. Right across the street from that, on the south side of West Chapman Avenue, where there is now a green building, two-story,¹⁴ that originally was the so-called Armor Block, not the one that is today because that's been greatly changed. When I was a youngster on that corner was a one-story brick building that had been built by Sam Armor during the big boom of 1888.

HS: Will you spell Armor?

DM: No *u* in it, A-R-M-O-R. His wife, Alice Armor, was the one that owned the *Orange Post* and who later was my father's partner. Dad and a man named Wright bought the *Orange News*, which was here in this corner of the Plaza Square and then in 1910 after he sold to Wright, he went into partnership with Mrs. Armor and bought a half-interest in the *Post*. Right behind on this southwest corner was this one-story, narrow, brick building where Armor, before and up to the time of the boom, had a general stationery and book store. Then during the boom he took the old frame building and moved it back into the southwest corner of the Plaza Square and turned it around so the narrow end of the building faced out on the Square. That was where the *Orange Post* was located. If I had time, I could give you a description of the interior of the old *Orange Post*, because it was really an antique. It had a Washington handpress and old wooden cases of type. That's where I more or less learned the alphabet. My dad used to let me play with the big wood type and I'd pick out the letters and try to spell things with them. That building on the corner was later bought by a man named Ainsworth.¹⁵ Next to the old Armor Building, from there west clear to the corner, was just an open lot. That was right opposite the bandstand which was on the northwest corner. From the old Armor Building on west there was nothing at all, just an open area. But behind it in the southwest corner¹⁶ was a frame building that had been moved from the corner and where the *Post* was located. Years later, the *Orange News*, Hart and Cramer, bought that corner and tore down the old frame building and built the building that's there now.¹⁷ That's where the *News* was located up until the time that Hoiles bought it and later folded it up, which was just a matter of a year or eighteen months ago.

¹⁴ The second story was added in 1907.—Ed.

¹⁵ Lewis Ainsworth bought the building in 1901.—Ed.

¹⁶ Corner of Plaza Square.—Ed.

¹⁷ This is 44 Plaza Square.—Ed.

Behind the Post Building, and I have some pictures of it, of my dad and Mrs. Armor standing out in front of it. I'm standing by my dad; I was only about seven years old. But behind that was a big area covered with pepper trees. I don't know how many there were, but there were a lot of them. They were old, old trees. They'd probably been planted about 1875 or something like that. But it was nice and shady and whenever the farmers would come in to shop in Orange, particularly on Saturdays, they would drive their teams underneath these pepper trees. I've seen fifteen or twenty wagons and surreys and buckboards and horses parked or hitched underneath these trees while the people would be in here shopping in this big town. At that time, Orange had a population of probably around a thousand people, and the whole business district was centered just around the Plaza. Mostly, there wasn't too much out here on West Chapman Avenue because as I've said, this corner where the Jorn Block is now located—and I don't know whether they call it the Jorn Block anymore or not, probably not, but Jorn was the man that built it—from there on there was nothing at all. It's where the bandstand was. Across the way in 1904 was just this one-story brick building that Armor had built during the boom of '87 and '88. Behind that was the old frame building that housed the *Orange Post* that used to be out where the brick is, here on the southwest corner.

Then, going east from the corner¹⁸ where the *Post* was located, there were two little frame buildings and there was a vacancy, an open spot, between this first little frame building and the Post Building because that's where everybody would cut through to get back to the pepper grove where the horses were located. But on the corner, starting east from this corner of the Plaza, first there was a little frame building¹⁹—and when I say little I mean small; it was probably not over ten by fifteen feet in size—in which a German by the name of Martin Lau, and his name was spelled L-A-U. He was a native of Germany and spoke with a decided German accent, and I used to go in there and stand around and watch him mend shoes and talk to him. Then right next to this Lau Building—I don't think he owned it—was another larger and little bit more modern building where Dr. D. F. Royer had his office. And to go ahead a little bit, a little later on when they modernized this corner over here, they picked up Royer's doctor's office and moved it over and put it where the Elks Building is located today.

HS: Where is that?

DM: That's on the northeast corner of Chapman and Orange. The Odd Fellows built that building, lost it, and then the Elks purchased it. It was built around 1925 or something like that. They over-expanded and couldn't make a go of it. It was built as a lodge building for the Odd Fellows, but the Elks took it over. We'll go on around on the south side of the Plaza.

HS: Just a minute. We have not come to the angle yet, have we? We're still on the west side, the southwest corner.

DM: Yes, we got to the south end of the west face of the Plaza. That's where the Post Building was located. Then we made a left-hand turn and started moving east, and moving east, first

¹⁸ Along Plaza Square—Ed.

¹⁹ At 40 Plaza Square—Ed.

was Martin Lau, the shoemaker, and next to that was D. F. Royer, the doctor's office, and then from there on to the corner of South Glassell was more or less open because back probably fifty or sixty feet away from the sidewalk, both the sidewalk on the north and the sidewalk on the east would be on Glassell Street, was a two-story building that had been built probably about 1875 or 1880. It was made out of, the same type of structure as the old McPherson home and two or three others, made out of sand and cement that was brought from Belgium by sailing ship to San Pedro. And also mixed with it was lime that was burned up here in Limestone Canyon by the Shrewsburys. It was a two-story hotel, that was what it was originally built for, but I don't know whether the upstairs was occupied or not.

Downstairs was the location of the public library, and I can tell you some stories about that, because I got hushed up in the library more than once by a dear old lady named Mrs. A. C. Field, who was not a trained librarian but she was a deserving widow. And so the city hired her to be the bookkeeper. She was very conscientious, rode herd on the type of reading that people should read. The library wasn't very extensive. I doubt whether they had over 2,500 volumes, but nevertheless, it was the best there was.

Then the library was located in that old hotel building on the ground floor. There was kind of an open spot in there because as I've said, this hotel stood back from the street, both from the Plaza Square and from South Glassell Street, probably fifty or sixty feet. It was just a little bit lower than street level because I remember you used to have to step down and go over across and then maybe take one step to get up into the building. That was on the corner of South Glassell and the Plaza Square. Later on, the building that's standing there now—I don't know the exact date, it was probably around 1907 or '08²⁰—the present building was built by a man named Cuddeback. It was called the Cuddeback Block; of course, before that was built they tore down the hotel. This Cuddeback Block is there on the southwest corner of South Glassell Street and Plaza Square.

HS: That's the building where the Radio Shack is on the ground floor now? Did you say southeast corner?

DM: Southwest corner.

HS: Oh, that's the beige-colored building.²¹

DM: That's right. The Radio Shack now is on the southeast corner. And I'm moving around now, starting²² on the southwest and I'm going to go down South Glassell Street.

HS: Just a minute. What is the vintage of this building that now stands on the southwest corner of Glassell [and Plaza Square]?

DM: That is the old Cuddeback Building. Of course, Roy Edwards later on bought it²³ and I don't know who owns it now. It's probably owned by the Edwards estate.

²⁰ It was built in 1905.—Ed.

²¹ This is 100-104 S. Glassell.—Ed.

²² Starts at 101 S. Glassell—Ed.

HS: I'm looking at the design and it's fairly modern. They must have changed the windows. They're not old windows.

DM: Well, it was modernized here in the past two years. Yes, they did change the windows. It was really modernized extensively, just within the last two or three years. It's a frame building, but it's got a false stone front on it made out of cement slabs that are about three inches thick. They're just nailed to the wooden frame inside. It stood idle for a number of years up until a few years ago because it was in such poor condition that it wasn't safe. There've been all kinds of things in it. One of the first stores that was in it, probably along about 1908 or '09, was a book store and I don't know who owned that.²⁴ After the Cuddeback Block was built—I'm speaking of the Cuddeback Block. I think there was a bookstore on the corner, but I'm not sure of that. This was going up to about 1908 or '09. Moving south on Glassell Street, staying on the west side of the street, the next store in the Cuddeback Block was a clothing store run by a man named A. J. Klunk, K-L-U-N-K. (interruption in recording)

We're down on South Glassell now. When the hotel was on the corner, there was quite an open spot there when the Cuddeback Building was built, and at the same time, in 1908, Ehlen and Grote built a building next to the Cuddeback Building that came clear on down to the alley.

HS: Where is the alley, parallel with Glassell or perpendicular?

DM: No, it's an alley that runs into South Glassell Street. It's still there. I'll take you around and show you where the alley was, because I guess it's still there. Well, anyway, to go back, I'll tell you about the Ehlen and Grote Building. They dug a basement with the old pick and shovel and wagons. They'd haul the dirt away by wagons. I don't know where they took it; I think it was down by Santiago Creek. Anyway, then they built the most modern building in Orange, which is still standing; that was called the Ehlen and Grote Block. And they had a department store; I believe there's still a clothing store in there. There was a little while ago. That was the clothing department. Next to that was the grocery department and then next to that was the hardware department. And, I believe ever since the building was built in 1908—of course Ehlen and Grote went out of business years ago,²⁵ and the separate stores were sold off to individuals—I believe there's still a hardware store in the original site, right next to the alley. But of course, Ehlen and Grote has nothing to do with it now. Before that—and I'll take you around and show you the old, now-called Olive Hotel—that used to be called the Tener Block. That building is still standing over here on Olive Street; it's probably the oldest building in Orange now. It was built sometime about the middle of 1870. It was on the [later] site of the Ehlen and Grote Building which is standing today, running down from the open spot around the hotel to the alley.

²³ Samson bought it in 1907.—Ed.

²⁴ The Orange Bookstore was owned by I. M. Bird.—Ed.

²⁵ Ehlen and Grote closed in 1938.—Ed.

I think probably what I ought to do, Helen, is to draw a diagram of the town and locate these different places because it will make it a little bit more vivid. When the Ehlen and Grote Block was built and the Cuddeback Block was built, they tore down the old hotel. They used to call it the Adobe Hotel; it wasn't. They picked up the Tener Block and moved it over here on Olive Street where it is now.

HS: When you say "block," you don't mean block; you mean a solid building.

DM: This was a frame building. But everything was a block, was called a block that had more than one store in it.

HS: Not a building that occupies a whole block.

DM: Oh, no. It was just a long building. I thought if we had time, and I've been intending to do this for years—I have a tapeline here and I thought I'd go over and measure the old building, because it's not going to last long. You know, the Palmyra Hotel out here is being torn down now. They started on it yesterday. And that was a boomtown hotel.

Then in the Tener Block—that's what they called it, because it was one of the biggest buildings in Orange. When I came to Orange in 1903 and '04, that's where the post office was located.²⁶ I can't remember too well, but I believe next to it, in that same building—it sounds like a big building but it probably wasn't over seventy or eighty feet long—there was a shoe store, there was a rooming house upstairs. That came to the alley. Then there was a spot in there, about two city lots. This was where the—I think they call it the Friedemann Building; it used to be the Colonial Theater—was just a vacant lot. And next to that vacant lot, moving south now on the west side of the street, was the Dobner Block. It was a brick building that was probably built during the boom days.²⁷ The first Orange Union High School, the first year of its existence,²⁸ the classes were in the Dobner Block and this vacant lot on the outside between the Dobner Block and the alley was the size of two city lots and that was the playground for the high school. This was in 1905, because it the latter part of 1905 and in 1906 they built the building up here which is now Chapman College. The old original building of Orange High School was moved around to the back²⁹ and Chapman College has a lot of new buildings, but the original high school building is still out there on the Chapman College campus.

Next to the Dobner Block there were some shabby places, but I can't remember—I think one of them was a bakery and another, I believe, was a doctor's office, I think Dr. J. W. Jones.³⁰ These were just little shacks, up and down board affairs. And then on the northwest corner of South Glassell and Almond Avenue was the blacksmith shop (interruption) run by a man named Joseph Beck, B-E-C-K. He was German, had a very, very prosperous business and he hired a couple or three blacksmiths to work for him. He had a big business. Then, across the

²⁶ No, it moved out circa 1901.—Ed.

²⁷ This was in 1887.—Ed.

²⁸ First year was 1903-04, 1904-05.—Ed.

²⁹ In 1923—Ed.

³⁰ His office was at 162 S. Glassell.

street on Almond Avenue on down towards the south, that's where the residences began. We lived in that block way down almost to Palmyra Street. Also in that same city block, about the middle of the block, was a house that's now gone. It was the home of Jacob Kogler, who was the minister of the Lutheran church.³¹ St. John's Lutheran Church was located on the northeast corner of Almond and Olive Street.

I'm going around that block, because Beck was on the corner and then right behind on the northeast corner of Olive and Almond was the German church, with a big, high steeple, and then north of it was an open spot with a little two-room, or maybe it was one-room, frame building and that was the German Lutheran school, out there in that open spot. Then, moving north on the east side of Olive Street, came to this grove of pepper trees that I told you about. Oh, there was a frame building in there alongside the pepper trees, placed on Olive, that was a cabinet shop. As a youngster I used to go in there and get shavings. And they used to make a lot of things out of cedar, because I used to go over and get the cedar sawdust and put it in my pocket because it smelled nice. I was about six or seven years old at the time. Well, that takes in that whole block over there.

HS: I find it very interesting that since you have known the Plaza and most of the buildings had been standing for some time when you first knew it, that this was always the urban center of Orange. People didn't live around the Plaza.

DM: No, they never did. This was always the business, the center, everything radiated out from the Plaza, usually only for a distance of a block north, east, south, and west. Of course, the blocks east and west of the Plaza are short blocks. Those north and south are long blocks. Well, better shut her off; I want to smoke my pipe. (pause)

Ready? Now we'll still start on the Plaza Square, but we'll take the block, the city block on the east side of South Glassell from the Plaza south, and we'll start on the southeast corner of the Plaza Square and South Glassell Street. What is that building now?

HS: It's called the Radio Shack.

DM: All right, it's called the Radio Shack now, but that was where Ehlen and Grote's store used to be until they built their own building over on the other side of the street in 1908. When I came to Orange that's where Ehlen and Grote were located. They had a department store, groceries on the corner, and next to that was hardware and—well, they had some clothing in there someplace. I don't remember just where.

HS: Would you call it a general merchandise store? Horse collars and—

DM: Well, yes, because they catered to the trade of this district. And, incidentally, Ehlen and Grote started in business out at the town of McPherson. They had a little old frame building out there.

HS: Can you date that?

³¹ Kogler lived at 226 S. Glassell.—Ed.

DM: Approximately.³² It was in the '80s, early '80s. Then they moved into Orange from McPherson. They were right there on the tracks. I've got a picture of their store building.

HS: Why did they move? Did McPherson die?

DM: Oh, not necessarily, but there was more business in Orange. They were progressive; they were German and they were progressive merchants. And so they left their little shack out there at McPherson and came up and took over this corner. That used to be called—I think a man named Beach built it before my time.³³ When Ehlen and Grote were there we called it the Ehlen and Grote Building, but I think it was owned by a man named M. L. Willits. I'm not too sure about that. But anyway, that was *the* big store in Orange. That was a department store, general merchandising. And on Saturday night this Plaza, oh boy, it was hot! They parked their wagons and surreys and things right around here, right where we're parked now, and there were hitching posts along here.

HS: The merchants stayed open Saturday night?

DM: Oh, yes, until nine o'clock. That was the big night of the week. And then at Christmas—I'll get to the Plaza after a while—at Christmas we used to have Christmas carols and when I was in high, over here in the Plaza underneath that big star pine, there was a platform built and the glee club would come down and sing Christmas carols.

Well, to move on down South Glassell Street on the east side of the street—I don't remember exactly the sequence, but I think next to the Ehlen and Grote Building was a barber shop run by a barber and his two sons, named E. E. Manatt.³⁴ "Shorty" Manatt was one of the barbers, the son of the owner, and his sister—I forget her first name now—and I were in school together. Then moving on south, came to a—and we can spot these buildings now by the street numbers; we ought to do that—came to a building that covered two city lots, or two business lots. When I first came here it had a stage at one end and that was kind of an assembly hall. It was kind of a rickety building, no seats in it, but they'd haul in chairs and things, and that was the, well, where they'd have amateur dramatic productions and concerts and things of that kind. That was not exactly a social center, but it didn't last very long after I came here, because then I forgot who it was that leased it and turned it into one of the first garages in Orange. They tore out the back so they could bring in their old one-lung automobiles.

HS: It was never a public building then? It was always privately owned?

DM: It was always privately owned, but it was always used as a public building, at least the first year or so that I was here in Orange. That's where they used to have concerts and elocution readings and things like that, but it didn't last very long. I forget who took it over and turned it into a repair shop for bicycles and automobiles.

³² P. W. Ehlen began business in 1887.—Ed.

³³ It was built in 1874.—Ed.

³⁴ Shop was at 111 S. Glassell.—Ed.

Then moving on south from that, there were some frame buildings. I don't remember too much about them until it came to a brick building that is still standing—and I think that's the one now occupied by the Army and Navy Store. We'll have to check that and see.³⁵

HS: There's no alley on the east side?

DM: There's no alley on the east side. Next to this, what I think is now the Army and Navy Store, was a vacant lot, and later on there was a young fellow that was going to medical school by the name of Marsden. Doc S. A. Marsden, who later became a doctor and practiced here in Orange, as a young medical student rented that vacant lot and put a wooden fence, a high board fence across the front and the back, with a little building up on stilts out on the Glassell Street end, hung a sheet on the far end and that was the first movie theater in Orange.³⁶ Admission was five cents, and they had five pictures every night. Each one of them ran about eight or ten minutes. Really flickers! He was there for quite some time. Then later, they built across the street next to the alley where the school grounds had been, they built what was called the Colonial Theater. That was a much better one. He was quite successful; in fact, he made his way through medical school by operating this movie theater. He would run it at night. I think he went to the USC [University of Southern California] medical school and he'd go in on the train into Los Angeles in the morning, come back late in the afternoon from Los Angeles on the train, and open up his theater and show his flickers in the evening and then, after that, while the movies were going on, I can remember one evening at least, he was away back in the corner underneath the projection booth, which was up on stilts. There was a little faint light shining down. He was sitting back there underneath the booth studying. (laughter) That was just about opposite what's now, I think, called the Friedemann Building. The Friedemann Building originally was the Colonial Theater, which was built³⁷ on the site of the school grounds. And I believe Doc Marsden's first theater was right across the street from it. Then next to that was a frame building³⁸ where J. P. Boring had his sporting goods store. The reason I remember that so well, it was a frame building and along about 1904, about the first year or so I was here, one Sunday afternoon the Boring Building caught on fire. There was no fire department in Orange then, and the building was completely consumed because there was no way—but the fire didn't spread because there were vacant lots on each side of it. But Boring had the guns and ammunition and everything and as the fire got hotter and hotter, the ammunition started to pop. It was really quite some excitement. The whole town turned out, all of two or three hundred people.

HS: Were you there?

DM: Oh, yes, yes. I couldn't get close to it because my dad grabbed my arm and dragged me back a ways, but I saw the building burn. That was Boring's sporting goods store. He sold guns and ammunition and bicycles and things like that. And that fire was the reason for the

³⁵ This is 131 S. Glassell.—Ed.

³⁶ This theater without electricity was at 137 S. Glassell.—Ed.

³⁷ Built in 1914.—Ed.

³⁸ This is 141 S. Glassell.—Ed.

organization of the Orange Volunteer Fire Department. When we get around further on the Plaza, I'll tell you about the first location of the Orange Fire Department.

We'll go on down South Glassell Street on the east side. Next to the Boring Building where the fire was, I don't, can't remember—oh, yes, I think there was another vacant lot and then there was another little shack where a man named W. M. Milligan had a barber shop.³⁹ Then, going south, next to the barber shop I believe there was another vacant lot and then there was a residence, a two-story residence that I think was owned by C. B. Bradshaw. I'm not sure, but we used to call it the Bradshaw house. I don't think he lived there. I know he didn't because he lived up here on North Glassell. That house, two-story, brown, very tall building painted brown, stood there for a long, long time and I think it was of boom times. Maybe it went back to the 1870s. I'm not sure. You see, Orange was laid out in '71. Then next to that was just a vacant lot.

HS: Was someone occupying this house?

DM: Oh, yes, it was a home.

HS: That breaks the pattern then, because that is within a block of the Plaza.

DM: That's right. It was a residence, but I don't know who lived there. Then from there on down to this corner here was vacant. There was nothing in here at all.

HS: What is that street?

DM: This is Almond, and this is South Glassell. As I say, there was nothing as I remember it on the northeast corner of Almond and South Glassell. But then it moved on over east, and it was vacant until you got over on the corner of Almond and South Orange. This is Orange Street. And there was the Baptist church which is still standing and has been highly modified. The Baptist church was on the northwest corner. Then right across the street from it was a frame building that, not at this location, but it was the first school building in Orange and it had been moved in from the school grounds way up here on Olive and Sycamore on the north side of town. It had been moved down here and was used as a kindergarten, and that's where I went to kindergarten.

HS: Public kindergarten?

DM: It was a public kindergarten, public school. And right next to it going north was a vacant lot. That was the playground, where we had a school garden and used to raise poppies because that seemed to be about all that would grow in there.

Then going up on the west side of Orange Street towards the Plaza, after the Baptist church on the corner, then it was all residences right on up till we got up to the corner of East Chapman Avenue and Orange. That would be this block right in here. (indicating on map) Swinging around now on West Chapman, or on East Chapman, and I believe you can see the building. Yes, you can. See where Rexall store is? That, and on the corner where the travel

³⁹ This is 147 S. Glassell.—Ed.

agency is now,⁴⁰ when I was a youngster where the travel agency is and that would be on the southwest corner of Orange and East Chapman, was a grocery store. I forget who ran the grocery store.⁴¹ Oh, and incidentally, to go way back to this corner here where the Armor Building was on the southwest corner of West Chapman, that was a grocery store, too, when Dad had the newspaper back there in the corner. There were three or four grocery stores in town. Of course, Ehlen and Grote was a big one. That was the mercantile center.

HS: Were they a credit store? Did they give the farmers credit?

DM: Yes. Oh, lots of it. They had to.

HS: I was just thinking maybe the small ones gave credit and the big one didn't.

DM: Oh, they all gave credit. Most of the stores in Orange gave credit, credit in a very, well, not exactly unusual way, but there was a lot of barter going on. I remember one time at Ehlen and Grote's, I forget the name of the rancher now, came in and got out in front and his wife brought in several pounds of butter and several dozen eggs, and he unloaded a couple of bales of hay out in back of Ehlen and Grote. It was a kind of a barter business; but all the stores ran credit and I don't think there was very much lost because everybody, this was a very tight little community.

HS: People were solid citizens, but they were ranchers and they depended upon seasonal income.

DM: That's right. And they'd pay up when they could sell their crops. The orange was just beginning to be a good crop. Most of it around here was a kind of a combination, mixed up: oranges, apricots and English walnuts. And then the orange was the best crop and apricots and walnuts were finally squeezed out.

HS: The land got too expensive to raise walnuts on. I remember when that happened to my father [in Tustin].

DM: Walnuts went out first and apricots were next and then the orange took over. Coming around on East Chapman Avenue now, on the south side of Chapman, there on the corner was a grocery store. That's where the travel bureau is now. Next to the grocery store, where Kellar Watson's drugstore⁴² is now, that building, or that part of it, was, you might say, an open front because back about thirty feet or so, or fifteen or twenty feet, was the post office, L-shaped inside the building with the mailboxes along the east side and the windows up facing the street. The post office was back in the building, although they took over the whole lower building. And then, next to that, to the post office, was a barber shop and a real estate office;⁴³ and between the post office and the barber shop and real estate office—I can't remember which came first. We're moving west now—I believe the barber shop was first and then the real estate office. They were just little holes in the wall.

⁴⁰ This is 120 E. Chapman.—Ed.

⁴¹ In 1913 it was Coones & Co.—Ed.

⁴² This is 114-16 E. Chapman.—Ed.

⁴³ These are 104-06 E. Chapman.—Ed.

HS: Do you remember the operators?

DM: Yes. I think a barber named Todhunter⁴⁴ had the barber shop; and I don't remember—yes, I do too. J. P. Small had the real estate office. And between the post office and the barber shop, or real estate, was the stairs that went upstairs. Right at the head of the stairs was a dental office, Doc Domann⁴⁵ had his office. I think he came in a little bit later than when I came here. I don't remember what was up there at the time. But at the head of the stairs and on the left was the big lodge hall. That building was built by the Odd Fellows along probably in the 1880s.

HS: It's not standing now.

DM: Oh, yes, that's the same building; it was built by the Odd Fellows. Of course, it's been somewhat remodeled. It's owned by Watson now. Where the Rexall store is was the post office, and then later Watson moved in when the post office was moved. Frankly, I forget where it was moved to. As I remember first when we came here, the post office was in the Tener Building; then it moved over to the Odd Fellows Building, and then from there I can't remember where it moved to. But Watson bought the building and put in a drugstore; it's been a drugstore for at least fifty or sixty years, fifty years or more.⁴⁶ And then on the corner—

HS: Have we come up—I can see a building called Joe's something-or-other, and then one S. B. something.⁴⁷ Have we covered that space?

DM: There's still a barber shop in there. That's where Todhunter was.

HS: Oh, that's Joe's Barber Shop. (read on angle)

DM: Yes. Well, then maybe there was another building in there—where the Rexall [Drugstore] is was the post office—and maybe where Joe's Barber Shop is was a separate building. It looks like it, doesn't it?

HS: Yes, it does. I think I can see two walls, not a common wall.

DM: So, I don't remember. But I think that's where the barber shop was and I think that building was cut in half, and half was J. P. Small's real estate office and the other half was Todhunter's Barber Shop.⁴⁸

HS: There is a small building on the corner now.

DM: Yes, that was there and that was occupied by a dry goods store run by a man named Bibber, B-I-B-B-E-R, and Bibber was an old-timer. He had a walnut orchard out on East Palmyra

⁴⁴ Not correct. See interview OH 3625.2 done on Feb. 21, 1970.—Ed.

⁴⁵ Dr. A. H. Domann—Ed.

⁴⁶ In 1910 the post office moved to the Odd Fellows Building; in 1926 the post office moved to 223 W. Chapman. Watson opened his drugstore in 1901.—Ed.

⁴⁷ S. B. Edwards.—Ed.

⁴⁸ This is not the correct location for Todhunter.—Ed.

Avenue. The reason I'm stressing him is because there's an interesting story. When I was a youngster he was in business here. Bibber's Dry Goods Store was on the corner and two or three years later, which would put it along about 1908 or '09, Bibber's nephew whose name was Noel came out to Orange from Boston. He was really completely out of step with the town because he was from a big city, and he dressed the part and was very sophisticated. But back in Boston it wasn't Bibber, it was Van Bibber.

HS: Isn't there a street?

DM: Yes, that's Van Bibber Street and out there was the old Bibber orchard.

HS: I was wondering why you weren't calling them Van Bibber.

DM: Well, after Noel Bibber came out from Boston, then the family took on the Van. It used to be Bibber's Dry Goods Store, but then after Noel came out they sold the store, and I don't remember what went in there.—Yes, I do too. I don't think he owned the building; he might have. But he went out of business downtown and went out and built a beautiful home out there on East Palmyra; and Van Bibber Street now runs right through where the house was. If you go out East Palmyra, do you remember seeing two great big camphor trees right on the road? Gee, they're immense. They have trunks two or three feet in diameter. Those were one each side of the drive that went up into the Van Bibber home. They tore down the old shack. I remember they lived in a little three- or four-room up-and-down board early California house, and after he closed up here and after Noel came out, why, they tore down the old place and built a modern California bungalow, one of the kind, you know, with slab sides, stained redwood siding with a big sloping roof.

HS: Broad eaves on the first and second floors.

DM: Oh, yes, a really 1910 California bungalow. It was really considered to be one of the finest homes in Orange, and it was. It was very nice; it was only torn down about twenty years ago or so. And he owned that whole, owned what are now about three city residential blocks. It was all in walnuts. The reason I'm stressing the Van Bibbers's corner, or Van Bibber, is because someone said, I remember very well—and I didn't know exactly what they meant—but I remember Noel Bibber with his mincing step and his very advanced, modern dress, modern for its time, always impeccably dressed, very nicely combed. I remember someone saying when he went through the Plaza, "Well, it's fortunate that some culture has come to Orange." (laughter) You can take that for what it's worth; but it's an interesting little side observation on the mores of Orange.

Bibber was here on the corner of, that would be the southeast corner of East Chapman and the Plaza Square. Then right behind the building here—you see, we're right here on this corner now—and right behind it was a vacant space for quite a ways. (looking at map) We're back at the Plaza now. Well, that takes in these two blocks.

HS: Now have we covered the angle, this southeast angle of the Plaza?

DM: Well, Bibber was here on the corner, southeast corner, and behind that was a vacancy. It was vacant when I was a youngster but later—I don't know whether the savings and loan actually built the building, but they moved into it. Now, (pointing across Plaza) you can't see it back there, but that's where the Assistance League has their [thrift shop]. That's the old savings and loan office building.⁴⁹

HS: Then behind the store here, going west toward South Glassell, what was that?

DM: Nothing. Behind Bibber's store there was nothing.

HS: There was another store here [e. end of Glassell].

DM: This was vacant and Ehlen and Grote was here on this corner. This [plat] isn't drawn right. You see, on this side⁵⁰ there's an alley that runs clear through here and Ehlen and Grote went back to the alley. The alley's still in there; but Ehlen and Grote went here and then Van Bibber here on the corner and this was vacant [between] here. I'm speaking now of the period 1904, '05 and '06.

HS: Let me turn this off. (pause and move)

DM: We're on North Olive Street, just off of West Chapman and the old Olive Hotel, as it's called now, is on the west side of Olive, about a hundred yards north of West Chapman.

HS: It's number 136.

DM: That's right, 136. That building in toto was picked up from over here on South Glassell and moved around here to this location in 1908.⁵¹ That is the oldest building. I think there might be a sign on the front saying 1876, which is probably correct, but I wouldn't want to swear to it.

HS: The sign over the door says, "Olive Hotel, oldest hotel in Orange County."

DM: That's true, because there was a hotel built in Santa Ana before this one was built, but it either burnt down or was torn down later on. This is the oldest one. This end of the building [south] was next to the open spot where the old hotel was located, there on South Glassell. The post office, when I first remember it, was in that lower right-hand corner, facing it.

HS: I think you said there were some changes made, didn't you, in the building when it was converted to a hotel?

DM: No. It hasn't changed a bit.

HS: It had those bay windows, four bay windows across the front? But it was not a hotel then?

⁴⁹ The savings and loan building was built in 1926 as temporary offices for First National Bank while their new building at 101 E. Chapman was under construction.—Ed.

⁵⁰ South side of Plaza Square—Ed.

⁵¹ It was moved in December 1907.—Ed.

DM: Yes, it was a hotel. You see, there was a hotel upstairs, and businesses [below]. Notice there are no display windows or anything. You'd just go inside. They all had screen doors; and the stairs is right there in the center. That was a rooming house, or a hotel. (pause and move to the Palmyra Hotel, now being demolished)

HS: Now you can start talking.

DM: Okay. When the Palmyra Hotel was in its heyday in 1888, it was so popular that the rooms were always filled up, so Culver, C. Z. Culver, who built this building, built the hotel, [also] built an annex and we'll go down and take a look at the annex now. I want to get a picture of it. That was this white building right here. E. T. Lee, who was a prominent merchant in Orange in the early days, lived in this house here on the corner.⁵² Of course, this was back sixty-five years ago and I don't know who lives in it now.

HS: They've taken all the gingerbread off or covered it up.

DM: It's been modernized quite a bit. There used to be another house in here where the green residence is, but it was torn down a long time ago. Another interesting thing: you see, when Orange was laid out in '71 and—wait, I want to stop here and take a picture. Now there is the Palmyra annex.

HS: We're near the corner of Washington and—Olive, is it?

DM: No, this is Washington and this is Grand.

HS: Then that house [annex] is 265 South Grand.

DM: Two sixty-five South Grand, which was the Culver Annex.⁵³

HS: Has it been moved or was it always there.

DM: No, it was always there. (conversation) When Culver, in '87 built the hotel, he tried to take business away from the old town of Orange which was down at the regular Plaza. These four houses here on these corners are relatively new houses, because Culver laid out a plaza right here in the center.

HS: This is the corner of Washington and Olive.

DM: Washington and Olive.⁵⁴ He laid out Washington. He owned these four blocks in here, city blocks, with the hotel. This was called the Culver Tract in here. And the big hotel and this was an old, well, not too old, it's only forty years old and that's young—Culver laid out the plaza in the center here and that used to have a tower in it, and when I was a youngster we used to come up—we lived over here on Center Street and we'd come up Glassell Street and cut through the old plaza and in back of Lee's house and cut right straight across through people's yards. Nobody cared, because it was all friends, you know, and it was a small town.

⁵² House is at 205 E. Palmyra.—Ed.

⁵³ It is not Grand but Orange Avenue where the annex was located.—Ed.

⁵⁴ Again, I believe Olive should be Orange.—Ed.

You see, the boom busted in the latter part of 1888 and after it broke this plaza stood here just as a weed patch until along about 1910 or '12 and then the city condemned it and straightened out Orange Street and straightened out Washington that crossed here, and then those four houses, this one and this one here, and well, on the four corners. Those are new houses; they were built about 1910. You can tell that by the style of architecture. And you know, that's a very interesting thing; there's the contrast between 1910 and 1888, right there side by side.

HS: Two fifty-seven and 265 South Orange.

DM: Two fifty-seven is the new one, but 265 is the old Palmyra Hotel Annex.

HS: Did he make any effort to decorate his plaza? Did he have a fountain and plantings?

DM: No fountain, but it was planted. It had trees; I think it had some pepper trees. See, pepper trees were very, very popular back sixty years ago.

HS: No sign of any of the original plantings, I guess.

DM: No, the last original planting was cut down here about the last ten or twelve years. Right down here on the corner where that automobile's making a turn, there used to be a Monterey cypress, a great big one.

HS: I see a stump over there that's covered completely with ivy, on the left side [of Orange looking north] just this side of the tall palm tree. It looks like the remains of an old tree.

DM: Oh yes, probably. Probably. It might have been a Monterey cypress because they were very popular. See where that old brick building is, there on the northeast corner? That's where the old kindergarten was, corner of Almond and Orange, on the northeast corner. (conversation) That brick building, I think there's a dentist in there by the name of Dr. Nichols, but that brick building is right on the site of the first kindergarten, and that's where I went to kindergarten. Then those stucco buildings down there, that whole area in there where the big cross is, that's the site of the first Methodist church. It used to be an up-and-down (board) building with a steeple.

HS: It looks like the southeast corner.

DM: No, it would be the northeast corner, between Almond—on the east side in the middle of the block.⁵⁵ And of course, the Methodist parsonage was on this side. The minister, back about 1910, was a man named Rev. W. W. Cookman and he had a son that was a year or so older, and I used to roam around with Al Cookman, the minister's son. He was a typical minister's son; he taught me a lot of things. (laughter followed by conversation)

HS: We've come down to watch the tearing down of the Palmyra Hotel and we've been walking around the hotel, without the tape recorder. Now I'm going to ask Don to talk about the Palmyra and tell some of the things he was just telling us.

⁵⁵ Along S. Orange Street.—Ed.

DM: Well, the hotel was built in 1887 by a man named C. Z. Culver, who came out to California from Palmyra, New York. He owned these four city blocks in here, clear down to Almond, clear on up to the next street⁵⁶ and two blocks on each side of South Glassell. In 1887 he built the old hotel that's being torn down now. I don't see a single one of the pepper trees left, but there used to be a row of pepper trees along here on the south side of Palmyra Avenue between the sidewalk and the curb, and they ran clear down. Way down there on the corner of Grand where that Monterey cypress is standing, that's been there ever since I can remember. That was probably planted along about '87.

HS: Do you suppose what's-his-name planted it, the man who built the hotel?

DM: Probably, because, you see, he owned these four blocks in here and this was the C. Z. Culver tract. Culver, like a lot of people did at that time, over expanded during the boom of the '80s and he lost this on a foreclosure. It was sold at auction. I don't know who bought it; easy to run down. Anyway, for a long time, when I was a youngster, on Sundays we used to come over here to the Palmyra Hotel for dinner, and it was a nice place to eat.

HS: What kind of food did they have? Family style, big tables?

DM: Yes, I think it was family style.

HS: So many of our old hotels did serve that way, things put on the table in big dishes and you helped yourself.

DM: Seems to me that was the situation. I was just thinking of it as food and I didn't care how it was served. There was plenty of it, I know that. Then as I told you a little while ago, up until about 1910 the hotel ran back about another sixty feet south, and there were rooms upstairs. There was a great big dining room and they used to clear out the tables and have dances in here. In that corner, and that would be the northwest corner of the hotel, was the parlor, and I've got some pictures of the parlor. Typically Victorian, with tassels on the drapes and, not wicker chairs, but those fragile little things, you know, horrible looking. But, the parlor was on that side. And I don't remember what was on this corner [sw] because we'd go in the front and then the dining room extended right straight on back to the south. The croquet ground was right out here [west of hotel]. You know, up until about six months ago, there was a filling station here on the corner.⁵⁷

HS: That's right. I wonder what's going to come here next. Read it in the paper tonight.

DM: I don't know. I don't think anything's going to be done with it because this was a firetrap and I have a hunch—this isn't in the paper—but I think the county came around and said, "You get rid of it," because it's a fire hazard. You see, it's been abandoned for years.

HS: I was thinking of redevelopment of the land. But if it's not the owner tearing it down, maybe he doesn't have any plans.

⁵⁶ Culver Avenue.—Ed.

⁵⁷ Refers to southeast corner of Glassell and Palmyra.—Ed.

DM: Probably it will come in time. Things are pretty dead here in Orange now. Real estate isn't moving at all, in this part of town. Out on Tustin Avenue, that's hot, but down here—
(conversation)

Well, James Fullerton lived here in this house on the corner that's been modernized, stuccoed over. It's on the southeast corner of Palmyra and Center Street. Here at 344 South Center Street was the house that Dad built in 1905, this house right in here.

HS: Oh. Does it have the same outlines?

DM: No, it was built and it was added onto three different times. The first unit was where these kids are, with that bay window and the porch. That was only two rooms and then a year or so later, Dad built on two rooms in the back and then two or three years later, he built this ell that runs out here to the south. We moved in here in the latter part of 1905 to 1906, and we lived here all the time I was in school, even through high school. When I was a freshman in college, we were living here. I joined the navy during World War I and just before Christmas I got a few days leave of absence and I came home and stopped in at Dad's print shop down here on Orange Street. I got in in the morning and so when we started out for lunch, we usually made a right turn and started off in this direction, and Dad said, "No, we're going to go this way." I just followed along; I thought he had some business over on the north side. So we went up to 231 South Grand Street. It was rather a new house, and Dad said, "This is where we're living now." He'd sold this place and bought that one, so that was that. That was during World War I. See that pergola out in front? I built that in 1914, when I was a freshman in high school. Gosh, it's even falling over now; it's a little out of plumb. The scallops were put on later. There used to be an orange tree right out in front. One of the first avocado trees that I ever saw was located right here where this young tree is. That orange tree [in the yard] was planted after we sold the place.

HS: How deep is the lot?

DM: Fifty feet wide and 135 feet deep. It goes back to an alley. On the roof—and that isn't the original roof because those asbestos shales have been put on it. My mother insisted that she had to have a fireplace and so after the house was built, that chimney there, there's a fireplace down below it, one of these dinky little things about eighteen inches wide, but it was still a fireplace. On the roof of this house I had about a twenty-foot tower and way in the back of the lot I had a telephone pole with another line on it and in 1912, '13 and '14 I had one of the first radio stations in Orange County. There were only three of us. Johnny Waters in Santa Ana had one. Does that name mean anything to you, Johnny Waters?⁵⁸

HS: No, I don't think so.

DM: He had one and Earl Cossairt had one out here on the west side of Orange and I had the third one.

HS: Spell Earl's last name.

⁵⁸ John E. Waters was born in 1916 and lived at 2002 N. Broadway.—Ed.

DM: C-O-S-S-A-I-R-T. Soon after I built this one—I was in grammar school when I built it—one time I talked to Johnny Waters, two and a half miles away, and that was something!

HS: There was no matter of licensing, was there or anything of that sort? They weren't even called "hams" in those days, I suppose.

DM: No, there weren't any. That was an old crystal detector and an automobile, you know— And now, 376 South Center Street, that house was moved in, and that's the old Jubb place, J-U-B-B.⁵⁹ I don't know where the house was originally located, but Jubb was one of the early founders of Orange. It was in closer to town, that is, closer to the Plaza. In 1909 there was a German named John G. Heinig. He came out here from Chicago and bought this corner lot. This was all an orange grove; this was part of the old—

HS: This looks like an old orange tree, right beside us.

DM: Yes, this is, that's one of the originals. It goes clear back to the '80s. Heinig bought this corner and built this house [moved it] about 1909 or '10; and with him was his grandson and his daughter. Her name was Leimer. She was a widow and her son was Charlie. And Charlie had I are the same age. He's still living in Santa Ana, and Charlie and I practically grew up together until I went away to college and then we slowly drifted apart, for no reason at all. Heinig also bought this—

HS: Just a minute. He lived on the southwest corner of Culver and Center then?

DM: Culver and Center. He built the house about 1910. John G. Heinig. And later Charlie built a radio station and we used to be able to talk. You see, it was only about three hundred feet apart. As Charlie got older, his grandfather built this little room out here at the back. That's where Charlie had his ham shack.

HS: They've got a couple of nice old chimneys on that house, with caps on the top. They look like pre-earthquake chimneys.

DM: Oh, they are. This is 1910. Heinig also bought this lot here on the corner and put up these two houses for rent. He called them the Chicago Cottages—I think he was from Chicago—391, and behind this on Culver there's another house just like this.

In 1907 Orange was growing. So right here on this corner, clear over to that brown house way down there, the Center Street Grammar School was built here and this was where I went through grammar school. It's on the southeast corner of Culver and South Center, extending halfway down the block and it went clear over from Shaffer across. I've got some pictures of the old schoolhouse. It was built in 1907 and torn down about 1950, something like that, torn down after World War II.

HS: They had a slightly larger playground than the one downtown.

⁵⁹ This house was removed at some point.—Ed.

DM: Well, yes. We used to play ball right here on this corner. These trees out here, though, are the originals that were planted when the school was here.

HS: Acadias and some camphors, and a carob.

DM: Well, now, Heinig planted this camphor and the carob. And there's the other Chicago Cottage. See, these two houses were exactly alike, and they're duplexes. This is a duplex and I think that is too, but anyway, he was retired. He was in the coal business in Chicago and then came out here.

HS: Four-oh-seven, 415 and 417.⁶⁰

DM: Oh, I might tell you something interesting. It doesn't have to do with this; but I showed you the place over there on South Glassell where we lived. When we lived there, the main ditch of the S.A.V.I. water company ran right down South Glassell and was an open ditch right out in front of our house. Whenever they'd irrigate, the water would come down and my mother used to worry like the dickens, afraid I'd fall in that ditch. And I did!

HS: We had the same thing on South Tustin Avenue [in Tustin], the open ditch with the beautiful white sand in the bottom of it when it was dry. (conversation)

DM: Ah, here we are. I think we're on Palmyra—but they've cut them down. Right in here is where Van Bibbers had their home, and you know it wasn't Van Bibber, it was Van "Bibbah."

HS: We're still on Culver approaching Cambridge.

DM: And the Bibber place was back in there. Going out South Cambridge Street, I used to play down here in the Santiago Creek and it was really a magnificent place, because it was unimproved, of course. There was no definite channel; it was just cut by the stream and it was willows and sycamores, mule fat and everything else. Here was the starting of the river bottom right here, you see, where we dip down and this was all dense jungle.

HS: Where is Shoer Brothers?

DM: Shoer Brothers is down about, at the end of Shaffer. You can see Shoers' in through here.

HS: We've got to do something [on tape] about Shoer Brothers sometime. I don't know how long it's been there, but long enough—

DM: That's the old Hinkey place. Now you see how this has all been ruined in here? (pointing to stream bed)

HS: This is flood control work, too. I recognize it.

DM: Yes. But this used to be a solid jungle in here with willows and sycamores, rabbits and squirrels, coyotes.

⁶⁰ Refers to East Culver locations.—Ed.

HS: We're going across the bridge over Santiago Creek.

DM: George Shoemaker, right in here in this area, this was all planted to apricots. We're now crossing [over] the Garden Grove Freeway. And this was the old George Shoemaker place and the apricot orchard. I used to work there in the season, picking fruit. I'd get five cents a box and when I made a dollar a day I was going all right.

HS: I used to pit apricots on Harvey Ritner's place in Tustin. I don't remember what I was paid, though.

DM: I think you were paid by the tray, wasn't it?

HS: Yes, but I haven't the faintest idea how much.

DM: Here on this corner, this is the northeast corner of Cambridge and Fairhaven, this is the old C. B. Campbell residence, one of the first orange groves in Orange County.

HS: Is the house gone?

DM: The house has been gone quite a while. He used to have, I don't know how many acres, twenty or forty, something like that. The house was way back there in the grove.

HS: [A sign] says, "This site reserved for future development of Fairhaven Memorial Park." It's right across the street.

DM: They bought part of the Campbell ranch. Campbell owned the whole thing. He had a big family; there were several boys and several girls, and one of the boys, I think it was either Earl or Roy Campbell, after C. B. died, the ranch was not exactly cut up, but the boys took different ones, and one of the Campbells built this house along about 1920.

HS: Nineteen-oh-one [street number]. Are they still living here?

DM: I don't think they are because I think Earl Campbell—and I believe this was the Earl Campbell place, I'm sure it was. No, Earl had a place out on Prospect. Earl must be eighty years old now.

HS: Was he involved with the Farm Bureau? I seem to remember my father [S. W. Stanley, Tustin] speaking of him.

DM: Probably was. C. B. Campbell—wait a minute, I take it back. That wasn't the C. B. Campbell—C. B. Campbell owned the house that we rented there on South Glassell. This was the D. F. Campbell grove, so it was D. F. that had the big family. Campbell came to Orange probably about 1878 or '79 and was one of the first to put in oranges. That grove there, of course, has been reset to Valencias. I think they had Mediterranean sweets in there first. And my dad, who would be over a hundred years old now, and D. F. were great friends. Dad owned the newspaper and Campbell was one of the rather wealthier orange growers. Oh, I think they figured that Campbell was worth \$50,000! That was a lot of money.

END OF SESSION WHILE DRIVING

HS: We're now back at the Meadows' home on Panorama Heights, and Don has just thought of something that he'd like to get on the tape right now. (laughter)

DM: Well, I think I'd better talk about this while it's clear in my mind. I want to talk about the old, what we called, the "Peanut Roaster." The Peanut Roaster was a little four-wheeled car, ran narrow-gauge, had a steam engine—a boiler and a steam engine in the center—and with seats at each end that was built by the Tolle Brothers back during the boom. They built the engine and sold it to—I think it was called the Santa Ana, Orange and Tustin Street Railway Company. When the boom busted, the Tolles had to take it back and they were running it. Mr. Tolle was the engineer. What I wanted to record was the route that this narrow-gauge train—it wasn't a train but just a single car. The reason we called it the Peanut Roaster was because it had a little steam whistle on it that went "Tweet-tweet" just like an ordinary peanut roaster which was very common in those days.

What I want to do is record the way that this line followed to get between Santa Ana and Orange. It came out east Fourth Street to Main, in the center of the street, and then at the corner of Fourth and Main [Santa Ana] made a right-hand turn, turning north on Main Street and stayed in the center of Main Street clear out until it crossed the Santiago Creek. This was back in 1905 up until about 1907. It started way back during the boom days but I'm talking now about the time around 1905 it went up the center of North Main Street and after it crossed the Santiago Creek on an old wooden bridge, then the tracks, which were narrow-gauge, swung over on the right-hand side, or the east side of Main Street, and kept to the east side until it came to La Veta. And it made a turn on La Veta and went east down the north side of La Veta Street, past what is now the St. Joseph hospital. But when it reached Batavia Street, the corner of Batavia and La Veta, you probably remember that there's a jog in the road? Well, the tracks went straight ahead. La Veta jogs over a little bit to the north, but the tracks went straight ahead and crossed Batavia. Then the tracks followed on the south side of La Veta to South Glassell Street. At South Glassell it made a turn and went right up the middle of South Glassell Street to the Plaza and that was the end of the line. Back in the beginning, the tracks went around the Plaza to East Chapman Avenue and out East Chapman Avenue and came clear up to El Modena. In the beginning it was a horsecar line, but when the steam line went in with the old Orange Dummy or the Peanut Roaster, it never went any further than the Orange Plaza. The car left, I think, every hour. The fare between Santa Ana and Orange was ten cents.

Back about 1906 I had to take mandolin lessons. I didn't want to but some super-salesman sold my mother on the idea that I ought to have a musical education. So she bought me a mandolin and I, every week, had to make a trip to Santa Ana on the Peanut Roaster to take mandolin lessons. I hated it, but when I got into college, it paid off because we had a little combo, mandolins and guitars and violins and a clarinet, and we used to have a lot of fun, so it was all right. But I didn't like it at the time.

Anyway, the big day was circus day in Santa Ana and the people used to just fill up the Orange Dummy. I don't think it could carry a capacity of more than twenty people, thirty at the most, but they used to load it down so much that when it came to between Orange and Santa Ana when it made the turn from Glassell Street onto La Veta, half the people would have to get out because the engine just didn't have the power enough to pull the car around the turn. Then everybody'd get on and ride until they got to Main Street and then they'd get off again and let the engine pull itself around the turn getting on Main Street and hightailing it down to the center of Santa Ana. The circus grounds used to be just about where the Santa Ana High School—I guess it's still there—just south of Birch Park. Circus Day, Barnum & Bailey, Ringling Brothers—I saw Buffalo Bill a couple of times, right at the end of his circus career. Of course, Dad was a newspaper man and we got passes to everything and so took advantage of all of it. But I have ridden on the old Orange Dummy many, many times, at least once a week for a matter of a year or so. I think that's enough, just to clear up the Orange Dummy. I have picture of it someplace. (pause and conversation)

This is starting back a little earlier than I intended to, but I first came to California with my parents in March of 1903. My first recollection is being in Pittsburg, Kansas, on New Year's Eve when a police officer named Milt Hinkel was killed by a negro, and there was a mob organized and they lynched the negro, pulled him up on a telephone pole. Now, I wasn't there, but Dad was working on the *Pittsburg Headline* at the time and I remember him coming home and telling my mother all about it. And I was just young enough to be greatly impressed by all the gory details. A little bit after that, right after Christmas, I had an attack of scarlet fever and I was really sick, because I remember, still remember, it was a very hot disease. I was really sick, and at the same time my mother came down with inflammatory rheumatism. Dad had been to California in 1891. He had a brother out here that had an apricot orchard over at a place called Moreno, over here in Riverside County. I think there's still a Moreno locality, still called, in the Moreno Valley. Anyway, Dad was out here in '91 and when mother and I got sick in Kansas, he declared that he wasn't going to put up with another winter in the east. So in March of 1901, 1903 rather, he came out with his brother, Roy—came out to California on the Southern Pacific. I had an aunt, that was my father's sister, who lived at Banning, and we came to Banning. They had no room for all of us, so someplace Dad got a hold of a tent and put up a tent right out in the middle of the street under some pepper trees. We lived in the tent while Dad went into Los Angeles and got a job.

He was on the *Los Angeles Times* for a while and then he had a chance to go down to Santa Monica, or Ocean Park, I guess it was, and he got a job as a newspaper reporter on the *Ocean Park Wave*. And then he sent for my mother and me and we came down to Ocean Park and lived there, on the Ocean Park Terrace, for a while. My mother had never been in California, in fact, had never been away from home, and she got terribly homesick. So while Dad was still hanging onto the job there at Ocean Park, mother and I went back to Seymour, Indiana, where her parents lived, and we stayed there until Christmastime. We went back, I think it was probably about the middle of November. Just before Christmas it was cold as the dickens, and I can remember that very well, because snow was drifted and it was a terrific Indiana winter, and Mother decided that California wasn't so bad after all. Mother and I came out and got into Los Angeles. My dad, in the meantime, had quit his job on the *Ocean*

Park Wave and had gotten a job with Mrs. Armor of the *Orange Post*. So he was in Orange and he got passes for us. Mother and I came out on the Southern Pacific. I don't think there were over two or three trains a day on the Southern Pacific. And we came down from Los Angeles and Dad had gotten a horse and buggy from a livery stable in Orange and went out to what they called West Orange. The station now is right in the middle of the Santa Ana Freeway now. It was at the far western end of—it must have been Palmyra or La Veta, out along the Southern Pacific Railway, anyway.⁶¹ We came down on the Southern Pacific and the train was supposed to stop at West Orange so Mother and I could get off. Something got fouled up and the conductor didn't stop the train and we went clear on into Santa Ana and left poor Dad out there waiting for us. The train went zipping by, probably twenty miles an hour, and he went on back home then. Mother and I got down to the S.P. depot in Santa Ana. It was the last train and the Peanut Roaster had made its last trip to Orange and so there mother and I were stalled at the Southern Pacific Railroad Station in Santa Ana.

After a lot of conflagration, it happened that a man named Reginald Gardner, the son of Henri Gardner who had a ranch there in Orange, had an automobile, an old one-lung Tourist automobile that I think was manufactured in Los Angeles. Anyway, it was one of the kind where you let a step down at the back end of the car and the door opened and you stepped up and went into the back, got into the back from the rear rather than the side of the car. It did have a top; it did have a windshield, I think. It was a smoky car, because I remember that I had a sofa cushion that we'd brought out with us on the train, and for several days after we made the trip from Santa Ana to Orange, I could smell the gasoline fumes on this old sofa cushion.

Mother and Reg Gardner made some kind of a deal. I don't remember what it was, but anyway we made our grand entrance and my first automobile ride into the city of Orange on New Year's Eve, 1903. We got into Santa Ana around eight o'clock in the evening and by the time we got over to Orange, it was around 9:00 New Year's Eve. And the town was absolutely dead, dark as could be, no street lights, nothing at all. We went to the old Orange Post Building, which I pointed out this morning, there where Leason Pomeroy has its architectural office now, in the corner of the Plaza, and it was dark.⁶² He banged around and then he remembered where the Armors lived. They lived over on the southwest corner of Olive and West Chapman, which was just around the corner from the *Post*. In fact, we'd always go out the back door of the paper and cut right across to the Armors. Anyway, we went over to the Armors to see what to do. And Dad had rented a room at the Armors, up on the second floor. They had a big house. While we were there talking to Mrs. Armor, Dad came back from West Orange peeved as could be.

I'm going back to Santa Ana. I do remember very distinctly one thing that happened. When we got off the train at Santa Ana and Mother realized where she was, she showed the ticket to the conductor and said that said he was supposed to stop at West Orange so we could get off. He said, well, he was sorry but he didn't remember and they went right on through. "Well, just the same," she said, "you can just turn your train right around and take me back to West

⁶¹ The station was near Flower and La Veta.—Ed.

⁶² This is 44 Plaza Square.—Ed.

Orange." And the conductor said, "Well, lady, the Southern Pacific isn't running for your benefit." (laughter) So then Reg Gardner was there and we got into his automobile and chugged our way over to Orange.

Then on New Year's Day, it was a beautiful, warm, sunny day and my first recollection of Orange is on New Year's Day, 1904, because in the afternoon we took a walk from Armors, which was there on the corner of Olive and West Chapman, and we walked out West Chapman to Batavia. And there were walnut trees on each side of West Chapman, clear out to Batavia. Even though the walnut season was over, there were a whole lot of culls or nuts that had fallen on the ground and I remember hopping around from one tree to another picking up walnuts. I carried a little rock in my hand and I'd find a nut and then I'd sit down and crack it on the sidewalk and eat walnuts coming clear on out. Well, so much for that. That's all I can remember at the moment. (pause)

HS: We're jumping around toward the end of this tape, but Don, why don't you tell about your camping trip up at—upper Silverado, wasn't it?

DM: Yes, it was really at the upper Silverado. It was in July 1910. My parents were very friendly with a family named Durler, L. A. Durler. He was an ex-preacher who probably couldn't save enough souls to make a living so he started being a house painter. They were living in El Modena and on the Fourth of July, 1910, we spent with the Durlers planning this camping trip. It lasted about ten days, in the upper Silverado Canyon. I think there was a prizefight on the Fourth of July. My dad was never much of a sportsman but he always wanted to know how the fights turned out. I think it was the Johnson-Jeffries fight or something like that. Anyway, it was July 4, 1910. All the arrangements were made, and I don't know the exact date, but we started out at four o'clock in the morning from Durlers in a hay wagon loaded down with tents and all kinds of gear, and went up the El Modena grade and right through the county park and up past the Fourth Crossing up Santiago Canyon to the forks. Of course, this was just a dirt road. One thing that was very impressive: in going through the county park—of course, it's Irvine Park now—but going through the county part, the actual area where the picnicking took place was under the oak trees. But down along the stream, Santiago Creek, was heavily bordered on each side by willows and sycamores, and what was very impressive was the fact that all these sycamores and oak trees and everything along the stream, clear on up Santiago Canyon, clear on up to the Fourth Crossing, and the Fourth Crossing was located where the Irvine Dam is now, was solid with trees and the trees were just festooned and heavily loaded with grapevines. So it was really a jungle. And all the trip the road wound around. The reason it was called the Fourth Crossing was because the first crossing of the Santiago Creek was right in the park, and then the second one was up at the upper end of the park, then the third crossing was about halfway between that and what was called Man Cow Rock. But all during that, the road meandered around crossing back and forth across the creek through this jungle of wild grapes and sycamores and oak trees. Really absolutely beautiful. You haven't any idea today when you drive up. It's all been cleaned out and it's so formal it's depressing remembering what it was back sixty years ago in 1910.

After we passed the Fourth Crossing we went out into what was called Sycamore Flat. Sycamore Flat is that country that's now covered by the Irvine Lake, and the road that went right up Santiago Canyon to the forks—and of course Santiago goes off to the right and Silverado comes in from the left. And after we left the Santiago to get into Silverado, it was just a very narrow dirt road that had been cut through way back in 1879, I think it was, or it was '77 when they thought they'd discovered very rich mines up in upper Silverado. So this road was right out in the canyon bottom and it wasn't really improved. We left, as I said, about four o'clock in the morning and didn't get up to Silverado until about three thirty or four, because it was just slow going, the wagon bounding, rattling along over rocks down in the stream bed. The stream up there at that time, I don't know if the trees are still there, but the road has been cut into the hill. The road was right down in the canyon bottom, through a lot of alder trees. There are lots of them up there yet. Beautiful trees.

When we got to the old town of Silverado, there wasn't much left. There were a few frame buildings. Silverado at one time had a population of probably 1500 but most of the people were living in tents. As you know, there were seven saloons and two rooming houses and a blacksmith shop and a post office and several others. It was quite a good sized town; but all that was left were one or two of the old frame buildings. Down in the canyon bottom just below the mouth of Pine Canyon was a stamp mill and a great big round table with riffles in it, a separator, I think. Then there was a—I don't know whether they were using the mercury process or cyanide process, but the old mining building, which was not built during the boom of '79 at the discovery, this building was from probably when they tried to revive the mine along about 1900, because in 1910 the equipment seemed to be relatively new. It was abandoned, all right, but it wasn't too ancient. It was in a galvanized iron building. In fact, my mother took a picture of it and we have it around her someplace.

We camped up in the Cleveland National Forest but we didn't know we were in the national forest because there was no fence or anything. Just a few years ago Frances and I went up there and from the photographs of our camp that were taken, we could still spot the old sycamore trees under which we camped. It's still there after sixty years of time. My dad was always naming things and he called it Burro Inn, because after we got our tents set up underneath the sycamore tree—we were under one sycamore and the Durlers had their tent under another one—while we were setting up a burro came wandering into the camp and wandered around. In fact, the burros were up there all the time, because I have a picture of riding one of them, among all those pictures my mother took at the time. She used to take quite a few pictures but unfortunately we can't find them and neither can we find the negatives. (conversation)

We camped up there for ten days, hiked around, went up to the old mine. At that time the railroad tracks ran down the side. The blue Light Mine was way up on the side of Pine Canyon. I suppose it was 200, 250 feet up on the side. And they had a single track running down and halfway down the track split and went around. They had a cable with a car at each end and the way they'd bring the ore down from the mine, they'd fill up one car and then take off the brake and the weight of that car will pull it down and when it got halfway down there was this split in the rails and the empty car would go to the right and the full one would go

over to the left, and they'd pass each other and go on up. That was still operating. It was operating to this extent, it was still operable or functional, but it was of course not being used because the mine had been abandoned for some time, although it was privately owned. I later learned that they tried to revive that mine sometime within the last eight or ten years. Also, they tried to revive it about 1921. It's still privately owned

Of course, the houses that are up there now, none of them were up there then. Really we were camping out in the sticks. We had to take everything with us. There was a spring over on the side of the hill just about a hundred yards up from where that monument is now. Wonderful water, we'd take buckets and go up and get spring water, even in July. I remember it was really quite hot up there, hot and dusty and very, very dry.

HS: Those canyons get hot, they're so narrow.

DM: Definitely so, but mornings until about ten o'clock were wonderful and then after the sun'd get down low enough so the canyon would be in shade, they it was really quite a wonderful place to be.

HS: Any wild beasts?

DM: We heard some coyotes at night, and these burros were around all the time. We found a saddle in one of the old shacks— (interruption) a burro saddle in one of these old buildings and we saddled up the burro and we used to ride it up and down the canyon. Nothing unusual about it except that it was really up in the mountains and it was wild. I think down near the mouth of the Silverado and the Santiago was the Holtz ranch, I think it was called. H-O-L-T-Z, I may be mistaken on that. But that was way down at the mouth of the canyon and from there on up there wasn't a single sign of habitation of any kind. And even the road, I don't suppose there was more than a wagon a month that ever went up over the road. So upper Silverado where we camped and where the old town of Silverado was located, that was really up in the mountains, beautifully quiet. I remember two things, three things, in fact. There were lots and lots and lots of quail, lots of mourning doves and also a lot of ground squirrels. The ground squirrels you know have a little song, a kind of squeaky song, and I can remember they'd get up with that whistling song.

HS: I was thinking of condor or deer. Bears were gone by that time, in 1910 wasn't it?

DM: Yes, I think the last one was killed around 1902 or something like that.⁶³ We didn't see any deer that I remember, actually seeing them, but around the spring the ground was just pitted with deer tracks. And I suppose that I was too young to notice things, although I was terrifically interested in biological work. So much so that that was probably one of the factors that turned me towards majoring in biology in the university, or up at Pomona. I fell in love with the out-of-doors and the wild life. I suppose that there would be tracks of mountain lion and probably coyotes around, but I don't remember seeing any. I do remember we smelled a skunk one night.

⁶³ Last bear was killed in 1908.—Ed.

HS: You can smell those right here in town.

DM: Yeah, right here. (laughter) Oh, and then one Sunday we were up there and a lot of my parents' friends came up just for the day. They left early in the morning and they only could stay a couple of hours because they had to go back. That was a long trip.

Another thing, if there's any tape left. The first trip that I made into the mountains was in May of 1904, the first year we were here in California, in Orange. They used to have in the old days what was called May Day. Probably you remember that.

HS: Oh, yes.

DM: Everybody in the county, not just one town but everyone, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, Tustin, everybody closed up shop and they all got in their hay wagons and surreys and buckboards and everything else and went up to what was called the Orange County Park then, for a May Day picnic. I don't know when it started being called Irvine Park,⁶⁴ but it was always the county park, because it was the only one. On May Day—that was getting right along near the last of them. I think they kept them up to probably 1905 or '06 or '07.

HS: May Day was still celebrated after that, though. You made May baskets and hung them on people's doorknobs. But it was not a holiday, no.

DM: But this great trek was all over the county. And you know, they broke up into little county factions, because the Anaheim people always got way over on the right-hand side of the park going in, up along the stream, and they always had four or five barrels of beer. And they were great singers. They used to drink beer and sing. There were tables everyplace. The county had set up tables, and they'd spread out food. It was really quite a day. In fact, it was such a day that I remember one time, the first time perhaps, we came back and I'd played around so hard and got so tired that I went to sleep coming back from the park. That was my first trip into the Santa Ana Mountains.

END OF SESSION

⁶⁴ It became Irvine Park in 1926.—Ed.

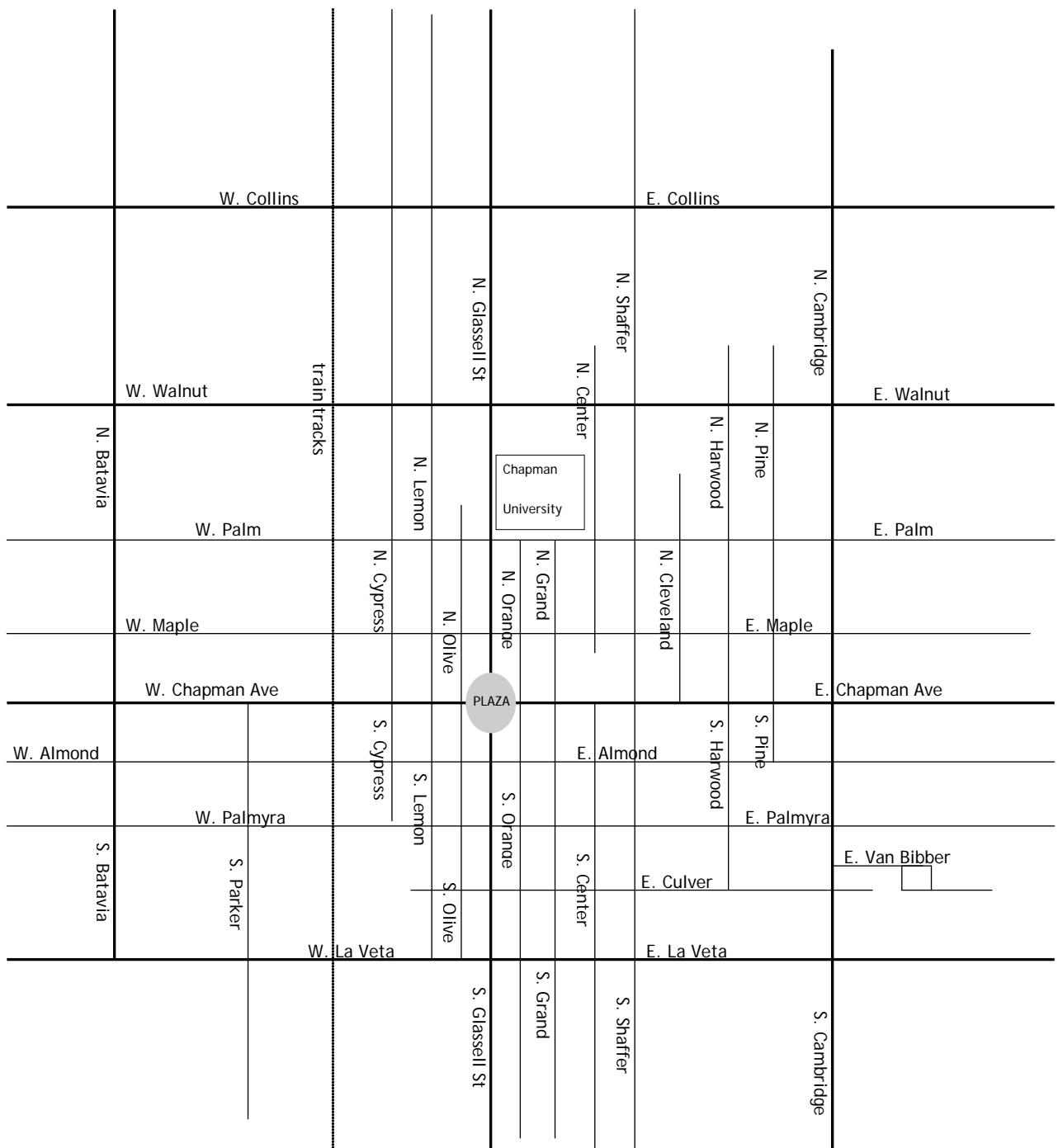


Figure 2 Map of Plaza area in Orange, California



Figure 3 Looking east from the Orange Plaza down East Chapman Avenue, Orange, California. Visible on left are First National Bank, Matthew Furniture, BPOE [Elks Building], Union 76; on right are Cringle, Swift, Jordan & Company, Watson's Drugs, World Travel Bureau, Orange Savings & Loan.

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: DON MEADOWS

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: February 21, 1970

SUBJECT: City of Orange plaza tour, day 2

Orange County historian Phi Brigandi provided the editorial additions found in the footnotes while processing the transcript in 2010.

HS: This is Helen Smith. Don Meadows and I are again in the center of Orange. We're now parked on East Chapman in front of the Elks' Club.

DM: On the northeast corner of Orange and East Chapman Avenue.

HS: Today is February 21, 1970.

DM: I think the reason we wanted to stop here is because I wanted to point out something that's already been discussed the other day, and that's the Odd Fellows Block which is on the southwest corner of Orange and East Chapman Avenue. From here we can get a better view of it. The two-story building was built about 1888⁶⁵ by the Odd Fellows. On the upper floor is the lodge hall; that would be on the east side of the upper floor. Then over on the west side of the upper floor are business, well, they were professional offices. I think there was a dentist named Dr. F. A. Gray that used to have his office up at the head of the stairs. Later Dr. Domann had his office there until he moved over on the Plaza Square. What I wanted to bring out on this stop was to go across the front of the building. On the corner, on the ground floor where the World Travel Bureau is now,⁶⁶ in 1905 or '06 was a grocery store. Next to it at the present time there are two store buildings that have been combined in one and it's Watson's drugstore. On the east half of the building, and at the present time there's a steel pillar that's holding up the upper floor and forms the front of the drugstore, on this side of the pillar, on the east side of Watson's drugstore, was where the post office was located. I've already described that; the front was open and the mailboxes and the window were back quite a ways, maybe fifteen or twenty feet back from the street. The whole front of the building

⁶⁵ This building was built in 1901.—Ed.

⁶⁶ Refers to 120 E. Chapman.—Ed.

was open. Then on the west half of the Watson drugstore was where Keller Watson had his first drugstore. That was there in 1905 or '06 or thereafter.⁶⁷

HS: Excuse me, Don. Was Keller the son or the father?

DM: Kellar was the father and also the Kellar that's living now is the son. Kellar Junior who owns the building now was the son of Kellar Senior. Starting from the corner and going west in the building, first was the grocery store and then the post office and then Kellar Watson's drugstore and then next to that was a stairway that goes up to the upper floor of the Odd Fellows Building. And then right next to it—I don't know who owned that building—but there's still a barber shop in there. The other day I said that's where Todhunter was, but he wasn't. Todhunter had a barber shop right across the street. Then down on the corner where, I think, there's an accounting office in there now, was where Bibber had his dry goods store. I told you how the name changed from Bibber to Van "Bibbah."

Up in the Odd Fellows Building—as I said, it was built around 1888—during the great boom, during the twenties, the Odd Fellows had a chance to sell the building, which they did, and here is where the Elks Club is. They sold the old Odd Fellows Hall and built this Elks Club Building,⁶⁸ mortgaged both buildings, or rather they mortgaged the new Odd Fellows Hall—so the Elks Club used to be the Odd Fellows Hall. Then during the Depression of the thirties, the Odd Fellows couldn't meet the payments and the Elks took over and the Elks now own the old Odd Fellows—or the present Elks Club is what we'll call the new Odd Fellows Hall. At the time the Odd Fellows sold the old building, I think Kellar Watson bought the whole building. That's been a drugstore for a good seventy years. And he's still running it.

[Here part of an account on Meadows Senior is missing.]⁶⁹ About 1945 or so after Westover Senior's death, Russ Westover, his son, was pushed out of the old building here at 122 S. Orange because the Assistance League bought the building and they own it now. It's a thrift shop. He moved over to a room at the Elks Club here on Orange, back at the back end. And he's still going so that business in there is over fifty years old. I go in quite frequently to see Russ and some of the old equipment that my dad bought back in 1916 is still there. It's lost among a tremendous amount of modern machinery and stuff, but some of the old type faces and things are really quite interesting.

We're now parked in the northeast corner of the Plaza Square, right next to the bank building. To clarify things, the numbering on the Plaza started at this corner of the Plaza Square. We're facing it now. It is now the back end of the First National Bank building. Then the numbers south ran in sequence, 1, 2, 3, 4 clear on around until they came back to the northeast corner again, which ends with 80, I think it is.

We might as well start at this corner since we're facing it. Right here at the back end of what is now the First National Bank building, the old bank building,⁷⁰ which shows in pictures,

⁶⁷ Drugstore was there in 1901.—Ed.

⁶⁸ Built in 1925.—Ed.

⁶⁹ Charles W. Meadows founded Meadows Print Shop in 1916. It was later owned by Russ Westover.—Ed.

⁷⁰ Bank was constructed in 1887.—Ed.

was made out of red brick, two stories high, very narrow, and it only came back probably about sixty or seventy feet. From the back of the bank building up to the corner of the Plaza Square was just an open space. I might as well finish the bank building. At this north end of the bank building was a stairs that led up to the second floor where there was a small room that started out as a lodge room. It was very, very small. It probably wasn't over thirty feet wide and forty feet long, but it was quite a good size for the early days of Orange. At the north end of the building on the second floor was a dentist's office where Dr. Gray had his office after he moved out of the old Odd Fellows Building. He moved over here; he practiced in here. It's always been a bank building.⁷¹ Back here in this northeast corner, as I've said, was an open spot.

The other day I told you about the time that Boring's sporting goods store burnt about 1905. At that time there was no fire department in Orange, but it was the first big fire that they had. So immediately the people, merchants, in Orange got together and organized a volunteer fire department.⁷² Back here is this open spot between the back of the building, the bank building, and the corner they put up a framework that was probably not over ten or twelve feet high and in it they hung a great big bell that the fire department still has. They've kept it as a curiosity. Right beside the bell was a hammer, and whenever there was a fire of any kind, somebody would run over and instead of what you'd say ringing the bell in an ordinary sense, they would stand there and they'd go "Dong, Dong, Dong, Dong, Dong, Dong" and you could hear that bell all over town. It wasn't a very big town at the time. Then right next to the bell—I don't remember whether it was on the north or the south side of the bare scaffolding—but anyway, there was an open shed and under that they had a four-wheel wagon with some hooks and ladders on it that was drawn by manpower. Then a little bit later on after the city improved and they got a water system in with fire plugs around, they bought a hose reel and put it along the side. But for several years the only fire protection they had came out of this corner here behind what was, and you might say still is, the bank building. The bank has owned this ever since the bank was started in 1888, or maybe it was '86 or '87. This is one of the oldest banks in Orange County, of course not the present building. The old one was torn down thirty years ago and the present building was built.⁷³ It was one of the first buildings built in Orange, and you see some of the early pictures of Orange with this old, red, two-story, spindly, bank building standing on this corner here.

HS: It seems to have another point of distinction: that it's still the First National Bank of Orange. Has it never been absorbed by one of the big chains that have bought up most of the regional banks?

DM: No. It's just the other way around. It started out first as the Bank of Orange. Years later, I think it was in the early teens, there was a rival bank started over where Bibber had his dry goods store. I forgot what their title was, First National Bank of Orange⁷⁴ or something like that. But after a while, the two consolidated and came over, and the First National Bank of

⁷¹ The present building in 2010 was completed in 1928.—Ed.

⁷² Boring's store burned in 1904 and the volunteer fire department was organized in 1905.—Ed.

⁷³ Original building was torn down in 1927 and replaced in 1928.—Ed.

⁷⁴ First National Bank of Orange started in 1905.—Ed.

Orange, which it's called today, was a consolidation of three or four smaller banks. The First National Bank here in Orange does have three or four branches. There's one on North Tustin, there's one there at Tustin and Seventeenth, and I think there's one down at Costa Mesa. They've spread out quite a bit. It's too bad in the early days when some of this bank stock was available for sale, if a person had any money to grab some of it, because it's terrific in price now.

What shall we do? Just start right around the Plaza?

HS: Which way would you like to go, west?

DM: Well, I'll tell you, I can't give you the numbers because I don't know what they are.

HS: We can read a certain number of them from where we're sitting. Why don't we start with 84, and 80, which looks like an old building judging by the upper story.

DM: It's an old building in a way. It's one of the oldest brick buildings. It was built around 1907⁷⁵ by N. T. Edwards and others got into it. I don't know who Edwards' partner was. Incidentally, Edwards was later the president of the First National Bank. The First National Bank was started by a man named Burnham and a man named J. R. Porter, who was the cashier.

HS: Do you remember first names or initials of Burnham?

DM: No, I don't remember the initials,⁷⁶ but it would be very easy to find because he was the one that built the place that he named *Su Casa*, now occupied as a dormitory, I believe, by the Sisters of Saint Joseph. It's out there on the northwest corner of La Veta and Batavia, not right on the corner. That house is still standing. It was one of the finest homes in Orange County, built along about '85, I think. In the old directories, instead of saying "retired," Burnham was listed as a "capitalist." He was probably worth, maybe, \$100,000 or \$150,000. He had an orange grove out there and this beautiful home and he was the one in Los Angeles, I think, that built the old Tourist automobile on South Main Street in Los Angeles. I know he had interests in Los Angeles. But Burnham started this First National Bank along in the middle '80s. Well, so much for that. Right back here—I guess we can see the number. What is it?

HS: Eighty-four.

DM: Eighty-four. That's the stairs that goes up to the upper floor of what we'll call—no, I'll take it back, Helen. It isn't, because here's the stairs right here, right next to 80. You see, there is a double stair going up. Oh, I know what it is—84 is where Richmond has his law office. I don't remember what was in there in the beginning. The building has been somewhat modified downstairs. Before that building⁷⁷ was built, this immediate corner in here was empty, just like the one right in the corner where the fire bell and all that was located. We'll

⁷⁵ Built in 1905.—Ed.

⁷⁶ His name was W. H. Burnham.—Ed.

⁷⁷ The Edwards building.—Ed.

go up to the corner here; before this building was built, and on the corner was a frame building. That would be on the northeast corner of North Glassell and the Plaza Square.⁷⁸ It was a little frame building and, frankly, I don't know what was in it, but I do know that back in the early days of Orange that's where Forsythe had his general store. Maybe it was a grocery store. Of course, it was before my time, but it was interesting because Forsythe's son, Clyde, was the famous Western artist. Clyde died just three or four years ago. Clyde was born here in Orange out on East Chapman Avenue. His father's, Forsythe's store was a little frame building right here on the corner. Then back of that was an open spot, except right in here about where the stairs goes up to the second floor—I don't know whether it was Edwards and Meehan at the time, but there used to be a butcher shop back here in the corner, a little old frame building, one of those false-front businesses. Of course, you realize, at that time the Plaza was here all right but the streets weren't paved. It was dusty; the Plaza was more or less rundown. The custodian of the Plaza, the park, was also the tax collector, the city marshal, and everything else. That was R. J. Fyffe I told you about. He used to try to take care of the Plaza. It was kind of a difficult job because the water supply was just a little bit indefinite.

HS: And there were hitching posts in all the corners?

DM: Yes, that's right. And these corners in here—I told you how the farmers used to come in and park over under the pepper trees in back? Well, they'd go in there because it was shady, but also in here on Saturdays and even during the week there were horses and buggies and things scattered around in here, hitched right along in these corners.

HS: Right where the cars are parked now, by parking meters.

DM: That's right. Instead of parking meters there were hitching posts, and quite a few of them. By about 1906 or '07 Edwards and some others bought up these buildings, the old frame buildings—I guess they owned the land in the first place—and tore them all down and built this present building that's standing now. I can't remember exactly what was in the very corner building.

Now I'm going to start up North Glassell Street on the east side of the street. Right on the corner of the Plaza Square there was a store building in there but I forget what it was. I think it was a variety store, but I'm not sure. But I do know that right next to it, Edwards and Meehan—the same Edwards that owned the building—had a butcher shop. And then next to the butcher shop was a grocery store and I can't remember who had that. Oh, yes I do too! It was Cossairt's Grocery Store. Cossairt had a grocery store, because my mother used to—we never said "the grocery store," we said, "Go down to Cossairt's" and buy this or buy that.⁷⁹ And then going up North Glassell, I can't remember exactly what was in there, frame buildings though. About in the middle of the block there was a livery stable. I think they called it The Fashion Livery, but anyway it was quite a popular place and it covered about—most of these business lots in here were only twenty-five feet wide—and I think the livery

⁷⁸ Referring to 101 N. Glassell.—Ed.

⁷⁹ By 1907 it was Newell and Cossairt.—Ed.

stable covered two city lots. I don't know whether a man named Barber owned it or whether he worked there. There was a man named Barber and I don't remember his initials. I do remember he had a son, though, named Bronson and Bronson Barber and I were in grammar school together. (conversation) Unfortunately for Bronson, when he was still in high school his uncle died, and his uncle owned all that land out there on North Main Street, at the corner of Main and La Veta, and it was sold for, at that time, quite a colossal bit of money. He had about forty acres and he must have gotten maybe \$80,000 or \$100,000 for it. Bronson, in the meantime his parents had died, and he was the sole heir. So Bronson went to Laguna Beach and bought a home up in Bluebird Canyon, and even though we'd gone to school together, Bronson, with his money, became extremely high hat and also developed a craze for liquor. And now, Bronson is still living . . . down and out and the last I heard about him he was working as a mail carrier or something like that. Just shot everything he had. Maybe I'm a little bit, not exactly bitter, but I don't like Bronson because we had a home at Laguna Beach after he moved down there. And just for old time's sake I went over to see Bronson. It was only a couple of hundred yards from where our home was. Bronson met me at the door, high hat, and said, "Oh, yes, I remember. We were in school together." Well, to hell with him. I never went in the house. It was years later before I saw him again; but unfortunately a little bit of money upset his common sense, and he lost everything he had. He used to be a pretty decent kid. I don't know really where he is now. He's around the country someplace. Well, his father, Barber, either owned the livery stable or his father worked there. I don't know which it was.⁸⁰

HS: Excuse me, may I ask a question? The livery stable, did it use North Glassell as its entrance and exit, or did they have a back entrance?

DM: Oh, no, this was right on North Glassell, with great big double doors, and it was one of those peak roof businesses with a false front, a tall square front with great big letters. I think they called it The Fashion Livery. And it was. Gosh, they'd get \$1 a day for a horse and buggy! That was lots of money. Dad was over here, owned his own business, and he was only drawing \$10 a week. Of course, we didn't live lavishly at all, but I never can remember of being denied anything reasonable. We always had plenty to eat, and dad was building a home, that one I showed you out there on South Center Street. I think he raised his salary after a while, up to \$12 a week. Of course, he was working eleven-hours, twelve-hours a day. But there was just as much money floating around then as there is today. The only difference is that the money in actual units wasn't as great, but it would buy just as much or more relatively than the money will today. That was just incidental.

Well, someplace, I can't remember whether it was on the north side of the livery stable or on the south side, there was a man named Pixley who was very prominent and also one of the stockholders of the First National Bank. Pixley, I think, had an implement store, also one of these wooden [buildings].⁸¹ In fact, all the buildings here, with one or two exceptions, when I came here were frame buildings, except the old Odd Fellows Hall. This whole block over

⁸⁰ Ed Barber and F. C. Thompson owned the livery located at 131 N. Glassell.—Ed.

⁸¹ D. C. Pixley's store was on the other side of the street at 122 N. Glassell. His son, Walter, later had a furniture store on the east side at 121 N. Glassell.

here was brick, and also, starting here on this corner with the bank and running out on East Chapman Avenue, this whole city block in here was brick. I haven't gone over that yet. Shall I go on with North Glassell?

HS: Shall we go into the source of the bricks, or do you know?

DM: Well, I can't be too sure of this but over in Santa Ana out there about where the stadium is now, there was a man named Gerrard or Gouard or something like that who had a brickyard.⁸² In fact, he was the one that burnt the brick that the Casa Las Rosas [Frank Forster, San Juan Capistrano, 1885] and the Egan home in Capistrano were built out of, bricks that were made and burnt in Santa Ana. That's the only brickyard of the early days that I know of.

HS: The Olive brickyard was later?

DM: Oh, the Olive brickyard didn't come in until about 1920, something like that. It's much later. But Grouard was in business there way back in the '80s, because he supplied the brick for a lot of the buildings in Santa An. I rather have a hunch that the bricks that were in these buildings here—not this one, because Grouard was out of business when the Edwards Block was built—but in the old days when the First National Bank and these buildings along here on East Chapman were built.

There was an implement store someplace, either on the north or the south side of the livery stable. I'm a little confused as to exact location. I remember the places that existed but just exactly where I can't really remember. Up there someplace, probably north of the livery stable, was a blacksmith shop. In fact, at one time, there were four or five blacksmith shops in Orange, but I do know there was one up there on North Glassell. Then, I believe, beyond the blacksmith shop there wasn't anything at all but just open country, just vacant lots.⁸³

Well, now we'll jump across the street, and this street on the north here is (conversation) Maple Street. That's the one that runs east and west, the first block north of the Plaza. I think perhaps by doing a little checking here with some rough notes, although I don't seem to be able to find them, might refresh my memory a little bit. (conversation) Here from this note, that blacksmith shop I told you about was up near the corner of Maple and North Glassell Street.

Instead of going across the street, we'll make a right turn when we get up to the corner of Maple and North Glassell, make a right turn and go on over to Orange and then turn south on Orange. On the southeast corner was the location of the First Presbyterian Church; it was right on the corner. It was a frame building with a very tall, spindly steeple. As a youngster I used to think it was very, very high but I don't suppose it was over fifty or sixty feet to the top of the steeple. It was a small church seating probably 150 people. The minister was Alexander Parker, who seemed like an old man when I came here. I think he was the

⁸² Brickyard owner was Grouard.—Ed.

⁸³ Meadows may have been thinking of Eltiste's shop, north of the livery or maybe J. C. Williams and Son located at 143-47 N. Glassell in 1907.—Ed.

minister of the Presbyterian Church for better than thirty years. He's been written up several times. I have a lot of the printed records at the time he retired. I can't remember what year it was, but it was fifty or sixty years ago. They put out a little brochure on Dr. Alexander Parker. Right next to the church, which was right on the corner and just covered one city lot, the church owned the next lot and that was vacant, because that's where the horses and buggies and the surreys and the people used to come in on Sunday and hitch their horses during the services.

Right next to this vacant lot was a house, I don't know who owned it but it was rented at least by a man and his wife named B. T. Beale. The first house that we lived in, Dad and Mother rented a couple of rooms in the Beale cottage, at the back end of it and I remember out back of it, Beale had gathered up a whole lot of eucalyptus branches. Mother used to burn eucalyptus wood and eucalyptus leaves in the little iron cookstove that she'd cook on, and the smell of eucalyptus smoke every once in a while when I smell it today brings back memories of better than sixty-five years ago, when Mother was particularly frying bacon. The smell of bacon and eucalyptus leaves at breakfast time! And in those days I used to get up early. I'd get up around six or six thirty in the morning. Of course, I've developed some better habits since then. But anyway, while we lived there, that's why I was exposed to the Presbyterian Church, because later we moved from there and went down on South Orange to that house I showed you the picture of the other day. Being close to the Presbyterian church, when the time did come that I—a rash of religious fervor when I was about ten or eleven years old—I joined the Presbyterian Church. It didn't do me any harm, but I haven't been to the Presbyterian Church in fifty years. Well, I guess—no, about fifty years because believe it or not, I used to sing in the church choir.

HS: That's why little boys get interested in the church, I think, because they can participate.

DM: Yes. Well, if you really want a little story, which I won't tell you, it's in print. It came out in *Orange County Illustrated* about three years ago at Christmastime. It's a full column story and it's headed, "When I Was a Boy in Orange" and I told about the church and how at Christmastime they used to give out little socks full of candy and they had a Christmas tree. And my dad was Santa Claus one year and he spoiled it all because he, when I came up to get my candy, he knew too darn much about me and he asked some rather embarrassing questions. I recognized his voice and my illusions of Santa Claus—I was young enough that I believed in Santa Claus—he just blasted them out of existence. I wrote up that story which has been published, I think, in *Orange County Illustrated*. That was there at the Presbyterian church.

Then, moving on down south on Orange Street—North Orange—moving south on North Orange from Maple, on each side of the street were residences, clear up to the corner of this brick building here on East Chapman Avenue, residences right straight through. Most of them, or quite a few of them, were standing until just within a relatively few years, last fifteen years or so, when the city started buying them up and they've cleaned them out and that's all city parking lot in there now. Some of those old houses were taken out just since World War

II, just as they did here on South Orange. That used to be a row of residences and that's all parking lot now.

When we get down here to the corner of Orange and East Chapman Avenue we come to this brick building. In the corner, I can't remember exactly what kind of a building it was, what business it was, but later on a man named Shadel bought it and put in a furniture store. And of course, within the last ten years the First National Bank has bought this whole block and remodeled it and this is all the bank now between the Plaza Square and Orange. But where the escrow department is now is where Shadel had his furniture store.⁸⁴ Then moving west in the building, I think there was something else in there but I can't remember what it was. And then there was a woman named Lottie B. Gitchell who had a—

HS: Is that *e* or *i*?

DM: I don't know whether it was Gitchell or Getchell, but I remember that she belonged to a group that my mother belonged to and I used to hear the name Lottie B. Gitchell. She had this stationery store, just a little hole in the wall in a way.⁸⁵ It was just half—I was going to say half the building. It wasn't. If the store fronts or the lots were twenty-five feet wide, she had about twelve and a half feet of one of them and then the other half was where Todhunter's Barber Shop was. I told you it was across the street, but Todhunter was on the north side. Then right next to them there was a man named Northcross who had a pool hall, a very popular place when I was a youngster.⁸⁶ Of course, Orange was a small town and it was, there wasn't much excitement, but sometimes Dad and I would walk uptown and he'd sit around for half an hour or so in the pool hall and just carry on a conversation with the owner.

HS: Excuse me. Was that any relation to the Santa Ana Northcrosses, Robert?

DM: I rather think it was. Now I can't be sure of that, but I believe it was. I think it wasn't Robert Northcross, because you know Terry Stephenson grew up in this country and Terry and Robert Northcross and this Northcross used to go hunting together. I could find out what the Northcross first name was, in the old city directory. Northcross had a daughter named Olive, and Olive and I were in school together. This was back in 1906 or '07. I'm pretty sure he was Robert Northcross's brother, but that I'm not positive of at all.

Then of course, next to Northcross's pool hall was the Bank of Orange. This bank on the corner, the old red brick, was built in the '80s, early '80s, maybe in the late '70s, because it was an old, old building. Then in the boom of the '80s, about '87 I guess it was, or '86, a brick building was built from the bank here down to the corner, and that's where the pool hall and the Gitchell⁸⁷—Oh, say, I remember. There was another break in there. Next to Lottie

⁸⁴ This is about 117-19 E. Chapman.—Ed.

⁸⁵ Lottie B. Gitchell's stationery store was at 109 E. Chapman.—Ed.

⁸⁶ A. R. Todhunter and Porter operated the barber shop in 1907 at 111 E. Chapman. The pool hall run by T. J. Northcross was at 107 E. Chapman.—Ed.

⁸⁷ The Bank of Orange was first built in 1887; Whitted Block was built in 1902.—Ed.

Gitchell was a gal named Bessie B. Lea who had a millinery store.⁸⁸ So there was Shadel on the corner and then Bessie Lea's millinery shop, then Gitchell's stationery store and then Todhunter's barber shop and Northcross's pool hall and then the Bank of Orange. And up on the second floor of the brick, over Shadel's and the millinery store was—some place in there, I can't remember just where—but there were some stairs. I think they were between the millinery store and Gitchell's. I'm not sure, but the stairs went up to the second floor, and right at the head of the stairs was a photography studio. Incidentally, when they remodeled the building, I don't know what's been done upstairs. Well, I think they tore it all out because most of the ceilings in here look like they go clear way on up. But at the back end apparently they didn't remodel that, because the old glass skylight is still in. That's been in there for at least seventy years or longer.⁸⁹ On each side of that there was a hall that ran down through the center of the building and there were rooming houses. Mrs. Gitchell lived upstairs. There was a dentist's office and an attorney. I forget who it was now. I think Al Drumm started out with it; it's the son that's the attorney in Santa Ana now, but he was born here in Orange. His father was an attorney and I think he father had his office here in the old—I don't know what they called this building.⁹⁰ Everybody knew everybody and where everybody lived and worked, all about him. Well, that takes care of this block.

After these frame buildings were torn down and Edwards built this block on North Glassell, the upstairs was given over to a rooming house.

HS: Speaking of the building that takes in numbers 80 and 84 on the Square now.

DM: Yes. The short end of the building is here on the Plaza Square, and the long building runs up on the east side of North Glassell. And about midway of the building is a staircase that goes up and there are rooms up above. What reminded me of this—I can't remember who had offices up there, but right after Chapman College came to Orange they had dormitory problems and so they leased the upper floor of this building, and I think the girls lived up here. This was a dormitory for Chapman College for quite some time until they built the dormitories out there north of the college.

HS: I'm wondering what's going on upstairs now. It appears to be vacant, but I just saw two young men waiting at the stairs. Two other young men came, they shook hands and they all went upstairs. And there's a sign in the door marked number 78 that says, "Open. Orange County Teen Challenge."

DM: It doesn't mean a thing.

HS: Not to me, either. Something's happening up there.

DM: Well, there are vacant rooms up there now. And later on, I think where the old Fashion Livery stable used to be, a man named Pixley either bought or owned it and he tore down the buildings and put up another brick that joins the Edwards Block going on up, at the other end

⁸⁸ Lea's millinery store was at 113 E. Chapman.—Ed.

⁸⁹ It looks to actually be in the Edwards Block addition from 1915.—Ed.

⁹⁰ Whitted Block.—Ed.

of this corner brick.⁹¹ I don't remember why, but anyway the upper floor of the Pixley Building was never finished. It never has been finished. From Orange if you look up you can see the windows and just see the studding, unfinished studding through the windows. And downstairs Pixley's son had a furniture store and also a hardware store, after this building was built.⁹²

HS: We have to go into the Pixley family. There's undoubtedly more information on them.

DM: Oh, there's a lot. Pixley was quite an active person here, an old-timer and he's been, the biographical material has been written up in, I think, Armor's mug book of 1911, with his picture. Pixley was one of the wealthy people of the community. He was a director of the Bank of Orange and owned the Pixley Building. As I told you the other day, a block in the old days used to be any building. I don't know why they called it a block. It was the Bank Block and the Odd Fellows Block and the Jorn Block and all the rest of them, and this was the Edwards Block here.

HS: Pixley, of course, had a street named after him.

DM: Yes. Well, Pixley owned quite a bit of property around this district and also was an officer of the savings and loan. And incidentally the Savings and Loan Building,⁹³ that was also bought by the Assistance League and it was back here in the southeast corner of the Plaza Square. The building is still standing here. They were there and then they moved up here on the corner, right on the corner, and then from there they moved up to their new building that was built three or four years ago.⁹⁴

HS: But they still operate a thrift shop in the little old building.

DM: Yes. Well, the Assistance League bought it, clear through there. (pause)

HS: We've just interrupted the taping to go upstairs, up the stairway that's marked number 78 Plaza Square. Don, would you like to describe what we saw up there?

DM: Well, I think you can do it as well as I can, Helen, because it's been remodeled so much. We'd already mentioned the fact that that was once the dormitory of Chapman College, and the interesting thing about it are the high ceilings and the old wainscoting, and as you point out, the architectural design on the outside of the building is quite interesting.

HS: It's handsome. You thought perhaps C. B. Bradshaw designed it?

DM: Of course, that's just a wild guess, but Bradshaw was *the* architect here at the time these buildings were built. He was the one that designed the old first Orange High School and the

⁹¹ It was built at virtually the same time to match Edwards.—Ed.

⁹² D. C. Pixley built the Pixley Building in 1905-06; Walter was his son.—Ed.

⁹³ Savings and Loan was at 20 Plaza Square.—Ed.

⁹⁴ Assistance League was located in the Orange Savings and Loan and relocated to the southwest corner of Chapman and Grand.—Ed.

grammar school and was really quite the architect, and I'm just assuming by association that since he was a local resident, he probably did.⁹⁵

HS: Just a minute. I'd like to describe this Teen Challenge. They have taken over the whole top floor on an angle, and L-shape building and are restoring it. It's a non-denominational religious organization dedicated to encouraging young people to get off drugs and stay off them. Some of the boys, who were ex-drug addicts, showed us around the place, showed us all the improvements they're doing. They have a complete setup there, with apartments in which a couple of caretaker couples live now. There's a kitchen and other bedrooms, a dining room, a big meeting hall—and they have preserved the original woodwork of the building, the fancy moldings around the doors and windows. We noticed the doors on the north-south corridor, opening into offices. Beside each door is a window, a regular double-hung glass window which apparently was used to bring the light from the skylights above the corridor into the offices, when there were offices there. All right, Don.

DM: Well, I don't remember who it was that had their offices in the building but it used to be quite a prominent place for doctors and attorneys back in the early days. Well, we're on North Glassell Street now facing north and we'll start on the northwest corner of Maple and North Glassell Street where the Orange Theater is located now. Up until the '20s that was a vacant lot, and a man named H. Z. Adams who was of an old-time family here in Orange built the Orange Theater during the flush times of the '20s and was doing all right. But as you can see, it's a reinforced concrete building, very elaborately built, and he mortgaged everything he had and then, of course, the Depression came along and people had no money and unfortunately he lost the building and I don't know who owns it now.⁹⁶ You remember I told you when we were talking about South Glassell Street that the Colonial Theater was built, which is now Friedemann Hall? Well, after the Orange Theater was built, the old Colonial folded up and this was *the* movie house here in Orange. One thing I remember very definitely about that corner was that in 1910—it was a vacant lot then—they had what they called a Pageant of Progress, I think it was. And all around the Plaza, clear around the circle, they had kind of ramada affairs with bunting and open places and they had exhibits of oranges and canned fruit. It was more or less a typical county fair, because in the corners of the Plaza, they had some sideshow or carnival company come in there with a Ferris wheel and honky-tonk shows and things like that, in tents clear around the Plaza Square. There's a photograph of it, which I have at home, taken from the top of one of the buildings showing all the booths around the center of the Plaza. At that time that was a vacant lot where the Orange Theater is now and they had a captive balloon and for \$.25 you could get in the basket and they'd let it up on a cable. I suppose it went up around seven hundred or eight hundred feet. That was quite a trip. It was on that vacant lot there at the corner where the balloon ascension took place.

Working south, next to the theater, I can't remember exactly what was in there. I think there was a frame building of some kind, but what it was I don't remember. Then where that new, modern—modern, although it's forty years old—was the Santa Ana Valley Irrigation

⁹⁵ Agreed. Bradshaw was the architect.—Ed.

⁹⁶ Adams started construction in 1924 and ran out of money. Mike Eltiste finished it in 1928-29.—Ed.

Company; that used to be a frame building, just up and down boards.⁹⁷ That has always belonged to the irrigation company, clear back from the beginning, and in this up and down board shack was their main office. Then on the south side of that brick building where there's a little low building now, that was vacant and there was a wooden fence across there with a gate in the fence, and that's where the irrigation company kept all their heavy equipment, all their wagons and old fresnoes⁹⁸ and things to take care of it. They also made cement pipe back there, back of the building. Then, I think it was in the '20s, this present building and the building on this side was built—

HS: By the S.A.V.I., as all we old-timers call it.

DM: That's right, the old S.A.V.I. was the irrigation company. And you know, Helen, I suppose it's been done, but if it hasn't it should be: the great fight between the Anaheim Union Water Company and the Santa Ana Valley. You see, the Anaheim Water Company put in their dam and took all the water over at the Anaheim side. It was called the old Chapman Ditch in those days. They went further up the Santa Ana River and put in a dam and brought the water on the south side of the Santa Ana River. So there was a hassle and they took it into court and finally they allocated 50-50 on each side. And out of the Chapman Ditch was the growth of the Santa Ana Valley Irrigation Company, and this was their headquarters.

Then coming down someplace along in there is a brick building, and I can't tell you exactly where it was. It's possible that it was right next to the present Orange Theater, before we get into the S.A.V.I. office. I'm a little doubtful because I don't think it was as wide. It was a brick building, rather narrow, and it was called the Red Front Variety Store. What it was was just a second-hand store.

HS: Do you think it's gone now, the building?

DM: It's possible that it is.⁹⁹

HS: We could check it by going in the alley.

DM: All right, we'll swing around that way and take a look at the back of the buildings.

Then, moving down this way, there was a group of frame buildings. Maybe this [map] will refresh my memory a little bit. I know there were a bunch of buildings along there. The S.A.V.I. Company was right where it is today and then from there on north where the theater is and the building this side, that was a vacant lot. That was vacant. That's what is confusing because there was nothing there at all. That theater lot is a little bit narrow for the balloon ascension; and so the first building that existed was the old up and down board shack of the first offices of the S.A.V.I. Company.

⁹⁷ Built in 1913 at 154 N. Glassell.—Ed.

⁹⁸ The Fresno scraper invented in 1883 by Scottish immigrant James Porteous was one of the most important agricultural and civil engineering machines ever made.

⁹⁹ May be referring to 148-50 N. Glassell.—Ed.

Now, this was way before my time, but the First Methodist Church in Orange used to be just this side [south] of the S.A.V.I. office. It didn't last very long because they finally built over there on South Orange. Then, coming on down, I think right about in here where Paul's Bakery would be, or maybe it's where the Royal Drug is now, 128 North Glassell Street, was the old E. T. Lee Grocery Store. It was a brick building and it was one of the popular stores, grocery stores, in town. Then next to Lee's, moving down, and this was a lot before my time, but one of the early post offices was just across the street here. [We were parked on the east side of North Glassell.]

Then coming back to my period of recollection, next to that, which would make it about—there were some more stores in there—but where the Masonic Temple is located now, there used to be a—I suppose originally it was a livery stable, but during my time it was the first, we might call it a garage and kind of a repair shop. It wasn't a carriage shop or a blacksmith shop, but it was run by a man named Hennigan, I think it was. It was a frame building that was a garage, open out here on the street and also opens at the back end. And then, as I told you the other day, where the Masonic Temple is now, right on the corner was Crowders' store. That would be right here on the Masonic Temple corner, and next to Crowders' store was this Hennigan's repair shop for early automobiles. I remember as a kid I used to collect the sections of the old chains that drove the wheels of an automobile. They'd break and they'd throw them out in back and I'd pick them up and I had a whole cigar box full of the chains that came out of the repairs that he had done.

Of course, the street wasn't paved. It was dusty. They used to have a water wagon that would drive up and down two or three times a day in the summertime laying the dust. It was pretty dusty. And then, starting at Maple, clear on up north, was the residential district. Some of those old houses are still standing, till we get up to the corner of Palm, and then, in 1906, the high school district bought that corner and built the first Orange Union High School. That's where Chapman College is located now. That was built in 1906. I went to the third grade in the high school, because the third grade was down in the basement of the new high school building, because the high school wasn't big enough to occupy all the ten or twelve rooms they had.¹⁰⁰

HS: Do you mean you were a junior or you were in the third grade of grammar school?

DM: I was in the third grade of grammar school, down in the basement, down in the southwest corner in the basement. That was the third grade. I think the elementary school was only there one year, because in 1907 they built the old Center Street Grammar School, and I transferred from there and in the fourth grade I was out at the Center Street Grammar School. C. B. Bradshaw was the architect of the high school and his office and residence was right over there where that Texaco Company is. I believe the house is still standing, although it's been moved back and turned around at the back of the lot.

HS: That's the northwest corner of North Glassell and Maple.

¹⁰⁰ Checking records how the high school was built in 1904-05.—Ed.

DM" Yes. Well now, the Bradshaw house wasn't right on the corner, but it was the next lot over from the corner¹⁰¹ It was a two-story house; and that was the grandfather of the Roch Bradshaw that I used to play with, my buddy-buddy. We grew up together. That was his grandfather. Incidentally, I have all of the specifications and some of the drawings for the Orange High School that Bradshaw drew. Before Roch went to Hawaii, his grandfather had died and he cleaned out the house and the old office. Oh, this is interesting. Right out in front of the house was an up and down board shack that was Bradshaw's architectural office and it was full of a big drawing desk and all that. That was right on the street.

And then right north of the Bradshaw house, this is on the west side of the street, was a house built by Lydia K. Killefer,¹⁰² who was one of the first grammar school teachers. In fact, I don't know whether the school building is still in existence now or not, but they built a new building and called it the Lydia E. Killefer School. She was a teacher here in Orange for over forty years and when she retired they happened to be building this new school and so they named it after her. She was one of my teachers. In fact, she was the teacher when I was in the third grade in the basement of the high school building. She was a very understanding person. And to reminisce a little bit about that, she used to read us poetry, and she read Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, just passages of it. I was so enthused over it that years later I memorized practically a whole chapter, starting out, "By the shores of Gitche Gumee, by the shining sea water." She was the one that got us started reading poetry.

HS: I was going to ask you if you had to memorize poetry; I had to, I had assignments. I remember in the Tustin Grammar School when I was in the upper grades, Friday afternoon we each had to memorize a poem, and the first one who did it went up and recited it to the teacher and then got to go home early.

DM: I guess that was standard procedure, because I used to put it off until the last minute to memorize it and then I was usually the last one to go home.

HS: Well, I was usually first or second or third.

DM: Yes, we did. I can't remember exactly what the poems were, except once in a while when I'm reminded of one of them it all comes back to me.

HS: One of them was Whitman, I'll bet, one we had to do: "Oh, Captain, my captain . . . "

DM: That's right! "The fearful trip is done." That's right. And then another one was something about, "and then my heart with pleasure fills and dances with the daffodils."

HS: And also, "Behind him lay the gray Azores, behind the Gates of Hercules."

DM: That's right, yes.

HS: Well, now we have to go west on Maple.

¹⁰¹ At 224 N. Glassell.—Ed.

¹⁰² This is at 234 N. Glassell.—Ed.

- DM: All right. We'll see what it looks like. (car moves up Glassell to Maple.)
- HS: We don't have to literally go there. I thought perhaps you might remember here.
- DM: Well, we'll swing around and come down on Olive Street, up North Glassell to Maple, making a left-hand turn on Maple Avenue to go over to Olive. See that two-story house over there? That's the old Bradshaw place, and it was moved back and his office used to be right out in front.
- HS: I see a piece broken out of a chimney, out of the cap of it.
- DM: That house was there in 1905, not right where it is now, but it was probably built about 1888. Now we're making a left turn on Olive Street, so we can get a back view.
- HS: There are several old brick buildings along there [rear of Glassell], facing on North Glassell on the west side.¹⁰³
- DM: Let's see what we can spot. (pause) A vacant lot here next to the theater and then that brick building is the S.A.V.I. storage house. It ran clear through to Olive, because they still have some of their equipment in there. Now where that Royal Drug Company is, that is the old E. T. Lee Grocery Store. It was brick. You see, it ran clear back. It was a good size store. Then next to that, well I don't remember, but you can see the upper part of the Masonic Temple, and that was where _____ had his repair shop. We sat in the corner there last week.
- HS: Yes. That would be approximately where Aames Rentals are now, next to the Masonic Building.
- DM: There were residences along here, on the east and west sides of North Olive, north of Chapman. Here's a little piece of history that doesn't mean too much, and yet maybe someone in the future would like to know about it. You know I told you that the first house we lived in was rented by a man named B. T. Beale, and we lived in it, right next to the Presbyterian church. Mrs. Beale's maiden name was Howard, and her brother George had polio when he was about twelve years old and he was a cripple. He lived with his mother right here on this corner. That would be the southwest corner of Olive and Maple. The house was just torn down here two or three years ago when they built this apartment house that's in here now. But he lived right here on the corner and there was a row of cypress trees along here. (pause)
- In the early days, there were three ornamental trees that were very conspicuous. Naturally, there were quite a few sycamores scattered around; but the pepper tree and, I guess, the Monterey cypress were very, very, very common. Apparently the Monterey cypress did very well, and you can still see some of the old-time trees along here. Those trees out in front of the old Olive Hotel that was moved over there—I think we talked about it—those trees [deodars] were planted later. They're not the originals, but there was a row of cypress. I

¹⁰³ This is 100 block of North Olive.—Ed.

don't think this street's been widened, but the cypress trees were right along here and that's a new sidewalk, on the west side of Olive, north of Chapman.

Then D. C. Pixley had a wonderful home that used to be one of the mansions of Orange. It's just up here on North Olive on the west side of the street.¹⁰⁴ The house is still standing. That was the Pixley residence. It was a two-story, is a two-story, north of Maple on the west side. And also, at the same time that Chapman College was using the upper part of the Edwards Building as a dormitory, they also rented the old Pixley house and that was a dormitory.

I don't know whose house that was on the corner. It's an old, old-timer but I can't remember whose residence it was. I used to know the people that lived there.

HS: It's in its original location?

DM: It's in its original location. I think it's got new siding on it because that looks like those modern asbestos shingles, but it's an old frame that was probably built about 1885 or so. Architecturally the design of the building hasn't changed a bit. It's been that way all along.

As I've told you, on the east side of the street here there were all residences, and these bricks that are in here now, and vacant lots, they date back probably to the 1920s, something like that. I think that just about cleans up—

HS: Well, we've got, let's see now. No, we don't have another block left because that was the vacant corner where the band concerts were held, east of Olive and north on West Chapman. We've covered the buildings.

DM: That's right. On the opposite side there was also a vacant lot—

HS: With the pepper trees?

DM: No, not right on the corner, but that was vacant. And then on the southwest corner of Olive and West Chapman was the Armor residence. Maybe I told you about that. Armor built that way back in the '80s. Two-story, and the first night I spent in Orange was in the Armor home. (pause) —back end of the old Olive Hotel. See how it runs up a way?

HS: No, Orange Hotel.¹⁰⁵

DM: Yes, Orange Hotel.

HS: We're looking toward the first block on West Chapman, west of the Plaza.

DM: No, second block.

HS: Sorry. We're looking at the back, I assume, of that building that's a bar, painted purple with red lettering on it?

¹⁰⁴ Refers to the southwest corner of Olive and Palm.—Ed.

¹⁰⁵ The Orange Hotel built in 1886 was to the rear of 228 W. Chapman.—Ed.

DM: I think that's the front. It's the old Orange Hotel. The Ponderosa is the bar with the bright front, so it would be west of that. You know, I'd better take a picture in here. (pause)

HS: This is the vintage of the house that I grew up in. It has shiplap siding, horizontal shiplap with the little narrow piece that fits under the board above, about ten inches wide.

DM: Oh, that that right? You know, when I was a youngster, right where we are now there was a barn that used to be—they didn't bale the hay, they'd just bring it in and dump the hay into the barn. You know how it would get packed down? As a kid I used to come over here with the other kids and we'd get into the back door and dig tunnels through the hay, just a little hole and crawl all through it.

HS: The Orange Hotel is apparently still in operation. It stands next to the southeast corner of the second block on West Chapman, right beside the Bradley and Thomas furniture warehouse.¹⁰⁶

END OF SESSION

¹⁰⁶ This is at 240 W. Chapman.—Ed.

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: DON MEADOWS

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: August 20, 1969

SUBJECT: Koorok ceremony on the Yuma Reservation

DM: I'm reading from field notes; you might take the whole thing.

HS: Thanks.

DM: It's notes FN [Field Note] 939. And the date is Saturday, August the fifth, 1933. And this, I am skipping a lot of it because it's background material, like—Well, we arrived in Hopieville at such-and-such a time and had a blow out and so forth and so forth. Then at 8:10 p.m., Yuma, 31,032 miles, there is groceries and a base of supplies after a rather interesting experience. About four o'clock, we crossed the river and tried to find where the fiesta was to be held. And by the fiesta, what I mean, we were going down to the Koorok ceremony on the Yuma Reservation. Well, I tried to find where the fiesta was to be held. We cruised around for a while until Doug McPherson asked an old Indian for Davis and the fiesta—

HS: That's Ed Davis?

DM: Yeah, because he was with us. He was the one that got us into the—See, we were the only whites in there.

HS: Oh.

DM: Rock(?) Bradshaw, Doug McPherson and I, and Davis were the only whites; the rest were the Indians. To go back, we asked where Davis was and the fiesta, and the Indian said, "*No hablo inglés*" (laughs) until a few oranges opened the way. You see, before we left here, we filled the back end of the car with, oh, two or three sacks of oranges from Bill McPherson's ranch.

HS: How did you get them across the Arizona border?

DM: Oh, they didn't bother, because we were *touristas*, you know. We could talk to the people at the border there. (laughs)

HS: There wasn't any hoof and mouth disease?

DM: Oh, no, no. Then an Indian joined us and took us to the fiesta ground about a mile away from a ceremonial house and cemetery just below the school on Fort Hill. The Indian guide, name unknown, left us at the fiesta while he went to find Davis. Five minutes later, Davis and Mike Ambrosio(?)—parenthetically it says, with blood on his teeth and lips as though he'd been in a fight—(laughs) came from a _____ thicket where the images of the departed were being constructed. Davis introduced us, and we asked permission to stay. D. Ambrosio(?) said he couldn't give permission because he didn't own the land. He went to find Chino, a very fat old Indian with a red bandana over his mouth and a blue bandana on his head. With Chino came a very well-educated Indian, about forty-five in American dress and short-hair named Jackson, who acted as interpreter. Davis knew Jackson's father. Chino, through Jackson, said he couldn't get permission but must get the advice of the committee in charge of the fiesta. They gathered around us and for more than an hour we were quizzed and answered questions through Jackson. The Indians were prone to let us stay. They wanted to know why we were there, what we wanted, if we were government ethnologist, if we were going to write notes and take pictures, if we planned to publish what we saw, and many similar questions. One tall, thin, grey-whiskered individual wearing a broken and dirty cheap sombrero named Wilson, wore glasses, asked most of questions in Yuman. Finally, after a half-hour talk, during which time the car and we were surrounded by twenty or thirty men, women, and children, Jackson said the committee had decided that we could stay all night and that permission of tomorrow would come in the morning, if at all. We were cautioned that the ceremonies were sacred and we must not take notes, pictures, or laugh. We promised, and each made a speech of friendship through Jackson. (laughs)

While the talk was going on, a fine, intelligent Indian stood by in silence, dressed like a white. When the pow-wow was over, he introduced himself as Patricio McGill, a Carlyle graduate and son-in-law of Cornell, one of the inquisitors. He said he would fix things up for us tomorrow and chatted quite a while. He once lived at Temecula where he married a McGee. (laughs)

HS: Oh.

DM: Well, they separated—He once lived at Temecula where he married a McGee. Later, they separated and he married a Yuman. That was several years ago. He said he had helped Crober(?) and others to get notes on the Yuma and was quite in sympathy with us. He believes the customs of the Indians should be preserved in writing. The Indians were dancing and singing with globe rattles when we arrived, which Pat said should not be done at the fiesta. (phone rings) One moment. (tape off)

These are from Field Notes 937, August the third, 1933. And a lot of preliminary notes on Temecula, et cetera. And—all right, I'll take it up from here. One-thirty, Warner's Ranch, Hot Springs, 3719, that's the mileage.

HS: Um-hm.

DM: Well, so far this is all—Off for San Felipe, at 3720. Two-thirty: San Felipe store. [At] 3731, off for San Felipe. From 2:55 to 5:20 at 3736, at San Felipe. Three-fourths—I am reading my notes now—Three-fourths of a mile southwest of the road from Warner's ranch, the village of San Felipe stretches along the slope of the San Felipe wash. (clock chimes) The sandy soil of the wash had been cut to a depth of twenty feet, and a brisk stream eighteen inches wide meanders through the wash. Under a group of cottonwood trees, several modern buildings have been erected, and south of them seventy-five yards are the remains of the old adobe buildings built by the Indians. The adobes are lined from northwest to southeast and face the valley on the east. The one furthest to the northwest is designated as Number One. These numbers have to do with photographs that were taken. Only a chimney of adobe and a mound of walls are standing. Building was approximately ten by twenty feet in size with a fireplace at the southeast end. Cottonwood beans lie on the floor. Mesquite bushes and a lot of sumac grow on all sides. Number Two, thirty paces southeast of One, twelve by fifteen feet in size with a fireplace at the southeast end. (loud thud) Window-casing still in place. Pictures taken from the south and film marked Number Three. And then building Number Three: one hundred paces southeast of Number Two, across a deep gulley and through greasewood and junipers. A large house of two rooms with smaller rooms on the south end. The small room is nine feet six inches by nineteen feet. The large room is twenty-nine by nineteen feet. Only a partial wall is standing. The roof was of shingles as many littered the ground within the walls. (puts objects on the table) House Number Four: forty paces northeast from Number Three, the best preserved of all the houses. The inside measurements: twenty-eight feet eight inches by thirteen feet three inches with a wall of willow poles dividing it across the middle into two rooms. Fireplace is at the south end. Picture Number Six: the front door towards the fireplace. The camera was resting on the window sill, or door sill. Pictures Seven and Eight, from the northwest corner of the room just inside the front door. Front door was twenty-eight inches by sixty-two inches in size. The wall west of front door, twenty inches. Height of adobe wall inside: four feet nine inches. Height of wall at peak of the roof: twelve feet. From front wall to wall partition was twelve foot six. Window cut is the top of a, adobe wall, twenty-four inches deep by twenty-eight inches wide. Door on southeast: two feet six by four ten high. Fireplace opening: three feet four inches wide, two feet six inches deep, and three feet eight inches high. Lots of pack rat seen inside. Rafters of pine poles two-six from center to center, twelve on a side. Poles are five inches thick, floor is a tamped clay. Partition across building only as high as adobe sidewall. Do you want all those, too?

HS: Oh, I don't really need all that.

DM: No, I don't think so, but let's see,—

HS: Tape is getting short.

DM: You know, well, they roofed—Everything was tied together with rawhide thongs.

HS: Let me turn this off.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
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Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS J. W. (MYRTLE) MORRISON

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: Unrecorded

SUBJECT: Whittier Landscape, Operating Anaheim Landing Resort, Early Laguna Beach

MM: I am Mrs. J.W. [John] Morrison. I came to California when I was a baby, two years old.

HS: What year was that?

MM: It was the 1880s, and my family was Quaker and came to Whittier because Quakers at that time settled there.

HS: Where did they come from?

MM: We came from Osborne County. I think the largest city at that time was called Bull City.

HS: What state?

MM: Kansas. From Kansas. Of course, when we arrived there were very, very few buildings in Whittier, nothing like a hotel, and we lived in a tent for some time until my father could build a house. My father was a very likable man and very energetic; because of the boom he never was without work. So it wasn't long until we had a house.

HS: What kind of work did he do?

MM: He was a painter. We lived at the bottom of College Avenue. That was a dead-end street at that time and the other corner was Milton Avenue which was also a dead-end street.

HS: Was the college established then?

MM: I don't remember that the college was built. I really believe that it was because there were about eight very large brick buildings built at that time and my family being a religious family we started going to Sunday school very young. I remember going to the Whittier College to Sunday School—when I was big enough to go. And Whittier, at that time, the hills were so beautiful in the spring, they were so green just like green lawns and covered with all kinds of wildflowers. It was just a riot of color.

HS: Do you remember any flowers that you knew when you were a girl that you don't see anymore?

MM: No. There was blodea (?), poppies, lupins, Indian paintbrush. Spending days in the hills I don't remember that we ever took a lunch. We were in the hills a great deal. We ate the roots of the blodea, the onion part, and the cactus apples. We'd take sticks and push off the apple onto the ground and rub them until the biggest stickers were off. We'd roll it in the green grass until we could pick them up and then we would eat them. And there was something about the juice of a cactus apple that was more or less permanent, very juicy.

HS: Awfully sweet, aren't they, too?

MM: At the end of the day, our faces would be covered and our hands and our clothes, but it didn't matter, we enjoyed it very much.

HS: How many children were there in your family? Were you the older or the younger or where did you fall?

MM: Of nine children, I was the sixth one; two died before we came to California. The rest of the children all lived here in California until very, very recently. My brothers and sisters [have all passed] away, with the exception of one brother and one sister.

HS: The fact that you lived on what was called College Avenue or College Street must have meant that Whittier College was there.

MM: I think it was there.

HS: Did you go to school there?

MM: No, I was too young to go; we only went to church there. The auditorium in the college was the only place large enough for any amount of people. So any organization of any kind, of any size went to Whittier College. But I left Whittier when I was sixteen, so I wasn't old enough to go to college there.

HS: Where did you move to when you were sixteen?

MM: We moved to Artesia. My father traded our property in Whittier for a small ranch in Artesia. It was called at that time Bloomfield. I believe there is a Bloomfield Street now in Artesia. At that time there was a schoolhouse there, and we bought the property that had the schoolhouse and we lived in the old and only schoolhouse at that time.

HS: Do you remember what the name of it had been as a school?

MM: Bloomfield, the Bloomfield School. The creek was just about a block from where our house was. Most of the time it was just a creek, but when it rained, it really overflowed and all the surrounding country was under water. This takes me back to the rains in Whittier. Water would come down the various streets in Whittier carrying brush and all small out houses like small chicken pens and rabbit pens and like that. Everything was brought down in those terrific rains that came from the hills. We had a very nice piece of land that had been river bottom and we could grow just anything that we wanted. And on this place, we had an artesian well that overflowed; it was at the back door. Later, when people began to move in, why, we began to have to have pumps. Later we had to have a windmill and after that it was difficult to have water at all.

HS: You moved from Whittier to Long Beach rather early in life then?

MM: Yes, we lived in Long Beach for a couple of years. Our trips from Whittier to Long Beach were extremely interesting in as much as when we left Bloomfield we came to a ranch they called Sheepsmith ranch. He was an Indian and he had sheep and it was very, very interesting for us to go down and watch them shear the sheep. It would only take just a few minutes. They would pick up one and they'd have a pair of shears and they'd just go over him and in a few minutes he was clean.

HS: Where was that ranch?

MM: In what is now called Hawaiian Gardens. After we left Sheepsmith ranch, we came to the Bixby ranch and we were nearly always met there by Indian vaqueros not only because they wanted to protect us from the cattle but they usually were lonely and liked to visit with us. Very often we would pass the place where they were branding their cattle which we sometimes stopped and watched. It was interesting. But the roads were just something indescribable! They were so deep in ruts and though the place was fenced people would get as far away from the original road as possible to find a place that was better. On every fence post there would be squirrels or owls, very often buzzards. In time the buzzards were not afraid of us; they'd come down and pick off a squirrel or an owl off the fence post as we were passing by.

HS: I wonder what road that would correspond to now.

MM: Seventeenth Street, I think.

HS: Running down to Long Beach?

MM: No, to Seal Beach.

HS: Oh.

MM: Seal Beach. There was a very deep ditch on Signal Hill that they said was a trench left from the Spanish American wars we had at that time. It was there until I was quite a grown up young lady.

HS: I don't remember that. Have we had a battle at Signal Hill? Well, it doesn't matter. I don't remember much about early Seal Beach. It never had much personality as far as I was concerned. I remember the time during the Depression when gambling was legal there, and you'd see limousines from Pasadena and Los Angeles; wealthy old ladies would come down and gamble in those parlors on Main Street.

MM: That's why my husband left Seal Beach. We had—

HS: That's about all I remember about it.

MM: We had Anaheim Landing. Anaheim Landing was a thriving resort, we had—

HS: You mean you operated it?

MM: Yes, my husband, ____ D. Richards—the Pacific Electric Company said that we had 90 percent of all the picnics that left Los Angeles. We had churches and we had organizations; the Pacific Electric or the Gas Company, sometimes we'd have as many as 2500 people in one picnic. It was a very thriving place. We had thirteen private houses. I must say here that we did not own this property; it was part of the Hellman ranch. My husband leased it long-term.

HS: Could you locate what you call Anaheim Landing? Is it a part of the navy ammunition base now?

MM: It's what the navy base has spoiled and taken and ruined. It was a marvelous bathe; it went clear back to, the water would run clear back to Westminster, way back to the hills. That water would come in on one tide; it came in fairly fast. But when it started out students from UCLA measured it and said it went out as fast as thirty miles an hour. If you weren't a good swimmer and you didn't make sure that, just exactly the right time, you just didn't make it. You were carried out to the breakers.

HS: What years did you operate Anaheim Landing as a resort?

MM: From 1910 until—well, earlier than that. My husband was there a long time before I married him. But I was there from 1910 till 1914, '15, somewhere like that.

HS: Betty never told me about this. Did you ever have any occasions—I'm thinking of, for instance, the Iowa picnic that they still have, I guess, at the Bixby Park in Long Beach? Did you ever have any political celebrations or anything of that sort there?

MM: No, but I know Bixby Park very, very well. On our trips from Whittier to Long Beach there were just a few very ragged trees in what is now Bixby Park. But we knew the family that lived there, a widow woman that had a son that they called Crazy Charlie. He lived to be a past middle-aged man and was very famous in Long Beach in the early days. He never wore shoes; he never had shoes in his life, I guess. And he had long hair that came down on his shoulders. But he was a very, very nice man and whenever we wanted to go to the beach to gather shells or anything like that, we were always trusted to go with Charlie. (laughs)

HS: They lived in what is now Bixby Park, is that right? They had what, a little ranch there?

MM: They were supposed to be taking care of that property. I don't know—Bixbys let the mother and son live there. I don't know the circumstance. They afterward, after _____ began to grow, they moved to Long Beach someplace. Charlie still would take groups of kids over to where the rivers opened into the ocean and help find shells. We'd spend whole days with him; sometimes he'd have a group of a dozen children. And though he wasn't a very bright man, he was a very dear man. The kids all loved him.

HS: Do you remember his last name?

MM: No, I never knew him as anything but Crazy Charlie.

HS: I never heard of him.

MM: Any old-timer in Long Beach will tell you about him. He was just like Larson here in Laguna Beach.

HS: Mr. Larson is in his right mind.

MM: Yes, he's a very bright man.

HS: Yes. My uncle built an apartment house in Long Beach in 1916, I believe. It's called the _____ House; it was a block back from the Virginia Hotel then on First Street, west First Street. It's now almost surrounded by buildings of the new Civic Center. But I've been going to Long Beach since about 1916, I think, perhaps before then but I don't remember anything about this man.

MM: Well, later he—tide grew up and it became Terminal Island where we used to go with him. Why, he just stayed in downtown; you'd see him on the street. Of course, he attracted a great deal of attention. He didn't mean anything to tourists, just something to look at.

HS: _____. We were talking about Anaheim Landing.

MM: Well, all the people from Orange County came to Anaheim Landing; many of them owned houses there. We owned thirteen cottages and the rest of Anaheim Landing was leased to people who built their own little cottages. There were thirty or forty of them right on the bay.¹⁰⁷

HS: Your business came from both directions then, didn't it, from Los Angeles and also from Orange County?

MM: Yes, particularly Orange County. The big picnics came from Los Angeles, the saloons came from Anaheim Landing, I mean, from Orange County. We had many churches.

HS: Did many people drive their own vehicle?

MM: Oh, yes.

HS: How did they come?

MM: They'd come in buggies and by the time they arrived they would be so covered with dust you would hardly know their faces. I remember going from Artesia to Long Beach to a Fourth of July celebration with a young man. I had a white dress and a big floppy hat and when we got on the edge of Long Beach he said he had a sister who lived in town and that he would think that we better go by and freshen up before we went downtown. I was so covered with—I wouldn't recognize myself I was so covered with dust. When there was anything like the Fourth of July and they would be coming from Whittier and all the places inland, you could see that dust. It would seem to me that it would be about a half a mile high in the sky. (laughs)

HS: Did you have places for people to unhitch their horses and tie them up or did they leave them hitched to the wagons or buggies?

MM: They stayed with their wagons. Later they came and _____. They all brought cats they wanted to throw away. (inaudible)

¹⁰⁷ Prior to the 1929 depression, there was a movement to build summer cottages along the coast in the vicinity of Sunset Beach; this trend halted after the Depression. Electric Railway Assoc. of Southern California web site: www.erha.org/pesnb.htm

HS: What happened? There was no SPCA then, was there?

MM: No, we took care of them. Of course, with all that amount of houses and everybody threw their garbage in the back yard, the cats had plenty to eat. And there was always fish and clams and things like that. I had fourteen cats that I called my own; they were the most beautiful cats you've ever seen.

HS: Were these all strays or cats that had been left behind?

MM: Yes, people brought them down and left them there.

HS: Anybody who lives outside of town is fair game for this. I grew up on a ranch and people were always leaving cats, mother cats with kittens, in our driveway.

MM: We always had a whole lot of cats. No, my husband wouldn't kill a cat; he wouldn't kill anything.

HS: Were your children born at Anaheim Landing?

MM: No, my, I went to Anaheim Landing—Mr. Richards and I were married—when my son was four years old, and then we moved away for awhile and went back when Betty was about eighteen months old and lived there until she was in the fourth grade. I imagine she was about ten years old. Then we moved back to Norwalk.

HS: You were saying that your husband sold lots. Was that along the bay there in Seal Beach?

MM: Yes. He didn't sell them, he just leased them because the property, well, he leased property from the Hellman ranch and then he sub-leased them to these people who built houses. But they lived there for so many years, they didn't know but what they owned the property. (laughs)

HS: Was there anything at Sunset Beach then?

MM: Yes. After the Pacific Electric went through there were quite a number of real nice houses built along the oceanfront. And then later in back of the swamp part of the—that was all under water at times every day, so there were quite a number of houses that were built back there that were built up on stilts.

HS: That little old island is still there now right next to Huntington Harbor. It looks rather incongruous.

MM: It's been so many years since I've been there. (pause) Betty learned to swim there; she learned to swim before she learned to walk. She could crawl into the water.

HS: Did she learn to swim in the ocean or in the bay?

MM: Well, we had both ocean and bay. The ocean emptied into Anaheim Bay and it was just a really short space from, not more than a block, until it was ocean and great big breakers. So we had both bay and—but all the youngsters in Orange County I think learned to swim in Anaheim Bay because they could start in crawling along the edge of the water and the first thing you know they were swimming.

HS: Did it have a clean bottom?

MM: Oh, yes.

HS: You know Newport Bay in the old days—we used to go down there swimming sometimes but it was slimy and full of tin cans and broken glass. It was not a pleasant place to wade at all.

MM: Oh no, it was just clean, clean as the cleanest pool. Well, the water went in and out twice a day.

HS: It was heavier tide than at Newport. It has such a narrow mouth.

MM: Yes. Where it emptied into Anaheim Bay there was hard rock on both sides, and it was only about, oh I'd say maybe about fifty feet wide but about thirty feet deep. So the water that came through there twice a day made it clean.

HS: Cleaned it out, yes.

MM: It was a wonderful place to fish.

HS: Do you remember boats along there at that time?

MM: Well we had boats. We had something like twenty, twenty-four or twenty-five boats, maybe more that were for rent if anybody wanted to go down to the bay fishing.

HS: They weren't for going out into the ocean though.

MM: No. No, no, there were no large boats really. Very often we saw larger boats not too far out, but not in the bay.

HS: Do you remember anything about Bolsa Chica? It wasn't very far away.

MM: Well, yes, it was a gun club. You're speaking of the gun club?

HS: Yes.

MM: We could get in a row boat and row down there.

HS: To the lagoon?

MM: Yes.

HS: Did you?

MM: No, I didn't, but our boat man built a little tiny boat for my son when he was about seven and he often rowed. He rowed to Sunset Beach; he rowed all over that place in that little boat.

HS: I don't think the people at Bolsa Chica welcomed company, did they? They were (inaudible)

MM: Well, they were all members and I think they considered themselves a rather select group.¹⁰⁸ I knew quite a number of them. One of the most prominent lawyers in Los Angeles at that time—he figured in my divorce case—was a member and very often brought us ducks. We always had all the ducks we wanted. We had neighbors who lived somewhere where ducks were very plentiful and she plucked ducks for the market. She taught me how to pluck a duck just as quickly as she could, perfectly clean.

HS: Who shot these ducks for the market? I suppose there were no game laws then.

MM: No. There was an open season for a short while. They came from everywhere. They usually would come at night and stay all night and then go out very early in the morning. They could nearly always get a limit of ducks.

HS: Well, you said "for the market" and I wondered.

MM: Well this woman that taught me how to pluck ducks had worked for a market.

HS: Betty said that you have walked along the coast from, I suppose, Anaheim Landing down to Laguna.

MM: Yes.

HS: Do you do that often?

MM: Once. My sister and her husband and I walked as far as Newport and we took the boat over from this side of the bay and then walked on down; it was the *old* Hotel Laguna here at that time. We stayed all night.

HS: Where was it?

¹⁰⁸ Beyond Los Patos (south of Sunset Beach) and to Huntington Beach, there was a long expanse of swampy land, favored by duck hunters. Some exclusive clubs were established, and even Pacific Electric (PE) itself encouraged its employees to visit the area. Two old PE car bodies were placed on the sand to accommodate visiting employees. Electric Railway Assoc. of Southern California web site: www.erha.org/pesnb.htm

MM: Right where it is presently, right where the present hotel is.

HS: Well, let's see. Is that the one that became the art gallery?

MM: No, it was right where this hotel is. I was seven months pregnant when I made this walk.

HS: Good exercise.

MM: So my family didn't think it was wise for me to walk back. They walked back and I took a little old jitney to Santa Ana, went into Los Angeles, and then from Los Angeles back down to Anaheim Landing.

HS: There wasn't any road, I suppose, between Laguna and Newport.

MM: There wasn't any road, no transportation. It took me all day to get home. I walked ten miles _____. (tape paused)

HS: Say that again.

MM: _____ was mayor of Seal Beach for two terms, eight years.

HS: When was that?

MM: That was after Seal Beach began to grow. Their school, not superintendent—well anyway, they had built a school and built a church. The first church was a Catholic church. (pause) When Mr. Rich and I were married, there wasn't any Seal Beach to amount to anything. There were about eight houses—

HS: When was that?

MM: Hmm, before 1910, it was before that. There were four beautiful houses, two-story beautiful houses that were built by Mr. Stanton. The rest of them were scattered, little, tiny cottages. There was one, little, tiny store, unbelievably small to carry the amount of groceries they did and also the post office and building and loan.

HS: Were these all along the oceanfront or further back?

MM: This little store was on Main Street. Those big houses were, well, three of them were on the oceanfront, and one of them is still there right across from that big plant that's there.

HS: The Edison plant?

MM: Yes. That was after the _____.

HS: You were telling me that this house you're living in now in Laguna on Ramona Street is one of the oldest houses in Laguna.

MM: That's this one, yeah. My—Dr. Morrison and his wife Julia—my husband was a dentist. For their vacations they always came to Laguna. All this in here was gum grove, and they liked this particular spot and camped here all summer. The house next door—a neighbor of theirs, Hollister Garr (?), a neighbor in Norwalk, would camp next to them. After a number of years they decided that they were good neighbors and they liked Laguna. So Dr. Morrison said when he had fifteen cents to put in lumber and three cents to put in nails, he would invite his friends down and they put this house together. The house next door was a cook wagon from the bean fields over in Costa Mesa.

HS: Which side? Would that be west of you?

MM: That would be, yes, uh-huh.

HS: That would be number three-fifty-something, I guess.

MM: It's five-fifty, five-fifty-four. I think it's four. And they built onto it, so now they have three bedrooms and quite a large living room. It's a nice little cottage.

HS: Is Ramona an old street in Laguna?

MM: Ramona used to be the highway, South Coast Highway. But you know how the road started originally, it'd wander whichever was the easiest way to go, and when they straightened it, why, it was too far, well, a block, so they made this an alley. Of course, we don't consider we live on the alley here, but downtown—(laughs)

HS: They still have a name down on Park Avenue; it says it's a one-way street, Do Not Enter.

MM: Well, this only goes one block down here, and that's Sleepy Hollow. So the Morrison family kept coming here and the children, after they grew up *their* children come here and when I married Dr. Morrison, their grandchildren were coming here. And now my great-grandchildren are coming here. When my husband died, Dr. Morrison, and his property was put in trust, it was important to the bank for some reason to know when this house was built. They searched the records here and in Santa Ana and there has never been a record of when this house was built. So nobody knows how old it is.

HS: No permit was issued. Well, fifteen cents for lumber, is it built of redwood?

MM: Yes, it's a single construction _____. To start with, the fireplace was not here, but one of the son-in-laws was learning how to build fireplaces, and one of the first ones he built on his own as practice was the original fireplace here. But during the war there

was so much shooting out here on the ocean that the house was jarred so constantly that the original fireplace fell down.

HS: I remember. I was living in South Laguna during World War II; there was just constant vibration.

MM: Yes, so this is about twelve, fourteen years old, I guess. These eucalyptus trees are more than fifty years old.

HS: I wonder who planted these trees; they're not the usual eucalyptus that was planted by the railroad.

MM: I don't know who planted the original ones, but whatever ones that are left downtown here are the original ones.

HS: Well, they are very handsome trees, much prettier than the blue gums.

MM: I wish you'd just look at the trunks of these trees. They are this big around. They're just terrific. During the war we had to keep our blinds down, but when I came down first, the limbs of this tree came clear over the house and it came completely down in front, so when we were supposed to keep our shades down and the house camouflaged, we were almost completely hidden under the trees. It was beautiful really; I loved to have them. But my husband was away one night and I was here alone. I heard this creak, creak, creak, creak, and I couldn't find out what it was by looking through the house. In going to the bathroom which was detached from—the bathroom I saw was cracked in three or four pieces outside of the house. So, one of those big limbs was just ready to come down. We had a tree man who had worked many, many years in Washington and Oregon come to cut this limb down. He said had it fallen, and it would have fallen very soon, it would have crushed this house just like an eggshell.

HS: The tree is gone now?

MM: No, the tree's still here; it was just that one big limb. But that one limb was this big around. He took it off.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MRS. LOUIS (NELLIE GAIL) MOULTON

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: February 21, 1969

SUBJECT: Judge Richard Egan, horseback riding group, Helena Modjeska

HS: This is Helen Smith. I am talking with Mrs. Louis Moulton in her home at Three Arch Bay. A friend of mine, Mrs. Moulton, has been doing some research on Richard Egan of Capistrano. She finds great disagreement among the people who remember him. Some people have called him, literally, a dirty old man. Other people have said he was a good citizen and a good man and helped the people. If you would like to commit yourself on this, see, she's puzzled because she can't find what he was really like. (clears throat)

NM: Mr. Egan, or Judge Egan as they called him, was, was a neighbor and friend of Mr. Moulton. I never heard Mr. Moulton make a disparaging remark about Judge Egan. Never! (sighs) They used to be a little group, a little social group, here in those days. Madame Modjeska was up in the hills; her husband was Count Bozenta. She used to come down and spend the day with Mr. Moulton. Before she came, she would write him. There were no phones then, you know.

HS: Yeah.

NM: She would write him saying they could come on a certain day and suggested a luncheon that they could to partake of.

HS: This was before you were married?

NM: Oh, yes, before I was married.

HS: Before 1908?

NM: Oh, yes. Judge Egan was one of the group that knew each other pretty well. Oh, let me see, who else was there?

HS: Marco Forster? No, it would have been, uh—Any of the Forsters?

NM: Oh, the Forsters? Well, yes, but—Yes, Madame Modjeska—Oh.

HS: Modjeska rented the old—

NM: Marah Ellis Ryan, the author was living at San Juan Capistrano at the old mission at that time. She came here from Pennsylvania in ill-health. And, I do not know under what circumstances she arrived at San Juan Capistrano, but [she] was someone of prominence in Southern California, and they gave her a suite of rooms in the old mission. Now, she loved to go horseback. And so Mr. Moulton and Judge Egan and Marah Ellis Ryan and Madam Modjeska and her husband were a little coterie of friends that would get together sometimes.

HS: Where did they ride, on your ranch?

NM: Oh, well, on the ranch. Marah Ellis Ryan [was] living at Capistrano boarding at the old restaurant there. And she was writing at the time. She wrote a book while she was there.

HS: Was that called *The Soul of Raphael*?

NM: That was one of her books. She had twenty books sold in the market. One of them was a book of poems. I think I have it. I am not sure. But she used to ride a good deal down at Capistrano. She'd ride down toward the beach along Capistrano way, but I don't know whether she rode up here to the ranch or whether they rode—I don't know where they rode. But, Judge Egan and—

HS: It must have been Mrs. Ryan or was it Miss?

NM: Yes, and Marah Ellis Ryan was her—

HS: It sounds as if she were married, or had been.

NM: Yes, she had been.

HS: They were good friends?

NM: She and Judge Egan?

HS: Yes.

NM: Well, yes. This was a little group of friends. When Madam Modjeska was not traveling and was living up here in her home, well, that was just a little group of friends would get together sometime.

Now, Judge Egan, as I remember, whether it's true or not, was not a real judge.

HS: So I gather; he was a judge by courtesy. He did make decisions though that kept people from cutting each other's throats.

NM: Yes, he was used as a judge down here. Now I don't know, but I never heard anything against him at all. He had some property between here and Capistrano down where the creek joins the old highway, because when we drove down there, we had to be careful driving across that creek.

HS: That would be near Rosenbaum's place?

NM: Yes.

HS: Yes, um-hm. Did he—Where did he live? Oh, he lived in the house by the Forster house, didn't he? That brick house that is being restored.

NM: Judge Egan?

HS: Yes.

NM: Yes, they used to call it Harmony Hall.

HS: Oh.

NM: And it was across the street. And on the right-hand side of the street was the old jail. And that was converted into a residence. And Judge Egan lived across the street in a brick house. Two-story, I think, and they called that Harmony Hall.

HS: Did he name it that?

NM: It was named while he was there.

HS: Do you remember him?

NM: Oh, yes.

HS: What, sort of physical appearance did he have? Was he large or small, neat or messy, or—

NM: No, I think he wore a suit that a man (pause) would naturally wear at a time like that. He didn't wear a uniform.

HS: He never was a farmer, a rancher, was he?

NM: No, I don't think so. He owned a little property near the creek, but I don't think he ever physically did any work.

HS: Then he dressed as a city man or a professional man? Is that right?

NM: No.

HS: Did he wear boots or shoes, or—

NM: (laughs)

HS: Well, that's getting pretty—

NM: (laughs) Well, that I do not recall.

HS: But he always looked nice anyway?

NM: Reasonably.

HS: Do you remember how he talked? These are questions that my friend would like to find out. Did he have an Irish accent?

NM: I don't remember him having an accent.

HS: He was an Irishman, but he had traveled a lot before he settled down here and he might have lost it.

NM: Yeah. I don't remember him with an accent.

HS: Have you been to his home when he lived there?

NM: Yes.

HS: Do you have any idea what happened to all the things that he had? He had a lot of Indian relics and a big library of books. Have you any idea what—

NM: I have no idea.

HS: You don't have anything of his, so—

NM: No, just I have a photograph or two, I think, taken with Mrs. Ryan and him. Oh, and the priest, Father Sullivan.

HS: O'Sullivan¹⁰⁹.

NM: O'Sullivan. Yes. O'Sullivan was a priest. And Father O'Sullivan gave me fish to put in my little pool up on the ranch. And Father O'Sullivan was a greatly beloved man as I remember him.

HS: Yes.

NM: And I know he furnished credentials for my daughter to see the Pope when she was in Europe.

HS: Oh! When she was sixteen?

NM: Yeah. I had credentials from him when I was over there two years later, but it was in the summer and the Pope was indisposed and had gone to a, well—

HS: Up in the hills where it was cooler.

NM: Yes, I don't know where it was, but I didn't get to see him anyway personally but my daughter did.

HS: Do you think that Mrs. Ryan was living at the mission at the same time that Father O'Sullivan was living there and restoring it? He came in 1903, wasn't it? I believe so. He was there for twenty years.

NM: I have no recollection. I only know Father O'Sullivan as a citizen. Not being a Catholic myself, I had no connection in that regard. But he used to come up to our house. I felt of him as just an old friend and when he bought us buckets of fish to put in the pool. (laughs)

HS: Gold fish. That was after the fountain was built, then, out there.

NM: We just had a pool then in the yard. (laughs) They've filled it in now and made a flower bed out of it, I think.

HS: Do you remember the irrigation ditch that ran near Mr. Egan's house? It must have been between his house and the old coast highway, the old highway.

¹⁰⁹ Reverend St. John O'Sullivan

NM: No, I don't have a recollection of that. He was on one side of the—He was on the north side of the highway. And I can't seem to remember the name of the people had the property across, which is now—

HS: El Adobe.

NM: El Adobe.

HS: That wasn't O'Harzaval(?), was it?

NM: No, that doesn't sound—

HS: They owned one of those adobes along there. I can't remember. Clarence Brown bought it from, uh—

NM: Clarence Brown?

HS: He bought it from that family that owned it before. It seems to me it was the O'Harzavals(?), but maybe not when he made it into a restaurant. I don't remember. But behind the judge's house was the Forster house, Las Roses.

NM: Now, across the street but, Clarence Brown comes the next generation, you might say.

HS: Well, he was the one who made it into a restaurant.

NM: Yes, The Adobe.

HS: I am jumping ahead. Clarence Brown and I were in high school together.

NM: I am trying to think of the people that owned that property because Judge Egan, I think, used to take his meals over there.

HS: In their home?

NM: I think all this is before the restaurant.

HS: Oh, heavens, yes. He just ate with the family then?

NM: I would recognize the name if I heard it, but I can't think of the name. They had daughters, and they were prominent people. And I think the lady was a sister of the man that was the manager of the main hotel in San Francisco.

HS: The Palace, I suppose, the Palace Hotel?

NM: Yes. Yes.

HS: Well, we can find out that. Somebody will know; it doesn't matter. Don't let it bother you. Were you ever entertained in the judge's home? Did he have a wine cellar there? Do you remember?

NM: Well, the wine cellar in the restaurant that Clarence Brown bought—Their wine cellar was part of the jail, as I recall.

HS: Well, I was speaking of earlier times when the judge was living in his house. Did he have his own wine cellar that you—

NM: That I do not know. He may have. I dare say he had some liquor around, probably.

HS: He was an Irishman after all.

NM: Yes, but I never knew of him being anything but a gentleman.

HS: Well, glad to hear that. Mrs. Lee, the friend of mine, has been looking up lots of things on him and she felt that he was one of the leading citizens of Capistrano.

NM: Oh, he was.

HS: Then, she went down to Capistrano and talked with various people who remembered him, and as I say, she ran into all this opposition. There are people there who didn't like him, apparently. Then, she couldn't see any reason for it, so she was puzzled and wondered if you had an impression of him. She prefers to think that he was a nice man.

NM: No. I don't think Mr. Moulton had ever had any business through him at all. I think it was just a friendly acquaintance.

HS: You had riding horses on your ranch. Did they ride your horses, those people down there, or did they have their own horses, Mrs. Ryan and the judge?

NM: I wouldn't know. (phone rings) There was a little stable down there where she—

HS: Oh, it could have been. Yes. Do you remember the summer that Modjeska rented the hotel down at the beach? Down at Dana Point? Down on the beach?

NM: I think my telephone is ringing.

HS: Yes, it is. Go ahead. (pause in recording)

NM: Madam Modjeska was having a farewell performance in Los Angeles. And I guess we had a phone by that time. Anyway, she got word to Mr. Moulton to meet the train as it went to El Toro, and so he did. And she gave him tickets to the theater in Los Angeles.

HS: What theater, do you remember?

NM: Well, the one on Broadway, North Broadway, not far from the—

HS: I wouldn't know whether that's the place.

NM: Uh, North Broadway, it's on the south side of the street, not far from the *Los Angeles Times* Building, in that part.

HS: That's the Civic Center. Yeah. Did you go to the performance?

NM: Yes.

HS: It was a concert? No. What was it, was it a play? It wasn't *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream*? That was one of her favorites.

NM: I don't think it was that. I think it was *Macbeth*.

HS: Oh? Well, she could play Lady Macbeth, couldn't she? I never saw her. She died when I was seven years old.

NM: She died down at the beach.

HS: Yes, um-hm.

NM: The Crookshanks got her old home in Tustin.

HS: Yes. We lived just across the orchard, so I am very familiar with that house. We lived on Tustin Avenue. You know, the Snows and the Adamses, and all of those people lived on that block. And then Crookshanks bought the Modjeska house. Well, she only rented it; she never owned it. So I was quite familiar with it. It was a charming house. Um, what was I going to say? Did you hear many of her concerts or performances? Or was that the only one?

NM: That was the last one. I think, perhaps, I had. Before I had any reason to know her at all, I think I'd been to a performance of hers, but this particular one was the only one that I went to see where she gave us the tickets.

HS: Yes. That must have been around 1910 or '11 then? It must have been then.

NM: I imagine it would be somewhere there.

HS: Did you ever go to any of the parties that they had up in the canyon at her home?

NM: I never did. I never did, but I'll tell you [about] one evening, a social evening. It was given in Santa Ana up on the second floor in one of the clubs that they had in those days. And that was before my marriage. Mr. Moulton took me to that. And there was Madam Modjeska and the Count and Mr. James Irvine and the—I don't seem to remember the other guests. I was new to the community at that time. But I remember playing cards with Madam Modjeska. And I remember dancing with Mr. James Irvine. Those are some of the recollections for that evening.

HS: At that party? (laughs)

NM: Yes. And I believe Madam Modjeska was giving the party. I think she was and had rented that hall.

HS: After all, it was probably quite a trip to go up into the canyon to their home.

NM: I have been to her home in the canyon, and I've been there when her maid that she had for years was still there. And I had a luncheon that day, Mr. Moulton and I, but with her old lady-in-waiting. She used to travel with her, you see. And, but I don't remember where Madam was, whether she was here or not, but she, the lady-in-waiting, was in charge of this ranch house, and we were up there. And, I remember having lunch that day. And I took some pictures in the grounds, I remember, of her old house there.

HS: You knew the Rices, of course.

NM: Rices? I used to, yes. I guess they are all gone now, aren't they?

HS: Yes, some of the—There are two or three of James Willis Rice's sons living. I used to take violin lessons from him when I was a girl.

NM: Oh, is that so?

HS: Do you remember he played the violin? James Willis Rice. Yes, he was the son of James S. Rice.

NM: Oh, yeah.

HS: He was Percy's brother and Harvey's brother.

NM: Oh, they were related to Mr. Irvine.

HS: Yes. Mrs. Rice and Madam Modjeska were very good friends. They always got together when Madam Modjeska was in Orange County.

NM: Yes, um-hm. Um-hm. Yes.

HS: She rented the frame hotel down at the lower end of the, where San Juan Creek flows out, one summer. There was a hotel built there, you know. They had a subdivision there; it's called San Juan by the Sea, down on the sand where the trailer park is now, the county trailer park, just down below Dana Point on the flatland where San Juan Creek runs out. And the hotel was built there, and it wasn't a success. The boom broke, you remember, in the late 1880s. And sometime after that, Madam Modjeska rented this hotel for the summer and entertained people there. She was a great hostess, wasn't she? But I think that—

NM: Well, that was before my time.

HS: I am afraid it was, yes.

NM: Yes.

HS: Um-hm. Did you know the Forsters well, the ones who lived at Las Rosa?

NM: I have known or met most of the Forster family. Mr. Moulton knew them all very well. And I had met most of them casually in the years after I was married and we owned the property down there at San Juan, walnut orchard in the—Then, we planted citrus. I think we had about ninety acres there was all. It didn't join our main ranch property.

HS: I didn't know you had any land there. Do you remember a man named Louie Dartigue(?), a Frenchman? Dartigue(?).

NM: I don't recall.

HS: He owned sheep land, I guess, down there.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: MARTINA YORBA PELANCONI

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: November 3, 1973

SUBJECT: Yorba family, San Antonio adobe, and landholdings

Formal start of the interview appears on third page of transcript.

HS: Peg Wente's mother . . .

MP: That name seems familiar to me.

HS: Your sister, Uvenia, married Wente.

MP: Wente, yes.

HS: Peg is the granddaughter, Margaret Wente? She's my age.

MP: Oh, is that so?

HS: Yes, and I used to know her before she was married. So, I remember she used to talk about Viola Vejar, but I never met her.

MP: Viola is still going, you know. Working and taking, being with her mother; they're getting along pretty well.

HS: I'm just going to leave this thing running.

MP: But, you know, it's quite lovely to have something made by your grandfather and grandmother like this and to keep it like this. I generally kept everything but you know, I have a very dear little trunk that was given to me from Spain, little thing like this, about this big. And it's red and with a little paint, you know.

HS: *Baúl?*

M: Yes, ----cita and I've given all of my pictures and things. You know, I have, well, kind of diminished all my home, because I've had everything that I wanted saved, you know, put in

that little trunk with the pictures for Viola to take care of. Then she can follow up what we had started.

HS: What is she going to do with them?

MP: Well, she's going to keep them while she's living and then she'll be giving them to some of the relatives.

HS: The family?

MP: The family, yes.

HS: Have you ever thought about giving these things to an institution like the university?

MP: No, I've never wanted to give anything I have out of the family. I always think that my family ought to know and practice and get along with what we have, some of the old things. Now she's got most all of the old things that I had. You know, I had very lovely things put in this home, but since I'm going to give this, sell this to the telephone company—

HS: Oh.

MP: I've got that with them. And I've got part of my things packed up in there; books and things are all packed up because I'm going to let them have them, see?

HS: It's already been sold?

MP: No, no, no; it's still mine, still mine but I've got the children; they know that it's coming to them, you know. And they have to take care of it, just as I have taken care of it, but I always tell them, I hope you don't live as long as I've lived because ninety years is no age for anybody, you know. Providing, I always tell them, you're going to have some money to keep you up.

HS: That's true.

MP: If you haven't got no money, don't wish for a long life.

HS: No, because you could worry, you know.

MP: Worry and make other people you know worry: Who's going to take care of her? Who's going to do this, and who's going to do that?

HS: Many old people who have plenty of money, when they get past ninety, begin to worry. And they're afraid that they'll be out on the street. They forget that they have money.

MP: Well, and I think they have a right to forget, too, because the world is so upset that how can you be thinking otherwise? That the younger children are going to have what you had? So I always think that you never know. So, it's better to, well, not to wish death, because it don't do us any good to wish for it because if God wants to give it to us, He'll give it to us, without us wishing for it.

HS: My mother lived to be—my mother was born the same year as you, 1879.

MP: Seventy-nine, yes. And how old did she live?

HS: She lived to be eighty-nine, but she didn't like it at all. Her mind was all right but she was taking about twenty pills a day. And she would say to me, "I think I'll just stop taking all these pills," and I would laugh to make light of it and say, "But, you can't commit suicide by stopping your pills. You'll just make yourself uncomfortable, so you might as well take the pills."

MP: Well of course, that was the best advice that you could give her. I don't go on long deaths for friends, for too long a life, I mean, if you haven't got the means. You just get pitied, you know, and what's the use of living that way?

HS: There are so many people in Los Angeles who live in one awful hotel room. It must be a terrible life, one meal a day.

MP: Just think of it, them living in there between the other people. I hope to goodness that I don't have to. Oh, I know I don't have to go through that, but it's sad when people have to.

HS: You know, this, would you like to hear a little of this? And see how you sound?

MP: Yes.

HS: This is Helen Smith. I am interviewing Mrs. Martina Pelanconi in her home on 7305 Sunset Boulevard. This is October, no, this is November 3, 1973. Mrs. Pelanconi, where were you born?

MP: Yorba, in my hometown.

HS: Oh.

MP: Orange County. Yorba, there wasn't very much of Yorba at the time I was born. Of course, the folks lived there, you know, and I was born there, Orange County.

HS: I see. Was that where Atwood was later?

MP: Oh, yes. Atwood come way—many, many, many years after that.

HS: But that was in the same area?

MP: Yes, in the same district, the same land, yes.

HS: You were born on your father's land?

MP: Yes, oh yes.

HS: On Esperanza Road?

MP: Yes. It wasn't named at that time; they didn't have the names but that's where I was born.

HS: Where was your father's house?

MP: My father's house was—you know where the old school, Yorba schoolhouse, is?

HS: Yorba school?

MP: Yes.

HS: Not the Peralta school?

MP: Oh, no, no, no. Not the Peralta, Yorba.

HS: North side of the river?

MP: Yes.

HS: No, I don't know.

MP: Well, it's there by Yorba Linda, down below.

HS: Yes.

MP: Well, that's where we lived before—when I was born, I was born there, at Yorba Linda, what they call Yorba Linda now, you know. And they call it Linda, Linda, Yorba Linda. And well, we were all born there, all the children, which we were nine, nine or ten of us.

HS: Which were you?

MP: I was the second one. Hortensia was the first one and you know, when I was little, I come. Hortense was very fair, she took after my mother. She was born a blond, blue eyes and light hair. Well, when poor me, when I come in, I was a brunette you know, a little dark and they always called me "darky" and I always, I still am, to this day, some of my people do call me "darky," you know.

HS: You mean in English?

MP: Yes, uh-huh.

HS: Oh dear.

MP: Or in Spanish, in Spanish, "*negrita*" means "darky," you know. So I _____. My sister, Mary. Have you met my sister, Mary? She's married to a, was married to a "Vejar." He's gone now, you know.

HS: No.

MP: Well, they lived here in Orange County. She comes here quite often now. Viola, Viola's mother.

HS: Oh. I grew up in Tustin and most of the people I know are in the south part of the county: Santa Ana, and Newport, Costa Mesa, Tustin, but—

MP: We had considerable property in Tustin.

HS: I know, all of those areas.

MP: Uh-huh.

HS: But uh, I don't have, know too many people in the north part of the county: Anaheim, Fullerton, Orange. And I'll tell you who some of my friends are: Arnold Dominguez, I know. And I know Amos Travis and Dorothy. Do you know them?

MP: Oh yes, sure.

HS: Dorothy and I went to Santa Ana High School together.

MP: My relatives, you know, they're back—they're a little younger than I am but I know them, their mothers, perfectly. They grew up together. Of course, I grew up as a young lady in Anaheim. I was in Anaheim, to all the functions that they would have, the dances and things in Anaheim. I was at my age, at that time.

HS: Did you, did your father move to Anaheim or—

MP: No, never. He passed away when he was rather a young person.

HS: Oh. And you all lived, continued to live in the house—

MP: In Anaheim, you know. We lived and then we went on to—well, where the Yorba people are in now, we didn't live there back when we were very young. Not until my father died, we moved to Peralta and then we continued living there.

HS: Which house did you live in, in Peralta [district]?

MP: The house that, my first house that my husband made. It's where Ben, Bernardo, lives now on the side of the hill.

HS: Oh. I have never been to his home. In fact, I've never seen him. I've talked with him on the phone.

MP: You'll want to meet. That was my first home that Mr. Pelanconi built for me while we were there.

HS: What business was he in?

MP: Mr. Pelanconi? When I married him, he was in company with Mr., in the wine company, Guasti. Have you heard of him, Mr. Guasti?

HS: Yes.

MP: Well, Mr. Guasti and Mr. Pelanconi were in partnership in their winery.

HS: Was that over in Ontario?

MP: Up here, closer to Duarte, going to Riverside, that's where. We had fifty acres. Fifty? I guess five hundred acres of the Guasti Winery that we used to run, Mr. Pelanconi and Mr. Guasti.

HS: Oh.

MP: Mr. Guasti was a very lovely man, businessman, you know, in the wine and he asked Mr. Pelanconi to be with him, as a younger partner.

HS: How did you meet?

MP: How did we meet?

HS: How did you meet your husband?

MP: Oh, I met my husband in Los Angeles, here in this city. And I didn't, I didn't marry Mr. Pelanconi until I was about thirty years old.

HS: You didn't?

MP: But I had very good luck. I had a wonderful man.

HS: Did you have a family?

MP: No. No family at all. But we lived very happy and he made it very happy for all of us after he passed away, you know. He was a very good man.

HS: Did he come from Italy, himself?

MP: Yes. But wait a minute, no. His parents were married in Los Angeles, his mother and father. Then the Italian man came into Los Angeles; that's where my mother-in-law met him. They married, they married there.

HS: Do you remember much about your childhood?

MP: I do, I do, but it's funny that I never forgot my childhood.

HS: I think it comes back. I'll tell you what my husband said. I said, "I'm going to see a lady of ninety-four years, who sounds, has a strong voice and sounds wonderful on the phone," and he said, "Find out what kind of diet she had when she was a child."

MP: Funny. It was very little milk.

HS: Oh?

MP: Because now, our family, we used to have cows, you know, at that time. But they used to milk the cows and take the cream and deliver it there where the separation milk thing had, you know. Well, I lived, but I don't like milk to this day, and all our family never liked milk.

HS: Do you think this has anything to do with the Mexican custom? In Mexico, children, after they are weaned, don't have any milk. They start drinking coffee.

MP: I wonder. No, I don't think—they never gave us coffee, they always gave us something else. You know, they'd make kind of mush, what we would call, and then they'd give us that.

HS: *Atolle*?

MP: *Atolle*, yes.

HS: Made of grain.

MP: Yes, they used to give us that. I remember that, but as far as milk, I never could take it. I can't take it to this day.

HS: Do you like cheese?

MP: No, I don't.

HS: Did they make cheese on your ranch?

MP: No, they didn't. They had people that they used to take the cream to. They used to make milk but it wasn't our ranch, it was across the river. We lived on the other side of the river, see? And these people separated the milk and all that and they had it on the other side.

HS: Who were they, do you know?

MP: I don't remember them very well. I never knew them, I guess, the people. See, they used to separate the milk with horse and buggy and I never went around. My mother was kind of particular. She didn't let us run around very much with other people, you know. Unless we were of the same family, then we could go, but I think we were raised kind of—

HS: Your mother was a Cota?

MP: [Erolinda] Cota, yes.

HS: And she had the same name as you?

MP: Martina.

HS: Yes, her name was—

MP: Her mother, her mother was Martina.

HS: Oh.

MP: Her mother was Martina and that's why she named me Martina, too.

HS: Oh. You know what Bernardo calls you—Aunt Matty?

MP: Yes, Aunt Matty. (laughter) They always called me that. Everybody called me Aunt Matty.

HS: We were talking about the diet. I suppose most things were raised on the ranch?

MP: Yes, they did; they had to have. My grandfather, you see, Bernardo, when he come to, to California, he went, of course, to follow the river. You know, they were all interested about the river. Well, my father, grandfather kept up, you know, tracing the river and when he got to the top of the, where the river was coming into the canyon there, he worked, and he had men working and made it that they were going to have the water divided, see, to Anaheim and to come to the, to go around. Well, my grandfather seen all to that and he put his, his say into that and my father had to get, my grandfather had to get the Indian men to get to work, see? That's how they got that started and that's where the Yorba Water Company comes from around, see, and then the other one goes around to the Olive side, so—

HS: Yes, there is still a ditch—

MP: A division.

HS: Still an open ditch.

MP: Yes.

HS: Santa Ana Valley.

MP: Right around Santa Ana Valley, yes.

HS: It's on the north side.

MP: And we had the Yorba Valley, you know, on the other side.

HS: Is that the one that became the Anaheim Water Company?

MP: Yes, that's the Anaheim Water Company.

HS: I'm going to, let's see. There's a picture in this album of one of those, oh. Now, these are some place in the canyon. I hope you can see these.

MP: Well, my eyesight is not very good, but—

HS: They're not well described. This is called an irrigating ditch. Well now, that has to be in the canyon some place.

MP: Yes.

HS: But there's nothing—

MP: Well, that's a part of the river. It must be a part of the river.

HS: With all the willows?

MP: Yes.

HS: Well, here's a little hill here, but here, this is a ditch.

MP: Yes, one of the ditches.

HS: A dirt road here and a pole line, but over here is someone's ranch and that must be on the north side. Does that look at all familiar to you?

MP: Well, you know, my eyes are pretty bad and I couldn't tell you what part it could be.

HS: They have to be up in the canyon. Apparently it's a ditch that goes close to the hill.

MP: It comes down and around from the Anaheim, from the Yorba ditch, you know, from where the division of the water. That looks from, that's the way it comes to Peralta district, see? Coming out this way.

HS: Oh. Now that could be it on the other side. It's hard to tell.

MP: Uh-huh. Well, those little pictures are, are hard and then when your eyes are not very good, it's hard, too.

HS: Here's a picture of my aunt. You won't be able to see it. She was about thirty-two then. This was at Catalina about 1903.

MP: No, I couldn't. But you know, it's nice to keep those things.

HS: It is. But I wish she had described them better. If she had only said who that old adobe belonged to or where it was, but she didn't say.

MP: And, and of course, I couldn't recognize the adobe.

HS: Let me see, it has a eucalyptus tree close to it.

MP: We had eucalyptus in the old place.

HS: Well, you also had a big cypress tree. Where is that? (looking through photos) There it is, but there are no, there's a hill, way over there.

MP: Uh-huh. No, but that's a, I don't remember my father so good, my grandfather having anything like a shed, there. I don't remember.

HS: No. I'm sure that's not your grandfather's house.

MP: No, I know that, too.

HS: And this is out in a field.

- MP: Out in the field there. I wouldn't know where that is. I couldn't place it.
- HS: We must get back to the food. I suppose they raised all kinds of vegetables?
- MP: Oh, at the ranch? They always did.
- HS: I should think they would raise beans and chilis?
- MP: And you know what? We had, they, at the ranch, when I remember, my first remembrance was the vineyards. You know all Santa Ana, Anaheim, Tustin and all those countries was vineyards. When the epidemic come on the vineyard, then everything burnt and was dried out. I remember so well, you know. When they, then afterwards, they had to dig the vines out and burn them because they had to throw that out and burn them all, you know.
- HS: Yes.
- MP: Then we, we had after that, we had the walnuts planted. And you know, then all that grew up for years and we used to get the walnuts of that, I remember. English walnuts. They were planted, big, big trees. Quite big trees planted, and they all grew beautiful into these great big old trees, you know. It gave a lot of nuts. Well, the epidemic come on that, and then they died, too.
- HS: I don't remember that.
- MP: Oh, yes.
- HS: I grew up in a walnut grove in Tustin, but we just pulled them out because the land became too valuable to raise walnuts.
- MP: Well, everybody loved their walnuts and they brought in the oranges after that, see? So, I remember that so well. And then afterwards, the orange got in trouble again and we had to get rid of them.
- HS: Quick decline.
- MP: Just think how much we people lost. Everybody in Orange County lost in losing their orchards and then, they wouldn't get discouraged, you see. They'd try something else, and that's the way it went until we had—I was one that planted the latest after they all, the other ones had died. I planted some orange trees and I made good money at that for about three or four years, after I was married already—and this was many years, one after the other, you know, and I made money. Then afterwards, I had to give it up, you know. I sold parts of it, and oh boy, I had been making money with the oranges. And that's the way it's come. Things go and other ones come this way. Well—
- HS: Now the people, the Travises, for instance, they have lots of oranges. They have a good crop and they can't get enough money from the trees to pay the taxes.
- MP: That's sad.

HS: Well, that makes them sell their property.

MP: Sure. But another thing, you can't sell your property over there. Now, I've had my property in Yorba that I've had, and I can't sell it.

HS: Where is yours?

MP: Well, you know where the house is on the side of the hill? The one Mr. Pelanconi made for me over there.

HS: This is at Peralta?

MP: At Peralta, yes.

HS: The one where Ben lives?

MP: About where Ben lives now.

HS: I don't know where it is, but I'll find it.

MP: Well, it's a very lovely place, location, you know. I have a two-story house and then I have the barbecue pit house on its own and then my sister-in-law, Edna Yorba, lives with her brother, with Ben, with the kids, you know, there. She has—in the little house she lives upstairs. I always wanted her to live with me after her husband died, so she's lived with me while I lived there. Then, I moved to Hollywood, so then she stayed there with them.

HS: How much land is there?

MP: Oh, I really don't know how much I have left over there now. I really don't know, and I haven't sold but really very little in there.

HS: Well, they're certainly building lots of tracts of houses up there.

MP: Yes, you know that little village that he's trying to put up, the little—

HS: Along the old canyon road?

MP: Yes.

HS: Is that his?

MP: Yes, well, it's his land and Edna's land and Jack's land and part of mine and Mabel, too. Now, Mabel has been quite bad, hasn't she, my sister-in-law?

HS: I don't know her.

MP: Oh, well. She's a very charming, well-built person, you know, like Edna. Have you met Edna?

HS: No.

MP: Oh, you haven't met either. My two sisters-in-law are very well built, you know, taller than I am and very healthy looking. They all, well, they're both widows. My brothers died and they're widows.

HS: That's the history of America; it's full of rich widows.

MP: Yes, well, not always rich but medium; so you can stand up.

HS: It's too bad that people lose their husbands so early.

MP: Yes, and these two brothers of mine died young.

HS: Oh? What were their names?

MP: Bernardo and Vincent.

HS: Oh. He used the English?

MP: Yes, Vincent, Vicente. It was Vicente and Bernardo both, but we called them in English, you know, Ben and Vincent.

HS: Mm hmm. We can't seem to stick to the subject; I really would like to talk about the food that people ate when you were young.

MP: Oh, when I was young? Chickens, chicken, we had a lot of chicken, I remember that.

HS: *Cuatalope*?

MP: Yes, we always had a lot of that, you know. My mother believed in giving us plenty to eat and vegetables that we should all like. And we all liked vegetables very much. And we were all brought up healthy, except me, and I lived the oldest.

HS: (laughter) Excuse me for laughing.

MP: Well, that's funny.

HS: This reminds me of my own aunt who lived to be ninety-eight. We met over Labor Day and she was about ninety-two or three, I think, and she was resting; she was always resting; but in between times, she was practically galloping. You couldn't keep up with her. So, she was holding court. She was on her bed with a spread over her knees and I went in to visit with her and she said very solemnly, "You know, Helen, I've always been an invalid." She was about ninety-four then. (laughs)

MP: Ninety-four! Well, see, with me; I always was dainty, I mean, weakly when I was little, always with throat trouble. I always had throat trouble and I would get cold after cold, you know, and then they'd have to put me to bed and I'd get over it.

HS: Maybe they gave you extra special food?

MP: Well, I guess, soup. That's one thing, they can't never get me enough soup. I love soup. Do you like soup?

HS: Oh yes, indeed.

MP: I think soup is a wonderful—I drink, drink soup every day, summer and winter. I love it. I love it with vegetables.

HS: What kind of vegetables did they raise besides beans and corn and tomatoes?

MP: Oh, summer squash and things like that.

HS: Same as the ones in Mexico. I have lived in Mexico and I know what's found down there. Did you use any of the Mexican diet? The rice?

MP: Well, we always used rice.

HS: And beans?

MP: No, uh, well. I love beans but I don't get them very often. I love the Mexican beans. But I don't get it.

HS: Did you have them when you were young?

MP: Oh, well, once in a while, about once a week or so. But there was beans on the table because the hired help was Mexican and they had to have the meals for the Mexicans, you know.

HS: Beans and tortillas?

MP: Yes. Well, they never got tortillas because they could get that at home. Who would make the tortillas? Nobody. We had a little Indian that raised us. My father had this woman working for him when he was living alone before my mother came, see. And she used to be a wonderful cook and cleaned and used to do all the work for my father. He was living alone and had quite a big house and she was running the house for him and everything. So this old lady was living with him. Then when my father got married, she had to come into the kitchen then to be cook for my mother, and she used to cook, you know. She used to like to make things like she had, but he wouldn't let her use the beans and all that. For the hired men, they had to have them, though, and for his family, it was a different thing, because we couldn't be growing up on beans all the time. We had too much meat. We had, we loved meat, the little ones, you know. So they had to give us meat instead of beans all the time.

HS: Was the meat all raised there?

MP: Oh, yes. We used to kill the beef there, you know.

HS: Pigs?

MP: Beef and hogs, and whatever they had to have, you know.

HS: Sheep too?

MP: Oh, yes. We used to, they had very good planning. See, the old gent, Bernardo—

HS: Excuse me just a minute. That wasn't on the tape. What do you remember about the people that you played with when you were young? You had so many cousins that you didn't need to go out of the family, did you?

MP: No, but you know, the cousins wasn't living with us.

HS: No, but weren't they in the area?

MP: Not all. They were spread, you know, all the relations were spread around.

HS: Some were up in San Bernardino.

MP: San Bernardino, yes, San Bernardino. And all, in Santa Ana and—well, there wasn't much of Santa Ana when I was little, you know. I know that.

HS: You mean downtown?

MP: Yes, because there was no depot, you know, there was no city there. So there was not, we were the owners of, you might say, of the country around there, until the American people began to come. The German people come in first.

HS: To Anaheim.



YORBA RANCHO — The fabulous Don Bernardo Yorba, whose father started California's oldest family, built the most famous rancho in the state just a few miles from what is now Placentia. The ruins are now all gone but from the hilltop behind the home of his great grandson, Bernardo Yorba, this view is seen of what was once the location of the famous Yorba fiestas that sometimes lasted for weeks and where whole beeves were kept turning over fires constantly to feed travelers who stopped in to enjoy the hospitality and the bounteous table of the famous old family. In the center of the picture north of the river is the site of the old rancho itself. All other areas in the picture were a part of the fabulous rancho where early Californians stopped on their way north. The picture was taken from a hill on the ranch owned by Bernardo Yorba III. (News Tribune Photo)

MP: Anaheim, yes. I remember that. I know that very well, and of course, we had, my father had a cousin or two that lived in Anaheim, see. And then we used to go to church every Sunday. I remember we used to go, we had a Catholic church in Anaheim and when I was supposed to go in the morning to, to church, I was always sick in the morning. You know, I always, I had a bad stomach if I'd get on the machine. We didn't have a machine at that time; on the carriage to go to church, I'd be heaving up the whole way to Anaheim, and we were only eight miles away from Anaheim. But you see, I had a bad stomach and every Sunday, I would be sick to my stomach from the buggy where they took me up. They had to put me in bed in Anaheim at my aunt's. So that's the way—

HS: Was this real or didn't you want to go to church?

MP: It was real. I was sick every morning; I was even sick even when I grew up to be a big lady. And once I was out with a young man and my sister and I, and if I wasn't heaving up sick on the street car.

HS: Oh, dear.

MP: So you see, I had such a bad stomach, that if I had eaten before I was going to get on that, I'd be feeding the fish. So that's the way I, I grew up.

HS: Did you get over it?

MP: Well, no, not so well, because if I get upset, it's right away, I have to go lose my feed.

HS: Have you travelled by ship?

MP: Oh, when I feel, the way we travelled, my husband and I, seeing a great new part of the world back when we got married, afterwards.

HS: Were you seasick?

MP: I was always seasick and the poor man, all he could do was—I think he was downstairs and, I mean, upstairs and he'd be down seeing to, watching me, to see how I was getting along and I don't see how he didn't get cross. I would have gotten cross but he was so sweet and he was always wanting to, he'd touch my head and he'd want to know how I was feeling, you know.

HS: Well, they didn't have remedies for those things

MP: No.

HS: Now they do.

MP: I used to get sick on the train, and I used to get sick every which way.

HS: Have you flown?

MP: No, no, no, neither my husband nor I. Well, I'd have been dead, I guess, if I kept on there. I don't suppose I could have, because I would have gotten short of breath you know. I don't know if I could stand it.

HS: Now they're very comfortable.

MP: They say, you know, and you know, I never wished that I would be in one of them. Never.

HS: Oh, it's exciting. It's quite exciting.

MP: It would be and that's why I would be feeling it.

HS: It's the wrong place for you.

MP: Oh, the wrong place for me. Wouldn't do.

HS: I had my first plane ride when I was in college, about 1923, I think. Fifty years ago and it was down over Newport, over San Pedro harbor. Now I realize, I'm a pioneer. I didn't think about it at the time.

MP: At that time you could be moving so nicely, see, and you were young.

HS: I like to fly.

MP: They say it's lovely. My sister, young sister was always, she used to enjoy it, going up. But I never—and my husband didn't even want it. I guess he didn't want to excite me. He wouldn't fly, he used to say, he wouldn't fly at all, so I guess I wouldn't want him to fly myself. I guess that's why he used to stay.

HS: How did we get on that subject? Oh, we were talking about going to church in Anaheim.

MP: Uh-huh, and being sick. (chuckles)

HS: How did you go to church, horse and carriage?

MP: Oh, yes. There was no other thing at that time.

HS: Where did the road go? Did it go down through Olive?

MP: Well, no, we'd go to Kraemer's—you know where Kraemer's used to be, Kraemer's ranch? Well, right from where we used to live, you know, right straight out towards Anaheim.

HS: But Anaheim is south, you have to go south sometime.

MP: Yes. Well, from Anaheim—the church would be right there, see, in Anaheim, but we were starting out from Yorba, coming right straight.

HS: Straight across?

MP: Right west, west of Anaheim.

HS: What would the road be now?

MP: Well, they have all the—one road that goes clear to Placentia, you know where Placentia is?

HS: Yes.

MP: Well, one road used to go to Placentia to go to Anaheim; and then you to go by, by Olive to go to Anaheim. So we had two roads to go to Anaheim.

HS: Both dusty and stuffy out there.

MP: Oh, dust. It was terrible at that time.

HS: Or muddy in the winter.

MP: In the winter was mud, all over.

HS: Do you remember the place where your grandfather's grist mill was? You know, there's a little, beyond the Bernardo Yorba house, there's a point that comes down, then there's a place, a low place in the road going east. Well, that still gets muddy in the wintertime.

MP: Oh, it gets terrible. Floods, terrible, it's terrible, and they have very bad, muddy the whole way. Have they paved it in there?

HS: Yes, but it gets under water, it's so low there. It's below the railroad track.

MP: Yes, below the railroad track.

HS: Do you remember the grist mill? Was it operating when you were young?

MP: No, it was gone already when I grew up—but I still remember yet, that we used to have wine that I could take a sip of wine around there, because the folks lived down there—but Prudencio Yorba, my uncle, had a home down there, see? And we, whenever we used to go, my father used to take us out for a ride on a Sunday, and we used to go and see his brother and they always had a little drink of wine and I remember I used to have a little wine then.

HS: It was very good for your stomach probably.

MP: And I don't suppose I lost that because I didn't get enough of it, you know. He wouldn't let me have too much of it.

HS: Where else did you go? Did you go to Los Angeles?

MP: We used to come in to Los Angeles. Once a year, my father used to bring us clear to the beach. You know, my mother's home was at the beach.

HS: Which beach?

MP: At, at Venice. My folks were from there, see, and they used to come there and we used to spend the day there and then we used to spend another half a day at one of the other aunt's before we would go to the ranch.

HS: Was that Venice or Santa Monica?

MP: Santa Monica, it was at that time, Santa Monica.

HS: In the canyon?

MP: Yes, in the canyon, it was very pretty

HS: It still is.

MP: Yes, it is pretty. I haven't been there now for some years. They always had lovely big trees in there.

HS: Uh-huh, and water running down. Which of your aunts lived there?

MP: Mrs. Valdez, one of them. Her name was Valdez.

HS: Which was your mother's sister?

MP: My mother's sister, yes. And was one Tom Valdez, one of the boys that I knew very well, but just to go to the ranch, too, on holidays, you know, when he'd go. Tom, his name was, Tom Valdez, he was quite a boy there. At Venice, we used to go to the dances sometimes, when we used to go there.

HS: He was your mother's nephew?

MP: Yes, my mother's nephew, my first cousin, yes.

HS: Well, you stayed overnight then?

MP: Oh, we had to. My, Honey—Honey, it was about thirty, and by the time we'd get in horse and buggy, you know. It used to be, well, it's thirty miles from here to the ranch and it's twenty, twenty-five to the beach from here.

HS: More like forty, I think.

MP: No, it's thirty something.

HS: Really. I want to look at my map.

MP: It might be close to forty, yes, now. Now, from little turns that they have, it might be thirty.

HS: By freeway it's closer.

MP: Yes. It's length of time different entirely. Not so easy, and still it seemed shorter to me because they cut the roads in so many ways.

HS: It's easier in some ways. I didn't leave my home until about fifteen minutes past nine, but I got here ten minutes after ten. It was too early.

MP: Well, not too early but you made good time.

HS: Yes, no traffic, it was very fast. Well, I went up to the corner and I telephoned my son, he lives in Studio City. He works on the radio here. So we had a nice talk, then I came back and parked in your driveway and went in that way.

Now, let's see, I was wondering about the places where you used to visit. Did you ever go to Capistrano?

MP: Oh, my yes.

HS: To church?

MP: Well, once in a while to church but mostly for the dances.

HS: Oh, *baile*.

MP: There was a dance with the Forster people, and Marcus Forster and us were great friends, you know. My father, he was a great friend of my father, and we children grew up like that. We used to go to the dances.

HS: Where were they, at the brick house?

MP: Yes, they had a large old home in Capistrano.

HS: Built of brick?

MP: Brick, yes.

HS: That was a lovely place. It became a restaurant later and they called it Las Rosas. It's gone.

MP: Yes, I haven't gone that way for a long time. Well, the last time I went through, where was it that I stopped at Capistrano? I guess we were going, oh, I don't remember where we were, but on our way, we stopped at Capistrano and Capistrano is entirely different to what it used to be when I used to go there.

HS: It's just bigger because down in the town, it's more or less the same.

MP: Yes, but even going in, the roads are different.

HS: Yes, the old Camino Real, it stops.

MP: Yes, it's different, or everything is different but I never go anyplace now. Would you believe it that I get lost when I go to Anaheim?

HS: I would believe it.

MP: I don't know the streets anymore and I don't know where I am.

HS: Well, they keep changing the names of the streets.

MP: Well, and then, you know what it is, I used to go by the lovely big homes they had and the big homes had all these big trees, all trees, and they used to be in the corners and I remember the corners where I used to drive, when I used to go, you know, and I had a horse and buggy and I used to drive them up in the ranch. But where are they? They're all gone. The houses are gone, the trees have been cut down, so what have you got to go by? Nothing.

HS: Well, we still have a few eucalyptus trees.

MP: Yes, a few and at the ranch, we had beautiful eucalyptus, you know, beautiful old trees that had been there for years that my father had planted.

HS: He planted them?

MP: Yes, he had planted them.

HS: What other ornamental trees were there?

MP: Well, I remember we had in the corner, we had one palm tree. I don't know where they ever got that little palm tree.

HS: That kind? One of those great, tall, ugly ones? I don't like those.

MP: Yes, like the old, old, old ones across on the street. But you know, with what I've had at the ranches, those palms, like, well, like those long leaves, you know.

HS: Like a fan.

MP: Like they go to that, to plant the, oh, what do you call them?

HS: You don't mean—well, there are some! Can you look way around, right through that window? Those are like date palms.

MP: Yes, more like the date palms. That's what I want to say, the date palms, yes. Because, I raised—the little palms, the palms that I have out to the ranch—thirty of those kind, the long leaves, you know. I raised them in the back yard, playing with them, you know, and watered them, and helped by little Jack to water them. And when they moved them down there, my brother, Bernardo that died, took them, thirty, in the—well, what would it be? Not packing, yeah, well, the packing yard on the ranch you know. It would be like a—

HS: Warehouse you mean?

MP: No, not a warehouse. It would be like a, where you haul things like a truck or something. That was it; the truck was full of little palms that I sent to the ranch. So they grew up there beautiful. They were very pretty.

HS: Did you raise them from date seeds?

MP: No, they were little plants, I don't know who gave them to me or how. There were thirty and they brought them to me here.

HS: That was at the Ranch Peralta?

MP: Yes, that's where they are, in Peralta. I didn't have none in the ranch at Yorba. No, it was just too much horse and buggy there, you know.

HS: Did you mean that the eucalyptus trees were planted at Peralta or at Yorba?

MP: At Yorba because they'd been there for so many years, you know.

HS: You must have had pepper trees too, didn't you? Everybody had pepper trees.

MP: Yes, and they were pretty when there were the little peppers, the green leaves and the little red peppers. They are pretty, you know.

HS: Lots of people think they're natives but they're not. They come from South America.

MP: Yes, they're not from here.

HS: They're all over Mexico. Have you been to Mexico?

MP: I've been to Mexico. That was my first place where I went. I didn't like it there. It was too dirty a place for me. I never went back again.

HS: You didn't?

MP: Never, never gone back to stay. I've gone through it and travelled like that to see friends but I never, you know, it was just—For me, it wasn't clean enough.

HS: They have problems. They can't seem to do things right. They can't make things work.

MP: They tell me that since Americans have been there, Mexico is entirely different.

HS: No, it's not really. It's better but it's not entirely, it never will be entirely different. But it's better.

MP: It's better, they say. Everybody tells me, when they ever say, have you gone to Mexico? Oh, yes, I've been to Mexico but a long time ago. That was when I first married, you know. And then, I took my mother, because she had never been to Mexico. And so Laurence and I took my mother, and we were there for oh, I guess by the time we went all around, you know, and stopped in different small places and then years went by—not years, because we didn't stay a year, but we were there a month in Mexico and took the surroundings in. But, I always say, yes, but I haven't been back again. I don't have to tell everybody that I didn't go because it was dirty. They didn't have to know.

HS: Well, one reason it's dirty is that so many people are poor. Really, they try to be clean but they don't have the water, they don't have the soap, they don't have the facilities. It isn't their fault, you know.

MP: Not, not exactly their fault, and maybe they don't like to work hard, either.

HS: Oh yes, they do. They have to work hard just to make a little money. I sympathize with the Mexicans, I hate the country sometimes. I should turn this off. (tape interrupted)

We were talking about Mexico. It occurs to me that perhaps the people, like your ancestors who did come from Spain through Mexico, but some of them stayed in Mexico for a while. They were the ones that left—

MP: Some of them stayed in Mexico. Grandpa wouldn't stay there.

HS: They were the ones who left Mexico because they didn't like the way things were.

MP: They didn't like things running the way they did.

HS: Yes, I never thought of that before but—

MP: They say my grandpa was very fussy, very fussy and very exact. Of course, the older folks tell me, of course, how he used to be so particular and so, he was raised in Spain, of course, and they were very strict when they were young, too, you know.

HS: Bernardo?

MP: My grandfather, yes.

HS: I thought he was born in San Diego?

MP: Oh, no. My grandfather would come from Spain, you know.

HS: That's Jose Antonio, then.

MP: Jose Antonio, that's it.

HS: The great-grandfather.

MP: My great-grandfather, yes.

HS: Bernardo's father.

MP: In San Diego. He was born in San Diego, but my great-grandfather comes from Spain. And he was very, in fact, some of the folks say that he was peculiar because he was so particular.

HS: Nobody's particular anymore. I'm afraid we do everything sloppily.

MP: We try, we try anyway.

HS: But I think your grandfather probably was also because you read about how he would every morning sit on the veranda and all his children would come by, all twenty-one of them or whatever there were, and have to great him and kiss him and probably curtsey.

MP: Yes. He always knew how to handle them.

HS: Well, you'd have to, wouldn't you, with that many?

MP: With that big family!

HS: One of the things that I wanted to talk to you about was, I have a map of what is known about the San Antonio adobe and I wonder if you can remember anymore about it than there is here? These are only from oh, evidently about fifty years ago, but we know that the place was very large and had a wall around it? The big house?

MP: You know, I don't remember. It had a wall, a yard, a great big yard in the back but not in the front. It had a little, like an ornament on the stairs, yes, it had that but not a clear—

HS: That was inside?

MP: In the yard, you know.

HS: Oh, you mean on the gate? Was it like this?

MP: Uh-huh

HS: The gate with a cross or something above?

MP: No, no, it didn't have no cross.
No.

HS: What was it?

MP: Well, it was lumber, it was just lumber.

HS: Carved, perhaps?

MP: No. No, it was just put together, you know, nailed together.

HS: Oh. Now, let's see. This is—north is about that way, isn't it?

MP: Yes.

HS: So that's north, so this was the way the house lay and the street would be down here?



ADOBÉ SITE — Location of the famous Bernardo Yorba adobe, probably the largest home in California when it was built in 1769 near what is now the city of Placentia, is marked by a stone monument that tells the story of the Yorba family. The building was destroyed in 1929 because it had become a hazard to treasure and souvenir seekers. (News Tribune Photo)

MP: Here, yes, down in the front.

HS: Now, I suppose—

MP: That was a stairway.

HS: No, I think this is the part of the house that is now known about and this would be the Manriquez house? Did you know it as the Manriquez house?

MP: No, I didn't.

HS: Whose name was on it when you knew it?

MP: I don't remember.

HS: That was the house that was west, west of San Antonio, of the San Antonio adobe, your grandfather's house?

MP: Yes, west, west of it.

HS: Yes. That would be towards where your father's house was.

MP: Yes.

HS: Do you know whose this was? It was very close?

MP: No, I don't.

HS: And it's now called the Manriquez.

MP: Manriquez. I think that's what the name was, if I remember that. Manriquez, those people that lived there.

HS: Who were they?

MP: I suppose they were Mexican people. I don't know.

HS: Workers? It was a pretty good size house.

MP: Uh-huh. They must have been some friends of them, but had them move there.

HS: But they weren't relatives?

MP: No, I don't think so.

HS: I wonder if your grandfather had the house built or if it was built later?

MP: Oh, grandfather, I wouldn't know when grandfather had his house built. I wouldn't know.

HS: Well, here's another plan of the house. Do you have this little book?

MP: No, ma'am, I don't have it.

HS: Written by Don Meadows, he's a friend of mine. In 1917, he was just, just a boy in high school in Orange and he rode his bicycle up the canyon and saw the remains of the adobe and decided to investigate it. So he talked to Ramon Cooper?

MP: Cooper? Yes.

HS: Do you remember him?

MP: They were in the Peralta side. I know of them, I don't think I knew him. I didn't meet him, I never knew them.

HS: He was Spanish, wasn't he?

MP: Well, I think they must have had Spanish blood because how it happened that they were living there?

HS: I think he married a Peralta, didn't he?

MP: I do not know. That I wouldn't know.

HS: The name supposedly was Copa or Copas and he changed it; he changed it to Cooper from the Spanish, but you don't know him?

MP: No, I didn't know them.

HS: Well, anyhow, Don and his friend, who later became a writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, investigated and then they, two years later they came back, in 1919, that's fifty-four years ago. And they found that the house had deteriorated badly, like old places. And oh, some of it was damaged but they decided, well, we'd better do something about this before it falls down. So they measured it and they photographed it and these are the pictures they made. Esperanza Road would be down here, so this is called the front, this is looking south but it shows the two stories and this is the northwest corner and this is the west end; that would be the end that faces that way.

MP: Yes.

(Third voice speaking Spanish to Mrs. Pelanconi.)

HS: And it's uh, let's see. So he asked me to ask you if you could remember what the inside of the, what did they call it, *sala*? The parlour?

MP: *Sala*, they had a great big *sala*. And I remember that the floor was just beautiful because they used to dance in, you know.

HS: It was pine wood, I think?

MP: Pine wood, yes. And they had chairs all around where we used to sit when—and if there was a big wedding in the family, they generally used to come there, where they would have that big floor to dance. And the ladies would be all fixed up and the bride, always with long—I

remember with long veils, you know, and all fixed up. Isn't it funny, you don't forget if you're little and see those things, you know?

HS: Oh, no. Very exciting and mysterious when you're a child.

MP: Yes, and we wonder, you know. And I remember so well, we used to have, and we used to—Do you remember those windows that they had with bars on the outside?

HS: In adobes? Yes, deep.

MP: Well, I remember that we used to sleep, we little ones, in the windows there in between, and they would be dancing inside. We'd be sound asleep by the bars.

HS: You must have been quite short.

MP: Well, we were small, you know. And I guess they put up anyway—what did the younger ones that were dancing think of fixing our feet right so we would be stretched out? They didn't care; they were dancing.

HS: Then your family would take you home afterward?

MP: Well, the next morning; we would have to stay there.

HS: You mean they danced all night?

MP: Oh, yes. They would dance all night, sure.

HS: What kind of music? Do you remember?

MP: Violin and guitar. They had a violin and a guitar.

HS: More than one?

MP: Just the one.

HS: One of each.

MP: They were lucky that they had one. (laughter) But the thing is, they could make good dance music, see? They were used to doing, these two men, and they used to go from place to place, you know, to play for the dancers. They could be in practice all right.

HS: It was sort of like the mariachis now, they still wander as they play.

MP: Yes, they wander a lot.

HS: They sometimes have a base viol, more strings.

MP: They have more than one violin.

HS: Rather thin. I was wandering, in looking at this design, none of these rooms are big, they're not big enough to have a dance in.

MP: Just the one room that they used to have.

HS: This is all that was left. This is only 20 feet wide here but it was 106 feet long here. And these apparently were what, bedrooms or work rooms?

MP: Bedrooms, I guess.

HS: Where was the living room then?

MP: The living room used to be this vacant big room. You know, they never sat up here. They used to go down there in the little small places and—

HS: You mean the living room where the dance was, was upstairs?

MP: Upstairs. It used to be upstairs. They were upstairs where they used to dance. Because I remember that I stayed in between bars.

HS: Well, if you remember it so clearly.

MP: I remember that, you know.

HS: Then they were still there. If you were born in 1878, that was probably 1885, 1888? And this was only thirty-five years later, so the bars were still there. You don't have any idea how much of the upper floor was taken up by the *sala*, do you?

MP: No, I don't.

HS: Were there other rooms up there?

MP: No, I don't think that there were.

HS: They had like a ballroom there?

MP: Yes, they had just that, and shingles to cover up instead of—

HS: Those are shingles up there, not tiles?

MP: No, shingles. I think that there were shingles. I remember then—

HS: And you could look up and see the underside of them?

MP: Uh-huh. I remember that. Because I guess their money wasn't holding on so much to put the tiles on. You see, tiles were expensive at that time. So, I suppose they put shingles on instead of the tiles. Because I remember they didn't have no tiles on the top of that, I remember that well.

HS: Well, it's quite clear from this that they didn't. Uh, what was I going to say? This was when your step-grandmother still lived there.

MP: Yes.

HS: Is her name Andrea Elizalde?

MP: Andrea Elizalde, yes. She was living there and she was a big, stout woman. Very heavy, one of those great big ones, you know. Big legs, I remember she had big legs.

HS: Of course, your grandfather married her by proxy. He didn't see her.

MP: Oh, yes. He didn't see what the goods were. He didn't see very much of her.

HS: What they used to call piano legs.

MP: Piano legs, yes. Oh, and she really had those piano legs. She was heavy, yes.

HS: How many children did she have? Well, never mind, it's all—

MP: Yeah, let's see. She well, when grandpa died, afterward, she married again. She married again, you know. And she had, she married a schoolteacher that had, that grandpa had him come to teach the children.

HS: Was it Mr. Scully?

MP: Let's see, was she, no, I don't think she was married to a Scully. No, it was my uncle's daughter that married a Scully. That was him. A Scully did come in but he was a nuisance.

HS: Do you, have you seen this book? It has a great deal about all of the early families in Orange County.

MP: No, I don't think—I couldn't see it anyway, Honey. I couldn't read it.

HS: I'm sure it will tell who it was. It wasn't Botiller.

MP: No. One of the girls did marry a Botiller though.

HS: Let's see if I can find it. Verano, we're still going. (machine off) Now, that's running again. The reason I wanted to see you, the first reason, was that Esperanza Road is going to be realigned and it's going right across the site of the house of Bernardo Yorba.

MP: Bernardo Yorba, uh-huh.

HS: Well, there's nothing there except maybe they can find the foundations, if there were foundations but nobody seems to know now how many buildings were there. Now, this is what is known about the layout of the house; this is the Manriquez, this is San Antonio. Do you call it San Antonio? The San Antonio adobe is [how] it's referred to.

MP: It's what it's been called.

HS: Now, where's north? Here's north, no, it isn't. I don't see the arrow on this one but it would lie sort of, no, it would lie like that.

MP: Like this, I think.

HS: Well, this says north, right here. This is Esperanza Road, more or less. So, it would lie like that. Do you remember more rooms than there are?

MP: Well, I remember I used to go to grandma when she used to live there. Grandma, I used to call Andrea Grandma, see?

HS: Your grandmother died long before you were born, when your father was small.

MP: Oh, yes. And then we used to call this lady, Grandma, you know. She was the stout one I tell you, that her legs were so big.

HS: But this plan only shows a long building, only 20 feet wide.

MP: So narrow and long?

HS: Yes, it was measured when it looked like this. That's only 20 feet that way but 106 feet this way.

(Voice in background)

MP: All right. *Hay vamos.* We'd better go. (tape off)

HS: You mean, the early days?

MP: Yes, the early days.

HS: But it was still kept up.

MP: Oh yes, oh, they kept it up well.

HS: When you knew it?

MP: You know, the last I knew, when my father had it roofed, it was kind of leaking I guess, in spots. And the rain was kind of ruining it, you know. Anyway, my father felt that he didn't want it to look that way, so, he took it and he—and I remember that it was in the thousand dollar, that to shingle all that thing, it cost quite a bit of money.

HS: That was this building here, the long, narrow building?

MP: Yes, that was the one that he fixed.

HS: Was your grandmother living there then?

MP: Oh, no, no. Well, it was like this at the last days there, at the very last days that they lived there. They left this for the dancing and for the fun part of it, but Grandma lived at this end.

HS: That would be the west?

MP: Well, it would be the east, east of the house, because the house ran this way.

HS: Near the hills? The part near the hills?

MP: Yes, uh-huh. She lived at the east end.

HS: Yeah, that's right. It lies like this.

MP: Yes, and so this is the west, here. This is the east. And Grandma was living at this, at the end of the house.

HS: Did she live there with her second husband? With D'avila?

MP: I don't know if she lived with D'avila there so much. She must have lived, at that—yes, I think so because now that I remember, once I was, we were taking a ride and Papa was with us and taking us and he said, we'll stop at Grandma's, so then, they were living there, see? She was living there. Whether the husband was there or not, I don't know.

HS: Did she live in style there?

MP: No.

HS: Not the way Bernardo did with all the servants?

MP: All the servants went the other way. No, when they, the rest of the men, when they didn't get the money from Bernardo, they couldn't get no more money because they didn't have it.

HS: This is after he died, you mean?

MP: Yes, uh-huh.

HS: Well, he probably was a very strong man and held the family together as long as he lived.

MP: Oh, yes. And just think of how many he used to help that didn't have no husband.

HS: You mean relatives?

MP: Well, they're the close relatives; he always kept them together, you know. He always helped them. I suppose I got many things from Grandfather, you know, but children don't always think of things.

HS: Well, it's too bad that he didn't live as long as some of his descendants, isn't it? He was only fifty-eight when he died.

MP: Yes, and here I'm ninety-four. Why didn't he get a part of me?

HS: Maybe he gave it to you. Women always outlive men.

MP: Yes, we do because just think of how many of our, in just in the few months here, are girls that had been married: Juanita and Marie, and the other one—three of the boys, young men that died and left their wives young.

HS: Relatives of yours?

MP: Yes, cousins of mine.

HS: Recently?

MP: Recently, last month, you know. Yes, it's pitiful because these girls are young and they'll have to get married again.

HS: I know, go through all the adjustment again.

MP: Yes, that's it. And if they get good husbands like the ones that they lost, that's the trouble. I feel sorry for them.

HS: It's bad for the children, too, if there are any children.

MP: There's one of the girls that has one girl, she's tall, you know, she's going to high school. And then Juanita has three children that she's had, but one is at Santa Clara, and the other one is here, getting a diploma here in the city, and one, the other one got a diploma the other day at the beach. Not the other day, just a few weeks ago.

HS: Whose? Who are they?

MP: Well, my nieces, you know. Well, Juanita is my daughter's girl, the one that's attending my books and writes my letters and things like that. She has three children, the young, you know and uh, he died just recently. He was the last one that died, about a month ago or two months, no, not quite two months, but anyway—and young people. It's too bad that they have to die and leave their girls, you know. It's sad, it's very said.

HS: One of the things that Don Meadows, he's the man who wrote this book, picked up, was a piece of painted wood. You know what a wainscoting, well, not a wainscoting, the wood that comes half way up the wall?

MP: Yes.

HS: He thinks that that was a piece of wainscoting from one of the rooms in this *casa* and it has a painted design on it, a kind of green scroll work, painted to look like a ribbon or cloth drapery.

MP: Yes.

HS: Do you remember any decorations like that?

MP: No, I do not.

HS: You don't remember the decorating on the inside of the house?

MP: No, I don't.

HS: And you don't remember where the wall was? The wall, let's see, I don't understand these drawings but, do you remember any workshops other—

MP: I know that they had a workshop but I never was in it.

HS: Was it in the house or was it—

MP: No, it was out in the yard, in the out.

HS: Now, if that's north, and this is the house, where would it be?

MP: Well, this part of the place here, it was where they had a kind of a patio and a place for the men to get out to do their work, you know.

HS: This says "covered porch" here?

MP: Uh-huh.

HS: Let's see, north, probably faced more like that and this was the front?

MP: The front of the house, there.

HS: Yes, awfully hard to orient it.

MP: Yes, because it don't have a—

HS: I have to do it but, it seems to me that north is that way. Does it seem to you that it is? I don't have a compass with me.

MP: Well, I think that it's that way, yes. I always called north this way.

HS: Then this is the way it lies, and this is the, more or less, the north face, the west end, and the entrance, I guess, was, where was the entrance?

MP: Up on the, this way, it would be around here.

HS: Here's a door here, but there's no door there.

MP: No, but I think that this was the front door that they had to go in, see? And I don't think they had very many side doors or doors that way.

HS: Well, the doors were around on this side.

MP: No, they wouldn't be under here.

HS: What does this say? "Remains of porch." There was a porch all the way across here, then, except that right here, there were high adobe walls. And the roof was gone. Do you remember what this would have been between the porches on the north side?

MP: I remember that I used to play on the yard like that, but I never noticed what would be, you know. In my young days, I wouldn't remember anything that would be interesting to us now.

HS: Yes, you're right. You don't remember for instance, where the—I suppose there wasn't any blacksmith's shop? There wasn't any winery?

MP: There was but they were on the west side. I remember all those; they did have that but not right in this part of the house. It was, they were up this way a little in the, you know.

HS: That would be on the side of the river?

MP: Well, no. On the side of the hills.

HS: Oh, that would be over here then, wouldn't it?

MP: Yes.

HS: This is covered. Well, that would be almost down to the road or the trail.

MP: Yes, because maybe that could, to get them down to the—because, you know, they didn't have no roads. They used to just cut through.

HS: Well, in a later photograph—Of course, we don't know what it was like originally but this is Esperanza Road, I guess, and it's cut way down.

MP: Yes.

HS: Then in this other picture (papers rustle) I suppose, let's see, southern face—

MP: I feel that this used to be down below to the river, what we used to call, the river. Because there was a road that the water used to come from the river.

HS: Very close.

MP: Yes, right into, under here, see? Because it just come from the river; it curved around, you know, around the hill.

HS: So the workshops wouldn't have been on this side?

MP: No.

HS: They were back here?

MP: And under, under this, Honey. They could have been under because the water used to run right down here, below this part of where we used to go up, you know, on the road. The river used to flow under.

HS: Do you think perhaps it washed out some of these buildings?

MP: Well, sure. Well, none of the big buildings, no. It never did.

HS: Barns?

MP: Barns and things like that. Because that used to run this way for the barns, this way.

HS: That's on the south side then?

MP: Yes.

HS: There is a, I don't know whether that's a building over there. This is an old car, it looks like a building behind there but—

MP: It's hard for me to—

HS: I don't know whether it's a building or not.

MP: It must be something of the working implements or something like that, you know.

HS: When your grandmother was living there, when you used to go there, did they still have a winery?

MP: No, no.

HS: And they didn't have a tannery?

MP: No, I don't think so. They didn't have anything around like that around you know, around their house, Grandpa's house.

HS: Nothing else at all?

MP: No.

HS: And there was no big wall around it?

MP: No. There used to be a small wall, you know, that would go around. I remember that, and then afterwards, when I went to see to it, I couldn't see it anymore. I guess it had been broken off or had been taken off, you know.

HS: Well, I think I've given you enough problems for one day. I'd better get going.

MP: Honey, it's been a pleasure for me to have you.

HS: Well, I enjoyed it very much.

MP: Because it's nice and I—it's nice for me to see people that are interested in things like this.

HS: Well, this is really the last chance to do anything about this site.

MP: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATORJR: John B. Romero

INTERVIEWEJR: Helen Smith

DATE: September 25, 1967

SUBJECT: Chumash Indian culture and artifacts

Narrator is speaking of the Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly when recording begins.

JR: Things misquoted in here by Herman Strandt. He calls the Chumash Paiutes.

HS: I knew Herman.

JR: Yeah. He was a big thief. That's what he was. He stole a lot of artifacts from our project down here at Banning Street (sic).

HS: I know he did—sold them to the Peabody Museum. All we can say about Herman is that he did a lot of things that nobody else did and because of him we do know more than we would have without him. I know he committed some bad sins, but he did good, too.

JR: Yeah. Well, in some cases he did do some good but he did a lot of things that—don't seem as if he understood about the Indian life in California.

HS: He wrote several papers on them. Did you read them?

JR: Oh, I read everything. I read everything.

HS: He made his own interpretations, I guess. He wasn't here when the Indians were. He didn't know them but he made his own guesses.

JR: And all his (sic) surveys were made directly after I made my own surveys, for the anthropological project.

HS: Do you have a key to the Irvine ranch?

JR: No, I haven't. There was no key at the time. I could go anywhere on the ranch.

HS: You didn't need one. Herman had one [later]. I'll tell you one theory he had that I've wondered about. You know these stone rings? They're about that big around (indicates four-inch diameter) with a hole in the middle like doughnut?

JR: Yes.

HS: Herman said that he thought they put them on the end of sticks and used them for war clubs.

JR: For war clubs, no.

HS: They weren't warlike people?

JR: No. They were sinkers, that's what they were. Sinkers.

HS: Well, what about the oblong stones shaped like this with the indentations on the sides and the ends? Those are from the Islands. I have some from San Miguel Island. I thought those were sinkers, because they have notches at the top and bottom and sides, so you could tie them.

JR: Yes, that's what they were. They were sinkers too. Different kinds.

HS: Over at the [Bowers] Museum they have one of those stone rings on a haft, on a handle of wood, and it's been stuck on the end of it with asphaltum. I don't know whether that was done by the Indians, the asphaltum, or by somebody else.

JR: That was done by the Indians.

HS: What would they do that for, then?

JR: That was a spear, to spear—

HS: There wasn't any spear point on it. It was just a handle about eighteen inches long, I think.

JR: Well, probably the spear was gone.

HS: You mean it would have the ring on the upper end and the point would be down at the bottom?

JR: Yes, that's right.

HS: Why would they have that on a spear?

JR: Well, you know the Indians used to do a lot of fishing, you know.

HS: Yes.

JR: They used to fish, you know, big heavy fish like the whale. There was one Greenland whale in Santa Barbara that measured one hundred and—one hundred feet long. Oh, it was a giant. It took tanks and tanks of oil to burn it up. My father burned it up.

HS: I always had the idea that the Indians couldn't handle those great big whales, like the gray whales that are sixty feet long.

JR: They generally, they marooned themselves on the shore lines.

HS: And they died, sometimes.

JR: They threw out a disease from the stomach known as ambergris. And that ambergris makes one of the wonderful perfumes in the world.

HS: That comes from just one kind of whale?

JR: Yes, the Greenland whale.

HS: We don't get many of those whales on our coasts, do we?

JR: Well, we did get two of them up in Santa Barbara.

HS: Mostly, it's the gray whale, the one that goes to Scammon's Lagoon in the winter.

JR: Yes, down to the southern part of Mexico, northern part of Mexico.

HS: Mr. Maddock went down to Scammon's Lagoon. Did you know?

JR: No. There's something I want to tell you about. John Collins, that's Congressman [Sam] Collin's brother, he was handling the butcher shop, you know, the storage house there at Anaheim, and he told me he had run into some pyramids down in Mexico and wanted me to go with him. I says, "John, I am sorry." I says, "I can't go down there. I don't want nothing in Mexico—nothing that wants a 'bite,' *la mordida*." Yeah. So I never did go and John, the last time I saw him when I was surveying for the county, he was caretaker of the harbor down here—boats, you know, private boats, big schooners and yachts. It's a yacht club now, and I don't know if John is living or not. But he was down there [Mexico] and he discovered these pyramids.

HS: Do you know where they were?

JR: They were down at the southern end of the California peninsula, Baja California, way at the south end.

HS: I never heard of any pyramids there.

JR: Yeah, he told me about that and he said, "I want you to go."

HS: Did he tell you what area they were in?

JR: San Quentin. (English pronunciation)

HS: San Quintín?

JR: San Quintín, that's right.

HS: That's not down at the south end.

JR: Yeah, that's way down.

HS: No, it's not very far. It's north of Cedros Island. I've been there several times. It's a big flat plain where they used to raise, or try to raise wheat. I think they're raising vegetables there now.

JR: They probably are. I don't know. Anyway, Seris Indians down in there. Red-headed Indians.

HS: Seri?

JR: Seris, yeah.

HS: Well, San Quintín is on the Pacific Coast, but the Seri are over inland from Tiburon Island and that's on the Gulf, not on the Pacific. I didn't know the Seri went across the peninsula.

JR: Well, they did. Yeah, they did. And they're very fond of lithographs, you know, like labels of tin cans, you know. Yeah, they're very fond of them. They accept them more than they would anything else—

HS: You're sure those are not the Kiliwa?

JR: No, no, the Seris Indians. Seris, red-headed.

HS: He told you that, or you knew it? Did he tell you they were Seri?

JR: No, I studied. Later on I delved into it and found out that they were Seris Indians.

HS: They built pyramids at San Quintín?

JR: Yeah. I don't know if they built them or not. It could be some other tribe, you know, of the Aztecs or the Toltecs that built the pyramids.

HS: Yes, pyramids go way back beyond any of the Indians that are still living now.

JR: Yes. (pause) So we never made it. We never made the trip.

HS: Well, I should tell you I don't think you're so much bothered by the *mordida* in Baja California as you are in the main part of Mexico. They're not very well organized down here, not so much trouble with bribes. Well, maybe you should have gone.

JR: It's too late now. I can't get around and walk over the hills, you know. It is very rough down there, specially climbing those pyramids, you know. I surmise that they were pretty tall, too—several hundred feet high.

HS: Were they in the mountains, do you think, or on the plain?

JR: No, they were on the plains, off the shoreline.

HS: Made of rock?

JR: Rock, all laid rock.

HS: Lots of rock there, lots of lava rock. I have talked with Mrs. McKinney and Mrs. Robinson about your trip the other day. They said they had a fine time.¹¹⁰ And they were so glad you were with them.

JR: Yes, but I was very much disappointed because I couldn't take them down there at Sycamore Canyon and show them a cave that I discovered.

HS: That's on the Moulton Ranch?

JR: On the Moulton Ranch, that's right.

HS: Mrs. Elliot thinks that she can get permission to drive a car in there. If she can, her jeep will go lots of places where the roads aren't good; you may be able to go back.

JR: Well, we could go in there with a jeep, right up to the potholes, you know.

¹¹⁰This was a field trip on which Mr. Romero accompanied Aileen McKinney, Pat Robinson and Betty Elliott of PCAS on Sept. 20, 1967, to Indian sites in Laguna Canyon and on the Moulton Ranch.

HS: She'd like to take you. You didn't think of anything more about the shell fish that the local Indians used, did you?

JR: No, I didn't. We didn't have time to go through the territory that I've been through, you know. And when I saw everything so populated, I said, "My gosh, all my work is covered up with buildings."

HS: Oh, yes, most of it, but not all.

JR: The only virgin country there is in the Moulton Ranch, in Niguil (*nigueli*), you know. That's named after the acorn culture of the Indians—niguil (*nigueli*). But we went through the canyon there—I build that road myself from Laguna for the county.

HS: The Laguna Canyon road?

JR: Yes.

HS: You see what they're doing to it now?

JR: It's terrible—traffic. The travel in there, the cars are just going through there like a racetrack.

HS: Sports cars use it and they go so fast around the corners that it's dangerous for them and for other people.

JR: Yes, it is. I show them where the petroglyphs (sic) were, of the Niguil (*Nigueli*) Indians, at Rattlesnake Canyon, at the point of the canyon. We didn't get out. We couldn't go in because the fence was high.

HS: Is that on the Moulton Ranch? Not in that section between Moulton and Irvine?

JR: No, it's on the Moulton Ranch, and there's a road they build, they scraped through, a fire brake or for some purpose—I went on that road with Judge Forster of San Juan Capistrano. I showed him everything. He's dead now, I think.

HS: You mean Tom Forster? Yes, he's dead; he died last winter.

JR: Yeah. Well, there's another big desecration of Indian graves right there, Tom Forster.

HS: I'm afraid so. The trouble was, he left a whole barn full of artifacts but nobody knew where they came from except him, I'm afraid.

JR: Well, most of them came out of the San Juan mission or the old mission up above.

HS: I know his grandfather owned it at one time.

JR: There was one time when we had to correct the county lines in there, you see, and there was only one that knew where he had moved the monuments on the Santa Margarita Ranch toward the canyon, and that was a son of our famous detective here, Constable of Laguna Beach now—Rios.

HS: Oh, Danny?

JR: Danny, yes. He was a good man—Danny's father. So I went over there and I says, "Say, I want to know just where those monuments were moved." "Oh," he says, "I got to get a permit." "No," I says, "you're not going to get a permit. You're going to go to jail." That's what I told him, the old man. So he went up and he showed me. I says, "Where were these monuments at?" "Oh, they were way up on top of that mound there, that hill."

HS: They'd moved them to the south?

JR: He'd moved them himself, to the west.

HS: What do you believe about that place up the canyon by the corrals that they call the Mission Viejo? Do you think that is the site [of the old mission]? I don't think it is.

JR: Well, the *mision vieja*, no, the real mission was established up in the canyon. It's all now a mound of dirt; all the adobe has disintegrated and just left a mound. They're very natural.

HS: You mean that place up by the big corrals? Up the canyon—there are a lot of corrals there and they keep cattle there. I think they drive them in so they can load them in trucks and take them away, the Mission Viejo [ranch]. Is that the place you mean, up the Ortega Highway maybe five or six miles from Capistrano?

JR: That would be about the distance of the real old mission.

HS: You think it was up there?

JR: Yeah. And above it, up towards the Robinson Ranch [Louis Robinson] as you go through the Canada Las Pulgas, you know—they call it the Flea Canyon—there's an estancia up there. And it's up there to the northeast side of the estancia, is where the old mission service has been buried. It's the only place where you can see the tower of the San Juan mission.

HS: You mean way up by Trabuco?

JR: That's right.

HS: I've been to an old adobe up there. They've put a roof over it to protect it. They call it the Trabuco Adobe. It's not very far from O'Neill Park, from Trabuco Oaks. It has walls about five or six feet high still.

JR: Yeah, that's right. We surveyed that road.

HS: It's not very far from Mr. Robinson's ranch.

JR: That's right. There's a gate not very far from it where it cuts off from the Robinson ranch.

HS: That's right, from the upper road and then you drive back west. Louis Robinson told me that when he was a boy there was a family living there, and he and his brother used to go down and deliver milk and eggs from their ranch to the people that lived there. He said there was an old, old Indian who was about 115, who lived there when he was a boy. I've forgotten the name. But that's the building you mean.

JR: Yeah, that's the one. There's no other up in there.

HS: It was in good shape until, when those people moved out, maybe in 1910. It had a roof, it had tiles but they came and took all the tiles off so the roof blew off and it was ruined.

JR: Yeah, that's right. There's all just mounds of adobe there. Directly right off from it, when they took the treasures of the San Juan mission—

HS: When the pirates were coming?

JR: Yeah, they took them and they buried them up there. And they are in burial there yet. And the cactus is right there. They planted some cactus over the place as a landmark, you know.

HS: There's a nice pond of water down in the canyon just below that. They built a dam and it's beautiful. Have you been there?

JR: No, not recently. I haven't been through there for about thirty years or more.

HS: I think this dam isn't very old. Not very long ago Father Geiger of the Santa Barbara Mission, who is in charge of the archives there, the historian of the Santa Barbara Mission who took the place of Father Engelhardt—

JR: Yes, I remember him.

HS: This man Geiger took his place, and Father Geiger was looking over some old papers and he found some clues that made him think that he could locate the real site of the old mission that they had two years before they started to build the mission that's there now.

JR: In Santa Barbara?

HS: No, Capistrano Mission.

JR: Oh, Capistrano Mission. Well, it's up there in the canyon. I knew where that is.

HS: He says it's not there, that that wasn't the mission, but that it was further down toward Capistrano.

JR: Well, he's wrong there. He's wrong. That's northeast of the mission. Northeast of the mission is where the original mission was first founded.

HS: The original mission was a *ramada*; it wasn't an adobe building.

JR: But it became an adobe building, though.

HS: But they were only there for two years before they decided to go down and build it where it is now.

JR: Yeah, that's right.

HS: Do you think they bothered to make an adobe building there?

JR: No, I don't think they did. They had enough Indians to do the work.

HS: Well, I mean to have it built. Do you know anything about who lived in that building after they moved the mission?

JR: I do not, because you know the Forsters, they were the land grabbers of that country. They ____ Abraham Lincoln. And I was going to show Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. McKinney where Ramirez, a Mexican surveyor, laid the monument right up on top of that hill. There I traced out when I was with the county engineering department.

HS: Where was that?

JR: That's in San Juan.

HS: You mean the monument that got moved later?

JR: Yeah. There was a bunch of cactus up there, covering up the monument, up to that point. And up to there was the line of the San Juan Capistrano Mission, granted by Abraham Lincoln.

HS: And beyond it was the old ranch, the Mission Viejo.

JR: Yeah, that's right.

HS: That sounds like some of the stories we used to hear about the Irvine Company.

JR: Well, you take the El Toro Ranch that used to belong to Uncle Frank Serrano. I call him Uncle because in those days we respect older people and you had to be courteous to them. There was no such thing as 'you' or 'I' or this and that. Like now when a mother calls her child, "Hey, come here, Jenny! Come here, Billy!" "What?" That's the way they answer. In those days there was nothing like that.

HS: I notice there is still a custom among Spanish-speaking people to call people uncle or aunt or grandmother or grandfather when they're not really related, or to call someone cousin and you're not a real cousin.

JR: That's right. No, that's courtesy, and it's still being done. And that carried among the Indians quite a bit, you know. Yeah.

HS: I should ask you, did you—you were not brought up as an Indian? Would you like to tell me the story of your father and your grandmother, and we'll get it on the tape?

JR: Yes, I would like to do that. My father was picked up from an anthill.

HS: What became of his mother?

JR: Of his mother? She was kidnapped, taken to Monterey for slave purposes.

HS: By whom?

JR: Franciscan friars. I wouldn't know by whom, but by the Spanish.

HS: I suppose you wouldn't know when that was?

JR: No, I wouldn't know because my father, when he died he was about 58 years of age. He died young.

HS: When you were born, how old was he?

JR: Oh, he was in his twenties, I guess, something like that.

HS: You were born in 1884.

JR: Eighty-four.

HS: So he was probably born about 1860, then.

JR: Yes, somewhere in there.

HS: So you never knew much about your father, or your mother.

JR: No, I know all about my mother, what side she came from. Not so much about my father, because my father, in his days of death he says, "Son, I never have confessed to a Catholic priest in my life, and I want you to go out to our elderberry tree." He said that's the name he has given to me as an Indian—*Hasat*. That means elderberry. We sat there and he told me all his life. "I'm confessing to you my past and my present and everything that any human being could convey to my own personal flesh. You are my son."

HS: Are you talking about your father Romero?

JR: Yes.

HS: Not your Indian father?

JR: Well, that's my Indian father.

HS: The father who adopted you?

JR: Oh, that was the Romeros. The Spanish dons adopted my father. I got pictures of my grandmother here on file.

HS: I'd like to see them.

JR: Gee, I wish I could find them now for you.

HS: The question is, did you grow up as an Indian or as a Santa Barbaran? As a Chumans [pronounced Kumash] or a Santa Barbaran?

JR: I grew up as a Chumash Indian.

HS: Well, I don't suppose your father had very many sins to confess, did he?

JR: No, he didn't. He didn't believe in confession. Neither do I.

HS: I mean, I suppose he didn't have very many sins. (JR didn't hear this)

JR: Yeah, because I told Mrs. Robinson the other day, I said, "Listen, Mrs. Robinson, I'm not a Catholic."

HS: Yes, they said you said you were a Mormon.

JR: That's right. And as a Mormon, I shouldn't be smoking, but the only habit I have is smoking. That's all.

HS: To continue the story about your father being picked up from an anthill—

JR: Ant hill, that's right, and all the ants were brushed off by my foster grandmother, who, in baptism, she became my godmother. I was the first one born. Out of thirteen children I am the first one and I'm still living.

HS: How many others are living?

JR: Well, I got Frances and Katherine and Roy and my brother here. [Stanley R.]

HS: Are these other ones between you and him?

JR: Yes, he's the youngest—thirteen years younger.

HS: Where do they live?

JR: They live in Santa Barbara—until we move here in 1907. We moved into Quakertown, El Modeno. That's a Quaker town, you know. I don't remember the people who used to have a store there. They used to be a stopping place, you know, for the Silverado Mines. I'm trying to bring it out but I just can't remember. Eventually it'll come, though.

HS: Then you lived in Santa Barbara from 1884 when you were born until 1907?

JR: Until 1905. That's when we came to Ventura and from Ventura we came here.

HS: What kind of house did you live in Santa Barbara?

JR: Adobe. Adobe house. And I remember my bed. My bed was just like a tripod, like that, you know, with three legs. And it had deerskin that was a mattress and I used to cover up with a bearskin!

HS: You did?

JR: Oh, yes, my father killed those bears. He was a hunter.

HS: Up in Los Padres Mountains? What kind of bear?

JR: Yes. Black bear. There were some grizzly in the mountains, though.

HS: They're gone now.

JR: Oh, yes, they all went north to Alaska and some down to Mexico.

HS: How could you sleep on a tripod bed? You had to curl up, didn't you?

JR: No, it was just right. It curved in the bottom, you know, and I used to sleep in there just like that.

HS: When you were a little boy?

JR: Yeah. A young fellow.

HS: What kind of food did you eat in those days? Do you remember?

JR: Yeah, we used to have some *pinole* and porridge, deer meat and—

HS: Fish?

JR: No, no fish. Never ate any fish. And I don't like it today.

HS: Did your mother make *weewish*?

JR: Yes. She made *weewish*.

HS: How did she make it? She used a mortar?

JR: Yes, she ground it with a mortar. But all the acorns they were drained out, you know, and put in a sack in running water for several days for the tannic acid to come out.

HS: What kind of sack, a gunny sack?

JR: No, no, it was made out of fiber, reed.

HS: Did she put the acorns in whole? In the water?

JR: No, after they were shelled.

HS: I thought that in most cases they pounded the acorns to flour and then they leached the acid out.

JR: Some of the Indians down here south did do that, but we didn't up north.

HS: That's the way olives are cured sometimes, isn't it? In running water. That's the easy way, but it takes quite a long time.

JR: Yeah, that's right, it does.

HS: How long does it take to get the tannic acid out of the acorns?

JR: It takes about four days.

HS: Is that all?

JR: Yeah, that's all—four or five days.

HS: Then they have to spread them out and dry them. What did they spread them on, on rocks?

JR: No, they spread them out on—oh, what I could call—just like a mat, you know.

HS: Like a *petate*. Was it woven?

JR: Yeah, that's right. Had four stakes, one at each end and they spread them out.

HS: It was up in the air, then, so that the air could come up from beneath?

JR: That's right.

HS: Well, that's very interesting.

JR: Yes, it is. But here's something more interesting (tapping his copy of *Rock Paintings of the Chumash*, by Campbell Grant). Dr. Campbell Grant and Dr. Heizer hasn't—

HS: Excuse me. Before we start on that let's do a little more about what you remember of when you were a boy. Let's continue a little.

JR: When I was a boy, the first thing I done—I was about fourteen years of age then—I met a British explorer by the name of Sir Earlscliff. He was an archaeologist from England, British Museum. He came out here and I went out with him and I show him all the campgrounds of the Indians, and he took out many tons of *metates* and mortars and I don't know what else he did take (unclear). They went back to the British Museum.

HS: I don't know what they've done with them. You can't see them there now.

JR: No. And he wanted to adopt me and take me as a British ward, to make an archaeologist out of me. He said he would take me to Egypt. He had been in Egypt;

these men had, these British scientists. So my father says, "No. My son will never leave our home. He's too young."

HS: How old were you?

JR: Fourteen years of age. So, I got to digging after he left and transported everything back to England. I went all by myself to work.

HS: Was he the one who gave you the idea?

JR: Yeah, that's the one. Sir Earlscliff of England. And I started to dig and I dug skeletons and skulls and one thing or the other, and I took a whole body of an Indian and took it home. And under the house I put the bones, and I took the skull and I put it under my pillow!

HS: Why?

JR: I don't know, just—

HS: Did your mother and father know?

JR: No, they didn't. But my mother, when she went to do the bed the next day, she fainted! She saw that skull, you know, grinning at her. I was already to parochial school, you know. I was studying Spanish then.

HS: Where did you find this skeleton?

JR: I found it in Carpinteria.

HS: Near the coast?

JR: Yeah, right on top, right by the banks of the coast. Oh, that was rich.

HS: I know. When Mr. David Banks Rogers was there, he wrote his book in 1928, and he saw so much stuff all along that coast. It's gone now. Some of it's buried when they built roads and when they farmed the fields. They covered it up with dirt. It's still there, but who knows where? Do you remember the first name of this man? The Englishman?

JR: No. He was earl, an English earl, but I remember his title—Earlscliff of England, Earlscliff.

HS: What did you call him?

JR: I called him Earl. That was all.

HS: So you don't remember his other names?

JR: No, I do not.

HS: Did he ask you about the plants that you used? That your mother used?

JR: No, he never asked me that at all. No.

HS: All he was interested in was artifacts?

JR: That's right.

HS: That's all they were interested in in the old days. Do you remember much about the plants—besides acorns?

JR: Well, yes, there was a plant that they used very much. That was the sea lettuce, scraped from the rocks. That's what the lobsters feed on. It's green—green moss.

HS: Is it moss, or is it wide?

R: It's wide. It grows just like ribbon, like, on the rocks. The Chinese, you know, exterminated all of that.

HS: How did your mother fix it?

JR: Just boiled it, like spinach. It was good.

HS: Did the boys go down to the beach and gather it?

JR: Yeah, I used to gather it myself.

HS: But you didn't get fish?

JR: No, I didn't.

HS: Or clams?

JR: Oh, yeah, we used a lot of clams and abalones.

HS: Mussels?

JR: No, we didn't care for them at all. We had Pismo clams on the beach, sticking out in rows. Just dig them out, whatever you wanted, and that was it.

HS: How did your mother cook them?

JR: Boiled them.

HS: In the shell?

JR: No. In the pot.

HS: And the abalones?

JR: The same way.

HS: Did she pound the abalones?

JR: No, she used to take them after they were boiled and put them out to dry, to dehydrate in the sun. Then they were pounded.

HS: Were they put out whole or sliced?

JR: No, no, whole. And I remember when I used to go school I used to carry one for lunch. That was my lunch, and I'd carve away and chew away. Oh, they were tough. Oh, they were good. I made a meal out of them.

HS: Which one was that? Was it the red abalone?

JR: No, that was the black.

HS: With the smooth shell, the common one. Then you had deer meat?

JR: Deer meat, yeah, we had plenty of it.

HS: Fresh?

JR: No, it was dried, venison, you know, dried. Sun-dried, jerky.

HS: Didn't they eat any of it when it was fresh?

JR: Oh, yes, we used some of it when it was fresh.

HS: Liver?

JR: No, the liver— There's a disease in that, you know, in the deer and the moose liver— any of them. We didn't go much for it.

HS: I don't either, but some people do. In Alaska, my husband tells me, they just love the liver of the moose. Did you eat rabbit?

JR: Oh, yes, we ate a lot of rabbit.

HS: Cottontail?

JR: Yeah.

HS: How about—you didn't eat snakes?

JR: No.

HS: They're good.

JR: I know they are. We used to use the snake meat for medicine, though.

HS: How?

JR: We used to dehydrate the flesh of the snake, dehydrate it and sun-dry it, and made it into a powder.

HS: Any kind of snake?

JR: Rattlesnakes.

HS: What was it used for?

JR: It was used for blood disease.

HS: They never figured out any use for the poison, did they?

JR: No, that's one thing they were very careful about, that. When a snake was killed, you know, they cut about two-three inches back of the neck, and part of the tail, you know, of the—oh, what they call that?

HS: Rattles.

JR: The rattle, yeah. And that was it, and they skin it and they take it and dry it.

HS: And the children got to play with the rattles? Is that right?

JR: Yeah, some of them did, but the head was always crushed.

HS: It's ugly. Did you eat birds?

JR: Oh, yes, we ate a lot of—at that time, you know, there was a lot of this messenger dove, which is extinct now.

HS: Oh, pigeon, yes.

JR: Yes, the pigeon, messenger dove, and we ate lot of them. They used to fly on the coast, you couldn't even see the sun.

HS: So I've heard. I never saw one.

JR: Well, I did.

HS: Did you ever see the condors? The big birds?

JR: Yes. I got one egg on Strawberry Peak there in Mugu Point. I went up there. I got one egg of a condor.

HS: Shame on you. What did you do with it?

JR: Well, I took it over and turn it over to a fellow by the name of—oh, what was his name now? That was in Camarillo. I turned it over to him, anyway. What he done with it I do not know.

HS: The big birds were not in the nest?

JR: No. But when I got off the nest, coming down the rope, you know, I saw a great big condor just flying around. She was ready to attack me. That I knew.

HS: Frightening. What kind of nest did it have?

JR: Just up there on the holes of the rocks, you know.

HS: They didn't build a nest of twigs?

JR: No. Yes, they used to roam there on that Strawberry Peak there in Mugu Point. There's a mountain there that resembles Abraham Lincoln. I call it 'Abraham Lincoln.' Just as natural as can be. When you come from Hueneme this way along the coast, you'll notice that. That's on the west side of that mountain. Abraham Lincoln. I'm the one that named it.

HS: Is it called that on the maps?

JR: No, it isn't on the map. And me and Arthur Jones were coming together—he was engineer for the navy, then, at the time, and I was his assistant. I says, "Art, stop your

car right there. I want to show you something." He stopped the car. "Do you see that mountain over there, what it depicts? What does it look like to you?" He looked at it. "Just a mountain." I says, "Think of Abraham Lincoln. Look at his chin and his beard and the way he poses up there." "By, gosh, John," he says, "that is Abraham Lincoln." Yeah, Arthur Jones from Long Beach.

HS: I'll have to look for it next time I go to Santa Barbara.

JR: We surveyed all that country, you know, in Hueneme, for the navy, and all of that.

HS: Who were you working for then? Surveying?

JR: I work here for the county, a good many years, and after I got absence of leave on account of the caffeine poisoning, because my hand was trembling. It's still trembling. I never did get over it.

HS: You drank too much coffee?

JR: Yes. No, I made coffee when my wife was in the hospital here in town, in the community hospital, and she was in a critical shape, too. She slumped right back in the kitchen and they had to come and pick her up in an ambulance and they took her over there. And at that time I was working pretty hard, you know, and so I made coffee for the whole week in an aluminum pot. And aluminum will oxidize, you know, and form a sulfate of aluminum, and that was in the coffee and that's what got me. And then for good measure, I got a stroke on the right side. Oh, my gosh.

HS: You did? How many years ago?

JR: Oh, about four years ago.

HS: It isn't bothering you now, is it?

JR: No, it is. My hand, though, just goes like that. (shakes) I'll show you. (writes name). When I write checks or something like that, it gets pretty hard. That's the way it goes. I can't write nothing.

HS: Well, fortunately it doesn't bother you talking.

JR: No, it doesn't bother me talking. The only thing that bothers me is that I haven't got the mind I used to have. I had a very good mind.

HS: We all suffer from that. When you and your brothers and sisters were sick, what kind of medicines did your mother use? Did she go out and gather things and make her own?

JR: No, in those days there was Spanish medicine, which consisted of tallow, and they rub your chest with it, with sulfur.

HS: They used to use bear grease for that. Did you ever have bear grease?

JR: No, tallow, from cattle.

HS: She didn't use any plants, then?

JR: No. The only time we used any plants was for stomach aches or something like that, you know, or detention of bowel movement or diarrhea, something like that. Mrs. Robinson, she picked up some, up there in the Moulton Ranch.

HS: Yerba mansa?

JR: No, that wasn't yerba mansa. It was pennyroyal. There's two kinds of pennyroyal. One grows up in the San Juan Canyon, right off the old mission up there, and the other grows in the hills. The pennyroyal makes good tea, you know, but you've got to be careful and not make it too strong. They used that. And there was another one they call yerba pasmo. That's for blood poisoning. *Adenestoma*. That's in my book, in my writings. *Adenestoma californica*. And so on, and that's the way we took care of ourselves in those early days.

HS: You must have been well taken care of or you wouldn't be as healthy as you are now.

JR: No, that's right, too. I'm thankful to God that I'm living the years that I am now, eighty-three going on eight-four. Yeah.

HS: How long did your mother live?

JR: She was seventy-six years of age when she died.

HS: Was she in El Modeno?

JR: No, she died in Santa Barbara. We took her over there and buried her. She wanted to be buried in Santa Barbara, her home town.

HS: At the mission?

JR: No, the other side of the mission. That's Arroyo del Burro.

HS: Did you ever go up to the Rancho Dos Pueblos when you lived in Santa Barbara?

JR: Oh, yes, I've been all through that country.

HS: They have a lot of Indian things there, don't they?

JR: Oh, yes, they have a lot of things.

HS: (pause) You have a copy of Campbell Grant's book, *Rock Paintings of the Chumash*, here.

JR: Yes. And here's one of the interpretations that Rogers [D. B.] hasn't been able to decipher.

HS: Mr. Romero is speaking of the picture on the dust cover (also the frontispiece) of Mr. Grant's book. It seems to be a star with eleven points.

JR: Eleven points. Now this star here is the star of the north—that's Polaris. (pointing to inner star design) That has seven points. That is the star of Polaris. The Indians, you know, they worshipped the sun, our people, and this star.

HS: Not the moon?

JR: No. Not the moon, nothing about the moon. Just the sun and the stars.

HS: Are they both in that drawing?

JR: They're in here, and they're both inside [the book], too. But this has been misinterpreted. They don't know the mystery of it. But in November of the year we used to hold our rites, like Thanksgiving, you see. Like which comes on the twenty-eighth or the twenty-ninth or the thirtieth of November. And for three days we danced, thanking this star for our lives and our health and one thing or the other, because we Indians believe that we came from the North. And that's the north, that's Polaris. That's the star we use in survey work, too. And this is the sun outside.

HS: The larger circle.

JR: Thanking the sun god that without him we couldn't live. He provides the warmth to the earth, vegetation and everything that grows. That's it. Yes, that's it.

HS: It seems quite clear. Where was the ceremony held?

JR: It was held everywhere. In Santa Barbara, up in the mountains, and right here at Banning. We held it at Banning, too.

HS: Morongo?

JR: Yeah, Morongo. We held it there. After all, they were all Chumash Indians. But I see here (indicates *PCAS Quarterly*) Strandt's got a map for Paiutes and this and that. The Paiutes never came down in this part of the country. They never did.

HS: They were inland, behind the mountains.

JR: Yes, and through Utah and Nevada.

HS: They were also up in the high Sierras, weren't they?

JR: Up in the desert.

HS: When was the last of these ceremonies held?

JR: The last ceremony I attended was in nineteen hundred and—I got a telegram there when Uncle Bill [Pablo] died. I wish I could find it. It must have been around '35, somewhere in there.

HS: That was at Banning?

JR: At Banning, yeah.

HS: What kind of costumes did they wear?

JR: Well, the costumes worn by the chief, William Pablo—that's my uncle—he had an owl plume up there [forehead] on his forehead, and a bandage.

HS: From a big white owl?

JR: Yeah, from a big owl. Yeah. Yeah. And the rest of them wore plumes also, but with the heavy gear, you know.

HS: What is that?

JR: Heavy gear? Well, there were different plumes, you know. There were plumes of the eagle and the owl. The owl's a wise bird, you know.

HS: Yes. But there are lots of Indians who were afraid of owls, but not your people?

JR: No. No. And the dance went on for three days. After the third day (sic) Indians went out to hunt, you know, and they killed a lot of jackrabbits and deer and they brought them right in. And the women cook them. Everybody was fed with *weewish*, you know—that's the Indian porridge that they made out of acorns. Well, everybody had a good time, you know, in commemoration.

HS: You mean they didn't eat until after the dancing was over? (See *sic* above)

JR: Before the dance was on, they ate first. Yeah. And they never ate until next day in the morning at sunrise.

HS: Did the women dance too?

JR: No, the women sat on the back and they sang. (sings short refrain) You know that?

HS: No, I don't know it.

JR: Well, that's bidding farewell to the sacred star, Polaris. Yeah.

HS: Can you sing some more? There's more than that.

JR: Oh, yes, but I can't sing though.

HS: Well, it sounds all right.

JR: Yeah. (sings longer refrain) That's the end of it. Short and repeated over and over.

HS: Is that Chumash?

JR: Well, all the Indians down here are Chumash, you know. Only they got topographical names.

HS: The words, are they made in a Chumash dialect?

JR: Yes, that's a Chumash dialect.

HS: And the children? I suppose the children just played around?

JR: No, there were no children present. No, no children present.

HS: How did they keep them away?

JR: In bed.

HS: Oh. They danced at night then? Slept in the daytime?

JR: All night long until next day sunrise, and when the prayer came to the sunrise, then everybody went and ate, and then they slept through the day and [to] the night again.

HS: They didn't have anything to drink, did they?

JR: No. No, nothing to drink.

HS: Let's look at some more of the drawings in here [*Rock Paintings of the Chumash*]. I haven't read this book lately. I have a copy of it at home, but perhaps there are some other drawings that you can explain. Is that the same? This is not taken off the rock; this is made much more neatly.

JR: Yeah, that's a design of a basket there. Well, it's got the design of the northern star.

HS: Here's an animal or a man. Figure 29—that's from Cuyama. Is that a man, do you think? It's not very clear.

JR: Yeah, that's a man.

HS: These drawings are all mixed up, of course. Some were painted on top of older ones, so it's rather jumbled-looking. That's a pretty one, figure 25. I suppose that's a man, figure 17?

JR: Yes.

HS: (pause) On those articles that you wrote and the drawings you made of the stone compasses in the desert, do you think that you could find those places?

JR: Well, not right now. Oh, I could find them all right but it's a rugged country though.

HS: Can you drive there?

JR: No. Got to walk.

HS: When you saw them, and when you drew the plans of them, did you measure?

JR: No, I didn't.

HS: Too bad you didn't, because that would be part of the information that would be very interesting. They're all out in the desert, you think?

JR: Yeah, all of them out in the desert, yeah.

HS: Those compasses, you think then, were only about four or five feet across?

JR: Yeah, that's right.

HS: Maybe I remember wrong, but I thought that some of them outlined a dance floor, that they were big enough that they could dance inside them?

JR: No. The one that I found on the Moulton Ranch is worshipping grounds.

HS: Is it oriented?

JR: Yes, it's oriented. It's oriented, yeah.

HS: Do you think it's still there?

JR: I don't know. Everything's been changed so much, the topography of that whole ranch. Roads here, roads there, and the electric company has cut across there. They've got roads, too, of their own. But I could find it though, I know, because it's not far from Rattlesnake Canyon. You have to travel up it about half a mile or so.

HS: Is Rattlesnake Canyon the one that runs south beside that rock that has Mr. Tischler's name on it? Is that the canyon? You know the big rock that has the name of Newton and Tischler? Where the cross is on the tree? You were there. That's not Rattlesnake Canyon?

JR: That's Rattlesnake Canyon? No, it wouldn't be. No, no, Rattlesnake Canyon begins right there from the Laguna Road. You know where it goes, I mean, to the Moulton Ranch, to El Toro. And it cuts down from westward, from Sycamore Canyon. (pause) The iron pot is over there with my niece, over there in Reseda, it's out in the backyard. She's got some mortars that I gave her.

HS: Was it the iron pot that belonged to Frank Serrano?

JR: Maria Serrano, not Frank. The original, the old man, Jose Maria Serrano. The man was the father of Frank Serrano. Frank Serrano used to live right down there about a half a mile or so, in an adobe house.

HS: Half a mile from where?

JR: From where the Whiting ranch is now. They call it the Whiting ranch.

HS: Toward the highway? Oh, you mean in what they call the Serrano Adobe? It's on the side where the cemetery is, the El Toro Cemetery.

JR: You mean the main building?

HS: Yes.

JR: Well, that's where Jose Maria Serrano claimed all that land, you know, under the rights of the Spanish Government. Then Whiting came in there later and he got the Burruels and the Serranos to haul posts everything with horses and saddles, and he threw a line clear up there and by gosh, he claimed all that ranch.

HS: The Rancho Canada de los Alisos?

JR: Yes. Claimed all that land.

HS: Do you remember any of the stories that Uncle Frank Serrano told you? You told me about how he fed the starving Indians.

JR: Yes. That was right there down there where the highway 101 is now, and I dug a hole down there, you know, and I found this iron pot.

HS: This was near where El Toro Road crosses [highway 101] now?

JR: Yeah, when you turn going north, into Aliso Canyon. Yes, I found that pot and I took it out. It had bones in it, and everything.

HS: Animal bones?

JR: That's right.

HS: Was this house there?

JR: There was no house at all.

HS: How did the pot get there?

JR: I was prospecting. Yeah, I was prospecting. I had a divining needle, you know, for metal. It struck right down in there, so I dug down and found that pot within four feet.

HS: Is it a big one?

JR: Yes, pretty large—about that big.

HS: Four feet across, then?

JR: Just about.

HS: That's the kind they used to make the lard in. Tallow.

JR: Well, they used to kill a lot of cattle, you know, and they used to cook it in there and feed the Indians with it, because they were only surviving on rodents, you know, rats and snakes and one thing or the other.

HS: These Indians that they fed—did they work for them or did they just feed them because they were kind people?

JR: Well, they were just kind. They were kind.

HS: Where were the Indians living then?

JR: Oh, down there in Niguel, right down in the hills.

HS: Most of them in the Laguna Canyon?

JR: That's right.

HS: I wonder what kind of houses they lived in? Brush?

JR: Well, no, most of them had caves in there. I ran one cave down where it would house about fifteen to twenty Indians in it. I dug a lot of bones out and charcoal and everything. Evidently they cooked inside.

HS: Did you find rocks in there, artifacts?

JR: No, no artifacts of any kind. Probably vandals got in there before I did, you know, many years ago and took out mortars and whatever there was there.

HS: Did you ever go exploring up in the hills, Trabuco, Modjeska, Silverado? Did you ever find anything up there?

JR: Well, I found a cave in there in Silverado, right next where the Santiago—they had a battle in there once, they put up a monument.

HS: That's Black Star Canyon?

JR: No, the Black Star Canyon's way down this way.

HS: They had a battle up there. There was a massacre.

JR: Yeah. Well, they had a battle up there. There's a monument there. Well, that would be about southeasterly from that monument, I walked up there and I found a cave.

HS: That had been lived in?

JR: Yeah, lived in. I found a lot of artifacts in there, though.

HS: What became of them?

JR: Winterbourne got a hold of them and put them in the Bowers Museum, I guess. I don't know what he did with them.

HS: You didn't find any evidence of baskets? Of weaving?

JR: No. I found some sandals, though. In that cave I found some sandals.

HS: In a cave in Santiago Canyon they did find a piece of matting, I think. Those are all in the Bowers Museum. I wonder if that's the same cave?

JR: Well, it could be.

HS: Not far from Limestone Canyon. That's where Irvine Lake is now. I think their [cave] was over there.

JR: That country I know pretty well, because I laid some triangulation bases on those peaks, you know, all those mountains.

HS: Is that how you happened to buy that land from—who did you buy it from?

JR: Lola.

HS: Oh, you bought it from Lola Gonzales? She's still there.

JR: Yeah, I sold it though. She is? Uncle Frank wanted me to marry her in nineteen hundred and eight. I wanted to go to college then. I wasn't in the mood for marriage of any kind. My father promised me \$1,700. He was farming on the Irvine Ranch then raising lima beans and beets.

HS: He had a lease? Did he live on the Irvine ranch?

JR: Yes, he lived on the Irvine Ranch. And when he sold off, why, he just put on his white duster and his .44 gun on his waist and he took off. He got from Jim Irvine, I think he gave him \$2,800 or \$2,900, for all the seed that he had acquired out from the dumps from the thrashing machines. "Oh," he says, "you're too young to go to college." I never said nothing, so I took off. I told my mother, I said, "Mother, you pack up all my clothes. I'm going to leave." Mother says, "Where are you going?" "I'm going out and make some money," I says, "so I can go to college." So I took off, and I was right at Camarillo. There was a little station there. I got off there. I didn't know where in the heck I was going to or anything else. And an Englishman came along, Captain Rowe, Patterson Rowe, came along on a white horse. And he looked at me sitting there, you know, with a suitcase and a trunk, and he says, "Are you looking for a job?" I says, "Yes." So he took me to the ranch—oh, what's the name of that ranch? Part of one of the ranches of the Camarillo estate. It was a big ranch, hundred and eighty thousand acres of land, all cattle. But we had to rough it. We used to have do to the cooking. Old Captain Rowe, he had his family up there in

Santa Ynez Valley and San Marcos ranches, and they were transporting all the cattle down [to Camarillo], and I sat on one end of a bench, he sat on the other. So we ate. That was our chair and table. Well, the captain got to like me pretty well and I got so I got to dehorning cattle, you know, and castrating, vaccinating and all of that, and I took much interest because that's what I wanted to be—a doctor of veterinary science, a veterinary surgeon. That's why I went to college, and you know I raised enough money from that ranch dehorning, vaccinating and castrating and all of that, and riding, too, you know, I was a range rider there on the ranch, I had about, oh, about \$1,400, and I took off. My godfather was in Michigan, Detroit, Michigan, and he used to correspond with me quite a bit. He had married a woman by the name of Eva Elwood.

HS: Was that Mr. Romero?

JR: Yeah, Gorgon Romero, that was a brother of my father. He was an adopted brother, you see, for my father was an Indian. He wasn't; he was Spanish. But I was his godson, you see, the first one that came in the family. And he told me, he says, "You going to go to college you better come up here. Eva has acquired 500 acres of mint land here, and stills and everything." To still, you know, the mint. Big farm. So I took off. Instead of going to Colorado University, I went to, not Ann Arbor, but Detroit.

HS: What is it called? Detroit College or the University of Detroit?

JR: The University of Detroit. Ann Arbor, you know, is far off from there. That's the old university.

HS: Was it a good school?

JR: Well, I made one hundred points.

HS: How long were you there?

JR: I was there three years. In three years they couldn't teach me anymore! Yeah. So I graduated on the—let's see if I can't find it. (pause to look up graduation certificate)

HS: March 22, 1923.

JR: That's right, with a hundred points. And I got a write off of ninety-eight points. I had a \$2,000 certificate to go to McGill University in Canada.

HS: In Montreal.

JR: Yeah. So I came home and I found my father very sick with hepatitis of the liver. My father was a heavy drinker, you know. Oh, he was a drinker.

HS: Is that why you're so opposed to it?

JR: Yeah, that's why. This brother of mine took after my father, the same thing.

HS: So you didn't go to McGill?

JR: No, I didn't. I lost my scholarship here in Orange County, in Santa Ana. I couldn't go.

HS: That's too bad.

JR: I had to be the father of the whole family from there on. And I'm still alive.

HS: Somebody had to do it.

JR: Yeah, that's right.

HS: Did you study veterinary medicine when you were at Detroit?

JR: Yeah, that's right.

HS: Did you ever use it?

JR: No. I'm going to tell you something about that. After I got back from the university, college, I met a fellow by the name of—oh, what was his name now? Up in Upland. He was a German fellow. He had imported five stud horses from France and they were all covered with mange. And there was a doctor by the name of Cunningham doctoring those horses. He told me, "Say," he says, "you graduated from veterinary school," I says, "Yes, but I'm not a full-fledged surgeon. I can't operate." I says, "I got a minor degree, a doctorate degree. What is wrong?" He said, "I've got five stud horses that came from France, and I don't know what's wrong with them. The doctor doesn't seem to do any good." This was Doctor Cunningham of San Bernardino. I went and looked at the horses. I said, "They've got mange. That's what they have. I tell you what you do." I says, "I haven't take my examination yet to practice here in the state of California." So there was nothing coming in from—Schultz, Schultz was his name. Schultz, I remember now. No money coming in from him to the doctor, so one day the doctor came over. He says, "I came over to see the stock. That stock is doing pretty good—those stud horses. What'd you do to them?" "Oh," he says, "I had a veterinary here,"—he called me a veterinary—"He give me some medicine." I went down to the store at Upland; that was the name of the place where he went. I

says, "You get me some silver nitrate, one quart, and I'll adulterate that so you can swab the tails and manes and everything. And get me five gallons of carbonic acid—carbonic. We'll spray all the fences and the posts where they horses been rubbing." And that done the job. He [Cunningham] said, "What was the name of the veterinary?" He gave him the name, you know, the old Dutchman didn't know any better.

HS: That didn't get you into trouble, did it?

JR: Yeah, he got me into trouble. So I got a, from the medical board, I got a citation to appear for a medical examination that I was practicing without license. Well, that was right, you see. So I went in, to the medical board in Los Angeles. They asked my name is so-and-so, I said, "Yes." "You have cured some horses up there in Upland, haven't you?" I says, "Yes. You know why? I'm a horse doctor, not a horse thief, like all of you are." Just like that. I pointed at every four of them. I says, "I'm through. You can count me out. Don't tell me I have to cure any more horses, or anything else." And I didn't. That was the end of it. So then I took two years of math under the school of correspondence, in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

HS: That's the I.C.S.?

JR: Yeah, that's right. And in two years I graduated and I got another scholarship there, for higher mathematics. I says, "This is all I want to know. That's what I need to survey." That was it. And from there on it was archaeology and, oh, I been into a lot things.

HS: I think maybe it would be nice if you would make a statement on here—give your name.

JR: All right. My name is John B. Romero and my Indian name is Hasat. I'm giving this statement so that anyone that would be interested could read the facts that I have got here with Mrs. Smith.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: John B. Romero

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: December 20, 1967

SUBJECT: Indian artifacts and culture in Orange County canyons

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Mr. John Romero. This is December 20, 1967. Mr. Romero has just given me three small coins, cut out of coins (sic), that he found about thirty years ago on the desert. I'll let Mr. Romero tell how he found the coins.

JR: I found these coins in Death Valley. I was prospecting for gold there and I went down and found some very fine chips of gold and I kept on traveling down to see if I could find more, and finally I landed into a pot, clay pot, and in this clay plot, I hit it with a pick and made a hole in it on one side and I tried to pull it out with the pick, which wouldn't give in and I felt some of the solidness of the pot below. So I dug all around the pot—it already had a hole in it—and I took it out. I thought I had found a rich treasury which proved to be nothing but Walker's sealed as wampum, made in Missouri. The history traced down—it happened to be that he was on the Oregon Trail and he had missed the trail and landed down in the base of Mt. Whitney. Of course, he found his way out of there and finally landed over in Fresno where he settled and reared a family. In the years to come, that came later on, I met a son of his by the name of George Walker. He was quite old then, at the time, around about seventy years of age. We met in a convention, Indian convention. He was representing the Tule Indians which were nothing more than the Chumash that fled away from the coast up into the inland base. These coins, I donated twenty-seven to Terry, historian here of Orange County. At that time I was an engineer for the Orange County surveyor's department, and I was one of the only individuals that had access to the treasury department where Terry had charge of; and not only that but he was also connected with the Santa Ana *Register* at the time. He had a desire to go

visit his mother in North Dakota; so he left, and poor Terry, he never finished the investigation of these coins and he died on the train of heart failure.

HS: I remember when Mr. Stephenson died. I was living in Orange County. No one else has ever tried to finish it then?

JR: No, no one has. He had some of it. He gave me some information that Walker was on the trail. He got lost and dropped down beside of Mt. Whitney from the other side, north side of the desert.

HS: I wonder if he ever found out whether Mr. Walker had ever used any of these coins. There were fifteen thousand of them, you said.

JR: No, that's the investigation. Fifteen thousand seven hundred. I counted them five times.

HS: They were being brought to California, then?

JR: Yes, brought to California to trade in probably for gold, because at that time most of the coins, when I dug them out, they were very shiny.

HS: Oh, they were. They're copper, aren't they?

JR: Copper, yes, that's copper.

HS: Well, how fitting that you should find them. They were made for the Indians and an Indian found them.

JR: Yes, I was prospecting.

HS: You think some are in Bowers Museum now?

JR: Yes, there's some over there. I think Terry turned them over to Bowers Museum. We were—he was a very close friend of mine. We were together. And he has a son, that's a journalist, graduate of the University of Texas, school of journalism. Terry Junior, that's right.

HS: Did you ever go out on trips with Mr. Stephenson?

JR: Yes, I was one time up in the Trabuco range. Yes. We were up there together. Yes.

HS: Can you tell something about your trip with Mr. Stephenson up in the Trabuco?

JR: Yes. The idea was of interpreting some hieroglyphics on a stone that lays now right down at the museum.

HS: The Bell Rock, was it?

JR: Yes, that's the Bell Rock.

HS: It was up in Bell Canyon.

JR: Yes, that's where we were.

HS: It was still in the canyon then?

JR: Yes, it was still in the canyon.

HS: What happened? Could you read them?

JR: Well, I started to decipher; some of the hieroglyphics I deciphered and some of them I couldn't.

HS: You didn't keep a copy of them, did you?

JR: No. No.

HS: That was the only trip you ever made with Mr. Stephenson?

JR: Yes. From there on is when he went on to North Dakota to visit his mother and he died in the train.

HS: What a shame. He made lots of trips [into the mountains]. Too bad you didn't go with him earlier.

JR: Yes.

HS: Mrs. McKinney, I believe, was telling me that you told her, the day that you went on that trip together, that you once met Madame [Helena] Modjeska.

JR: Yes, I did. I met her over there in the Santiago Canyon. There's a dam there now, you know. I was hunting back in there and I had killed quite a bunch of mountain pigeons, mountain doves, you know, wild pigeons, and she came along on a horse and says, "What are you doing?" I says, "Hunting." I had a ten gauge muzzle-loading gun.

HS: What kind was it?

JR: Well, I—it was an old western type of a gun. I don't remember the name of the gun.

HS: Those were dangerous.

JR: Yes. I used to load it and—yes, they're dangerous. One time I got flopped over. I was hunting robins then and there was a big sycamore tree that was leafless, and it was just full of robins.

HS: In the winter that must have been.

JR: Yes, in the winter. Oh, they used to flood out into that country of ours, you know, thousands of them.

HS: Where was that?

JR: In Santa Barbara. That gun came from there. We brought it here when we moved to Orange County.

HS: Where did you get it?

JR: I got it in Santa Barbara. It was one of my father's guns. He had all kinds of guns, you know. He had a regular arsenal in the house. He was a bear hunter, you know, shoot lion and all of them.

HS: Is that gun gone now?

JR: Oh, yes, it's gone now. I just don't know what became of it.

HS: Too bad. Well, to get back to Mme. Modjeska—

JR: Well, she says, "Oh," she says, "I wish you wouldn't kill any more of them. They're just like pets around my place." I says, "Yes, ma'am. I will quit shooting." And she says, "You know what I'm going to do?" I says, "No." "I'm going to give you a twenty dollar gold piece." She gave me a twenty dollar gold piece.

HS: Just because you quit shooting?

JR: Yes, quit shooting, and I never did hunt any more in there.

HS: Did she have the money with her or—

JR: Yes, she had the money, plenty of it.

HS: I mean while she was riding the horse in the canyon? She didn't have to go back to the house to get it?

JR: No, no, she had it with her.

HS: That must have been up in Williams Canyon, the side canyon where the dam is.

JR: Yes.

HS: That's interesting. Do you remember what she looked like?

JR: Well, I have just a—she was a very pretty woman, a very pretty woman. She weighed around about 140 pounds, something like that.

HS: Do you remember what year this was?

JR: This was in 1906.

HS: Oh, toward the end of her life. She died in 1910, didn't she, or '11?

JR: Somewhere in there. Yes.

HS: Was she cheerful?

JR: Yes, she was very cheerful.

HS: Mr. Romero has given me one of the four copies he has of the manuscript of his book, *The Botanical Lore of the Indians of California*. This is copyrighted in 1934. When was it published?

JR: It was published in—oh, I don't remember the date now. I have to go in the case. I have one book that's left.

HS: Doesn't matter. We can look in the book later. How many copies were printed?

JR: There were printed about five or six thousand of them.

HS: Oh, there were that many of them?

JR: Yes, that many.

HS: Well, it shouldn't be that expensive to buy then.

JR: Here's the trick. I was in the hands of a bunch of Jews in New York, a Jewish publisher. And he sent me a check for \$50; that was my royalty on those six thousand dollars (sic) of books. I placed my investigation in the hands of the, oh, what do they call this little booklet that they publish in New York to investigate the case?

HS: I don't know who that would be. Another publisher?

JR: Yes, another publisher that generally takes care of the authors, you know, investigates for authors.

HS: How did you happen to have it published by those people? [Vantage Press, New York]

JR: Yes, I published because they were publishing in the newspapers. They had headquarters in Hollywood. Yes, and I met the real publisher, the president of the company. I met him in Hollywood. I liked him and I had confidence that he was all right, and that's what confidence—my father said that's what kills manhood. Watch out.

HS: Why, that's shocking, because they undoubtedly sold all of them, and now what do they cost?

JR: It cost me \$1950.

HS: To have it published?

JR: To have it published.

HS: Each book that's sold now, in the used book catalogue, costs about \$12 or \$15. Books become more valuable, you know, when they're out of print. When you wrote this book, who identified the plants? Did you or did someone help you?

JR: I did.

HS: You didn't have any botanists helping you?

JR: No, sir, no botanists.

HS: You were the one who put the Latin names on them?

JR: Yes, that's right.

HS: Without any help from anybody? Is that right?

JR: Well, I had some help from the University of California, at Berkeley.

HS: Who was it?

JR: Dr. Sparks. Some of his work [is] published, and by a woman authoress, too. She was a thorough botanist, full-fledged botanist.

HS: You also made collections of plants, didn't you?

JR: Yes, I did.

HS: How many did you make?

JR: Oh, I made about—Dr. Kroeber of the University of Southern California, at that time he was considered the authority.

HS: University of California.

JR: Yes. And he only had about sixty plants. That was all. And I come up with, oh, all told, I think, about seventeen hundred. And I published only a hundred and eighty of them, something like that. I thought I'd cut the book into about five or six copies and I was going to continue but—I quit already the publication of the book.

HS: This copy that you gave me is just the same as the book that was published?

JR: Yes.

HS: Well, where are your other lists of plants? You have them?

JR: Oh, yes, I have.

(pause)

HS: Mr. Romero has shown me a copy of one of the anthropological reports that was done in the 1930s, which also has many plants that he doesn't discuss in his book. I notice you have the Indian name in each of these. What Indian language is that?

JR: Chumash—no, not Chumash. It's Cahuilla—Ca-we. C-A-W-E. C-A-dash W-E, Ca-we.

HS: That is not the same as the Cahuilla?

JR: Well, it is a corrupt name, given by the Franciscan friars, of Cahuilla.

HS: Of the desert Indians?

JR: Yes. Of all the Indians here towards the Palm Springs area, San Diego (sic) County. And they were all Chumash.

HS: Do you know Mr. David Barrow's book? It's called the *Ethnobotany of the Cahuilla Indians*.

JR: No. That must be a new one.

HS: It's an old one. He's dead. He wrote it for his doctoral thesis in 1898, and it was published in 1900. The people out at Morongo, the Malki Museum, have just

republished it. This would fit in with what you have here. I would like to look at this book later, when we finish talking. —Mr. Romero has also given me a publication of his called *The Indian Conception of the Creation of the World*. This is a manuscript copy, but the cover is printed. Was this ever published?

JR: No.

HS: How did you happen to have a printed cover?

JR: Well, I just—I had it printed because I want it that way for my records, you see.

HS: How many copies of this are there?

JR: I had four of them.

HS: Is this of the Chumash? The names of the peoples?

JR: Yes.

HS: Amnaa and Tokmiyawut—are those Chumash names?

JR: Yes.

HS: Thank you. When I talked with you last, you started to tell me—I don't know whether you meant to go on, but you didn't—about how your father took you out to the elderberry tree to tell you what he thought you should know.

JR: Yes, that's right.

HS: What did he tell you?

JR: Well, my father was more of a Protestant; he wasn't a Catholic in a sense of the word at that time. But still when he died he had a Canadian friar take his confession. But he told me at the elderberry tree, he says, "I'm going to confess to you, of what I have been and how I came to this world and everything else." He says, "You're going to live and bury the whole family. I know you're going to bury me, too." And he says, "You know—" What did he tell me now? That's a good many years ago. He says, "Whatever you do, you don't have to confess. If you do, do it to God, to the supreme God up there in Heaven. And what's more," he says, "you're the oldest in the family and now you are responsible and you're going to have to take care of your brothers and sisters. They're all young and you're the oldest." Well, that's quite a responsibility—so I got the job.

HS: Also your mother.

JR: Yes.

HS: Did he know he was going to die?

JR: Yes, he did.

HS: And he did die not long after?

JR: Yes, he did die. Couple of months later he died.

HS: How old were you?

JR: Oh, I was about eighteen or nineteen years of age.

HS: He wasn't telling you the facts of life, then. You already knew those.

JR: No, he told me also how he had been picked up from an anthill.

HS: Did you know that before he told you then?

JR: No, he told me right there. I hadn't known it, no sir. He was raised by this Romero family, you see. That's the way I acquired that surname, you know, Romero. They were Spanish grandes in Santa Barbara. They had a lot of land, you know. They had about fifteen square miles of land.

HS: Where was it?

JR: All the way from Carpinteria clear to Santa Barbara. From Santa Barbara it ran across clear to the mountains.

HS: Are there any of them left there?

JR: No, my grandfather died and my godfather died, who was supposed to be a brother to my father, which he wasn't. They looked upon him as one of their family. They raised him as one of their family.

HS: Was he an Indian also?

JR: No, he was Spanish.

HS: There are none of them left there now?

JR: No, they're all dead. The only one living was Uncle Louie, and I think he's dead now. He passed a hundred.

HS: Didn't they have children?

JR: No. No, no children.

HS: He [your father] I suppose was told that story by his parents, the Romeros?

JR: Yes. They were coming from the Santa Barbara Mission one Sunday morning and his foster mother which became his mother and also my godmother, because I was the first one in the family, born and they baptized me under Catholic rites. She heard a baby crying and she told my foster grandfather, she says, "Apolinario," she says, "I hear a baby crying." "Ah," he says, "you're crazy." "You tell the coachman to stop." Finally they stopped, and my grandmother got off and went over around the brush. And there was my father eaten up and just covered with red ants. Oh, they were just working at him. No wonder he was crying. He was picked up, and in those days you used to wear a lot of poplin and silk, you know, the Spaniards, you know dressed in silk. She brushed with her skirts, you know, and everything, the ants off and wrapped him up in a shawl and put him in the coach, and they went up to the ranch. And he was raised on the ranch and he became the head cowboy, head of the ranch. They had a lot of cattle, you know, about ten thousand head of cattle.

HS: Did they raise sheep?

JR: No, no sheep. Just cattle. And he used to go up in the mountains, you know. He was always seeking, you know, the solitude where he could be all alone. And one night, he told me, he was making—had made a fire and he was warming up some coffee to drink and in comes a man with a red handkerchief tied around his head. And he says, the man looked at him [and said], "What are you doing?" He says, "I'm guarding the cattle. The bears have been killing some of the cattle up here and I'm here to do the job." He says, "Aren't you the son of Apolinario Romero?" My father said, "Yes." He says, "Well, I'm Bill Colts. There's a big posse chasing me and I'm on my way down through the desert to get away from here. But I ran out of ammunition and I have nothing to eat." So my father says, "Here's something to eat. Eat here." He [Colts] says, "You go to the ranch and you tell Apolinario Romero that Bill Colts sent you." And my father went down, and my grandfather at that time was United States Marshal, deputy marshal. And he says, "Father, I met a man up there by the name of Bill Colts. He told me he wanted you to send him four quarts of brandy and some food and ammunition, that a posse was after him, fifteen of them in number." So my grandfather says, "Never mind this. Keep quiet. Don't say anything." So my father got the lunch for several days prepared so he could go right on through. He got the ammunition and the four quarts of brandy, and he gave my father his gun, one extra gun. He used to carry two guns, you know, and he gave my father one of them—with three notches on it. A big Texas Dragoon—one of those .44s. Yeah, Texas Dragoon.

And say, I've seen my father kill quails, just knock the head off those quails with that revolver. He was a crack shot. He never shot anything standing. He'd scare them and then when they run he'd shoot them, right on the head, rabbits, jackrabbits and everything. Oh, he was a wonder.

HS: Who was this man, Bill Colts? Is he well-known? I never heard of him.

JR: Bill Colts. He was a bandit. Yes, he was a bandit.

HS: He robbed people on the road?

JR: No, he robbed the missions. He was just taking the alms out of the collection box.

HS: Do you know how his name was spelled?

JR: C-O-L-T-S. William Colts.

HS: I never heard of him. What finally happened to him?

JR: We don't know what became of him. The posse came into the ranch next day. And of course my grandfather was United States Deputy Marshal and he received them. They says, "We're looking for Bill Colts. He was heading down this way." "No," my grandfather says, "I haven't seen him or heard of him." So they turned around and went away.

HS: Well, really, he hadn't seen him.

JR: No, he hadn't seen him, no. Only through what my father's message had been delivered to him. And he took off and was never heard of. My father kept that gun until about, I think it was 1912. He loaned that gun to a fellow by the name of Johnson that used to have a stock corral right on the corner of Sycamore and Third, where the Salvation Army is now. Johnson was his name. He took that whole block in there. And on the other block is Birch, you know, where there used to be a photographer living there by the name of, oh, what was his name—Rannells(?), Arnold, something like that.

HS: This man was a gun collector—the man who borrowed the gun from him?

JR: No, he was rustling mules from Montana and from away up in Dakota and bringing them down here to the yard and selling them to farmers around here.

HS: Oh, he had a stockyard?

JR: Yes, stockyard. He was caught up there, on a roundup of stock and he went to the penitentiary there in Montana, Helena, Montana.

HS: He stole them and brought them to Santa Ana?

JR: Yes. Brought them to Santa Ana. Or ship them by train, you know.

HS: But he never returned the gun?

JR: No, the gun went to the hands of the authorities and that was the end of it.

HS: That was a long time ago, wasn't it?

JR: Yes, 1912. Because my father died in 1913.

HS: Did you ever have any connection with the Channel Islands, the Santa Barbara Islands?

JR: Yes, I've been on the islands.

HS: How long ago?

JR: The first time I was in the islands was in '99, 1899.

HS: Where did you go? How did you get there?

JR: Santa Rosa. On a boat, on a sailboat.

HS: How did you happen to go?

JR: Well, I went there to help, you know, wash dishes. They were shearing sheep at that time up in there.

HS: That was the Vail Ranch, Santa Rosa?

JR: Something like that. And then I was in San Miguel, too, that was another year, 1900, and from there on I never did go back there anymore.

HS: Did you work on San Miguel? What did you do? Shear the sheep?

JR: No, I was dish washing and helping around, you know.

HS: Who was the boss there, then?

JR: The boss there was Borderi, a Spanish Basque.

HS: They had a lot of Basques.

JR: Yes. Santa Rosa, I think, was controlled by a bunch of Basques, you know.

HS: They do well with sheep.

JR: Yes. Huichtalote was there and Borderi. He had some interest and they had a lot of sheep, and over on San Miguel.

HS: Do you know who had the lease of San Miguel then?

JR: No, I don't remember, it's too long.

HS: That might have been Captain Waters.

JR: Yes, it could have been.

HS: The house wasn't there then, was it?

JR: No. We lived right out in open camps, tents.

HS: I think the house was built about 1908, I believe. It's still there but it's falling down. They had a lot of sheep there, then, though, didn't they?

JR: Oh, yes, they had thousands of heads.

HS: I think there were sheep on San Miguel Island from 1873, so they've practically ruined the island.

JR: Oh, yes, they denuded the whole pasture lands and everything.

HS: Were there any trees on the island when you were there?

JR: Just a few.

HS: What kind? Do you remember?

JR: Well, there was some manzanita and—

HS: On San Miguel?

JR: No, not on San Miguel.

HS: There's manzanita on Santa Cruz and maybe Santa Rosa.

JR: Yes, there's some on Santa Rosa. Scrub pine, too. Oaks.

HS: I mean were there any trees on San Miguel?

JR: No, they were all just shrubbery, you know.

HS: Bushes, about three feet high.

JR: Oh, bigger than that, yeah.

HS: There's not much left now. Do you remember all the signs of the Indians on San Miguel?

JR: No, I do not.

HS: That was before you took an interest? Because that's one of the greatest Indian sites in the world. It's still covered with things. Too bad you didn't notice them.

JR: I notice, all right, but I wasn't interested at all.

HS: You were what, about seventeen then?

JR: No, I was pretty young.

HS: You said it was 1900?

JR: Eighteen ninety-nine and 1900 again.

HS: You were sixteen. Have you ever heard anything about boats that the Indians had before the Spanish came?

JR: Yes. They used to make boats there in Carpinteria. They hewed them out. They built fires, they hewed them out and when they got to a certain depth they would build fires in it.

HS: What kind of logs did they use?

JR: They were just poplar.

HS: Cottonwoods, you mean?

JR: Cottonwoods, yes.

HS: You never saw any of these boats, did you?

JR: Yes, I saw two of them. Yes.

HS: Where were they?

JR: In Carpinteria. Right by the ocean front down there where the big asphalt deposits are.

HS: Just lying on the beach?

JR: No, they were right up on top of the bank.

HS: Had somebody left them there, or had they been buried?

JR: No, they were left there and there were no Indians there at all. They were all gone.

HS: And these were dugout boats? Made of logs? They were not made of planks put together like this?

JR: No. Well, that channel's only thirty miles across, you know.

HS: It's rough, though.

JR: At times.

HS: And rough around the islands. Hard to get through the surf. Even now it's hard for people with their new equipment. How big were those boats you saw?

JR: Oh, they were about, I would say about, oh, from that door over to the other door.

HS: Not very big, then?

JR: One of them was about that size. The other one was from here over to the door over there.

HS: That would be about—I'll pace it off. (pause) Evidently one boat was about ten feet long and the other one about twenty feet. I have heard so many stories about plank boats that were built by the Indians on the islands on Catalina or on the northern islands. Do you know anything about those?

JR: No, I do not.

HS: Do you know anything about songs that the Indians sang when they rowed?

JR: No, I do not.

HS: You know, you sang some little songs the last time I was here. A friend of mine wanted me to ask you if you knew any peon songs. Did you ever play peon?¹¹¹

JR: Yes. The Indians of Cahuilla, they play that quite a bit. They get right down, a party of two or three on one side, and three on the other. And they hold a blanket in their teeth, you know, and the women stand in the back singing. And the men, you know, why they just murmur—grunt.

HS: I've seen it played down in San Diego County, at Mesa Grande. Do you know any of the songs?

JR: I used to, but my memory's not very good any more. When you become eighty-three years of age, you know, your mental faculties are not right.

HS: I don't think yours are so bad. You sang the last time I was here.

JR: Yes. It just happened to be that day. I remember one of the songs that the Chumash used to sing, *The Song of the Bear*. When they used to hunt bear, you know.

HS: Will you sing it?

JR: Let's see if I can remember now. (after some rehearsing, sings)

HS: Is that Chumash?

JR: Yes, that's Chumash.

HS: Could you translate the words, do you think?

JR: Well, it's just a bear song. The bear hunters, you know, that's all it is, pretending, "I'm going to kill a bear." That's all it means. Yes, the same thing over again.

HS: Do you remember any other songs?

JR: No. I do not—from an Indian. That's from way down, what's the name of that place now? It's in the desert region.

¹¹¹ Peon is a very old California Indian community game that involves traditional singing. Participants on one side hide under blankets and the other side guesses how they are holding the game pieces of bone and rawhide; a lot of singing of peon songs takes place during the game. http://www.kumeyaay.info/games/peon_peone.html referenced in August 2011.

HS: Where is it, in San Diego County?

JR: No, it's north of San Diego County, back in there somewhere.

HS: What kind of song was it?

JR: Well, it's an Indian song, you know, of appreciation, appreciating the beauty of the mountain that they have, how beautiful it is. It's sung part in Spanish, though. *Que bonito esta el parral*, etc.

HS: Isn't that funny, part of it's in Indian and part in Spanish? That's a cute little song. Could you sing it louder, do you think?

JR: Yes. (Repeats louder)

HS: Those would be the Cahuilla people?

JR: No, I think they were Pima. Pima Indians.

HS: Oh, from Arizona. Did you ever hear any of the songs they sing in Lower California? They have a Wild Cat Song that they sing down there.

JR: No, I never have. I've never been around the fiestas there. (Unclear) I was detained [in lower California] for about two weeks. I had to apply to the Department of Fomentos in the capital city of Mexico, and I stayed with Contreras, the head of the Custom House there at Tecate. He had a nice little ranch right close by. I finally got all straightened out after buying about a whole case of tequila for all those—

HS: What happened? You got caught below the border?

JR: No, I went across to examine at San Valentin—that's seventy-five miles south of Tecate—a beautiful gem mine. It had emeralds in it, emeralds and rubies.

HS: What was your problem?

JR: Tiffany Company wanted to buy the place, they wanted to get a report so they sent me there because I spoke Spanish, you see; and also being an Indian among Indians. There are Indians down there, Tanama Indians, Tanama.

HS: That's in lower [Baja] California?

JR: Yes, in lower California. I finally got straightened out after I got the justice of the peace there half drunk. Oh, I tell you, those guys—they call it the *mordida*, little bite.

HS: They don't get paid enough, and they have to get enough to live on somehow, so that's the way they do it.

JR: Anyway, I got my papers. I had papers of exportation, but I had none for—I mean for exploration but not for exportation so I could remove none of the minerals from the mine.

HS: Did you ever succeed?

JR: Yes, I did. The Tiffany Company of New York came and sent their engineer over and mineralogist. Gave him \$100,000 for the property.

HS: Who did it belong to?

JR: Belonged to the Indians.

HS: And the Indians got the money?

JR: Yes, the Indians got their money but there was a German fellow, you know. He was mining there and the first time he sent a consignment of emeralds and rubies, and he came back with \$5,000. He divided the money among all the Indians. And the next time he took about thirty pounds of gemstones and they never heard of him anymore.

HS: That's an old story.

JR: Yes. Never heard of him anymore.

(pause)

HS: That's a beautiful quilt you have. Is that on your bed in there?

JR: Yes. I don't remember who made that. It's been a lot of years.

HS: I think that's the log cabin design. That's what they call it. (pause) In this anthropological report, I notice that Mr. Romero has a section on marine flora used for food. I wonder if you can find in here the one you call, sea lettuce. You said you used it when you were a child. It isn't this one, not the sargassum weed?

JR: No.

HS: This one is called sea spinach. That's not it, is it?

JR: No. Let me see that.

HS: I think you described it as being long ribbons, what you used in Santa Barbara.

JR: That's a green kelp. That's what lobsters feed on.

HS: Was that what you used for food that your mother liked to cook? Is that the same thing?

JR: Yes.

HS: Can you find it in here? There may be more.

JR: No. I had all that preserved.

HS: Is that it?

JR: Yes, this is the one. This is the sea lettuce there.

HS: This is the green salad grass, *sargassum filmentosum*. This is the one that you used to gather for your mother to cook.

JR: Yes.

(pause)

HS: —the ranch Mr. Romero owned in El Toro. South of the schoolhouse, did you say?

JR: Yes, down below the schoolhouse.

HS: Who did you say you bought it from?

JR: Wickerheim, Mr. Wickerheim.

HS: How many acres did you have?

JR: Five acres, interset.

HS: Oranges?

JR: Yes. God almighty, the darned trees they were so thick I could barely go through with the tractor. It was a real old Dutch orchard. That's what I called it.

HS: Trees are supposed to be 20 feet apart. You didn't plant it?

JR: No, I didn't. I did transplant about eighteen or nineteen trees, though, right on the same rows because I saw they were a little too thick, you know, five acres.

HS: Valencias, they were?

JR: Yes. And it grows good sweet oranges, too, and early. The Collins Packinghouse at Orange used to pick the oranges up there.

HS: Seems like a rather dangerous place to raise oranges, because of the cold draft that would come down that canyon. But I know there are a lot of groves in there; the Osterman grove is in there.

JR: Yeah, Benny Osterman has one, and one down below—Harvey has a grove in there too; he's dead now. He has a son in the Hawaiian Islands teaching.

HS: Did you ever know Pierre LaCouague?

JR: No.

HS: He's a Basque, a Frenchman who has a ranch there, a hundred and fifty acres. It is in the Capistrano canyon, above Capistrano, not in the El Toro Canyon but in Capistrano Canyon about a mile east of the Ortega Highway. Did you ever know him?

JR: No. I know Etchenique used to have a ranch in there. I know the ranch, I think, but I never met the people.

HS: A big, two-story house with a tile roof, built up on a hill. I haven't been there but they told me about it. Mrs. McKinney and Mrs. Robinson went down there to see him one day, and they found lots of Indian things in the orchard. They found some milling stones, *metates*, that were long and rectangular, two feet long and very deep, and they wondered, "What is this? It's not a bowl, it's not a *metate*. What is it?"

JR: It was a *metate*.

HS: But it would be difficult to use a *mano* with that because it dipped down maybe three inches deep—much deeper than usual. They didn't find any sea shells in there, so they felt that the people had lived there a long, long time ago, long before the Spanish.

JR: Oh, there was quite a reservation of Indians in there, you know, controlled by the mission.

HS: This was long before the Spanish came. It was a long time before that, before they had the arrow points. They were living on acorns in those days. (pause) I'm looking at a book of drawings of artifacts that Mr. Romero did. Did you do them for the anthropological project? Did you do them from the original things—not from pictures?

JR: Yes. From the original things.

HS: Where did this cogged stone come from? .

JR: Well, the cogged stone has been found as far north as Santa Barbara.

HS: This particular one, do you remember?

JR: Oh, that one came from down here, from the Banning Estate.

HS: It's probably in the Bowers Museum.

JR: Oh, there are several of them there.

HS: Over a hundred and fifty there. There's a plummet. What do you think those plummets were used for?

JR: The plummet? They were used for fishing.

HS: So many of them are so beautiful, perfectly symmetrical and they look almost like plumb bobs. It seems as if there was more work on them than you would put on a fishing weight. Do you think they were charm stones? A lot of people call them that.

JR: Well, some of them were used for that purpose, you know. Not all of them.

HS: I don't know how they used them.

JR: Oh, they hanged them around their neck with a cord. Cut an eyehole, you see.

HS: We find them rather often in the excavations that we do. We never find any burials or anything like that, but we do find plummets. You know where I went yesterday. I don't know whether you know anything about this place, but I was down at the Magee house on Camp Pendleton. This is Las Flores. Have you ever been there?

JR: Yes, I surveyed in there. I must have spent about three months surveying in there.

HS: That was when it was still the Santa Margarita Ranch?

JR: No. Camp Pendleton. Well, it is the Santa Margarita Ranch yet. They've only got about an eighty- or ninety-year lease on it.

HS: No, I think the government owns it.

JR: They bought it?

HS: Yes. They bought it in 1940, I believe.

JR: Well, it wasn't bought then. It belonged to the ranch yet.

HS: To the O'Neills.

JR: Yes.

HS: Well, it seems now that President Roosevelt gave permission for the Magee family to live in that house as long as they wanted to. You know that two story-house with the big garden around it?

JR: Yes, I do.

HS: Mrs. Louis Magee has become so ill she can't live there any longer, and one of her descendants has persuaded the federal government, the war department, to give this land to the State of California for a park. It will include the adobe house that was built by the Forsters when they owned Santa Margarita, and also the *asistencia* of Las Flores which was connected with San Luis Rey Mission. And I just wondered if you'd ever been down there in your explorations.

JR: Yes, I have been all through there, all through that country in there. San Luis Rey Mission and all that country.

HS: We saw quite a lot of old Indian rocks around the house. They'd collected them there. There was a big Indian village. It was called a *pueblo libre*.

JR: *Pueblo libre*—free town.

HS: There were only a few that were ever made, but when Pio Pico was owner of the ranch, he took the land away from the Indians. The Spanish had made it, had given it to the Indians, quite a lot of land, some square miles of it, but I guess Pio Pico was a greedy old man and he couldn't stand to have anyone else have something that he might get; but there are still quite a lot of signs of the Indians there.

(pause)

HS: (Speaking of Jane Penn of Malki Museum) I think she's around, in her sixties.

JR: No. Uncle Bill only had three daughters; that was Juanita; Maria, Mary; and another daughter; and one son. Let's see. And he raised one grandson; he's chief of police down there to Palm Springs now.

HS: What's his name?

JR: His name is Gene—Eugene.

HS: Pablo? Is that his last name?

JR: Well, yes. No, he's got another name he uses, Holmes.

HS: Maybe that was his father's name.

JR: No, because Holmes didn't have only that Eugene, Gene Holmes. He raised one too by the name of—oh, what was his name—oh, Roy Arenas.

HS: This was an adopted son?

JR: Yes. Well, originally he was his son. The old man, you know, was quite a rounder.

HS: All of the children didn't have his name, then?

JR: No. No, he had his name, Pablo.

HS: I don't know anything about him. Where was he born?

JR: He was born in Riverside County, there at the Indian reservation.

HS: Which reservation?

JR: In Soboba. Yes, when Uncle Bill died, you know, he had another woman there on the reservation. Her name was Belte.

HS: Indian?

JR: No, she was Spanish, and she's the one that turned over the whole case—records of all the Indians.

(break in recording)

HS: Mr. Romero was telling about the personal papers of William Pablo. When he died the patent of his land and Soboba was there, and that most of the Indians did not patent their land.

JR: No, that was in Banning.

HS: Oh, this was not Soboba. It was down toward Palm Springs?

JR: Yes. Well, he had charge of the whole Indian reservation. He was chief, you know, of all of them.

HS: What became of his papers? You didn't keep them?

JR: No. I turned them over to Roy.

HS: Where is he now?

JR: I don't know. What he done with them I do not know. There's two—one of the boys live on the reservation and the land and Juanita lives on the land, too, at Banning.

HS: Do you ever go out there? Do you ever see them?

JR: Well, I used to go there quite a bit when Uncle Bill was alive, you know, and Aunt Jenny. I used to go there quite regular and stay with them for two or three days and then I'd come home.

HS: You ought to go out to the Malki Museum sometime. Perhaps some of the things that you have you would like to give them, because this is really an Indian Museum. The Indians started it, the Indians are running it and they are doing all sorts of things to raise money to build a permanent building and I really think it's worthwhile, because most museums, you know, are just about the Indians but not them.

(pause)

JR: Well, let's see now. You want to look at that?

HS: I've seen that before. This is the one [manuscript] of the compasses.

JR: That's right.

HS: You showed it to me.

JR: Oh, I did? I didn't know whether you had seen it.

HS: I'd like to know more about these and I would like to know where all these drawings were made, where the places are located and also the measurements, dimensions. You see, I want more than there is here. But it's too late to do that now—is that right?

JR: Yes. And to show you where they are, that's impossible.

HS: If they are still there. These are all out in the desert?

JR: Oh, yes, they're still there. In the desert, yes.

HS: Where?

JR: On the Turtle Range and around. Let's see—Turtle Range and Death Valley. And—that's quite a lot of land back in there, you know.

HS: You certainly did a lot of work on these.

JR: Lot of walking too. Real walking.

HS: Do you think you could remember—no, you couldn't remember the approximate locations of these?

JR: Oh, I think if I could get back in the days if I could walk. I can't walk any more.

HS: Just by reading these you couldn't remember, though?

JR: Oh, yes, I could remember, yes.

HS: I'd like to publish some of them sometime. In Mr. Romero's manuscript *The History and Mystery of the Indians' Stone Compass*, I'm looking at number ten, The Compass of Bad Omen, symbolizing evil spirits. This one you mention as possibly being in Santa Barbara County?

JR: No, that was on the desert. That's in the Turtle Range. That's when the Chemihuevi used to control all that country, you know.

HS: You think that these compasses are still on the ground?

JR: I think so. I found some Boot Hills up in there too, you know. I was going to dig down to see if I'd find any arms, any revolvers or pistols.

HS: Did you?

JR: I didn't go back there anymore, because I had found, you know, a place where this fellow Wiggins had taken out a tubful of sand and taken it to San Bernardino for assays and it proved very rich. I found the bridge and everything and I went back there and I couldn't find that anymore. No, I couldn't.

HS: Happens all the time, doesn't it?

JR: Yes. I just couldn't find it so I gave it up.

HS: It's a shame that you never got this published. But it does need more information. However, perhaps they could—since this does pertain to Chief Pablo they'd probably like to have it out at the Malki Museum, if you don't give it to somebody else, in the meantime. May I look at this? What is it?

JR: Oh, that's just a writing, just some writings copied out, that David Tuttle got for me.

HS: Oh, I see, these are from different sources. No name on it.

JR: No, no title to it.

HS: Who wrote this?

JR: David Tuttle.

HS: Who's he?

JR: He's a Mormon. He's from Utah.

HS: Was he doing a study for school?

JR: Yes. He was a university graduate from up there.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: JOHN B. ROMERO

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: August 14, 1969

SUBJECT: Serrano family homes and Indian campsites

HS: I'm speaking with Mr. John Romero in his home on Cooper Street in Santa Ana. Mr. Romero, a group of us has become interested in the only Serrano adobe in El Toro that's still in existence. You know the house I mean?

JR: Yeah, right on top of the hill to the right as you go into El Toro on the old Trabuco Road.

HS: Yes. Were you living in El Toro at the time the Whitings were living there, at the time they restored the house?

JR: Yes, I was living there.

HS: Do you remember how the house looked before it was restored?

JR: Well, the house was in pretty fair shape for being one of the oldest buildings in that district.

HS: Was anyone living in it before they fixed it up?

JR: No.

HS: It was just standing there—but it had a roof?

JR: Oh, yes, it had a roof.

HS: That would protect it, of course, from the weather.

JR: Oh, yes. Of course, you know when the Whitings took over the ranch, they stole that property. That's what they done.

HS: From whom?

JR: From the Serranos.

HS: But the Serranos hadn't had it for a long time before that, had they?

JR: Oh, they lived there, but the Whitings have got it, though.

HS: Whitings have sold it, quite a while ago. The Serranos, I guess, got into debt, didn't they, and lost the property?

JR: No, they didn't.

HS: What happened?

JR: Well, what happened here was that the Whitings wanted to correlate some of the land in there. And what they done, they went and hired the very people that used to own the ground. Yeah.

HS: How did they get the land away?

JR: They just put in a fence clear across, across the hill clear down to the grade there, Sycamore Grade. They went north. And there's supposed to be—because James Irvine wanted to correlate that land himself.

HS: He got part of it, part of the Serrano land?

JR: Yes, he got part of it. There's another darned crook that ever come to California. The politicians today, Mrs. Smith, are rotten, all of them.

HS: Well, they're not as bad as some of the people in the nineteenth century.

JR: Look how they sold the Indians of California. Who was it? Fillmore, was it? President Filmore?

HS: Oh, I don't know—every president, every Bureau of Indian Affairs has not been good to the Indians.

JR: And never will be.

HS: I guess not. Not until the Indians stand up and assert themselves and get their own lawyers. They're educating a lot of their young men to be lawyers.

JR: Yeah. Well, we had some pretty good lawyers. We had one that represented other California Indians, and he was very good.

HS: Who was that?

JR: That was Collett, Mr. Collett. Made a lot of trips to Washington. He was an ex-minister. I don't know what denomination he belonged to, if he belonged to the Presbyterian or what, but anyway, he had a traveling card from the Presbyterian—I guess he was a Presbyterian—to travel any time he wanted to go anywhere. We backed him up financially though, on those trips.

HS: He was a lawyer, too?

JR: Oh, yes, he was a lawyer.

HS: Well, tell me about the El Toro area. Do you remember the other Serrano adobes that used to be there?

JR: Yeah, there used to be one away from there where Uncle Frank was born.

HS: Where was that?

JR: That's right down there to the right as you cross the creek.

HS: That would be going inland?

JR: Inland, yes, going in up north, up beyond the canyon. There was a good size 'dobe house there.

HS: Which side of the road was it on?

JR: On the right-hand side, going north.

HS: The stream side?

JR: Yeah, right across from the stream.

HS: Was it up above Osterman's place?

JR: Osterman's place? Oh, no. Osterman's place is way back in there.

HS: It was below that. Not very far from the one that's still standing?

JR: Yeah, that's right.

HS: Who built that one, do you know?

JR: I think—let's see.

HS: Would it have been Frank's father?

JR: Yeah. I was trying to think of his name.

HS: Wait a minute. This book, *Saddleback Ancestors*, says that the original Francisco was one of the members of one of the first parties that came in here, but his son Leandro had a son Francisco who was christened April 16, 1804 at Capistrano mission. Was that the one you call Uncle Frank, who was born in 1804? Or perhaps it was his son?

JR: In 1804?

HS: That's a long time ago. The Francisco you talked to (sic) was born about 1844, and he was the son of Don Jose Antonio Serrano. And he apparently was baptized in the Plaza Church in Los Angeles. So that would have made him, what, fifty-six in 1900. That's the one you call Uncle Frank?

JR: Yes, that's the one.

HS: He didn't build that adobe on the El Toro Road?

JR: No, I don't think so. I think it was his father that built that one.

HS: You remember him?

*JR: No, I never met the gentleman and don't remember him. But all the rest of the Serranos, I know every one of them. I can name every one of them.

HS: Why don't you? Who would they be, his brothers and sisters?

JR: They were brothers. There was only one sister; that was Nimfa.

HS: Oh, yes. She never married, did she?

JR: No, she never married. She was a regular old maid.

HS: Was she really? I wonder why they called her Nimfa. That's a name that means nymph, but she doesn't sound like that kind of person. Maybe she was when she was a little girl. You knew her?

JR: Oh, yes, I knew all, every one of them.

HS: Where did she grow up?

JR: She grew up right in the old 'state, up there where Alifonso used to live, Alifonso Serrano.

HS: You mean the property that Blackjack Torres took from him?

JR: No, no. Blackjack, he—

HS: Not that property?

JR: Well, it used to belong to the 'state.

HS: But that's not where she lived?

JR: No, she lived right down below there, right along the road down there. The old houses are still there, I think.

HS: The ones with the trailers around them? Some of the Serranos live there yet. She's dead, isn't she?

JR: Oh, yes, she died in—I don't remember, 1900 and—

HS: I think they're listed in this book.

JR: Yeah, she's dead. So, of all the Serrano boys that I knew, was Aurelio. He's the one that followed Uncle Frank in age, Aurelio. And Aurelio was followed by Leandro.

HS: Just a minute. Did Aurelio have a house? Did he have a separate house there?

JR: Well, they all had—they all lived in that shack there, and Aurelio used to be a cowboy for the Santa Margarita Ranch.

HS: You're speaking of the Santiago Road, now, the place where some of them still live?

JR: No, Sycamore Canyon, Sycamore Canyon.

HS: Oh, on El Toro Road, what they used to call Los Alisos.

JR: Yeah, Rancho Los Alisos.

HS: Los Alisos Road that used to be called, but they changed it to El Toro Road. They lived in that place you were telling about, then?

JR: Yes, they all lived there.

HS: Aurelio and Leandro, you said. Who was next?

JR: Let me see, there was Aurelio, there was Leandro, and Jose Maria, and let's see, the other one was—my mind is not exactly as it used to be to remember them things. It's very seldom I'm consulted about them by anyone. Alfonso, that's four.

HS: He was the father of the people who live up there under the Sycamore trees now. He had a son named Alfonso, I think, and a couple of other boys.

JR: Yes.

HS: Who was Louie Carisoza's mother? She was a Serrano, wasn't she?

JR: Yes, she was a Serrano. That was Uncle Frank's daughter. Her name was, let's see—

HS: It doesn't matter. I can ask Louie. I'm going to. But the story seems to be that there were five adobe houses built by Serranos on that property when they owned it still, where El Toro is.

JR: Not to my knowledge. I started going there in 1907, is when I first went into that area. And Uncle Frank wanted me to marry one of his daughters. That was Lola Gonzales

HS: It might have been better if you had. She's had a lot of trouble with that son of hers, Nick.

JR: Oh, gosh, that guy is a natural born crook.

HS: Nick is her husband, isn't he?

JR: Nick, yes, and the son is Nick, too. Nick Junior.

HS: Nick Senior is a nice man. He pulled me out of a ditch once when my car rolled into a ditch. But Lola hasn't had a very happy life, I don't think.

JR: No. Uncle Frank wanted me to marry her. And I was young and I wanted to go to college, you see. I was preparing to go to college in those years.

HS: Do you remember when her mother was still living? I have a picture of her mother.

JR: Oh, yes, that's Aunt Jenny.

HS: Very old lady. One eye was missing. She was ninety-four when she died, I think. What was her name, I wonder?

JR: That was her name. Her surname, you mean? Let's see now, let me think of that. She was of Capistrano. By gosh, I know Aunt Jenny's name just like I know my hands here, but I can't bring it to mind. [Juana Olivarez Serrano]

HS: That's all right. I'll ask Lola, sometime when the weather cools off. I don't want to go up there now, it's too hot. Someone said that there was one of the Serrano houses down where the freeway is now. Do you remember?

JR: There was no houses in 1907 that I can remember that there used to be there. There was nothing like that. The only house was down below where Uncle Frank used to live when he was young. That's right down there on what is the Whiting estate now, on the Trabuco Road.

HS: You don't remember one over by where 101 goes? The 101 followed the line of El Camino Real, so they might have built a house down there and apparently they did, but nobody knows exactly where it was. It's gone, of course. You don't remember any other houses then?

JR: No, I do not. Because I done a lot of exploration work in there for the state university, you know.

HS: What kind of work?

JR: Archaeology. I done this work for Dr. Kroeber out of the University of California and also Southern California, and the other work went for Dr.—there's his name again. I worked under him so long.

HS: Not Rogers? Not Malcom Rogers.

JR: No, that's Santa Barbara Museum. There's a lot of things there of our people in the Santa Barbara Museum.

HS: You remember that Indians would have lived around the present adobe, the one the Whitings lived in?

JR: No, there was no Indians there.

HS: No sign of them? There was a stream, Serrano Creek ran west of it.

JR: Yes, that's right, but there was no Indians, not a single Indian in that area. What few Indians there were, about three or four of them, used to be down at El Toro, in the village, right next there to the store of Osterman, George Osterman.

HS: You told me once that Uncle Frank used to feed the hungry Indians.

JR: Oh, yes. That's right.

HS: You thought those lived in caves?

JR: Yes. Well, those Indians that lived in Niguel. I found a cave where they used to live. It's right up on those hills back in there. You never got to see that. And it will be impossible in my physical condition right now.

HS: We could drive to it.

JR: No, you can't drive to it. You have to walk up to it.

HS: Would it be south of where the Moulton ranch house is?

JR: Yeah, it would be south.

HS: It won't be there long, probably. They're developing all that land.

JR: Yeah, that's what I read in the newspaper once in a while. They're developing all that country.

HS: You ought to see El Toro. Have you been down there lately?

JR: No, I haven't been down there for about four years.

HS: You wouldn't know it. It's all covered with houses. Remember where the olive grove was? It's all covered with houses and they've built a big lake two miles around. They call the settlement Lake Forest.

JR: And where do they get the water from?

HS: Metropolitan water. It's been piped down there, down through the Irvine ranch. Do you remember any other Indians living around there when you lived there, when you knew it?

JR: No, I don't remember of seeing any Indians outside of the half-breed Indians, like Aunt Jenny. She was a half-breed Indian.

HS: They like to call themselves Indians, not Mexicans, all of those people.

JR: Well, they are Indians. Of course, they have some Spanish blood in them, you know.

HS: I think they'd rather recognize the Indian than the Spanish, which is all right.

JR: Yes. They do that because they got a certain little income from the government.
(laughter)

HS: Eight hundred dollars, I think. (interruption) Louie [Carisoza] showed us a site up the road, quite a ways up above Osterman's. You know La Canada Road leading into Osterman's? Quite a ways up above that there's a spring in the creek bed and a great big oak and a great big sycamore, and he said on the east—or the south bank of the creek there, that there was a big Indian site. But that's on the Mission Viejo and it's behind the fences and it would be hard to get to from the Mission Viejo and you can't get to it across the creek. It's all brambles in there. Do you remember that spring?

JR: That's in the San Juan?

HS: No, it's on the El Toro Road, Los Alisos Road, and it's up about halfway to Cook's Corner.

JR: How can Louie describe that thing? He was only a kid.

HS: He used to work for the Mission Viejo and he found a lot of stuff over there. I don't know how he got in; there must be a gate someplace. When he was a boy, he used to—

JR: Oh, yes, the country was already open.

HS: He was living up where he lives now, in that same area where you used to own land and we used to own land. He's about sixty now, I think.

JR: Something like that. Well, there's another guy that's not very honest.

HS: But he's nice; I like him.

JR: (Unclear) but on business I wouldn't have nothing to do with him.

HS: We're going to help the construction company down there lay out a park. I suppose they'll call it Serrano Park. It will be west of the adobe, it goes down to the creek and then up the other side, about a hundred acres. They're going to put a lake on that. And we were just wondering if there were any Indian sites around there. We're going to go look.

JR: There is Indian sites there, but we removed a lot of archaeological specimens from all those grounds in there.

HS: They went to Berkeley?

JR: Yes.

HS: Did you excavate:

JR: I didn't. I was supervisor.

HS: You didn't just pick them up off the ground?

JR: Oh, we picked some off the ground but we excavated for some of them. I located all through that Laguna Hills, you know, camp sites and everything. All along the coast.

HS: I think you were down there with Mrs. Robinson one day. I wasn't with you.

JR: Yeah. Everything was fenced in but she had a key to get in and we made it to some of the places, but we couldn't cover the rest though because it was impossible.

HS: What do you know about the San Felipe Valley? Down near Warners. Do you know anything about that area?

JR: Yes, I do, quite a bit. I had Indians there to supervise down in there.

HS: In what capacity?

JR: The Director of Indian Affairs, that's what I was.

HS: There were Indians living there?

JR: Oh, yeah, there's still Indians living there.

HS: Well, there are some half-Indians. The man who is the caretaker for the San Felipe Ranch now, who lives in the old adobe, is named Bill Paroli. You know him? He's part Italian. There's a spring called Paroli Spring along that road there. Did you ever survey the San Felipe Ranch?

JR: No, I never did. What I did do in that country, I prospected for gold. Yeah, I was a prospector for gold.

HS: Where did the Indians live that you were looking after?

JR: Well, most of the Indians lived in Palm Springs and they lived in Yuma and they lived down at Indio and Imperial Valley and up in Warner Springs.

HS: Well, I was thinking mostly about the San Felipe. There is a graveyard that's still in use down there. An old Indian was buried there just last winter. He used to work for the Sawday family for many years. His name was Hyde, Conrado Hyde.

JR: Oooh, that Hyde family, you know, was pretty big. They were half-breeds.

HS: I don't know anything about them. Where did they live?

JR: John Hyde used to be one of the _____, used to live at the Banning Indian Reservation.

HS: Morongo, you mean?

JR: Morongo, yes.

HS: Conrado had been down in San Diego County. He worked for George Sawday for many years, so some of them went to his funeral, and they had it at the San Felipe graveyard. He's buried there. You don't know anything about the San Felipe Ranch itself, then?

JR: No, I do not.

HS: The archaeology society is going to have a weekend campout down there and look the ranch over for sites. There's a lot of stuff there this Paroli has picked up. It's hard to get into those little ranches; you know, it's private property. Another thing I wanted to ask you about was if you could name the—I guess you would call them *barrios*, the Mexican villages, you know.

JR: *Barrios*, yes, that's what it is, yeah, "neighborhood." Mexican neighborhood.

HS: I came out Seventeenth Street and I came right through Santa Anita.

JR: That's up the line here.

HS: Do you remember the other ones?

JR: Yes, Santa Anita, that's over there by the side of the river. And then there was—let's see, what was the other one that came up? That's way up there on the Chapman Road, past the Chapman road.

HS: Up by El Modeno?

JR: No, no, no, no. It's way west.¹¹² I don't know, my mind don't function well as it used to. To think I wrote books, five of them in here and I can't even sign my own name. My hand just got that palsy, you know, from the stroke that I had on the right side and caffeine poison on top of it. It's the caffeine really that's doing all the damage to me. I don't drink coffee anymore.

HS: I should think not. There was one out that way, too.

JR: That's toward Talbert.

HS: I can't remember the name of it. They all had names. Was there a *Colonia Juarez*?

JR: Yeah. Right down at Talbert. I'm trying to work on this one. Good thing you brought that up. It cleared my mind. Oh, this is Saragoza. That's over there by—it's between Edinger, that's the street that goes north from here, north from Seventeenth.

HS: Edinger is parallel with Seventeenth.

JR: Oh, that's right. That's down there. Excuse me.

HS: Not Katella? Not Ball? Chapman?

JR: Chapman runs east and west. Gosh, I used to know all these streets when I was in the county surveying department, surveying roads and everything else.

HS: I should have brought a map. Would your brother know?

JR: No. He doesn't know; all he knows is beer, and he drinks plenty of that.

HS: I can't think of it. I was hoping you could, because I tried. Most of them [*colonias*] are gone. I think Santa Anita is about the only one left.

JR: I should be able to think of that name; it's very common. It takes off from Seventeenth Street and goes north. Oh, Gilbert, Gilbert [Street]. I know because I had sixty acres of strawberries in there. Yes, I know. I used to employ 160 Mexicans and Filipinos and Japanese.

HS: That was in the south part of Garden Grove. The next thing is to think of the name of the *colonia*.

JR: Yes, the *Colonia Saragoza*, named after General Saragoza.

¹¹² Note by HS says, *Colonia Independencia* – Midway City.

HS: That was Saragoza on Gilbert Street? There must have been five or six of them in the county.

JR: Yes, there was quite a number of them.

HS: I wonder if there could be, by any chance, any connection with the Indian villages and the *colonias*. I don't suppose there was; the *colonias* came up after we became agricultural.

JR: Yes. No, there wasn't any connection.

HS: You never lived around Capistrano, did you?

JR: Oh, I used to go down there all the time on days, you know, Communion days, one thing or the other, baptism days and barbecues. It was a great town for barbecues. Yeah, they used to have a lot of wine and everything else. I was just beginning to taste it then. I used to ride a bicycle all the way from Orange clear over there, from El Modena rather, where we settled.

HS: When you used to go down there, do you remember the Forster house? Behind Judge Egan's house.

JR: Oh, yes.

HS: Were there any other buildings around it then?

JR: No, it was all alone.

HS: Tom Forster told me that it originally had a winery and a tannery and a blacksmith shop and all those places around it as all of the old houses did, but they've been gone a long time, I guess.

JR: I was preparing for Communion, I think, the time I went there.

HS: Who was the priest then?

JR: The priest there was a—I can't think of his name now.

HS: Was it the Irishman, O'Sullivan?

JR: No, he came on later. I tried to put one of my books there and he said that would create too much of an expense for the Mission. But now they're going to get TAXED. They're going to get taxed somewhere. (pause)

HS: The people at Bowers Museum are getting very much interested in the kind of dishes that were used in the old houses, the old adobes. Do you remember what kind of dishes your mother used?

JR: Oh, it was all copper, copper and clay.

HS: Copper cooking pots, pounded and riveted?

JR: No, they were made in Spain. I don't know where they came from, but I remember we had some at home and we had some clay dishes, you know.

HS: Mexican clay dishes, I suppose.

JR: No, they were made by the Indians.

HS: Were they baked? Hard?

JR: Yeah.

HS: There weren't any china dishes.

JR: No, until later years and then the Chinese brought in their crockery into this country. We used them, too.

HS: What else? Do you remember what your family had in the kitchen when you were young?

JR: Well, in the kitchen we had what they call an *hornilla*, made out of rock, you know, built up, with a plate up on top of it.

HS: An open plate, you mean, to cook on?

JR: Yeah. That's what we had in those days.

HS: In Santa Barbara?

JR: In Santa Barbara.

HS: They still have them in Mexico and some of the poor people down there just cook on an open fire outdoors. They can't build a fire inside their thatched houses.—Did you have Chinese dishes?

JR: Yeah.

HS: Where'd you get them? Do you know?

JR: Well, I don't know. My father used to get them there. There was a bunch of Chinese in town, Santa Barbara, that came in.

HS: Came by ship or by land?

JR: By ship, yeah.

HS: You don't remember the dishes, do you?

JR: I remember having a lot of flowers and things like that, you know. It's pretty hard for me to describe the designs, but pretty well decorated.

HS: Were they bowls?

JR: No, flat dishes and bowls, both.

HS: You didn't have any English dishes?

JR: Yes, we had some English, too. They came later.

HS: What did they look like?

JR: The English dishes, they were made of mostly porcelain, porcelain dishes decorated and branded underneath on the bottom of the cup, describing the country they came from, England, and the town they were made. I don't remember the decorations on them.

HS: How about Spanish ware?

JR: Oh, Spanish ware, that was way back in the days when I was a kid.

HS: I don't suppose you know anything about this, but shortly after 1900 they had a bad drought in Southern California and down in Capistrano an old lady got some little girls together and they took a walk four different days to make it rain. They were carrying images and pictures. Do you remember that? Did you ever know about that?

JR: No, but I remember that drought though.

HS: The little girls walked up to San Juan Hot Springs and they walked over toward Irvine and they walked south over the Forster Ranch and they walked down to the Boca de La Playa, and the fifth day it rained. Mrs. Sepulveda told me that. She was one of the little girls who made that walk. I just wondered, but you weren't in Capistrano then.

JR: Oh, no.

HS: Where were you baptized?

JR: I was baptized in the Santa Barbara Mission.

HS: Have you ever looked up your name there?

JR: Yeah. I was kind of balled up here with the federal government. I lied myself into the army. There was a draft going on, you see, and I tried to volunteer in the regular United States Army. Col. Miller was in charge of the station there in Los Angeles and told me I had a bad heart and they couldn't take me. Yeah, here I am with a bad heart! So, I went down the street and I looked up and I saw a Canadian stationed out there right on the street, recruiting men, you know, for World War I. I went up to them and told them I wanted to join the Canadian Army. He says, "You'll have to renounce your American citizenship before we can take you. We'll take you if you renounce." I said, "Oh, no. Can't renounce my American citizenship! If I do, how am I going to get back into my country? I'll be a foreigner and I'd have to go through a lot of red tape to get back to the United States." Further down below, they were right close, you know, by Col. Miller's recruiting station, there was a Scotch Highlander; he was a sergeant major, a sergeant of rank. He was lecturing and he had pictures, you know, of the Germans, you know, where they were cutting the women's breasts so they couldn't nurse their babies. Oh, boy, that got my goat right there! I said, "Here's where I'm going to join." And they told me the same thing that I had to renounce my American citizenship. I says, "No, I can't do that." I used to belong to the Moose Lodge then, you know, in Los Angeles and Judge Myers of the Superior Court was one of our officials in the Moose Lodge. And he had charge of the draft board in Huntington Park. So I went to the judge. "Judge," I says, "I want to get into this war, but I'm too old." He says, "Well, if you're too old, you can't get into it." "How about cutting my age down? Can I cut my age down so that I can be drafted?" "Yes," he says, "we can fix that." The judge fixed it; he was at the head of the board and in four days I was called for service. I went up to San Francisco. There's where I got my uniform and everything.

HS: Didn't that make any trouble later for your Social Security?

JR: It did with my Social Security. And they investigated everything. I'll tell you who done that, the Mormons. You see, I joined the Mormon Church. And I was a Christian, subject to the laws of God, you know. I kind of like that baptism, to submerge under water, like the Lord was baptized. And it went on like that.

HS: They looked up your baptism certificate?

JR: Yes. Looked it up and by God, I was born in 1884. (laughter) Yeah, born in 1884 and that makes me eighty-six now. I got a pretty good pension from the government, soldier's pension.

HS: Did you serve overseas?

JR: No, I didn't. I never got across there. I wanted—my whole division, half of my division went up, but they went to Siberia. They left the other half there and we was getting ready to go to France, the other half, because the men that were coming in, you see, would make up the full division. Then the war broke.

HS: And you didn't even get to Siberia.

JR: No, never got to Siberia, never got anywhere; never got to kill Germans like I wanted to.

HS: I remember some of the soldiers in Tustin were in Siberia, Holderman and some of those people. I grew up in Tustin. Well, I guess—I think you told me the last time I was here that you dug up an old iron kettle.

JR: Yes, that was the one that Uncle Frank used to feed the Indians.

HS: Make stew in? Where was that? Was that up the road?

JR: Right on the corner there of El Toro and the freeway. Right on the corner there was an old ranch there.

HS: Now that's the house I was talking about. The freeway took it. Was that a Serrano ranch?

JR: Yeah, that's the one.

HS: They did have a house down in there. What else did you find?

JR: I found a lot of bones, cattle bones and everything, you know.

HS: You always find those, sawed bones.

JR: They buried that kettle, and it was a big one, about that big around. My niece over in Reseda's got that now. I gave it to her.

HS: You didn't find any other metal things?

JR: No. Nothing.

HS: Did you ever go out to the head of Newport Bay where the old Sepulveda house was? It's been gone for a long time. You know where Lane Road used to run? Just south of Lane Road where San Joaquin Road came up, there was a green farmhouse there. Do you remember that, on Lane Road? It would be east of Red Hill Avenue and southeast of the Lighter-than-air Base where the big hangars are. Did you ever see any signs of a building over there?

JR: The only building that was there that I ever saw was the original old 'dobe house of the Sepulvedas.

HS: That was the one where the golf course is now, and the Irvine ranch house?

JR: On the Irvine ranch, yes, because Irvine bought Sepulveda's ranch, but he left the buildings there and the one that lived there for a long time was—oh, what's his name? He's one of Alfonso's sons. [Serrano] Just think of that—I know all those boys and I just can't think of the name right off the bat.

HS: When was that that you knew him?

JR: Oh, that was in, I think around 1912 or '13, somewhere in there. He used to punch cattle for the Irvine ranch.

HS: I know where you mean. They called it the old ranch house. It was near the head of the bay. I know who you mean. I can't think of his name, either. It's catching, isn't it? He's still alive, isn't he?

JR: Oh, yes. He lives up there on the old estate, Alfonso's place.

HS: Was it Ben? Was that his name?

JR: No. Let's see now, if I can think of it.

HS: Well, I can ask Louie [Carisoza] about that. He'll know. Probably an uncle of his, or a cousin.

JR: He would be a cousin.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: ANONYMOUS NARRATOR

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: Not recorded

SUBJECT: Mission bells

Recording begins in the middle of the conversation.

AN: This is the piece I have at the present time.

HS: Well, describe it for the tape.

AN: All right. That's just a chunk of the side—

HS: Ooh, fifteen pounds.

AN: I don't think I've ever weighed it. When I had the top, it weighed twenty, twenty-two pounds, if I remember correctly—the top did.

HS: This is just out of the side of the thing?

AN: This is out of the side. I didn't have the correct pictures with me today.

HS: (inaudible) by heat; was it cut up?

AN: Yes, it was, with a blow torch. The best I know and can figure out from all the pictures and the material that I've had sent to me over some period of time when I was corresponding with the mission, this is a piece from the oldest bell. The top that I had was the top of the other bell dedicated to San Pedro, which was not the oldest one. This is the one that's from 1723; this is a chunk from it.

HS: Is that the _____ book?

AN: Yeah, and I have other, some other articles, stuff. Here's a picture that they sent me of the top of the bell that they had arrived at my home and collected when I lived in the valley. That's the top that has the squared top. It was enormous. It was, oh goodness, a foot across anyway and stood about six or eight inches high.

HS: Oh my. How did you find out what this was?

AN: Oh, that is the peculiar part about it. OK. You've heard this before. Years and years ago long before the bell got into the picture at all, my father lived in Southern California all his life, came to Southern California in 1903 and grew up there, started his business there, and was in business clear up until the mid forties when he retired from that. He had a garage business and retired from that, had an orange grove—

HS: Where was that?

AN: In Redlands, Southern California. He is a great outdoor man, did a lot of hunting and fishing, this kind of thing, and still does. He's now seventy-seven this year—yes, and he looks and acts about sixty, one of these very vigorous active people. He's been this way all his life. Much of his hunting has been, well, local; he's not one who goes off on safari. So they've been roughly in Southern California. A great deal of it was for dove, quail, and this kind of thing which took him out into the San Bernardino Mountains as well as the San Jacinto ranges, around in that direction. I imagine probably out in that area he either saw something, or in that general area where he spent a good deal of time through his youth that he ran into an old Indian out there on the reservation next to Palm Springs. His name was Fig Tree John. And Fig Tree John must have been a hundred years old, over a hundred. Certainly, in my father's description, he was a wrinkled prune about five foot tall. Claimed to have been, and no one had any reason to doubt, one of the guides for Fremont when he came across into the Southern California area and discovered a good portion of that, mapped and what have you. He was a very dear old friend of my father and used to tell him all the best places to go for hunting and showed him one time where there was a water hole, I guess an oasis-like thing out in the middle of nowhere near Palm Springs which my dad would go to because all the dove and quail would all congregate there for water. So he and my dad were great friends.

He would come in every once in awhile, have his old Model T Ford or whatever it was he drove fixed by my dad or my dad's mechanics in the garage in Redlands. Well, one day he approached my dad and said some young Indian friends of his had some metal that they would like to have assayed. My dad messed around, did a little prospecting for fun; it was hardly a hobby, it wasn't that frequent or anything but they would often talk about it. He was interested in a multitude of things, very active mentally until physically kind of got—So they knew my dad had dabbled in this kind

of thing so could he get this assayed because they didn't know what to do about it or how to go about doing it. My dad said, "Sure bring a chunk of it in, whatever it is, and I'll be happy to send it off to LA and have it assayed for you," because he was a friend. So Fig Tree said, "Fine, I'll send them in and tell them where to find you."

HS: When was this?

AN: This is probably now in 1926 because this is the time when the bells were stolen and I think this probably happened within a few months after the bells disappeared.

HS: Yes.

AN: So my dad agreed to do this and he gave it no more thought. He was not told anything about what the stuff was. So lo and behold, the three young Indians arrived in the garage with this gunny sack full of big chunks of metal which, of course, made no sense. And, if you look at this, unless you knew it was the piece of a bell, it would never dawn on you what it was. It was just a sheet of metal slightly curved, very very heavy. But it could be a part of anything. He thought it might not be iron; he thought it might be maybe brass because it had kind of a brassy look to it. The Indians had mistaken the brassy look for gold, but that's another—so then they arrived with his gunny sack full of stuff and said to him, Here it is; get it assayed. Well, I guess they thought you had to take the whole thing in to get it assayed. My dad said, "Fine, I'll take care of it. So I'll let you know. When Fig Tree comes back by, I'll give him the report on it." So he says, "What do you think it is?" They said, Well, we think it's all gold. And he said, "Well, it's heavy enough." You could see how someone could get confused. So he said, "Okay, I'll send it in and see."

So he searched through the thing looking for something that he could saw off and the biggest chunk, or what looked like what was the biggest sample of it, was unfortunately from the top of the bell. Now it would not be recognized unless you were a bell nut of some kind, you wouldn't recognize it as a bell either because it was just the rounded top, again, that had been cut off with an acetylene torch and with this sort of squared off arrangement. I don't know how to describe it. It was not ____ the other bell, but it was the long boxy like top. So he said, "You can't imagine what a job it was!" He took a hacksaw and he tried it. It was the more brassy, by the way, of the two it; it was brighter, shinier looking one; it wasn't copper colored, it was again brassy-like. If it was gold, it would be more gold-colored. So, he sawed it off—he said it took forever—and took a chunk out of the damn thing. With a hacksaw he finally got a chunk out of it that was maybe the size of a children's playing block, maybe, or half that size and sent it off to Los Angeles to have it assayed. I don't know what it cost him, but I'm sure he absorbed the cost of it because he was that type of

person. He liked the guy, the Indians, and he knew Fig Tree John very well and so was happy to do it, in a sense, for him.

He brought the report back and they said, oh, there must have been forty different metals; it was a wild combination of stuff. It was not just copper and zinc; it had multiple things in it. So he got the report back, and I don't know if there was any gold or not. He had the assay report in his safe; I've never studied it. He showed it to me but I have no memory of what exactly percentage-wise, but he does have it in his safe.

HS: Would he let you copy it?

AN: Possibly so. Anyway, he got the report back. And in due time Fig Tree John dropped in, either to get his car fixed or see how the thing went. And my dad said, "Sorry to report, but whatever it is, it isn't gold." It's heavy enough to be but it had a lot of this and this and he read him off the report. And Fig Tree said, "Fine, I can tell the guys and they can give up the idea of gold," and "Thank you very much," and "They'll come and pick up their stuff." And he went on his way. Well, my dad waited and waited, and Lord have mercy, months went by and nobody came for this gunny sack full of stuff. In the meantime he just stored them; it was covered under his vice and a whole bunch of stuff on a work bench. And it stayed there and it stayed there and it stayed there. Finally one day Fig Tree came in and he said, "They never did come back and get their metal. Well, what am I supposed to do with it?" Fig Tree said, "Throw it away if you want to. They aren't going to come back and get it if there's no gold in it; they don't have any interest in it." This time my dad said, "Well, what is it? What's it from? Where did they get it?" And Fig Tree said, Well, a long story, but they heard about these bells from this mission and the story was that when the mission fathers came into that area, why, they had all the natives turn in all of their gold trinkets and idols and things like this which they then gathered into a huge barrel and sent to Spain, had it melted down, and then made into bells to be then sent back to the mission to symbolically show conversion from the native non-Christian religions to the Christian religion. These bells were made out of these old idols.

HS: Hah! Nonsense!

AN: Yeah, this was the story. Well, _____ met these guys who were from the reservation outside of Palm Springs, went down in the dead of night and the bells were back, I understand, just merely hung on a wooden scaffolding kind of thing they sawed down in the dead of night. It was a very literally a rainy, stormy night—I always get the picture of kind of a Frankenstein movie—a rainy, stormy night they were down there. There were three or four of them—whether there were *just* three or four of them, I'm not too clear yet—but there were three or four of them and they had one or two

acetylene torches. Literally in the dead of night, they cut the bells into pieces that could be moved and they stashed the things into gunny sacks—an eeny-meeny-miny-mo-kind of thing approximating the amount of weight so that each of them had their fair share of these chunks and went off with them. And that was it. And my dad said, "Oh, for God's sake, tell them to come and get them; I don't want them in my garage. Fig Tree John said, "Well, I'll tell them but I doubt if they do. If they don't have any gold in them, they don't have any more interest in them. They don't want to be caught with the things." And my dad said, "Well, I don't really want to have them either. They're not mine and they really are theirs." And so Fig Tree said, "Dump them. That's okay. Take them out to the city dump and get rid of them."

Well, my dad didn't really want to do that; it ran against the grain. So he kept the idiot things and kept them clear up until he retired in the mid forties. The war was well on its way. He retired, sold the garage, and here is this old gunny sack full of chunks of bells still in this cupboard under the garage. It's been in there for years. So, at this point he took them home and they were in his garage at home for a long time.

Well, I was a kid, I was born in 1926 so I grew up knowing and somewhere along the way was told about them and they had no impact upon me either except they were old mission bells. I'm sure I heard about them since I was ten years old; it was a meaningless thing to me, too. I was not Catholic. I had no kind of cognition to it; it was nothing other than a bunch of old metal bells. Period.

HS: What year were they stolen?

AN: In 1926, the year I was born.

HS: (inaudible)

AN: Yes, as far as I know. So anyway, I knew of this, knew the story about it and knew about it all my life. And way up, I don't know what year it was, I—you know about it and you forget about it. And this book had come out; *Sunset Magazine* had put out a new book on missions. Now, one of the things that my father had always said was that it was from the Pala Indian reservation. And so okay, fine. But then this new book came out on missions put out by *Sunset Magazine* and I was looking through it one day because—now, I had married. My wife and I took our vacations and would frequently drop into various missions down the coast to Southern California as we went to visit my parents. I was looking at the book and I thought, Oh yes, there's a mission I've seen; that's one that we've been into. And I said, oh yeah, there's the Pala. There it was a picture of the Pala mission and I read about that and it didn't say anything about any bells in it being stolen or anything. And then it went on to talk about Santa Ysabel [Asistencia] mission which was a lesser mission.

HS: It was a mission—(inaudible as both speak simultaneously)

AN: (inaudible) many times as a kid we drove by it when it was nothing but a pile of rubble, in fact. So, it mentioned about these bells of the Santa Ysabel. And I thought, Well, Santa Ysabel, that isn't the mission my dad had said these bells had come from. So on one of our vacations we drove down to Pala, the mission, and went to Pala mission and there's their bell tower with bells in it. I looked at all their literature that said nothing about any bells being stolen in it. That still didn't deter me _____ from Pala. There's nothing about mission bells _____ Pala. I did not go for some reason to Santa Ysabel. I've never been to the Santa Ysabel mission yet. I must go visit there sometime, especially to go visit my bell top.

HS: Visit their bell top.

AN: That's right. I kind of can visit my old keepsake. It was not too long after my wife and I married that my dad said one time, "Why don't you take that sack of stuff? Maybe you'd like to have it." He really would kind of like to get rid of it. So I looked through it, and were loaded with, as we always are—on your vacation the car was loaded to the gunnels—and good heavens you know there's a hundred pounds of this stuff; it weighs very heavy. So I said, "Well gee, Dad, really there's no place to put it, but let's take the top—that at least looks more like something—and do something with it. So I brought it home with me, and we had it in front of a fake fireplace for awhile. And I often thought there was something you could make out of it, convert it into something else.

HS: Andiron.

AN: What?

HS: An andiron.

AN: Something, a bird bath because upside down it had a cup that wasn't even big enough for more than one sparrow. So that was kind of a stupid thing to do with it. It was some time after that that I was reading a book that a lady had written, a book on mission bells. Actually I was in graduate school and had nothing to do after studying about things. _____ and here's this whole book on mission bells, the history of it and all the rest, and there in this book it talked about these bells. It's obvious these are the bells; they're not from Pala, they're from Santa Ysabel. They had a picture of them and I recognized the top of it and the top that I had at home. And oh, my lord, you know!

So I went home and talked to my wife about it and what have you, and she said we ought to take it down there. I can't afford to mail it; it's too heavy. We ought to take it back to them. And I said I'd like to except that my father has such feelings about this thing and feels so badly about what happened. Somehow he feels he was a party to it without meaning to be. He felt, I'm sure, a great deal of guilt about this thing because he knew where they should have gone. Well, he might have thought he did because he thought they went to Pala. But anyway he _____ and somehow he was really very uncomfortable about what happened and how he got involved in it. Well, so I think in 1965 somewhere, maybe that's what it was, when the *Sunset* book came out—you'll have to check the date on this—but anyhow, something triggered me because it said something about the mystery of the bells and what happened to them.

I thought, Well for god's sake, the least I can do out of just courtesy if nothing else is to write the mission and then tell them what happened to the bells. At least they ought to feel better about it than just leaving it dangling in midair. So at that point I did, I wrote to the mission and just to-whom-it-may-concern kind of thing, and explained what happened to them; explained that my father did not, would not want to be involved, and in fact did not even know that I was writing to them because his own feelings were involved. So please, for heaven's sake, don't bother him about this, but I think you ought to know what happened to your bells. It's terrible after this long time to still not know. I sent this off and I never heard anymore. About two or three weeks, that is, I didn't hear anything.

Two or three weeks from then I was at work and the door bell rang and my wife went to the door. And this was 1965, roughly I would say in September or October in 1965—went to the door and here is this very short, plump, little Catholic priest, standing at the door and he introduced himself as Father Nardi, N-A-R-D-I. He spoke a very heavy Spanish accent and asked if Mr. (Anonymous) was there. She said no, that he was still at work could she help him. He said, "Well, will he be home?" She said, "He'll be home very soon," and she's getting concerned because here is this utterly strange man standing at the door saying when is your husband gonna come home, how long are you going to be alone, and she's feeling just a little bit antsy about it. He kind of dug his toe in the cement and acted really quite uncomfortable.

And he was getting uncomfortable, and she said, "Well, could I help you? Is there something I can do for you?" And why is a Catholic priest looking for me? And he said he wanted to talk with me about the bells. Oh, the bells, of course come in, come in, because she knew I had written to him. She was relieved that he'd come that far and said, "Would you like to see the piece that we have?" She took him over to the fireplace and there it was and he picked it up and held it like a baby and I don't think he ever put it down again. He held it in his lap the entire time. It ended up that Father

Nardi had been attached for a period of time at Santa Ysabel and it had been his life goal while there to find those bells. He had failed miserably.

HS: And the really sad thing was that Father _____, too, was there for so many years.

AN: Yes, he too—

HS: He inherited quite a lot of money and donated it to the church to build the new mission and Santa Ysabel. (inaudible)

AN: Okay, well, if I'd have gotten my wits about me, I probably should have written him sooner. But it's the sort of thing—

HS: He was bothered by it.

AN: Yes, very bothered. Oh my god, yes!

HS: He thought the Indians stole it. Did he ever get a name of any of these Indians from the Pala _____?

AN: Evidently not.

(inaudible exchange)

AN: To my knowledge he never knew their names. All he knew was Fig Tree John who was the old patriarch there for centuries; he was a very elderly gentleman. There was no connection, no names, I don't think, involved at all. Well, I got home very shortly thereafter—to get back to the story—and my wife said, "You have a visitor, Father Nardi." "Who?" And she said, "He's from Santa Ysabel mission." And I said, "Oh, my goodness. Oh well," I said, "fine," and I came on in and we sat down and by this time—I remember we had corned beef and cabbage for dinner and we asked if he wanted to stay for dinner. He said he'd be delighted. He said he had come to San Francisco on a conference and my letter had arrived just a day or so before he left for the conference and so he was just ecstatic about it. So he just whipped over there as fast as he could from San Francisco to find Lafayette and search out the bell. We had dinner and I talked a little bit about the bell; I pretty much had written this in my letter, given my full, about as much as I knew about how it came into my father's hands. He said he certainly would not bother my father, that he understood that he was really quite innocent of the thing. He didn't in any way help destroy the bells. He did not know what they were until months after, really.

HS: Where was your father living?

AN: He was in Redlands. So we had dinner and he held the bell top in his lap through dinner.

HS: The top?

AN: The top, this heavy, heavy top, this large piece, the one that's in the picture. So we finished dinner and it was obvious that I wouldn't get it wrested away from him very easily. After dinner he said, "Sir, I really must go now because I have some meetings I have to go to." He said, "If it's at all possible, I really would like to take the bell top." I realize that it means a great deal to you and on and on, but I really would like to take it. I was in a horrible bind because the bell top was always kept in front of our fireplace; my parents do come up and visit. There's no way—if my father were to notice that the bell top was gone, I know he would say, What happened to the mission bell?!

HS: Wouldn't he be pleased to know it was back?

AN: Are you out of your mind? No, heavenly day, no! No, not in the least!

HS: Why?

AN: He would be mortified. He was afraid that the FBI and the CIA would be descending upon him as a thief; no, he's a very honorable, staunch, rigid, conservative Republican if there ever was one. He just simply—in his entire life—he's never had traffic tickets; he just plain was not anything.

HS: He probably felt guilty because of his conscience.

AN: Well, he did not know what it was even. The whole thing was it was stolen property. He had kept it all these years because he didn't know what to do with it. He didn't want to throw it away because he realized what it was; it was something that shouldn't be thrown away. At the same time, he didn't know what to do with it. If I'd taken advantage of it at the time I'd have the whole gunny sack full of pieces but I really didn't have room in the car for them so I just brought the one thing, the bell top.

So really the same thing with Nardi: I didn't feel like I was in a position to say, no, you can't have your bell top. It wasn't mine either; it was less mine than anyone's. So there I was, you know, how am I going to explain this to my father? Because I know he's going to notice; he has eyes like a hawk. How was I going to explain that it was missing and where it is and know how he would respond to this? I really dreaded that kind of a confrontation. At the same time dammit, it really belonged back at the Santa Ysabel mission. There was no question in my mind about it.

HS: Really, the paper says "a party from (inaudible)"

AN: Oh, yes. Yes. So I said, "Okay—great, really! Yes, you should take it back with you even though I really hate to see it go." He thanked me and thanked me and bowed out the door. I got the camera; I took a picture of him holding the bell top in his arms like this. He took it back and in a very short [time] returned back to—I think was he from Ecuador? Yes. He had come up from Ecuador for this conference, stopped off at his old mission at Santa Ysabel, and there my letter had arrived, they said, just a few days before. He said it was an act of God; I thought it was too, because he'd spent his entire time there looking for pieces of the bell and all that had ever showed up were the two clappers or whatever you call the things. And son of a gun, here comes this letter of mine saying here's where another part of the bell is and this is what happened to them. So he took the bell off and that was the last I ever saw of dear old Father Nardi. He was a sweet guy; he seemed very understanding of my position. And then very shortly thereafter I got communication from Father Gonzaglia who is the present or was the person there in 1965. Whether or not he's still there now, ten years later, I don't know, but what he—did you read the letter?

HS: No.

AN: Maybe it would be of interest to you.

HS: Yes, it would.

AN: In essence what Nardi said and (inaudible) is that taking the bell back to the mission will be a great help because, what had happened was that, following the theft of the bell, the Indians at Santa Ysabel suspected immediately—they had bad feelings between the white ranchers around there and the Indians, and they just immediately suspected that the white ranchers had stolen their bells. And the ranchers, on the other side, always thought the Indians had done it to make them look bad. So it just made bad matters very bad. So he said if we get these back, I will explain to the people what happened, that the ranchers didn't take it, the Indians didn't take it. There were Indians that took it but not from our area at all, which is true. It was from many miles away. The good thing is at that time there was another reservation just outside of Palm Springs. So he was delighted to get the bell back.

HS: I can imagine. It was his golden moment.

AN: Yes, and I said to him, "My father has some more pieces of the bell which I would at least like to have one piece of if I can get them from him. I'll be happy to return as much of it as I can to you, but I really would like to have one piece of the bell." He said that was perfectly understandable, and please do keep the piece of the bell. So

after he had taken the bell top off, my conscience got the better of me and I decided I really had to square this with my father and let him know what had happened. So I wrote my father a letter and let him know what I had done and the response was exactly what I had anticipated.

HS: How could you do this to me?

AN: How could you do this to me?! Oh, our relationship has never been the same since. No, never has been. "If I had known you were going to do that I would have never given you the bell. How could you be so thoughtless? How could you endanger me or put me in such a bad position? I don't want them coming to me, descending upon me." And, I assured him that no one would. It was a bad thing all the way around. Our relationship has never quite been the same and this has been ten years since.

HS: It's too bad your father couldn't have met Father Nardi?

AN: My father would have been terribly uncomfortable because he's not very—

HS: Perhaps he could have been charmed by him and made to feel that this was a good thing?

AN: The fact that he was Catholic would almost negate any possibility; the fact that he's a Catholic priest would have doubled that negation. But I thought that he might as well know because he's going to come up there and find that bell missing and he's going to ask me and then I'm going to have to answer to him for all this stuff.

HS: Oh, yes.

AN: So I told him what happened and as I said, we went through a really kind of explosive—I told him to his face the next time he visited. The fact that at the end of this I asked if I could bring the rest of the bell back, which was maybe bad timing on my part—if he really want to get rid of it and now since the secret is out and there's no reason for him to keep the stuff on his property because he might as well get rid of it and give it to me. Put all the guilt on my shoulder, so to speak, and they know what's happened and they aren't going to bother him, and he refused to do so.

HS: You don't think he's disposed of them—

AN: No, no, no.

HS: After all these years?

AN: I don't believe so. I don't believe so. He kept them all these years.

HS: The top of the bell was the symbol. They could never put them together.

AN: Oh, no, there's no way. (inaudible) You see, the other two or three young men had their gunny sacks full and they've long since, I'm sure somewhere they've disposed of them somewhere, probably out in the desert surrounding Palm Springs. They probably buried them.

HS: Probably there are parts of the two different ones in there.

AN: Of course, so that what I have is a piece of the oldest bell; the top was not the one to fit this one. The top was the one to the west, to the other. This is San Pedro, the other one is—oh god, what was the name of the thing on here?

HS: Yes, there is a name.

AN: They *were* named and the top of it is known as Our Lady of Laredo.

HS: Yeah.

AN: Yes. Now the top of the 1729 bell, as best I can tell from the pictures, it was the—excuse me, no. The de Laredo is the '71; this is from de Laredo. I'm sorry. And St. Peter is one, yes, St. Peter is the one with the crown, yeah. At least from the photograph they sent me, they both looked like they're named in the correct position under the bell. The bell top that they have back is the one from San Pedro which is from 1767, and this piece which is much, much thinner—see, that was a much thinner bell—just from the edge of it that was cut with acetylene torches looks like it was twice as thick where it was cut out from the top. I can't imagine why they would suddenly shrink it down half that size for the sides of is, so where the acetylene torch went on, it was at least twice this thick. So if the edge of the top where it was round and the chunk out of it would have been the one from 1767, Saint Pedro, while this is the other piece. There's also, oh yes, there's also a square chunk here and I remember my dad saving two chunks because this one, see, was taken out here. And yet the other one was a chunk like this taken out of part of the hanging arrangement. It had two holes or something that the ropes would have gone down through the rail it was made to hang it by. But there's a chunk out of the side of it; you can see if you ever look at the top of the bell. (inaudible)

So anyway, they have the bell top back; my father will not relinquish or at least has been very resistant to relinquish any more pieces of it. Not that he has any use for it, but he's still kind of bitter for me having exposed him. And the exposure is that I'm a junior so that they know exactly what his name is, you see, which is also kind of bad. I felt—I did not see sending an anonymous letter to them because it seemed that this

enveloped the whole thing in somewhat of a ridiculous situation. I don't have any feelings of guilt about the fact that my father ended up with all these chunks of bell. So I saw no reason for not giving my name; I would see no reason except knowing him, to have given *his* name so that they could send him a letter personally thanking him very much. But, I knew that he would not be thankful in any way, shape, or form.

HS: It's difficult for me to understand—I've come upon many things, I've collected lots of Indian relics which is not the thing to do, but I'll present them to museums—

AN: Yes.

HS: And I feel (inaudible) when I do it.

AN: Yes, and I bet they're delighted to get them.

HS: Things I've had thirty-five years or more.

AN: Yes. Well, forty years '26 to almost '66 is a good estimate for them to not know what happened. But the fact that I, behind his back as he saw it, because I knew if I wrote to him and said, Dad, I'd like to write a letter to Santa Ysabel mission and tell them what happened to the mission bells, I would have gotten a telegram from him saying, Don't you dare. Then I really would have felt uncomfortable doing it and so I did behind his back write a letter to them.

HS: Well, if it comes up again if you ever tell them that you told us this story, tell him you've done a good thing by preserving them.

AN: I told him that if I ever mention it to anyone, they say it should have always been there. One very dear Catholic friend of ours who now lives in Lemon Grove had her husband drive there just to see the bell top but it was not on display. And they thought they had the right mission. I said, Well I'm sure you'd have to ask Father Gonzaglia, or whoever is there now, tell them who you are, that you're a friend of mine and you know they have the bell knob, tell them that you'd like to see it because they're not taking it out—they're still trying to protect my father.

HS: (inaudible)

AN: It is certainly there. Apparently, at least that year at their fiesta they rang it at the fiesta where they use a bell; maybe they do every year.

HS: When is the fiesta?

AN: I don't know. We get tickets for it every year. We always send them a check—I've never been to the fiesta but every year, religiously—not to coin a phrase and make a pun—we send them a check. The one last year is the first time that it ever happened, we received a strange envelope about two or three weeks later in the mail from the post office that apparently had been mailed back that my check was in. My check had burned and my half-burned, charred check and stub, whatever you want to call it, returned to me. The fiesta was over; it was already too late. They said this was burned by accident and they were really sorry, and that was it. I'd never had this happen to me before.

HS: What can we do with this tape? Why are we taping it?

AN: I haven't the slightest idea.

HS: It can't be published.

AN: I don't know. But I want to tape it.

HS: I do. I said please do. You shouldn't have this—Turn it off. (inaudible)

(pause)

AN: I was saying that besides the piece that they now have and this piece here, there are probably, to my best recollection—at one time I knew what I had. I looked many times inside this silly gunny sack. There's probably about four to six more pieces of it left still in my father's garage. When we went once or twice since then to visit at his home, and for one reason or another when they want a visit, they'd come here to visit without me going to Southern California. There's no reason. The last time we *did* go down I said to him somewhere along the way, "What about getting rid of the rest of the pieces of the bell?" and he said, "I don't know where they are." I don't really believe it. I think, well, he's still smarting. I'm sorry about it because I don't really think that he's in any danger or under any threat of anything.

HS: There is the statute of limitations.

AN: But he's such an honorable man, really he is, he's just plain mortified and his response—when he found that I had told them about it and they literally came and collected it from me didn't do anything to make him more comfortable. I think he sees them as descending upon him to gather up the other pieces if they think he has them. I honestly don't think they would.

HS: I don't either. And he can't enjoy the feel—I have enjoyed it—the kind of enshrining—

AN: Like I said, the shrine thing I understand exactly.

HS: You're so relieved when you put it someplace where it will be appreciated by lots of people.

AN: And I wish the time would come when they should be able to put the bell top on display if they wanted to and not feel uncomfortable about it. But I think out of honor and my request to please be very circumspect about this they have not, because as I say, when Alberta went down to visit, the bell was nowhere to be seen.

HS: He said that, "We are keeping it in our house."

AN: That's right, "in our house" and he goes on to say [reads from letter] "When we will be able we will send you a picture with your old bell top." But there was another place where, "we're sure you did the right thing. . ." Here it is: "For the time being, we keep the piece not in the museum but in our house because too many outsiders want to know too much about it. We are afraid they could put the explanatory note you requested—I wrote them with what I thought would be a perfectly simple to do with no names attached—that can bring to you and your family some trouble." I didn't perceive this when I wrote a five by eight card and said, "Why don't you just attach this to it?" And it was something to the affect that this is a piece of the bells that were stolen in 1926 and cut up with an acetylene torch and were thought to contain gold and did not. Period, you know. But apparently they don't want to do that out of respect. I'm not condemning them for this but I think they're being very cautious, more cautious even maybe than I feel that there is need to be.

HS: (inaudible) or considerate.

AN: I remember there is an edge of the—

HS: Were there any parts with raised letters on them?

AN: On top there is and it seems like one of the edges the heavy edges that goes with the heavy top, it's an edge we'll say six inches long slightly curved may have a few—Now my memory can be really confused, but it seems like how it had some letters on it as if there was some writing.

END OF INTERVIEW



Santa Ysabel Asistencia

<http://missiontour.org/sandiego/asistencia.htm>,
September 2011

Figure 4 Santa Ysabel was established in 1818 as a sub-mission of Mission San Diego de Alcalá. It served people who had a hard time making the trip to San Diego. Though the original asistencia is gone, in 1924 the Santa Ysabel chapel was dedicated and sits near the site of the original adobe.



Figure 5 In 1926 the original two bells from the chapel disappeared. A day later, Jose Maria Osuna found the clappers and kept them. They were returned to the chapel in 1959 and are now in a small museum on site.



Figure 6 Between the church and museum is the statue of the Angel of the Lost Bells, dedicated to finding the original bells for the asistencia.

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Project

NARRATOR: Mary Sepulveda de Carmelo

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: August 24, 1970

SUBJECT: Frances Alcala, Estancia House, and frightening noises

HS: It's on. Would you give your name?

MC: My name is Mary Sepulveda de Carmelo and I am here to record for the Estancia House known as the Halfway House what history I have heard of people living in that house. It was to the effect that when Mrs. Alcala, Frances Alcala, lived there, sometimes we were sitting around the table and we would actually smell candles burning and we would hear noises that were coming from this room that was always locked.

HS: Which room was it?

MC: It was the one where the fireplace was at. That apparently was the living room.

HS: That was the room on the east end, or the south end toward the ocean?

MC: Toward the ocean, yes. There was many, many times I'd stay there until about two o'clock in the morning, because this woman was so frightened of the noises she would hear in this house, which she fully didn't understand what was going on.

HS: I have a question. There was a wooden addition built and that's where the fireplace was. You mean in the wooden part of the house?

MC: I mean in the adobe part of the house.

HS: I don't remember a fireplace. When I knew the building I don't remember a fireplace in the adobe part of the house.

MC: When we were sitting there I would hear like there was someone in constant prayer. This is what I would hear. Mumbling and going on. At the time I assumed that this was from the baptisms that took place there, being that it was known as the Halfway House for masses. This is the chanting I would hear. I feel that it was through this that Mrs. Alcala at that time was so frightened.

HS: Wasn't her husband home?

MC: Her husband was home part of the time. He worked for Mr. Segerstrom at that time and put in long hours. Many a time I and her would go out in the field and we would start digging and we would find arrow heads, we would find pottery along the bank of the Santa Ana River, and we would go all in through there. There were many, many times that we spend day after day in the fields hunting for things that eventually she would sell, to make money for the family.

HS: And later she had to sell them to pay her doctor bills, when she was ill with cancer; and her husband wouldn't pay her bills or wouldn't let her go to the doctor.

MC: That's true. He didn't believe it, because when she told me how she was feeling, I felt that I should tell her it was cancer. So the husband wouldn't pay out his bills. So we would hunt these things, arrowheads and things that we'd find, and Mrs. Alcala would sell these things in order to pay her doctor bills.

HS: Do you remember who she sold them to?

MC: Mr. Segerstrom at that time had quite a few things that she sold to him.

HS: That's what I thought; I know they still have those things. But I wasn't sure whether she gave them to them because they owned the land, or whether they bought them.

MC: What Frances told me was that it was an agreement that they had with the Segerstroms, that whatever she found there she was supposed to sell to the Segerstroms. So therefore she couldn't sell to no one else.

HS: But she did; because one of my friends that lives in Costa Mesa has some things that she bought from her toward the end of the time. They moved in 1963, I think, didn't they? She died the next year.

MC: Yes. I visited her I think just a month before she died.

HS: But Mrs. McKinney plans to give her things to the Estancia, the things that she bought from Mrs. Alcala.

MC: Oh, that's wonderful, because she had numerous things. You can't imagine—

HS: Do you remember finding cogged stones?

MC: Yes, we found several of them.

HS: How did you find them? I mean, what position were they in—deep under the ground?

MC: No, we would wait until Gil would be plowing the ground, which was just the depth of the plow, and then we would go down the ditches.

HS: Eight inches?

MC: No, he would take the twelve-inch plow and this would go down into the trenches and then you would see them. There was no effort at all because he would unearth them as he plowed, and this is where we found them.

HS: Apparently the Segerstroms got the cogged stones, or other people did because there were none left when they moved. They didn't have any there.

MC: She sold quite a bit, because she had to. She just had to because—there was many, many times that she sold me beans that she went out in the field and gathered, so that she could pay for her doctor bills. Her cancer was very, very advanced at the time she told me about it.

As far as Indian relics I do believe that they still can be found there; however it's so populated now that everything's covered up.

HS: Did she ever talk about the story about the candle in the window? The buried treasure, I mean.

MC: It was so real; it was so real. I remember that and I remember the candle on the window. I even went there one night and we started to dig, which we thought was in this part of the adobe house. But it was so dark and so frightening that it frightened me. So I had to pull out; I didn't go ahead with it.

HS: That must have been the back room on the northwest corner? It wasn't used.

MC: It wasn't used. They weren't allowed to go in this room at all; they weren't supposed to use this room at all.

HS: Why?

MC: Because they wanted to preserve it, and they knew, they had rumors of it, that there was a buried treasure there. This is when Frances came to me about it. But if I went digging, like I said, I really got scared.

HS: The story that was in the copy of this book was that some people came there with treasure and they didn't want to bury it around the house, so they put a candle in the window and they walked in a certain direction as far as they could see the flame of the candle and then they buried the treasure, and of course they never could find it again. That was away from the house, west.

MC: Yes, west. It was in the fields, because many people thought it was in the house. They wrecked the house digging for it. I know I had a hand in it, too.

HS: There was no treasure. They were not rich people living there.

MC: No, they weren't. There was just what was brought in, you know. And this is about as far as I know about the Halfway House.

Niece Ferraro: What about the noises you heard in the house?

MC: Yes, I told her. It's true; I was there. We never did find anything. Have you ever contacted her husband, Gil?

HS: No. (tape interrupted)

MC: What would you call that, north or south? You'd go past the barns. I don't know whether you remember those old barns that were there.

HS: Down the hill?

MC: No, way up towards the field, north.

HS: That's all gone now; that land was all carried away.

MC: There was a little drive and I used to drive in. I don't drive now. I used to go because I felt sorry for this woman. She used to call and say, "Mary, come quick, because the noises are getting loud and I'm scared."

HS: But you heard the noises too, and therefore that didn't mean that it was an illusion of her illness?

MC: No, no, no. It was real. I don't know what makes them. I'm still game to find out what makes them although I get scared every once in awhile.

HS: How about a swarm of bees? There were bees in the wooden part of the house. That would make a similar humming noise.

MC: We thought about that once, that perhaps it was the bees at night. You know how they roar? But actually you heard the voice. And, me that would pray rosaries and all of this, I would know what was going on in there. She'd look at me, and we'd stay there until two or three o'clock in the morning until Gil came in. I don't know where he was at. But this was true.

HS: Tell about the conversation you had in Santa Ana about your father's birthplace on the west side of Santa Ana. You think that your father was born at Refugio, and that it was west of the central part of Santa Ana?

MC: Well, why don't you just let me wait until I get a hold of Aunt Frances? I would prefer it, getting a hold of Aunt Frances and then getting the true statement on it. She was his sister.

HS: She was born there also?

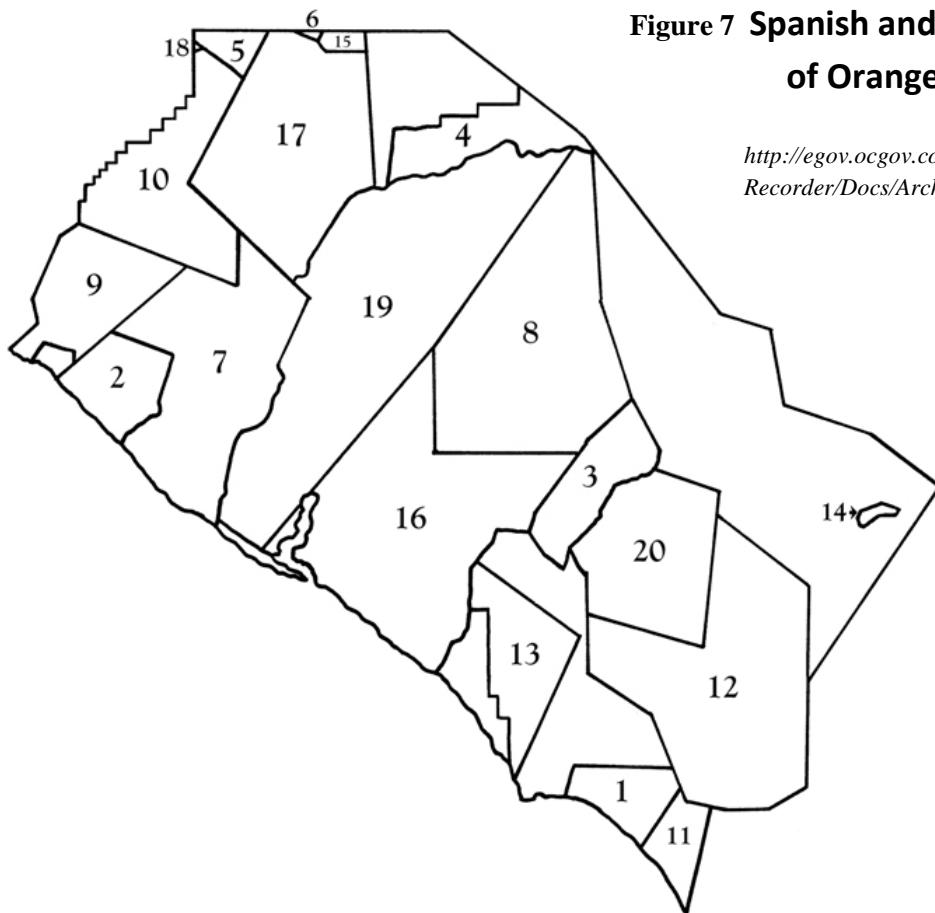
MC: I don't know where she was born.

Ferraro: She was born in Capistrano.

END OF INTERVIEW

Figure 7 Spanish and Mexican Ranchos of Orange County

http://egov.ocgov.com/vgnfiles/ocgov/Clerk-Recorder/Docs/Archives/Spanish_and_Mexican_Ranchos.pdf



(3) *Rancho Cañada de los Alisos*: Originally granted to José Serrano on May 3, 1842, and enlarged by a second grant on May 27, 1846. Patented at 10,668 acres.

(4) *Rancho Cañon de Santa Ana*: Granted to Bernardo Yorba on August 1, 1834. Patented at 13,328 acres.

(8) *Rancho Lomas de Santiago*: Granted to Teodocio Yorba on May 26, 1846. Patented at 47,226 acres that became the northern end of the Irvine Ranch.

(12) *Rancho Mision Vieja*: Granted to Agustín Olvera on April 4, 1845. Also known as *Rancho La Paz*. Patented at 46,432.

(14) *Rancho Potrero los Pinos*: Granted to Juan Forster on April 5, 1846 along with two other small ranchos in Riverside County, *El Carriso* and *La Cienega*. Patented at 523 acres.

(16) *Rancho San Joaquin*: Originally granted to José Sepúlveda on April 15, 1837, and enlarged by a second grant on May 13, 1842. Patented at 48,803 acres that became the heart of the Irvine ranch.

(19) *Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana*: Originally a Spanish concession, first occupied by Juan Pablo Grijalva around 1800, and later granted to his son-in-law and grandson, José Antonio Yorba and Juan Pablo Peralta on July 1, 1810. In 1839 the grant was confirmed by the Mexican Government. It originally contained more than 77,000 acres, with the Santa Ana River as its western boundary. But a flood in 1825 moved the river southeast, and the land between the old and new river beds was eventually allotted to the Rancho Las Bolsas. The final patent covered 63,414 acres.

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Project

NARRATOR: Adolfo Sepulveda

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: August 31, 1969

SUBJECT: Sepulveda property and relatives

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Mr. Adolfo Sepulveda at his home in Tustin. We were just discussing the site of some of the early Sepulveda houses on the San Joaquin ranch. Did your father ever tell you where he was born? Which house he was born in?

AS: He was born on the San Joaquin, which is now, I believe called Bommer, the old Bommer Canyon.

HS: There's a picnic place up there.

AS: There's a ranch up there. He was born there and he was one year old when he left. He was one year old, he tells me, when the Irvine took over.

HS: We had a discussion about that up at Louie's [Carisoza]. Your mother was born in 1890, your father was 21 years older than she was, therefore he must have been born in 1869. He'd be 100 this year. Does that sound right?

AS: More or less, yes.

HS: The ranch was sold. Sepulveda sold the ranch to Irvine and Flint and Bixby in 1864.

AS: But he never sold it, though. He lost it. (laughter)

HS: I don't know. You hear different stories. Maybe it depends on whether you're a relative or not, what you believe. But anyhow, they took possession of it, we'll say, in 1864, then he wasn't born for five years after that.

AS: My dad, you mean?

HS: Yes. How could he have been born on the ranch? Do you think some of them stayed on there?

AS: No. I don't know any of that history that you told me. I don't recall any of that at all. My dad told me that he was one year old or thereof when he moved off of the ranch and went back to the adobes in Capistrano, and the Aguilar adobe.

HS: Why did he go to the Aguilar?

AS: Well, in other words they were just told to get out and they had to get out and they had to go someplace.

HS: Well, people were not so fussy as they are now about collecting money for houses. They let other people use houses if they were vacant, didn't they?

AS: Well, they went in with a family, the only place they went.

HS: Were they related to the Aguilars?

AS: Well, Aguilars, speaking of the Aguilar house, now the Aguilars might not have been living there at the time. The old Aguilar adobe is not there now. It was right at where the Standard Oil Company is now, on Ortega. It's not there now. Stroschein owned across the street from the Aguilar on the northeast side of the Mission, and this Aguilar adobe was on the south and east side; there's a station there now. But then from there Adolph Manriquez, uncle of my father, moved the family up to his place, which is about two and a half miles due east on the Ortega Highway. And there's where my father was raised.

HS: And what happened? Joe¹¹³ said he was 12 years old when his father died (sic).

AS: Something like that. More or less. He was just a kid. In the meantime I believe that he lost his mother; and then of course he had two brothers who were half brothers and two sisters who were half sisters. But his mother was a Manriquez.

HS: What was her first name; do you know?

AS: I don't remember her first name. I've heard it so many times but I don't recall it right at the time. Then when she died, he married an Aguilar girl. That's why he has the two younger sisters, still living, my Aunt Florence and my Aunt Nieves.

¹¹³ See interview with Joseph and Lou Sepulveda by Helen Smith, O.H. 3967.

HS: Where do they live?

AS: They live in Capistrano. One of them lives in Los Angeles and my Aunt Nieves lives in Capistrano.

HS: What's her last name?

AS: Sepulveda also, because she married my dad's nephew, Albert Sepulveda. He worked in the sheriff's [department] in Capistrano. He was a deputy for quite a while there in Capistrano.

HS: Is he living?

AS: No, he's dead quite a long time.

HS: I see. What was your aunt Florence's name?

AS: Ruiz.

HS: She lives in Los Angeles?

AS: She lives at East Los Angeles, out there at—North Atlantic, east of town, south of the freeway. But now this ranch you were talking about, dad always said that he used to come through there after he was maybe five or six years old and the old man would always say that this was where we used to live, that we owned this property. And dad very faintly remembered always going down to the well and bringing the water up with a rope.

HS: But you said he was only a year old.

AS: No, no, this was later. When my granddad [Joaquin Sepulveda b. 1838] left the ranch after he (my father) was five or six years old, lost his mother, my dad's mother, the first wife; maybe five or six whatever it was, they used to come by here and go to Los Angeles because the old man, my granddad, had this house in Los Angeles. And they'd go by and make a couple of days trip through the country here and this was named, not Tustin, but Aliso.

HS: It had a lot of Sycamore trees. We had some on our ranch (Tustin Ave. south of Main Street).

AS: So when they stopped at the Irvine, or their house, he would always say, "There's where we used to live and this is the well." Because Irvine evidently—I don't know, he's never said this, but in my opinion he probably just, the old place, he just

demolished it and forgot about it. There was a water hole, a water well, a man-made well for water.

HS: Where do you think that was? Down in the drainage channel?

AS: Well, no, it wouldn't be in the drainage channel. It would be either at Bommer Canyon or there where it's called—Eagle, Turtle Rock now. You see that's an old ranch that sits back in there where House used to live, the old foreman for the Irvine, and that is one of the places. As far as his saying that there was a home there, we didn't have no record of it.

HS: Well, I'll tell you what Joe said. He said that your father told him that he was born in a house that would be east of the interim buildings of the university. Do you know where that is? On the edge of the drainage channel; that there were two little *lagunitas* in there, two ponds and they're still there.

AS: That's the Whiting ranch, not the Whiting ranch but the House, his name was House.

HS: That's not anywhere near Bommer Canyon.

AS: Oh, yes, Bommer's just over the hill about a half mile.

HS: It's not really very close, because this is the drainage of the Cienega de las Ranas, that came down from below 101 or Camino Real and runs into upper Newport Bay.

AS: That's right.

HS: Bommer Canyon is over the hill.

AS: Over the divide, yes.

HS: Well, Joe said that he would point to the top of the bank just north of those lakes in that draw there and say, "That's where I was born."

AS: That is the old House, foreman's home for Irvine.

HS: Well, does he mean the one—do you play golf? Your brothers do.

AS: No, I don't.

HS: On the San Joaquin.

AS: Yes, right there. You know where the golf course is there? Over the drop, white barns and what have you.

HS: Yes, I know where that is.

AS: That's the one that he used to tell us where he used to stop and where his dad used to say, "There's where I used to live," and then they'd stop there to water their horses.

HS: Well, that isn't exactly where I thought Joe said it was, because the interim buildings are further south on what used to be San Joaquin Road, now it's Jamboree.

AS: That's right. You can see the old ranch there. It's still there, the old Irvine ranch.

HS: Oh, I know that place. They've still got the old hay barns.

AS: No, it's below that, below the golf course. It's just south of there about half a mile.

HS: Well, that's the one that Joe was talking about.

AS: That's the one that I mean.

HS: But I haven't seen any signs of that. I'm going to go in there as soon as the university opens; I'll have to get permission. It's leased by the university. We're going to go in and see if we can find any scraps of old dishes or anything that would show. Do you think that was an adobe house?

AS: Yes, it was an adobe house. I suppose most of it was wood, some of it; some of it adobe and most of it wood.

HS: You wouldn't have any idea who built it or when?

AS: No. My dad would never, never have any knowledge of—only that he was born in that vicinity, and that's it.

HS: His father never told him.

AS: If he did, my dad was just one of those guys, he was a cowboy and didn't care. You know, he was so mad about it in the first place, you know, to hear of what his dad lost and how he lost it.

HS: His father wasn't the one that lost it. Jose was his grandfather.

AS: No, Jose was his father.

HS: Oh, you're talking about your grandfather (Joaquin).

AS: My grandfather, my dad's father.

HS: Well, it was a merry life while it lasted.

AS: That's why he lost it because he just lived it merry too long. (laughter)

HS: Well, they were—he wasn't the only one. It happened to practically all of them except Bernardo Yorba. He was one that hung onto his.

AS: Well, the reason he hanged onto that because Peralta was his partner in the transaction and he couldn't very well sell it all. That's the only way he kept it.

HS: As a result his descendants are better off than others.

AS: Not anymore. One of them I guess that's got a little property up there.

HS: Oh, I don't know. Some of the Yorbas have land in those oilfields up at Yorba Linda. Don't forget that.

AS: Up that far, eh? I don't know. It's an awful thing after you've acquired all this, you know, and you lost it all. It was harder on him than all the family way back. All you do now is hear about it, you know, and wonder why, when and all this. You can hear a lot of stories. Try to believe one of them and it'll probably be the wrong one.

HS: Louie's [Carisoza] got the same story in his background—Jose Serrano. He did the same thing, borrowed money, bet on the horses, mortgaged his land and then had to sell it for not very much.

AS: Whiting up there (at El Toro) is all Serrano's, you know, clear up to where Louie is now.

HS: They managed, I guess, to get some government land up on Modjeska Road, the land where Louie lives now. It wasn't part of a ranch.

AS: No, that wasn't part of the ranch. The ranch went up to part of the road, I believe.

HS: Your father never told you stories, then, about—

AS: He never knew stories, and if he did he didn't believe them. What I mean, in a sense he didn't care to talk too much about it because he was a small boy and all he knew was what he was told. He didn't see any of it. And so he was also in the way that he didn't know what the truth was. He never did learn the truth probably.

HS: Oh, I think it's kind of getting sorted out now. They know more about it than they did. After all, it was all in the deeds. The people who were friends of the governor—

I guess your great-grandfather was a friend of Pio Pico and got lots of land, more than he really was entitled to.

AS: Well, there was some kind of a relation, not relation, but you take when you baptize somebody else's child you become godparent and that means a lot. It used to, and they still do practice that in the Catholic religion. But then they practiced it, period.

HS: It was the same as your own children, only more so.

AS: More so, because you had to responsibility also. But then they, I guess—like the Pio Pico building up there in Pico, you know. Have you ever been there to see it?

HS: Too many Pico houses. No, I've never seen that one.

AS: It sits right there by the river, by the San Gabriel River, on the street that runs from Whittier over toward Los Angeles—Montebello. It goes from Whittier into Montebello; there's an adobe house that sits right there by the river.

HS: Is it restored?

AS: Oh, yes, that state's taking care of it.

HS: There's a Pico house, or was, over by San Jacinto, on top of a hill. It was called Casa Loma.

AS: That's up there in Hemet, up on top of the hill. It burned.

HS: I saw that. I've got some pictures of it.

AS: Oh, yes. My dad used to be a foreman for Korman (?) Ranch, below Pico's cattle ranch, out there in the Hemet Valley, and of course we lived in Hemet. And we knew of the Picos.

HS: Isn't one of your sisters married to Bill Sosa [of Soboba]? That's where they met, I suppose.

AS: Right. Out there.

HS: I want to talk to him again. He's a very nice man.

AS: Yes, he is. I guess he works for the government now, as interpreter, not interpreter either. He's an overseer for, I think, about three or four reservations, for the government, from the government office out of Riverside.

HS: You mean he's working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

AS: That's right.

HS: For heaven's sake, I didn't think he'd ever go to work for them.

AS: Well, it's wages, you know. He didn't like (construction) because he had to drive so far down here where all the jobs were, and so finally he moved out to the reservation.

END OF INTERVIEW

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATORS: JOSEPH SEPULVEDA, LOUIE and NELLIE CARISOZA

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: August 24, 1969

SUBJECT: Locations of McGee, Serrano, Sepulveda property

An unidentified person (P?) joins session.

HS: Louie, you said the McGees had a lot of adobe houses. How many did they have?

LC: Well, I know, the one that you was talking about, the one down there La Plaza(?) and the one that they had over there at Ticanza(?).

HS: Well, the one at Las Flores was built by Marco Forster, the father of Frank Forster who was the father of Tom Forster in 1865. So the McGees didn't build that one.

LC: No, I don't think so. Well, this adobe, I guess, must have been built by somebody else and then they bought the land there.

HS: Which McGee was that?

LC: You know Billy McGee?

HS: I know Victor. He's the only one I know. He lives in San Diego; he's a marine, I think, or a soldier. I don't know what relation—

LC: Well, these were Billy McGee's brothers. Billy McGee was the head guy, well, he was the superintendent of Rancho Santa Margarita when it was Santa Margarita ranch.

HS: Was his wife's name—Ruth?

LC: I believe so, yeah.

HS: She was the last one that lived there.

LC: And of course, he lived up in, out toward the Ortega Highway. And then, I guess he finally died or they laid him off or anyway, they laid him off for something.—They laid him off because he got to drinking too much.

HS: Oh, they did?

LC: But he had two other brothers, and then I met them other two brothers; they lived up in (inaudible).

HS: What were their names?

LC: I don't really remember their names anymore, but I know that they're McGees because they said they were this McGee, Billy McGee's brothers. And the one lived in the little town of (inaudible) and the other one lived in the (inaudible) house. And the way he happened to rent that house was because he was just, he didn't have any family, just by himself. And then my grandfather—

HS: Which grandfather is this?

LC: Frank.

HS: Serrano?

LC: Yeah. You see, my grandfather and (inaudible), they were going to some Indian doctor up on the reservation in Pechanga, the one they call Pechanga. And of course, we gave him another house farther up in the canyon. That adobe, not an adobe house, just a regular wooden house, but in the wintertime, we had to move to a house that was more convenient, well, that was more together, too. So finally he went up and talked to this McGee. And then of course, this McGee saw that we were going to use his home. He didn't charge nothing for it! He just said all he wanted [was for us to leave] the place clean. Of course, I was no bigger than a little kid like George is here, about like that.

HS: Was your father working?

LC: No, I was the—I was staying with my grandmother. No, my granddad arranged to stay here, and Vic stayed here, but they'd go home on the weekends; see, they'd go up there on the weekends. And of course, this McGee, this one McGee that was a brother to this Bill McGee, well, he just came in and slept there and ate maybe one meal or so. I think he went someplace or worked someplace out there by that house or that ranch, that big Pala ranch or whatever you call it.

HS: Where?

LC: Up in the, towards (inaudible), someplace in there. He wouldn't go there every day, maybe once or twice a week at most. But he went to maybe Warner ranch or someplace anyway. And we stayed there for near, it must have been near a year. And then we finally moved out and came this way. But one time after I got married, I went back there and tried to see if I could find the house, but heck, I couldn't find the highway! (laughs) I couldn't even find the highway.

HS: Well, I wonder if the land *did* belong to the McGees.

LC: I guess it did. There was a rock quarry there that the McGees had mined; it looked like granite stone.

HS: Well, there is a lot of granite—

LC: And then they even made the fences out of rocks! Their fences were very rocky with loam like this. They were square, they buried them for poles. I seen where the guy, whoever's got the place now—of course, I was there in 19--, 1940, '42.

HS: Was the house still there?

LC: No. That's what I mean, I couldn't find it; I couldn't find the house. Because they changed that road, you know, from Fallbrook to Temecula. They changed it, oh, farther over the hill.

HS: Yes.

LC: The road used to come pretty close to the mountain. But it was kind of late when I went up there, so I thought maybe I could see it from the highway, but I couldn't see it from there. I know if I'd of got a little bit closer I could tell just where the house was, but it was kind of late and I said, "Well, I better get back home." But down below I run into that fence that was made with rock—

HS: Cut posts. I've seen those.

LC: Yeah, they were just perfectly square. And they'd use them, you know—

HS: It must have been that San Diego County granite, black and white granite.

JS: It came out in slabs.

LC: No, they did it with machinery. They cut the things just about that big. What's that, eight by eight or six by six—whatever they needed.

HS: Do either of you know anything about the San Felipe ranch?

LC: No, I don't know a thing about that.

JS: I was going to mention there's a Bill McGee that used to go up to the Indian school and he's from Temecula. He's about, I imagine, around sixty, sixty-two years old right now, if he's still alive. And you would probably know that he's a descendent of the McGees (inaudible due to much activity in the interview setting)

HS: Oh, one of the people we worked with trying to save this McGee house is a descendent of the McGees. (inaudible)

JS: His name was Bill and he had gone to the JC [junior college] in downtown Riverside.

HS: She would know him, yes. Would you identify yourself for the tape?

JS: Oh, yeah. I am Adolfo Sepulveda's son; let's see, I'm his second son—alive, that is.

HS: You were talking about mining in the Santa Ana Mountains. Wasn't that where—

JS: No, we were talking about Lupis Canyon.

HS: Where is that?

JS: That's southeast, I believe it's southeast from Ortega Highway.

HS: Well, technically speaking, it's in the Santa Ana Mountains.

JS: Well, yes, the Santa Ana range, let's say.

HS: Yes, that's what I meant.

JS: Andy Serrano used to take care of it. It was a placer mine at the time I knew it.

HS: Who had the lease?

JS: I don't know who had the lease. Do you, Louie?

LC: Well, the old man had the lease, Bob's family, the old man. And then when he died, he left the lease to, to Henry, I guess.

HS: Who was Bob? Roberto?

LC: No, Roberto was the one that was single, because Henry was single. He and Bob were the ones that moved to here.

HS: Oh, that's right.

LC: (inaudible)

HS: Francisco's grandson?

LC: No, no, they was—Bob's boys that were, his nephews.

HS: Oh. Oh, I see, his brother's—

LC: You know, with them, Old Bob's kids—

HS: I see.

LC: There was one girl, and then there was, let's see, Andreas and Rupert and Henry. There were four of them, four boys and one girl. They were nephews of Frank, of Francisco.

HS: Francisco, yes. Okay.

LC: Now, Francisco had (inaudible). And then Juan had only, the only one here, one son, and he died. He had some girls, too. She'd be my age.

(pause)

JS: I remember I drove him through there. And he said just north of those little lakes, I believe, _____, they called it, and he says, "The ranch there is where I was born." He said, "My dad died." His uncle or somebody's family come there and got ready to send him to an orphanage up in Bakersfield. It was a Catholic orphanage run by French priests. Dad ran away from there when he was twelve years old and he went to work for the Kern County Land and Cattle Company. And he was really a boy when he first went there and he never went back to school again and he worked for that company for thirty years. That's what Dad told me.

P?: Is that possibly the same one?

HS: Oh, no. No, the one where we excavated was the old ranch house, though not the one where the San Joaquin Golf Course is now.

JS: No, no.

HS: That was another one.

JS: That's another one.

HS: This one was on a hill and there used to be an old tenant house at the corner of Lane Road and San Joaquin Road. Remember that?

P?: Hm-mm. I remember that.

HS: And this supposedly was just east of that, along those lines?

JS: No, my dad told me that it was just north of the little ponds that they had there. I don't know what it is now.

P?: That would be Diller Kahn Field(?) in there.

HS: There are ponds where they have hunting dogs, retriever trials.

JS: That's right, and there used to be a duck club, a shooting club at one time.

HS: Where was it from the drainage channel?

LC: Just up from the drainage channel.

HS: Well, this may be the same place you're talking about.

LC: Well, they changed it quite a bit since they went in with 'dozers and stuff.

JS: Yes, and what our controversy seems to be is that there are three hills along there and the road goes right between the saddle of the two most—Some think it was to the north of the road that goes through the saddle of these hills along with the drainage canal, or some think it was to the south of there. And we should have really a map to show it, but it would be like, this would be the one here—The canal goes like this, and this road goes along off the existing, this is the San Diego Freeway now to the right and this road meanders along here—

HS: That's Lane Road.

JS: Lane you reach from off the Newport or Main Street and come right back and curve around. Remember where Culver goes over the freeway now? Lane Road used to curve in there.

HS: And it dead ended there.

JS: What they call Jamboree now came down here. There was an administration office for UCI at the time right there. Just below the hill, my dad told me, just below the hill was the home ranch right there. He said they had the corrals, barns, everything down in there.

HS: Down in that—

JS: Down in that little valley.

HS: Little *cienega*.

JS: Right, in the *cienega*. That's right

LC: Hmm.

HS: Well, for heaven's sake.

JS: That's what Dad told me because I was curious. I said, "Dad, where were you born?" He said, "Right there." I couldn't believe him; I said, "There's nothing there!" "Well, there was when I was a kid."

P?: And then the adobe was on the, let's see, the west side?

JS: On the west side, skirting that little hill there.

HS: That's about half a mile from the site that was finally selected.

P?: Who selected it?

HS: Oh, Paul, don't ask. (laughter and overlapping comments) Yes. It wasn't his fault. It was one of the houses that he had. He actually lived in Los Angeles and sometime he lived in southwest Santa Ana, over where Raitt Street is now, someplace over in there.

JS: But he used to water his pinto stock right there at the old water works in town. That's what my dad told me.

HS: Where do you mean, Flower and First Street?

JS: Flower and First, that used to be the old water works there and he said my granddad used to water his stock, his pinto stock, right there.

HS: Why just his pinto stock?

JS: Because he kept all his pinto stock on that side of the ranch.

HS: He was quite a horseman.

JS: Yes. (noise outside)

P?: Is that a warning? Disneyland, (inaudible) I thought we were going outside.

HS: I thought you knew I turned it on. (multiple speakers – inaudible – tape off)

Mr. Sepulveda, your father was born in Orange County then?

JS: He was, in Orange County.

HS: At the old Jose Sepulveda place?

JS: That's right.

HS: When was he born, do you know?

JS: Eighteen—I truly don't remember.

LC: When was Dad born?

NC: When? That I don't know either. Eighteen something.

JS: Eighteen—I can't remember. Oh, February 24, 18 what?

NC: Let's see, Mama's seventy-eight years old, seventy-nine years old, seventy-eight, seventy-nine. All right. Daddy was twenty-one years older than Mama.

HS: Seventy-nine and twenty-one is a hundred. He was born in 1869 then.

LC: Some course in there, in the sixties.

HS: He's a hundred now. Well, then it couldn't have been the house we were talking about because somebody who –

NC: Gee, that's old.

HS: Yes, it could have been. Some traveler who went by left written word that that bath house that we're talking about, the Jose Sepulveda ranch house, was in ruins in 1880. Well, if he'd been born in '69, that was eleven years before and I guess it could still have been standing then.

JS: Well, yes. His father had died when he was twelve years old, well before that. He was twelve years old when he ran away from this orphanage. So he was just a youngster when he was sent on.

HS: I don't have on tape why he ran away from home. Did his mother die?

JS: No, his father died.

HS: Oh, when he was quite young.

JS: Didn't his mother die before that?

NC: Yes.

JS: She'd died before and then his father died, so he was left an orphan. And his relatives connived, I guess, in a way and sent him to orphanage school, and they took over his land over in L.A. and down there.

HS: Did he have brothers and sisters?

JS: Yes, he did. He had a brother named Fidel and had a sister named Manuela (inaudible) —

NC: That's all. He had half-brothers. They don't count.

JS: No, they don't.

HS: Half brother by his mother or his father?

NC: His mother.

HS: They were not Sepulvedas?

NC: No.

JS: No.

HS: Do you think the three of them were all born in that house?

JS: I really couldn't say whether Uncle Fidel was born there or not. Was he, Nellie? Or, was he born in L.A.?

NC: I don't know that.

JS: Only person who'd know—ask Delfina. Is she still alive?

NC: Oh, heavens, she lives in the same place.

JS: Delfina Sepulveda. I don't know what her name is now. She lives in Capistrano.

NC: Olivares.

P?: She was the Mrs. Olivares next to the Rios adobe.

HS: She *is* the Mrs. Olivares?

P?: Um-hmm.

JS: Delfina. Her dad was my uncle.

P?: Oh, he was?

JS: Fidel. They owned what they used to call in the old days here when I was a kid Little Hollywood in Capistrano.

NC: (inaudible to Helen)

HS: Is that called Obispo Street? No, it's called (inaudible) Street.

JS: Yeah, that's where they had all the Mexicans. (laughs)

NC: Joe! Delfina is Mrs. Houston.

JS: Oh, yeah, Mrs. Houston.

NC: She works in the mission, in the curio shop where they sell trinkets and stuff like that.

LC: Yeah, she's a (inaudible).

JS: Johnny Houston's wife.

NC: Johnny Houston's wife, and he died already. She's still alive.

P?: Not the Johnny Houston of—

JS: Not the movies, no. (inaudible) Yeah, they referred to that little Mexican settlement which belonged to my Uncle Fidel; he owned all that land, he built all those shacks in there. I don't know where he got his savvy to buy all that. He made the loot from that.

HS: They were pretty good shacks. They're still standing, a lot of them.

JS: He called them shacks. (inaudible)

HS: They're just perfectly good bat-and-board houses, like there used to be a lot of here.

JS: That's right.

LC: Sure, they're good. Now you can't build a house like that.

HS: No, you can't. They were good houses. Of course, they were kind of drafty when the boards cracked.

LC: You used to be able to build a house that was what they call a straight-line board, straight up and down. Then he backed both sides. By god, you can't get by with a back on it because you've got to put siding.

HS: You know, there's a two-story bat-and-board house in the Ortega, on the south side of the road. Have you seen it? Eucalyptus trees around it.

JS: Oh, that's the old O'Neill's bunkhouse, remember? Right there by those new houses, below that new silver bridge. All the windows are knocked out. That's the old bunkhouse.

HS: Oh, is that what it is?

JS: Yeah.

HS: It was there the last time I looked.

JS: It was there the last time I pulled off at Capistrano.

P?: How old is it, do you think?

JS: I don't know. How old is it, Louis?

LC: Darn if I know, Joe. That's been there for a number of years. (inaudible) I mean it has holes in the windows.

HS: (inaudible) bat and board houses

LC: (inaudible)

JS: I seen it all my life.

LC: In '78 it had the same holes and it's still the same house.

JS: I showed it to my wife one time. I said, "You want to see an old house?" I drove right across that bridge.

HS: It's kind of unusual, because it is a two-story bat-and-board. I suppose those are twenty-foot redwood boards.

JS: I think they are. Old redwood boards. It's still standing though.

LC: I bought that Raitt building, the one Doctor Raitt's father(?) used to live in in Santa Ana. (recorder off?)

JS: They'd filled it with all kinds of trash and stuff and they made flat country out of it.

HS: (inaudible) *cienega*, down in the hollow behind the university administration—

JS: Is still there.

HS: Is still there. I believe the university is going to lease it; it belongs to Irvine.

JS: Yes.

HS: And they're going to lease it and use it for a kind of experimental station. I don't know what for, and they're going to get their rent out of it by letting the people still use it for their dog trials every so often.

JS: Oh, I see.

HS: They've been using it for a year for the retrievers.

JS: Retrievers, that's right. There used to be a private (cough) restaurant(?) down in there.

LC: But they don't have no more duck huntin'?

JS: No duck hunting, no.

HS: I saw the first flight of ducks the other day. Fall is coming—you know, the V-shaped thing, flying south.

JS: (inaudible) back to (inaudible) creek is what it is, used to come down in through here and make those lagoons there. Dad said, you know the hill comes, like here, there's a big hill right here, right?

P?: Yes.

JS: And this is sitting right on top (inaudible). Dad said it was right in this area in here.

P?: Oh, right on the bluff there. It would be like, maybe arbitrarily, like right there.

JS: Right about in there somewhere, because the little lagoons were below the ranch house. The corrals were up—there would be barns, of course, and stuff in the barn.

HS: Can you tell me where the, what do they call it, the *calero* was? They burned lime in there, *calera*.

LC: *Caldero*?

HS: *Calera*. They burned lime.

LC: They burned the lime.

JS: Burned lime, I don't understand that.

LC: Wasn't there lime on the Moulton ranch, too?

HS: I don't know.

LC: They mined the lime out of there and then they burned it right there.

P?: Where abouts?

JS: What'd they burn it for?

LC: Well, to get the lime out of it, get the lime. It's like cement then.

JS: Oh, you mean they were—

HS: Turtle shells or whatever there happened to be.

JS: They made lime out of it? Lime lime or slaked? If you burn it, that would be slake, wouldn't it?

LC: I don't know.

HS: I have no idea. But on the old maps it shows a *calera* up there at the head of the bay above those two pools. It also shows a house up there, up to the northwest, above those pools. And we found a lot of pottery on the little hill that ran—you know that big tenant house, the green one that used to stand on Lane Road and San Joaquin, which is now Jamboree. Well, just to the east of that there's a little ridge of hills and that's where we, well, Jim Sleeper of the Irvine Company decided the Sepulveda house was. But that's not what you say.

JS: That's what my dad told me.

HS: We found a lot of pieces of china there, English and American and Chinese. There *was* a house there—there must have been—and a lot of bones, burned cattle bones and cut cattle bones.

JS: Well, could it have been, say, all the help's or—?

HS: Well, they used pretty fancy dishes if it was, because it was English china there and Chinese china.

JS: Well, in those days, that stuff—(inaudible) Unless they gave some of the old ones that they had at the house, you know, and gave it to them. Because in those days, those people lived pretty high on the hog, you know. If two or three dishes broke in a set, that's no good! Get it away! We want a new one!

HS: Well, Jose certainly did live like he—

JS: Well, he lived pretty high on the hog. It's amazing.

LC: There's something there to that story, you know, all about that California, owned (?) California coast; it even mentioned the ones up in Torrence, you know—

HS: Where?

LC: Torrence, _____.

HS: Palos Verdes.

LC: Yeah, some of them houses belonged to the Alverados—

HS: Domingues.

LC: And Domingues and all of those, and some [to] Yorbas up on the side of the canyon, and even the Corona(?). (additional inaudible)

HS: Well, they're all disappearing or have disappeared. We're trying to save at least the memories.

P?: Probably we have here—Richard Sepulveda estimates how many feet it was from the Jamboree Road. I know that's kind of a relative question.

JS: Well, let's see. From Jamboree Road over that hill I'd say would be about from three-quarters to a mile, you know that hill down below—that bluff?

HS: And it would be that direction, kind of.

JS: It's sort of southeast.

HS: Southeast.

?? Southeast from Jamboree?

LC: Are you warm? I'll turn that down. (inaudible)

P?: About a quarter to a half a mile.

HS: I'm fine. (inaudible)

JS: No, about three-quarters to a mile.

P?: Oh, three-quarters to a mile. Thank you.

JS: Because you see, the level ground is where the house was; that's where he was born. (inaudible)

P?: I'll sweat with the work_____.

LC: (inaudible) Next year in this room I'll have put air-conditioning in. (inaudible) We weren't supposed to be in here today.

JS: The one they call _____ now, across that salt mine, or that salt collection there on the upper bay there.

HS: I should, I used to use that road a lot.

JS: The old road, remember? There used to be a dirt road run up there—

HS: Yes, yes. It went right past the base of the _____ —

JS: And it went clear back in there. Well, Dad and I got on that road. I remember I was just learning how to drive. I was about fifteen when I drove back in there. We weren't supposed to be in there, but Dad knew everybody around there that was living there. That's when I asked him where he was going and he said, "The old ranch used to be right there, and that's where I was born. Right over there." Right on the flat—there was nothing there at the time, except it was just a marsh-like—

HS: Well, why was he born there? Because he was a grandson of Jose?

JS: I really don't know why he was born [there]. (inaudible)

HS: (inaudible) the only one of his generation.

JS: As far as I know. And, maybe because they were living with the folks at the time, or maybe they were spending the summer there—I don't know. Well, it was in wintertime, being in February when he was born.

LC: Jose Sepulveda, that's your dad?

JS: Granddad.

LC: Granddad? Oh, maybe they were staying there.

JS: They might have been staying there, I don't know. But he said that's where he was born.

HS: He didn't say what his father was doing. Was his father working on the ranch at that time?

JS: I don't know what his dad was doing. I hear he was a pretty high-stepper himself. So, no telling what the old goat was doing. (chuckles)

HS: Well, not to mean that personal—

JS: No. (laughs) I was just thinking back to what could have been if they hadn't been such high steppers.

HS: I wonder if they had any horses down there.

JS: Oh, I imagine so. It was the home ranch; it had to have horses.

HS: You don't remember anything else that your father said?

JS: No, my dad didn't tell me. I was too small at the time, you know, for many particulars like that. (tape off)

My dad had a blind, a blind pig in Capistrano—an old speakeasy.

HS: That was before—

JS: My brother could tell you about that, my oldest brother. He lives in Texas. And daddy said it was a blind pig, and of course, I didn't know what a blind pig was—a pig he never had, you know, with no eyes that couldn't see. And he told me, he said it was a bar, an illegal bar. He says, "I sold booze." "What'd you do that for?" He says, "To make a living!" (laughs)

LC: It might be there—of course, they don't have that anymore either. There used to be a pool hall right there.

JS: Right, the pool hall and the speakeasy.

HS: That's the central part of Capistrano?

JS: Right near the drug store.

LC: You know where that old bank used to be and the Mission Hotel? Well, there's that street that goes right down _____ and the _____ down there and into the—

HS: Railroad station?

LC: Yeah, yeah. Well, right on the corner was a wine store. And right next to the wine store was this—the fact that, why they had the problem, _____ of the pool hall

HS: Was it on the same side as the hotel was or was it the south side?

LC: Just across—the opposite side.

HS: Down where The Swallows is now, then?

LC: Yeah, the one right next to the street, see.

HS: Oh.

LC: Yeah, here was the Mission Hotel and then right on the next corner there was the pool hall.

HS: Well, I thought a blind pig was supposed to be off on some back street somewhere.

JS: It was in the back room.

HS: Oh, I see.

JS: The pool hall was in front; the bar was in the back room.

HS: It was not that booze was illegal, but he didn't want to pay the license fee.

JS: I don't know what the story was there, but he said it was illegal, a blind pig.

HS: Well, it certainly was before Prohibition because Prohibition started—

LC: That was before Prohibition.

JS: He was probably like the rest of them. They didn't have the heart to pay anything. Like my mother's uncle lost that adobe. I think he wouldn't pay \$7 plus \$.75 tax—

LC: And?

JS: So he lost their property! That's that Yorba adobe down below. (inaudible)

LC: Is that the one way down there by where—

JS: That restaurant is now, the Adobe restaurant.

LC: What is it?

P?: Oh, El Adobe?

JS: El Adobe, on the south end of _____. It used to belong to him but he just couldn't see paying taxes!

LC: (inaudible)

JS: I don't know.

LC: You see that adobe there? (lengthy inaudible)

HS: Do either of you know who Pele Yorba was? Pele Yorba. He was supposed to be Madam Modjeska's driver, coachman. Does that ring a bell?

JS: No.

LC: No. Ask my mother, she might remember.

HS: What about Jesus Serrano? He was a cook for Modjeska.

JS: Hmm.

LC: No, the only one that would maybe know, well, let's see. The only one that would know anything about that—maybe—would be Lola. Lola was my aunt, the second one from Vista; they're the ones that worked for her. They worked for her when she moved up here.

HS: Well then, you don't know about Danielle, then? Refugio and Antonia Danielle? They were supposed to work there. She washed and did the laundry.

JS: You know, I barely mentioned them about that. Of course, I was pretty small at that time, you know. In fact, I didn't really know her.

HS: Oh, just a name?

JS: Just a name. I was there after she died—because there was a fellow by the name of Slager (?) got the place after she died. Then he was the one used to run the restaurant there. He opened it up to the public and run a restaurant there.

HS: It was a hotel, too.

JS: Yeah. And after this Slager or whatever his name is lost the place, or sold it to this Walker, Walker from Long Beach. And when that Walker bought it, why, he just completely locked the whole thing. Otherwise, they'd still be in the house. (laughter) I mean, right now they could—you know, a souvenir, they could get anything out of there. And, right now it's still under lock and key.

END OF INTERVIEW

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON
CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: DORIS AND RAY SERRANO

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith and Friend

DATE: 1969

PROJECT: Helen Smith Oral History Project

Helen Smith talks with Doris Serrano while an unidentified male (UM) interviews Ray Serrano. An unidentified female (UF) voice is also heard.

UF: Now I'm going to ask you something. Did you know the Olveras? From Los Angeles?

DS: No. Mrs. Martinez over here, that used to be her great-grandfather.

HS: Olvera Street?

DS: That was named after her great-grandfather.

HS: What's her maiden name?

DS: Her maiden name was Forbes but her grandfather was Olvera —

HS: That name sounds familiar.

DS: We just took a trip over there last week. (male voices in background) Now, I'm gonna shut my mouth, Ray, and you go ahead.

UM: Well, pardon me. No, I didn't mean—

DS: No, that's all right, I'm—

RS: Well, what do you want to know about that canyon?

UM: Well, I was just telling Mr. Serrano that the Edison Company is going to put in an enormous dam in the Black Star and Fremont Canyon; the whole thing is going to be under water including the Hidden Ranch there. And I was just wondering, did you ever know Fremont or of him, the man that lived there and built the shack?

RS: I didn't know him too well but he was mean.

UM: Oh, was he?

RS: Yeah, he was awful mean. He was gonna kill the cattle foreman one time.

UM: What for?

RS: Because he turned him in. They didn't want him there. He went up and built his shack and everything, you know, up the canyon there. He had everything in there. He had a garden. He made a hole in the side of the hill, cut in, you know, a hole in the rock and then he had his camp there. He used to walk to town, then he packed his stuff in there. He took beans and potatoes and anything you'd need, you know, and he packed the stuff back in there.

UM: Was there ever any gun fight?

RS: No, no, they didn't have a gunfight but he come out with a gun one time and was going to try to kill the foreman of the of the cattle farm. They wanted to get him out of the place, so they pushed the cattle back in there. And you know they had water on the bottom, but half the cattle wanted to stay and he'd run them out. He was walking around the hills there and he'd run the cattle out. So they were trying to keep him out of there.

UM: What finally happened to him?

RS: He finally got out of there. He got pretty old and walked around with a cane.

UM: Is anything left of his homestead there?

RS: Part of the stuff was there. I don't know what happened since they had that fire; they had a big fire about four or five years ago.

UM: We were up there yesterday looking around for the Indian sites—a lot of fossils up there. Did you ever find any seashells?

RS: You mean in Fremont Canyon?

UM: Yes. And below was a ranch at Black Star house. Have you seen that date that's carved in the rock, 1714, where all those bedrock mortars are in the Hidden Ranch and Black Star?

RS: Up below the Hidden Ranch, though. Did you go up there, too?

UM: Yes.

RS: Yeah, we used to go up there once in awhile. Irvine cattle would get in with the Hidden Ranch cattle; we'd have to go up and get them. One time we went over there, you know, and there were three of us and we had about six heifers in there that belonged to Irvine. And some guy'd been hunting deer up there, you know, that left a gallon of wine up there. We stopped and ate lunch at the cabin down there ahead of Fremont, inside the fence of the Hidden Ranch. So we got there and ate dinner, didn't have no water so we drank all that wine, about that much of a jug. We didn't drink it all so that guy when he came back he'd have a drink, anyway. I was sure good to him. (laughs) He had the wine hid right as you went in the door, you know. He had a nice little cabin—back of the door we found the wine. It wasn't even open yet. [There] was an empty gallon but this one was full.

UM: What did he say about it?

RS: Oh, I don't know what he said; we didn't see him anymore.

UM: Did you ever visit that coal mine that's up there?

RS: You mean up at the back of the dam? Back there where those pine trees are? Up on top of the hill you mean? Yeah, we used to ride there all the time.

UM: Was there much there then?

RS: No. I mean there was just ____.

UM: Are there any other mines up in that area?

RS: Not up in there, but there's one on the top of the hill. You know where that pile of stuff is, like that below Fremont? You've seen that pile, that black stuff in there—there's another mine up above.

UM: Coal also?

RS: Yeah. See their hole, the stuff from up above was piling up there, you know, and then the other _____. I think they quit—I don't know what happened to them, they quit. Still got that pile there; been there for twenty years!

UM: Did you ever find any Indian artifacts at that place where all the bedrock mortars are?

RS: No, not in there. Since they had them big floods it washed off. There's nothing there now. Like I was telling you one time about that man was mean, you know—We were supposed to run some cattle up there one time. We stopped to eat lunch. There must have been about ten of us. There was an old man, Tom Ahern (?) was with us. He was sitting there eating his lunch, and I sneaked around behind the building over there behind the bushes to come on around and jumped on him. Gosh darn, boy, he really got scared. I said, "What you doing here on my camp? I don't want you around here," like I was going to kill him. The other boy laughed, the other boy knew what I was going to do with him. Tom was afraid of that man; he wouldn't ride up by the canyon; he'd go around the other way. He wouldn't come up that canyon. So I sure scared him. "God damn you so-and-so." He was going to fight with me, you know. (laughs) That was really fun. When we went up I said, "Tom, you better watch that man. He'll come out with a shotgun from behind a rock and come at you." "Are you sure he's there?" "Hell, yeah." "Let's go back." "No, I said, we've got to check this country out."

UM: The old oxen road that goes up through what is now called Weir Canyon—is there any sign on the road? Could you tell where it was, the old road?

RS: No. That's why I've seen all the water come through the canyon and wash out everything. A lot of water came down through there in '16 and '38; this is the last part of '69, you know. It washed everything off.

UM: How long ago did you see this rock that they refer to as the Altar Rock in Weir Canyon?

RS: In Weir Canyon? Well, just last summer I went hunting deer; I went right by it. I went around and come out on top. See, that road comes from Weir Canyon, comes on the top right on into Fremont, and you come out in the park.

UM: You mentioned that—what's around it, where this rock—Are there bedrock mortars?

RS: Sand rock, I guess, the rock you're talking about, sand rock. There's a little dam below, you know. They made a little dam for the cattle to drink water, yeah, a little dam by the rock. (pause) They had the big floods; most of the rock washed out.

UM: What were the ranchers doing?

HS: That was before. (several minutes of recording problems) It's going, yes.

UM: Thank you. You were mentioning about the Indian rock.

RS: Right here, right here where the Coto de Caza is. They used to call it Gobernadora Canyon; when they bought it they changed the name on it. But there were a lot of springs in there.

UM: How far down the canyon?

RS: Well, it runs down pretty close to Ortega Highway.

UM: That's near what they call the old mission site, I think.

RS: Yeah.

UM: Do you remember when the walls were standing on that adobe?

RS: The adobe house? Well, there is one up here on this mesa way down at the other end. Still some there not too long ago.

HS: Yeah, we've been down there. You meant the one over by the corral on the Ortega that they used to call the old mission site.

RS: That's all gone now there. But, this here was still part of the _____.

UM: That's Trabuco down there?

RS: Yeah.

HS: That's where they buried the treasure, isn't it?

RS: Yeah. There was a guy come down from San Diego—was it San Diego? Someplace—the other day. He said somebody told him that I knew about them bells and all that gold and all the money that was buried there.

UM: Oh, my gosh.

RS: That was before my time; how was I gonna know?

UM: Did he have a Polish name? A real long Polish name?

RS: Yeah, a Dutchman almost.

HS: Do you know who it was?

UM: Well, he's the fellow that does—Did he have a metal detector?

RS: Yeah, he had everything with him. I told him I didn't know nothing because that was before my time.

HS: And besides, if you knew where it was, you could have dug it up yourself!

RS: Why heck, yeah, I'd of had it here with me!

UM: Didn't Mr. Carrillo who was the interpreter at—

RS: You mean Charlie Carrillo at the court?

UM: Yes, he used to try to find it, I understand.

RS: Well, a lot of guys been trying to. I don't think there's nothing there, though. I don't think so.

UM: Did you ever know anyone that lived in the Trabuco adobe?

RS: Up in here?

UM: Yeah, the Trabuco adobe.

HS: Well, the Dukarts (?) lived there.

RS: That was a long time ago.

HS: They lived there last. They were the last ones to live there. Louie Robinson told me, because he's always lived here.

RS: No, Louie lives up there, you know; that's his place over there.

HS: Yeah, that's his place; he's always lived up there on the mesa.

RS: Yeah, but this belongs to his sister, you know, this place right here.

UM: What theories have you heard about this treasure that was supposed to be from _____?

RS: Oh, there was this guy one time who sat there and told us about it for three or four hours. He was younger than I am; I don't think he knew nothing about it. But he was telling us what happened, you know. And I don't know how many men were killed up in this canyon, and one down there in Trabuco.

HS: Did you ever work down at the ranch where the golf course is now, the San Joaquin Golf Course?

RS: The old cattle ranch? Yeah, the boardinghouse was there. The old man Irvine was born there, you know.

HS: Do you remember anything about the first Sepulveda house that was there below Lane Road? Did you ever see any walls of that?

RS: Well, there used to be a Sepulveda [who] used to be a cattle foreman; that's all I know.

HS: No, this is Jose Sepulveda, the one that got the original grant back in the early nineteenth century.

RS: No, I don't think I knew any Sepulveda there. They all live up toward Santa Ana Canyon, back up in that country back in there.

HS: I know the present-day Sepulvedas, but what we're interested in is trying to find out where the old house was that Jose Sepulveda built in 1830 or so. (recording interrupted)

HS: Were you about to say something?

UM: Well, I was just going to ask you about what they call the old mission site there in Gobernadora Canyon. Do you think that was where the first mission was?

RS: No, I think it was down below the Gobernadora, you know, in the hills outside Mission Viejo. Well, the Gobernadora used to belong to Mission Viejo too and then what's-his-name bought it, you know, that sold it to this Ernie Bryant, you know, Bixby' son-in-law. He bought the place.

UM: But isn't it on the O'Neill property now?

RS: Well, yeah, it's down below, I think, below the Gobernadora. It runs clear down to the road, just about a couple of miles from the road up this way, that's as far as it goes. _____ ranch, you know.

UM: And when you first saw that, were there some walls up on it or—?

RS: There were walls in there; it was years ago. We used to hunt back there years ago, you know. There ain't nothing there now. Well in fact, they ploughed everything; they put in barley, ploughed up everything now.

UM: Have you ever seen what they call pelican stones which are usually often made of steatite and they're like this, it looks like a big number one? One was found in the quarry area there in Capistrano. Have you ever seen any others?

RS: No. I don't know what they're digging out over here. I know they've found quite a few Indian rocks where they're digging that gravel here in Trabuco Canyon down at the lower end, you know. And then they're digging up above the Mission Viejo now over by the cattle camp. Johnny Chingala (?) he found about five rocks, perfect, big like that, but they're perfect, digging them out where they're digging that gravel out.

UM: Is he in Capistrano?

RS: No, he lives in El Toro. But he found some good rocks over there. Well, you see, when they had them big floods, it would wash all the rocks down the gully, you know, and then that water took them down and they're buried way down in that gravel. He found some of them _____, good ones about that long. And them rocks he found, they were perfect, you know. They'd never been broke. But they say that when the Indians left this country here, when they moved them back up in the rough country, why, they broke most of the rocks. They took a hammer and broke them so nobody would take them. Oh hell, you could find a lot of pieces.

UM: When earlier you showed me the cog, the discoidal, and the arrow straightener and all that I photographed, you were mentioning that they came from the feed lot at—

RS: Moultons, back of Moultons.

UM: And you and your brother-in-law were building the feed lot?

RS: No, no, we were working on the fence back in there. My brother Frank, you know, he was the youngest one in the family—he just passed away about six years ago.

UM: Oh. And these just came out where you were digging?

RS: Yeah, by the plough you know, and him and I after we'd eaten—we were working right that close and we were eating dinner, you know, and then we went over there after lunch. We didn't go to work till 1:00, see. We went up and looked around and found them rocks.

UM: And the cogged stones, those three that you mentioned, do they look like they were made of something like volcanic rock? There were little holes in them?

RS: Well, there were a lot of rocks with little holes in there, a lot of shells, you know. They used to bring them abalones and things and stuff like that and it was buried and the ground was black. Whatever you see in those Indian camps—the ground was like it was burned, you know, where they brought all the stuff in there.

UM: Did the cogged stones have holes in them? I mean, was there a hole in the center or were they just kind of like a big mono?

RS: No, no. You mean the big rocks?

UM: No, the cogged stone that you have.

RS: No, no, no, it didn't have no hole in the middle. They were just made like a sprocket on the wheel. There should be some there if they plough again. But sometimes they're pretty deep, but the one we found, they ploughed the year before and then they cut everything off; they put the cattle there so the cattle feed on the stuff off the ground.

UM: Was it near a spring?

RS: Yeah. Well, the spring is up above, up above; the spring is down below. That's why they use all the water for the ranch, you see.

UM: And the cogged stone came from above the spring?

RS: Yeah, all that stuff come from back of the spring.

UM: Did you ever find any bones like they were burials?

RS: No, not anything like that. Just cow bones and stuff like that but no human bones.

UM: And how deep do you think the ploughs were going at that time?

RS: It must have been about maybe three inches, four inches deep.

UM: What were they raising, barley?

RS: What? Barley. They raised barley and they raised beans, too, them black-eyed beans. So those rocks [were] buried, hit by the plough, and they'd come out. They'd dig them out.

UM: And this object that was shaped like a spade on the end, that came from the same area?

RS: Yeah, it came from the same place. And that rock right there, I got that off the Irvine. I was chasing a bunch of calves that took off. I was bringing them back.

UM: What, the metate?

RS: Yeah, the one here. So I seen that rock there; (moves from interview setting) I seen it was an Indian rock so I went back. See, that's the one I found.

UM: Hmm, that's a nice one.

RS: Is that what they call—what the hell is the name of that canyon where they've got them craters? The Lamoure Canyon (?).

DS: They call it El Moro (?) Canyon.

RS: Etamouro (?), something like that. We found that rock, found two of them, you know. I left one over there in the canyon. When I went by back to look for it after they had that flood I never did find my rock.

UM: Was it in the canyon?

RS: Yeah, this was up—on this side there's a spring right down, it used to go down this side. In the spring there used to be an old well—they fixed it after, you know, and made an old well out of it.

UM: Is that where the trailer park is now?

RS: It's down below here, down below. You know where it's at.

UM: It's right on the beach?

RS: Yeah, right close to the highway.

UM: Oh, yeah.

RS: I was chasing them calves so I took me a stick and stuck one down in the ground, you know. And then I got home and then _____ was staying with _____ and I went up there to get the rock. I went over and I picked up the rocks. It was Indian rocks all right. I bet you there's some more in there someplace. There should be some more. Trouble is a lot of them rocks are in them ditches, you know. The flood came in and just covered them all up, see.

UM: And the Sakamoto camp was near there, the Japanese, farther north. They found a number of cogged stones there, I understand.

RS: Well, that's up by, you know where they're building them new homes in what they call Coyote Canyon? Coyote Canyon side is on that side, you know. I used to farm all them flats up there, remember?

UM: Oh, yes.

RS: That used to [have] some rocks, too. I guess they got that house and knocked it down. They got houses there now. They used to have—it was a farm owner, some Japs, you know

UM: A lot of caves up there, too, aren't there?

RS: Yeah. Yeah. You know, _____ packed all his stuff in and he had good stories about everything. He could carry on.

UM: Well, that's the value of recording this because you have a good memory and all of this is getting lost every year that people don't write it down. Have you ever seen back in the back country these petroglyphs, the Indian painting and carvings?

RS: No, that was before my time. There were no Indians here then, you know.

UM: I mean did you ever see them?

RS: No, I never seen nothing in the caves.

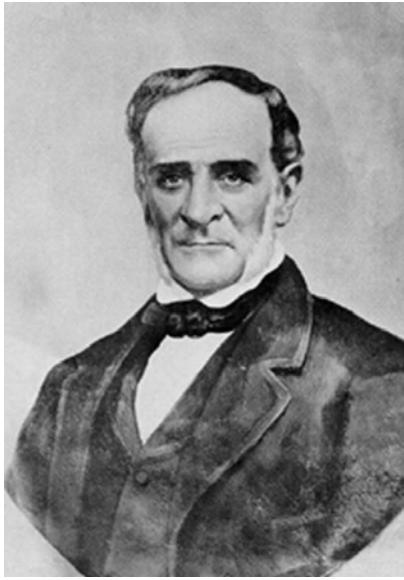
UM: I was reading about an early artifact collector by the name of Herman Stranthen (?) who had access to the Irvine Ranch and Myford Irvine. Had you ever heard of him, Herman Stranthen?

RS: No. He never did say nothing about that—I fixed my pump. Look at my shorts, I got grease all over them—No, it's what I say, if I'd have kept track of that stuff I'd have been all right. Get it down, the story of the whole thing. Now I get to thinking now, God knows I could've made money with them books, see.

UM: I'm glad that you're writing down your story of your life, very good. And your pictures, too, it would be good if you could write down the names of the people in the photo album.

RS: Yeah.

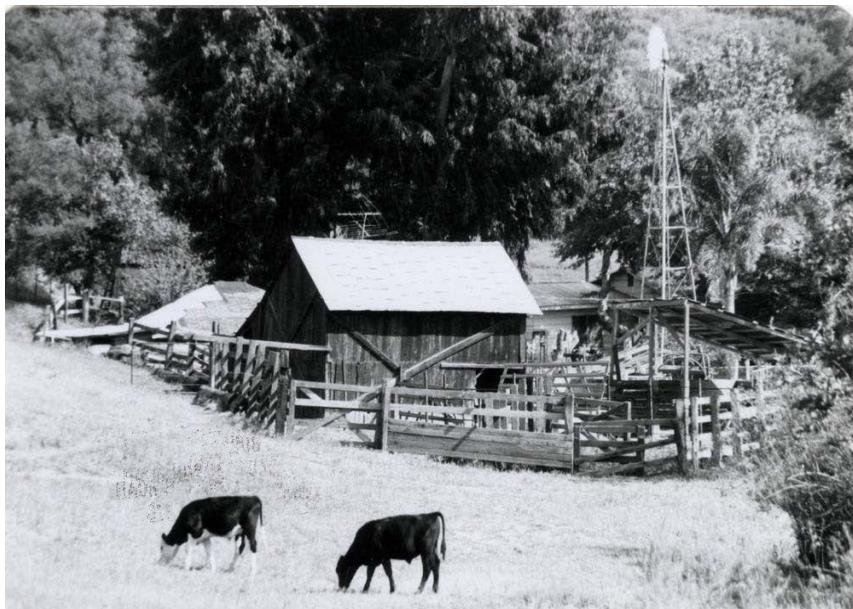
END OF INTERVIEW



In the early 1830s Don José Andrés Sepulveda built a large adobe house for his family on the east side of the upper Newport Bay marshes.



Bedrock mortars or grinding rocks used by Indians in Black Star Canyon.



Hidden Ranch in Black Star Canyon
1984

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Helen Smith Oral History Collection

NARRATOR: U. F. (STEVE) STEVENS

INTERVIEWER: Helen Smith

DATE: August 27, 1970

SUBJECT: Charter service, commercial fishing, and Herb Lester's injury

Later in the interview Mrs. Lester is present.

HS: This is Helen Smith. I'm talking with Mr. U. F. [Urban Fuller] Stevens in his home on De La Vina Street, Santa Barbara. Today is the twenty-seventh of August. Mr. Stevens, can we go way back and start with when you first started sailing your boat, or operating your boat, in the channel?

US: Well, I started in 1927, and I've been a commercial fisherman all my life. When I first went over to San Miguel I was working for the Santa Barbara museum, taking archeologists and botanists and different people from the museum that were doing botanizing and archaeologist work. And, that's when I first met the Lesters.

HS: Did you go over there before the Lesters moved there?

US: Yes, I'd been there but I'd never been ashore.

HS: Oh, you hadn't? You'd never taken any of the scientists over before that? Do you remember your first trip after they moved to the island?

US: Well, the first time I went ashore, when I met Herb Lester, that's before he was married. Then I think the next time I met him was shortly after he was married.

HS: Do you remember your first impression? Did you know there were people living there?

US: Yes, I'd heard there were people living there. Herb, when I first met him, struck me as a very interesting person. He was all enthused about the islands, especially about living there. He thought there was just nothing better.

HS: I'd like to go back a little. Did you ever meet John Russell when he was living there?

US: No, I never had. He was before my time.

HS: And you were too young to have known Captain Waters?

US: Right.

HS: I can't find anybody who met Captain Waters. I don't suppose there's anyone left.

US: I don't know. Roy Brookes has never met him?

HS: Do you mean Bob Brookes? I never asked him. I haven't talked with Bob for thirty years. Who was the first scientist that you took over there?

US: David Banks Rogers. He was doing a study on the Indian life.

HS: He was the head of the museum?

US: No, he was just the archaeologist. Ralph Hoffmann was the director, and he was mostly botanizing, and before he did that he was in bird life, sea life. At first, I used to go over there and fish a lot at San Miguel Island and a lot of times we'd get blown in over there. You couldn't go out to fish so we'd go up and visit the Lesters.

HS: Where did you fish, near Cuyler's?

US: Yes, outside there, about six miles outside the islands, fished bottom—rock cod mostly. But sometimes it would blow too hard and you couldn't work, so we had to go in there for protection and we'd stay in there. Sometimes there'd be quite a few boats in there. The harbor's so nice and smooth—well, the seas were smooth. The wind was terrific but the seas were smooth and there was a good, safe anchorage. The surf was pretty high, especially in the winter months. I knew a few friends of mine who got caught in there; they couldn't even get out of the harbor. It was safe inside but it would break outside; they were bar-bound and they couldn't get out of there at all.

You know, I took some friends of the Lesters over there by the name of McMillen. There was Mr. and Mrs. McMillen and their two sons, to visit. When I went up to the ranch that day, Herb had told me that they'd found an elephant tusk exposed out of the formation there quite a ways away from the ranch. He wanted me, when I got back, to go to the Santa Barbara museum and tell them what he'd found, and if they

were interested to send a crew of fellows back over there to dig it out and take it to the Santa Barbara museum. And if they were not interested [they were] to let him know when I came back and he was going to call up the Los Angeles museum and have them come over and get it, because he knew they'd be interested in it. So when I came back to Santa Barbara I went to the museum and told them what Herb said he found over there. They were very skeptical; they thought it might be a whale bone exposed. They didn't want to go to the expense of hiring a boat and hiring a crew of men to go over there and dig it out. They didn't seem to be encouraged about it, so I told them that being as I had the McMillan family over there and they'd paid me to take them over and also to come and get them, that I'd be glad to take somebody from the museum over just to verify it, see if it was an elephant tusk. And so they agreed on that.

So the director of the museum, Ralph Hoffmann, and a friend of his by the name of McDaniels, they went along. We had a load of supplies for the ranch; and before we got to Cuyler's Harbor, Ralph Hoffmann then wanted me to let him off inside of Prince Island. There's a kind of a beach there. I didn't want to because I wanted to hurry and get over with the supplies and get them unloaded. I told him I wasn't in favor of it and he said, "Well, if it's smooth we'll get off and if It's rough we'll go on over to the harbor with you." So we got over there and it was smooth so we let them off there. At the time I didn't notice it, but McMillen had been doing some Indian diggings close by and he saw us land there at this little beach. After we'd landed Mr. Hoffmann and McDaniels, we went over to the ranch and Herb came down with the team of horses and the sled and we hauled the supplies up. We got up to the ranch around five o'clock and we met McDaniels up there. He seemed to be worried about Mr. Hoffmann because they'd separated down around the beach area and Mr. Hoffmann was going up the face of this big cliff and do some botanizing. McDaniels said he'd meet him up on top of a small mountain there and they'd have lunch together. He said he waited all day and Ralph never showed up so he tried to look for him and he couldn't see him and he thought he might be lost. Although he was kind of worried about him, I wasn't, because I'd seen Hoffmann out on other trips, seen him out at eight, nine, ten o'clock at night. He seemed to know his way around the islands and around the mountains and hills and he always showed up with no trouble, so I wasn't too worried about it. We sat down and ate supper with the Lesters, and McDaniels kept bringing up that he was worried about Hoffmann. So finally I said I'd take a horse they had by the name of Sparky and see if I could go find him. The wind was blowing a pretty good gale, about thirty miles an hour and thick fog; as a matter of fact, it was so thick you could hardly see the ground from the horse. Over there there's no trails and everything's just practically like a desert; anyway I went in the direction I thought was it.

HS: You cut across to that little cove east of Cuyler's, is that right?

US: Yes. It's right in behind Prince Island, down in the corner. So I kept going and finally the horse just didn't want to go anywhere and he stopped and I could hear the breakers down on the beach below me. It sounded like I was close to a cliff, but being that it was so foggy I wasn't sure and the horses didn't want to go, so I thought there was no use in trying to force him. He probably could sense there was danger there, so I turned around. So then I was wondering how I was ever going to find my way back to the ranch. I'd heard say that you just let the reins loose, and he took me within twenty feet of the gate. He could have gone one way and he'd have been miles out of his way; but he'd come to the fence, turned to the right, gone about twenty feet and there was a gate, where if he'd turned to the left he'd have gone two or three miles and there was no gate.

So I went back to the ranch and I told Herb and McMillen and McDaniels that I couldn't find anything. Well, McMillen had seen us land down there and he'd been going back and forth every day there, and he was pretty sure that he could find his way down there to that area. So Herb and one of the McMillen boys said, "We'll go down to where you launched your skiff," presuming that maybe Hoffmann had decided not to come up to the ranch but to go back and wait on the beach where the skiff was. So Herb and the McMillen boy went down to the beach where the skiff was and McMillen and I went directly to where he saw us land, and he was going to wait there for Herb and the McMillen boy to join us. After an hour or two they finally arrived. We saw the tracks where they got off the skiff and walked and we tracked up to the foot of this cliff and we found Hoffmann's body there. The indication was that he was using a hand trowel to crawl up in a crevice to pick some wild flowers, and the trowel had broke and he fell quite a ways. It wasn't a perpendicular cliff but it was pretty steep and a lot of rocks; he broke his neck and had quite a few injuries. It was too late to do anything that night so we covered him over there and went back and got the boat and next morning bright and early came over. We had to roll him in a tarp and tie him up and put a stick through so we could carry him off of this cliff.

HS: Then it wasn't all the way down to the beach?

US: No, he was just about halfway, about fifty feet from the base of the cliff. But the slope was very steep. So then we brought him in to Santa Barbara. A few weeks later the museum decided they would send a few people over there to check into this elephant tusk. So David Rogers—and he had two other members there, workers, with him—went over and they verified that they were elephant tusks. They were eleven feet long and eight inches in diameter at the base; when they got to digging they found another one. There was two there, and Rogers' supposition was that they were not of the same animal, that they were different, and they were embedded in the

Pliocene age. They also found parts of the jawbone and stuff, but it was pretty badly decomposed.

HS: I wonder if that was before the dwarf mammoth was found on Santa Rosa?

US: We found elephant tusks over there. I'd had Mr. Rogers and them over there. That's on the west end of Santa Rosa. There's a place they call Elephant Canyon, Green Canyon.

HS: Was that before this discovery or after?

US: That was before. I mean the elephant tusks on San Miguel was after the ones they found on Santa Rosa.

HS: You'd think they would have been so excited to find there were the same things on San Miguel, wouldn't you?

US: Well, it proved a point. Rogers thinks that at one times these islands were all connected, and San Miguel was connected with Point Concepcion, mainland. They think that these big elephants got out there and they were trapped out there and that's where the pigmy elephants come from. I had Rogers and some of them digging up on the west end of Santa Rosa and they say that the majority of Indian graves up there have these pygmy elephant tusks in them. His supposition was that one of their prize possessions was these tusks and when they were buried they were buried with them.

Well, I think why they didn't think much about these elephants over there was that there had been other rumors about it and every time they investigated it turned out to be a whale bone. That's why they were skeptical, because I heard them talk about it and they didn't seem to think there was any big stuff there. These were in fair shape; they were decomposed. We had to put these big large tusks—built plaster of Paris forms around them and let them set.

There is another interesting thing. I've never had an answer to it, and I don't know anybody yet, even people that've roamed the islands, that has seen it. Previous to going over after the elephant tusks, up on the northwest side of the island one time I was roaming around and I found what looked like a foundation of something, a building, or some kind of marker or what, I don't know. But it's about ten foot in diameter, round, and it's just made out of rock like a cobblestone street.

HS: Solid rock, paved?

US: Yes, just like a street. So while I was waiting for the plaster of Paris to dry on these elephant tusks, we had some horses there, so I asked Mr. Rogers if he'd like to take a ride. I'd explained to him before about it and he didn't seem to know what they were.

So I said, "Let's go over and take a look at them." So we went over and he said he's never seen anything like it. He had no idea what it was, but he definitely knew it was not Indian.

HS: Could you describe it? How far inland was it? Was it up on the top of the island?

US: Not up on top. It was up on a kind of a slope, gentle slope. We looked around there and the closest rock to that area was a mile away; so the rocks would have been carried there.

HS: It wasn't beach cobbles?

US: Oh, no. You could see they were flat on top, you know, like it was a cobblestone street.

HS: Was it in a place where it would get covered with sand? I wonder if it's still there.

US: No, there was vegetation around there. Of course it's possible. That island, the way the sand shifts, it would, you know; but it was good soil all around it, hard soil and there was no sand at that time. Of course, I haven't been back there in so many years. But I've talked to people that have done a lot of roaming around there and they've never seen it.

HS: Rogers really covered the whole coastline and the islands before he wrote that book, *Prehistoric Man on the Santa Barbara Coast*. And he'd never seen anything like it?

US: No. Of course, he didn't travel too much inland. He did most of his along the water. Most of the Indian villages, from what he said, were along the waterfront, up on knolls and kind of high ground. It was wherever he found that kitchen midden, that's what we used to look for. We'd go by in a boat and look for that kitchen midden, and that's where he'd go ashore and dig.

HS: They were not going to carry their seafood, shells, abalones and things, very far inland, just up where they were safe.

US: Right. You've seen his book, I guess?

HS: Oh, yes. I don't have a copy. It cost \$45 now.

US: Well, he give me a copy of it, autographed it, and I loaned it to somebody.

HS: And you don't know who you loaned it to?

US: Well, I think so and I asked about it a while back, and she said her son had it and she'd see him about it; but it's been so many years ago that I couldn't say. There's pictures in there of my boat and me and everything.

HS: I was going to ask you, did he think that there might possibly by any connection with the Aleuts or the Russians who used to come down and kill the Indians?

US: He didn't say. He didn't know, but he said it definitely was not Indian. And if anybody knew his Indians, it was Rogers. He was really good.

HS: You never took any of the scientists over there?

US: No. Oh, yes, I did but not to San Miguel.

HS: I mean to see this particular thing?

US: Oh, no. No, I've never had any connections with any of that. Since then I've talked to a lot of people that were interested in it. At the time there was a boy with me who had a camera and took a picture of it, but for some reason or other it didn't develop, and I've never been back with a camera. I've talk to people that've roamed around there and they have never seen it. I've tried to describe the area as close as I can. It's kind of northwest of what they call Green Mountain. That's where that big bomber crashed.

HS: That's toward the west end, then?

US: Right. I imagine it's in a southwesterly direction from the ranch.

HS: Halfway across the island, would you think?

US: Yes. Well, this spot that I found was about—the distance I couldn't say, but it's a westerly direction from the ranch, the old ranch.

HS: Did you ever see Captain Nidever's house that he built over there of brick? I've seen pictures of the foundation of it but I don't know where it is. Sometimes it gets covered up, so you can't always find it.

US: No. There was a little shack up on the west end in Adams Cove, but I think it was some fisherman. Years ago, especially in the spring months when there was minus low tides on all the islands over there, the Chinese would go and they would pick the agar-agar off the rocks and they would dry it in the sun. This shack that was up in Adams Cove I think was built by some of those Chinese.

HS: Where did they come from, Santa Barbara?

US: Yes, they came, most of them, from Santa Barbara.

HS: In their own boats, I suppose?

US: No, they used to generally hire some local commercial fisherman to take them over there with their supplies and stuff. They camped on all the islands, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa and San Miguel. Prior to that—there was a law stopping it—there was quite a deal in drying black abalones, going over there and picking the abalones. They would boil them in ocean water plus salt and dry them out in the sun and then bring them in. They were quite marketable, but then they passed a law prohibiting it so that stopped that. Chinese did that and then there were also some white race people. That would probably have been 1910 to '15, around there—way before I knew anything about it.

HS: They also used to take the sex glands of the—

US: Seals, right.

HS: And discard the rest of them, I guess, even the skins. The Chinese were great for—

US: Most of that was the white man. They sold to the Chinese; the Chinese were the buyers. Yes, there was quite a bit of that. That was going on clear up into the thirties. The agar-agar is the seaweed and it's used in food supplements. I heard there was quite a bit of it used in ice cream making, and then the Chinese used it in their food. When they'd dry it, it would take an awful lot to make anything because there's just nothing to it. I guess it's 75 percent moisture.

HS: You wouldn't think it would dry very fast on the islands, it's so balmy.

US: They made racks and they'd take screen, chicken wire, and set it up on these racks so the wind would get underneath it, and the sun, and they would dry it up there.

HS: Did you ever hear any stories about the early days of San Miguel? Did you ever know anybody who knew Captain Waters?

US: No, I never did. There is a person—well, he's dead now—Bob Ord. You've probably heard of him?

HS: Yes, Elise has mentioned him.

US: He used to be in the guano business. He used to go collect guano from these islands and he has a boat called the *Roncador*. That was quite a deal. I think it was in the spring when he used to go around the islands to these rocks where the birds concentrated pretty heavy, and he'd gather this guano and he'd pack it up in sacks. He'd get four, five, six tons at a time and he'd come in with the boat pretty well loaded. Then he had this place up in Sycamore Canyon where he'd get this white chalk, kind of a limestone, and he'd mix it in with this guano to cut it down so it wouldn't be so strong. He had two or three Mexican helpers with him on the boat.

HS: This might explain what Elise said about him, that he wasn't a very fastidious person, wasn't very clean or very particular.

US: Right.

HS: She said he'd eat this tainted mutton. Well, maybe because he worked with guano he wasn't, didn't care.

US: When he was down around the waterfront you could always tell, the thick fog—you could tell when he was in because the flies, the kelp flies. They'd be swarming all around the wharf, every place, and they say it was terrible on the boat. There was just a continuous swarm of them. He did that for a good many years until they came into large quantities down in South America in those bat caves with bat guano. They kind of put this out of business.

HS: You were going to tell about the time that Herb poisoned himself.

US: Oh, yes. Well, they had trouble on the island there: when the ewe, the mother sheep, was lambing, she'd be laying down and the ravens that are thick around the islands would attack the mother sheep. The first thing they'd do was try to pick their eyes out, to blind the mother. Then when they got it blinded, they had no problem killing the mother and then they'd attack the lamb and kill it. It was quite a problem with these ravens. So Herb, the only way he could destroy them was when he'd go out and he found a carcass of a sheep that had been picked out by ravens, he would plant some strychnine in it. This day he was down off the east end of the island someplace and he planted some strychnine in this sheep carcass. And, the last thing he remembered—he thought he must have got some of it accidentally on his hands and he rolled a cigarette. He used to roll his own. He got a dose of it and he said the last thing he remembered was getting on the old horse, which was Sparky, and heading back for the ranch. The horse took him back to the ranch. He had an Indian fellow that was from Riverside or San Bernardino, he was a sheep shearer. He knew what to do for him; he figured that was what was the matter with him. He got him off the horse and gave him some Indian cure. I don't remember what it was, but anyway he came out of it.

HS: Oh, that was Arno.

US: Right, that was Arno. So Herbie said this was no place for him over there, so he was going to head for the mainland and see if he couldn't find some way to get married. So that's how he and Elise got married. At the time there were a couple of fishermen over there. They'd come up that day to visit or something at the ranch. They were there when Herb came in on the horse, and I guess they thought they'd take advantage of his condition, so they run off with one of his best rifles.

HS: But they were known, weren't they? They probably signed the guest book.

US: Oh, they were known. Matter of fact, one's living right today.

HS: But they never returned the gun.

US: No. Of course, it was proving it. Nobody saw him. (tape off)

HS: Rockwell and the sea lion.

US: Oh, yes. Hugh Rockwell and his wife and daughter, they were from New York and they came and wanted to go over to visit the Lesters, to spend a month over there. So they hired me to take them over there. They were going to stay a month and they wanted me to come back at the end of thirty days to pick them up. There was no communications on the islands at the time, no radio or anything. I stayed over there for the first day or so, and we got to talking about the sea lion life up on the west end. So Rockwell being from New York, he'd never seen anything like that. He had a moving picture camera with him and he wanted to go up there and take some pictures. So we saddled up the horses that morning and headed up there. We got up to this Adams Cove, and there's a little kind of peninsula runs out to a small island out there and that little island was really loaded with seals. We stopped and tied the horses up to an old shack that was there on the beach, and we were taking our shoes off, I and Herb, because we had to wade across a little neck of the land to get out to this island. We had our backs to Rockwell. He saw a big seal laying on the beach, so he got his movie camera and he started running to take a picture before the seal got up and started going to the water. We didn't actually see it and he doesn't know what happened but what he thinks happened is there was another big seal laying partly covered up in the sand and he didn't see it. The thing just reared right up in front of him and made a big swipe with his head and he got him right here in the arm, right in the muscle part, a hole that big around. It knocked his camera out of his hands and it fell where the tide came up and popped open and ruined all the film. So I put a tourniquet on. He was a Christian Scientist so he didn't believe in any doctor. Both Herb and I tried to talk him into coming back, but no, he wouldn't do it. It would have been a month before I'd be over there again and sometimes it was a month before anybody goes over. I was leaving the next morning; so we went back to the camp. Herb said that later that night he did talk him into putting some antiseptic on it, which he didn't want to do at first.

HS: He could have dunked it in sea water, but he didn't even do that!

US: Right. So I came on in. He sent the camera in and got it repaired. Then I went back a month later and picked them up and it seemed like it was healed up and everything was fine, no problems.

HS: He was lucky. But then Bob Brooks was lucky, too.

US: Right. I was just thinking of that. I wasn't in on that. When Herb came in, they went to doctors and the doctors said Herb did such a good job sewing him up with a sack needle that they gave him a present of a bunch of needles just for that type of work. From then on they had a radio or had communications.

HS: I don't think they had any more problems after that.

US: No. Let's see, what was I going to say?—Oh, they had problems charging the batteries over there on the roof for the radios at first. So George Hammond brought over a windmill that was made specially—but I don't think it was made for gale winds like you had over there. It was made for on the mainland here, a generator with propeller on it they had up on the tower. The first time I went over there after they installed that I was sitting in the kitchen and I thought thunder'd hit the place when that thing [rotated] in that wind. The first one that they put up, I heard that in that wind it just disintegrated. The blades flew off the first day and they never did find them. So they got another model and brought it over, and it would just wind up so fast that it had a safety device on it so the vane would fold and that way it would turn it out of the wind, because they weren't designed for that strong a wind. When it would turn like that it would just shake the whole house.

HS: Was it mounted on the house?

US: Yes, it was mounted up on the roof on kind of a little tripod deal. It did a good job of charging the batteries; they were never out of wind, you know. It blows practically twenty-eight days a month.

HS: Too bad they couldn't have had current for the house.

US: Yes. Well, they used kerosene lamps, mostly. They could have had it for one or two rooms, but there wasn't enough power good for any large amounts. Of course with the stuff they've got today for generators, they could have done it very easily.

HS: You were telling a tale of running out of gas.

US: Oh, yes. There was one time when I was supposed to take Roy Brooks over to the island.

HS: You mean Bob? You called him Roy.

US: (laughs) Right, well, I know another person Roy Brooks. We left at two o'clock in the morning. At that time I was living down at Summerland, and he drove into my place and parked his car. I had an old four-cylinder Dodge and we started into Santa Barbara. We got into Santa Barbara here where the boat was anchored and it was

blowing a gale of wind, and so we decided it was no place to go, San Miguel, in that kind of weather. So we headed back to Summerland and we got about halfway back to Summerland and we found we was out of gas. We found a service station there. Of course it was closed and we started plowing around to see if there was any cans, and we found an old kerosene heater in the back. We took the container out that held the fuel and it had a half gallon or two gallons of kerosene in it so we just poured that in the tank and away we went. Them old time cars, they'd run on anything!

Elise! —I want to ask her the name of these people—Do you remember the fellow and his wife who came down from Oregon one year? What was their name?

EL: Winnager, Joe Winnager and Leila.

US: Oh, yes. They were hunting for seals. They came down [from Oregon]. Oregon paid a bounty on seals, and in California it was prohibited. They weren't even allowed to shoot them. This Weingar and his wife came down; he was a commercial fisherman up there. I think he spent a month over at San Miguel, just collecting, shooting the seals and getting the bounty and then going back to Oregon to collect on them.

HS: Would Herb let him do that?

US: There was nobody around. All you had to show was the whiskers, I think, or the nose tip or something, I forgot I just what it was. In them days there was nobody around San Miguel, not like today. [California Department of] Fish & Game didn't have [any] boats. They had one, I think, that had to patrol the whole coast.

HS: You remember the time recently that somebody sailed around Santa Barbara Island and shot about twenty sea lions?

US: I read it in the paper.

HS: I read it in the paper, too. That wasn't that very long ago. (pause) You kept going out to the island as long as the Lesters were there, didn't you? Maybe afterward, I don't know.

US: Yes. I was there when Herb cut his fingers off. We went over there that day. We was fishing; it was in the winter. The navy was there. I think it was during the war. There was two of the navy boys came down to the beach on horses so we was in there talking to them. That road up to the ranch—well, you remember—that was something else. I didn't relish walking that any more than I had to. So I asked them if Herb was up at the ranch and they said yes. I told them, "Well, I'd like to go up there but I'll be darn if I'm going to walk. If he wants me up there, come on down with the horse and I'll ride up." So they said okay. Oh, they came down with some letters to mail. They saw us anchored in there and they motioned us ashore; they

wanted us to mail these letters. So they said they'd tell him. So they went up and they told Herb that I was down in the harbor there. If he wanted me to come up, to saddle a horse and come down and I'd be up there. About an hour or two later they came down there on the gallop, waving and yelling, so we went ashore and they said that Herb was planning to come down, but before he could come down he had to cut some firewood. And he accidentally cut these fingers off. The navy had a radio there and they'd radioed in for a doctor and a plane to come over, and there would be a plane there in just a few minutes. They wanted to know if I'd assist them in getting him ashore—it was a seaplane. So I did. We tied the plane up behind my boat and we took the doctor ashore, and an hour or two later he came back with Herb. They had him all bandaged up, and put him in the plane and took him to the hospital at Long Beach.

HS: Elise told me that it was a two-place plane and that the doctor rode in the cabin and that Herb was strapped to the wing.

US: No, no. What that was, it was a two-place plane, but the pontoon that was underneath was a single pontoon in the middle and then it had the wing pontoons. It looked something like these kind they shoot off of catapults—they used to shoot. It was a single-propeller deal. This part down at the bottom had sliding windows; I remember we put Herb—and it was about this far from the water, the window was—and slid the window open and he got inside there. One man would fit into this pontoon.

HS: Oh, then he was inside the central pontoon.

US: That's right. And the fuselage was above. Then they slid the door shut. Of course it had, I think, wheels too that folded down. I don't know, I imagine when they lit in Long Beach that's what it did. But they put him in there and the doctor and the pilot was up on the top. It was blowing I'd say a good thirty miles an hour, and he had to do a lot of taxiing around in the harbor there to get the thing warmed up.

HS: But this pontoon was then going through the water, wasn't it?

US: No, it was skipping, probably spray and everything. You couldn't see because the spray was going clear over the plane, it was blowing so bad and the chop and stuff.

HS: It was a rough ride!

US: Right, it was. The guy had to taxi around and around in the harbor to get everything up to temperature to take off; and then he couldn't, you know how that was. He had to take off into the wind and he'd be facing the island so he had to take off and then circle inside the bay to get out of there. He was a really good pilot.

HS: That's when the trouble started.

US: Right. Oh, another thing—getting back to the time that Ralph Hoffmann was killed over there. That night we had a kind of suspicion he might have fell and broke a leg or something, so we thought we'd all take a bottle of that whisky that they'd found. Herb had found it there a little before that, Kentucky Whisky. So we all—all we had was vanilla bottles, I think, so we filled them and each one took one of those, just in case we found him.

HS: Did you empty them yourselves?

US: Yeah, it was so cold.

HS: I don't imagine you people slept very well that night.

US: No. It was so cold and miserable that when we got to where he was they (the bottles) were empty.

HS: How was the whisky?

US: Oh, nothing compares to it today. I don't drink much, but, boy, that was really whisky. Well, it was bought in 1914 or '15 and inspected in '16 or '17; had the Kentucky distillery name and number and everything burnt right on the end of the barrel. They had the bung out of the barrel up there for years. I don't know whatever happened to it.

HS: I suppose it was left on the island and somebody took it.

US: Probably. The hoops were rusty so he was afraid to move the barrel. It had signs of leaking. It had been around a forty-gallon barrel and I think there was about thirty gallons left in it. (pause) Lots of times when I was over there and it was blowing and we couldn't go out fishing, why, I'd go up and we'd saddle the horses and just roam around the island because the west end of that island's a collector's paradise for all kinds of stuff: old hatch covers; electric buoys (?), every size and design that was ever built; and wreckage piled up there six or eight foot high from ships. Well, that ranch house according to Herb was built from a shipload of two-inch flooring, or three-inch flooring that went aground up there close to Otter Cove.

HS: Tongue and groove, wasn't it?

US: Right. It was flooring. This fellow Russell, I think it was, he had a team of mules at the time and he hauled it all the way from over there. He just started at one end of the place and kept building room after room on it right on down the line. (pause) Before the Hammonds got to flying over there, Hammond and David Gray and some of them, I used to haul the supplies, the groceries. They used to have coal, a few sacks of coal and stuff for the stove and for the blacksmith shop.

HS: Where did you get the coal, in Santa Barbara?

US: Yeah, sacks. You used to buy it here in them days. I don't remember just where. I think Bob used to get it. (speaks to Elise Lester) You used to use coal in your stove, didn't you Elise? Yes.

HS: Must have been coming from the days of coal-burning ships. I'll bet you couldn't find any coal in Santa Barbara now.

US: I don't think so. I think he used to get it at the Union Commission. That's down on Anacapa Street; they used to have everything. Then every spring I used to take the sheep shearers over. They were a band of Indians from San Bernardino. They used to come up and they'd go over and they would shear the sheep.

HS: Did you take them to all the islands?

US: No, just to Bob Brooks. I picked them up at Santa Cruz just once. They came down on the *Vaquero* from San Miguel and then they were left off at the east end of Santa Cruz and I picked them up and brought them back to Santa Barbara. But I took them up to San Miguel and they'd spend a month up there shearing and everything. They all sheared by hand in them days. There was no power shearing like today.

HS: I have some stories from Elise about the sheep shearers, how she used to cook for them make them birthday cakes. Do you remember those people? Did you ever find out anything about them?

US: No. Arno—what was the other one, Raymond?

EL: Raymond Arrietta.

US: That's the only ones I remember. I remember they used to get seasick, deathly sick on my boat. Sometimes when we'd get as far as Santa Rosa we couldn't make it to San Miguel. We'd have to anchor up there at Santa Rosa, and, boy, they'd just be deathly sick and lay there in the hold.

HS: Didn't they help with the roundup?

US: Right, they did everything. They helped with the roundup, the shearing, the shipping, everything.

HS: Did you take them out to San Nicolas too?

US: No. I don't know much about the shearing or any of that island development out there. By the time I started going out there, the navy had moved in there on San Nicolas.

HS: I guess you met some weather out there.

US: Yes, but it was nip and tuck with San Miguel and San Nicolas. They were just about the same weather.

HS: Do you think so? I've never been to San Nicolas, but it seems to me that it was probably worse than San Miguel. I heard Arthur Sanger talk about it. How it was almost impossible to get ashore there because there wasn't any beautiful harbor like Cuyler's.

US: Did you say Sanger? That's the one that had the *Dreamer*. I remember him well.

HS: Yes. Elise called him up the other day. They're still alive. He's 88.

US: Yes, he used to go around there and pick up Indian collections. San Miguel was a paradise for that because the terrific winds would expose the stuff. One time, I think it was the Rockwells or somebody, we were out around Adams Cove or Tylers Bight and we found three complete skeletons, just like they'd stretched out there. The wind had uncovered them.

HS: Same way on San Nicolas, I guess. The wind uncovers something and the next time you look it's covered up again and something else is uncovered.

US: Right. I know a lot of commercial fishermen that used to fish, well, half and half, half the time at San Miguel and half the time at San Nicolas. They were from the San Pedro area. They said it was a toss-up between the islands in the weather.

HS: Why did they fish around those islands? Were there shoals where there were fish?

US: Right. There's quite a few, and it seems like you get, where it's rough and there's not so much traffic, even today you're going to find a lot more fish. You get around Santa Cruz and Anacapa, those islands where the party boats are hanging out all the time, its way down in production in fishing.

HS: Either fished out or the fish are scared away.

US: Right, especially fish that hang around there all the time, like rock cod. You take migratory fish like albacore and other kinds of tuna, they're migratory, they're just travelling through. But anything that's bottom fish, bass and rock cod and stuff, they get cleaned out. And now the skin divers are starting in on it and it's worse and more of it.

HS: We were talking about the house and you were talking about all the stuff piled up at the west end. This is where different ships went aground? Or was it a flotsam place?

US: Not necessarily. It was just a place that the tide—like there was lots of Japanese balls [floats], great big, ten-, twelve-, fifteen-inch glass balls, Japanese origin, not the American ones. The currents would bring them in on the beaches; today you could probably find them still there. And hatch covers, a lot of flotsam I think was washed overboard off of ships. Like one time I was up there and I found a nice steamer chair, mahogany folding chair, beautiful, you know, deck chair.

HS: Probably off one of the Alexander boats.

US: Probably, or the *Harvard* or the *Yale* or one of those. I got on the horse first and I had the fellow that was with me hand it to me. I put my arms through it but I made a mistake by not having the right rein tight. And them horses over there, when you left the ranch to go any place you just prodded them all the way. But you didn't have to ask any questions when they were headed back to the ranch. Brother, they took off. This one took off with me with this chair in one hand and arm holding like that, and I had the reins and I couldn't pull it back, so what I did, I just reined him around in a circle until I slowed him down and then I got him so I could get another bite on the reins. So then it was all right. But them horses, just the minute you headed them home, boy, they were ready, right now; but going the other way you'd just prod them, prod them, prod them all the way.

HS: I think all horses are sort of like that, but it was windier there and they probably didn't like the sand in their eyes. They might have been worse than most horses. But you got the chair back to the house?

US: Yes, I got it home. But the sad story is I left it on my boat. I used to keep my boat in Summerland, and I had it opened up down there on the deck of the boat. The boat one day was out all morning and it rolled so bad [the chair] rolled over the side—lost again. Somebody else found it.

HS: All that work for nothing.

US: But there is an awful lot of flotsam stuff up there.

HS: Well, it's on the beach.

US: Right. It's just piled and piled and piled, just a big mass of wood and everything else so you can't dig into it. Probably a lot of the good stuff is underneath. Now hatch covers, there's quite a few of them up there.

HS: They're very popular now for coffee tables.

US: Right, right. They take and fiberglass them, sandblast them first. There's quite a few of those over there, at least there used to be. One time I had a bunch of college kids from Pomona College over there.

HS: I remember that. That's my college and I know some of those people. Did you take them over?

US: Right. First I took them to—I don't know if it was the same bunch—but one time I took them to Santa Rosa.

HS: That would have been in '28 or '29, I think.

US: Right. They'd just got the deer in there—you know Santa Rosa has quite a population of deer, mule deer and elk. But the mule-tail deer are up in the thousands ahead now. They brought them in from the Kaibab [National] Forest. They must have just brought them in about that time because the individual cages that they brought them in were on the beach there. We came in there, they had something to do [with] the museum here in Santa Barbara; I think it must have been an archaeology class.

HS: No, botany, if it's the same one I'm thinking of. The people from Pomona were all botanists.

US: Well, that's probably it. They had something to do with the Santa Barbara museum. I think they're the ones that arranged the whole thing. Matter of fact, it was; it was Hoffmann, Ralph Hoffmann. That was his specialty. When I first met him—well, before I got the larger boat I had a small one, not much bigger than a skiff with an inboard motor. I lived down at Summerland, because I was still going to school. I took him out getting sea birds and stuff. The fellow that owned the boat before me had been doing some work for him and then when I got the boat, why, they came to me to go over there.

HS: It was just a day trip?

US: Yeah. Well, at first—I was about seventeen, eighteen years old at the time, eighteen, I guess; I was still going to high school. First I went over and spent a week; it must have been Easter vacation, because I didn't stay out of school. And I took Ralph Hoffmann all around Santa Rosa, San Miguel, Santa Cruz, Anacapa and he kind of plotted the places he wanted to go; they were going to spend two and a half months over there. Then in the summer months I think it was or it must have been April I started. I'd go over on a Saturday and take supplies over, crates and stuff. They had three or four men working under Rogers, and they would be digging all week, Indian artifacts. They'd have it all crated up; I'd pick up what they had crated, I'd give them

their old crates and new supplies and I'd move them from one harbor to another each time. So they completed Santa Cruz and they did some in Santa Rosa, not too much but they did some there, and some in San Miguel.

HS: These were all kids from Pomona?

US: No, no, these were just laborers from here in Santa Barbara that they had. Then later on, I'm not sure but I think it was a week trip, we went over there and there were girls and boys from Pomona College.

HS: Yeah, Alice Sweet, a tall skinny girl; and Betty Crow; and Ray somebody or other. I know several people who were on that trip. They had a wonderful time. But, I didn't realize they were on your boat. Were they staying ashore?

US: Yes, they were camped ashore. They spent most of the trip at Santa Rosa; it was probably blowing and that's why we didn't go to San Miguel. We went up there and I think we stayed a day or so at San Miguel. They stayed at Santa Rosa, right above the wharf there. And, there was one of these deer—they brought twelve of them from the Kaibab Forest over there and turned them loose—and one of them never left the ranch. He'd hang right there. And, he was pestering them to death around the camp. They had some tents set up there and he'd come up to them, tame as could be. Then we went to San Miguel and I think they camped on the beach there. I'm not sure but I think that was before Herb was there.

HS: It was; it was before 1930.

US: Right. And, they were roaming up through this trash that's on the beach there and when they came back I remember they had bottles with notes in them that they'd found. There must have been half a dozen. Some of them was written by football teams from San Francisco, writing to the *Harvard* or the *Yale* or the *Alexander*. I remember one of the notes said, "We won" and gave the score. Other notes said, if found, please mail to such and such an address or something like that. They spent a few days up there, not too much. They kind of roamed around the island.

HS: They were collecting plants. But on this other expedition, was that Rogers? Was Rogers along on the archaeology expedition?

US: Right. He was in complete charge of this.

HS: Did you ever take Phil Orr over there?

US: No, that was later. After Hoffmann was killed, I think this fellow Orr took over. After I got out of school, I would be fishing and it kind of cut in on my work. I had to drop taking them over because it was just once in a while that they'd go over, so I cut

out of it. There's one woman I think still works at the museum. She used to go. I see her name once in a while. You know any of those?

HS: Not by name.

US: I see her name once in a while. She's in charge of something up there. I remember one time down in Santa Cruz Island, she was along and some other woman and Hoffmann was up on the bank. He wanted to climb up a small bank to pick these flowers. He had a little garden trowel and he could dig and pull himself up; and boy, they were so scared they turned their backs on him. They couldn't look; they were afraid he was going to fall.

His wife had been a movie actress before and she'd retired after they got married; but then after his death she went back into movies. She was Mrs. Odetts in *My Little Margie*. You remember that serial that was on for years [in 1950s] on TV?

HS: No, I didn't watch television in the early days. Do you remember what her stage name was? [Gertrude Hoffmann]

US: No, I don't. But she was comical. I would never have believed that it was her, in this serial. She was Mrs. Odetts, a little old lady that lived in this apartment; but for years she was on with this gal in the picture, I mean Margie. [Gale Storm] Her name was Margie.

HS: Couldn't be Marjorie Main or Ann Southern?

US: No.

HS: Did they have children?

US: Yes, there is a girl, I think, in Santa Barbara today.

HS: What became of his brother?

US: Bernard? I don't know. I never did meet him. There's a deal here about this Bob Ord that was in the guano business. He was also in the seal, you know the organ parts. He'd been over there shooting them with another fellow and he had the boat anchored in this harbor, and he always had parts of seals out on the racks drying because that's what they used to do, dry them. He was asleep in the shack and the Fish & Game came ashore and got him.

HS: That was up in Oregon?

US: No, that was right over here at San Miguel.

HS: Oh, it was? Did you know him? Elise tells me he was a member of the family that used to own the land where Fort Ord is.

US: Well, I know he had a brother that was pretty well-to-do here in town. I remember he used to own one of the first ice companies, Ord Ice Company. It was down on the corner of De La Vina, right where Jordano's Warehouse is today. Where the telephone office is, what's that?

HS: Don't ask me, I'm not a Santa Barbaran. Well, it's right downtown, a few streets from here. Were you born here in Santa Barbara?

US: Yes. Well, I lived in Summerland for twenty years and then I moved here twenty-some years later. I've worked out of here.

HS: What did you do during World War II?

US: Oh, I was fishing. I was fishing up around San Miguel a lot. And it was tough fishing, too, because there was no weather reports in the winter. The winter months I fished up there and the only thing you had to go by was the barometer. They wouldn't allow us to use radio and you couldn't get weather reports.

HS: But they wanted you to fish for food, I suppose? Did you have a crew? Did you ever have any adventures, ever get shipwrecked?

US: Yes, I had a crew. No, I never had any trouble.

EL: There's a lot more wrecks and things over there since we were there.

US: Yes. There was a [story] came out in some magazine. Somebody wrote about the *Cuba*. She went aground on Bennett Point; there was a load of lignum vitae logs, I think it was.

EL: Yes, that's it.

US: But somehow the word got out she had copper on board. You remember, Elise, that big navy ship came over, that surplus deal after the war, and these guys were on it? There was two rival companies that were trying to find it.

EL: Yes. I've got it down. You remember they used up all the flour? They came up from San Pedro and they got into our harbor and they didn't have any food supplies left.

US: Well, I read an article about it later on in some magazine. Somehow word got out that there was a lot of copper on there but then they came to find out there wasn't.

HS: Well, that hardwood—did it get waterlogged?

US: No, I don't think it would. Lignum vitae wouldn't float anyway. I don't think the termites or sea would affect it.

EL: You know I have that safe from the *Cuba* in my house.

US: Oh. Captain Eaton who used to be around here years ago, he got a lot of stuff off that.

HS: When was the ship wrecked, do you know?

US: It happened the same day the destroyers went aground, the *Honda*.

EL: I think it was 1927.

US: That flotilla of destroyers was headed down from Frisco to San Diego. Before they went aground up there, this *Cuba*, the name of the ship was, put out a Mayday that they were aground and needed assistance. So either one or two destroyers pulled out of that flotilla and went to assist them and that saved them.

EL: Ira Eaton bought it, didn't he?

HS: No, he just pirated it.

EL: I know, he pirated it, but then he wouldn't let the captain come back. Didn't the captain abandon ship?

US: Right, they abandoned it, and when they went aground, Ira Eaton got over there and was salvaging the food and anything that was easy to carry off. He even got a baby grand piano off of it; I don't know how he did it, but he did. He had a camp at Pelican Bay, Santa Cruz and he supplied, a lot of the camp furniture came from the *Cuba*. In them days communication wasn't too good, not radio like they have today. So the skipper and everybody abandoned ship and as long as it was abandoned he just went aboard and helped himself, and he had his crew with him. They were just taking the stuff off right and left and when the insurance adjusters and the captain came back they made the mistake of just standing alongside in the boat they were on and hollering at him to get off of the ship. Well, he was just one jump smarter than they were. As long as they weren't aboard he didn't have to get off, so he just stayed there arguing and his crew kept on loading the stuff as fast as they could. Finally the insurance adjusters and the captain decided to come aboard. When they stepped aboard he told his crew, "That's it. We're through." But they had a lawsuit. They sued him.

HS: If the captain left one person on board he couldn't have done that.

US: That's right, or left an animal. I think you can leave a dog or a cat.

HS: Who was Ira Eaton?

US: He's an old-time pirate (laughter) that's been around here. He used to have Pelican Bay. Years ago there was a resort there on Santa Cruz Island, and he used to take people over there. They used to film a lot of movies around here years ago.

HS: He had an agreement with the owners.

US: Right, the old Caires, Justin Caire. He had cabins there he could rent; he had a boat, the *Sea Wolf*, and he would take parties over.

HS: That was before the Stantons owned it.

US: Oh, yeah, way before.

HS: He's not still around?

US: Oh, no. He's been gone for years.

HS: What happened to the people from the *Cuba*? They had to be lifted off to San Miguel?

US: I don't know if they were taken off by the destroyers or some other ship. I don't remember that.

HS: John Russell must have been living there at the time.

US: Probably was. But there was no way of getting to the island from the ship. She hit Point Bennett, that's out a ways from the main island itself, so the only way they could have got ashore would have been in a lifeboat or something like that. I imagine the only communication was dot and dash. There was something else I was going to [talk about].

HS: I wonder if they felt the earthquake out on the islands.

US: That was in '25. I don't remember ever hearing anybody.

HS: Were you here then?

US: I was in Summerland. I was out at the island at the anniversary one they had a year later, and we didn't feel it. Of course, out on the ocean it has to be pretty good. The one at Summerland, I know two commercial fishermen that were fishing out of there in rowboats and they felt it strong. As a matter of fact one of them thought it was a shark or something under the boat, and he stopped and was looking underneath the boat. They were rowboats and they were headed back for the wharf. They'd gone past their nets and taken the fish out, and this other one was an old Newfoundland

and he'd been in earthquakes on ships. He knew right away and he hollered to the other guy, a few hundred feet apart, to stay away from the dock till the thing was over because he was afraid the dock might fall on them or something.

HS: Some fishermen who used to come up here from San Pedro, I guess, told me a wild story—the kind of story you hear—about a sawfish sticking its saw up through a rowboat. Did you ever have any adventures like that?

US: Yes, I had two-swordfish. As a matter of fact before I ever had it happen, a friend of mind told me what had happened with him, that he had one come through the bottom of the boat. He was out of Newport Beach and when he went back he lined the bottom with tin so it would be slippery, it would just glance off. He said the very next trip one went right through the skiff just above the tin on the side. So from then on he never pulled any—You see, the swordfish—I've done a lot of swordfishing since 1938. There's a certain amount of them that won't die right away. The main deal is you harpoon them and you have 600 to 700 feet of line on the harpoon and you throw the buoys over and they fight the buoys and that's what kills them. Once in a while you get one that don't die right away. You don't want to hang around and hang around for two or three hours; generally in an hour or an hour and a half they should die. Sometimes it take two or three hours, so you have to get in the skiff. I generally liked to get in the skiff because I figure sooner or later one might go through the boat and I'd lose my boat, where in a skiff you'd only lose a skiff. Of all the ones that have had that happen, it's always been small fish, around 150 to 180 pounders. The biggest fish I ever got was 611 pounds, cleaned. That's 150 pounds off of it, head and tail. They're not much of a problem, but these little fish, they get up on the surface and they're alive and you go to pull them and you can't get them in. And when they come after you, they come so fast that you don't see the individual fish. You see a blue streak.

HS: Do you think the fish is deliberately attacking the boat? He can see the hull. It isn't an accident?

US: Right. No, no. Because they get out there 25 to 50 feet and they go around in a big circle, pulling on the skiff; and when you feel that line go slack, you know he's coming. I've seen them. One of them that went through the skiff, he missed me one trip and the second time he got me. But all I saw was just blue streak. That's how fast they are. He came up through the bottom, went through the side, and it jammed on the gunwale on the side. I motioned to the boat to come pick me up, and he came alongside and the skiff was full of water by that time. I jumped on board, and we put a sling on its tail, the fish's tail and we lifted fish, skiff and all right aboard. We sawed the bill off and we tried everything we had on the boat to drive that out. We had to leave it in until we got to Santa Barbara and we got a chunk of ironwood and a

big sledgehammer and drove it back out. The second one, he didn't go clear through. He broke off in the runner; it was a plywood bottom on the skiff. The first one was inch redwood, and he just went through just like you'd stick a knife in some soft butter. I didn't feel it.

Then I had one go through the big boat. I harpooned him and he circled and went around through. But that I don't think was intentional, I think he was just kind of stunned and he circled around and he hit right in the seams. That night we went into some harbor there and we had three or four fish that day and we put them all on one side and got in the skiff and nailed a patch on the side of it.

I made a movie of swordfishing, a 400-foot movie of it, and I made a 400-foot movie of lobster fishing. I've got them here. I used to loan them to the schools but the schools didn't take care of them. They scratched them pretty bad. They used to want them all the time. I told them "As much as you want them, you should have a copy taken off of them." At that time you could get them for about \$65. "Oh, no, we can't afford it." And then they'd keep them for months and months and I'd have to keep calling them because I'd want to show them to somebody and I'd have a heck of a time getting them back. Then they'd scratch them. I don't know, they didn't know how to operate the projector or a bum projector or something, so I just had to quit. They're not [scratched] too bad, but they're not like they should be. They're eight millimeter.

This oil spill, I made the whole movie of this, right from the start to the finish. We had no connection with the spill. There's a picture of the tug right there. We were working on another deal for the oil companies and the oil spill came along. We had this big barge and they had us go out there. We had this 200-ton crane on it, with a big 200-foot boom and we set two cement trucks up on top of it. We had to wait two days till the gas and everything was in the right direction, keep away from it. While I was putting these cement trucks up, I had my movie camera and right out the door there it was just a boiling.

HS: You mean these were ready-mix trucks?

US: No, they were what they call cementing trucks. They're big pumps.

HS: That was when they tried to plug the holes?

US: Right, right. Then that didn't work, so then we took our barge and brought it in here off Santa Barbara and anchored it up. They had twenty-two what they call Baker tanks—they're great big testing tanks. We loaded them on board and for two days and nights they hauled mud from the wharf here out to our barge. That was 120 to

130 pounds to the cubic foot, that's how heavy the stuff was; and we loaded 4000 tons of mud onto the barge.

HS: That's special mud, fine, fine diatomaceous stuff?

US: Right. I think it comes from Mojave. Then they put barite, heavy chemicals, material to make it heavy. After we got all twenty-two Baker tanks filled, they had a big bunch of big high-pressure pumps on the barge, manifold everything up. We went out there that afternoon. We couldn't get close to A so we had to anchor over at B, and luckily they had pipeline going over to that [A]. We pumped through that pipeline. They pumped that out in just a few hours and that killed it, but then it broke loose out in that fissure. Then, we've been working with tents, all them new tents that they put out there.

HS: Oh, those dome things of plastic? That must be a terrible job. I don't know how they can do it at all, get them down and keep them in place.

US: They fabbed them on the wharf at Hueneme.

HS: How big are they?

US: They vary from 10 foot by 10 foot to 125 by 125; they varied. I towed them all up from Hueneme and we'd have our big barge anchored in position. They're made to float, with big pipe. They're actually just like a trampoline, exactly. They're floats with big pipe. They're laced all the way around with nylon and they're made out of nylon, but there's enough gas underneath and there's enough slack so they billow up a little bit, maybe ten foot in the center. And right in the center there a hose comes out and goes up. I couldn't get any pictures of that so I narrated it. I made a sketch and I got the oil flowing through it and all that.

HS: Are those things working?

US: Yes. They're working very good.

HS: What's to keep the oil from coming out around the side? They fill up, don't they?

US: No, no. It flows. There's also enough gas—oil wants to seek the surface, wants to float. It's tapered up like that (demonstrates), so any oil coming in here [bottom], it goes up and hits the material and it wants to go up. Oil won't go back down.

HS: Don't they get filled?

US: No. There's enough gas pressure there, along with oil. It forces it right on up. And it only has to go up so far. We installed under the surface a big manifold pipe. There's about six or eight tents out there and they all go into this pipe and then after it gets in

the pipe then it's sucked out of the pipe. I took movies of one of the first tents and it's belching right out of the hose. We had the hose right alongside of the barge. We just got it hooked up, getting ready for the divers to hook it up, and you could just see it belching up. It'd stop for five or ten minutes and then pretty soon it'd start belching oil.

HS: And they used the oil?

US: Oh, yeah. They just pumped it in the line and pumped it to shore.

HS: Are there any leaks now?

US: I don't know. We haven't been out there for a couple of months, so I don't know. I don't think there's much, but I think there might be a little rainbow color. We've been working for Standard Oil, well it's API which is American Petroleum Industry. They have to come up with some kind of a contraption that, if we ever have another spill, it can contain it. There's been a lot of different ideas and all of them's been a fizzle, but this one here seems to work very good. We've been working with it up off Coal Oil Point in the natural seeps up there. And in all the time we were up there, I'd say in the natural seep we got a hundred barrels of oil, just two or three hours a day. This is a device we tow. It has big wings on it, and the oil goes right into it, and then they have a boat in the back with a pump that sucks the oil up.

HS: If there's a big spill do you think you can control it?

US: Oh, yes. It would be easier to control than up here, because this up here is all weathered, it's tar and it's balls of stuff and it's spread all over. When you get out there with the kind of spill we had, it only goes with the currents and up here it's day after day and it covers a big area. I saw it so thick out there one day—we was working at the place there where that picture was taken—I had to idle the tug. I was afraid it would come on deck it was so thick. It'd gurgle like syrup, the oil did. As a matter of fact, the oil company that owns that platform there, they stopped us. We were doing a lot of welding and it got so thick there they were scared. I doubt if it would ever have caught fire but they were skeptical about it and they stopped us.

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