F. Individual Interviews

1. CHARLES BEYER

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 1, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Charles Beyer on July 1, 2003, in the living room of his home. No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Charles Beyer provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". A pause changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
floppy diskette	the diskette contains all 14 transcripts from the Uptown project
release form	City of San Diego Historic Sites Board
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	

Transcript:

CB = Charles Beyer
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Charles Beyer in his living room. The date is July 1, 2003. Mr. Beyer, can you tell me your full name, please?

CB: Charles E. Beyer.

SW: What's the "e" stand for?

CB: Edward.

SW: Thank you. The purpose of this interview is to gather information from people with a long-term or expert experience in the project area called Uptown. The recording and final documents of this oral history will become the property of the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego and will be archived at the San Diego Historical Society archives. Can you tell me when you were born?

CB: June 1, 1929.

SW: 1929. Where were you born?

CB: In Huntington Park.

SW: Huntington Park.

CB: Yeah. That's a suburb of Los Angeles.

SW: What was your father's name?

CB: Casper.

SW: Where was he born?

CB: In Germany.

SW: Germany? What region of Germany?

CB: That I don't know.

SW: What was your mother's name?

CB: Anna Boden.

SW: Where was she born?

CB: In San Diego County.

SW: Where did they meet?

CB: In Los Angeles.

SW: Do you have brothers and sisters?

CB: I have a sister.

SW: Is she older or younger?

CB: She is older.

SW: What is her name?

CB: Florence.

SW: How did you get to the San Diego area?

CB: My father died and I was still a baby. My mother's mother, my grandmother, had a house here in San Diego and nobody was living in it and so she decided well, she would probably rather come to San Diego and move into that house. And so that's what she did. Then eventually, my grandmother and two of my mother's sisters came down and moved into the same house which is at 4520 Campus Avenue over in the University Heights area. And that's where I was raised, in that neighborhood.

SW: How long did you live in that home?

CB: Oh, 50 years maybe.

SW: Fifty years? I think you have an expert...

CB: Maybe a little more, yeah.

SW: ...and long term association with this neighborhood. Can you describe this house a little bit to me?

CB: Yeah. It was a single story and it had a very huge attic. There wasn't access to the attic, although there were some windows in it and then later on, when I got older, I'd get up there and look around and then store stuff there. But it was a three bedroom and it had a living room and a dining room and the dining room had a serving area that opened into the kitchen and there was a fireplace and it was standard lot size, I think 100 x 50. And my grandmother kept chickens and rabbits.

SW: Did she? Is that house still there?

CB: No, the house isn't there.

SW: What replaced it?

CB: A six-unit condominium.

SW: I bet the house was cuter. Tell me about these animals that she raised. Did she have them in pens or how did she...?

CB: Yeah. And she raised them mostly for food. She would collect the eggs and eat the rabbits. When they got to frying size, why she'd kill them and butcher them and everything, and we'd eat them. And then the same way with chickens. The chickens were mainly for eggs and then as they got older, they became stewing hens or something like that. But every once in awhile too, she had an abundance of them, and we would have fried chicken.

SW: Were you involved in the butchering?

CB: Yes, I was.

SW: And plucking?

CB: Yeah. I didn't like that part. That was too boring for any boy.

SW: What did she do with the leftover parts?

CB: Just throw them away.

SW: So did you have garbage collection?

CB: Yeah. There was a garbage collection and a trash collection once a week of each. Thinking back to it, I think [collecting] the garbage was probably done by a hog farmer or something. Because he had a different truck. We the trash went into one kind of can, the garbage went into another. But that's only speculation.

SW: Do you know what kind of chickens they were?

CB: Yeah. They were Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island reds.

SW: Do you know where she got them?

CB: Buy them from the feed store.

SW: How about the rabbits? Where did they come from?

CB: I think she bred them herself. There is the old saying about rabbits. I think every once in a while she'd buy a buck. Or a friend would give her one. There was a lot of rabbit growing in San Diego in those days and some of the people, my aunts and uncles, they grew them but they saved the rabbit skins and they would hang [the skins] up to dry in their garage, but my grandmother never really got into that. And

so I don't know if that was profitable or not. There must've been some money to be made from the skins. My grandmother also grew a garden every year.

SW: Tell me about the garden. How big was it, and what did she raise?

CB: Well, we were talking about a 50 x 100 lot. So let's say a quarter of that. Because there were the chickens and the rabbits way in the back in the garage

back there in the shed. And the shed was interesting too. I'll get to that in a minute. Then every spring she would spade that garden area by hand with a spade. My mother wasn't into vegetables. She was into flowers. So on the side of the house, my mother always did the flowers. But my grandmother was more of a practical person and so she would grow all the food. There were radishes, corn, a lot of string beans, always tomatoes, turnips and carrots. And then there were several fig trees back there. And there was a guava tree and an orange tree, but those were there all year round. And she would [preserve food by canning].

SW: I was going to ask if she canned any of that.

CB: And that is where the shed came in. And so she would make her own sauerkraut too. What she would do is she had a big 10-gallon crock. In fact, she had two of them. They were about, I'd say maybe 15 inches in diameter and maybe 25 inches high. I don't know if you've seen these.

SW: Oh yeah. Yes.

CB: And she would throw the cabbage...all I remember about that, she used to shred it and she'd put it in there and she'd put salt in it or something and then she had a wooden board that would just sit on it and she'd put that on it with a rock weight. And then, of course, my sister, my aunt and me, well when the sauerkraut was ready, we'd sneak in there, you know, and take some.

We had friends that lived a lot of places in the county. We had some friends that lived out in Santee and they had olive trees, so if we had a chance or we got out there, we'd go out there in my mother's old Chevy. Of course, we all had to pick olives and we'd come back and she'd throw the olives into one of those other crocks. And then of course, the pay off was when they were ready. And we'd sneak in and get those too.

SW: Did you harvest the olives green or black?

CB: Black.

SW: Did you ever pit them or did your grandmother process them with the pits still in?

CB: With the seeds in. There was no such thing as pitted olives in those days. I don't care where you bought them. But years later, I started curing olives and I used to get them in Balboa Park. This was probably started about '82. And I started walking as exercise and I used to walk into Balboa Park and I saw this olive grove down there just at Upas, where Upas crosses over 163. There is an olive grove there. And so I started picking them. And then I did some research and found a suitable recipe and so I started curing the own olives. But I didn't have a big crock then. I would use jars, gallon jars or something like

this. It took awhile to get the technique down. But anyway, the olives turned out really good. And then all of a sudden, I realized my nephew has an olive tree and he's living out in Santee and so I looked at those olives out there and they were huge. And I said, "This is where I'll be getting my olives from now on." These were jumbo. They cut that olive tree down to make room for a spa.

SW: Oh!

CB: But anyway, that was the only experience I had making the olives. But of course, they were never pitted either. Didn't have a pitting machine or anything like that.

But then another thing my grandmother used to do, she would can a lot of stuff. Now if friends have peach trees or berries or apricots or anything, when they came in season, they would all exchange stuff and she would can stuff. She had this one part of a wall in [the shed] like a cupboard and there were all these quart Mason jars with different fruits, string beans and just all kinds of [stuff].

SW: So when you went into that little shed, you had one wall with this storage area. What was the rest of the inside of the shed like?

CB: Just storage and there were some tools hanging around in there and it was an old, old building. There was a lot of my grandfather's stuff in there. He had died much earlier and I never knew my grandfather. But I still got some of his things. I've still got his saw, and some hammers and things.

SW: How did your grandparents get here to San Diego?

CB: My grandmother is part Indian. And so her family goes all the way back to whenever Indians were here.

SW: Are you talking about the Native Americans here in San Diego? She was Kumayaay?

CB: Yes. And she was born in Vinyard. Her mother was Indian and she was born in what they...the records say in Vineyard. Now, I don't now if you've ever heard of Vineyard, but it's just east of the Wild Animal Park. Have you ever heard of Boden Canyon?

SW: Yeah.

CB: Okay. She married a Boden. So what happened was there was a wanderer, a Boden, a William Boden and he had been wandering all over and I guess he wasn't satisfied with home or anything and so he told them to come to California. So there was John Boden, his brother and three of the sisters came to California. There were two unmarried sisters. One of them was a widow and when she came to California. She had three children. One died on the way over and there were two survivors. So [all] they settled into what is now Boden Canyon. And eventually, one of them married a fellow by the name of Gliebe. So he had a place up there. And the other one, the younger, I don't know much about her. I remember they all lived in the same area, you know, in the 1890s. A couple of miles away. But that's how they got here and how it became known as Boden Canyon.

And so I've been in touch with the San Dieguito River Park people and also the Department of Fish and Game. And it was about three or four years ago, the Department of Fish and Game bought the entire

Boden Canyon from a developer that wanted to turn it into something. And he gave up on it because there wasn't any infrastructure for it. And thank God, because everybody up there is happy about that because it is just the way it was a hundred years ago.

SW: You've talked about your grandmother quite a bit, but I don't know what her name is. What was her name?

CB: Nellie. Her married name was Boden and (before that) it was Renaldt. Now whether it was Renalt or Renaldt, I'm not sure. There's always been a controversy in the records because in some places, it is spelled A-L-D-T and then it is A-L-T. But she was born in what is now Boden Canyon. And they called it Vineyard, which would be the north end of Boden Canyon. And so were her brothers and sisters.

SW: And then she married your grandfather...

CB: John Boden.

SW: And they moved down into this area?

CB: Well, first they moved to Poway. Because about the time they moved there, some of the kids should have already been in school and the Germans, they [want] kids that are educated. They need the discipline, you know. And so that's why they moved out of there, because there was no school there, in the mountains. And so they lived there, I don't know how many years and my best estimation is that they moved out of there just shortly after 1900. And by this time, there were five children and some of them were of school age and some weren't. How long they lived there, I don't know. But they went to school and they met other people who [went] to the same school and eventually, they all ended up in San Diego here and they were lifetime friends, even into their very old ages because the first place they went when they came to San Diego is what is now 25th and Market, 25th and Imperial. It used to be M Street and then the next street was N Street and they moved to 26th and N Street where they lived. When they first came here they moved to Julian Avenue.

SW: What is your earliest memory of living in that house with your grandma?

CB: My grandmother took care of me and I do remember she would take me everywhere and I remember we'd go to a church [near] there and they would give us canned foods or something like that too. Actually, it would be like they do now. You go to churches and people give freebies and that's what this was. And I know one day they gave her a fish. She brought that home right away and that's what we ate for dinner. We ate that fish. She cooked it right away.

SW: Did you not regularly have fish? Was it unusual for you?

CB: Well, we were Catholic and so at that time, you could not eat meat on Friday. But it seemed like we always had fish or something that was non-meat. And I don't really remember the details. I guess there were local fishermen that had this fish and I don't know, they might have bought it up.

My mother told me about the canneries. Before they moved up to Campus Street there, they were living around 25th and Imperial. My mother, her sisters and all her friends worked at the cannery. When the fishing boats would come in, they would start up the cannery. And then when the steam was up, the guy

would blow the whistle and everybody that worked down there knew it was time to come to work and that whistle might go off at midnight, or it might go off at noon or at anytime, depending on when the fish were there. And they'd go down there and they'd can until the fish was all canned.

SW: Well, that's pretty neat.

CB: Of course, that's a little different area than we're talking about.

SW: Yeah, but still, it supports this neighborhood. Tell me about school. What do you remember about when you first when to school and what was the name of the school?

CB: I went to kindergarten at Alice Birney. And Alice Birney is still there, but it was a different building. And one of the main things I remember about it was one of my aunts was always taking me there because I was five or six or something like that. And she wasn't in school anymore, she had already graduated from high school, but there weren't that many jobs, so she would go out and would always take me to school.

Then the other thing I remember about was that one time my mother insisted that I wear long underwear and short pants. And I just did not want that, and she said, "Well you can roll then up." And then I'd take a couple of steps and they would roll down and she looked at that and she finally thought, "I guess he's right," or something like that.

SW: Were they the red kind?

CB: No, they were just long underwear and short pants but I don't know why [she] wanted me to wear the long underwear at that time.

SW: Yes, that would be embarrassing. Do you remember any of your teachers from Alice Birney School?

CB: No.

SW: How about classmates?

CB: No, I don't remember any of those. I don't think there were any on our block that were in kindergarten at that time. Now when I went to the first grade, I went to St. John's and then I went there all through until the eighth grade there.

SW: Can you tell me anything about St. John's? Teachers and classmates?

CB: Yeah. I still am in touch with some of the people I went to school with there.

SW: And who are they?

CB: Well, there is, I'm trying to think. John Early. He was probably as near as my recollection was, from the first grade all the way through high school. I haven't seen him in a couple of years, but I know he is still around. And there was Jesse Thompson. And then there was Jack McDougall, was my very good

friend, but he died several years ago. We went all through high school and I was best man at his wedding. You know, those friendships, they last for a long time. Of course, I remember a lot of the names, but I'm just trying to name the ones that are still living.

And then later on, there were other kids in the neighborhood in the lower grades, some older, a grade ahead of me or something, (who) eventually (moved) into the neighborhood. So you form these little groups. Neighborhoods.

SW: Sure.

CB: And then as you get older, then your friendship umbrella expands, you know. When I started high school, why it (expanded) all over the city. I went to St. Augustine High School. And so there were kids from Tijuana even, among the ones whose parents had money.

SW: When you were in the grade school then, do you remember any stories about anything that happened on the school or at the school? What was it like? What were your teachers like?

CB: Well, they were very strong on discipline. They were nuns and there was very little nonsense allowed. But you know, looking back, I wouldn't trade it for anything because kids need discipline. I guess they understood that in those days, more so than now.

There was always a story of the haunted house right up the street from school. And then, I got to talking with my sister many years later. My sister was several grades ahead of me, you see, and she was saying there was an old lady in there and that old lady had eventually moved down to some other part of town and that old lady, she said that old lady chased her or something. So I don't know whether that's true or not or anything, but this house was a two-story house and it was right up the street from St. John's School, next to a laundry. It was on Normal [Avenue], almost up to Lincoln. There was this big house, two-story house and it was rickety. I know one time, I don't know what happened and there was a rumor something would happen. And after school, every kid, I honestly believe, went up to that house and so all of a sudden why, we were all around there and somebody yelled, "Here comes Sr. Delphine!" And we just scattered. We did not want to get caught by Sr. Delphine. She was, you might say, the disciplinarian. But come to find out, she was a lovely person. But she kept that image. She had us believing she had a spanking machine hidden away.

SW: Oh my gosh. So did you ever find out what the basis of the rumor that this house was haunted was?

CB: No, there was an old lady living in it and they said she used to come around peeking out at people and in my recollection; it was really in very bad condition. So I don't know what ever happened.

SW: Can you tell me anything about some of the teachers that you had? You were just mentioning Sr. Delphine. Any others?

CB: Yeah. There were several others there.

SW: What did they teach?

CB: Everything.

SW: Did they have a special subject?

CB: No. There were four classrooms, so there were two grades to each classroom and one would teach first and second and another would teach third and fourth grades, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth. And Sr. Delphine taught seventh and eighth and she also was the choir teacher. She did the choir. Now, she also, you know you go to a school now and you see these little girls with the red sweaters and the signs, the crossing guards? When in those days, it was all little boys. Little girls wouldn't be caught doing things like that. They didn't want to. Sr. Delphine decided it would be a good idea if we have one there at St. John's at Lincoln and Normal. So, of course, being a disciplinarian type, everything had to be just so so.

Also there were a lot of freebies where the kids participated on Saturdays. Usually they would open up one of the theatres downtown and invite them all in. Well, you get 500 kids going down there. We'd all gather at San Diego High School lawn and we'd all march, maybe down to the Spreckels Theatre, or the Fox Theatre.

SW: Oh really?

CB: And fill up the balconies. St. John's boys all had to wear white pants, In addition to our red sweaters. And there she was. She was out there. She'd be looking at us and see some kid with a little mark on his white pants and she'd get her chalk out and she'd cover it with chalk.

SW: Oh really? Did you wear uniforms to school?

CB: Yeah.

SW: You did. What was it like?

CB: They were mostly for girls. Boys didn't have a real strict uniform, but we had dark pants and a lighter shirt or something and the girls, my sister could tell you about middies. I don't know if you ever heard the term "middy". My aunt and I can remember them getting ready for school. They had these middies they had to wear. So you need to talk to some of them about those.

SW: Did you have requirements for hairstyles?

CB: No. Well, everybody had the same hairstyle. All the boys did, anyway. They were all pretty short.

SW: Then you moved on into high school. Can you talk about that a little bit? What was the difference?

CB: Well, I didn't know where I was going to go to high school because St. John's went to the eighth grade and my next move would have been to Horace Mann Junior High School, which was right here next to Alice Birney. And that would be the ninth grade and then from the ninth grade, I'd go to San Diego High School. And so one day, all the boys from St. John's, we went over to St. Augustine High School to take an examination. So we had this examination. I guess it was an entrance examination and a scholarship thing. And they fed us lunch and in the afternoon, we played different ball games, and then they showed us around the school and everything. Eventually when they determined some of the boys

won scholarships. All the smarter ones. In fact, my friend that I was telling you about from the first grade all the way through, he won a scholarship for one year.

And so anyway, when I came home and I was talking with my mother about that and she said, "I can't afford to send you there." I just didn't give it anymore thought. I was 13, almost 14, you see. So a couple of days later, she came home from work and she said "You come down to the laundry and talk to Mr. Wetzel." He was the guy that owned and ran the whole laundry. And so I did and he gave me a job. Of course, I had to go get a work permit and all this. This was my first experience at anything like that. He hired me for 40 cents an hour. And I was working eight hours a day all through the summer and so I made enough money there to pay for that year's tuition and paid for the books. So that's how I went St. Augustine High School.

SW: And did you do that for all the years of high school?

CB: Yeah. Within the next couple years, I made enough money for the whole four years. I saved...of course my mother insisted that I save. Because otherwise, you know...and there wasn't all that to buy, either. Because this is right in the middle of World War II. You couldn't buy hardly anything. They weren't manufacturing anything. No bicycles or anything like that.

SW: Did you have a bank account that you were saving the money in?

CB: Yep.

SW: Which bank was it?

CB: Bank of America in Hillcrest, and then starting buying bonds too. So that's how that went. And then, of course, I had never had that kind of money before. I had worked, you know, little jobs, selling magazines, things like that and always had change. But I never had an allowance. My mother didn't have any. In fact, I had to help her. In fact, that was part of rules. With us getting a little bit, we'd have to contribute something if we worked.

SW: What did your sister do?

CB: Well, she was working mostly housework, domestic work. There wasn't much work. This was when she was still going to school. And then, of course, she got married really young. I think she was just 17 going on 18 or something like that when she got married.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about Wetzel's dry cleaning store?

CB: Laundry. The original French laundry and it's...

SW: It wasn't dry cleaning? It was laundry.

CB: Yeah. You see, in those days, there were a lot of laundries around. And so I don't know how many people they had working in there...50 or 60, something like that.

SW: What did they do? How was it set up inside?

CB: There were walk-in customers and then they had the drivers. The drivers would go around. They had customers and they'd pick up the laundry and leave the clean laundry and they'd go through a regular route and so they would bring their laundry in and when it came in there, it would get marked. They'd put a laundry mark on it. And if it was already laundry marked, why then they'd make a tally sheet for it and the sheets would go one direction and the clothes would go another and socks would go here and they actually kept track of it all and then when it was all done, it would all come together and they would put it into bags. Not bags, but wrap it up.

SW: In paper?

CB: Yeah. Paper. And maybe shirts and things like that, you could get them folded or on hangers. But most of them were folded.

SW: How did they have the inside of the laundry set up? Did they have washing machines?

CB: Well, the washing machines there were huge. They might be as long as this room is here and when it would stop, why they could open up different parts of it and put clothes in it and then close it and then they could run the water in there with the soap, feed the soap into it and then drain it out and rinse it and then they'd have extractors, pretty much like what you have here for drying your clothes on your washing machine, but they were probably 8 feet in diameter. And they would spin.

SW: A spinner?

CB: Put the clothes in there and spin them. And, of course, they really were packed in there and any guy that worked in there for any length of time, especially the old timers, they were really, their upper body was really well developed because they were pulling the stuff out of there and that was packed in there. Even in the washing machine.

SW: Anything with water is heavy.

CB: Yeah.

SW: Did they starch? And iron the clothing?

CB: Yeah. Everything.

SW: So how much did you get paid?

CB: 40 cents an hour. But I couldn't work there around machinery. That was part of the regulations. You couldn't work around machinery until you were 16. And so I worked in the call office and I'd work maybe in the marking room or something like that. And then there was always the maintenance. Maybe I would help the maintenance engineer sometimes. Maybe he needed something painted and so he's set me up and I'd paint that. But most of it was usually in the call office where customers would come in. They'd run out and grab the ladies' bag of laundry and bring it in so she wouldn't have to lift and then run out and carry it out for her. So yeah, it was service. Complete service.

SW: How many years did you your mother work for this company?

CB: Oh gosh, probably 15 years maybe. Something like that. But she had worked at other laundries too.

SW: And what did she do?

CB: She did final shirts and ladies' stuff. Household stuff went one direction and they had big old "mangles" they called them and they'd feed sheets into this thing and there were these rollers and a sheet would come out the other end. It was all dry and there would be two women there and they'd fold them up. And towels, they would go through like a tumbler and tumble dry. But they were much bigger and they'd come out that. But then clothes, shirts, they had to go a different way and so the shirts, they had a regular assembly line. The first thing was they would have a machine there and it would put the shirt on and it would do the back of the shirt. Everything else was hanging on the side. Then as it would go and they would put the front on and then when that was done, where the sleeve would come on these big metals things. They were hot and they'd just hang on there and they would dry there on that with the starch and everything. And then the final finish, which my mother did a lot of, would be to iron the collar and cuffs and make sure they were all nice and smooth.

SW: Did she or they replace buttons if they were missing?

CB: Yes. They had a seamstress there, a full time seamstress and that's all she did, was repair little holes and things like that.

SW: That's quite a story. Go ahead and describe what happened to the actual garments. Shirts?

CB: Well, the shirts had a standard fold for all of them. Regardless of the size, they would fold them and they would put them into a light cardboard box. They'd stack them in there and then they'd put a lid on them and then of course, that would get tied and there would be a tag on it or something. And then pants, well they would just be folded like you put them nowadays in your dresser drawers or something. Underwear and stuff like that all went to the tumblers. What they called the "tumblers." Tumble dry. And they were just folded standard and they were stacked into another kind of package and there was paper wrapped around it. The towels tumbled dry, the same with them. Sheets and pillowcases, they were folded into stacks in a standard size and paper was wrapped around them and they were tied with string too.

SW: Did they launder delicate things like silk?

CB: Yes, they did, and that was where my mother worked. Around there. They did curtains and you know curtains, when you have the main body of the curtain and usually around the edges you go the frilly stuff. They even had a little machine there that they could feed it through there and they would kind of go like this and put the little crinkles in them, you know...

SW: Ruffles?

CB: The ruffles, yeah. There were two pieces of metal that were hot and go together and then of course, they got special handling too. They'd all get put into a box, cardboard box. So everything had its way. Then they also had what the called "rough dried." You could take it in there and say, "I don't want any of

it finished or anything, just put it all in there and dry it and give it to me. So that was just dried. It wasn't folded or anything. It was up to you to take care of it after that.

SW: Right. Do you recall graduating from high school?

CB: Yes.

SW: Did you have a prom or anything like that?

CB: Yeah. We had a prom.

SW: Who did you go with?

CB: Oh, I forget her name. Oh my gosh, I can't think of her name anymore.

SW: That's okay. Tell me what you did on that evening. What was it like?

CB: Well, first we went to dinner and then from dinner, we would go the prom. And usually, the way we set it up for dinner, you broke up into different groups of guys, you know, or something. Now me and a couple others, we hired a taxi and of course, we went searching for weeks looking for a place to buy an orchid. Because we decided we wanted our dates to have orchids. And this is what we did for a long time. Right after school, we'd go looking for orchids. And we were trying to find the best deal. So we found a guy down on Reynard Way. I don't know if you know where that is. And so anyway, that's where we got our orchids. And so I don't even know who went and got them. One of them went and got them and it seemed to work out okay.

And so when I went to get my date and the guy I was going with, we were going to get some more of the group and here he was and he wasn't dressed and he was helping his dad put in a heater. A hot water heater. And I said, "You gotta get going here! The girls are gonna be waiting!" Here he was sweating and I was all dressed in a tuxedo and all this, all ready to go and so anyway – we made it.

We went to dinner and I think the whole class went to dinner at the same place there. And then from there we went to the prom. No, we went to dinner at the El Cortez, the Sky Room, and then we had the prom there. I don't know where it was. Some other room, and then we went and there were some after proms. And the after prom, one of them was way out in Spring Valley. So we went to that. I don't know, it seemed like about that time, why the sun was coming up and we were all pooped. To me, it wasn't all that good. I expected it to be...but you just had to do it.

SW: So it was sort of a let down in a way?

CB: Not a let down, but it just wasn't...it was just supposed to be something really special, which it was, but it wasn't as special as I expected it should be.

The one thing, though, that I did remember, all the boys from the graduating class at one time just before graduation, we were invited over to the bishop's house. The bishop of San Diego. So we'd go over there and so he had a little chapel there, so we had Mass. But in his quarters there and we were there for that and for breakfast. And this was a tradition that had been going on for I don't know how many years. He

had all these Cuban cigars. Boxes, yep. So of course, we were supposed to be men. So we had these cigars and we'd be smoking them and so we'd put three or four of them in [our pockets] and then part of the tradition was we'd come back to campus smoking cigars.

SW: Oh my gosh. The men about town!

CB: All the other lower classmen could see us, because we had to go through this for three or four years, watching them come back from the bishop's breakfast.

SW: Had you ever smoked before that?

CB: Oh yeah. We were smoking...we weren't supposed to or allowed to smoke on campus. That's why we went back. But we would run off of campus and sneak off and smoke. And I found out recently, that some of the guys were going another direction than we were into a canyon to smoke or someplace. No there was probably too much smoking going on in those days. I'm sorry I ever took it up. But I did quit smoking after about 20 years. I started smoking when I was about 15. And I smoked until I was about 35. It was the worst thing I ever did in my life, was take up smoking.

SW: Do you remember why you started?

CB: Everybody else was. Not everybody, but most of us.

SW: At that time, was smoking was considered unhealthy?

CB: Oh it was. Oh, yes. We were told in chemistry by all the teachers there. They would say, "Smoking is bad for you. It's not good for you." And so it's not this business, "Well, I didn't know that it was bad for me." We knew it was bad for us. But we did it. Of course, there's a lot of things we knew that were bad for us but we did them too. So that's a strange thing. I think it's a cop out when people say, "Well, so-and-so died and he didn't know any better." He knew damn well, because it was known generally all over.

SW: Did you go to college?

CB: Yes.

SW: Tell me about that.

CB: Well, I went to work for a long time and then ended up in the Army for awhile. And then about that time, I got to thinking, "I need to do something. I gotta go on to college." And so that's what I did. I decided to go on to college. I went on and I started through the local colleges here and I eventually graduated from San Diego State.

SW: So which of the local colleges did you go to?
CB: City College. Mesa College. Southwestern. Eventually...even after I graduated from State, I still continued on to college. So I went to just about all of them. I never went to Grossmont College.

SW: What were you taking? What subject matter were you studying?

CB: I majored in physics and minored in mathematics.

SW: And what did you use that for?

CB: Well, I went to work at North Island for the Navy. They have a large aircraft repair facility over there. They've got laboratories and do research and a lot of things over there, so I got into a lot of different areas in my career there.

SW: How long did you work there?

CB: Oh, let me see. Twenty-some years, I guess. I'm not sure.

SW: What was your title?

CB: I had several. Process engineering was one. Another was reliability and...oh gosh. They always gave us titles. New titles.

SW: What was the end product of what it was that you were working on?

CB: Airplanes. They would overhaul airplanes. The main thing was they'd come there, they'd go through a whole process of overhauling. And they do most everything for them there. They have everything from plating shops to machine shops to even new construction material, you know, composites and different things like that. And so they had to be examined and had to be repaired. Just to keep them battle ready.

SW: Which planes were they? Do you remember the type of planes that you worked on?

CB: Well, when I was over there, there was the S2F which was for observation and then there was the F-8, the F-4, the F-14, and the F-18. Those were all fighter and interceptors. And that's, towards the last, that's what we were doing mostly over there were fighter and interceptors. Some of the other types of aircraft were C2 and (other) aircraft. Helicopters. Oh God, I forgot about those. We had a bunch of helicopters. H53s, H46s. They still have them in Iraq.

End of Side 1

Tape 1, Side 2

SW: This is side two of the interview with Charles Beyer on July 1, 2003. And he was talking about working on airplanes and helicopters as an engineer.

CB: Yeah.

SW: Do you recall any of people you worked with or anything that was unique or interesting?
CB: Oh, I'm in touch with them all, a lot of them right now that they are retired and so we have a lot of things in common but there were an awful lot of retirees from North Island that are around this area.

SW: Did you ever get married?

CB: No.

SW: Your sister married, you said?

CB: Yes.

SW: And you have nephews and nieces?

CB: Yeah.

SW: Do you do things with them?

CB: Well, only as an uncle.

So anyway, I can tell you about my first experience at North Island. It was many years ago. This was when I was working at the laundry and it was in 1945 and the war was just about over. In fact, it was already over in Europe. And I noticed the year before a lot of kids from high school went to work as summer aides at North Island. And so I went and some of my friends from my class, we decided, well, we're going to apply this year. So I did and they said, "Okay, you can come to work on your birthday, because you can't work here until you're 16." And my birthday was the first of June. So that's the day I started to work over at North Island as a summer aide. And so that was a great experience that year too because they put us through a little week-long training period and we did learn how to rivet and safety wire bolts and different things for aircraft, you know. And then after about a week, they'd put us out into the different shops.

Well by this time, there were a lot of veteran sailors coming back from the Pacific that had been over there, done their tour and so they were experienced aircraft people. So what do they do with them? They put them to work with all the civilians and everybody was working together over here at North Island in all of these shops. We had a lot of war stories to listen to that were interesting, you know.

And as a matter of fact, my cousin was over there too and he lived just a couple of blocks from us, him and his wife and he had a small child. I don't know if he had one or two by this time, but anyway, he had been overseas for several years and so all of a sudden, here comes VJ Day and so my cousin, he says, "You go tell Marilyn I don't think I can get off tonight, because they are holding some of us here." And so okay. Marilyn was his wife, so I got off work and you had to take that nickel snatcher across the bay, you know. And so I did and I went on home and I stopped by to tell her, here he was home already and he said, "Oh, the old man let us all off."

And so by this time, things were really beginning to build up downtown San Diego. So me and my friends from the neighborhood, high school friends, all high school friends, we decided, well we're going to go downtown to celebrate. But that was chaos down there! Broadway from the bay all the way up to Twelfth was solid people and it spilled over for a couple of blocks, north and south. And you could hardly move. There were so many people down there celebrating on VJ Day.

SW: What were they doing?

CB: Just celebrating, hollering, yelling. Just out. It was a huge release of energy is what it was, really.

SW: Were there a lot of police out?

CB: I didn't see. The only time I saw police was when somebody says you can buy firecrackers down in Chinatown, so me and my friend when down there and we were in there, the place was packed and I had just gotten up there to buy some firecrackers, the police came in and they closed the guy down. I never did get my firecrackers.

SW: Oh! So were firecrackers illegal at that time?

CB: Yeah. They were illegal, had already been illegal for awhile. But before that, when I was growing up, firecrackers were legal throughout San Diego and you could buy them at just about any store or wherever.

SW: So you set off firecrackers on the Fourth of July?

CB: Yeah, we did that. As a matter of fact, there was a kid at our school at St. John's there, he had those sparklers and he had a pocketful of them and he was doing that and one of the sparks went in and ignited them in his pocket. Well he was crippled for life after that. But he's lucky he didn't burn up completely. There were those things that are red hot.

SW: So they caught his pants on fire?

CB: Yeah, well they...you've seen sparklers work, haven't you?

SW: Yes.

CB: Well, when you have a bunch of them and they go off, they generate a lot of heat. He could have lost a leg. But I guess in our neighborhood, we were lucky because nobody got hurt. Not that we were careless, but we weren't all that careful either.

SW: Yeah, well you were kids. What else did you do for the Fourth of July?

CB: Well, usually the family would get together and...I'm trying to think. Oh, I remember one time there were some cousins of mine. They came down and they lived with us, grandma and with us, for about a year and a half. And there were some family problems or something and that's why they were down here and so we got whooping cough and on the Fourth of July...you know, in those days, they came around and they hung a quarantine sign on the front door. "Quarantine." And so you couldn't go to school, you couldn't do this, you couldn't do that. Well school was already out for the summer.

So here come all the relatives down from Los Angeles and different places and they would say, "Where can we go to celebrate the Fourth of July?" They said, "Well, we'll go out to Camp Kearny." The old Camp Kearny out there where Miramar now is. There's nobody there. So that's where we went out. And we celebrated the Fourth of July there and there weren't a lot of people there. This was before World War II. This is '38 or '39. Yeah, about '38 maybe, something like that. And so that's what we did there and all these people. And of course, the reason they came, they all had kids too, because their kids had already had whooping cough, you see, and they couldn't get whooping cough, so that's why they went there. But

then all the kids in the neighborhood had whooping cough so they'd come over and play with us, but we couldn't leave.

SW: Was there anything left at Camp Kearny when you were out there?

CB: There were just walkways. It was formed in World War I, as I recall and they had mostly tents. And where they had the tents, they had rocks placed around there and they painted them white and there were no tents there, but you could see where they had been and it was pretty well open to anybody who wanted to go there. Nobody there to chase you off. And it was after World War II that the Navy took it over and put Miramar out there, the air station out there. But that was one of them and then another one, we went up to, this was just before World War II, we went up to Boden Canyon.

That's another time too. There was a lot of stuff there and that was the first time I had ever been in Boden Canyon and there were some people living there and they had two sons, two boys and a bunch of goats and they were living the in old Gliebe place. The house was there and so I don't know how many carloads of us went there. Not only that, but there were friends of the family too. And of course a lot of my grandmother's children would come down from Los Angeles for the holidays and spend it out here, Christmas and things like that. So it was a big get together and that's where we ended up, out there.

I remember there was water running in the creek and the guy had built a cable car that would cross the creek and he had these big stanchions up there and then you had cable and you would crawl up there and get in the cable car and pull yourself across the creek. But at this time of the year, the Fourth of July, it was dry. You dig in the ground a little bit and there was water. In the winter, there would be a lot of water coming down through there, because there weren't the dams upstream they have now.

But anyway, what I remember mostly about that, these boys were taking care of the goats and there were a couple of us in our group that were the same age and of course, we'd start playing together right away. Well, the boys they said, "C'mon, we're gonna milk these goats." So they started milking the goats and the first thing I know, they were showing us how to squirt goat's milk. And you know who they were aiming at.

SW: You.

CB: Yeah.

SW: Did you celebrate Halloween?

CB: Yeah.

SW: What did you do for Halloween?
CB: Trick or Treat.

SW: You did? You actually went out and asked for treats?

CB: Yes.

SW: And where did you go, around the neighborhood?

CB: Just around the neighborhood there. There were certain places. We knew, we learned and even up until the teens, we knew where to go, because there was one lady who always baked cookies. And they were always hot. And there was another guy who always had pomegranates. He had a pomegranate tree and I always liked to go there and get a pomegranate. My mother didn't like it because they stained everything, you know. So we would go to these certain places there and just trick or treat.

SW: Did you do tricks?

CB: No. Nobody ever did tricks. No. It was too easy to go onto the next place.

SW: How did you celebrate Christmas?

CB: With family. We'd get together. I'm talking before World War II and into the end of World War II. We'd all get together at grandma's where I lived, or sometimes we went up to L.A. I remember one time we went up to Los Angeles with very good friends of the family. They were the Dawsons. As a matter of fact, my aunt married a Dawson. And the Dawsons had a lot of boys and they were living in Los Angeles in the Belvedere Gardens area. We went up there, and Jess Dawson borrowed a truck from his brother-in-law. Grandma Boden and he sat in the cab and all the rest of us had to sit in the back going up to Los Angeles. He put furniture in there like this, you know, to sit. And of course, to the kids it didn't make any difference there. And so there was a truckload and I mean literally a truckload of us who went up there because we were having this Christmas party up there. So we went up there and that's what we did. We had that Christmas party. We all came back in that truck.

SW: How about other holidays? Did you do anything for New Year's?

CB: Yeah, we'd always do something. There was always a lot of hollering and yelling maybe, but that was about it.

SW: Did you stay up until midnight?

CB: Yeah, yeah. That was part of the tradition to do that but never anything destructive or anything. And another thing, you see, when we'd get together for a holiday, whether it be Memorial Day, Fourth or July, Thanksgiving or whatever, it seemed like most of the time it was over at grandma's. Because they'd come down from L.A. The Dawsons were always there too. So what you happen is we'd get into one of these big hide-and-seek games and I mean adults would get into it too. And we would be all over the neighborhood hiding and stuff.

SW: Were there any particular interesting landmarks or places like that in the area that are not here now?

CB: Well, there have been a lot of changes. The original bridge that went, that now goes across Washington Street, is metal. It used to be wood and of course, that'll never come back again. But they tore it down. It was gone for many, many years. That was a way to get across and that was right there at the end of the street where the original French laundry was. Right there. I don't know if you're familiar with that area over there. You know where the Ralph's Market is over there? In that little shopping center there? Well, that's where the original French laundry was, was in there. And that bridge, it's a metal bridge now, it goes across over to Tenth Avenue over there and other places there. And that's where a lot of people would walk across that from there instead of walking all the way up and around. So that was

one. And then, of course, there's a lot of stuff in this city. Mission Cliff Gardens used to be there, it's not there anymore.

SW: Like what?

CB: There were some walls and like a – I don't know what you'd call it. It would be like an outside patio with a semi-covered area. And at the end of World War II, they subdivided that and people were buying houses in there, or property in there and they eventually put houses. Are you familiar where this is?

SW: Well, go ahead and describe it.

CB: At Park Boulevard and Adams is where we are talking about. And now, if you go just east of that, it's where the Trolley Barn Park is. There's one that's missing. The Trolley Barn. That's missing. That's a landmark that's missing.

SW: Did you ride the trolley?

CB: Oh yeah. All the time. That's the way we went to school. There were no school buses.

SW: Oh really?

CB: No. There weren't any school busses. The only places there were school buses were in the Grossmont Union High School District and the Sweetwater Union High School District. I never saw a school bus except in those places and North County. If you had to take transportation, you could buy a student pass. And it was good until 4:00 in the afternoon or something. And that's the way you would go do school.

SW: So what was like riding on that trolley?

CB: Oh, it was just routine, but there were a lot of things that...well, lemme tell you. Here's something too. I remember one year, I don't know what year it was, maybe 1938 or '37, not sure, but one of the mothers in our neighborhood got this idea. She said, "Why don't you guys tell everybody to get a 50-cent pass", a streetcar pass. It was good for one week and it was good for children. And you could go anywhere you'd want to, wherever these go for 50 cents. All week long. Of course, the mothers loved this. They'd pack us a lunch and all the kids would get on with this lunch. We didn't know where we were going, you know, but we'd get on those street cars and then towards the end of the...no it wasn't a month, it was a week. A week pass. Towards the end of the week, why then we thought, we would more or less start planning our trip. But we took a lot of streetcars. You see, most of the transportation in those days was streetcars and there used to be a streetcar that went all the way to La Jolla. And I just happened to think. When we go across the mud flats over toward Mission Beach, there were no side streets, no streets, just the street car was on the mud flats, was what we called it. And the conductor would open that thing up and it would go and he he'd honk that whistle, blow that whistle. I think they got a kick out of it. And that thing would go and that thing would be rocking and rolling and I can remember we were all on that thing there, we were hollering and yelling and everything too, you know. We' d run across kids from other areas that were also out and about with this 50-cent pass. But that was quite an experience.

SW: So you went with your friends. Your sister? Did she go on any these?

CB: No, no. This was just friends of my age group. My sister, she had her own friends and all and they were into other things. They were older and they were beginning to look at boys and things like that. And guys my age, we didn't even want to be around girls.

SW: What did your family do on weekends when you weren't at work?

CB: Are you talking about in the 30s and the 40s?

SW: Yeah.

CB: Well, most of the time, it was just a Sunday dinner. Yeah, there would be fried chicken or fried rabbit and anything else that might be on sale and we would always sit down and have dinner together and sometimes we'd have dinner with other people. Friends and relatives. But that was pretty much all.

SW: So you didn't do family outings much?

CB: Well, I liked to tease my sister about this all the time. You know, about in the spring my mother had this old Chevy, 1927 Chevy. And my mother would drive it. I would sit next to her and my older aunt would sit by the other door and then in the back was my grandmother in the middle and my sister on one side and my other aunt on the other side. They were about the same age. And so we would get in that car and go out to the country, which wasn't very far, and pick mustard greens. And they all hated that, you know, because they were older than me and they were just coming on to be young women and they just didn't want to be seen walking down the side of the road with a gunny sack picking mustard greens. And the greens weren't that good either, to eat.

SW: Was that embarrassing?

CB: Yeah. But there weren't that many people out there anyway. But they were supposed to be tender and everything, but I never did like mustard greens. They always seemed like they were too bitter for me.

SW: Were there any other plants like that you gathered? Did you ever get lamb's-quarters? Or any others?

CB: I don't know what they are (called), but we had licorice. There's a lot of that growing around here.

SW: Wild anise?

CB: Yeah.

SW: So what did you do with that?

CB: Just chew on it. But you could pick that anywhere around here. I even see it now in some of these canyons around here. Even over here on Boundary [Street], on the side, there's some growing there. So when I'm out walking in the morning, sometimes I'll pick one and chew on it a little bit. And then there was sour grass. And then there were always loquats. Nobody cared if we picked those because nobody wanted them. They were all seed. You've seen loquats.

SW: Oh, I love loquats.
What was your neighborhood like as far as...did you have any ethnic groups that lived around here?

CB: No, no, there just wasn't. It was all...no. No ethnic groups that I know of.

SW: Has the neighborhood changed since when you remember?

CB: Well yes. It's all condominiums and apartments now. But as far as ethnic groups or anything, I don't think it's changed that much. The biggest change is right here. East San Diego.

SW: And what are the changes?

CB: Well, East San Diego had the...the Dawsons lived there, that I talked about, right over here on Swift. And then I had my grandfather's sister's daughter lived over on 38th Street and it was pretty much the same mixture as it was over in the Normal Heights and University Heights area, but now you get all the new ethnic groups come in and that's where they go and you've got a lot of Vietnamese. I've gone into the stores there just to see what they have in there. It's interesting. And then, of course, all the fruit and vegetable stands are Mexicans. They're running those and you go out further and there are a lot of Russians.

SW: Russians?

CB: Russian immigrants, yeah. Up near past 54th, around that area yeah. And then you get a lot of the Middle East people here too. Christians. And another thing I noticed too. The Vietnamese, they got all the doughnut shops. You ever notice that?

SW: No, actually, I hadn't noticed that.

CB: Sure. They know what to do. They go in and buy a business. So they're learning.

SW: So a little bit later in your life, you must've bought a car. What was your first car like? Do you remember it?

CB: A piece of junk.

SW: Well, what was it?

CB: It was a 1939 Ford.
SW: And was year was it when you bought it?

CB: '50. 1950.

SW: So it was pretty old by then.

CB: Yeah.

SW: Tell me about this car.

CB: Well, this car was one of my best friend's car. And so it was...everything was just about ready to fall apart on it and I knew it and everything, but we had been monkeying with cars and fixing them and everything. So he used to live in town here near where the original French laundry was, over there on Hendricks Street. Well, his folks bought a place out in Lakeside. So anyway, this was just out of high school. So he had this old '39 Ford and so anyway, I thought, "Well, I'll buy it." And so anyway, I bought the car from him and of course, it was just one thing after another. My second car, though, was a 1949 Ford. And it was only a year or two old. I'm not going to buy anymore junk.

SW: You learned your lesson, huh?

CB: Yeah. And I bought it from a fellow graduate from St. Augustine High School who was working downtown at Pearson Ford. That's when they were downtown there and here I was looking for cars and there he was. Shook hands and everything and so he sold me that car and I was happy with it.

SW: Have it for a long time?

CB: Oh, not for a long time, but long enough...in those days, guys didn't want to keep cars too long. There was always something else they wanted.

SW: Did you maintain the car yourself?

CB: Yeah.

SW: So you didn't take it regularly to a garage for anything?

CB: Well, at least I'd always do a repair the first time. The first time I changed a muffler, never again. I'll take it and let somebody else do it. It sounds simple, but it isn't. Rust and all that stuff.

SW: Did you ever go to theatres and watch plays, or go to the movie house?

CB: We did a lot of movie going while I was in high school and during World War II. There wasn't much to do and so I'd go or we would go with friends or something. We'd always take the trolley downtown and go to them. And of course, in the 30s, that's what everybody did. You know, the late 30s and early 40s. Everybody went to the movies. There wasn't much else to do. And then there was the Ice Capades and the Ice Follies would come every year and so we'd go to that.

SW: Did you do any other activities with your friends?
CB: You mean bar hopping and stuff?

SW: Oh, well...okay, if that's what you want to call it.

(Phone ring)

CB: Let me catch that.

SW: Okay, go ahead and tell me about your bar hopping days.

CB: Well, gee. Let's see...where to start. When I was old enough to bar hop, I never did get into a bar before I was 21. Just didn't see the...oh, I can tell you some stories about before.

SW: Okay.

CB: A friend of mine was working, the one that I told you, Jack McDougall, who had died just recently, he was working at a TV repair place down on Logan Avenue and the owners and boss there were members of the rowing club. And so they had a notice that there was going to be a buffet or something at the brewery down there. Remember the old Aztec Brewery?

SW: Yeah.

CB: And so, they said, "Well, we can all go there. This is great." And none of us were 21 except for Ed Swain. And so we went down there to that and of course, after they had the buffet there, why Ed Swain was sitting there at the bar drinking all the beer, you see. They wouldn't serve us because we didn't have any identification saying that we were 21.

SW: Right.

CB: So we went on the tour of the brewery. And then Ed Swain, he sat there drinking beer and of course, you know, he really rubbed our noses in it you know. So when we got out of there, we made him stop at a liquor store and buy us some beer and we went down by the bay and sat there and drank that beer.

And there was another famous place, it was Texas Street. There was nothing there. It was just an old dirt road. You go down across Mission Valley; there was no freeway either. There was just a two-lane road going east and west in Mission Valley. You go across that and you get down maybe a couple of blocks and you make a right hand turn and you go east a little bit here and there was a place there where everybody would congregate and drink beer. And there was one fence post out there that had a beer opener on it. And they called it the "church key." Everybody knew it was there. Nobody would dare take it. They would use it if they forgot theirs, but they better make sure they put that church key back! So that was one of the stories about the church key in Mission Valley Texas Street.

But then some of the places around here were Hanes Streamliner, that was up here on El Cajon Boulevard. There were several along El Cajon Boulevard. Oh, there was the Ken Club over in Kensington. And in there, I was never a regular there, but the regulars, it was called "The Stein Club." And everybody had their own stein, their beer stein, and they hung them on the wall. So when you came in there, if you were a regular, the bartender would get your stein down, rinse it out, put beer in it and you'd sit there and drink beer. And then when you were done, he'd rinse it out and hang it up for the next time. Of course, anybody else come in, they would get a glass of beer. But that was one there, went there a couple of times.

There was just a lot of...other places that were popular where they had western music and there was one out in Ocean Beach. It was called Rosie's and there was one out in the Lakeside, El Cajon area there. There were a slew of them out there. There was always a lot of noise and a lot of beer drinking and everything. You can go and dance and all that. That's how those were.

I was trying to think of a place over here on Fifth Avenue. It was pretty popular with the most of the younger people too. And I can't think of it. It's not there anymore. It was somewhere east of Balboa Park on Fifth Avenue.

SW: Sounds like you led an active social life there.

CB: Yeah. Yeah, we did. I didn't have any hangout where I would go there all the time. It just seemed like we'd get together and if we had the money, we'd say, "Let's go bar hopping." So they said, "Oh, we'll try this one." "Okay."

SW: So you didn't have a routine?

CB: No.

SW: Did you every go out to the drive-in movies? Were there any around?

CB: Oh, there were a lot of those around. Yeah.

SW: Where were they?

CB: There was the Campus. You've heard of the famous Campus Drive-In. My cousin, Rosemary Lynch now. She was Rosemary Boden. Her uncle owned that.

SW: Oh really?

CB: Russo. Russo owned that Campus and just this last week, I was out here at College Grove, and they've got the marquee.

SW: The majorette.

CB: Yeah. Out there.

SW: Indian girl.

CB: Well, Aztec. It was called an Aztec. But there was a big drive-in movie on Midway, down on Midway drive over toward the beach area. And there was one out in El Cajon. Oh they were pretty well scattered. I really didn't care for those too much. I got to the point I didn't even like to watch movies.

SW: They were boring or the subject matter didn't appeal to you?

CB: I don't know. It seemed like there were too many other things to do.

SW: You remember when you got your first TV?

CB: Yeah.

SW: What was that like?

CB: Well, everybody came to the house. It was all relatives and everything. It was in 1950, I think. And it was a Hoffman. Hoffman was made in Los Angeles. And so my sister would come with her family. My aunt, the one who had been living with us, she came with her husband and family. And the other sister had come. She had two kids and they'd bring popcorn and they'd bring all kinds of stuff there. There were kids all over that living room watching television.

SW: What did you watch? What TV shows?

CB: Well, it was Saturday night, so there was Hop-Along-Cassidy. And I forget what some of the others were. Oh, there was Harry Owens. You remember Harry Owens? There was Harry Owens and the Royal Hawaiians. Usually came on about 8:00 or 9:00. The kids didn't care much for that, but they liked the cowboy ones earlier. And then there was the one from, oh what the heck was that show – Ina Ray [Hutton]. That was an all-girl orchestra on there. She had all women. She was very famous and...there wasn't much programming in those days. And there was no cable television. Everything came in the air.

SW: How many channels did you get?

CB: Two. Well, there were none in San Diego when we first got it. Everything had to come from Los Angeles, so we had those big tall antennas, double stacked. And they worked out real well, especially for certain parts of the city, because there was a lot of water between here and transmitters up in Los Angeles. So channels 4 and 5 always came in good. Let's see...4 and 2. Two came in good; 2, 4 and 5 came in good. And then it seemed like after that, there weren't. Seven came in good until channel 8 went on the air. When channel 8 came on the air here local, that pretty well wiped out channel 7 from there. But the higher channels up there, channel 11 and 9 and 13, only on really good occasions. But then they had channel 8 and 10 came here. Eventually 6. So by that time, television wasn't all that important anyway.

SW: Let's go back earlier. Did you listen to radio programs?

CB: Oh yeah. We did that all the time. We'd sit and listen to I Love a Mystery was the name of one of them. I remember my grandmother would be sitting there listening to it and my mother and me and my aunts and my sister and it was on 15 minutes and I don't know if it was on every night or just once a week or something, but it was one of those continued things. And we listened to that. And it was all sound effects, of course. And you had to really use your imagination. I enjoyed that.

And then of course, my favorite was the Lone Ranger. That came on every afternoon about 5:30 or something like that for 15 minutes. There were a couple others too, but there were all these different radio programs that came on and when TV came on, why that pretty well finished radio for the soap opera type. My grandmother always liked Ma Perkins. And that was a daytime soap opera for radio. So she always liked that one. And I can remember then, the sponsor was Oxydol. Because I remember hearing that in the background, "Oxydol."

SW: Were there any other activities that you did as a family like that?

CB: Oh. Well, we were pretty well...we just had that old Chevy and it started giving out in the later years and so my mother, she never drove it after about 1940 or something like that. My uncle, her brother, would always take care of it. His name was Edward Boden, and he had a service station and gas station

out here on El Cajon Boulevard at 33rd and El Cajon Boulevard. You know where the Frazee Paint place is?

SW: Yeah.

CB: He had a service station there. And so he would always maintain the car for her. And what was really neat about that, she'd always buy gas from him too and he had the pumps. The old pumps where they had a big glass tank up there and then it would gravity feed into the car. Well, he'd always let me pump them back up.
SW: You liked that, huh?

CB: Yeah, I liked that. Oh, that was fun.

SW: Do you remember your mom going grocery shopping?

CB: No, I don't.

SW: Your grandma?

CB: My grandma would do...well, they'd always go together. I mean, they'd to together. It was in the car and sometimes they'd leave us at home because they'd put groceries in.

Now I know my grandmother used to go to the feed store. She would bring back 100-pound sacks of feed for chickens and for rabbits. And that's another thing that was in that storage for that shed we had there. There were these big trash cans, metal trash cans with a lid. She'd put it in there and keep the lid on to keep the rats out of there.

SW: Do you know where they went shopping for the food?

CB: Well, right down the corner from us, there was a Safeway, a small Safeway and then there was another right across. This was at Monroe and Park Boulevard. There was another good store there and everybody knew the guy there. And he had good prices too. The Safeway that was right across the street, I think they were a franchise at that time. And it was just a man and a woman in there. They didn't really have all that. In fact, this guy had a lot more to sell and stuff.

SW: So it wasn't the great big store we think of now as a supermarket?

CB: No, there were no big stores. It was a landmark when they put in this store out over here in North Park...Mayfair. Do you remember that? Mayfair?

SW: No, I don't.

CB: Okay. There's a drug store now...you know the drug store over there?

SW: No, go ahead and describe it.

CB: It's right over here on 30th.

SW: Okay. The Sav-On?

CB: No. Rite-Aid.

SW: Oh, Rite-Aid. Okay.

CB: That was it. You look at that and it doesn't look so big now, but that was huge when they put that in. This was right after World War II and everybody flocked to there from all over city. They wanted to see that big market there. I didn't get in too much on where they went grocery shopping or anything. Oh, there were some markets on El Cajon Boulevard too that they used. I can remember if we were going out to my aunt's or something, they'd always stop there to see if there was anything they could get, food or watermelon or whatever.

SW: Did you ever have vendors that came to the house?

CB: Yeah.

SW: What did they sell?

CB: Well, there was a fishmonger that you could buy from. This was in the 30s. Every Friday, he would come through the neighborhood. Then there was a vegetable man. Then of course, there was always the ice man everyday. The ice man came. But my grandmother never bought anything from them because they were too high, too expensive. You pay for the service. But the ice, we always had to have ice. So he'd come by a leave ice for us.

SW: How about milk?

CB: I don't ever recall a milkman coming by. Somebody would have to walk two blocks down to the market to get the milk. Because the refrigerator was only an icebox. And it wasn't all that efficient. Milk was pretty well bought as you needed it.

SW: Well, I've kept you talking for nearly two hours. You have one last thing you want to tell? You have some wonderful stories.

CB: Boy, I don't know. There are so many stories. I think probably most of the interesting ones were when I was growing up. Preteen and into my teenage years. They were so different from now. The trolley ride, go to school. Oh, there's another one too. When there was a football came or something, we might decide, well...we had night games, and it would either be in the stadium the old Balboa Stadium, or at the old Lane Field. And somebody would say, "Oh, let's ride the ferry." We'd get on the trolley, get on a ferry and go back and forth and pay one nickel and you could ride all night if you wanted to, you see. And my sister and my aunts, they used to do the same thing too. Get on that ferry and ride all night. Especially on a hot night, because it was cool on that bay, you know. So that is another thing we would do. You could walk. You could take the street car down there. The street cars couldn't go on. You'd have to walk and then you'd be on the top part of the ferry there.

SW: They didn't have cars going on it?

CB: Yes they did, but they were on the lower level.

SW: You went on the top part?

CB: Yeah. And then too, I had an aunt that lived over in Coronado, my grandmother's sister and when we'd go over there, we'd always go on the ferry. We'd get on that and drive on and then we'd go over to her house and then come back, get on the ferry and come back.

SW: Okay, Mr. Beyer. Thank you so much. I've had a wonderful time.

CB: I'd like to be listening to that.

SW: I may come back. I have a feeling you have more stories to tell me.

CB: Oh, there's a lot of stories.

SW: Okay. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

2. WILL CHANDLER

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 22, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed William Chandler on July 25, 2003, in his office. (Note that on the tape, Susan Walter said the interview occurred on July 23, it had originally been the 23rd, and was rescheduled to the 25th; she read the incorrect date). No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. William Chandler provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document in brackets [ ], or as footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:
San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	- resume for William Chandler

WC = William Chandler
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Will Chandler. The date is July 25, 2003. We are in his office. Can you tell me your name, please?

WC: Will Chandler. William S. Chandler.

SW: What does S stand for?

WC: Sylvester. It's a family name.

SW: Do you have any nicknames?
WC: Will.

SW: When were you born?

WC: January 22, 1949.

SW: And where were you born?

WC: I was born in Atascadero, California.

SW: What is your mother's name?

WC: Harriette Maxine Brown Chandler.

SW: Where was she born?

WC: She was born in Wichita, Kansas.

SW: What kind of work did she do?

WC: She started out as a telephone company worker in San Diego in 1943, I believe and later, she was a restaurant owner with my father in Chula Vista and she is presently still employed at 78 and is a realty broker for Prudential.

SW: What was the (the name of the) restaurant in Chula Vista?

WC: It was called the Doll House. 631 Broadway in Chula Vista. The building houses an auto glass company now and it was a businessman's lunch, steak and seafood restaurant for aerospace and contractors.

SW: Can you tell me your father's name please?

WC: Albert Joseph Chandler.

SW: Where was he born?

WC: He was born in Clatskanie, Oregon on the mouth of the Columbia River.

SW: What kind of work did he do?

WC: He was raised in Wyoming, actually, as a cowboy and he went to work for Mountain Bell Telephone Company in 1929 and worked for the phone company until World War II when he went overseas as a master sergeant in the Army. After the war, he moved to San Diego to recover from wounds and lived with his sister in Chula Vista and worked for the phone company here. In the 1950s, he and my mother opened a restaurant, which I just mentioned. And when they retired from that – he was quite a bit older than my mother, he was born in 1909 – he became a realtor and then health reasons forced him to retire about 1978. He died in 2000.
SW: You have brothers or sisters?

WC: I have a half brother, Dick Chandler, who lives up in the L.A. area. He was the son of my father's previous marriage in Wyoming.

SW: When did you first arrive in the Uptown area?

WC: I started visiting friends in the Hillcrest part of Uptown around 1974. I had lived overseas two years in the Middle East after college and when I came back I made some friendships in the neighborhood which led to my living there from 1977.

SW: And how did you first arrive?

WC: By car.

SW: What was your first impression of the neighborhood when you first came?

WC: One of the things that attracted me to the neighborhood was that I had lived in a similar neighborhood in Berkeley when I was in college, by which I mean that it was an older, shabby neighborhood with very cheap rents. I think there was a strong sense of old community [in Hillcrest]. Most of the people in the neighborhood in the mid 70s were still senior citizens, people who had either owned their own homes for a long time or had rented for a long time. There were young people moving into the neighborhood like myself because the rents were cheap. But it very much, for me, had the air of a neighborhood that had more of a past than a future. It was old, many of the businesses had been there for 40 or 50 years. And it was not, it was clearly a neighborhood that had been, you know, middle class, solid prosperous middle class in the 1920s and 30s and had been going downhill ever since.

SW: What were the houses like? Can you describe them?

WC: Little bungalows. Most of the houses in the part of Hillcrest I live in were built in the 1912 to 1918 range. There were more houses than apartment houses, although there were some big apartment houses that had been built in the 50s and 60s. The apartment building that my friends lived in that I still live in, at 3820 Fourth Avenue, was built as a fourplex apartment house in 1923. Good sort of contractor's Colonial Revival woodwork, sensible floor plans, lousy electricity, all of which has been redone since. Sort of amateur, small time landlords. I don't think there were many income property companies in San Diego in the 70s the way there are today. And it was mostly sort of amateur-hour landlords. Some of them were resident on the property. Some of them lived God-knows-where and the maintenance of the buildings reflected that.

SW: Where were the places that you hung out? What were the kinds of businesses that you patronized?

WC: Actually, the people I first got to know in Hillcrest were among the sort of young pioneers, the new business owners in the neighborhood in the mid 70s. There was a studio potter named Claude Cook and his girlfriend, Debbie Demaine, who opened a pottery, a fire-kiln pottery in the courtyard behind my apartment building at 3820 Fourth Avenue. Their first apartment in the building was downstairs at 3814. Each apartment had its own number. And in the courtyard, they got city permission to put in an enlarged diameter gas main to have gas fired kilns. They built three kilns in the backyard and produced reduction glazed pottery there. Their shop was called the Hand of God Pottery. Very 70s and they were very 70s. They were friends of other arts community friends that I had in San Diego from my high school days, so I think that's how I met them. I don't quite remember now. So I started hanging out with them. And eventually, I needed a place to live and they needed a roommate and we overlapped in my apartment for about a year before they moved north. And I've been in that apartment ever since.

SW: Can you tell me about restaurants that you went to in the neighborhood?

WC: Oh gosh, what was there in the neighborhood? The Crest had just opened in the middle of the block at Robinson between Fourth and Fifth and it was brand new. I can't think of the last family name. It was Patrick, who is now dead, and his wife who opened that restaurant. Gene Coster opened a cheese, dessert and coffee house called Quel Fromage in 1974 also and it was around on University between Fifth and Sixth. I think where the Khyber Pass is now, or somewhere right in there. I'm trying to think of what the

other restaurants are. International House of Pancakes, which stayed open all night, was on Washington between Fifth and Sixth on the north side. It's been replaced by another fast food hamburger place. It was there, it was reliable, it was fast. There were not a lot of restaurants in Hillcrest. I think at the moment, there are something like 55 food establishments in Hillcrest within three blocks of my house. They have replaced virtually every other mom and pop business that used to be in the neighborhood. I now think of the neighborhood as college date heaven more than anything else, because they are mostly moderately priced and not very good. There are some very good restaurants in Hillcrest, but there are also [a lot of mediocre ones].

SW: Can you tell me about some of these mom and pop establishments you mentioned?

WC: Yeah. There was a hardware store. It seems to me that the hardware store was where the Crest Café came in or next door to it on Robinson. There was Hammond's Five and Dime which had been there since, I think, the 1920s, with the Hammond family. That would be next to, just south of the Hammond Building at the southwest corner of Fifth and University. The Hammond Building is a four-story, three-story building that now houses The Gap. And that building and the one-story building immediately to the south were all sort of weirdly interconnected through passages in the back, because they'd all been owned by the same family for so long. It was a classic old family-run five and ten cent store. You could go in there and buy, in the 1970s and 80s, you could go in there and buy 1930s glassware. They had salt shakers. They had relish trays. They had everything that you don't find in a hardware store now. So there was that. There was a little family-run health food store run by an Eastern European family on the alley in the same building where Cathedral is now, the sort of Gothic perfume and decorator store. There was a liquor store on the corner [of University and Fourth] called Hillcrest Liquor which had been around forever where Column One is now. There was a shoe repair; there still is a shoe repair, but not the same one. There was a vacuum cleaner shop called Hub Vacuum that was in the Hammond Building. And there were a lot of things like that. There was a bookstore, it still is a bookstore, oh gosh, what's it called – [Bluestocking Books] – in the building immediately south of the Guild Theatre. There was a newsstand and there was a bookstore called Otento, which was one of the great old bookstores in San Diego. [Tom Stoup owned Blue Door Books, in the same building as Otento, and was very involved in the reawakening of the neighborhood in the 70s. He had poetry readings and book signings, and attracted new customers to the neighborhood.]

SW: Did you ever attend the Guild Theatre?

WC: Oh, the Guild? Oh, that's right. It's good that you questioned me about that because one of the things that I think that improved the economic and business life of the neighborhood was not just the opening of new businesses like the Crest and Quel Fromage, but it was 1974 that the Guild, I think, was purchased by Landmark Theatres. It, for probably ten years prior to that time, had been a soft core porn theater. And suddenly, it started showing revival in foreign run movies, the sort of bill of fare that you still see at the Ken in Kensington or at any Landmark Theatre. And there was a reason for "educated, respectable people" to come into the neighborhood at night. Hillcrest was a neighborhood that closed up at night, it had no evening business to speak of because they were mom and pop community need businesses rather [than shops catering to leisure-time customers.]. And the Guild went legit. The Guild Theatre had been there since 1912. It had been built back then as B house and what that means is that it did not get the first run premieres. It was the sort of prime neighborhood theatres that was running second tier material or would run A movies six months later than the downtown theatres. And it was left over from when Hillcrest was a [middle class suburban] neighborhood. It changed by the time I was here.

SW: Do you recall going to the theatre? What was it like?

WC: Uncomfortable. 1920s cast iron seat frames. Chewing gum on the floor. Classic old, shabby, genteel neighborhood movie palace. It had a little balcony. Of course when one started going there, every theatre in town still had smoking in the balcony and it had this very little lobby and you simply went in, you lined up and you saw whatever you saw. Usually a revival of foreign films when I was going there.

SW: Did you go to church?

WC: No. I left the church sometime during my college years. I was raised as an Episcopalian. And by the time I got to Hillcrest, I was no longer a churchgoer.

SW: Where did you work?

WC: At that time, from 1974 actually, I was doing graphics and looking for work. Oh, yes, I worked for the Green Tiger Press in 1974 and I think that's actually...I had quite forgotten this [...how I met] Claude Cook and Debbie Demaine and other young business people in the neighborhood. The Green Tiger Press was a children's book, classic children's books illustration publisher owned by Harold and Sandra Darling in La Jolla who owned the Mithras bookstore and the Unicorn Theatre in La Jolla. They had discovered that there was a hunger among their buyers for classic children's book illustrations, which they were taking old out-of-copyright illustrations and republishing them as note cards and calendars and at that stage, mostly just those.

SW: You're talking about (artists) like Arthur Rackham?

WC: Yes. Arthur Rackham, Kay Nielsen, Jessie Willcox Smith and a hundred different artists of great talent, mostly pre-1930. Well, Harold has copyright laws down to the day.

SW: Mostly English?

WC: No. No. I would say a lot of English, a lot of American and a lot of French. Edmund Dulac, whoever was doing really high end illustrations in the teens and 20s. And so this was the nostalgia market. And their warehouse was, for a time, in Hillcrest. In 1974 he was in Hillcrest. At the back of the parking lot next to, oh what's the 50s diner on Fifth Avenue? It'll come back to me. [Corvette Diner, which was then a furniture store.] It has a parking lot next to it. It's in the 3900 block on that side. There is a parking lot with an old frame building in the back which I think is a bicycle shop and the whole building was the office and production warehouse for the Green Tiger Press in 1974 and '75. And I worked for about a year for Harold.

SW: What did you do?

WC: I was hired as staff artist and assistant distribution manager. I did produce one book for Harold and Sandra in reprint and our sales manager, Jan Gobel, went off around the country managing 900 wholesale accounts for about six months and I managed distribution while I was doing that. It meant 90-hour weeks for $450.00 a month. Welcome to the 70s and the arts! I think you can't throw a rock at a crowd of artists in San Diego and not hit someone who hadn't worked for the Green Tiger Press at sometime until they got a clue and found another job. In 1976, I went to work as an associate curator at the San Diego

Museum of Art. That was my better job. And I stayed there as associate curator of decorative arts until 1988. And so Hillcrest was a very convenient place for me to live. One of the reasons I kept the apartment that I had and still have.

SW: What kind of work did you do after that?

WC: I became a personal property appraiser when they ran out of funding for my position at SDMA. And I did not want to leave town for a variety of reasons, my father's health being one of them. And so instead, I went into personal property appraisal. For about 18 months I had a partnership with an old antique dealer in La Jolla and had an office on Prospect in her shop. And then in 1990, it went into business for myself.

(telephone ring)

SW: Do you have anything else to add about your jobs, your work?

WC: Green Tiger Press was the work that brought me to Hillcrest initially. And then finding a job close by. I have always preferred to live close to where I work rather than have to spend much time on the freeway. I don't [love rush hours on the freeways]. It was no better then than it is now. It's worse now, but it was no better then. When I left La Jolla and formed Chandler Art Consulting Services, I found an office two blocks down from my house on Fifth Avenue, three blocks down, that had been a residential bungalow built about 1912 and was being rented out as shared office space. There was an attorney in there, a fellow who was becoming a rose importer who has prospered. The back office was occupied by the building owner who also lived in a mother-in-law apartment over the garage at the time, Larry Mattera, who was an attorney then and a financial consultant. (He) has since passed away of leukemia. And so I had an office in there for a couple of years. Then when he passed away and new tenants came in, they wanted the whole building and were [vile], and so I was more than happy to find another place to put my office. I think in 1993 that happened.

I moved into a space in the Design Center at Fifth and Brooks. This was Lloyd Ruocco's first commercial building in San Diego, the architect, the city planner. His own offices were in that building and the whole ground floor was the State Board of Equalization. His wife, Ilsa Ruocco, founded an interior design firm called Design Center Interiors and that was the whole bottom floor. That building had been subdivided into many little office spaces and I had one of them for seven years.

In 2000, I moved to my current office over in Mission Gorge district because the building again changed hands and the new owners wanted to remodel the building and I got priced out of the neighborhood. Rents had become more expensive in Hillcrest than they are downtown for commercial spaces. You can rent more cheaply if you look hard [on Paseo Delicias in Rancho Santa Fe] than you can on Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest nowadays. And I found a much better office for a much cheaper rent and a much more agreeable landlord than I could find in two solid months of searching in Hillcrest., which is why I eventually got priced out of my own neighborhood and now I get on the freeway every day. But it's not bad.

SW: What other buildings in this Uptown area have ever really intrigued you?

WC: Oh gosh. A lot of buildings have intrigued me. I stared as hard as I could at the Guild Theatre for 25 years trying to figure out what's missing off the front of the building and when they demolished it and

rebuilt it, they sort of left it in this mysterious state. They never did do some of the invasive testing to see what stencil designs or other things would have been (there originally). I know that, because I tried to sell my services for that purpose and they weren't interested. But that was a much more ornamental building when it was built and its mission arch façade, the mission revival façade it has is its second façade in the 1920s. There are no photographs of the building that have ever turned up, but we can see the edge of it in another photograph. And it was a Colonial Revival clapboard structure when it opened in 1912.

The building next to it that houses the bookstore I was mentioning, it's a four-story apartment house. It is missing a couple of belvedere towers on its corners that show up in photographs and I thought that was an interesting feature. Those probably got torn off in 1934 when many features like that left San Diego buildings after [the Long Beach earthquake], and so anything that could fall onto the street was at risk of being taken off.

The whole block where the drug store is, Rite Aid, was in the 1930s into the 1950s a very picturesque, Spanish colonial style, succession of little shop fronts, not unlike El Paseo in Santa Barbara. And that got blown out in the late 50s to put in a Mayfair Market and a big parking lot and then [the structure went] through a couple of tenants and now it's a Rite Aid.

The diner that I mentioned earlier, two-story [Corvette Diner] on Fifth Avenue in the 3900 block, had real Malibu tiles on all of its window cases. It housed a big family owned furniture store. And some of those tiles survived in a center entrance staircase up to the second floor on the front façade, but they were all over the building and they were quite beautiful and I loved them. They were blown out by the restaurateur who put in black and white 4-inch bathroom tiles so it would "look" like a 50s diner., and ironically, destroyed real historical tiles from the 1920s and 30s to do so.

The old Hillcrest post office was located a couple of doors to the north of that and that façade was entirely remodeled to house a men's clothing store, International Male, in the 80s and it was sort of high WPA modern of the 30s.

The Hammond block that houses The Gap had started out as a mission revival brown brick building about 1915 and it and the now missing drug store building across the street on the northwest corner of Fifth and University were both sort of craftsman mission revival style shop buildings with apartments and offices over and in 1939 they were remodeled in international style: gleaming white stucco, the horizontal silver metallic lines and the whole neighborhood got streamlined.

So there's a lot of old architecture. There's actually a lot of surviving old architecture in the neighborhood.

The wood frame antique store that's at [Eighth] and University on the south side of the street...I think Seventh or Eighth, was a convalescent hospital. It was actually a practicing [surgical] hospital about 1895-1910 period and it still retains many of those architectural features. The second floor is used only for storage and still has the skylights for the operating theaters and great big windows on the east side of the building catch the morning light for surgery. And there's actually a strange loading dock for ambulances, horse drawn ambulances would back up to it. There's like a barn door that's only 4 feet wide but slides aside to bring the stretchers out (that) has a strange sort of wrought iron and railroad spring bumper that's still attached to the gate so that when an ambulance slides back up to it, it wouldn't bash

the building. And it's a very strange and ephemeral survivor for architecture. So when you look, there's all sorts of funny things like that in the neighborhood, if you like architecture.

SW: How about some gardens, trees or plantings? Anything in that area that caught your interest?

WC: Gosh. I think Hillcrest is a catalog of generations of bad ideas of what makes good plantings over cars parked on the street. The beautiful jacaranda trees that we all love with their purple blossoms eat right through your paint on your car when they stick to it when they are in bloom in the spring. And we've only just gotten over that. The city is behind on trimming the palm trees on Third Avenue currently and one of my neighbors complained that he just had $2,000.00 worth of damage to his truck from some palm fronds coming down on his roof. He's fighting the city on that. I don't have to think about much anymore, but it does make me think about parking. A lot of old palms have simply grown a lot taller than anyone ever anticipated when they planted them in the 20s and 30s. It is a neighborhood that, because it was so mixed residential, that had a lot more landscaping. And then the sort of "city beautiful" thing that happened in the 60s brought more of that landscaping and trees on Fifth Avenue. In the 3800 block there are some [huge ficus trees that are beautiful, but the inedible fruits – they drop rot in the gutters and make the street stink for months every year].

SW: Can you tell me about ethnic groups in the neighborhood?

WC: There's probably everything, and there always was, with the possible exception of blacks in the neighborhood. I don't know that Hillcrest functionally ever had a color line in the pre-1960s days. A lot of San Diego did not lose its color line until the 60s. "No Negroes or Jews" was very common in a lot of the neighborhoods. And that changed. If there was redlining in Hillcrest, and there might have been among the realtors, it was casual and I don't know about it. Ethnically, it was a very white bread neighborhood when I moved into it that involved mostly older people and there were, I think, a lot of Hispanics living in the area. People of Hispanic or Mexican descent [but not expressing their ethnicity]. I don't know, but certainly one did not have a strong flavor of ethnicity anywhere. I think about as ethnic as it got was Jimmy Wong's. And gosh, Jimmy Wong was an San Diego family. So, individuals have been a lot of different places. One of the managers of my apartment building had been a college student [in Vienna] during the Anschluss and hadn't gotten over it. He had a very strong [Austrian accent] but I don't really have a [sense of] Hillcrest having a specific ethnic flavor at the time, apart from southern Midwestern like the rest of the town.

SW: How has the neighborhood changed from when you first got there and what it is now?

WC: Well, obviously, it became "the gay neighborhood" and that was beginning to happen about the time I came in the mid 70s. It is still, I think, in many people's minds, identified as a "gay neighborhood" which being a long time resident there, I would say that was true in the late 70s and early 80s, but is no longer true. There are a lot of everybody there. I think what it really has evolved into is an "alternative neighborhood" of young people. It remains a rather young [neighborhood with a lot of] old people. But the rents have all gotten so expensive that even the "alternative" [residents tend to have good incomes], certainly it is no longer a cheap rent neighborhood. It is rather expensive, as a matter of fact. Most neighborhoods in ["inner"] San Diego are.

SW: You had said the neighborhood was pretty shabby when you first moved in, now it's gone much more upscale?

WC: It's gentrified, a lot of buildings have updated, remodeled. A lot of buildings have been torn down, newer large space commercial office buildings have come in. The old Hillcrest Rexall Drug building [on the northwest corner of Fifth and University] was a great old international style building with other shops in it. A Jewish delicatessen owned by Vietnamese was in that [building] across from the alley. And it's become more corporate, income property management, $5.00 [to $12.00] a square foot, net / net kind of leases. Some more banks, like Union Bank. Medical [condo buildings].

Because of the proximity of Mercy and University Hospitals and a couple of big clinics, the city has re-zoned the neighborhood to residential / professional / medical. You can rent a house in Hillcrest to live in or you can rent a house to be a doctor in. You cannot rent a house to be an appraiser in the neighborhood, and this is iron clad. I could not rent a bungalow a block from my house that I wanted for my office because [it was zoned RP / medical] and I called the city about it and I couldn't. It just flat was not [possible] under the current [zoning]. And that is [today's Hillcrest]. There's nothing wrong with it being Pill Hill, but it does mean that other kinds of professionals will be [unable to rent] small offices [in the neighborhood].

SW: Have you observed any interesting events in the neighborhood, regular community events?

WC: Community events? Well, I've been to Pride Parades over the years. That would certainly be one of them. The Hillcrest Street Fair is another.

SW: What is the Street Fair? What do they do?

WC: The (Hillcrest) Street Fair...I don't know a lot about that in terms of its organization. There seems to be a round robin street fair that is organized through a department of the city, Public Affairs, probably, with the sponsorship of the business community in the neighborhood and the Hillcrest Business Association. The Normal Heights Business Association or Community Redevelopment District sponsors the one they have that is in Normal Heights on Adams Avenue and there are others around that have become popular, summer events mostly. And several blocks of Fifth Avenue are shut down for little more than a 24-hour period and booths get set up. People come in the neighborhood to eat and walk around, get sunburned and look at crafts. Sort of a glorified swap meet feeling is what they have currently. And there's – of course – music. You can [stand around and listen to] musicians mostly from San Diego County. They are very popular. You love them or you don't. I don't not love them.

The neighborhood booksellers association has taken on the [local ABA] and booksellers, San Diego chapter street fair which they used to have on Adams Avenue.[3] The past couple of years they held them in the 3800 block of Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest. And that is also popular and since I'm friends with several booksellers, I have more involvement with that, if only because I [help one of the dealers pack in] early in the morning and pack out after.

SW: What about the Pride Festival or Parade?

WC: The Pride Festival and Parade. Oh gosh, it must've been eight years where I always accidentally was out of town every weekend when it happened. It was rare for me to be in town, certainly for the past five or six years. I'm actually going to get to go to the parade tomorrow. There is a convention I do every

[3] ABA stands for American Booksellers Association.

summer in Van Nuys that had an eerie ability to schedule on the same weekend as San Diego Pride Parade.

The gay community of San Diego is probably as well organized in the social service areas as [any in the nation]. It partly came out of early HIV crisis management. The number and quality of social services available in this county compare favorably to New York and San Francisco. The Pride Association Festivals, I think were a very early outgrowth of what was then called the Gay Liberation Movement in 1968 and I forget when the first Pride Parade happened. It would have been in the 70s; '74, '75.

I'm trying to remember where the first one I went to happened. Seems to me it was in the parking lot of a bar down on Pacific Highway and it was very small and then it was a block party for a couple of years that happened in the block between Fifth and Sixth on Kalmia next to a "gay hotel" adjacent to Balboa Park. And it's just slowly grown. The city has learned now to accept it and understands that it was something that was not a bad thing happening. Police also had to learn how to accept it. There has been a lot of [educational] work with city government at all levels and [with the police], A) to allow the gay community to exist without constant legal harassment, and physical harassment from authorities and, B) to see the gay community as a legitimate, viable part of the mix of communities in town.

Those changes really didn't quite take place until the end of the 70s or the early 80s. There was a civil liberties attorney, Thomas Homann, who sat down with the city attorney and a couple of the more successful bar owners and worked out a modus vivendi that [brought closer oversight to] elements of the San Diego police force and elements of the city attorney's office, both of which had been performing illegal arrests. I have seen people beaten into the ground on the grounds that they were resisting arrest. And in the 70s, it was rumored, not without some accuracy, that if you killed a queer on duty as a cop, you got a little commendation in your file, not a citation. And that was very much the air of things in the 70s in Hillcrest back then.

It's better now. It's a lot better now. Now we have a much better managed police force, it's more professional, it's more trained. It doesn't [run wild]. In Hillcrest, when I moved in, there was a beer bar on Sixth Avenue across the Mayfair parking lot, so that would be the top of the 3700 block in that row of shops by the Union 76 station. That was a biker's bar and there was a lot of trouble that [happened on the street], certainly every weekend night at the bar around closing time. Drunken bikers throwing beer cars at passing cars, harassing people, gay bashing, and – it was the off duty cop bar. Those were off duty cops. The younger, stupider ones. So far as I know, [those cops] mostly no longer work for the force. We were all rather astonished at the time when we realized it. But that's how much things have changed in the city.

SW: Do you think that the politicians are more sympathetic to gay issues?

WC: Yeah, I would say that [about most of] them. And their sincerity varies. We [saw] Roger Hedgecock run for mayor and actively woo the gay community back in the 70s. And we all voted for him because, A) he was the first mayor we'd had in a long time who actually acted like he enjoyed living in San Diego and, [B] was very likable. After he went out of office and became a conservative radio talk show host he began bashing the gay community. I think it was the old [gay newspaper the Update], all it had to do was waltz back into their files from his first election year and find a photograph of him planting a big kiss on the cheek of Nicole Ramirez Murray. She was a drag queen activist. Nicole was dressed up like Glinda

the Good Witch of the North, and Roger found no trouble giving her a big kiss for the cameras for the *San Diego Union*. And so for him to become a "queers are evil" kind of Rush Limbaugh commentator...

(It) causes me to wonder about the sincerity of any gay friendly politician in San Diego, including some of the lesbian politicians we have. All of them I greatly admire. I think they've done very great things for [San Diego] within the community, within the city structure, the county structure and now at the state level. I do think – this is a very personal feeling – I do think that when we began to get mainstream straight votes, there was also a sort of subtle thing that went through the [gay] community from our political leaders within the community, that we all had to sort of look like ["normal' straight people]. A lot of the community went back to its "white suburban" middle class roots, or if not white, certainly suburban middle class roots – of behaving according to a very conservative standard in public. I'm not a real radical guy. I'm not very in-your-face all the time. I will say that I'm a bit uncomfortable with that too, but I do feel that to a certain extent, there has been a-not-in-front-of-the-goyim kind of thing that's happened. In a different way.

SW: Do you have anything else that you wish to add?

WC: Oh gosh. I think it's interesting just overall, when I think of Hillcrest and I think of my early days there, (remembering) some of the people, Gene Coster and Patrick and Claude and Debbie, for example, the potters and a couple of other people...

One of the reasons Hillcrest is a viable neighborhood today commercially is its interactions with city government. I think it's because of the influence and dedication of the Hillcrest Business Association. In the mid 70s, the old business association had sort of fallen into inactivity. A lot of the old members of that who had been very valuable to the community in earlier days had long since stopped talking to each other, as it happened. And the new business association in the 70s, they came up with the funding to get the Hillcrest sign restored again and all kinds of things to foster a sense of place. This, I think, was particularly important in the 70s because at that time – and this was very much in the conversation of all the people I've mentioned – based on their meetings with city council people and other zoning and government aides in the city structure, that the Downtown Business Association wanted neighborhoods like Hillcrest and North Park and Lemon Grove to die. They wanted those businesses to go away. They were fighting a lost cause against the rise of the shopping centers that were taking away a lot (from) traditional downtown business. They were closer to city government, obviously, than the outlying lower income neighborhoods were.

There was a fixed light rail transit plan revived in the mid 70s that [was published in] the *Union* to revive the old trolley tracks. There's another version of that coming along now, to continue to dig the tracks back up that have been paved over and use the right of ways. So the four square blocks that now constitute Hillcrest business from Fourth to Sixth and from Robinson to Washington, were designated under that light rail transit plan, to be demolished to put in a major transit plaza. They could have put it many places. They could have put it on the Sears site, but no. It was really chosen to make this burgeoning young revitalized business community go away. I think there are many people in the city who would stoutly deny this now. All I can say is, "You weren't there." And that's only 25, 27 years ago. So things have changed a lot.

Now we have neighborhood development districts, and a lot of the [neighborhoods have a better voice in the city]. The most viable is probably University Heights, but they've got retired judges sitting on their board and that doesn't hurt.

But yeah, I think as a resident of the neighborhood still, I kind of miss the old businesses in the neighborhood. As a resident who has never had any off street parking, if half the restaurants went away, I would stand up and cheer. The city very cynically uses the same parking spaces in the [Hillcrest Village] building to grant business licenses to restaurants against its own zoning laws. They interpret them in a very creative manner, I think, to keep allowing these restaurants to open with no off street parking, which is in violation of zoning, unless you can point to a parking lot that "everyone" can and does use. If I get home after 6:30 tonight, a Friday night, to park within a quarter of a mile of my house will take, on average, 35 minutes of searching.

SW: Go ahead.

WC: So as a resident, parking has [become the neighborhood's biggest problem]. Our current city councilperson, Toni Atkins, I do greatly admire. She's very involved with [her district]. But this remains a big problem for residents. If you have a neighborhood like University Heights, which is I think within Uptown, that has a community development organization which is a mix of business owners and residents. What we have in Hillcrest is really more a business owners association which has a shopkeeper's mentality. There's nothing wrong with that, but since I think there are more renters in Hillcrest than property owners resident in the neighborhood, they are very disorganized. I'm too busy making my living to go out and canvass and do all the things you need to do [to protect residential parking from the business association's wants]. So if parking meters erupt on purely residential streets, as they are between First and Third on this side of Robinson, it would take property owners to protest that and bring back all-day parking for the residents. There is no one to fight that battle in Hillcrest and the residents are disorganized. So it's not perfect, but it's the neighborhood I still choose to live in and enjoy.

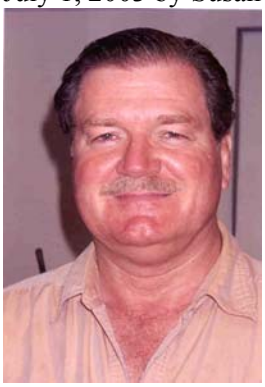
SW: Thank you very much.

WC: Thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW

3. SCOTT CROWDER

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 1, 2003 by Susan D. Walter



Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Scott Crowder on July 1, 2003, beginning in a nearby restaurant, and then continuing in his office in the California Bank and Trust Building. No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Scott Crowder provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
release form	City of San Diego Historic Sites Board
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
questionnaire	filled in by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	NA

Transcript:

SC = Scott Crowder
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: I am interviewing Scott Crowder. We're in a restaurant. What's the name of the restaurant?

SC: It's called Chez Odette. It's on Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest.

SW: Okay. And the date is July the First, 2003. You've had a long-term association with the area in our project that is being called Uptown and so I'm going to ask you a little bit about that. (But) first of all, what is your full name?

SC: Scott S-C-O-T-T Crowder C-R-O-W-D-E-R.

SW: No middle name?

SC: Yeah. Peyton. P-E-Y-T-O-N.

SW: When were you born?

SC: The sixteenth of May, 1945.

SW: And where were you born?

SC: In the District of Columbia.

SW: What was your father's name?

SC: Robert McPherson Crowder.

SW: Where was he born?

SC: He was born in the District of Columbia also.

SW: What was your mother's name?

SC: Elizabeth Barnard. B-A-R-N-A-R-D.

SW: Where was she born?

SC: Charlotte, North Carolina.

SW: How did they meet?

SC: They met at church. The Methodist church in Washington, D.C. And in high school. Central High School in Washington, D.C.

SW: And how did they... Did they come to California? Is that how you got here?

SC: Yeah. My dad was in the Navy in World War II and he traveled to different places including Hawaii and San Diego and decided Hawaii was the most beautiful place in the world. So after the war, he moved the family to Hawaii where he worked for some months and after he got laid off, he said, "Okay, we're going to the second most beautiful place in the world." And that's how we ended up in San Diego.

SW: What part of San Diego did you go to first?

SC: Initially El Cajon and Lemon Grove.

SW: When did you move into this area here?

SC: We moved to Mission Hills in a house on Randolph Street in the middle 50's. I went to the third and fourth grades while we lived on Randolph Street.

SW: Do you have brothers and sisters?

SC: Older sister, Carolyn, and younger brother Robb.

SW: Can you spell the sister's first name please?

SC: Carolyn, C-A-R-O-L-Y-N.

SW: How long have you lived in this area here?

SC: Since the middle 50's. Except for two long-term absences when I went to school at UCLA, so I was away for four and a half years. Then I was in the Army and was away for four years while I served in the Army.

SW: Are you married?

SC: No.

SW: Do you have children?

SC: I have one son who passed away in 1998 and now I have another son who is 2 1/2 years old.

SW: Can you tell me the names of your kids?

SC: My older son was named Kemble, K-E-M-B-L-E and the two-year-old is named Andrew.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about what work your father did while you were living here in the San Diego area?

SC: Dad was an accountant and a business manager for several firms. For an appliance firm, and an appliance distribution firm, and an engineering firm, Woodward-Clyde, Sherard and Associates. They did soil engineering. He was their business manager for many years.

SW: Did your mother work?

SC: Mother worked various jobs. She worked at Sears, Roebuck in Hillcrest for many years in the complaint department.

SW: In the complaint department?

SC: Yeah.

SW: Did you get stories about that?

SC: I'm sure there were, but I don't remember any of them.

SW: Do you remember anything about when she was working at that Sears? Is that the large building that was (torn down)?

SC: Yeah. That's where the Uptown District is now. The large Sears near Tenth and University that was built in the mid-50's and was replaced in the middle 80's, I guess.

SW: So do you remember going to see your mom at work?

SC: Oh yeah. Yeah. It was a very large store and had a good hardware department. I remember that. It was sorely missed after the store closed because we didn't have a...Hillcrest had everything, lots of restaurants and drug stores, but we didn't have a hardware store until Ace hardware opened up a few years ago at Tenth and University. So now we're a complete community again.

SW: Can you tell me what is the earliest memory you have of the Uptown area?

SC: Going to school, Grant School, third grade. We lived across the street from Francis Parker School, so we'd climb the fence to get over to Francis Parker, to use their tennis courts. They had some really nice tennis courts at Francis Parker School. And then some of the local ladies in Mission Hills got together and built the tennis courts that are now across from Grant School. That was donated to the city. After that, we didn't have to jump the fence anymore.

Break in interview here.

SW: Okay, we've moved from the restaurant and now we're in Scott's office. Actually, I don't remember where we were (in our conversation). What were we talking about?

SC: I don't remember.
SW: I know that you told me that you had gone to school here in the neighborhood. So can you tell me about school?

SC: Oh yeah. I started third grade at Grant School which is down on West Washington Street and that was just a couple blocks from my house on Randolph Street. I went to the third and fourth grades there. I remember being on the street patrol which was a police sponsored activity. We would stop the traffic going down Fort Stockton Street to let the school kids come. We did that in the morning and at lunch time because most kids went home for lunch and walked to school. We even wore uniforms at that time. White shirts and white pants and red sweaters, and had stop signs and whistles so there was quite a feeling of power. We could stop the cars in the street and let the kids cross. Then for the fifth and sixth grades, we moved to Florence Elementary School, which is up in Hillcrest on First and [University Avenue]. I graduated from there. At that time, our family had moved and we moved to Brant Street near the corner of Brant and Washington across the street from a nursery that was there at the time. There was also a used car dealership across the street and a Foster's Freeze on the corner of Dove and Washington Street. And that's where the Wells Fargo Bank is now.

I remember my sister used to work at the Foster's Freeze. I'd come home from school and she would save all her mistakes for us. If you didn't do the curlicue just right on the Foster's Freeze, they made you throw

them away. So instead of throwing them away, she would save them. Then my brother and I would get home from school and she'd bring them out of the freezer and give them to us.

SW: How did she save them?

SC: Just stick them in the freezer.

Then I went to school at Roosevelt Junior High School which was down on Park Boulevard and Upas Street. And that was fun. We took the bus, I had a school bus pass. All the kids from Mission Hills and Hillcrest would get on the bus. It was a San Diego City Transit bus that had a special route that would go directly to the junior high school. And that was fun because it was all full of kids, to and from school. So we'd try and get in as much trouble as we could, on the way to school and on the way home from school. I remember going down Richmond Street, there was a really whoop-de-do bump about at Cypress and Richmond – and there is a stop sign there now which prevents this activity – but the activity was if we had a new bus driver, we would start yelling to go faster and faster and the bus driver wouldn't be able to see until it was too late that there was a dip there that would send all the kids in the back of the bus airborne, about 3 feet in the air and just rattle the bus. That was fun and we always tried to trick all the new bus drivers into doing that.

And when I went to Roosevelt Junior High School, I was in the band and the orchestra.

SW: What did you play?

SC: I played the B-flat clarinet and the tenor saxophone. We had to take our instruments home to practice and all of us in the band and the orchestra were pretty tight. Sometimes we'd break out our instruments on the way home and play them in the back of the buses as we were going home.

SW: Did you ever have a singer?

SC: A singer?

SW: Yeah. When you were playing with your music.

SC: No, the orchestral music we played didn't lend itself to that.

All these schools have since been torn down because of earthquake considerations, but they were all beautiful schools. Florence School was a very impressive granite stone, two...three stories including the basement, three-story building. And Roosevelt Junior High School was very impressive. It had a huge auditorium that had murals on it put in by the WPA during the Depression. And that auditorium was so large.

At that time, we had lots of extra activities at the junior high school. I mean not only band and orchestra and the glee club, but marching band and a drama department and so all those organizations got together and we would do a musical every year. So in junior high school, we actually put on a yearly musical in the auditorium and the community would come and watch, so it was quite an activity.

SW: Do you remember the names of any of the musicals?

SC: "Showboat" is the one I remember when I was in the eighth or ninth grade. We did "Showboat" and I remember that because I had a very nice saxophone solo I had to play. And then after junior high school, I went to high school down at San Diego High School down Park Boulevard, Park Boulevard and Russ Street.

SW: You took the bus there, too?

SC: Yep, took the bus directly to San Diego High School. Although during high school, I did a lot of studying at the downtown library, or we'd stay after school for activities, so a lot of times, we'd take the regular city bus home. That school was really unique. Of course, the original wood school that Mr. Russ...owned a lumber yard, he built in the 1880's, I guess it was, that was replaced and a huge granite stone building was built was around 1910 or 11 and very impressive. It was modeled after a Midwest prison, I think, but it looked like a castle and was called "The Gray Castle." It was a very unique school, and it looked beautiful. It was very diverse with a lot of white kids from Mission Hills and a lot of brown kids from the Barrio attending there, and a lot of black kids from East San Diego and so it was a very diverse school and (had) all kinds of activities. It was really wonderful going to school there, because not only did it have all the cultural activities of Roosevelt Junior High School, it had a drama department, a glee club and madrigals singing group and marching band and a jazz band and a full orchestra and we would put on, actually, two plays a year, or sometimes a musical, two plays a year in the Russ Auditorium.

At that time in the late 50's and the early 60's, the Russ Auditorium was actually the civic auditorium for the city. So (it was used) for all of the civic activities, and when a guest speaker would come to town, (like) Eleanor Roosevelt or politicians. I remember Dwight Eisenhower's motorcade drove past the school. Anything that was happening where anybody needed a venue. Scientists came and spoke there, so it was quite exciting to be there before the civic auditorium, before the Sports Arena, before any other venues, that was the place to be. And it still was, in the early 60's. So it was fun going to school and fun going to a school that had such a history because, until Hoover High School was built, it was the only high school in San Diego and students from as far away...

SW: So all the kids in your neighborhood that you were living in went (to that school)?

SC: At Russ Boulevard. No, not all the students. Some of parents who felt that the school was a little too diverse would arrange to have their kids go to Point Loma High School. And that was an option for students that lived deep in Mission Hills on the western end of Mission Hills down toward Fort Stockton. They had a choice to go to Point Loma High School and some did, but at that time, most did go to San Diego because their parents had gone to San Diego High and anybody who was anybody went to San Diego High because for so many years it was the only high school. Of course, you hear the stories of Gregory Peck and other La Jolla residents taking the stage or the trolley all the way from La Jolla to go to San Diego High School across the flats, because it was the only high school. It was fun there, because there was such a tradition and all of the bigwigs in town had gone there. So when you go to reunions, you'd see pictures of all the city leaders on the board for the alumni. It was a fun school to go to. They had drama and auto shop, electronic shops.

SW: How about sports?

SC: Well, San Diego High had a very active sports department in baseball and football. When my sister graduated in 1960 from San Diego High, they were up for the CIF championship football. I can't remember if they won it or not, but the star quarterback at that time was Asell Singleton, I remember her saying that name. A few years later when I graduated from high school in 1963, we weren't doing that well.

Another exciting thing, aside from Russ Auditorium being the civic auditorium at that time, was Balboa Stadium was the civic stadium and that was our high school stadium. From looking at the San Diego High School web site, I learned that when it was built, it was the largest high school stadium in the United States. And then it was made even larger when the Chargers came to town in the 60's and they added the second deck. It made it even bigger. And that was our high school football stadium where we had our high school events, and it was exciting being in such a big place. So I was in the marching band there and also was in ROTC in high school. I did a lot of military activities with the cadets there and ending up as the top ROTC cadet from San Diego High and in fact, was the brigade commander of all the cadets in all the San Diego City schools and continued that through college.

I got a scholarship to UCLA. I got a Kutchin scholarship. Ms. Kutchin was the publisher, I guess, of the *Sun* newspaper in San Diego which was a forerunner of the *San Diego Union Tribune* and she set up a scholarship for high school students and since then, it's been funding scholarships every year, just from the interest. I don't think they ever touched the principal; it's just from the interest. It funded about twelve kids the year I graduated for scholarships to the University of California. So I applied to UCLA and was accepted and couldn't find housing up there because I didn't realize I was going to get a scholarship, so I hadn't bothered to look for housing. I couldn't find a place to live up there, so University of California sent me a postcard that said, "Check this box, we have lots of room at University of California, Riverside and we're just opening up an undergraduate school there." So I checked this box and I became one of the first undergraduates at UCR. I checked the box – and my high school girlfriend was going there anyway. So that was a good consolation prize.

I went to UCR for two years. Pretty much hated it. It was a brand new school, no traditions because it had previously been a graduate school and they didn't have much stuff for undergraduates. So even as a freshman and sophomore – I was a mathematics major – I had to share classes with graduates in mathematics and people working on their doctorates and so on. It was pretty stressful.

SW: I was going to say, you must've felt a little bit...

SC: Intimidated.

SW: Intimidated. Yeah.

SC: Especially in that major. You're starting out your sophomore year taking graduate classes. After two years, I transferred to UCLA, mostly to continue in the ROTC cadet program because I decided I wanted to have a career in the military and UCR did not have a military program. UCLA had all three, Air Force, Navy and Army. I joined the Army ROTC and continued the scholarship from San Diego High School and ended up being the top cadet at UCLA, which earned me a regular Army commission. After graduation, I went into the Army Signal Corps, which I went into because the Army considered a math major to be a science major and the Signal Corps was where all their scientists went.

While I was at UCLA, I joined the fencing team and I earned three varsity letters in fencing because it took me four and a half years to graduate, so that extra half a year got me another eligibility on the varsity fencing squad. So that's where I got my interest in fencing.

SW: And then you went into the military?

SC: So then I was in the military for three years, in the Signal Corps. They taught me how to fly. The Army paid for private flying lessons at Santa Monica Airport. I got to fly around LA by myself in a little plane and out over the ocean in Santa Monica, and got to fly directly across LAX. In those days, if you fly perpendicular to the main runway at LAX, you could fly over 500 feet, which was kind of exciting by yourself.

SW: (You can) not (do that) now.

SC: Yeah. There's no way you could do that now. But then those were different times. When I went in the military, I went around the country and different posts, bases and assignments. Since I was in the regular Army, I had to go to special forces or the airborne, so I went to the airborne and became a paratrooper and was assigned to the 18th Airborne Corps at Ft. Bragg. Then (I) was sent to Vietnam were I served a year at the largest communications facility there. I was the commander of the long lines detachment at Vung Tao as part of the 369th Signal Battalion, First Signal Brigade. I was there a year and came back to Ft. Huachuca as a communications electronics engineer in the Strategic Communications Command. I was responsible for projects in Vietnam and Alaska, Turkey and the Panama Canal, for some reason. They were probably the projects nobody else wanted, so I got them.

And that started getting a little boring after having combat duty, coming back to the States and then watching the military start to contract – it wasn't very exciting. So I got bored and put in my resignation, since I was a regular Army officer, I was in for life, so I had to resign from the Army. They offered me a master's degree at Georgia Tech, a double E, electronics engineering, if I would stay. I decided to resign and then applied to be an engineer at the phone company, Pacific Telephone, and got a job here in San Diego.

SW: Where was that located?

SC: I worked downtown at the Union Bank Building. Pacific Bell had the top few floors of the Union Bank Building at 525 E Street.

SW: Where were you living at that time?

SC: Oh, at various homes, I had an apartment over on Sixth Avenue and then got to Mira Mesa, bought a house out there and then after I got divorced, I moved back to an apartment on Eighth Avenue, and then Cleveland Avenue for awhile, and the family then moved to Ibis Street in Mission Hills from Brant Street. Then I bought a couple condos. I had a condo on Eighth Avenue and I had one on Essex Street. I was buying and selling property and building apartments in various enterprises. I had a real estate company and was doing development and building apartment buildings, in North Park mainly.

SW: Whereabouts was that? Is it on the map here?

SC: No, the apartments I built were down 44th and University, towards Sixth and University. Built some just outside the Uptown area at Arizona and Adams.

SW: They still there?

SC: Oh yeah. Yeah. That was a go-go period of high inflation and you could make a lot of money then.

SW: Arizona and Adams, and it was right in here?

SC: Yeah. Canyon with condos looking down on it. The canyon at Texas Street.

SW: Okay, so we've done some of your work... Can you tell me about some of the landmarks around here?

SC: Schools. Some of the biggest landmarks were the schools that have now been torn down, which is really a shame, because they were gorgeous buildings. The auditorium at Roosevelt Junior High School was just lovely and the Russ Auditorium was beautiful. It had a balcony on it. Murals all over it. Florence School was really impressive too. Next to Florence School was a huge canyon. It's been filled in now, but that canyon was great. It had a couple baseball diamonds at the bottom of it. Kids played dodge ball and baseball. And all those buildings were replaced by buildings with nondescript windows, plain Jane buildings with no character at all. It is very sad. And the second deck has been removed from Balboa Stadium. It's now a shadow of its former self. Other buildings? Let's see...

SW: Or other locales, other areas...

SC: Well, I remember Ron Keifer's Market down at the end of Fort Stockton.

SW: Stockton and what?

SC: Down by Stephens Street. And there was a little corner market there and there was a corner market at Front and Washington that was kind of on the way home from Florence School. That's where we'd buy penny candy on the way home from school and they were... Milk. We used to get milk for lunch and it was 6 cents for a carton of milk at that time, when I went to Florence and we used to not buy the milk and save the 6 cents for penny candy on the way home from school. I remember...for some reason, I remember there was an H&R Block tax preparation at the corner of Robinson and Fourth Avenue where the Crest Café is now. There used to be an H&R Block there. And the corner of Sixth and University is kind of interesting because that, where now the City Deli is, that was called Caesar's Restaurant for years and years, right next to Pernicano's Pizza.

SW: Did you ever eat there?

SW: Pernicano's Pizza was the hang out for our high school, at least the kids from Mission Hills. After the football games, everybody would gather at Pernicano's. It's still there, but it hasn't been open for years and years and Mr. Pernicano didn't sell the building. He just sits on it, so... But next door was a Caesar's Restaurant on that corner. It was an impressive looking building and that turned into a Summer Place after Caesar's moved out to Mission Valley. It was a Summer Place Restaurant for a couple years. Then it was Cavelari's Restaurant, and then it turned into the City Deli, which is it now. I was there all the

time, because I worked at the phone company. After working downtown as an engineer, they thought I needed line experience. So I was sent up to be a line manager at the University Avenue central office, which is on University Avenue between Seventh and Eighth Streets. So it was just half a block away, we'd walk across and eat breakfast every morning at the Summer Place.

SW: You seem to know restaurants pretty well. Any other restaurants in the area that you recall?

SC: Yeah. I eat out once a day, at least, in restaurants in this area and that's the really nice thing about Uptown. They have so many good restaurants and always have, and the restaurant business being what it is, there is a great turn over of restaurants too, and new restaurants being tried and not making it. Some have been here for years and years.

SW: What about ethnic foods? Were there any?

SC: Yeah. There's one that's gone now, the Old Damascus, was Turkish and that was on Fifth Avenue next door to where Busalacchi's is now. In fact – no, that is where Busalacchi's came and took over, there the Old Damascus was. So now Busalacchi's has Southern Italian/Sicilian food there. That's really good and that's been there a long time. The Lotus, I remember, was like a Vietnamese/Thai restaurant that was on Robinson and has since moved down a block. It is now...no, it was on University. It's now moved down a block on University.

SW: Did you ever go to the movies? (Or) the theatre?

SC: Oh yeah. The Guild Theatre was an institution up until about ten years ago. Yeah, we'd go to the movies at the Guild Theatre almost every Saturday. For 25 cents you get a double feature plus a cartoon plus a western serial plus a newsreel. So it was a real bargain and get us out of our parents' hair all on a Saturday afternoon so they were pretty willing to fund that activity.

SW: How did you get there?

SC: We'd ride bikes. Bikes were the mode of transportation. If you missed the school bus, you could hop on the bike and ride to Roosevelt Junior High or ride through Balboa Park and get to San Diego High almost as fast as the bus went.

SW: What kind of bike did you have?

SC: A three-speed bike. Don't really remember.

SW: Did you have a regular parking area on the campus for your bikes?

SC: I think so. I don't recall that clearly. I remember we would bike everywhere. Biking was the mode of transportation for kids and we would go great distances. We would go way down to North Park, all over Balboa Park. We'd play in the canyons in Balboa Park and ride our bikes through the horse trails. At that time, horse stables were in Balboa Park. We'd take archery. We'd take bows and arrows to Balboa Park and shoot arrows across the canyons and ride our bikes down to the beach, Mission Beach. We just had a lot of freedom and not so much care of where we were. (Our) parents weren't worried because there wasn't that much crime in that area. So we had a lot of freedom and bikes provided a lot of freedom. I

remember there was a nice bike shop right next to where Corvette's is now. Schultz' Bike Shop. That's were all the kids went. If you couldn't fix your own bike, you could take it to Mr. Schultz on Fifth Avenue between Robinson and University and he was a real institution there. The Cohn's from Corvettes own that building now.

SW: Who were your neighbors when you were living in the house there?

SC: On Brant Street, there was a dentist next door. Not a dentist, it was a dental lab. They used to make porcelain teeth and he had a lab in the back of his house, a separate office. He contracted out with dental offices and he would make false teeth and porcelain teeth and caps. I got a job helping him clean up. I would go in and scrape the plaster off the tables and clean up the office. He would pay me a little bit for that. And then there was an apartment building on the other side of us and I got a job mowing their lawn. When I was in college, my parents moved down to Ibis Street. I really didn't know the neighbors there, because they moved while I was away.

SW: How has the neighborhood changed?

SC: Well, it's gone through some transitions. In the 60's and 70's, there was a big economic transition when the big malls opened up in Mission Valley – Mission Valley Mall and Fashion Valley Mall. A lot of the stores, including the Sears in Hillcrest, really started to suffer because so much of the economic activity went to the Valley, and so the neighborhood started to be run down a little bit.

And I'm not sure when it happened, but the gay community – kind of centered around the Brass Rail – really started to become more active in the neighborhood. More gays started moving in, and the neighborhood started coming back as a residential area and real estate started to change hands and older homes began to be fixed up. The real estate values brought more economic activity back and the neighborhood really started coming back alive. Mission Hills really didn't have that slump because it was more residential and it's always been a very [nice] place to live. But now, both neighborhoods, both Mission Hills and Hillcrest, have become very upscale and very desirable and the demand for real estate in both areas is tremendous with very high property values now.

Plus the fact that it is a nice walking and biking community. All of the Uptown area, all the way down Sunset Boulevard, all the way over to Park Boulevard, is pretty flat and so it's a nice walking and biking area. And there are lots of stores, drug stores, large grocery stores and restaurants, so it is very convenient to stick right in the neighborhood. It's kinda like a village atmosphere with the residential and the commercial mixed so you don't have to drive to get to things.

And plus, if you ever do want to get somewhere, it's smack dab in the middle of all the freeways. It's a triangular area bounded by Interstate 8, Highway 163 and Highway 5. So it is very convenient to drop down on the freeway and get somewhere else. And even to get to the beach. You can ride to the beach in 20 minutes. Except for Juan Street hill, I have to walk up, it only takes 45 minutes to get back. It's very convenient, easy to get downtown. If you live in Mission Hills, you can actually work downtown and walk to work.

One of my good friends, Dr. Bill Quillin, is a gynecologist whose dad was colonel in the Army in World War II and after the war he got a job at the post office and walked every morning deep in Mission Hills all the way downtown. So it's very convenient in that regard. That was a nice place growing up too, because

so many of the city leaders lived in Mission Hills and the kids I went to high school with were well connected, good kids and smart kids with parents that liked to see them get ahead.

SW: What was politics like here? Did you observe anything?

SC: No, I didn't get to that aspect until after I resigned from the Army and came back and started my own businesses in Hillcrest and became involved in the politics. But when I was growing up, I wasn't concerned about that. Although my parents were, my father was very interested in politics. But I didn't care.

SW: Tell me about your mom. What was she like?

SC: Well, she kind of transitioned between the stay-at-home moms and the working moms. She did both. She was at home for many years and then got mainly part time jobs out of the home including working at Sears. Very active in the church at Mission Hills Methodist Church. Our family has been members since the mid-50's. She is on a lot of the committees there and did a lot of charitable work.

SW: Is she still there? Involved with it?

SC: Still there. Yep. Still a trustee in the church and still on the board of directors of New Entra Casa and a couple other organizations that she belongs to. The churches in Mission Hills have always been very active and very cooperative with one another. The Congregational church a couple blocks up from the Methodist church, which is now a United Church of Christ, and the Catholic church on Goldfinch, I guess it is, and there's another Christian church down in Old Town that has always cooperated and had summer picnics together. They used to always jointly put on an Easter sunrise service in Presidio Park, so it was kind of nice to be in a community where all the churches cooperated and supported each other.

SW: Was there a Jewish temple, or other types of religion(s)?
SC: Yeah. There was a Jewish temple on Laurel Street, Temple Beth Israel. It just moved to the La Jolla area, east La Jolla, by La Jolla Towne Centre. That's on Laurel and about Third. And there is a Unitarian church over by the county hospital, which is now the University of California Medical Center. My dad was very much into us having a diverse religious experience besides being member of Mission Hills Methodist Church. He encouraged us and actually took us to services at the Temple Beth Israel and at the Unitarian church. Also, because there was philosophical speaker's forum at the time – I think it was called an open forum – they'd have speakers at the Unitarian church, and also they had a speaker's program down at Temple Beth Israel. He would take us to those meetings and services, and encouraged us to go to other churches, and encouraged us to go with our friends to Sunday services at other churches.

He didn't much care for the protocol, but he would...we could be late to church as long as we didn't miss the sermon and at Sunday dinner, family dinner, he would quiz us on the meaning of the service to make sure we were paying attention.

SW: What kind of a man was your dad? What kind of father?

SC: Very strict, very smart. He was...he skipped a couple grades in high school and graduated from high school when he was very young, 16 or 17. He was a Boy Scout, one of the top Boy Scouts in the United States, actually. He was one of the founders of the Rover Scouts in the District of Columbia, which was

actually the precursor of the Explorer Scout program now. He was a scoutmaster. He led the scout troop at the Francis Asbury Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., and I guess that's where he met my mother. And he got a job with National Cash Register Company and that's how he got to go to Hawaii with NCR. But then he got into an argument with his boss in Hawaii, so he lost his job and that's how we ended up in San Diego.

SW: The second prettiest place in the world.

SC: Yeah. And so he was kind of a self-trained accountant and held accounting and business manager positions for different companies in San Diego. Oh, he worked for Convair when we first came to San Diego, but then he ended up at Woodward-Clyde, Sherard and Associates, which are soil engineers in the U.S. and was their business manager for many, many years. He'd take care of the business aspects. Everybody else in the firm was an engineer and he took care of the administrative duties in that company.

SW: Okay. Well, thank you so much. Do you have any last things to say? It's been almost an hour here.

SC: No more questions, huh?

SW: Not at the moment. Thank you so much.

SC: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

4. SIMONE KIRKLAND

Uptown Recollections
July and August 2003 by Mary Wendorf edited by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter was contacted by Mary Wendorf who suggested interviewing her former landlady and long time friend Simone Kirkland. On the day of the appointment, Mrs. Kirkland was unable to participate. However, Mary Wendorf volunteered to interview Mrs. Kirkland on another date and contribute her research to the Uptown project.

Ms. Wendorf interviewed Mrs. Kirkland by taking notes, which she gave to Susan in the form of a summary. Susan edited the information. Mary checked over the summary, and added comments which are included in this document. Mary may, as she gathers more information from Simone, contribute that to the San Diego Historical Society at a later date.

A compact disk listing all the participants in the Uptown Oral Interview project was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet lists the items provided by Mary Wendorf from her interview of Mrs. Kirkland.

Persons present during the interview:
Subject: Simone Kirkland
Interviewer: Mary Wendorf

The following items were included with the original of this document. They are archived at:
San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	NA
color photograph	taken by Mary Wendorf on one of the days of the interview
floppy diskette	the diskette contains all 22 transcripts from the Uptown project, and the narrative from this interview
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant and Mary Wendorf
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
release form	City of San Diego Historical Resources Board
ephemera donated by the interviewer of informant:	15 photos taken by Mary Wendorf of homes owned or formerly owned by Simone Kirkland

Transcript of Recollections:

Simone Kirkland was born in Nice, France on July 15, 1913 to Cicily and Jean Marty. She was an only child and her family lived in an apartment above a store.[4] Her father was a photographer and her mother worked in a pharmacy. One of her parents was Catholic, and the other Protestant, but that was never a problem. Simone was raised Catholic.

She attended grade school, high school, and business school in Nice. At age 18 she married Louis Carenco, partly to get away from her father who she loved, but she felt he was too strict a disciplinarian. She worked at a drugstore selling cosmetics, and for various other businesses. She gave birth to her only child, a son, named John when she was 20 years old. Eventually she divorced Mr. Carenco.

She met her second husband while he was in Nice with the U.S. Navy. Henry Kirkland was eventually a chief in the Navy. When their ship left Nice, Mr. Kirkland sent for her to come to Portugal, and they were married on Christmas Day, 1938. War broke out in France, and Simone was unable to get back into the country to get her son, so Simone and Henry set sail for the states without him. He lived with his grandparents in Nice until the war was over and she was able to send for him. On the positive side, Simone was able to support them and send them much needed care packages from the United States.

When she first came to this country she lived with Henry's mother in Florida. His mother had a motel and restaurant. Simone helped out, but did not really like it there. Next she moved to Virginia where Henry

[4] In 1996, Mary Wendorf traveled in France, located Simone's former home, and took pictures.

was stationed, and then finally to California. She first lived in Burbank, but was happiest when Henry was stationed in San Diego, and she found a rental in North Park.

Her first impression of San Diego was that it reminded her of home. She felt the climate, vegetation, ocean, and a lot of the architecture reminded her of Nice. She felt she had finally come home at last.

Simone purchased their first home at 4373 Maryland while her husband was out to sea. That has been their home since that time. They later purchased the homes on either side of them on Maryland (4381 and 4363), and the three homes on the cross street of Meade (1405, 1409, and 1417). They also owned a home in Bay Ho.

A big part of their life in University Heights was being landlords and managing and maintaining their rental properties. Their tenants became like extended family to them and most stayed 10 to 20 years or more.[5] The Kirklands provided affordable rent, and always had their houses rented, generally with recommendations from current residents. They were always there for the less fortunate. As an example, one tenant's daughter had kidney problems, and they allowed the family to stay rent free while the child underwent treatment. Another case was when a young couple divorced while living in one of their houses. When that single mom of a young daughter lost her job, Simone allowed her to stay rent free in exchange for doing odd jobs and errands for her. In the late 1990s, she helped three young couples buy their first homes by selling her three homes on Meade Avenue at affordable rates.[6]

Simone took English classes on coming to San Diego. She got her first job here doing office work for General Dynamics during the War. Being bilingual was an important asset. Her next job was sorting mail for the post office at the main branch, located downtown. To get to work, she rode the bus.

Later she was promoted to the job of handling the stamp collections / collectors at a branch in Old Town on San Diego Avenue. Simone loved her job. She was responsible for a $50,000 to $100,000 inventory / budget daily, and took great pride in her work. She enjoyed helping people build their collections, or helping them find that special stamp. She herself was a stamp collector, and had quite a collection at one time. She worked for the post office for almost 30 years, and retired at age 69. Henry had retired, and wanted her home with him. In fact, she retired only after he gave her a cocker spaniel puppy she named Buttons. Henry gave her the dog to convince her to stay home and train him.[7]

Henry Kirkland retired from the Navy after 20 years as chief. He then obtained a business degree from Mesa College, and worked, subsequently, for Bank of America. From them he earned a second retirement after 20 years. He was very active as a Mason at the Scottish Rite Temple in Mission Valley. He gave generously of his time, talents, and money. Everyone who knew him spoke highly of him. Simone was, and still is extremely devoted to Henry, and they had a wonderful marriage. They were very much in love. Henry died in 1992.

Simone and Henry went back a number of times to France to visit, and brought her mother to live with them after her father had died. To get her mother to come to the States, Simone had to promise to take her back and bury her next to her husband when she died. Simone kept that promise.

[5] Susan's note: This information was gathered by Mary Wendorf, one of the long term tenants of Simone's.
[6] Simone still owns the three houses on Maryland.
[7] Buttons lived to be 14 years old.

Simone's favorite restaurants include Bully's, off Texas, and the restaurants at the El Cortez and Grant Hotels. She misses the Sears store that was in University Heights, and also loved to shop downtown at Marston's and Walker Scott. Simone attended St. Johns Catholic Church, in University Heights.

Simone loves birds and animals. She regularly put out seeds for the neighborhood flocks, and kept hummingbird feeders stocked. After she retired, she always had a treat for the neighborhood dogs. The Kirkland house was a popular spot for dogs to stop on their daily walks to get a treat, and for their owners to chat with Mrs. Kirkland.

A point of pride with Simone is her silver maple tree in the back yard. She claims it was one of only two in San Diego at the time she bought her house. The other tree was in Balboa Park. She and her husband planted many fruit trees in their back yard, including apricot, avocado, grapefruit, and plum.

Simone's son John lives in Northern California. She has a grandson and three great granddaughters that live next door to her son. John wanted his mom to move up there, but she couldn't bear to leave her home in University Heights.

END OF RECOLLECTIONS

5. SISTER MARY LA SALETTE TREVILLYAN

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 25, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Sister Mary La Salette Trevillyan on July 25, 2003, in the archives group room of the Scripps Mercy Hospital Library. Also present during parts of the interview were Marg Stark and Sarah Anisman. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Sister Mary provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Changes and additions made by Sister Mary are indicated by brackets [ ], or as footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:
San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 22 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
release form	San Diego Historic Sites Board
ephemera donated by the informant:	- Angel in Black (photocopy of *Reader* article) - Mercy Hospital Chronology - Mercy Hospitals – Hospital Mergers - Sisters of Mercy – Then and Now (partial) - History of Mercy Hospital and Medical Center - Day in the Wildwood at Mt. Carmel Ranch - Sisters of Mercy Cultivate Carmel Valley History

Transcript:

SM = Sister Mary
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter. I am interviewing Sister Mary...

SM: La Salette

SW: La Salette. And we are in a group study room in the library of Mercy Hospital and the date is July the...

SM: 25th.

SW: 25th, 2003. Thank you. The project is Uptown. First, can you tell me your name?

SM: My name is Sister Mary La Salette Trevillyan.

SW: Can you spell that last name, please?

SM: I can. T-R-E-V-I-L-L-Y-A-N.

SW: Do you have any nicknames?

SM: Well, it all depends. You can call me Sister. You can call me La-La. You can call me Sister Mary La Salette, you can call me Sister Mary La.

SW: Where were you born?

SM: I was born in San Gabriel, California.

SW: When were you born?

SM: 1924.

SW: Can you tell me your mother's name please?

SM: Yes, I can. It was Veronica, you mean before she was married?
Veronica Jenkins.

SW: What kind of work did your mom do?

SM: She was the most wonderful mother.

SW: Tell me your father's name?

SM: My father's name was Edwin John Allen Trevillyan.

SW: What kind of work did he do?

SM: Well, he did lots of things, but I guess you want to know what he did the last few years. He worked for MGM and he was head of one of the departments that did something in films, a foreman.

SW: (What did he do as) a foreman?

SM: [He ran the labs for developing the films.] He was just wonderful.

SW: Do you have siblings?

SM: Oh yes.

SW: Can you tell me their names, starting with the oldest?

SM: Starting with the oldest. All right. The oldest is Ann Lucille, now Crowley, and she is two years older than I. Then I had a brother who is deceased, just below me, who was Edwin John Trevillyan. Then I have a brother, Jim, James Reginald Trevillyan, who is living in Modesto and then I have a sister, Joan Porter, who is having her 50th wedding anniversary this August. She lives in Gardena. And I have a sister, Mary Schmidt, who lives up in Torrance. She just retired in the last six months. Her husband is deceased.

SW: You have quite a few siblings, then.

SM: And I have 14 nieces and 14 nephews, and I can't count the next batch!

SW: Where did you go to school?

SM: I went to school in Los Angeles. I had a Catholic school education, St. John in Hyde Park for grammar school, and Bishop Conaty High School off of Pico and Western. And after I finished high school, I entered the convent and I went back to teach there five years later. I taught my two younger sisters as they came through high school.

SW: Oh, you did?

SM: And my one brother who was going to Loyola at the same time I was teaching. I was the favorite with the girls because he was so handsome.

SW: How did you get involved with this hospital?

SM: Well as you know, I'm a member of a religious congregation and this is Mercy sponsored work and...did you want to know (about) before I came here?

SW: Sure. How did it lead up to having you here?

(Upon evaluating the draft interview, Sister Mary felt the answer was confusing. She provided a written version which is inserted below in brackets.)

SM: [I taught high school for 13 years in Los Angeles at Bishop Conaty High School. Then I went to San Francisco to Mercy High School to teach and to be Vice Principal for one year. For the next 11 years, I was Formation Director (Postlant and Novice Director) with a year in between studying at Lumen Vitae in Brussels;[8] Vatican II had just updated Catholic Theology. When I finished being Formation Director I was asked to serve as Secretary General for our [Burlingame] Congregation for two terms [six years]. At the end of these terms I was asked what I would like to do next.

Since I had gone to Bakersfield for a short period of time I helped out on night call with the two Sister chaplains there as frequent night calls were a strain; I could sleep in. It was this experience that encouraged me to say that I, too, would like to go into chaplainry work. So I came to Mercy Hospital in 1979 and took Clinical Pastoral Education training shortly after. I served as chaplain for [13] years.[9]

At that time the Hospital was in need of a mission Services Director, a new work in our Catholic hospitals across the country. One of the gentlemen who was in education said: "Sister, why don't you apply?" I thought I could do this ministry and so I was Mission Service Director for ten years.

The Merger with Scripps came along at this time and since I was 65 I didn't think I had the energy and everything else this new position would take. Anyway, I told them I was going to retire and they said, "Don't retire, we'll find someplace for you in the hospital that you'll just love." (Now) I work with

[8] In a later note, Sister Mary added that during her studies abroad, she also traveled to the Holy Land, to Rome, and to England and Ireland.
[9] She had the opportunity to travel to Nova Scotia and Vistoria during this time.

Mercy Foundation and have since that time – much like a public relations person. I keep track of our donors who come in as patients and visit them. I carry my chaplainry skills with me, but I'm not there for that purpose. We have special gifts for our donors; I also attend most of the hospital functions. Since I am the Administrative Liaison for the Auxiliary I have a wonderful group of women to work with and who are an important part of my life as friends.]

SW: It sounds very interesting. You first arrived here in 1979?

SM: I believe it was.

SW: Can you tell me your first impression of the neighborhood?

SM: My first impression of the neighborhood? I've lived in the convent over here that's now been turned into the Mercy Gardens. You've heard about that?

SW: No. Can you tell me about the convent?

SM: Okay. Well, the convent was built, I believe, in 1924. It held 50 sisters; there were sisters in the convent who worked in this hospital. It was a mother house for the San Diego branch that began here in 1890. They had quite a number of sisters who worked in administration, in the kitchen, were in charge of the laundry, in charge of everything at that time. When I came along in 1979, we probably had around 15 sisters, so we were diminishing in numbers. But we still used the convent.

Then around 1985, myself and three other sisters moved a few blocks away because the trend within this congregation was to move into smaller groups of community so the hospital bought a home on Albatross Drive and the four of us lived in there for awhile. It moved around from four, to three, to two (of us). Then this last year, the sister that lived with me needed to go up to the retirement center, and so now I live down the street at [Swiss Village]. The convent was turned into Mercy Gardens about three years ago.

Anyway, (about) the neighborhood. The neighborhood when I first came here (was different). The hospital had the emergency room on the other side, so a lot of the hospital changed as it spread out in different directions. There were homes, little homes across the street. It was kind of homey around where I lived. That's a darling block on Albatross Drive. (In) the Uptown area everything was very close. I think when I first came here, even the traffic was different, because people have said this was (like) a small town when I first came here. Gradually it has expanded and grown so that there is a lot of traffic in the area now, and downtown too.

This other area, the one over there on University. University Heights, is that what they call it? I really didn't get up there too often because we actually didn't drive around too much except to go to functions and they were usually downtown and by the bay. I think that that has certainly developed, when I go by there now, which I often drive by for various reasons. There are storefronts and a lot of people around and people sitting out drinking coffee on the street. It looks like France.

SW: Do you recall any changes in the neighborhood like landmarks disappearing or appearing?

SM: Well, I think the Ace variety store was for a long, long time popular over there on Fifth. You could buy anything there. I mean if you were looking for the tiniest thing that was impossible to find, they would have it. But they did finally go out. I think they're down now on University, further down by

Tenth. But it was the most marvelous place and it was just one of those places that everybody knew about and went to for anything. Like a dime store except it had all kinds of things. And then, I think that the stores that have grown up there were not the ones that were there initially at all. There was an apartment building, I think it is still there, but I think it's (now) men's clothing.

SW: Where did you do most of your shopping?

SM: If you know anything about sisters, they probably have a shopper for the convent. And so mine was in the cupboard.

SW: Okay, so they purchased what you needed?

SM: Yes. Supplies, toothpaste and everything else that you needed that was personal, and our wardrobe was very simple. We had the habit, and they did the laundry right underneath the chapel. The laundry has gone. Oh, what has changed about the hospital so much is the – what do you call it? The outsourcing. So that we used to have our own laundry underneath the chapel. And the chapel was built, the one that's currently there, [was built in 1950], so the convent must've been built a long time before that, because it connected with the old hospital which was torn down when this one was built, and it's gone through two phases. One was, I think, around 1965. And then they tore down the old hospital and added on the front that's on here now.

SW: In your job, do you have a yearly series of events that you deal with?

SM: Well, I don't personally, but the auxiliary does.

SW: Okay. Can you describe that?

SM: We're fundraisers. So we have a membership drive, which is usually a very nice luncheon. Our last one was at the Prado. And we also have a Christmas party usually at one of the big hotels, and they have a boutique and auction. And we used to have a ball, a dance, in February, but they changed that. Now we have casino night, which is a fundraiser. They have things like, maybe a bus tour down to one of the casinos. They're fundraisers and a lot of the money goes toward the clinic and other places that they direct it. They had been giving a Christmas party for the children in the clinic when it was actually in this building, but since it's moved across the street, it's under the new auspices.

SW: Here is a map generally of the area that we are interested in. Would you mind locating exactly where we are right here on the map?

SM: I can do that. This is Montecito and this is Arbor and this is Mercy Hospital right there.
SW: Okay. Just circle it in red...All right, so you're fairly centralized. Have you seen changes in the neighborhoods around in this area as you've lived here?

SM: This is now a gay community

SW: Does that make a difference in the way the hospital functions?

SM: No. No, no, none at all. You know, what we went through, though, when I was here with the HIV patients, AIDS, and when we first had AIDS patients, oh my goodness. There was a sign on the door "Wash your hands" and "Wear gloves."

SW: (That) has changed?

SM: Yes.

SW: Can you tell me about some of the neighbors that you have when you're living in the little house that you were talking about?

SM: Oh, there was a gentleman across the street that was in his late 80's and early 90's. He had purchased his home, which was a pink house at the time, and he and his wife lived there and they were just wonderful neighbors. In fact, he saved our lives the first day when we blew a fuse and came over.

And then next door to me were the Mousamellis who were Italians. The husband was a fisherman at the time, early on. He has since retired. But there was a gate between our home and the one right next door because the previous owners had a son and there was a pool in the backyard and so this lovely Ann, she would come through the gate and ring our back doorbell and she would often supply us with tidbits of things that she made. And we would do the same, if we created something we would go over and share that.

And there was a lovely, Mrs. Bell down the street, her husband actually died at home and I was called at 5:00 and they wanted me to come down and be with them. So there were elderly people. Ann and her husband are not elderly. And then some younger people started moving in. So the houses have, the homes have been kind of repainted and fixed up. I don't know if you've been down that street, but it's really darling. There were primarily elderly and long term people that lived on that particular street. It's like one in the movies. If they wanted to make a movie, they could use that street for hometown kinds of things.

SW: Where do you go to church?

SM: Well, usually...St. Vincent's is our parish here. And so I often go there for Sunday Mass, the liturgy, but they have 11:30 mass every day right here, which is just a wonderful advantage for me.

SW: Right here in the (hospital)?

SM: Well, our new chapel too. That was built not too long ago. You can find all about that too, the background on that. But the donors' names are on the wall. It was really a wonderful advantage because once this hospital was built and the convent was over there with the chapel connected to it, for people to want to go to a Mass during the day like 11:30, it was too far to walk. By the time you were over there, the lunch period was up. So it was wonderful. If you have a chance to drop in on it at 11:30 because people every day use that. And there are always other people who are in the hospital, maybe they have relatives or are here for some reason, and they join in that liturgy. So it's really been a blessing. And people can go in. They have a service everyday at 2:00 that's ecumenical and so I think people go in for that also. And it is also over the TV in the rooms on channel 5.

SW: Oh, on TV.

SM: Yes. We couldn't do that from the other place, so that's an advantage.

SW: Does this hospital then have a connection with the church directly? And how about the school? There's a Catholic school...

SM: St. Vincent's is separate from us.

SW: So they're separate?

SM: Yes. There are Sisters of Mercy from Ireland that teach there. And they're not connected with us. Except by, you know, sisterhood.

SW: What did you do on your off time from the hospital?

SM: Well, I told you there was a pool in the backyard.

SW: A pool. Okay, so you went swimming?

SM: Yes.

SW: Do you go to movies or...

SM: Oh, on occasion, but I'm not a great moviegoer. I certainly watch television and I love suspense stories, "Witness" and things like that. But I'm not one to want to go out in the daytime to a movie when it's beautiful weather outside. So I could take myself down to the bay and read a book. Certainly now, we do go shopping, so I go shopping on Saturdays and other times.

SW: So you going shopping is different than when you were in the convent earlier?

SM: Right.

SW: Where do you go now?

SM: I go to Albertson's or over here to Ralph's or over to Henry's.

SW: Are you habits supplied by the hospital?

SM: I'm the only one that wears a habit. (As an aside to someone else) Is that why you got me into this? And it's by choice. Because, many years ago, they gave you the option, but I was already wearing a habit, as were the others, so the ones who went into lay clothes was just fine, but this kind is so easy. Wash and wear and people know who you are. And I have a continuity for 25 years, so people say, "You don't look any different, sister," (than) 25 years ago – well, this is why. I have the same outfit. Also I like being an ambassador for Christ, and I think that this supplements it.

SW: Can you tell me about any unusual or different events that have happened in this hospital?

SM: The merger.

SW: The merger. Okay, tell me about the merger. How did that affect you?

SM: It really didn't affect me. I happen to believe in the providence of God and as things move along, and we needed to do something different. It is advantageous to both groups. It was certainly something that was not appreciated. But I think that our employees really felt – there's a strong appreciation and love for "Mercy Hospital" – and I think when you say "Scripps Mercy," it does something. I suppose Scripps was our competition before. But anyway, it has turned out to be a very wonderful marriage. But it did affect the morale and the employees, [at first].

SW: You think it's gotten better since then?

SM: Oh yes.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the women you work with? Some of the other sisters?

SM: Yes, I can. Some of them, actually one of them, had entered in this particular community before it merged with the Burlingame group and her name was Sister Imelda; both her and Sister Cornelia. Sister Cornelia had sparkling little eyes and was an artist on the side had been an administrator at other hospitals and became chaplain here and was very much loved by people, as was Sister Mary Imelda.

The one that is very striking, I'm sure, for everyone would be Sister Alexine. I'm trying to think of her last name.[10] She was born in Cottonwood, grew up in Cottonwood, Arizona and became a nurse and eventually ended up here in San Diego as head of the surgical department. And the stories about her are so colorful. I mean she was a workhorse, a real workhorse. And you didn't get past the surgical door to get into it if you were Catholic without having been anointed first. That was important to her. And then the doctors have the story that whatever they needed and asked her for was always, "No. No." And the third time was "Yes." So that is the story about Alexine. She ended up working at the information desk, but she finally retired which would have been in her late 80's. And she has since, of course, died, but she was one of the very colorful people here.

I'm thinking of Sister Irene, who worked in the business department, kind of a heavyset sister and was in charge of the safe and would come over [even on weekends]. These people worked...I mean their work hours would just keep on going and she worked here with the people in the business department. Kind of a quiet, nonchalant person, but the people who worked with her loved her very dearly. These sisters have really meant a lot to the people who worked close with them and so on, but still remember them. So those are probably the oldest ones that I can remember from when I came here.

SW: Okay. Thank you.

SM: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

[10] Sister Mary later recalled the last name was Shea.

6. CAESAR & JULIE ORIOL

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
October 19, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Caesar Oriol and Julie Oriol on October 19, 2003, in the living room of their home in Mission Hills. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Changes by the informants are footnoted or in brackets [ ]. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewees. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego. CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

	ITEM	NOTES
	cassette tape	taped at regular speed
	color photographs	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
	compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informants
	floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
	map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informants
	pedigree	pedigree lists filled out by each informant
	ephemera donated by the informants:	NA

Transcript

CO = Caesar Oriol
JO = Julie Oriol
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Caesar and Julie Oriol for the Uptown Oral History Program. The date is October 19, 2003. We are in the living room of their home and the first thing I want to know is some background on each one of you. I'll start with you, Caesar. Can you tell me your name, please?

CO: Caesar Gil Oriol.

SW: Can you spell that middle name for me, please?

CO: G-I-L.

SW: Do you have any nicknames?

CO: No.

SW: Where were you born?

CO: San Diego, right here in Mission Hills.

SW: When?

CO: May 2, 1949.

SW: Can you tell me your mother's name, please?

CO: Hermelinda Fajardo Oriol.

SW: Where was she born?

CO: In the State of Colima in Mexico.

SW: What did your mother do for work?

CO: Housewife.

SW: Can you tell me your father's full name, please?

CO: Pedro Apalatequi Oriol.

SW: Okay.

JO: I won't even try and spell it.

SW: I have it on the paper, I think. What kind of work did he do?

CO: Gardening work.

SW: Where was he born?

CO: In the State of Sonora, Mexico.

SW: Do you have brothers and sisters?

CO: Yes, I do.

SW: Can you tell me their names, oldest to youngest?

CO: The oldest is Dolores, then Eriberto, Rita, Peter M., then myself, Linda, Gil and Peter F.

SW: And you're married...what is your wife's name, please?

CO: Julie Oriol.

SW: Can you tell me the year you were married?

CO: Let's see...1986.

SW: Good job. Do you have children?

CO: Yes.

SW: And their names please?

CO: Rachel Ann Oriol, Christine Elise Oriol and Jon Luke Oriol.

SW: Thank you. I like to now go on to Julie and ask the same types of questions. So Julie, could you please tell me your complete name?

JO: Julie Lynn Oriol.

SW: What was your maiden name?

JO: My maiden name was Schultz.

SW: Do you have any nicknames?

JO: No.

SW: When were you born?

JO: March 14, 1959.

SW: And where were you born?

JO: In San Diego.

SW: Can you tell me your mother's name?

JO: My mother's name is Julie Mendoza. Beltran Mendoza.

SW: Do you know where she was born?

JO: Texas City, Texas.

SW: What kind of work did your mom do?

JO: She was, they called it in her day, a beautician.

SW: And your father's name?

JO: Victor F. Mendoza. Oh, I know, it was Fortunato.

SW: Fortunato? That's an auspicious name. What kind of work did he do?

JO: He was a college professor.

SW: What of?

JO: Data...data...it was before computer times and it was data entry. He taught at Grossmont College.

SW: Oh really? I was just there last night. Do you have brothers and sisters?

JO: Yes.

SW: Can you tell me their names, oldest to youngest?

JO: The oldest is Yolanda and Gerarde is the middle and I'm the youngest.

SW: And you're married. And your husband's name?

JO: Caesar Oriol.

SW: And what year were you married?

JO: 1986.

SW: Good job.

JO: I even know the date.

SW: Oh good. And you have children. Their names are...?

JO: Rachel is the oldest, and Christine, and Jon Luke.

SW: Thank you very much. Caesar, what is your earliest memory of the Uptown area I showed you on the map?

CO: Earliest memory? I guess when I went to grade school, back in the 50's.

SW: So what was the school like at that time? What do you remember?

CO: Well, I remember the old building. It had a tile roof, the archways, hardwood floors. Very beautiful building. It just had a nice feel to it. Big playground.

SW: Do you remember any of your teachers?

CO: No, I don't. That was such a long time ago.

SW: Do you have any good friends you have retained through the years?

CO: Yes, yes I do. I had a next door neighbor, Andy, Andy Trinca, I've known since we were little kids. I think I was 4, he was 3. We've been in touch, very close. I mean I speak with him nearly every two or three weeks or so, his wife and his family.

SW: Julie, what is your earliest memory in this area?

JO: Well, walking to Grant School. I remember there was a group of kids that got together and walked to school. When I was at Grant, at that time I was in kindergarten, first grade, we used to go to, they call it Pioneer Park now. And it was a cemetery. I remember the big huge trees and we played over there at the cemetery.

SW: What did you play?

JO: I don't remember. I can't remember that. I remember one time we went as a class and we would draw, for art, our instruction was to draw the trees. Even the school used it as a place to go.

SW: As a learning resource.

JO: Yes.

SW: Where did you to go to junior high school?

CO: At University of San Diego High School.

SW: Do you have any memories of that school?

CO: Yes. I had lots of friends over there...you know growing up in Mission Hills, going from St. Vincent's, it was a big school for me to attend. It wasn't overwhelming, but it was exciting.

SW: Because there were so many kids there?

CO: Yeah. And at that time, it wasn't coed, so it was all boys, obviously. And so I had some good friends from there.

SW: Do you maintain ties with some of the people that you met?

CO: Some of them, not too often, because I left that school to go to another school.

SW: And how about you?

JO: I went to Roosevelt. Now, I had left Mission Hills at – probably – the age of seven, and came back in junior high and I went to Roosevelt, just for one year and then my parents put me at St. Vincent's, and so I graduated from St. Vincent's. I still have friends that I met from there.

SW: How was going to St. Vincent's different for you?

JO: Oh, it was very different. Very different from Roosevelt.

SW: Tell me the difference.

JO: It was very much more structured. It was a lot smaller. The nun that taught me, and she was very strict with me, is still there. She is the principal. I liked it. I needed the structure of the small...and she was right on me. If I did anything wrong, she was right there.

SW: How were classes structured? Were they fairly small?

JO: They were very small, and how it was structured, is we always sat at the same desk and the teachers came in and out. You know, nowadays the kids go from class to class.

SW: (Going) to different classes...you didn't do that?

JO: This was a small...and it's still like that at that school, at St. Vincent, because it is such a small school. So we stayed at our desks all the time and our science teacher would come in, our music teacher would come in. That was good, I think for the kids.

SW: That's interesting. Did you wear uniforms?

JO: Yes.

SW: Can you describe them?

JO: Oh, can I remember the uniforms? It was plaid, I know that. I betcha there was some navy blue in it. It was navy blue and green plaid.

SW: Caesar, how did you meet your wife, and where?

CO: Actually, can I make a correction to what I said?

SW: Yes.

CO: And that's the question about the middle school. I did attend St. Vincent for that, but it's confusing nowadays because sometimes...

JO: They change middle schools.

CO: So when you asked about middle schools...

JO: You were talking about high school.

CO: I was talking about high school. Middle school, per se, was at St. Vincent's.

SW: So let's go back to the other question, then — how did you meet your wife?

CO: I met her at Park West Real Estate, 18, 20 years ago.

SW: So that takes us right up to work. What kind of work have you done?

CO: For the last 25 years or so, I've been a real estate broker, now with Prudential California Real Estate.

SW: Is that the company you started with?

CO: Park West Real Estate Corporation was company I started with in 1978.

JO: The company was bought.

SW: What work have you done?

JO: I worked at Park West for 15 years. I started as a secretary and [receptionist, became assistant office manager, then was the marketing coordinator} and then after Prudential bought Park West out, I didn't make the cut, and so I went into lending. That's what I do now. You need the same kind of real estate license to do both.

SW: You've been here for a long time, both of you. Can you tell me how this neighborhood has changed? What do you remember was different about how this whole area and specific areas were?

JO: I think it's become more cosmopolitan. That's a big word, but when I was growing up in Mission Hills, it was very much of a small town feeling and now it's a very – I like the way it's become – but it's more cosmopolitan with all the things to do downtown, it's more chic. There's a lot...you look at what

they're building on Washington Street. You know, in the 50's, it was gas stations, and Ace drugstore. Now it's just more upscale.

CO: Trendy.

JO: More trendy, yeah.

SW: And how about you?

CO: Probably would be the children. I think when we were growing up in the early '50s, you would see lots, in Mission Hills, you would see lots of kids, a bunch of kids playing. Unfortunately, in this day and age, when we protect our kids so dearly, that we don't see that. I don't see kids playing out in the streets like we used to back in the old days when you would have like 80 kids on one block or 300 on another block.

JO: I don't know about that many.

CO: Well, Arguello block (had) a good number of kids.

JO: We used to play in the canyons. Playing in the canyon was a big deal for me. We explored and we went down in them. Now we don't ever let our kids in the canyon. But that was a fun part of growing up here.

SW: What did you play in the canyons?

JO: We played fort. We always built forts. We would have treasure hunts where we would go and find, oh you know, rocks or acorns. I don't remember if there are acorns in the canyons. We would collect different types of foliage, and these were our treasures.

SW: Did these canyons ever have water in them?

JO: Not that I remember.

SW: How about wildlife? Did you see animals down there?

JO: I don't remember seeing wildlife. I see more wildlife now. But maybe that was because I was a kid and didn't pay any attention to it. We never (noticed), in the canyon near where I lived (which is not this one). There were never coyotes in the canyon, but there might have been.

CO: There might have been, but they're nocturnal, so we were...

SW: You just weren't aware of them.

CO: Yeah, maybe.

SW: So you didn't see skunks and opossums and stuff like that?

JO: We probably saw...

CO: Or smelled them or something like that.

JO: I don't remember that. It certainly wasn't a deterrent to playing in the canyon.

SW: And how about your playing in the canyon?

CO: Same thing. Growing up on Ibis Street, we had a canyon down there and we built forts and all the kids played down there. Same thing what Julie did. I think we all basically did stuff like that. And we had bikes and we would ride to another group of kids and friends and play there, and we had a great time.

SW: Do you remember any negatives as a child growing up in this neighborhood?

CO: Negatives? No, I can't think of anything negative other than you got to home for supper or something like that. We were always out late. But something that sticks out like a sore thumb, no. I can't think of anything.

SW: Could you kids play out in the dark at nighttime? Were you allowed to?

CO: Yeah. We used to play late.

JO: I wasn't allowed to.

CO: Yeah. Daylight savings time was great for us during the summer, but I guess in fall and winter we'd come in because it was getting cooler.

JO: When we were teenagers, we would play and we would hang out at that park, at Pioneer Park at night.

SW: What did you do? Uhh, not meaning to get you in trouble here.

JO: Well, when we were teenagers, in fact, I was forbidden to play there, I was not supposed to go there. But we could congregate there. I'm sure there was beer drinking going on, and it just was a hangout for us.

SW: Were there any other hangouts that you could go to?

CO: Yeah, The Fountain over here off of Pine Street and Hortensia. There was a place called The Fountain where we would hang out with the same idea. And, to go over to Mission Valley. And of course, we were teenagers then, so we were out there...

JO: What about Allen Road, did you guys ever hang out on Allen Road?

CO: Well, no, because you guys were up in this part of Mission Hills. I was on what was called South Mission Hills on Ibis Street. All these streets are all cut up.

JO: I was an uptown girl.

CO: Uptown girl. Yeah, but we had hangouts down where we lived, some of my friends had their own places. We would hang out at what we called The Corner, the Italian group, and then we had our own places up here where the Italians lived.

JO: Just on the street?

CO: On the street, yeah.

SW: Tell me about Allen Road.

JO: Allen Road is right...it was called Busses then.

CO: Busses.

JO: Yeah, Busses because the busses went...what's it called now?

CO: Espresso Mio.

JO: Espresso Mio. It's a little coffee show now. It used to be a store, the neighborhood grocery store. And we would hang out there and then there's a road behind that goes all the way down to Mission Valley. And I never went down the road. Some of the kids did, but we would hang out right at the top of the road and near the grocery store.

SW: Did you ever go to movies? And was there anything like that available here?

CO: Yes. At the California Theatre downtown, there was the Fox, the Emporium in Point Loma, there was other ones we used to hang out at, this was before Mission Valley and way before the multiplex theater. In fact, those were major (attractions).

JO: I don't remember going to any of those.

SW: How did you get there?

CO: Well, I remember my mom did not drive, but my friend's aunt would take us when we were kids. They would take a bunch of kids down there, drop them off then pick us up.

SW: Did you ever use any of the rapid public transit?

CO: No, not really. Not to go down there.

SW: I'm interested to find out where you guys went shopping. Now you are raising your children here, so I'm talking about both your memories of your childhood with your parents going shopping, and then later as a married couple. Where did your mom and dad do their grocery shopping?

CO: Grocery shopping...probably the old Safeway that's now a Vons. It's still there. Groceries. For clothing, Penney's up in North Park or downtown at Marston's.

SW: And how about you?

JO: We went to Food Basket. It was called Food Basket, right across from Safeway. And that was grocery shopping. And then Mission Valley was, when I was a teenager, we'd go there for clothes. Montgomery Wards.

CO: Montgomery Wards. That's right.

JO: Yeah, Montgomery Wards. That's where we went.
And now? We still use the same grocery stores. Although there was a grocery store on Goldfinch. What was the name of that grocery store?

CO: Well, there were some mom and pop stores all around where we lived, for example where we lived on Sutter.

JO: Oh yeah.

CO: The Sutter Street Market was there for years. We went there for the quick things. They had candies or soda pop. We used to go there with all the kids. I mean, but for the heavy stuff, you know.

JO: But we still use the same grocery stores. They have different names. Same grocery stores. And for clothes shopping, we use...

CO: Montgomery Wards, like you said.

JO: We don't use...not now.

CO: Oh, now. I'm sorry.

JO: Montgomery Wards is not there anymore. It's closed. But we do use the Valley. Fashion Valley and Mission Valley.

SW: I'm interested in these family stores. These little mom and pops stores. Can you tell me about any more of them?

JO: What was the name of that store?

CO: Which one?

JO: The grocery store on Goldfinch. It was like White, not White Front, but...

CO: Oh. Piggly Wiggly. When we were little, it was called Piggly Wiggly.

SW: I love that name.

JO: I always remember the back door. They used to have a back door and there was a freezer there. The meat part was back there.

CO: Fed Mart. I believe that store was...I can't remember the name...Sol Price. He started there.

JO: Over there?

CO: Yeah.

JO: But anyway, the little mom and pops – Busses, what was the real name of Busses? [It became Keifer's.]

CO: I don't remember...

JO: That was our neighborhood grocery store. My mom would send me for a can of tomato sauce and things like that. Small things.

CO: Ibis Market was another one. It's still there.

JO: Ibis we used a lot when we were at St. Vincent's. Because we would go right across the street to Ibis and pick up whatever we needed. And it's still there.

CO: And the one that they knocked down at the corner of Jackdaw and West Lewis Street now is a parking lot for the church and they have a little preschool. There used to be a little store there. And we used to go there and now it's a parking lot.

JO: And Sutter Street Market's not there anymore.

CO: Sutter Street Market? It's just abandoned. It's there, but has no business.

JO: There's nothing in there.

SW: How about town facilities. Did you have a library, post office? Things like that?

JO: Same library that we go to now is still there. We went...I always went to that little library.

CO: I went to the one right across the street from the existing one right now, that is the original Mission Hills library. Then in the early 50's (or) middle 50's or so, they built the one that's there now across the street. But the one I always remember, the little library, was right next to, what was it called, either James & Scott or Scott & James.

JO: Scott James.

CO: Scott James. Right next door to that on West Washington Street is where the actual library was. Little small building, then they built the one that's there now.

SW: And a post office?

JO: I think we used the one in Hillcrest, which is on University and Richmond, I believe. It's still there. I don't remember going to the post office.

I want to go back to when we were shopping, when we were talking about little shops, because neither one of us mentioned it, but this was a big, big, little store that we went to all the time and that was Ace Drugs and I remember...one of the few memories I have of being little, was that there was an ice cream bar there. What did they call that? A soda fountain.

CO: Soda fountain.

JO: And I remember going there for ice cream. And we went there a lot for the drug store part of it. All the way up until...it was there until...when we got married it wasn't there.

CO: And then around the corner on Goldfinch was a 5 and 10 dime store. We used to buy model cars there and it was a neat little stretch of businesses.

SW: Do you remember any of the other businesses in that particular area?

JO: Ace on the corner. I remember the grocery store was there.

CO: Of course, the pet shop where that...

JO: Oh yeah, the monkeys.

CO: Yeah.

JO: I remember the pet shop.

SW: Tell me about the pet shop.

JO: That's not the same pet shop that's there now, Sheer Delight, it was where the French people...

CO: ...are right now. They used to have a big cage right on the corner where the grass is now. A big cage where they had monkeys there. And we lived on Goldfinch at the time, and they escaped and they came to our porch and we were, you know, we were just little kids. I think there were just three of us then and they were causing a lot of havoc. They were all scared. That's where the pet shop was for years.

SW: Do you remember the name of it?

CO: It was called Mission Hills Pet Shop. I think it was.

SW: What other kinds of animals did they have? Monkeys are rather exotic.

JO: I knew a family in Mission Hills that had monkeys.

SW: Oh really?

JO: They lived right off over the canyon over on Barr. Their whole back of their house was a cage and the monkeys were there.

SW: Do you know what kind of monkeys they were?

JO: They were very small. I would say spider monkeys or something like that. There were two of them.

SW: What color were they?

JO: They were brown. I remember the name...Ron South. Ron and Carmel South. That was the name of the people who lived there.

SW: Can you remember your first house that you lived in?

CO: Yeah. The one on Goldfinch Street. I remember that.

SW: Can you sort of walk through it? When you went in the front door, what did you see? What was it like?

CO: Well, the hardwood floors and the fireplace, living room then the dining room. Built-in china cabinets. One bathroom and it was a two-bedroom house.

SW: Kitchen?

CO: Kitchen. Yeah, small one.

SW: Where was it located?

CO: Right toward the back of the house, right before the back porch.

SW: Did it have hallways?

CO: Yeah, I think there was a hallway to...the bathroom was in the middle and then the two bedrooms.

SW: Did it have a garage?

CO: I think so. I think so.

SW: And what did the front of it look like?

CO: Craftsman style porch with siding.

SW: What color was it?

CO: I think it was gray. Or a light blue or something.

JO: Is it still there?

CO: Still there.

SW: It is. Do you remember the address?

JO: No, it was like 40-something. I was just little.

SW: And then where did you move to after that?

CO: After that, my parents bought over on Ibis Street in 1952, 3781 Ibis Street. My mom still lives there.

SW: And what is that house like?

CO: That was also a craftsman style. It was a two bedroom, one bath. Now over the years, my dad remodeled it and now it's, I think a four-bedroom, five-bedroom, one level, hardwood floors. Now unfortunately, the old world charm was taken out and plastered.

SW: I can see why you value this house (we are in now). You've grown up in this kind of home.

CO: Yeah. I think being in the business, I appreciate old style houses.

SW: Okay, and how about you, Julie, what is your earliest memory of your house?

JO: There was only one, and that was the house that my mom and dad are still living in and my earliest memory, I must have been between 2 and 4. And my dad had roses. I was sitting up at...there were a lot of stairs. And I remember seeing my mom, she was coming across the street and she smiled at me, like that hardly ever happened. I just remember that. I remember her smiling at me. And that's the only house I remember. When you walked in, to me this is a very little version of that house.

SW: Oh really?

JO: Yeah. You walk in and there's a huge living room with high, high ceilings and beams and a big fireplace and very formal dining room.

SW: And where was the kitchen from there?

JO: The kitchen was, if you looked at the front of the house and there's the living room, the dining room and the kitchen. And there's a little breakfast room that had a round...it was a round breakfast room with windows, very Spanish. And then the kitchen was long and narrow. And it was three bedrooms and one bath.

SW: And was it one story?

JO: One story, but it was up high off the ground.

SW: So the ground was sloped?

JO: Yeah. It's Aloha Place and it's called the High Side. All the houses have stairs, they have their garages on the street and then the stairs going up and the houses are built up higher.

SW: So that's called the High Side.

JO: It was called the High Side of the street.

SW: Of the street. And on the other side?

JO: On the other side was canyon and those houses were all built up to street level and would go into the canyon.

SW: Oh really? So they hung out (over the canyon).

JO: Exactly.

SW: Oh wow. That's pretty neat. Let's ask you about buildings that you particularly have noticed in this neighborhood. You're a realtor; you've seen a lot of them. Which ones just kind of struck you as particularly interesting? You've sold some, been in some.

CO: Well, of course the big one is the Guyman Estate on Sunset Boulevard. It has a big tree. You can see that house. That is the largest house. And there are so many, so many nice big homes. Even the smaller homes have a lot of character in them. I can't think of just one in particular, there are so many. I'd need another two hours to talk to you, but I can't think of one that just sticks out.

SW: What is your feel for the types of architecture in this area? What do you particularly notice?

CO: The craftsman style, of course, if very popular, very sought after. Of course, the Spanish. Very, very sought after. Then there's, well, there are some English Tudors here and there. But mostly the craftsman type, I'll say.

SW: Do you recall any particular incidents in this neighborhood that kind of caught the general attention? Anything unusual that happened?

CO: That caught the general attention of the public?

SW: Yeah, newsworthy items.

CO: Well, I remember one time there was a doctor, I believe, that wanted to open up a...at the corner of West Lewis and Randolph. He wanted to open up...I won't say a halfway house, but something to do with having people come and...

JO: Stay there. They were delinquents.

CO: Delinquents or recovering drug addicts or something like that. And there was a big whoop-de-do – if I can use that word – and all the neighborhood people had a town meeting and...

JO: What about when that woman got shot by the Mafia? Remember?

CO: Oh yeah.

JO: She did. [Her name was Mrs. Rand] she lived on Bandini.

CO: On Bandini, Bandini Street.

JO: And it was...it's even in the movies. I think that her husband was a doctor or...I don't know. I think he was a doctor and he somehow got involved, and they shot her.

SW: How long ago was this?

CO: Oh, let's see...

JO: Early 60's. About then?

CO: Probably. I think we were working at Park West when that happened. But definitely, that was a...

JO: Definitely newsworthy.

CO: Was on the news.

SW: How about clubs? Have you been members of any kind of social groups that were focused in this area?

JO: St. Vincent's.

CO: Yeah.

JO: My parents all our lives were members of St. Vincent's, different organizations at St. Vincent's. The Italian Catholic Federation, even though they weren't Italian. That was a big, big part of our life. A lot of functions that we went to were because of that club. All of our family, even as adults, we were active. Although Caesar was...you were, what's that, that you were the president for a little while?

CO: Oh, the Mission Hills Business Association. Oh yeah. I was president of that in '85 and '86. But that was with my business, (it was a) business career type organization.

However, I know when we were growing up, there were clubs, the Italian Committee had a Sicilian Club. These guys used to wear jackets, they were white, with the white lettering in the back called Sicilians. And I came in at the tail end of it. They haven't been here for a long time. I remember when I was a little kid, we used to see them walk down the streets, and I went through the initiation and got in, and although I'm not Sicilian or Italian, I knew a lot of the fellows and that was a club, with a jacket and colors. Soon after that, it just dissolved.

SW: What was the purpose of that club?

CO: Oh, I don't know. It was...I remember they would just congregate and just walk down the streets with these jackets on. I remember one time they went into St. Vincent's, the old church, believe it or not, they went in there and I don't know if they said a prayer or something at the old church, and then they took off. That I do remember. I mean they had a certain respect for the church stuff, but they still they went out...you know...

JO: Were they hoods?

SW: Yeah, I was going to ask.

CO: Yeah, well, you know, I think it was just a club. I know that later on, my friend Anthony Trinka and his dad were involved with the fishmongers. All Italian...

END OF SIDE 1

Tape 1, Side 2

SW: This is Susan Walter – the second side of the tape – I'm interviewing Caesar and Julie Oriol, and the date is October 19, 2003. Go ahead with your memory about the...

CO: Fishmongers?

SW: The fishmongers.

CO: That was later on and this was, the Italian community really are very clannish (with their) fellow Italians. They like to...I don't want to say stick together, but they like to have others gather together for fun and eating and whatnot. So I remember the older Italians – I'm talking a lot older, 25 years older than myself – who for years and years used to have the first Friday or some Friday get together. And man, I tell you, it was great food and great camaraderie with the fellas and all that. I can remember a lot of that even at my earlier age. The Italian community was really a tight knit group. Always geared to just having a good time. Even when they used to go to the beach. You used to see all the...

JO: The cabanas.

CO: The cabanas at the beach. It was always... with the Italians, it was a big family oriented get together. And very strong. That doesn't happen anymore. None of that stuff. You know, Highway 8, and 5 came through Little Italy, what they call Little Italy now. And many of them just moved out of the area. And I was kinda sad.

SW: Are you aware of any of the houses that were literally moved as a result of 5 being put in?

CO: I've seen some houses moved but not because of that, though. I know some of the houses (that have been moved), but not because of 5.

SW: Can you tell me some names of some of the people you knew in the Italian community?

CO: Well, Giacalone was a big family. Of course, my friend Andy Trinca and his sister lived next door to us for years. The Torontos, the Filliponnis. I mean there are a lot of them. Guido...

JO: Scuitos.

CO: Scuitos. Big fishing industry. San Diego had the largest fishing industry in the country. The largest. Unfortunately, that went away too. A lot of fishermen started to either fish for other countries and of course, the Portuguese in the Point Loma area were then fishing too. I understand the Portuguese were then there, but it was mostly Italians here on this side.

SW: Did you ever see the family situation where the father or the husband was out to sea and the family was still at home?

JO: Many, many of our friends.

CO: Even my brother right now, my younger brother, he's kept on a boat. That's his life. And he can't wait to go back out.

JO: Their boys were raised by their mother.

SW: Can you tell me a little about that?

CO: Well, I mean her name is, she's in the Scuito family. She raised...

JO: She was used to it. Her father, many of her relatives did the same thing. The women would all gather together and support each other because that was part of their lifestyle. They knew how to deal with it.

CO: The moving, financing, banking.

JO: They stuck together and the wives would support each other and her sister is married to...

CO: A fisherman.

JO: And he owns...he's gone all the time too. And so it's kind of they got used to it. They got used to their husbands being away all the time.

SW: Do you think there is a difference in how the families would have worked when dad's back as opposed to when dad's not home?

JO: Oh yeah.

CO: Yeah, I'm sure.

JO: I think there is definitely a difference. Dad is...the kids act different when dad's home.

SW: Oh really?

JO: I think they do. I know with my sister-in-law, that was very common. They didn't act the same when he was away. So it's hard for them to communicate. When he's here, they are acting all nice. It was part of their life. They were used to it.

SW: It occurs to me it would take on an entirely different meaning if they say "Wait 'til dad gets home" if the dad isn't going to be home for weeks.

JO: I think that the women are very conscientious about how hard it is for the man to be so far away and so they filter what goes to him. They filter the information that they are giving him over the...now they have...now they can really talk to each other. Before, they talked to them once a week on a...

CO: Or once month or something like that on the two way radio.

JO: It was a very, very hard way of communicating, and so they filtered what went to the men. Because you can't sit there and complain about everything. And they'd say "Over" and it was two seconds away.

SW: So it was by radio, then?

JO: At that time. Now it's different.

SW: So tell me a bit about your brother.

CO: He's a typical fisherman, you know, loves the sea. And he's always ready to go back out. He makes about 16 to 18 trips a year.

He's done quite well. I wanted to say; I don't know if I can add something...

SW: Go for it.

CO: I graduated from San Diego High School in '68 and in Mission Hills, about 90 percent of the kids that went to public schools went to San Diego High. There was a sliver of Mission Hills that went to...

JO: Point Loma.

CO: ...but most of them went to San Diego High. We had a good mix of kids at that school. We had the Mexican-Americans from the Logan Heights area. We had Chinese from the downtown area, and we had the Italian-Americans here. We had the Irish community from St. Vincent's up here. Because St. Vincent's is an Irish school. In North Park, they had a small group of Greeks, on Park Boulevard near North Park. And of course, the Blacks from Logan Heights too.

SW: So they all went to the high school?

CO: So they went to the high school. It was such a good mix and diversity of United States families. They all had different cultures. It was a nice time, in the late 60's.

SW: Do you think there were any ethnic tensions here?

CO: Here?

SW: Yeah. At your school.

CO: At school? No. There wasn't. That's why I was saying it was really a neat time, actually, in Mission Hills. We would meet guys from Logan Heights and the city. We made friends with them. I've got good friends that I've...we don't stay in touch, but we (see each other) at a reunion or something, and vice versa, they met kids from Mission Hills that they never would have gotten to meet when they went to grammar school there in North Park, Hillcrest and Logan Heights.

JO: I don't think that's happening now.

CO: So now I think...it's a little different now.

JO: Now a lot of Mission Hills kids don't go there.

CO: That's true, very true nowadays. Now they go to private school somewhere else. So that is a big change. I remember seeing guys in my class who grew up with their doctor fathers, you know. They weren't better than anybody else. They were all taught the same.

SW: So all the different economic levels were equal.

CO: At school.

JO: That changed by the time I went to school. My parents wouldn't send me to San Diego High. They took me out of Roosevelt and then it was Catholic school all the rest of the way. I think things started to change.

SW: Do remember restaurants here that were important in the neighborhood or that you yourself went to?

CO: Not for me, particularly. My mom did all the cooking and we never really went out to eat.

JO: And Mexican families, they don't like to go out. Everybody else can't cook properly. My father, he would complain about everybody else's cooking. And he certainly wouldn't go to a Mexican restaurant.

SW: Oh really?

JO: No way. It was always bad. Because only they knew how to make the best food. But there was a restaurant that I remember. It was where Gelato is right now. And it's at the bottom of Washington Street on India. What's that street?

CO: It's on India. It used to be called Five Points.

JO: But the restaurant was an Italian restaurant and I always say it was Gitano's or...I think it was called Gitano's. I don't know that for sure. It was an Italian restaurant, it was owned by Italian people and we used to go there for pizza and it was one of the few treats that we had going out to dinner. And my dad

used to sing with the Italian guy, with the owner. I can't remember his name. They were both big singers and so they would sing together.

CO: Another was the Chicken Pie Shop that used to be in Hillcrest. The Chicken Pie Shop was there for years. Although we never really went to that.

JO: I did.

CO: But the Chicken Pie Shop up there in Hillcrest was very, very well noted. In fact, it was famous.

JO: That was a nice place.

SW: So both of you grew up eating traditional Mexican food. Where did your moms get the specific items that she needed in order to cook it?

JO: My mother would go down to Logan Heights when she needed the masa and the specific stuff. I don't think my family only ate Mexican food. We ate pork chops and all that other stuff.

CO: Spaghetti. My mom used to make Italian food. Growing up with a next door (Italian) neighbor and (Italians) all around us. My mom loved to cook and try things and so she had own style.

SW: So you had international cuisine there.

CO: We were very fortunate.

JO: But when the occasion calls for it, like at Christmas, we always made tamales. And so for that, she would go to a Logan Heights market.

SW: Did you do a big family thing for tamales?

CO: Oh yes.

JO: Oh, it was awful.

SW: It was awful?

JO: Because we had...it's a lot of work.

SW: I know.

JO: I had the spreading job. And my father would, you know, he never cooked, but all of a sudden *he* was the master of it. And we would put too much meat in it and we would get in trouble, and we didn't spread it thin enough. It was a big deal.

SW: Did you ever put olives or potatoes or carrots or anything like that?

JO: We don't. But oh my God!

SW: You were purists.

JO: My girlfriend, who I make tamales with now, puts in olives, one olive in the middle. And potatoes, oh my gosh!

SW: Never, huh?

JO: No!

CO: It's the same thing (with my family). It had to be either pork or beef.

JO: We didn't even put chicken in. It was pork...we made pork tamales. That was all.

CO: And of course, the sweet ones.

JO: Pineapple.

CO: Pineapple. We loved the sweet ones.

SW: Did you have flan for dessert?

CO: Flan? On occasion, not too often.

JO: I don't remember having flan. But we did make it. Our first housekeeper when we were married, though, she would make flan for us.

SW: Did your family follow the Mexican traditions like Quinceañeras, or observance of Mexican holidays?

CO: My sister – I don't remember if she had a Quinceañera or not.

JO: All her grandchildren have had Quinceañeras, so I'm thinking that they did.

CO: They probably did. I'll have to say yes. But for my own sister, I don't remember. I just don't remember.

JO: I'm sure she did.

CO: She probably did.

JO: We didn't.

SW: Did you observe Diez y Seis de Septiembre, and Cinco de Mayo, or Día de los Muertos?

CO: No, we never did that.

JO: We didn't.

CO: I know down in Mexico they, well, Cinco de Mayo is more of this side of the border.

JO: But September 16 is a big deal.

CO: Yeah. That's when they had their independence against Spain, the other was against the French.

SW: Okay. Let's go through the year with some holidays. What, as kids, did you do for New Years?

CO: I know it was illegal, but I remember, it was the only time my dad would shoot anything, was at New Years.

JO: Oh my God!

CO: I remember that.

JO: My dad never shot a gun! On the north side, we didn't shoot guns.

CO: Well, we were on the south side.

SW: At midnight, then?

CO: Yeah. I have to admit my dad did.

JO: Wow.

CO: But that was the only time. We never saw the pistol. It was against the law. Back then it was, I guess. I don't remember.

SW: Did you ever do the visiting type of thing at New Years?

CO: At New Years?

SW: Uh-huh.

CO: No.

JO: I babysat every New Years. I can't remember when I was little. I remember Christmas when I was little, we would go to midnight Mass and I fell asleep every time.

CO: And it was midnight Mass, too. It wasn't...

JO: It was truly midnight, yes.

CO: Now it's at 10 o'clock.

JO: It was later then. I mean now, it starts at 10 o'clock, but at that time, it was more midnight Mass.

CO: Midnight Mass for sure.

SW: What did you do for Christmas?

JO: Our family, we had a big party Christmas Eve, go to midnight Mass, come back and open presents.

SW: And you?

CO: We used to go my cousins. We didn't go to Mass. (We went) to my uncle's house. And they had twelve kids, and we used to go down there, us four...

SW: Lots of kids!

CO: Yeah. It was a big whoop-de-doo all the kids together. We used to go down, with all of us together, it was a big family thing.

JO: You guys didn't go to midnight Mass?

CO: When we were older, but not when we were little. When we were older.

SW: What did you do for Easter?

CO: We did little eggs and stuff like that, but I don't remember... Getting dressed up. I know my mom used to get all dressed up. But I don't remember being out with any other family.

JO: I don't remember any Easters.

SW: How about Fourth of July?

CO: Mission Beach. Mission Beach all the time, we used to go down there. Spend time there in the long lines of traffic. We would spread this blanket. All of us would watch fireworks at Mission Beach.

SW: Did you ever do fireworks yourself as a family?

CO: No.

SW: Okay. And Julie?

JO: We could see the fireworks from where I lived and we would walk down two blocks and stand there. There was an open lot. It's still open and you could stand there and see the fireworks. And that's pretty much all I remember.

SW: Did you ever have picnics? Family picnics?

JO: Everybody would come to my house. We would have barbecues at the house, but I don't remember having picnics. My mom didn't like the sun. She wanted us out of the sun.

CO: Our house was a big...it was always at the house. Rarely did we go out to the park. I think we do that more now.

JO: I think...you know what I think? When I was older, my family went out with the Italian Catholic Federation, the ICF. The ICF would have these big huge, and those again were the Italians that would get the cabanas, and be out at the beach, at the water. And we would go with them. But that was when I was older.

SW: Thanksgiving?

CO: At our house, it was always a traditional turkey.

JO: They didn't have mashed potatoes at their house. When I first married Caesar, I was bringing something and there, gosh, they had it *at* 12 o'clock noon every...

CO: It was *at* 12 noon.

JO: ...and so here I come, walking in probably at 12:30, with mashed potatoes and everybody is just like, "Oh! Why did you bring that?" Mashed potatoes is a very common Thanksgiving...but they had the same thing every Thanksgiving and it did not include mashed potatoes.

CO: For sure, we always had the turkey, and all those things.

JO: Turkey and the same pies and other items.

We went to L.A. every Thanksgiving. Our relatives lived in L.A. It was very fun. It was big, like Caesar's other side of his family which had a lot of kids. It was very big and all my cousins were up there. The men would play poker and see who could eat the hottest foods. They would have sweat pouring off them. And it was fun. That's what we did every year.

SW: How about Halloween? Did you guys go trick or treating?

JO: Mm-hm.

CO: Mm-hm.

SW: Oh she's smiling. You've got stories. Tell me about your Halloween.

JO: It was fun. We trick or treated in this neighborhood, up until the time I was 17, I trick or treated.

SW: What kind of costumes did you wear?

JO: Oh gosh, I can't remember. But they were always homemade. You did not buy one. I can't remember buying a costume. My mom and dad were always a little weird. They would never open the door. They would always turn off all the lights.

SW: Really?

CO: Yeah.

JO: They were weird about that.

CO: We had the same thing, we were in the same mode. If somebody was brave enough, they would open the door at the knock on the door. We would make our own costumes, too.

JO: We were allowed to go out alone. All of our friends would gather together and we would go traipsing up and down the neighborhood by ourselves, just the kids.

CO: You could in those days. You didn't have to have a flashlight.

JO: We didn't even have a flashlight. We didn't have our parents.

CO: We didn't have a guardian with us. Those were really neat times. Very safe.

SW: Do you remember your costumes?

CO: No, I don't.

SW: I wanted to ask both of you. Is there anything in particular that you want to say now about your life here in this neighborhood?

CO: Well, I know that I was able to travel around, about here. For our purpose, Mission Hills was the best spot to be in. And I can't think of a better place to be, close to the water, in a neat city – San Diego, state of California, in this country. I love Mission Hills because I love the old world charm. And they're friendly people, our neighbors all around here are neat people.

JO: Some of them have been here for so long.

CO: I've been up, for example, in California, we have visited San Mateo and all the neat homes up there, and Pasadena and parts of L.A. and they're nice and neat homes. San Marcos is another one. I think for our purpose, for me, Mission Hills is the ideal spot.

SW: How has this neighborhood really changed? Or hasn't it? I know that Hillcrest has become sort of a gay enclave. Has that affected you?

JO: I think that's part of the cosmopolitan type of change that I was talking about.

CO: Hey, I kinda like it.

JO: I like it. It's very diverse. I like the diversity of Mission Hills now. I don't remember that diversity when I was growing up, although it might have been there. I don't remember it. But I love the diversity now. I think we were pretty blessed to grow up in Mission Hills. That's unique. I was adopted in, I didn't feel...I'm lucky that my parents when they came to California, San Diego, they stopped in Old Town and then they just naturally came up the hill to look for houses. And there they were lucky, because they could easily have gone in another direction. So I think we were very blessed to live here.

I'm sad that the schools, that the public schools have not kept up. I'm not quite sure why; I think the economic level of the people that live in Mission Hills has grown. It's higher now than it used to be, and I think that because of that, so many people now put their kids in private school. And that's why the public school hasn't had to keep up. We like the diversity of the public schools. But they haven't...it hasn't kept up in this neighborhood. There hasn't been a demand for it, because of the private schools, in this section.

CO: I think the gay community is highly welcome for myself, when traveling to the bigger cities of the world. We've seen a lot of that. Every big city has their groups like that which is really a way of growing. It's good to have that type of diversity. I think we're here in this pocket of Mission Hills surrounded by freeways and we're very blessed to be up here on a hill and to be able to get out and about and to have the diversity.

SW: Thank you very much. This has been just wonderful.

PAUSE IN TAPE

SW: I had forgotten to ask Julie and Caesar about this beautiful house they live in right now. Can you tell me when you first moved into it and about the house?

CO: The house was built in 1923 and has a formal living room, dining room, Spanish style house with the original beams, the original wall sconces, the original lighting fixtures.

JO: Original curtain rods. Which we found in the garage, by the way, when we moved in.

CO: Built in china cabinet, you saw that.

SW: Mm-hm.

CO: And we bought it and moved in – in 1995 – from a family that had moved in here in 1935. And they were the second owners. The original owner built it, lived in it for awhile, and sold it to them. It was acquired in 1935.

JO: Their two kids grew up here, and then they were old and they sold it. They were in their 70's when they sold it.

CO: 70's when they sold it. The mother was 95. But everything is original as far as the architectural design and all.

JO: We loved it when we walked into it. When we first drove up and walked in, it was kind of a mess. Not structurally a mess, but cosmetically, it was a mess. There was the walls were yellow, discolored from smoke, and there were bushes all up the front there. Bushes all over the whole front. But when we walked in, we knew.

CO: We knew, we could envision what it would look like. The hardwood floors (were in such good condition), you could see they had old-fashioned carpeting for decades.

JO: There were three layers of linoleum in the kitchen and the bathroom.

CO: We pulled everything up. Everything was kind of neat, because everything was nice underneath. And we were very fortunate. And there is a little studio in the back that was built later on than 1923.

JO: And we kept the same phone number. We have the same phone number. Since 1934, or 35, whenever they moved out.

SW: Oh, so cool.

CO: Same phone number, which we are going to transfer to my brother, who lives across the canyon over there on...

JO: The Oriols do that all the time. They all have the same phone numbers that they had...

CO: So when we...

SW: You can get it back again. Does your house have its original bathroom fixtures, kitchen fixtures?

JO: No.

CO: Well in the bathroom, the actual pedestal we brought back in. It was downstairs.

SW: Oh really?

CO: We got the original pedestal. We had it refinished. We had to buy the fixtures because the original fixture is downstairs. And I had to buy out of Chicago the right looking fixture. It's almost identical to the one that I still have. So the fixtures are almost the same.

JO: Our kitchen is still 1923. It doesn't have a dishwasher or (that sort of stuff). It has an old stove and the only modern thing is the refrigerator.

CO: Yeah. The kitchen nook is still the same. All the screens are the same as they built in 1923.

SW: I can see this little cabinet. Is that one of those ironing boards?

CO: No, that's a California cooler.

SW: It's a cooler! Oh, way cool. That is so neat.

CO: And of course, the balcony...

JO: We had to rebuild it.

CO: But we built it with the same...

JO: Same chains.

CO: Chains, that holds up the balcony like an old castle. And it's still the same chains holding up the balcony. Same facing color when it was built and same awning that they had. It was full of bushes like she said, and it was all ripped and we took it down and fixed it. Everything is basically the same.

SW: Well, it is absolutely beautiful. You've done a gorgeous job here.

CO: Thank you.

SW: And once again, thanks again.

END OF INTERVIEW

7. ANNE PRUSA

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
June 27, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Anne Prusa on June 27, 2003, in the dining room of her home. No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Anne Prusa provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document, either in bracketed [ ], or as footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
questionnaire	filled in by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	NA

Transcript:

AP = Anne Prusa
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: Could you please tell me your full name?

AP: My name is Anne Frances Prusa.

SW: This is Susan Walter and I am interviewing Anne Prusa on June 27, 2003 in her dining room. The purpose of the interview is to gather information from people with a long-term or expert experience in the project area which is called Uptown. The recording and final documents of this oral history interview will become the property of the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego and they will be archived at the San Diego Historical Society.

SW: Can you tell me when you were born, please?

AP: I was born on January 15, 1922 in San Diego at Mercy Hospital. Except I think at that time it was called St. Joseph's Hospital and it is now called Mercy.

SW: What was your mother's name?

AP: Julia Creary Raney.

SW: And your father's name?

AP: Charles Benjamin Raney.

SW: And where did they meet?

AP: They met in Pensacola, Florida, where he was in flight school.

SW: How did they come out here?

AP: As soon as he graduated from flight school, he received orders to San Diego.

SW: Which military branch was he attached with, do you know?

AP: He was a pilot and he was with Squadron, I believe it was VJ6 on North Island.

SW: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

AP: Yes. I have a sister and I did have two brothers. One of them passed away three or four years ago.

SW: Who is the oldest?

AP: I'm the oldest. My brother that has died was a year younger than I and then when we were teenagers, my parents had two more children with built-in babysitters, of course.

SW: So how long have you lived in this house that you're in right now?

AP: Seventy-five years. When I was 6 years old, my father bought the house.

SW: Do you have any early memories of first moving? You were pretty young.

AP: Well, yes, I remember when my father brought me over to look at the house. There were two neighbor girls peeking over the fence next door and one of them was the daughter of the man who had built the house, who lived around the corner. He built the house to move his own family into and then changed his mind and decided to sell it and he and my father were friends in the Navy and when my father found out that he had this house for sale, he came to look at it and liked it very much and bought it.

SW: So did you become friends with these two girls?

AP: Oh yes. One of them lived right next door and the other one lived around the corner.

SW: Were they your age?

AP: Just a little bit older. One was about three years older and then I think the other girl was probably four years older.

SW: Do you remember their names?

AP: Yes. Virginia Muns. That was her name at that time and Mary Jeannette Gardner and we played a lot together, especially Virginia and I and had a lot of fun.

SW: Tell me, what was this neighborhood like when you were a little girl? I'm sure it's changed.

AP: Oh yes. It was all houses. There weren't anything like condos around here. And it was just like, it was a small town, really. Nothing was here but the Navy and I don't know, it doesn't seem like there was a whole of that. But it was just a small town. A whole lot different.

SW: Where did you go to school?

AP: I went to school...I first started at the Training School of State College, which at that time was at Park Boulevard and El Cajon Boulevard. And Virginia and I both went there for a couple of years and then it moved out to the college area, what is now the college area and so then at that time, we went to Alice Birney.

SW: Was Alice Birney a school already there, or had they built it?

AP: No. I don't think it was already built. No, they built it. And where the ed center is now, was Horace Mann Junior High School. So that's where we went when we graduated from Alice Birney. We went to Horace Mann.

SW: And then high school?

AP: Then high school. I started at San Diego High, went there for a year and a half and my father got orders to Pearl Harbor.

SW: Oh really?

AP: So we went there for two years.

SW: Were you there during the attack?

AP: No, we left there two years before that. My brother was quite disappointed that we weren't still there, that we missed all the excitement.

SW: I don't know. I think it's better that you're here.

AP: Well, we lived right close to where the action was. In fact, where the *Arizona* went down, we used to swim there and it was right near our house. Well, it wasn't a house. We lived in the chief's quarters on the base.

SW: Who were some of your other neighbors around here in this home?

AP: Well, let's see. There were the Clardy family across the street that had three kids, two boys and a girl. And across the alley was an elderly couple who had been advised to come to a better climate from the East because of his health and he built a swimming pool in his back yard and he let some of us kids, he made it almost like a little club. There were only certain kids that could go in that pool. But the only thing that he required was that when it was time to empty the pool and clean it out, we all had to get in there with scrub brushes and scrub it.

SW: So you had to help.

AP: Oh yes. But other than that, he let us go in whenever we wanted and he would come out with soda pop and all kinds of refreshments for us.

SW: Oh boy, I'll bet that was a big neighborhood...

AP: It was wonderful. And of course, kids from all around came and wanted to go in, but you know, he just couldn't have so many kids. After he died, his wife emptied the pool and didn't...yeah, no more kids in there.

SW: Did the pool have anything like a diving board or anything? What was it like?

AP: I don't think it had a diving board. I think we just dove off the side.

SW: Was it all one deep pool or did it have shallow...

AP: No, it had shallow and deep, as I remember. But we sure had a lot of fun there. We just loved it.

SW: I'll bet you did.

AP: And we didn't mind getting in there to scrub the sides of the pool. He didn't have anything like filters or anything. You just had the water in there and then he's siphon it out when it got...I don't remember. I suppose he had a certain length of time that he could leave it and then he'd have to siphon it out and we'd all get in there and scrub.

SW: Were there fences between all these yards at this time?

AP: I think so, yeah.

SW: So you would go around to the front of his house...

AP: Well, we could go through the back yard.

SW: Can you tell me some of your memories of school, grade school in particular? Who were your teachers and your friends, any interesting events?

AP: Actually, I can't remember a whole lot. What I can remember most of all, and it wasn't really related to school was when we kids would hike down to Mission Valley. We'd just hike down to the side of the canyon there. We'd usually take our lunch and at that time, there was just a little dirt road down there and there were Japanese vegetable gardens and a couple of dairies and we would sometimes stop at one of the vegetable gardens and pick a couple vegetables to go with our lunch. And sometimes we went swimming down there. Other times, I guess we just hung around. I don't know. But then coming back, we always picked a bouquet of wildflowers for our mothers. Because at that time, the sides of the canyon there were just covered with all kinds of wildflowers. They're not there anymore.

SW: Do you remember what they looked like, what type of flower they were?

AP: Well, there were...different colors and I can't think now of the names of them. In my old age, I'm finding it hard to remember names of things.

SW: That's okay. But there were brightly different colors?

AP: Yes. Yes. And we could bring a beautiful bouquet to our mothers. We just loved doing that.

SW: That must've been fun. So any other stories about school then that you can recall? Did you ever get in trouble, did you ever have...how about school events? Did they have open house, that sort of thing?

AP: I guess so. I can't really remember open house. But I think they must've had for the parents to come.

SW: Did you have school plays?

AP: I don't think I was ever in one, if we did. We must've had something. I don't know what we did.

SW: Did you walk to school?

AP: Oh yes. Always. And we walked to church and we walked every place.

SW: So did your family have a car?

AP: Yes.

SW: But the children tended to be on their own and walk someplace.

AP: Yes. Every Saturday afternoon, we would go to the Egyptian Theatre, which is now the Park Theatre, and that is about to be torn down, I guess. And we always took 15 cents with us, as I remember. Ten cents to get in the movie and 5 cents to buy a candy bar and all of us kids would go.

SW: Do you remember any of the types of movies you saw? Do you remember a favorite one?

AP: No, but I remember there was always a serial that would end at some exciting moment and you would have to wait until next Saturday to find out what happened.

SW: Was that like the Perils of Pauline?

AP: Yes. Something like that.

SW: What kind of candy bars did you eat?

AP: There was a little store that is on the corner of Cleveland and Meade was there when I was a child. And it's still there.

SW: Still there. Yeah, I stopped in there.

AP: It's still there. And until recently, was owned by the same people and I'm not sure if they've gotten it back now or not. But anyway, when we were coming home from school, we would always stop there and we would buy what they'd call "Lucky Bites." They were chocolates and most all of them had white centers, but there were a few with pink centers. They cost a penny apiece and if you got one with a pink center, you got a free candy bar. And that was so exciting. We would stand there and look and look to see if we could see any pink peeking out and we sometimes asked the man in the store could he find us a pink one.

SW: So were they packaged?

AP: No. No, they were loose, as I remember. But they were about that big around. They were just regular size chocolates. But they only cost a penny.

SW: Did you patronize that store for other things besides your candy?

AP: Very little. At that time, there was a grocery store over here on Maryland and we used that more.

SW: So that was where your mom got your groceries?

AP: Yes. Well, I think maybe she went to the bigger stores for most of the groceries, but if she needed something extra, she'd send one of us over to the store on Maryland to get it.

SW: So she'd give you some money and you'd walk over and get it?

AP: Yeah. In those days, we didn't even have to lock our doors when we left. Now it's a lot different.

SW: Where did your mother do the grocery shopping?

AP: I don't know if it was Piggly Wiggly or Safeway at that time. I feel it was Piggly Wiggly and I'm not even sure where it was. I think it was somewhere on Park Boulevard, I think.

SW: Did your mother go shopping for clothes in the neighborhood? Where did she buy your clothes and furnishings and stuff?

AP: I don't know. I don't remember a whole lot about my childhood, which seems funny. A lot of people do remember everything about their childhood, and then other people don't.

SW: When you were in junior high. Let's move up a grade or so ahead. Do you have any memories of that school and activities that happened there?

AP: Well, I remember we were more interested in boys by then. But I can't really remember any special activities. We must've had a lot of them.

SW: How about high school? Anything interesting happen in high school?

AP: Well, when we were in Pearl Harbor and I was going to high school there, my girlfriend and I were out on Waikiki Beach one day and a man came up behind her and tucked in the tag of her bathing suit that

was sticking out. And we turned around and it was a movie star. Starts with an "E" I think. Oh gosh. Why can't I remember his name?

SW: Errol Flynn?

AP: Yes, that's who it was. Errol Flynn. It was Errol Flynn. We were so excited about that. And my father got orders to come back to San Diego in May of that year when I was about to graduate. So I had to miss the prom and they mailed me my diploma and all that.

SW: That must've been disappointing.

AP: It was.

SW: How about your friends across the street? You told me you had a friend who knew somebody rather famous in that area.

AP: Yes. Turned out to be famous. Did you want me to say their name?

SW: Yeah.

AP: Betty Clardy across the street was attending San Diego State and I was attending San Diego High School and she became engaged to Gregory Peck, who at that time was Eldred Peck. His real name is Eldred Gregory Peck. But he dropped the Eldred. But anyway, at that time, he was just a shy young man, very nice and very quiet, but he was always over there at the Clardy's, of course. Later, when he went to Berkeley, and her parents couldn't afford Berkeley, they gradually decided that they would break the engagement and they did. So she didn't end up marrying him. But he did drive me to school one day when I was late. It's exciting now to think of it, but it wasn't then. It was just Eldred.

SW: That's a great story. Did your mother work outside of the home?

AP: No. She was a housewife.

SW: And your father was in the military?

AP: He was a Navy pilot.

SW: Was that the entire time you were growing up?

AP: Yes. Before she was married, she worked some, but after she was married, she didn't. In those days, husbands didn't like their wives to work. They wanted to feel that they could support their family and they wanted their wives to take care of the children and of course, it was great for us to have her home so that when we came home...oh I can remember one thing that happened when I was in grammar school at Alice Birney. They had a program where whoever we had, we had some baby chickens there in the classroom and whoever behaved the best, got to take home an egg. And one day, I got to bring the egg home. I dropped it on the way home. So all I could do was tell my mother about it. I couldn't show it to her or anything.

SW: Oh. That's sad. What did your family do on weekends when your dad was off work? Did you have family outings?

AP: We didn't travel much because my father, he didn't like to travel. I guess we went to the beach. We'd have picnics at the beach and on Sunday afternoon, I think we almost always went to Fenn's Ice Cream Store at Sixth and University, where they sold that green ice cream...

SW: Pistachio?

AP: Pistachio nut ice cream. And my mother just loved that. I think, well for a long time, anyway, every Sunday afternoon, we'd go there for ice cream. And that was exciting.

SW: What did you do for holidays? Did you celebrate New Year's in your family?

AP: I don't remember that we did anything special. My father was a very thrifty person. And he didn't want to spend money on anything that was frivolous and unnecessary.

SW: Did you have birthday parties?

AP: Yeah, we had birthday parties.

SW: Tell me about what that was usually like.

AP: Well, I guess we just had all the neighborhood kids and we'd play games and had prizes.

SW: Had a cake?

AP: Yeah, always a birthday cake. My mother was a very good cake maker. When she was married, she couldn't even boil water, I don't think. She didn't know how to do anything. In fact, the first time she ever cooked bacon for my father, she put Crisco in the pan first.

SW: I'll bet it didn't stick. Did you go to the local church?

AP: Yes. It's the Park Boulevard Methodist Church and the interesting part was that when my mother was growing up, there were eight kids in her family and her father was an Episcopalian and her mother was a Methodist and half of the kids went to church with the father and half with their mother and she went with her father to the Episcopal church. So when we moved here onto Cleveland Avenue, the Episcopal church was way downtown. Of course, in those days, that was way downtown. But the Methodist church was within walking distance, so she decided that would be good for us kids to go there.

SW: Has the church changed since when you were a kid? Do you remember any building or anything like that?

AP: The buildings haven't changed. The church has closed since that time. The church closed in 1994. We just walked to church every Sunday and sometimes she would play the piano for the Sunday school, but she didn't regularly attend church there. Occasionally, she would get to the Episcopal church downtown.

SW: Were there Fourth of July activities that you participated in? What did you do for the Fourth of July?

AP: Oh, we had fireworks. We'd go out in the yard and shoot off all these fireworks and in those days, they were legal in San Diego. And that was exciting. We never got hurt with them, luckily. We never even thought about being hurt with them. We just had a lot of fun.

SW: How about Halloween? Did you go trick or treating?

AP: Didn't have trick or treating in those days. No. That came later. No, we would go around and we'd soap some windows and...what else did we do? Just mischievous things we would do.

SW: So was Halloween more of a time to play tricks than ask for treats?

AP: Yes. You never asked for treats. That was unheard of. We just played tricks.

SW: How about May Day? Did you ever do May Day?

AP: I think at school, I can remember a May pole at school.

SW: Really?

AP: Where we danced around the May pole.

SW: And Christmas? What did you do for Christmas?

AP: Christmas we just had the family here and of course, we had our Christmas on Christmas morning after Santa Claus had been here. And it was exciting. We had gifts and my mother would always make a special dinner.

SW: So when you had that dinner, was that in this room here?

AP: Yes. Yes. But this room was smaller at that time. It was about 8 feet shorter.

SW: So like maybe right about here?

AP: It came oh, right about to there. Just maybe a foot or two beyond the door there.

SW: And that was the original door.

AP: Yes. That door itself is not the original, but the doorway is.

SW: Your house is very pretty. When you moved in, it had this molded ceiling and everything?

AP: Yes. And when we extended the dining room, I thought they did a beautiful job of matching it.

SW: Yes, they did.

AP: And I love what the lady did with the windows.

SW: Did you do any other changes to the house besides the extension to it?

AP: Years and years ago, we redid the kitchen, tore down a couple of walls and so forth.

SW: So it was more of an enclosed kitchen than what it is now?

AP: It was a kitchen and a breakfast nook and a service porch. And we had them tear the walls out and make it all one big room.

SW: This is real nice.

AP: When we were kids, part of our entertainment at night, we would play kick the can out here with the boys. The boys and girls joined in that activity and the corner of Cleveland and Madison was the home base where the can got kicked from and that was part of our fun entertainment. We didn't have anything like television, of course.

SW: How about radio? Did you listen to radio?

AP: Yes. I can't remember...yeah, we had radio I guess, when I was a little kid. We used to listen to some of the programs on radio. We enjoyed that.

SW: Do you remember your first television?

AP: Yes. That was after I was married. My first television. Had a lot of snow on the screen when you turned it on.

SW: Was it one of those little...

AP: It was a round one.

SW: Round?

AP: Yeah. A round screen and had problems with snow.

SW: When did you get married?

AP: In 1941. In June of '41. Before the Japs attacked us. And I went out to State College for two years. I had intended to go for four years. And I was going to be a CPA, but then I met a man that I liked very much and I ended up quitting school after two years and we got married. And then I was glad later that I hadn't become a CPA because I think it would have been kind of boring. I ended up working for San Diego Fire Equipment Company for 27 years and that was most interesting.

SW: What did you do there?

AP: Well, let's see. I answered the phone, I waited on the counter. I did the books, I did the payroll. I recharged fire extinguishers. I repaired fire hose. I measured firemen for their turnouts and it was very interesting. Made deliveries sometimes on my lunch hour.

SW: How many years was this?

AP: I worked there for 27 years.

SW: And where was it located?

AP: Down on Market Street. At Tenth and Market and then after some years, it moved to Eleventh and Island. And now I think they've taken the building for the ball park.

SW: Did you have any other jobs besides working for the fire...?

AP: Before that, I worked for a short while part time in a doctor's office out in North Park. My kids were both in school and I just worked mornings. And then later when they were older, I went to work for San Diego Fire Equipment. My neighbor in the rear house here, her daughter was the same age as my daughter and so she looked after my kids until I got home from work, so that worked out very nice.

SW: Good babysitting.

AP: Yes.

SW: What was your husband's name?

AP: John Henry Prusa. He was a deputy sheriff.

SW: Of San Diego?

AP: Yes.

SW: Tell me a little bit about his work then.

AP: Well, when I met him, he was a senior gardener at Balboa Park, but he had always wanted to be a policeman. And after the War, after he got out of the Army, he decided he wanted to try and get on the police department. But he found out that you had to have 20/20 vision without glasses in order to pass their test. He didn't have that. He had 20/20 vision with glasses and he found out that the sheriff department would take them with 20/20 vision with glasses. So when the test came up from the sheriff department, he took the test. He failed part of it, the physical part, because he had gone the day before to the hospital to give blood for the father of a man he knew in the Army and it had left him weak enough that he couldn't chin himself and so they failed him and he told them what had happened and he felt that was why he couldn't do it and they said, "Tough." But my father knew the sheriff, and so he spoke to him and he said, "Send him back down tomorrow." So he went down that next day and he passed it, of course. It would have changed his whole life if he couldn't have gotten on, because the next time they gave the test, he would have been too old to take it. So he was very thankful that he was able to try and again and pass it.

SW: He liked the work?

AP: He loved it.

SW: What did he do? Can you tell me a little bit about what he did?

AP: They usually start them out in the jail. They work in the jail and that's not very exciting. And then they get various assignments. They work in different departments for awhile. For awhile, he worked in warrants and fugitives and that was interesting because he would travel to pick up prisoners to bring them back and if he had to pick up a woman, then he would either have to take a matron or his wife with him. So...you know, I wasn't letting him take any matron with him. I would take time off from work and I would go with him and they would give us one day to get there, one day to spend there and one day to fly back with the prisoner. So it was interesting. I got to see a few cities that I probably wouldn't have seen.

SW: Yeah. And what was it like traveling with a...

AP: With a prisoner?

SW: Yeah.

AP: Well, it wasn't really very different from traveling with anybody else. You weren't allowed to tell the people on the plane, or I guess even the airlines that it was a prisoner. But you didn't have to handcuff them or anything, because they weren't going any place. Not from the plane. But this one man, we picked up the man and his wife and so I went and that was in Houston, I think. And that man had said he wasn't going to San Diego. Well, of course my husband assured him he was going. But he said, "You're going to go on the plane like a gentleman, or you're going to go on the train. You're going to have a lot of chains on you if you're on the train. But I'm the one that's going to decide how we're going." The fellow, I guess, decided he'd behave and so we went on the plane. But as soon as we hit Lindbergh field, he put cuffs on him and put a napkin over his wrists so you couldn't really see that he was cuffed. But he was afraid as soon as he got off the plane, he'd run.

SW: So these prisoners, they were mostly nonviolent...

AP: Yes, and that was the only time that I went along that there was a man involved. They other two times, it was a woman, just a woman. But it was kind of interesting.

SW: Yeah. I think so.

AP: One time, when he brought a prisoner back, the fellow made a date with the stewardess for that night.

SW: And he thought he could keep it?

AP: I guess he thought maybe he'd get out on bail that quick or something. But he wasn't able to keep that.

SW: Your husband work with other police officers, then?

AP: Other deputy sheriffs.

SW: Other deputies, then?

AP: Yes.

SW: Did they have like a social club or groups that they attended?

AP: They had dances and things, but I never got to go to those. He was sort of anti-social as far as things like that. And I wouldn't even know they were having a thing until it was over and then...

SW: So you didn't ever meet other wives?

AP: No. Very seldom got to meet other wives. They had picnics and dance and lots of things, but he never wanted to go.

SW: What kind of social life did you have, then?

AP: Well, mostly on my own. Of course, there was the church. I had quite a bit of social life there. He wasn't interested in going to church with me. He would occasionally go when they were having something special for the kids' sake, I think, more than anything. And I joined a bridge club. In fact, it started out with most of us in the neighborhood and my parents taught us to play bridge and I still belong to that bridge club.

SW: With the same members?

AP: Some of them are the same ones, yes.

SW: Can you tell me who they are? The long term ones?

AP: Yeah. Betty Dunton was one of them. Then she had to leave, of course, when she went back East with her husband. But now that she's back, she's playing. And her sister Virginia Kelly, who did live next door. Oh, I can remember probably all of the names of them, but some of them have died and some of them have moved away and we picked up other members along the way.

SW: What did you do for Thanksgiving? That's one holiday I forgot to ask.

AP: Well, I think my mother always cooked a turkey and we had a big turkey dinner.

SW: Did she go to the Piggly Wiggly to get the turkey?

AP: Yeah. I think so.

SW: How has the area changed in this neighborhood? You had said originally it was homes. Have you had different kinds of people moving in? Different ethnic groups, anything like that?

AP: Not really ethnic. But a lot of the houses have been torn down and they put up condos and apartments.

SW: Do you feel the neighborhood is more crowded now?

AP: Somewhat, with the multi-dwelling buildings.

SW: I was wondering if it had affected the neighborhood by the changes that occurred here.

AP: Not too much, except that it seems like people aren't acquainted as much as they were. I think primarily because most people are working now. And it used to be all the mothers were home. So we knew all our neighbors. But now, I don't know most of them. You just see them when they're coming and going.

SW: Were there any landmarks here that have disappeared?

AP: I can't think of any. When we were kids, at the end of Park Boulevard, there was the ostrich farm. And you could ride on the ostriches, but you paid for it. I don't think I ever rode on one, but some of the kids did. But my father, being so thrifty, he would not spend money to let me ride on an ostrich.

SW: So you could walk up and at least see them, though?

AP: Oh yes. Yes.

SW: Can you describe how the place was laid out? I can't imagine.

AP: No, I can't remember how it was laid out.

SW: Was it like a big park or was it like cages?

AP: No, it wasn't cages. I think they were running loose. And then next to it, or else I don't know if it was maybe after that left. I'm not sure. No, I don't think so. I think it was next to it. The trolley car barn was there.

SW: Did you ride the trolley?

AP: Oh yes.

SW: Where'd you take it to?

AP: Oh, I don't know, probably downtown or something. And our next door neighbor, when we first moved here, he was a trolley driver.

SW: Oh really? One of the conductors?

AP: Yes. The conductor. And he drove a Model T Ford. I remember that Ford.

SW: Okay. Did you go to any of the local parks to hang out or do anything? Where did you go?

AP: Actually, there weren't many parks around except for Balboa Park. I guess we used to go there for different things.

SW: Did you go to theatres to see plays, movies?

AP: Not when I was a kid other than Saturday afternoons.

SW: Yeah. The ones you were talking about.

AP: But when I was older, I went some to movies and plays, of course. My husband didn't go much. He didn't want to.

SW: Did you ever take music lessons, or anything like that?

AP: No. In fact, years ago, I think it was before she was married, my mother taught piano. And when I was a child, she tried to get me to learn. And I didn't want to. And now, of course, I wish I had. But no, I never took any kind of music lessons. I sang in the glee club at school and learned some music that way. And now I have this organ and I've never taken a lesson and I sort of entertain myself with it. Although since I've gotten a computer, I don't touch the organ very much, and I should.

SW: Did you have hobbies when you were a kid? Did you collect things?

AP: I don't remember collecting things. I can remember Virginia and I sitting out on the front porch playing jacks and we played paper dolls and we played hopscotch.

SW: Did you make the paper dolls or did you buy those pre-made ones?

AP: I think we bought them.

SW: Did you ever get those ones out of the newspapers? They used to have Betsy McCall.

AP: I think some McCall's magazines had one every month or something. And my mother always subscribed to that and I always got that.

SW: Did you subscribe to the newspaper?

AP: Yes.

SW: Is there anything else that you wish to tell me about? What would you especially like to tell me about in this area?

AP: I'll probably think of something later, "Oh I should have told her about that." Gosh. There must be something I should tell you about.

SW: How was life different then than it is now? How would you think of going downtown or anything else as being different then than as it is now?

AP: Well, I think...in the old days, you wouldn't hesitate to talk to anybody you met. And nowadays, you would be less likely to talk to people.

SW: To strangers?

AP: I mean there are all kinds of people down there. I don't know, really what would be a whole lot different.

SW: You've lived here a very long time.

AP: Yes, a very long time.

SW: Okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciated it so much.

AP: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

8. MARVIN RANDALL

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 8, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Marvin Randall on July 8, 2003, in the dining area of his home. Tayde Randall was also present. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Marvin Randall provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Marvin added corrections to the manuscript; they are indicated in brackets [ ], or as footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
floppy diskette	the diskette contains all 14 transcripts from the Uptown project
release form	City of San Diego Historic Sites Board
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	rules to the children's game Frankenstein

Transcript:

MR = Marvin Randall
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter and I am interviewing Marvin Randall. It is July 8, 2003. We're in his living room. He is going to augment with some stories of his childhood. But before that, Marvin, can you tell me your full name please?

MR: Marvin Joe Randall.

SW: Joe. Is it just Joe?

MR: Just Joe.

SW: Just Joe. Okay, when were you born?

MR: June 22, 1951.

SW: Where were you born?

MR: Greeley, Colorado.

SW: And how did you get out here to San Diego?

MR: My mother moved out here because my older brothers were in the Navy in San Diego and my father had passed away and my mother moved out here to reunite the family. That's how we got to San Diego in I think it was 1956.

SW: Did your mother work?

MR: Yes.

SW: As?

MR: She was a cook.

SW: Where?

MR: At a place called Johnny's downtown on Broadway. It was a little café down there and a lot of military, a lot of sailors used to go in there and my mom would cook for them.

SW: How long did she work there?

MR: Oh gosh, I bet probably at least ten years or more.

SW: And then after that?

MR: After that, she retired. I was a very late child. I'm sure I was a real surprise when I came along. My mother was 40 when I was born.

SW: So your older brothers were in the service?

MR: Right.

SW: What do you remember as a child growing up in this area?

MR: Of Mission Hills?

SW: Yeah.

MR: It was a real close neighborhood area. There were lots and lots of kids to play with. I attended St. Vincent's Elementary School and being a Catholic elementary school, there were large families. It wasn't uncommon to have families that had six, seven, eight, ten kids. One family even had thirteen. So there were always kids to play with. We rode our bikes, skateboards, hung out, had water balloon fights, chased each other.

SW: Where did you live? Where was the home?

MR: I lived at 4141 Jackdaw Street.

SW: I was going to say, what a coincidence.

MR: Yeah. Just this one reversed. And that's on the corner of Jackdaw and Montecito.

SW: Okay. Tell me about that house.

MR: It was a very big house. My mother bought it in 1960. She paid $15,000 for it. We moved in there, I think I was just about nine. And the first thing that I noticed about it was that the neighborhood had over 30 kids in it. So to me, being more or less alone at that time, all my other siblings were [older or] gone,

because I was a real late child, to me it was like having a whole [new] family. And I had lots of kids to play with, so that was really fun for me.
SW: Tell me about your neighbors. Who lived nearby?

MR: The Torcellini family, the Moxley family, the Bruces, the Vargases, the Woods.

SW: These were families that had kids you played with?

MR: Lots of kids. Lots and lots of kids.

SW: So what did you do with all these kids?

MR: What did we do with all these kids? Well, we used to play at the dead end of Ibis Street and Montecito all the time. We'd go down there, it was a dead end street and (to me at the time) it was quite large, being a little kid. Of course, now I look at it today and it's not very big at all. But we'd go down there and we'd play football. We'd play baseball and we used to play a neighborhood game in the summertime mainly, called "Frankenstein." And it was kind of like a hide-and-seek type of game and as you got caught, you had to become a helper, so eventually what started out as two people chasing you, ended up with everybody chasing you. So you really learned to find really good hiding places over there in Mission Hills in that neighborhood.

SW: Did you have boundaries?

MR: Yeah, we had to stay on the block. We had to stay on the square block. But the real good games of Frankenstein happened on Halloween night in the cemetery at Grant School. Those were really good games of Frankenstein. We'd have 30, 40 people over there playing in the cemetery on Halloween night, scaring the heck out of each other. And it was an old cemetery with real huge markers, lots of big granite markers you could hide behind and there were also pepper trees that you could climb up in. And when people would walk by, you could jump down out of those trees and just scare the heck out of people. And we would go over there and play. We started playing Frankenstein in that cemetery on Halloween night probably when we were about 11 or 12 and we played until we were about 15 or 16.

Then later on, when I was 21 years old, I went to a liquor store over there in Mission Hills to buy some beer because I was on my way to watch a football game and we could drink then. There were some little kids in the liquor store talking about playing Frankenstein in that cemetery. So the tradition continued until they tore that cemetery down in 19...oh maybe about 1974, something like that. Somewhere around there.

SW: So kids were still doing it then.

MR: They did it for quite awhile, yeah.[11]

[11] Marvin clarified the Rules for Frankenstein later:
Start with a large number of kids, boys and girls. Choose a person to be Frankenstein (a real honor). Sometimes one would wait a long time before being picked. Frankenstein – would then pick a helper, someone that could run very fast. Frankenstein and the helper would close their eyes and count to one hundred, by ones as fast as they could. Everyone else would run off to hide. After Frankenstein and the helper finished counting they would announce very loudly "The Frankenstein Monster is loose." This told the players two things, first the game had started and from now on you should trust no one. You got caught by being tagged by Frankenstein or his helper. After being caught – you became a helper. As the game went on Frankenstein's strength grew. Soon

SW: What kinds of other types of things did you and your playmates do in the neighborhood?

MR: Well, in the summertime when it was nice and hot, we would run through the sprinklers, have water balloon fights, choose up sides and have water balloon fights. And from time to time, we were actually somewhat rowdy. We would get eggs and throw them at the bus as the bus drove by. The Number Three bus would come by on Ft. Stockton Street and we'd line up in the alley there and pulverize the side of it with eggs and then we'd hop on our bicycles and ride off down the street and laugh about it.

SW: Did you ever get caught?

MR: No. The bus couldn't stop and even if the bus did stop, he can't drive down the alleys because there's lots of alleys over there. You can go down on bicycles, so it was easy to get away.

Our biggest thing that we used to do, believe it or not, there was a little corner market on the corner of Ft. Stockton and Jackdaw Street called Pee Wee's Market and it was a very, very small market and Pee Wee always had lots and lots of penny candies. You could walk into the store there and he'd have glass jars of licorice and jawbreakers and gumdrops and jelly beans and all kinds of stuff for a penny. So you could take a dime in there and end up coming out with a whole bag full of candy. And that was like our hangout for all of us young kids and we would hang out around and we'd actually stay at Pee Wee's and follow the sun as it moved around the building, creating shady cool spots for us. We'd start on one side of the building and we'd stay there for a couple of hours and as the shade moved, we'd move with it. And Pee Wee didn't mind, because we were going in and out of his store constantly spending money and you don't think of it as much, but when you've got 30 or 40 kids spending 10 or 15 cents a day back then, that was a lot of money. We didn't cause any trouble. We were just there.

And we played at Grant School. We'd go over there and play baseball and Grant School also had...it was the older Grant School, not the new one now, because it's been demolished and rebuilt. But the old Grant School had a big tunnel that we would go and sit in and it was nice and cool. Also, we'd play little games in there like four square or jacks or talk about throwing eggs at the bus, or playing in the cemetery.

SW: What was the purpose of the tunnel?

MR: It was just connecting one part of the building to the other and it was a little tunnel that went underneath the school, but it was open. You would see through it, but it was just really nice and cool and shady in there. It was a good place to hang out in the summertime when it was hot, especially for little kids.

SW: Yeah, really. Was it all boys that you were playing with or did you include girls too?

MR: No, it was all boys. There were, out of the 35 or so kids that were in the neighborhood, probably 25 of them were boys and about 10 were girls. And the girls, they kind of stayed to themselves and they didn't hang out with the boys too much.

---

he had many helpers and his helpers would lay traps to catch others. These helpers would hide and wait for a player to run by, and then jump out and scare the hell out of you. There was no safe base, or time outs. The game was played until everyone was caught.
The object of the game was to be the last person caught. But it was sure fun scaring the hell out of people.

A family named Wood that lived over there at the end of Ibis Street, they had a blue and gold macaw and his name was Captain Hook. When we wanted to bring out whoever was in the house, we went over there to see, we'd go over there and we'd ask Hook to call them and Hook would start screaming their name.
SW: Oh really?

MR: Until they came out. And it was really interesting. Hook became a major attraction over there for us kids because such a large colorful bird back then was very unusual. Hook couldn't fly and we'd take Hook and put him on the handlebars of our bicycles and ride him around and he would open up his wings and he would scream. I mean, he was very loud. I mean he'd scream his head off and we'd ride through Mission Hills and he'd be screaming his head off and people would be looking at us and we were a bunch of kids, you know, 10 or 12 of us kids on bicycles riding around.

SW: What kind of bikes did you have?

MR: Huffys, Schwinns, JC Penney. Sears had a bicycle too, but everybody really wanted a Schwinn, but they were kind of expensive. They were about $25-30. That was a lot of money back then. But a lot of us kids had those bikes because a lot of us kids had paper routes and we earned money.

SW: Tell me about the paper route. Where was it located?

MR: My paper route boundary went from Washington and Dove up to Washington and Albatross and over off of University Avenue down parts of Dove Street and went down into Reynard Way. I had about 90 customers and I used to get up every morning at 4:45 because I had to be there at 5:00. It took us an hour to fold our papers. We got our papers at the old Safeway store which is now a Vons. Myself and two or three other paperboys would meet there and we'd fold our papers and then we would load them up on our bicycles and our paper bags and we'd all go off to deliver our papers and then we'd all meet back up at the doughnut shop there. There was a Winchell's doughnut shop there and we'd check up on each other and make sure that when one of us was late, we'd go look for the person and sometimes we'd get a flat tire on our bike or something, then our friends would come and help us and stuff like that, then we'd go and get doughnuts at the doughnut shop.

SW: Who were these other people on the paper routes that you had?

MR: Paul Morin, Dennis Mesa and another kid named John somebody. I don't remember his last name now. He wasn't there very long. He got his papers someplace else. But we'd meet there every morning at 4:45.

SW: How old were you when you started your paper route?

MR: Ten.

SW: How long did you do that?

MR: Until I was 16.

SW: Did you have anything to do with selling subscriptions or collecting money?

MR: Oh, we had to collect our own money. We had to deliver the papers and it was really strange. We had to get up every morning to deliver the papers and then at the end of very month, we'd have to go and collect the money and then the paper company would actually give us a bill for all the papers that we had gotten and so the money we collected, we had to pay the bill and whatever was left, that's what we got to keep. There were lots of months that there wasn't very much money left.
SW: So how much would you make?

MR: Well, it depended. Probably an average was about $20.00 a month.

SW: What did you spend your money on besides penny candy?

MR: Penny candy. I saved my money. There used to be an old drug store called Ace Drug Store that was on the corner of Goldfinch and Washington. The ladies that worked there knew us, because we'd always go in there and buy stuff and they would save cigar boxes for us. I used to have a really nice wooden cigar box. And at one time, I had $180.00 saved up from my paper route money in that cigar box underneath my bed, which was a lot of money back then. We bought baseball gloves, fishing poles. Some kids bought new bicycles. We bought tires for our bicycles because we always wore them out because we'd always skid on them. We bought lots of paper bags. We'd have to buy those from the paper company because they'd always get tangled up in the wheels of our bikes and get all ripped up. I remember my mom used to repair them as much as she could, but eventually you just reach a point where you couldn't repair them.

SW: So the paper bags were made of fabric?

MR: They were made of canvas, a heavy canvas. But every so often, they'd get caught in the chain or the spokes and they'd get ripped up and then you had to buy a new pair. Because you had to put your papers in something.

SW: Okay. Anything else?

MR: Just that there were lots of kids that roamed through Mission Hills and we had a lot of good times and nobody ever really did anything real destructive. I mean throwing eggs at the bus was probably the worst thing we ever did. But just a lot of families, a lot of kids.

SW: Did these families get together for things like picnics, or anything like that?

MR: No. Surprisingly not. All of us kids actually got together. My mom never really associated with any of the other kids' moms and I guess they were all too busy. You have to remember back then, the dads worked and the mom stayed home and took care of the kids and then most of the time when the kids were outside playing, mom was probably in the house resting or cooking dinner or planning some sort of activity for the family. But I don't recall any of the families ever getting together.

There was a family named Clark that lived down at the end of Hunter Street off of Jackdaw and they had a go cart and their father was a golf course superintendent up in Thousand Oaks and so he was always gone. We used to get that go cart whenever their mom would leave. Sometimes their mom would drive by. She was one of the few moms that actually had a car and drove. This was probably around 1963 or '64. We would see Mrs. Clark leaving and we'd say, "Hey, your mom's leaving. Let's go get the go cart." So we'd go to the house and roll open the garage door and get the go cart out and then we'd get on the go

cart and race up and down Jackdaw Street on it and take turns riding it around and a lot of times we'd put it back before Mrs. Clark came and nobody ever was the wiser. But a few times we'd be riding the thing down the street and here would come Mrs. Clark coming the other way in her car and it was like, "Uh-oh, we're caught, we're in big trouble now." And then we'd get in trouble. Mrs. Clark was not happy that we would do that.

SW: What was school like for you when you going to the Catholic school?

MR: St. Vincent's?

SW: Yes.

MR: Here, I have to really be careful. I might have to take the fifth amendment on this. It was the same kids I grew up with, so as far as that went, we all knew each other, we all had a good time. It was a very disciplined school.

SW: Did you wear uniforms?

MR: Yes.

SW: What did you uniform look like?

MR: It was a white shirt with a pair of kind of like corduroy pants, blue corduroy that had a little white in it and hard leather shoes, black, and a leather belt, black.

SW: No vests or anything like that? Jackets?

MR: Some kids wore sweaters, but lots didn't.

SW: And the girls?

MR: They wore a white shirt also, with a blue skirt and black leather shoes. Only they got to wear little white socks. The school was very small. There were only a couple hundred kids that went there, maybe 200-250 at the tops. It started, I think, in first grade and went to eighth grade and each class only had 25 kids in there or so.

There were a few lady teachers, but mostly they were nuns. And a couple priests that would come in and teach catechism, religion then. And boy you made sure you did your work, otherwise, you paid for it. You didn't cause any trouble or... Well, other kids didn't, but I did. I was one of the kids that learned the hard way. I had to have several meetings with the "ruler" as we called it, with the nun. When we got in trouble, we'd be sent to see Sister Martin and she would whack our hands with a big heavy wooden ruler. Sometimes, she'd knock off your fingernails.

SW: Oooh.

MR: Yeah, the first time I went and saw her, I was probably about 8 or 9 and she knocked two fingernails off my right hand and she grabbed me by the ear and pushed me to the floor and made me lick them up and spit them out in the trash can.

SW: I think that's rather strong discipline.

MR: Well, yeah. It was very strong discipline, but for some reason, I always kept going back. I don't know. Maybe I was just one of those unlucky kids that always got caught.

SW: So then you went on to junior high school? This went through eighth grade?
MR: To eighth grade. Right. And then in ninth grade, I didn't want to go to Saints or Uni.[12] Those were the two Catholic schools and I was rather rebellious about that, because Roosevelt was much closer and I had a lot of friends that went to Roosevelt too, so I ended up going to Roosevelt for ninth grade only. And then after that, I went to San Diego High.

SW: So you liked San Diego High?

MR: Yeah. It was fun. The Gray Castle? The old Gray Castle. That was fun. We had a lot of fun. Somehow, I don't remember how I ended up getting the key to the school and so we would go in the classrooms where we weren't supposed to go. It was a master key and we used to go in and change the desks in the room all around for the teacher. We had a typing teacher that was kind of a meanie, so we used to go and move the classroom out in the hall all the time. Me and my friends.

We used to go and open up the Pepster area where my wife was a Pepster and she was in charge of it. And we used to take all the stuff out of there and make our own signs and hang them up around school and she used to catch us and she'd get really mad at us for borrowing her equipment.

SW: Okay, she didn't mention being a Pepster.[13] What's a Pepster?

MR: To tell you the truth, they made the signs that you hung around like for the football games.

SW: At pep rallies?

MR: Yeah, at pep rallies and stuff. They made the signs and they had all the art stuff. They had the paints and the brushes and the crepe paper and whatever else they needed and they would make their signs and then we'd go in the room after they were done because we had the key to the place and we'd get our stuff out and we'd make our own signs and she kept wondering, "Where's all this stuff coming from?" and "Those aren't signs we made" because we'd hang different signs around school and stuff. So she used to get real unhappy about that.

SW: What changes have you seen in this neighborhood? In the neighborhood where you grew up, actually.

MR: In Mission Hills?

SW: Yes.

MR: A lot more people. A lot more people. Houses, that used to be little tiny, probably two bedroom, one bath houses, are now five bedrooms. They've expanded the houses and added on, added on a second story

[12] Marvin said "Uni" refers to University High School.
[13] Marvin's wife Toyed Randall, had been interviewed just prior to his interview.

and pushed out the side. There were lots of houses that had big yards. I think as time went on, people began to remodel making the houses much bigger. But it doesn't seem like there are any kids over there now. I drive through Mission Hills all the time, but it doesn't seem like there are hardly any kids over there. But there are some big houses now.

SW: Any landmarks that have disappeared?

MR: The cemetery. The cemetery we used to play in. They tore that down. I think they tore that down just before the State of California was going to pass a...like a historical landmark ruling and I think the city rushed in there and tore it down before the bill passed. Otherwise, it would have been there today. But I remember the dump trucks showing up on a Friday afternoon with the bulldozers and the thing was gone by Monday.

SW: Are the burials still there?

MR: The bodies are still there.

SW: And the stones?

MR: Some of the stones are there. They took some of the nicer stones and put them over in a corner and made a little monument over there and the rest of the stones ended up somewhere in a canyon over off of 94.

SW: Just dumped?

MR: They just dumped them in a canyon, yeah.

SW: Are they still there?

MR: I couldn't tell you. I don't know.

SW: Well, have you anything else you wish to add? You've added quite a bit of color to my little interviews.

(Pause in interview)

SW: You have an interesting story that you wanted to add about the Shepherd house. Go ahead.

MR: The Villa Montezuma. There's probably about a two-year time frame there that is probably unrecorded in the city about that piece of property. From about 1970 until about 1972, that property was owned by a family named Finn. F-I-N-N. They purchased the property from an elderly lady who owned it apparently, and for about two years, some of my friends lived in that house. We would have been probably in our late teens or early 20s. We used to call the place "The Mansion." And everybody got together and we kind of all added something to it. People brought tables and chairs and lamps and pool tables and stereos and speakers and we kind of turned the place into a big hangout, and we would go there. We had a TV room, and we'd drink lots of beer, watch football, especially Monday Night Football. And we'd shoot pool in the pool room and we had a stereo there and we'd listen to music and have big parties. We used to have some really big parties there. There were two Halloween parties there that were

monsters. There were probably 200-300 people in the place, inside, outside, on the roof. Drove the neighbors nuts. But it was really interesting and we had a lot of good times.[14]

The story of Jesse Shepherd still haunting that mansion is true, because we actually witnessed some very peculiar things that went on at that house. One particular night, there were about five or six of us watching Monday Night Football and we were the only people in the house. There was absolutely nobody else in the house and yet the pool balls were bouncing around on the pool table. We could hear them, and when we went up and looked in the pool room, the balls were still rolling on the table. Another incident occurred when we were there and we could hear footsteps walking around and the footsteps went right past us and right up the stairs. But there was not a person there, but we could hear them. We could hear people walking.

Anyway, the property belonged to them, the Finns, for about two years and I don't really know what happened there, but somehow they relinquished the property and the property is now a historical landmark. But there was a two-year window there that was owned privately and we had some great parties there.

SW: Well, that's really interesting. Okay, do you have anything that you want to add?

MR: No, I think I've probably done enough. I don't know if I'm finished, but I better stop.

SW: Okay. Thanks a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW

9. TAYDE RANDALL

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 8, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Tayde Randall on July 8, 2003, in the dining area of her home. Also present was Marvin Randall. Before the interview, Tayde and Susan posed for a photographer for *San Diego Home / Garden Lifestyles*. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Tayde Randall provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Tayde's additions or changes to the transcript have been footnoted or are in brackets [ ]. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

[14] Marvin added later that he and his friends had admired all the stained glass that was in the mansion.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:
San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
Map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
Pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	NA

Transcript:

TR = Tayde Randall
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter and I am interviewing Tayde Randall for the Uptown Project. Could you please tell me your full name?

TR: Tayde Azalea Randall.

SW: Tayde, can you spell your first name, place?

TR: T-A-Y-D-E.

SW: And spell your maiden name, please.

TR: My maiden name is Cortes. C-O-R-T-E-S.

SW: Tayde, where were you born?

TR: I was born in Tijuana.

SW: What was your birth date?

TR: 03/21/52.

SW: Do you have any nicknames?

TR: At home only. Only with the family it was Lulu.

SW: Lulu. Okay, we won't call you that then. What was your mother's name, please?

TR: My mother's name was Lupe Alvarez Cortes.

SW: And where was she born?

TR: She was born in Mexico in Colima.

SW: What kind of work did your mom do?

TR: Before she married, she was a secretary and a telephone operator and then when she married, she didn't work anymore [after she had children].

SW: What was your father's name?

TR: My father's name is Ramon Cortes.

SW: And where was he born?

TR: He was born in Mexico also.

SW: What kind of work he did do?

TR: He was a tailor.

SW: Where did your parents meet?

TR: They met in Manzanillo, Mexico.

SW: When was that?

TR: Probably in 1941.

SW: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

TR: I have one brother.

SW: Is he older or younger?

TR: He is younger. He is nine years younger than I am.

SW: And what is his name?

TR: His name is Raymond Cortes, but everybody knows him as Chico. Everyone in the neighborhood knew him as Chico.
SW: How did your family come here to the United States?

TR: We came right after World War II. Well, my parents married in 1944 and soon after that, my father lost his job in Mexico. My mother was working, she had worked a time for a man who owned the telephone company and he told my mother that business was very good in San Diego and Tijuana was going to be a booming town after the war. So he offered my mother a secretarial job in Tijuana and that's how my parents came to Tijuana, because my mother was going to work as a secretary for this man who started a commercial laundry and my parents eventually took over the laundry.

SW: So was your father a tailor when he first came to Tijuana or...

TR: Yes. Well, he didn't work for the man that they were going to work for. He set up his own business. Because he would make men's suits. So his was more of a custom kind of work.

SW: So they moved because of her job and then he established his own business?

TR: Right. In Tijuana. And then my father eventually started working in San Diego and that's how we came to San Diego.

SW: Where did he first work?

TR: He first worked at a place in North Park right on the corner of 30th and University and I don't know the name. There was a men's clothing store there and he worked there.

SW: So he worked there as a tailor?

TR: Yes. People would go in and buy suits, men would go in and buy suits or pants and then he would tailor, he would do the alterations. And then right after that, then he started working at Robert's in San Diego downtown and that's where he worked until probably 1981 when the store closed.

That's when downtown was still struggling. It was either going to be dumpy or they were going to revitalize it. There was talk about revitalizing downtown, but business was really not doing well by that time for the clothing store. So the owner decided to just close the store. It was an independent store and so he just closed it and my dad went to work for Highlander until he retired.

SW: Where did your family move to when they came from Tijuana into San Diego?

TR: We first moved to Logan Heights and then we moved here, to University Heights. We lived there for a few years probably.

SW: In Logan Heights?

TR: Yes. I was four when we came to San Diego.

SW: Do you remember the address of where the house was that you were raised in?

TR: Here in University Heights? 4315 Maryland Street.

SW: And that's close by where we are now?
TR: It's around the corner. Actually, the back yards kind of overlap. They are next to each other.

SW: So you knew this neighborhood very well, growing up as a child and everything.

TR: Yes.

SW: What is your earliest memory of this neighborhood?

TR: Probably just kids playing. A lot of kids playing in the alley back here and the elementary school which was...it's about two blocks away and kids playing there. They would play there after school and in the summertime. The parking lot would have people there, staff members there and they would organize games and crafts and that.

SW: So what was the name of the school?

TR: Alice Birney Elementary.

SW: And you went to kindergarten there?

TR: No. Third grade through sixth grade.

SW: Do you remember your first day of school there? In third grade?

TR: I remember my mother taking me to register there before. It was before school started. It was a couple weeks before school started and it was different because the other elementary had stairs. It was a two-story elementary and this one was just a one story. And that's all I remember. I didn't have any problem fitting in with the school or the students there.

SW: You spoke English when you started school here?

TR: Yes.

SW: Were you raised speaking English as a child?

TR: We spoke Spanish at home, but when we were outside, we spoke English. And my parents spoke English.

SW: They spoke English before they came here?

TR: Yes. Plus, my mother, when she was telephone operator, she had to sometimes use English and understand (it). Sometimes she would do international calls so she had to converse in English and then my father, before I was born, they were...well being in Tijuana, you kind of lived in both worlds or

sometimes you maintain two homes. My father would work here and then he would go home on the weekends. So there was a lot of interaction, I guess, between the border, as it still is.

SW: Did you have other family members that lived with you or nearby you? Cousins?

TR: No. Nobody. We were the only branch of the family to be here in the what they call "The North." From Mexico. I do have an uncle who lived with us when I was little, and that was in Tijuana. But he never lived in the United States. Always lived in Tijuana.

SW: Who were your playmates when you were growing up in this neighborhood?

TR: Eileen and Paul who lived next door.

SW: And what their last name?

TR: Best. Paul Best. And the family still lives right here next door.

SW: Oh really?

TR: Yeah. Right there. And Mrs. Best just passed away two days ago. So she was their mother and Eileen and Paul and Greg Best. Older brothers and sisters, Ronnie, Anna Lynn and Larry. But they were older. So they were all teenagers when I was maybe 8 or 9. And Trina and Mike. They lived up the street.

SW: And what was their last name?

TR: Baquera. And I know there was a boy named Mickey and I don't remember his last name. And then Donny and Sherry, but they were younger. They were in later. And I think their last name was Land. I think that was pretty much it for around here.

SW: So what did you guys do when playing together?

TR: We would play in the alley, play dodge ball, four square. Eileen and Paul had a back yard that their father had it concreted and had it cemented in and so he actually had painted four square, the four square. So we would play four square and they also had a tetherball and so we would play tetherball there and they had this huge swing set that their father also built.

SW: He built it?

TR: He built it. He was kind of a jack-of-all-trades. He was a welder, I believe.

SW: So it was a pole type?

TR: A pole type. They were metal and they were huge and it was a very big swing set with chains on the swings and the board for the seat, it was a board and it was very big and we used to like going over there because we could really just really go high, although one day, it did collapse when Paul was on it and I think it scared him more, but nobody was hurt.

And the Best family also had a tree in front of their house and the father built a tree house up there and so we would go up there. Just play games. Sometimes we would have lunch up there and just hang out there during the summers.

SW: Did you have a ladder to get up to the tree house or did you have to shinny the tree?

TR: No. His father, what his father did, he bought a slide, you would climb up the slide so you could use the little ladder rungs to get up to the tree house and then when you wanted to leave, you just slid down the slide.

SW: This tree house is really neat. Did it have a roof?

TR: No.

SW: Was it like just a platform? Did it have a railing?

TR: It had a railing, platform and railing. And we would go up there and play. We'd also play in the street. That was common, to play on Maryland Street. We would also play down this hill on Van Buren, riding bikes. Sometimes riding flexies.

SW: What are flexies?

TR: Flexies are like sleds. They looked like sleds, but they had wheels, four wheels instead of blades.

SW: Really?

TR: Uh-huh. And they had brakes on the front so you would lie down on it on your stomach and then you would ride them...

SW: Down a hill?

TR: Yes. Because someone would stand at the bottom of the hill and wave you on and tell you when it was okay, when it was safe.

SW: Because of cars.

TR: Because of cars. Except a couple times, we had Trina, who liked to kind of play games. You know, play jokes on people and she would actually wave you on when cars were coming, just to kind of scare, you know, to get you in trouble. And when you think back, luckily, nobody ever got hurt.

SW: Yeah, really.

TR: It was dangerous.

SW: Oh, of course. So nobody ever was hurt, then?

TR: No. And we'd also play in the canyons. There are canyons across the street. I didn't go down there too often because I was actually older than the rest of the group. The rest of the kids, they were about 2 or

3 years younger. So sometimes if you are 10 or 11, you don't want to play with the 9-year-olds. There's not that much of a difference, but they would go down there and just walk around and hack at the plants and stuff and come up and that's about it.

SW: Did you ever build forts or build houses?

TR: Not that I recall. Not in the canyons. No.
SW: So were there a lot of canyons that were still open at that time?

TR: Yes. The one across the street...there's an apartment house now on the street here, but that wasn't there before. But what I had heard was that probably in the maybe mid 50s there was a house that was built down into the canyon and it burned. It burned down. And you could walk down there. That's how we could get down there because there were traces, I guess, of the foundation were still there, so it actually allowed us to get more down into the floor of the canyon and walk down there. So we had more canyons. There was a canyon up here on Maryland that has been filled in and now they put apartments on it. That used to be a canyon. So there were a lot of canyons you could get to and play in.

SW: Do you remember any specific incident of interest when you were in school?

TR: Well, I know that the school was kind of...there were a lot of kids there. A lot of kids. And there were for awhile. Alice Birney started to grow again, but there were a lot of events they used to have. A Halloween carnival every year which was really, it was really big because we used to have pony rides and hay rides and haunted houses and the parents, the PTA and the fathers would get together and they would start constructing the sets and the haunted houses. Gosh, at least a week before the actual Halloween carnival.

SW: Yeah. Was your carnival during Halloween or was it on a weekend?

TR: No, it was actually on Halloween. And it was at night. In the evening, they would always have a spaghetti dinner and then it was going to the different I guess attractions that they had because different grades had different games assigned to them and I know my mom worked at the haunted house because the sixth graders had the haunted house.

SW: Did you go to school in costume?

TR: No. No. We weren't allowed to do that.

SW: Did you change into costume at the carnival?

TR: No. We would go home. We would all go home and then the carnival wouldn't start probably until about 5 or so; 5 or 6. I remember the carnivals being much later. At 8:00 or 8:30, I still remember being at a carnival. Which would seem late by today's standards.

SW: Did you then do trick or treating afterwards?

TR: Yes. We would do trick or treating afterwards or during or before. I remember Halloween being much later. Probably until 9 or 10 at night. We would still be out trick or treating.

SW: Do you remember your costumes? What did you do for Halloween?

TR: Well, I would wear the store bought stuff. The ones with the plastic masks, because I liked those. A couple times I dressed up as a hobo and then when Moona Lisa was popular, I had long hair in fifth or sixth grade and so I dressed up as Moona Lisa. She was a character that used to be on channel 10 in the 60s. She hosted scary movies. They would run scary movies on Saturday afternoons and she was the host. She was actually like the Elvira, I guess, but she wasn't sexy or anything. She was supposed to be scary, but her name was Moona Lisa. She was a local celebrity, like Johnny Downs.
SW: Did you ever do tricks for trick or treat?

TR: No.

SW: Tell me about junior high school. Where did you go for that?

TR: I went to Roosevelt Junior High.

SW: And do you remember anything in particular about that?

TR: Well, it was just a new experience. Going from an elementary school to junior high. We had to wear P.E. uniforms and they had to be washed and ironed every week.

SW: Ironed?

TR: Yes. They had to be ironed and they would check. They would check every Monday to make sure that your clothes were clean and ironed. You got points off for not having clean clothes on Mondays and at that point, I met a lot of people that I am still in contact with from junior high.

SW: A lot of friends?

TR: A lot of friends. That's where I met my husband.

SW: In junior high school?

TR: Yes.

SW: Tell me about that. I was going to ask about this anyway. This is a good time. What is his name?

TR: His name is Marvin Randall.

SW: What's his middle name?

TR: Joe.

SW: Okay. Joe? Not Joseph?

TR: No. Not Joseph. Marvin Joe Randall.

SW: And do you know when he was born?

TR: He was born June 22, 1951. And he was born in Colorado, but he came here when he was 5 years old and he came because his father passed away when he was a year old and the family came out, lived in Salt Lake and then his brothers went into the Navy and they were stationed in San Diego so the rest of the family moved out here to kinda be where his brothers were stationed. So he grew up in Mission Hills.

SW: So you met him in junior high school? Where?

TR: I think just down in the lunchtime area. We had attended Roosevelt for seventh and eighth grades and then in ninth grade, a lot of the kids who attended Catholic school and didn't go on to Catholic high school, since their school ended at eighth grade, then in ninth grade, they would come to public school. And so that was like, "Oh, we have new kids here." So we went down and kind of looking and checking up the kids that had come from Catholic school in ninth grade and there were several. And he was one of them, one of the new kids that had come from Catholic school.

SW: So did you like him immediately?

TR: No, I didn't t really. He had a girlfriend.

SW: He had a girlfriend. He was kinda popular?

TR: Yes, he was quite popular with the ladies, with the girls. And I didn't have any classes with him so I didn't have the chance to talk to him. But that's when I met him.

SW: So you went on into high school. What high school?

TR: We went to San Diego High.

SW: Was he going to the same school at that time?

TR: Yes.

SW: Any stories you can tell me about your high school days?

TR: Well, we had, I had a lot of fun. There were a lot of things to do. It was, I think, for the most part, all of the kids enjoyed going to not just school for school, but also because they would have dances on Friday nights. We all went to the football games on Friday nights. And the stands were full and afterwards you would either go to the Taco Bell in Mission Hills or Der Wienerschnitzel that was down the street. And they would have dances after school.

At San Diego High they also put on full productions. They would have a fall play and then a spring musical. So a lot of the students were involved either in acting, singing or playing the music because we actually had bands and orchestras back then. And if you weren't part of it, you attended the performances or you worked at selling concessions. So I think there was a lot to do. I enjoyed it because I liked school and I liked being involved in a lot of activities.

[During high school we attended the USD dances on Saturday nights. Kids from all over San Diego would attend the dances; it was a place where you could meet kids from other parts of San Diego. The

dances were a lot of fun; it was the place to be on Saturday night. One of the bands that played was "Sandy and the Classics."]

SW: Did you participate in other after school activities?

TR: Besides school activities?

SW: Yeah. Besides school. Take lessons of any kind?

TR: Well, I took music lessons when I was from fourth grade until about ninth grade. I took violin lessons.

SW: Still play?

TR: No.

SW: Do you have a violin?

TR: Yes.

SW: You do?

TR: Yes. I have a 3/4 and a full sized.

SW: Did you go to the prom?

TR: Yes.

SW: Tell me about that. What did you wear?

TR: Well, we actually shopped for the dresses at bridal shops because I don't know if department stores even carried formals. Anyway, I remember buying my prom dress at a bridal shop downtown and a group of us went out to dinner before, to Lubach's. And then we went to the prom and we just danced and just stayed at the prom. Then the big thing was the after prom because the school did sponsor after prom and people went to the after prom. They actually were popular because you got to stay up all night. That was the big attraction. So it was held at I think the College Bowl up here on University and College at a bowling alley and they actually had bowling and they served you breakfast and you could play pool and they even had a band there. So that was a big attraction.

SW: When did you get married?

TR: I got married in 1977.

SW: And where did you live?

TR: I lived, I still lived on Maryland Street.

SW: You and your husband still lived there? When you got married?

TR: Oh, when we first got married, we lived in North Park. And that's the furthest we've been away from University Heights. So we lived in North Park by the skating rink. Across the street from the skating rink.

SW: And how long did you live there?

TR: We lived there for three years. Well, from 1977 until 1980 when our second son was born and then we moved, actually to University Heights, well it's considered part of University Heights, on Louisiana Street. So it's still considered part. Nowadays, it's still University Heights. It's about a mile east of where we are now. And then after that, we moved to Proctor, which is right behind us. And then we moved here to this house.

SW: Tell me about your children.

TR: I have two sons. The oldest one is Marvin Jr. and he is 25 and he is in California. He grew up [here in San Diego]. We lived in North Park until he was, I think, two and a half and then we moved to Louisiana Street. So he's lived in this neighborhood for a long time and my parents also lived in the neighborhood and so we would visit them. It's always been part of our lives, this area. Going to the zoo and hanging out at the zoo, Balboa Park and he also attended Birney Elementary until the sixth grade, went to Roosevelt and then he went to Keiller Middle School, which was a magnet school for two years and then he went back to Roosevelt in ninth grade and then San Diego High.

SW: And your other son?

TR: Our other son is Alec. He is...

SW: Alec?

TR: Alec. A-L-E-C. He is 22. He'll be 23 next month and we moved to Louisiana Street when he was about 3 weeks old and so he's also grown up here. And he went to Birney Elementary and Roosevelt and San Diego High.

SW: He didn't go to the magnet school?

TR: No. He didn't.

SW: When you were raising your children, did you go to PTA meetings and do school volunteering or anything like that?

TR: No, because by that time, PTAs just didn't exist anymore.

SW: Oh really?

TR: Well, they're not very big here. I don't know in other parts of the city where...I know North County is always...I don't know maybe it's just a different area, but when our sons were growing up, the elementary schools was actually very small and there weren't too many kids in this area. Most of the students, even today, live east of Park Boulevard. They don't...there weren't too many kids in this part of University Heights, in the west part of University Heights and I know that they didn't have anyone to play

with. We ended up having one or two neighbors that had young kids, but there weren't a whole lot. Not like when I was growing up. So I don't think the parent involvement thing was very big. I also worked, so I didn't have time. And I'm a teacher, so I work school schedule so a lot of the volunteering or anything like that occurred during the day...

SW: At the time you were at work.

TR: At the time I was working. I do remember that when they were going to school, it was year round. So during the summer I would visit the classroom or try to do things when I could.

SW: So they were going to year round school. Really.

TR: Yes.

SW: When you were raising your kids, where did you do your grocery shopping?

TR: We did our grocery shopping at Food Basket.

SW: And where was that located?

TR: That was on University and Alabama Street. I didn't shop at the Safeway that was closer here on Park Boulevard. Prices were a little higher.

SW: So the prices were higher there?

TR: At Safeway. Yeah. And then when they tore down the Sears building and built the Uptown, we were really happy because they put in a Ralph's and that has made it very, very convenient for us because it's not too far away.

SW: Where did you buy clothes for your children?

TR: Actually, we shopped at Sears a lot. Again, because it was convenient and they did have, they were actually a true department store, full service. They had appliances there, they had yardage goods, they had household goods. So we did a lot of shopping there. We also went to Mission Valley, but because Sears had everything and it was close, they had shoes, so that's where we would do our shopping. They had an automotive center, so we would go there too for things. So actually, that's where we did a lot of our shopping.

SW: So you bought a lot of your clothes there? Also at Sears?

TR: Not too much.

SW: Where did you buy your clothes?

TR: Probably down in Mission Valley.

SW: How about for your husband?

TR: Sears. I don't remember. Montgomery Wards down in Mission Valley. Mission Valley, because we lived so close also to...well, this area is so convenient. You go down to Mission Valley and Fashion Valley. It's very convenient to go down there.

SW: How about your jobs? What was your earliest job?

TR: My earliest job was working downtown where my father worked, at Robert's. It was a tradition because it was family owned, it was a tradition that the daughters of the men that worked there, that they would work there during Christmas and then the oldest ones...again a tradition...the oldest daughter would then work there Saturday, every Saturday as a cashier. And that was a time when downtown was...a lot of people went downtown to go shopping and we did cashiering during Christmas, because we also provided free gift wrapping and it would get very busy and usually there were maybe three or four of us working there. It was busy.

SW: How old were you when you started doing this?

TR: I was 16. I was there and I was the second oldest. So when the oldest, it was another employee's daughter, when she graduated from college, she quit working there on Saturdays and so then I took over and I was 18 or 19. I took over as the senior cashier. And I worked there every Saturday. And for the two weeks during Christmas.

SW: How did you get downtown and back?

TR: I either drove, or sometimes I would take the bus. Because it was easier because of parking.

SW: Right.

TR: That's always been a problem.

SW: What was your next job? Where did you work after that?

TR: I started working at Sears. And that was close by. I used to walk there.

SW: What did you do there?

TR: I was a cashier.

SW: In a particular department?

TR: I was a floater. They called them "floaters." I went from department to department, wherever they needed someone for that day. And then in the meantime, I was also, during the week, I would work at school. I was going to college. I worked in offices also.

SW: Where did you go to college?

TR: I went to USD.

SW: And what was your major?

TR: My major was Spanish and English. I would also work during the week at the college. I was working, as I said, in offices, in the post office. And then I think that was it.

SW: What did you graduate? What degree did you graduate with?

TR: A bachelor's in Spanish and English Literature. Spanish Literature and English Literature. And then I went to, one year I worked on my credential. And I got my teaching credential.

SW: You got that at USD?

TR: Yes.
SW: Okay. And then you became a teacher.

TR: Kind of.

SW: Kind of? Okay, what kind of?

TR: Well, I worked. That was 1975. It was a time when there were too many teachers and not enough jobs. So jobs were very competitive. So I worked for one year in San Luis Rey Academy, it was a private girls' school. And I worked there for one year. And then I came back to San Diego and I substituted and then I got married and then I substituted still, because there weren't teaching jobs and then I got pregnant, but I was still substituting in between until I finally got a contract at Sweetwater. And that's where I've been.

SW: Oh, so you work for Sweetwater District.

TR: Right.

SW: Which school?

TR: Southwest High. And then I started at Castle Park High. And then I worked at Sweetwater High for one year. So I know the South Bay, kind of.

SW: What did you teach in those schools?

TR: ESL. Which is English as a Second Language. English and Spanish.

SW: Did you like teaching high school?

TR: Yes. I think one year I did teach partial assignments working with junior high. I guess they call them middle schools now. But it was junior high back then. At Mira Mesa and I didn't like that. I'm more comfortable with high school. I've always taught high school.

SW: Then continuing with the idea of work, where did you work next? You said you'd gotten pregnant, and you had children. Did you work while you were raising your children?

TR: Right. Substituting.

SW: And was that also in the Sweetwater District?

TR: Yes. I was in Sweetwater.

SW: Are you still working?

TR: Yes.

SW: Where are you working now?

TR: At Southwest High.

SW: Okay, tell me about some of the places where you and your husband socialized, hung out.

TR: We hung out at the beach. My husband was an over-the-line player. So that's where we spent a lot of time, he would play over-the-line. And I would watch and hang out at the beach. But we had children soon after we were married, so then that kind of became a...your life changes after you have children.

SW: Yeah.

TR: So when socializing, we'd go out with the boys, we would go to Balboa Park, we'd get the passes for the zoo. And back then, you used to be able to get a city resident card which was different than the Zoological Society. It was only available to residents of San Diego and you had to show it and pay $10.00 a year. You could get in free to the zoo with that card. So we did a lot of that. And we used to go to Seaport Village. That was fun. We used to go to the bay a lot and then with other families and have picnics and bonfires at the beach. So I think the beach has been a place we would go a lot.

SW: Where did you go out to eat? Did you go to restaurants in this area?

TR: Gosh. When we could afford it.

SW: Sorry about that. (Alarm ring) I'll check my time.

End of Side 1

Tape 1, Side 2

SW: So where was it that you used to go eat?

TR: We used to go to the Chicken Pie Shop. China Land down in the Midway area. That was a favorite place to go. I know we used to go to Don Jose's Mexican Food. It was out there on El Cajon Boulevard. We used to go to Old Town a lot. That was pretty much it.

SW: How about church? Where'd you go to church?

TR: I've always gone to St. John's since I've lived here. When we lived in North Park, I attended St. Patrick's, but that was just a couple of years. But I've always gone to church at St. John's.

SW: Are you active at the church?

TR: No. I used to be at St. Patrick's when my sons were attending CCD there.[15] And I used to help out with youth group and their activities. But now that they're older...

SW: Where did you get married?

TR: At St. John's.

SW: You have lived here a very long time now. How has it changed?

TR: Well, there's more people. I do remember that for awhile, probably when we were married, in the late 70s, early 80s, it was almost considered an old people's area.

SW: Really?

TR: Because a lot of these people had moved in when their children were young, probably in the late 40s, in the 50s and then their children grew up and so a lot of the people stayed here. Their children moved on and so it became kind of an older area, (with) a lot of older people. And then probably, maybe in the last 10-15 years, I've seen younger people moving in. Uptown has come and Hillcrest has changed and is considered the gay community and so we have that, gay couples moving in. And so it's been good, because what the families have done, is the families who move in, move in because of the convenience of the neighborhood and because they like old houses, so there has been some restoration in that respect. What happened probably in the mid 80s that wasn't good was a lot of construction. They tore down some of the homes and put up condos, four and six units where there used to be one lot. And there used to be one house. And that hasn't helped, I don't think, the neighborhood. Because now we have kind of a mishmash of condos, but then some really nice houses. But people are now restoring and preserving. It's a lot more crowded.

SW: Do you think you have more of a transient population because of the condos or do you think they move in permanently, the people that move in there?

TR: It's kind of half and half. There's a lot of apartments too. For a while, some of them, they weren't condos. I would say in the late 60s, the Huffmans, they're called Huffmans because at some of the of the community meetings here, you'd see a lot of Huffmans, which are the...Hoffman? Huffman or Hoffman. Huffman buildings. They also came in the late 60s and tore down houses and put up apartments and he was a big builder at that time. And so those apartments still exist here in the neighborhood as well. And some of them have changed hands, obviously. They are different owners and so those tend to be sometimes not well kept up or they do contribute to the people moving in, moving out.

SW: How about landmarks? Are there any landmarks you remember that were here that aren't anymore?

TR: Well Sears. The Sears store. The footbridge, luckily, was rebuilt. That was an old wooden bridge that would connect University Heights to I guess what is now called Uptown and Hillcrest and they tore that down in the 80s and it wasn't until 1994 that there were funds from the community, the University Heights Community Association and the City of San Diego, they rebuilt that. They did a real nice job.

[15] CCD stands for Co-fraternity of the Christian Doctrine or catechism.

And a lot of the residents...some of the residents were opposed to it because they felt it would bring in more homeless and there would be more crime, but I don't think that's happened. As bad as they thought it would.

SW: Are there any ethnic minority groups in clusters anywhere in this area that you ever recall or see now? Not ethnic necessarily...you mention this area here as being for the gay community. Any other groups of people?

TR: Well, in Mission Hills, especially south Mission Hills, which is still in your area here. A lot of Italians, some of our friends that I went to school with. And what happened was that many of them either grew up or their parents grew up in Little Italy, but when they put in Freeway 5, actually expanded it, they broke up Little Italy and some of them moved up to Mission Hills.

SW: Sort of circle that area (on the map).

TR: This area right here. There are a lot of Italians. And they still live there, though. A lot of our friends from Roosevelt, the Italians, they lived in Little Italy and some of them lived in the south part of Mission Hills. So we still keep in contact with them.

SW: Any Hispanic neighborhoods at all?

TR: Not in this area. When we went to...actually, it wasn't until we went to San Diego High that we, I guess met or we had the kids from Logan Heights, from Memorial Junior High going there, but they lived in Logan Heights. That was kind of far away from where we were.

SW: Were there any other parks in this area besides Balboa Park that you went to, any other community areas?

TR: I didn't. I didn't go. I know there's a park in Mission Hills, Pioneer Park. I know my husband has a lot of stories about that. The cemetery there. But I didn't go there. And they used to have a place, well, it's still there, the North Park Rec. That's over in North Park. I didn't go there, but I knew kids who would go there and we pretty much had, Alice Birney had its own little rec center and a director, someone who would work there and I can't remember his name, but he would run the after school programs and games and in the summer. So we pretty much stayed in our neighborhoods.

SW: How about theatre? Did you ever attend any theatre or plays in this neighborhood?

TR: We would, well we would go to the Old Globe down in Balboa Park. If we went to the movies, big movies, we would go to the Fox Theatre downtown, where Symphony Hall is now. But that was the nice place to go. We would go to the North Park to watch movies and the Guild, which was in Hillcrest. But we did go to the Old Globe. I do remember going to a couple of things at Russ Auditorium which was part of San Diego High. And I know the symphony used to play there before the Community Concourse was built. Before the Civic Theatre was built. They used to play there. And I remember also going to Charger games at Balboa Stadium.

SW: You had mentioned something about going to a bowling alley earlier. Tell me about that.

TR: Well, it was just the Hillcrest Bowl. And it was over on Washington Street on Sixth Avenue and we would just go there to watch people bowl and they had a coffee shop there and my father would buy his pie and that was just a place to hang out.

SW: All right. Have you any other details you wish to add about your memories about growing up in this area?

TR: We actually used to have a dairy.

SW: Oh really? And where was that located?

TR: That was where T.G.I. Friday's is now. It's at, well I don't know. Well, it's where 163 and 8 meet. And it's probably right around here. But it's actually once you get down into Mission Valley. So they had the Challenge Dairy and I can't remember what the other place was...and there was also a Little League field there. So the kids that played Little League, that's where they would play Little League. There were several other dairies along Mission Valley, but my father didn't like to drive a lot, so he didn't take us out. So we didn't really venture out in this area. Mostly Hillcrest and that area.

SW: Okay. You've had a long life here and you've enjoyed it very much apparently. Do you intend to stay here?

TR: Oh yes. I think so. We're still here. We were going to move last year, actually down to Otay Ranch and that didn't work out. My parents were still in the neighborhood. They live over by the...my father lives over by the zoo. My mother is in a rest home now, but she's in Hillcrest. So it's just more convenient and accessible. We'll be able to keep an eye on both of them. To visit and kind of stay in touch, because that's the only family I have in San Diego.

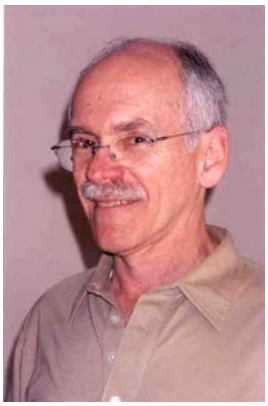
SW: Thank you Tayde very much. I really enjoyed this.

TR: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

10. STANLEY SCHWARTZ

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript:
July 7, 2003 by Susan D. Walter



Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Stanley Schwartz on July 7, 2003, in the living room of his home. Laurel Schwartz was present for a few minutes. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Stanley Schwartz provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	- booklet: *Congregational Beth Israel of San Diego 135th Birthday Celebration 1861-1996 5621-5756.* Mr. Schwartz authored the section A Brief History of Congregation Beth Israel

Transcript:

SS=Stanley Schwartz
LS=Laurel Schwartz
SW=Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter and I am interviewing...

SS: Stanley Schwartz.

SW: Today is July 7, 2002. We're in the living room of his home. We are talking about the temple, the Jewish synagogue in the Uptown area. (But) first, I want to get a little bit of background on you.

SS: Okay.

SW: Your full name?

SS: Stanley Schwartz. I don't use a middle name.

SW: Do you have any nicknames? No? When were you born?

SS: January 7, 1946.

SW: Where were you born?

SS: New York City.

SW: Were you adopted?

SS: No.
SW: Can you tell me about your mother and what was her name?

SS: My mother is Mildred Schwartz. She lives in Hillcrest now. She was a school teacher, a bookkeeper.

SW: When did she come to San Diego?
SS: In 1979.

SW: And your father? What was his name?

SS: Harry Schwartz. He worked for the post office for 32 years.

SW: Really? Where?

SS: New York.

SW: Where was he born?

SS: New York.

SW: Do you have brothers and sisters?

SS: No.

SW: Are you married?

SS: Yes.

SW: And what is your wife's name?

SS: Laurel.

SW: Laurel?

SS: Uh-huh. Stan and Laurel.

SW: Where was she born?

SS: New York.

SW: Where did you meet her?

SS: We actually met in Israel.

SW: In Israel? About when was that?

SS: In 1976.

SW: How did you come out here to San Diego?

SS: You mean why?

SW: Why. Yes.

SS: Because of the weather.

SW: Because of the weather. Did you have jobs here when you arrived?

SS: No, my wife had a job here when we arrived.

SW: What was she doing?

SS: Computer programming.

SW: Where was that job located?

SS: Midway and Rosecrans area.

SW: Do you have children?

SS: No.

SW: We're particularly interested in hearing about the history of the Temple Beth Israel. I understand you have quite a background of knowledge of that. Why don't you tell me about when it was first established and any incidents that you know about that.

SS: Well, we have to clarify your question because the Third and Laurel location of Congregation Beth is really their second home. Their first home was on Second and Beech. The Congregation was formed in 1861. They built their first building on Second and Beech in 1889. They built their second location at Third and Laurel in 1926. The building on Second and Beech is now in Heritage Park in Old Town. The new location, the third home, is up in University Towne Center.

SW: Go ahead. You had told me that you had proceeded with nomination for historical designation.[16]

SS: Yes.

SW: What did you find out about the history of the (synagogue) while you were doing this?

SS: Well, I personally didn't find out too much that I didn't know because prior to that, for the Congregation's 135th anniversary, I wrote a brief history of the congregation which, of course, covered the history of the building. There's a copy there if you would like it.

SW: Oh! I'd love to (have it). Can you tell me about some of the people who were involved in the early history?

SS: Well, because Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest and largest congregation in the city, you want me to tell you about some of the pioneers?
SW: Yeah. Why don't we start with that.

SS: Well, one of the pioneering families would be the Levi Family. L-E-V-I, five brothers who came to San Diego in the 1870s. They've been a prominent Jewish family ever since. One of the brothers, Simon Levi and his brother Adolph Levi, were both involved in finding the Second and Beech location for the synagogue and the Third and Laurel location for the synagogue. Other prominent families, I guess you have the Klauber Family, though Klauber is still involved, very involved in the history of San Diego. Who else? Marcus Schiller was one of the pioneers of the congregation. He was involved in the congregation from the 1860s until he died in 1910. Here's my wife, Laurel.

SW: Hello Laurel.

LS: Hi.

SS: This is the designation report that I wrote.

SW: Thank you.

SS: You want (to know about) families who are still active today?

SW: Yes.

SS: From the pioneer days?

SW: Yeah. Particularly people who live around in this area (on the map).

SS: Well, there aren't any pioneers, unfortunately, who are still Jewish except the Levi Family. I guess there's been a lot of people who have been involved with the synagogue since it opened on Third and Laurel...too many for me to name.

SW: Tell me a little bit about some of the other activities that the synagogue has. Is there a day care?

[16] In conversation prior to the interview.

SS: You're talking about when it was Beth Israel?

SW: Yeah. Okay.

SS: Of course, now another congregation is occupying the building.

SW: Okay. Tell me about that, because obviously, I'm confused about this.

SS: Well, Beth Israel had the building from1926 until last year or the year before. 2001. No, last year.

SW: 2002?

SS: Laurel, when did Beth Israel move out? Do you remember? Was it last year or was it the year before? Because the building was empty for a while. So Beth Israel moved out around 2001 and then about approximately nine or ten months later, Ohr Shalom moved in, so the building was empty for about nine or ten months. Now, Beth Israel, when it occupied the property, probably had 1400 family members or member families, whereas Ohr Shalom is much smaller. They have probably about 220 member families.
SW: What is the difference in the second congregation?

SS: Well, the second congregation is Conservative, Beth Israel is Reformed.

SW: Can you tell me what the (synagogue) did to bring the Jewish community into the (congregation)?

SS: Well, for one thing, at the time, when the building opened at Third and Laurel, there were only two congregations in the city . Beth Israel was Reform and the other one, Tifereth Israel, at that time was Orthodox. The important thing is that there was a complex, you have a sanctuary and you have a social hall. One of the reasons for the building being able to get nominated for the national register is for all the events that took place in the social hall. So I think one of the attractions for the congregation was that a lot of the Jewish organizations met there. During World War II, there were a lot of, I guess you call them USO dances. Also, they had, during the Jewish holiday of Passover, they had a lot of ecumenical – is the word – seders where people from outside the Jewish community also attended. They had Thanksgiving celebrations with the community in the social hall. Whenever something was going on nationally and speakers were coming in from other parts of the country, they would speak in the social hall at Third and Laurel. A lot of the Jewish organizations had their meetings at Third and Laurel in the social hall. So I guess you could say it was sort of a gathering place for the community. The Jewish Community Center, the one on 54th Street at the time, didn't open until 1953. So from 1925 to 1953, the Third and Laurel social hall was the main gathering place for the community.

SW: Was it also a gathering place for the non-Jewish community?

SS: Not specifically. I would say that the vast majority of events were open to the community, but I would say that most of the events probably had the sponsorship of the Jewish organization or from the congregation itself. The Passover dinners, Thanksgiving dinners, were all sponsored by the congregation. The USO dances, I'm not sure...I don't know exactly who would have sponsored those. I know a lot of people, husbands and wives met at those dances. I guess that would cover most of it in a nutshell.

SW: When you talk about Thanksgiving, is this the American Thanksgiving?

SS: Yes.

SW: So did you know what was served there? Did they have traditional (kosher food)?

SS: Being a Reform synagogue, they served whatever the committee would decide upon. In other words in the Reform synagogues in those days, the laws of keeping kosher usually were not followed.

SW: Did the synagogue have anything to do on odd holidays like Halloween?

SS: Probably not. Whether any of the organizations that met there, they might have had something going on, but that would be something specific to a certain organization. In other words, there might have been a dozen organizations that met there at various times during the month and whether one would have something for Halloween, I don't know.

SW: Or other types of holidays?

SS: Yes. Well, I'm sure they had something for the Fourth of July. They might have had something for Mother's Day, Father's Day. They might have had something for New Year's.
SW: You told me [previously] that you do interviews. Can you tell me a little bit about that please?

SS: Well, I've done oral interviews with some of the older people of the Jewish community to find out what life was like for them in San Diego from the time they were growing up until now.

SW: How do you think it was different in the time they were talking about?

SS: Well, it's mainly that the Jewish community was very small. I would say that they, the Jewish community tried to live closer together.

SW: So the people were neighbors? You mean they literally lived closer together?

SS: Some did, not all of them. For example, the Orthodox congregation which formed in 1905, most of the people lived down around 18th and Market. They even had a synagogue in that area which is now Highway 5. But they lived there, they had stores that carried a lot of Jewish type of foods. They had a bakery, Bohemian Hearth. The Bohemian Restaurant and I think there was probably a kosher butcher in the area. And then they could also walk to synagogue on the Sabbath. So it's interesting to find out how their life was, how they got along with their non-Jewish neighbors, where the community lived at times, because eventually, they moved up to the North Park area. North Park became something like a Jewish area because there were two synagogues in North Park. There was a kosher butcher and there was a bakery and then basically after that, the community dispersed throughout the city.

SW: The people in this earlier neighborhood that you were talking about, were they immigrants from other countries or had they moved here from other parts of the United States?

SS: I would say that the majority of them moved here from other parts of the United States.

SW: And why did they come here?

SS: Well, I guess the first reason would be the weather. The second reason is for the opportunity of starting out in a growing city. You're talking about around the 1920s or so?

SW: Right.

SS: I would say those were the main reasons at that time. Earlier, there were different reasons and later, there were different reasons.

SW: What was the feeling these people had when they moved into these neighborhoods? Were they comfortable in the neighborhoods?

SS: Yes. As far as I know from some of the research I've done, there were never any problems between the Jewish and the non-Jewish community. They always seemed to get along pretty well.

SW: So the children when to school with no problems?

SS: Yes.

SW: And the neighborhoods were friendly?

SS: Yes.

SW: There was never any problem in getting jobs?

SS: No. Most of the people who I interviewed, the families were usually small business owners, a lot of merchants and shop owners and things like that.

SW: Do you know if any of the small businesses were in the Uptown area? I'm interested to find out if there were any kosher businesses in this area.

SS: No. As far as I know , to the best of my knowledge, is that from downtown, the 18th and Market area, they moved up to the North Park area which I guess would be a few blocks over from Park going towards 30th Street.

SW: Where is this oral interview collection housed now?

SS: The bulk of it is here.

SW: At your home?

SS: Yeah. Eventually, we'll be moving most of it over to the archives.

SW: Where is the archives?

SS: The library of San Diego State University.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about your own history gathering experiences?

SS: I guess around 1987 the American Jewish Historical Society had a conference in Los Angeles, their first time on the west coast in a hundred years. And at that time, we also started our book business and we found that there was no Jewish history of San Diego. Most cities in the country have a history of the Jewish community written. There was nothing on San Diego. So when we came back, we got involved with the San Diego Jewish Historical Society, which was a small group. It was very low key. The people got together usually in people's homes and they had small meetings. At that time, the person in charge of the group was a man by the name of Henry Schwartz who did a lot of research on Jewish history in San Diego. A few years later when he passed away and we took over the Historical Society from him, we decided to make it a bigger group. I guess at this point, we have about a hundred members.

In 1996, for the 135th birthday of Congregation Beth Israel...let me backtrack a second...up until 1996, the Congregation didn't really know when it was formed. The people who did a 75th anniversary of the congregation back in the 1950s or 60s did a 75th anniversary. Being involved with another group called *Western States Jewish History* magazine run by Rabbi William Kramer and a doctor by the name of Norton Stern out of Los Angeles. Reading through Henry's files, I found that he had told the congregation that the date they were using as their formation was incorrect. The reason it was incorrect is that when people were thinking back when everything started, nobody really knew. The people who wrote the history for the 75th anniversary didn't know that there were Jewish newspapers published in San Francisco at the time back in the 1860s that was keeping tabs of what was going on in San Diego. There was actual communication between San Diego and San Francisco and this information was published in the San Francisco Jewish newspaper called the *Weekly Gleaner*. People at that time in San Diego didn't know this. Because research was being done, this information was uncovered. When Henry approached the congregation with the information, at that time, they weren't interested in it. Why? I don't know.

Okay. Fast forward to 1996, a new rabbi had come to Beth Israel. He had heard that the congregation was going to celebrate an anniversary and he wanted to make something out of it. When I heard this was going on, I went in to see him. He, coming from an old congregation in Indiana, was history minded. When I showed him the documentation I had on the actual beginning of the congregation and that I had enough data to prove what I wanted them to use as their starting date, 1861, I was able to show him all the data I collected and he agreed with me and we went ahead and reset the date of the congregation, making it older than they thought they were. They had a starting date of approximately 1875 and we put it back to 1861.

SW: What happened to your 75th anniversary?

SS: Well, it's a lovely booklet, it just has the wrong information in it. Well, I think that's one of the things that happens, is that back in the 50s, people didn't really do thorough historical research and in the last 30 or 40 years, research has become more refined, especially on the west coast. So you are now able to document things that nobody bothered to document earlier.

SW: So what was the final product of all of this?

SS: You mean the redating of the congregation?

SW: Yeah.

SS: Well, we had a large party. We published a booklet with a brief history of the congregation that I wrote. Unfortunately, it wasn't a big seller. Even though we gave them away for free. Well, you see, the

problem is, and I would assume you've run into this yourself, is that the vast majority of people aren't from San Diego. They've all come here from other places. They don't have a sense of history for San Diego. At least from what I've found. They don't have roots here, so they're not as interested in the history of this place as they should be. In the Jewish 850. And it's just not recognized. It's very difficult for our historical society to gain what I consider to be enough community support because the people don't relate to it as well as they should.

SW: So obviously, there was a longer history of Jews in this area than just World War II. Can you talk a little bit about some of that that you've found in your research?

SS: Okay. During World War I, the community supported, of course, all the Jewish troops who wound up at Camp Kearny. There was a small building that was used as a synagogue and probably a kosher dining room and little meeting room. If memory serves, a lot of the land for Camp Kearny was donated by one of the Jewish pioneers, Adolph Levi. At the end of...well, I guess it's not the end of war, but when the camp was closed down, that building that the Jewish community was using up there was moved down to become part of the synagogue down on Second and Beech.

SW: So was it attached to the synagogue?

SS: It was not attached to the synagogue. It was probably used as a meeting room because the Second and Beech building itself was quite small. A lot of Jewish people came to town, came to San Diego in the World War II period. As a matter of fact, there were so many that they built a balcony in the Second and Beech synagogue to handle the overflow. And it was at that time, right at the end when the camp was closed, that they realized that the Second and Beech building was getting too small and they started to look around for another location where they could put up a larger building and that's how they wound up at Third and Laurel.

SW: Do you have any idea what happened to that structure that had been moved from Camp Kearny? Does it still exist?

SS: No, the Second and Beech synagogue structure exists. That's been moved to Heritage Park in Old Town. The building from Camp Kearny, if memory serves, I think it burnt down. Most of the buildings that they built at that time were considered temporary structures anyway, even though some of them are still in use today. They were basically built to temporary standards.

SW: Were there any other national or international events that brought large numbers of Jewish people to San Diego besides the two world wars?

SS: Yes. You had the Panama Exhibition of 1915.

SW: Why did Jewish people come for that? Was they just tourists?

SS: Yeah. Tourists. They just came to see the exhibit and they liked the city and stayed. Just like today. Besides that, off the top of my head, I can't think of anything else. It's amazing that you talk to a lot of people today and they say, "Oh yeah, I've been to San Diego. I was there when I was in the Navy and I remember the zoo."

SW: You have a business with Jewish books. Can you tell me a little about that? What is the name of the business and what do you do?

SS: The business is Schwartz Judaica. We sell out-of-print and rare and scholarly books of Jewish interest. We sell them by mail order catalog and on the internet and we sell them internationally. We've been doing it for about 14 years.

SW: I see you have your own library here.

SS: Also I have a large collection of books on the history of Jews in California. It's not all that many books that have been written, but I have most of the books on that subject.

SW: Are there any on Jews in the San Diego area?

SS: Yes. We published, the [Jewish] Historical Society, a book called "Old Town, New Town–An Enjoyment of San Diego Jewish History." It's mainly a compilation of articles that were written in the San Diego History Journal and a publication called "Western States Jewish History." So we just brought the articles together so they would be in one volume. And I also have done a bibliography of articles on San Diego Jewish history.

SW: Where is the bibliography?

SS: It's also in the "Old Town, New Town."

SW: Okay. Can you tell me anything about any other people that you can associate with this temple from the old days? Any other people aside from the ones you had already mentioned?

SS: Well, Samuel Fox, who owned the Fox Lion Clothing down on Fifth and Broadway. The Lion Clothing building is still standing there. I think it's empty right now. I'd have to look.

SW: Are there any newspapers that focus on the Jewish community?

SS: Well, the oldest one is the San Diego Jewish Press-Heritage which started publishing, I guess it was around 1917 and is still published today. There are two others in town. Since 1914, sorry. There are two others in town that are, I guess you would call them newer papers. There is the *San Diego Jewish Journal*, which started up about two years ago and there is the...what's the other paper, Laurel?

LS: *The Times*.

SS: The *San Diego Jewish Times,* which probably started about 20 years ago. Unfortunately, with the *San Diego Press-Heritage*, no one had the foresight to save the old copies; neither the publisher nor anybody else. We've been trying to put together whatever we can find in these papers. We have some that go back to the 1940s, but as of this time, I haven't been able to locate any of the older copies. For some reason, the publisher didn't keep them, the libraries didn't keep them and the universities didn't keep them.

SW: (Did) other synagogues?

SS: The synagogues didn't keep them either.

SW: How about the newspaper in San Francisco? Is it possible that there was a connection with papers from here going up there?

SS: I doubt it, no.

End of Side 1

Tape One, Side 2

SW: This is side two of the interview with Mr. Schwartz. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about Judaism in the San Diego area?

SS: Yes. One of the main things that Beth Israel had that was another draw for the community is that they always had either a day school or a religious school. Their school was...how would I put this? They always had a good school and they even drew children from other congregations. Over the years, the school became quite large on the property in the early 1960s. They put up a separate school building which still stands today. Back, I guess ever since the congregation took over the property and started on that property on Third and Laurel, the school has always been there and it's always been a very large draw for the community. When UCSD opened up, the parents, the professors up there sent their children down to the Third and Laurel property for schooling. Over the years, even the more orthodox people have attended Beth Israel's schools. Like I said, they're kind of a day school, a religious school. Always. And I think that's an important part of the congregation.

SW: Are there non-Jews that attend the school also?

SS: Yes, in the day school. I think they've had enrollments of up to close to a thousand kids.

SW: And what are the grades that are included in the schools?

SS: I know at the times, over the years, they've had a nursery school, so I would say that they've gone from nursery school probably toward the sixth grade.

SW: Any secondary school level?

SS: The secondary school would be a school that is in addition to public school. I know they've had what the call a Jewish high school, but it's something done usually on the side or after regular school. I don't think they've ever gone for a full secondary school program.

SW: So it's not really a curriculum of like high school level, but it's additional schooling?

SS: Correct.

SW: Is it religious primarily in instruction?

SS: I would say it's Jewish in content, but not very...I don't think I would call it religious. There is a difference.

SW: Is there anything else you wish to add?

SS: I just would repeat that the Third and Laurel property has always been a magnet for the community because of all the events that have gone on in the center, the social center of the property.

SW: Okay. Well thank you very much.

SS: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW

11. ELOISE SHERFEY

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
June 27, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Eloise Sherfey on June 27, 2003, in the living room of her home. No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Eloise Sherfey provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Prior to the interview, Mrs. Sherfey and Susan Walter walked around part of her neighborhood. Mrs. Sherfey pointed out some interesting structures, described some of the former tenants, and introduced Susan to one of her neighbors. After the walk, she then showed her through her house.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Items inside brackets [ ], or footnoted, are added from Mrs. Sherfey's notes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	- a descriptive note about the Sanborn map - a Sanborn map showing locations of houses made from Camp Kearny tent flooring - photocopy of article showing the Camp Kearny tents

Transcript:

ES = Eloise Sherfey
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Eloise Sherfey on June 27, 2003. We're in her living room. The purpose of this interview is to gather information from people with a long-term or expert experience in this project area which is called Uptown. The recording and final documents of this oral history interview will become the property of the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego and archived at the San Diego Historical Society.

SW: Can you tell me your full name?

ES: Mary Eloise Vanetta Sherfey.

SW: Do you have any nicknames?

ES: No.

SW: When and where were you born?

ES: On April 1, 1928. I was born in Knox County, Ohio.

SW: How did you get to California?

ES: I drove, and there was one other car that also came. They were elderly people. One of them had a niece living in San Diego. They wanted to visit her. Another couple rode along in my car. They had gone to Florida the year before, as did I.[17] I didn't like Florida. They were tired of Florida. They'd gone every year for 20 or 30 years, I suppose.

[17] Mrs. Sherfey added she went to Florida the winter of 1948.

SW: So what year was this?

ES: When I came to California, it was 1949. [That was the year we all came to California.]

SW: Where did you live when you [first came to] California?

ES: At Gillespie Field in El Cajon, which was a parachute training place during the war.

SW: Were you married at the time?

ES: No. My husband was separated from his first wife, getting a divorce and I happened to move into what was the officer's club during the war. He was already living there, but we weren't married until about seven years later.[18]

SW: Where did you and he first live?

ES: 1429 Tenth Avenue, (in) downtown San Diego.

SW: Where did you move from there?

ES: [Here] to 3675 Herbert Street.

SW: What year was that?

ES: 1956.

SW: So you've been here for how many years now?

ES: 47.

SW: 47 years. What was your impression of this neighborhood when you first came?

ES: It looked like paradise.

SW: Really? Why do you say that?

ES: Well, it was mild, the climate was good. Everything was green. We had more rain than recently, so I liked it very much.

SW: What about the people that were living here? What were they like?

ES: I was working, of course, as was my husband. We didn't socialize much, but they were nice. They all maintained their homes.

[18] Mr. Sherfey had two sons from his previous marriage when he married Eloise.

SW: Before we started the tape recording, you and I walked a little bit around the neighborhood. Do you want to give me some of your impressions of some of the places that we took a look at and some of the people that used to live her in this neighborhood?

ES: We walked down through what I call "the dip," on Herbert Place, and made a left turn at the alley and looked at the old barn where the carriages used to be. Then we walked on the other side of the street and talked with the lady at 1646 Pennsylvania. She told us about an older man who is still living (at the end of her street). I was surprised at that. (He resides in) the second house from her place, at 1630 Pennsylvania. And then we went back past what used to be the maid's house, and the little white house that was the groom's house next door.[19] [To the north is where a mansion was located, where now a two story apartment building is.][20]

Then we walked down to the end of Pennsylvania Avenue and looked down into what used to be, and still is, as far as I know, Maple Street Canyon. Many years ago, they talked of having an offshoot from 163 come up Maple Street Canyon. It would have taken many of the trees and things out. But that never went through, thank goodness.

SW: What year was that, do you recall?

ES: It must've been in the late 40s or early 50s, because 163 was opened up shortly after World War II.

SW: Do you remember when 163 was opened up?

ES: No, I don't. I always went by bus from Park and Cypress downtown and very seldom did I go on 163.
SW: So you used public transportation?

ES: Yes.

SW: Did you ever ride on the trolleys?

ES: The trolleys were no longer operating when I came to town. They were taking up the tracks, I remember, downtown...

SW: Go ahead.

ES: Across the canyon, there is a wide street on an angle going up to Adams. That's where the Japanese Gardens used to be. [Normal Street] was made wider because of Spreckels, who donated the Organ Pavilion. He thought a trolley going up to his ostrich farm would be a boost for his property, but it never went through for some reason.

SW: What are some of the interesting features in this neighborhood? You had mentioned about the Camp Kearny wood. Tell about that.

[19] Mrs. Sherfey mentioned also that at one time there was an artist who lived in the former groom's house.
[20] The modern two story apartment building fronts on Park. On the other side of Pennsylvania, facing Park, are two older apartment buildings also pointed out by Mrs. Sherfey. She said they had been owned by sisters.

ES: My house – and there were nine houses altogether – (were) built from wood that came from an Army camp up on Kearny Mesa. The floors were wood in this Army camp and the tops were canvas. Of course, wood was a scarce commodity. They brought [some of] the wood down here. The man who built these houses evidently had a lot of knowledge of what he was doing. He was able to build the nine houses, and they are all standing except for two that were taken out back around 1980, and a two-story Spanish tile roof house built in its place [at 1609] Herbert Place.

SW: So was it just the floors in these houses that came from Camp Kearny?

ES: Just the flooring from Camp Kearny was used. But everything, all the wood was used in these houses.

SW: So the walls are also made from Camp Kearny flooring?

ES: Everything. And I have never been in my attic, but the man who owns the house next to me was up in the attic one day. He told me that on the rafters it says "ammunition." So they even used the wood from the ammunition boxes. The end house [at 1616] Herbert Place, the little bitty house, was used for storing tools and stuff. The little house back of me in the canyon [at 3685 Herbert] was used for storing the wood. I can just visualize them in here like bees building these houses after [World War I].

SW: Do you think the sashes and so on, window frames, came from Camp Kearny also or do you think that's lumber that came from some other source?

ES: I really don't know. But I do know there is a place in my bedroom on the baseboard...[the houses had baseboards in them] underneath the [shelves] mounted on the wall is very rough. I often thought that probably was a piece of odd wood he had left and (used there).

SW: That's pretty interesting. Do you know what year these houses were built?

ES: Evidently, they were built (after) World War I. My house was occupied in 1923. So they were built probably between 1918 and 1923.

SW: Do you have any idea which house was the first and in which order they were built?

ES: No, I have no idea.

SW: Have any of your other neighbors told you interesting details that they found out about their houses, like your friend up in the attic?

ES: I'm going to get the map that has the numbers of the houses. That house there, is one of the oldest houses in the area.[21]

SW: The white one back there?

ES: Yes. [Bill and Norah] Wilson had that house. She was a war bride from World War I. But, the house is much older than that.

[21] 3664 Herbert.

Another interesting thing, Pennsylvania, over where we were walking where the old barn is and the carriage house,[22] it used to be called Thornton Street and they renamed it Pennsylvania. If you go over on Pennsylvania Avenue west of [Fifth Avenue] between Third and Fifth, I'm not sure which one, it has embedded on the sidewalk the name Thornton.

SW: Where did you do your shopping when you were first living here?

ES: Well, we did a lot of it downtown at Popular Market south of Broadway. The building is still there, I believe. And there used to be a Piggly Wiggly.[23]

SW: How about shopping for clothing? Where did you go?

ES: I always made all my own clothes and knitted my own sweaters. Of course, I don't do that anymore.

SW: Where did you buy the material?

ES: Sears used to be where Ralph's is now [on University Avenue]. This Sears store and when it was built after [World War II}. It was the largest Sears west of the Mississippi River. They had a basement [plus] two floors, so it was a good size store. I bought most of my materials and things like that over there.

SW: Where did you get your sewing machine?

ES: (Pointing) That one?

SW: The one that you sewed all those clothes on.
ES: That's it. Well, I had a portable one that I had to lift up and put it on the dining room table and that got to be too much. So this machine I bought in 1960 and I got it downtown. I can't think of the name of the place. Probably Marston's or Dormeyer's or one of the old stores down there.[24]

SW: Did you take the bus down there too?

ES: We used the car. I just took the bus when I went to work.

SW: Where did you work?

ES: Where didn't I work? It was always an insurance office. When I first came to California, it was National Automobile and Casualty in the First National Bank Building. I worked for Willis Fletcher at 1018 Ninth Avenue downtown. The Ed Fletcher Company was at 1020 Ninth Avenue in the same building, and the building is still there. Home Federal, which was started by Charlie Fletcher; (he) got his start in the rear room at 1018 Ninth Avenue. When I left there, I went with Frank Hale on Fourth Avenue

[22] At 1630 and 1646 Pennsylvania.
[23] Mrs. Sherfey added later that the Piggly Wiggly was "over on Park Blvd which became a Safeway and then a bakery. This (was) on the east side of Park Blvd north of Robinson."
[24] Mrs. Sherfey added these details about her sewing machine: she bought it at the Singer Shop at 903 Sixth Avenue, San Diego. It was the first year (1960) they made the Slant-O-Matic. It is constructed all of metal in the head, and has no plastic. Never been in the shop and probably spent a total of $10,00 for light bulb(s), felt washers, oil, lubricant over the years. Mrs. Sherfey was self taught and made everything including curtains, drapes, and awnings for the trailer.

at Nutmeg. Next it was to Underwriters Insurance Agency which was owned actually by Carol Shannon, the daughter of C. Arnholdt Smith. We were at 1020 [C Street} for years on the 18th floor and C. Arnholdt Smith's was on the 24th.

Quite an interesting little tidbit about that building. In 1975, I believe it was, Gerald Ford came to town to make a speech and he stayed at the Westgate Hotel, which was just across the street; and C. Arnholdt Smith had his finger in that development. We had a telescope up on the 18th floor keeping a check on the gas station on C between Tenth and Eleventh, and lo and behold, the Secret Service came in and they wanted to know why we were spying on the President? And of course, we weren't, we were just checking on the gas station so we'd know when to go get gas. Well, they sealed off the telescope and that was the end of that. Of course, we all saw [President] Ford crossing the street into the City [Concourse] building.

SW: These areas are all in the downtown area?

ES: Yes. Then when the bank (was) closed up by the FDIC, we went from 1020 C Street, to Mr. A's building [at Fifth and Laurel]. We used to laugh about it. We were on the fourth floor of Mr. A's building for awhile, then they moved us down to the basement. I worked in that building until 1978 when eight of us split off and went under the name of Alcott Insurance Agency. And it was on [the east side of] Ninth Avenue south of Ash Street, I believe. [I retired from there in 1980.]

SW: Are there any other buildings, areas in the area that particularly caught your fancy or were of interest? You've been here for quite some time.

ES: In the olden days there was a building over on Fifth Avenue, it used to be LaValle. The trolley went up Fifth Avenue that far, and got turned around inside that round barn. And they've been going to move the airport since before I came [to California] and it's still the same place. Of course, I remember Shelter Island and Harbor Island weren't there. [Both were built from dredging the bay deeper.]

SW: How has the neighborhood changed since you've moved in here?
ES: Everything is being changed to apartments and condos.
SW: How about the neighborhood? Have the people changed as they built? Are there different kinds of people moving in?

ES: Well, Hillcrest and Uptown has a lot of gays and lesbians, including Mission Hills, Sunset Boulevard and the Presidio, going down into Old Town.

SW: This project called Uptown. Do you have other names for these neighborhoods? What do you call the neighborhood you live in?

ES: There's been a lot of discussion on that. Nowadays, the real estate people like to call it Marston Hills because it sounds higher class than [University Heights], but Hillcrest is the main name. A lot of the streets are named after states. I used to think they were according to the location, but they don't seem to follow that at all. Like when you go out east, there's Alabama and Texas.

SW: And (there are) a lot of (streets with) bird names. Do you know why they are named after birds?

ES: I don't know, but they're all alphabetical. Like Dove and Falcon, Hawk, Ibis, Jackdaw.

SW: Where did you and your husband go to hang out or socialize?

ES: We always had a trailer and he loved to go to the desert camping and I did too and we went there a lot.

SW: Desert rats, huh?

ES: Yes. Fishing in the All American Canal, and Coachella [canals]. Of course, that's all changed now. When I came to California over the old highway [in 1949], it was quite windy. You could see the sand going across the [highway] and see the old plank road to the side that was used [earlier].

SW: It's pretty much gone now. What did you do after work on a regular workday?

ES: Fix dinner. My husband also helped out. He was a cook in the Navy for a short while. He was a cook on the U.S.S. Texas which is now a museum in Brownsville, Texas.

SW: Wise woman, married a cook.

ES: I have a cookbook over there [on the bookcase] that [is] programmed for 130 people.

SW: Oh really? Mass feeding.

ES: The Girl Scouts and the Boy Scout camps are just to the south of Upas at the edge of the park. They were built after the war. There's a house that was built in the {Balboa] Park during one of the expositions. They had a contest and [the house was moved across from the camps on Upas Street].

SW: Do you know of any ethnic minorities that lived in this area?

ES: Not really. I know of a lot of them. Little Italy and the Old Town area. But I don't know any of them personally. I used to travel. And the three [aunts] of Jerome Navarro, owner of Jerome's store used to travel with the group, but I never had any dealings personally with them.

SW: So they were of the Italian community?

ES: Yes.

SW: What did you go to a church here locally?

ES: I used to go to the Methodist Church downtown at Ninth and C. Of course, that's long gone. Then we went to the Methodist Church down in the valley. But I haven't gone for years.

SW: What did you and your husband do to celebrate holidays? I'm thinking right now of New Year's. Did you do anything in particular on New Years?

ES: No. [As I said earlier we] didn't like to socialize and I didn't either.

SW: So you were stay-at-homes?

ES: Stay-at-homes! [When I was first married the office was open half day on Saturday] and I had a deal with the office that I would work the holiday weekends. (The other) people wanted long weekends. This was fine with me, because we didn't like to get on the road during the holidays. And (we would) then take off other times.

SW: So you made your own vacation times.

ES: Yes.

SW: What did you do for the Fourth of July?

ES: Stay home and hold our breath that the canyon didn't burn up.

SW: Why? Did people set off fireworks?

ES: Fireworks and it was so dry, for years. [Maple] Canyon is (in) back of the house. We don't have to worry this year, because we've had enough dampness and rain.

SW: Did that canyon ever catch fire?

ES: There have been a couple minor fires. One was set by a car that came down Pennsylvania on the other side of the canyon and evidently wasn't familiar (with the road). [He] went through the guardrail, broke that out and went down in the canyon [which] started a fire. Then there is a place directly back of the house behind me[25] in the canyon where [there is] a lot of prickly pear cactus and bamboo. Somebody made a camp out there and that started a fire once [many years ago].

SW: Do you ever have homeless people living down in the canyon?
ES: I'm sure there have been. Right now, I don't know of anybody that has seen any activity. [Wild animals live in the area though.]

SW: Did you and your husband have Thanksgiving celebrations?

ES: [My step sons and families would come and] we always had a big turkey, as big (a turkey) as my old, 53-year-old [O'Keefe and Merritt] stove would hold.

SW: Oh – that was something else. You had mentioned when you moved into this house that it came furnished. Tell me about that.

ES: We had just been married.

SW: What year were you married?

ES: '56. He had been living in a trailer out near where the Parkway Bowl is in Fletcher Hills. Of course, he didn't have any furniture except a television. I had nothing because I had lived in a furnished apartment. When we bought this house, to make it more appealing, we offered the man $500.00 for all the furniture in the house. Not expecting him to take it, but he did. I still have some of the same furniture

[25] 3685 Herbert Street.

including the [kitchen] stove, corner cupboard and desk in the dining room, and [mirrored] vanity in the bathroom. [There is also a wardrobe with 5 drawers and a mirror in the utility room].

SW: Tell about the storage in the bedroom, the built-ins. That's cool.

ES: Well, the house is a one-bedroom now, but it had originally been built as a two-bedroom. I don't know who did the woodwork, but they converted it from a two-bedroom to one, and there are built-in wardrobes on both sides of the bedroom with [24 inch] deep drawers. You can store a lot of things in those drawers because they are so deep. [There is also storage below the hanging clothes, plus a huge space on both sides above the hanging clothes.]

SW: How many (drawers) do you have?

ES: There's nine on each side plus [two below, and] all the larger areas above, and the long hanging space.

SW: That's quite a few drawers!

ES: There are 38 drawers altogether in the bedroom. That's including the [two] chest of drawers [and night stand].

SW: What did you do for Christmas?

ES: We'd go to the desert.

SW: You went to the desert for Christmas? You take the boys with you?

ES: The younger one was living at home with his mother and he would go with us. The older one was in the service. We always looked forward to those holidays.

SW: In this neighborhood, you have a lot of mature plantings. Do you remember when people were putting in trees and gardens?

ES: There used to be a tree right in front of [this living room] window. My husband bought it over at Sears where the Ralph's store is now. Bought it there in a pot and it was [marked] 89 cents, I remember. He didn't know what he was buying, the [salesman] didn't know either. He planted it right in front of that [big] window. It started to grow and grow and it got too big. So he dug it up and planted it where the bird of paradise is now. Still that wasn't the right place for it. So he dug it up again and put it out on the closed street in the center of the open area and that's where it was until after he passed away in 1984. He was able to trim it, and keep it out of the wires and [gutters]. And then in about 1985, I guess the city was getting tired of me calling them about [cutting it back from the wires overhead] so they came out with their equipment and [sawed] down that tree, and dug up the roots and put topsoil in where that had been.

SW: Did you ever find out what that tree was?

ES: Yes. It was an Aleppo pine. A-L-E-P-P-O. And there's one right to the back of the second house here to the east.[26] One day I was at the kitchen sink, and looked out the window and I said [to myself], "What's that growing up above that house?" And lo and behold, it was one of those big trees and it now is probably a 50- to 60-foot tall tree. They grow awfully fast.

And right across [from me at 1610] Herbert [Street], there's a wisteria vine. Wisteria is the fastest growing vine in the world. In Pasadena, there's one that they have on display. There's a big trunk and all kinds of branches and it completely covers two houses. Well anyway, [this] wisteria is just beautiful when it's blooming. Now, of course, the blooming season is over with. But it will be popping out [new growth later. The gardener trims it every two to three weeks so it will not get out of hand.]

SW: So the wisteria is, how far down from your house here?

ES: [It is] 19 feet [away, as] that's what the city says that [is the width of] Herbert Place. When they paved the one block, Cypress, up, and opened up this alley here, Herbert Place, the property line was about a foot beyond the curb line and the city wouldn't pave that. So my husband had it paved because it was ridiculous to leave a foot of dirt up against the curb.

SW: In walking around your neighborhood, can you tell me any stories about the people that live here that you've known for awhile?

ES: On the corner [at 1517 Cypress Avenue] there is an old lady, probably in her 90s. She has lived there for many, many years. [On the southeast corner at 1603 Cypress Avenue is] another old house and the lady that used to live there, was Laura Athen, A-T-H-E-N. She was Greek, [and a very active] participant in the Greek Church. She and her husband lived there for years. Then he, well he passed away first and then she passed away.

SW: Were there other Greek residents in this neighborhood?

ES: Oh, I'm sure there were. There is one lady who lives [at 3619] Albert Street, which is the next street west of Herbert. Her little house is still there and she still lives [in it]. I have not seen her for quite a few weeks out walking. The two-story house [at 3620 Herbert Street] is another old house that has been in the area a long time. 1610 Brookes [Avenue, a large] two-story blue house, is an old, old house. The house that the Parishes lived in [at 3625 Herbert Street] – they wanted to remodel and were going [to] fix it up. They couldn't get the permits, so they had the house torn down and they moved in a stucco house from somewhere. So, of course, they're both gone now. And right next to the pink house on the other side of the street [at 3541 Herbert on north side on Brookes] is a cork tree.

SW: A cork tree?

ES: If you [took] a pen knife, you could cut out cork.

SW: You ever try it?

ES: No. Because it's just defacing. But you [can] see where [it's been done.]

[26] 1610 Herbert Place.

SW: Somebody else's tree.

ES: Brookes dead ends at the First Congregational [Memorial] Tower. They didn't put any windows on the west of that building purposely, because of making it quieter for the people living in the retirement place.

SW: That makes sense.

ES: Yes.

SW: You had mentioned that the gay people who had moved in were good neighbors. What do you mean by that?

ES: If you needed help, they would help you, [and they maintain property good.] Now, I'm not saying that everyone is the same, just like any other class of people. But they would help you out. They keep their houses beautiful. [The house at 1615 Cypress Avenue, for example. He redid the whole thing, putting in new glass in the windows because he wanted everything fixed up. Small things like that. There's [two] houses at 1610 Herbert. I've never been inside either, but the one on the front of the lot had a "For Rent" sign. $1,685.00 a month, which is a little steep.

SW: When you moved in here, were all the amenities in here like electricity, etc.?

ES: Oh yes.

SW: How about telephone service?

ES: Yes. It used to be plugged right in that corner and the telephone was sitting on an end table [as I recall].

SW: Did they ever put in new lighting in this neighborhood?

ES: Well, they have worked on the lighting and the cable, but I don't think they've done anything major. They're always counting on doing it. There's markings out on the pavement with green paint. Over here is green paint, too. That's the sewer color. They're supposed to be putting in a new sewer line down the alley and up through the dip]. They were out here a few weeks ago and put a camera down [between 3664 and 3678 Herbert. There were roots growing into the old pipes under the ground (that) [had to be cleaned out].

SW: So they might be replacing it?

ES: They're supposed to.

SW: Okay. Well, we're getting close to our hour here. I was wondering, is there anything in particular about this neighborhood that you'd like to add? You'd like to tell us?

ES: I don't believe so. I think we've covered quite a bit.

SW: I do too. I really appreciated the little walk through the neighborhood. That was really interesting, the lady friend of yours, and all her dogs. Thank you very much, I really appreciate it.

ES: You're welcome and it's been [a pleasure], Susan.

SW: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

12. ELDON & ANNELLA SMITH

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
June 30, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Annella Smith and Eldon Smith on June 30, 2003, in the office of the Swedenborgian Church. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

After the interview, Mr. and Mrs. Smith showed Susan Walter the main church interior, the archives room, the kitchen, the theatre, and the green room.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Changes by the informants are footnoted or in brackets [ ]. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photographs	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	pedigree lists filled out by each informant
ephemera donated by the informants:	- Booklet, *The Story of Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian Church* - Bookmark, 50th Anniversary of Eldon & Annella's marriage - 3 photocopied images of the earlier Swedenborgian Church building

Transcript:

AS = Annella Smith
ES = Eldon Smith
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter and I am interviewing Annella Smith. Today is June 30, 2003 and we are in the church office where she lives and works. Can you please tell me your full name?

AS: Annella Skeen Smith.

SW: I am also interviewing Annella's husband, Eldon Smith in the same location on the same day. Can you tell me your name?

ES: Eldon Dean Smith.

SW: Annella, can you tell me when you were born, please?

AS: April 6, 1925.

SW: And where were you born?

AS: Lakeworth, Florida.

SW: What was your mother's name?

AS: Malinda Magdalene.

SW: And what was your father's name?

AS: Marvin Ward Skeen.

SW: Where did your mother and father meet?

AS: I don't have the slightest idea.
SW: How did they get out here to California? Or did they?

AS: They didn't.

SW: Then how did you get out here to California?

AS: I came out in 1950. My brother-in-law was in the Navy and he was going overseas and I came out here to be with my sister who lived in El Cajon.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about how you first got involved in this church?

AS: My mother was a member and I grew up in Pawnee Rock, Kansas and there was a church there and so we attended that church. Then naturally when I came to San Diego, I attended the Swedenborgian church here.

SW: And the Swedenborgian church that you were attending was this one here? Here in the Uptown area?

AS: Yes.

SW: How did you get from El Cajon to here on Sunday?

AS: We drove.

SW: What were the streets like when you were driving? Were they paved?

AS: Oh sure. We usually came on El Cajon Boulevard.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about your first memory of this church? What was it like?

AS: My first memory was when I attended church and the minister was from Boston and he had a delightful Boston accent and I couldn't understand a word of the sermon and I loved it.

SW: What did the church look like at that time?

AS: Pretty much like it does now. We made a few changes on the outside such as the ramp and so forth, but basically on the inside, we've made no changes since I started coming here. Painting and so forth to keep it up, but no major changes in the sanctuary.

SW: You moved from El Cajon. Where did you move next?

AS: San Diego. I'm trying to remember. We were married in 1953 and we lived on 30th Street in San Diego then. That was our first home.

SW: When did you first move into this church here?

AS: September 1990.

SW: Now, I'm going to ask Eldon some of the same questions. Eldon, can you tell me your full name once again?

ES: Eldon Dean Smith.

SW: When were you born?

ES: December 14, 1926.

SW: Where were you born?

ES: San Diego.

SW: Can you tell me where your mother was born?

ES: I believe Kansas.

SW: What was her name?

ES: Lydia Delilah. And there is an argument on how you spell it in my family.

SW: What is your father's name?

ES: Clyde Peyton.

SW: Where was he born?

ES: I think Kentucky, but I really don't know anything about my dad or my dad's family.

SW: Do you know how they met or where they met?

ES: No. I have no clue.

SW: Did they move out here?

ES: Yes.

SW: When did they move out here?

ES: I can give you the approximate date. I don't know the exact date. But they came out in a 1916 Dodge touring car in approximately 1916, 1917, 1918, somewhere in that area. I'm not sure because my earliest

memory of talk about my parents goes back to 1919, but I know that they were here before that. So I really don't know.

SW: What kind of work did your parents do?

ES: My mom was strictly a mother and a housekeeper.

SW: And your father?

ES: My dad was a barber at 536 Market Street for over 30-35 years.

SW: How did you get involved with this church?

ES: Well, I began crawling around on the floor in my diapers. I've been here ever since.

SW: So you attended as members here?

ES: Oh yes.

SW: And now you're a pastor?

ES: Yes.

SW: How did you get involved in your more formal...

ES: You don't have enough tape. It's a long, long story. I began helping out the pastor on Sundays when he had to go to convention or if he had an important engagement or maybe he just wanted to go to the mountains and get away from the stress. And I would take over the Sunday worship services. Sometimes I would just lead the liturgy. Sometimes I would deliver the sermon and somebody else would lead it and it was a cooperation between the men. And so then it just has gradually developed when our pastor left San Diego and we had interim pastors that were here sometimes, part time for one Sunday or whatever and then I just continued in that vein and so then my education started to increase at that point where I almost began to know what I was doing, you know. And so then I don't remember when, but several years later, I started taking correspondence courses from our school of religion and that took over a six-year period, and then I graduated from our school of religion in Massachusetts. We had a confirmation service here in San Diego and our ordaining minister had laying on of hands and consecrated me to be an ordained, so to speak, authorized lay leader. It's complicated. Basically, it means that I am not ordained in the way that our other ministers are ordained because they have to have a college education, a master's degree and four years in theological school and I did all mine through correspondence courses. But I was privileged to walk down the aisle in cap and gown, which was a big thrill, and so then after a year, the congregation voted to accept me as their pastor. And the denomination gives me full rights as an ordained minister. So I can marry, bury, baptize, preach, teach, anything that the highly educated ministers can do, I can do. Which doesn't set too well with some of them.

SW: I think that is very interesting.

ES: So anyway, it was a long, long drawn-out process beginning with where I would read a certain amount of Our Daily Bread to where now I go with my own sermon.

SW: What is your actual function here, Annella, in the church right now?

AS: I am the elected secretary and treasurer on the board and then I'm a full time volunteer to take care of all the scheduling of groups and whatever needs to be done to help the pastor. I'm a member of the Women's Alliance and so on and so forth.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about some of these groups that you've mentioned?

AS: We have groups here Monday through Friday. Monday night we have a teaching gentleman who teaches acting. Tuesday night we have an AA group. Wednesday and Thursday we have D.J. Sullivan who teaches acting. Friday night we have Theatresports, which is an improv group.

SW: Acting? So he is teaching actual acting classes for...

AS: Yes. They teach actual acting classes.

SW: Oh really? How long has this been associated with the church?

AS: D. J. Sullivan, who is Wednesday and Thursday, has been here for over 25 years. The other groups are all fairly new. The AAs have been here about 5 years and Theatresports and John Descanso have been here a little over a year.

SW: Your man that's been here for 25 years, is that...

AS: It's a woman.

SW: Oh, I'm sorry.

AS: That's all right. D. J. Sullivan.

SW: What does D. J. stand for then?

ES: I don't think she wants that known.

AS: She doesn't ever use it.

SW: Has she had any graduates from her training that have gone on?

AS: She teaches people to act in commercials. She's been in a great many commercials herself, some TV and some movies. And what she teaches the young people is how to act, as I say, in a commercial. They bring in a TV and see how they look and that kind of thing. Then once a year, she has what she calls a Showcase and various agents come and view these young people and a great many of them get contracts through that.

SW: What time of year does she have the showcase?

AS: She usually has one in May and if she thinks she has enough people who are ready, she'll have another one in November.

SW: So she trains them with like a monologue or something?

AS: The last time they had, it was monologue. Most of the time there are two or three involved and they are short skits.

SW: Is there singing or dancing involved at all?

AS: Not usually. It depends upon the individual, of course. If they have this ability, then she will incorporate it in their skit.

SW: I think this is really quite fascinating. So have any of her students become well-known or famous then?

AS: D. J. went to New York last year to see one of her students who had a lead in a Broadway play.

SW: That's really cool. So they do theatre then as well as commercials, television commercials?

AS: Yes.

SW: And movies?

AS: She has been in movies. Now whether students have or not...some of them have been in bit parts. This I know, because when they were filming something in Tijuana in Mexico, some of her students were involved in bit parts. But I don't remember what they were...

ES: It was the *Titanic*.

AS: Was it the *Titanic*?

SW: Fox has an actual filming place down in Mexico now. Can you tell me about any other people involved in your congregation who are also unique?

ES: Not in a public sense, I don't think. We have one lady that had breast cancer and survived and she is very active in all facets of trying to help people. She runs in all the marathons. She was just in this 26-mile thing here where they walked or ran, whatever.

AS: Rock-n-Roll.

ES: And she tells us the story that she'd gone about 12 or 14 miles and one of our ladies was on the corner there and she said "I was about ready to give up. I just couldn't go another step." The lady got behind her and started pushing her, told her she could do it and pushed her for about a mile, I think she said. And so she said, "I went the whole 26 miles." And so she is very active in trying to help people who have breast cancer or cancer and so she is probably one of our...she's a little English lady, with a most delightful English accent or brogue or whatever the proper term is.

SW: What is her name?

ES: Christine Stankus. She's from England.

SW: And she's been involved with this church a very long time?

ES: I don't know when Christine came to us.

AS: About ten years ago.

ES: Our congregation is getting down to where it is very small. We started out in the early 20s we had 92 members and now we have nine members. Well, we have 30 members, but we have nine people who come to church. We have almost a different congregation every Sunday. I shouldn't say that. We have four or five I guess that come every Sunday and then some of the others, like Christine, for instance, when she's got a walk or a run, she doesn't come and so we have two members that live in...

AS: Campo.

ES: In Campo. Which is 60 miles from here and we have two members up in Vegas. And they wanted to join us and we said, "Sure."

SW: Las Vegas?

AS: Yes.

ES: They come every two or three months maybe or so and we have members that don't come anymore for health reasons, so 30 members is kind of misleading. We actually have...

AS: Twelve to 15.

ES: Twelve to 15 people that attend church on Sunday.

AS: Regularly.

ES: So our congregation isn't...we have a lot of people that participate in a lot of different city functions and things anymore. It used to be that they did. We had one lady who is deceased now who was, what do they call it? A pink lady or whatever in the hospitals? And so on and so on. And I believe we had one couple that participated in volunteer work, but I don't remember what Ralph and Ellie do. They do volunteer work somewhere. And our organist is a paid organist. I don't know if he still does or not, but he used to give free – not concerts, but entertainment. He would entertain at this home that has Alzheimer's patients. Our members that can are all involved in different things like that, but nothing spectacular or getting in the paper about.

SW: So are you telling me that most of your members are not necessarily right here in the Uptown area and they travel in?

ES: Yes. The ones that live in Campo get here a half an hour early and the lady that lives two blocks away is 10 minutes late. Every Sunday.

SW: Can you tell me any stories about the earliest times of the church when you can recall? What was the congregation like then?

ES: I don't know. Stiff.

SW: Stiff?

ES: Yes. They're not stiff anymore. I'm the pastor now.

SW: So in other words, they were more formal?

ES: Very formal, yes. I still use the same format for my services, because there it is formal...but it is not as formal. So I don't know about stories. Just stories about me, maybe.

AS: Well, I remember him telling about riding the streetcar to church, which I thought was kind of interesting. I don't know how many years the streetcar was here, because that was before I came, but I know Eldon told me he and his family all came on the streetcar.

ES: Outside, it was going in. It was out by the Greenwood Cemetery and we would take the streetcar from 38th Street, 39th Street, I don't remember now, it's been too many years, all the way downtown and then either took the same one or transferred, which I don't remember anymore, from downtown to here. And we used to come Park Boulevard back here. And we took the streetcar for years and years. Used to go by Balboa Park and they used to have that little merry-go-round or whatever it is. I don't know if that's still there anymore.

SW: The merry-go-round? Yes (it is).

ES: And so that used to be a big thrill for me when I was five, six years old. I remember seeing the merry-go-round.

SW: Did you ever get to ride on that merry-go-round?

ES: Not until I got older. I think Annella and I did once. I'm not sure.

AS: I think we did.

SW: About when was that, do you think?

AS: Probably about...

ES: Back in the 50s, somewhere about...

AS: The early 50s.

ES: Before the kids were born.

AS: When we started, probably started dating.

SW: Where did you two meet?

AS: Church.

ES: In church. Yeah. She's a Swedenborgian and I'm a Swedenborgian.

AS: We both sang in the choir and so we were constantly thrown together and decided we might as well, you know, make it a partnership and stay together.

SW: What year were you married?

AS: '53.

SW: 1953. And, you have children?

AS: We have two. Two daughters.

SW: Who is the oldest?

AS: Debbie is the oldest. She lives in Cathedral City and she has one little daughter, so we have a granddaughter, Danielle. And our youngest daughter is Carol and she is a preschool teacher in Bonita and she lives in Imperial Beach.

SW: The oldest one, when was she born?

AS: 1954, October.

SW: And the younger one?

AS: Was (born in) December 1956.

SW: And where were you living when these daughters were born?

AS: San Diego.

ES: Both of them were born at Mercy Hospital.

AS: They were born at Mercy Hospital. We were living on Dwight Street at that time.

ES: In fact, Mercy Hospital wasn't going to let me take one of them home. I couldn't take her home because I hadn't paid the bill yet.

SW: Oh really? And how did you resolve that?

ES: I paid the bill!

SW: You wanted to take them home...

ES: I don't remember if that was Debbie or Carol.

AS: Debbie.

ES: Debbie. That's the oldest one.

SW: As a young mother, what was life like here in San Diego when you were raising the kids?

AS: Busy. I was very involved in the church at that time. I've always been involved in church work. I've always loved it very much and so I taught Sunday school, I was in the choir...in the adult choir and at that time, we had a children's choir which I instructed. And the Woman's Alliance, which met fairly regularly.

ES: And we did the janitor work.

AS: And then we were janitors of the church itself on Saturdays. We came in and did the janitor work. So it was busy, but it's always been very rewarding for me for church work and I've always stayed very involved. My mother started that way back when. She was a Sunday school superintendent and I used to work with her.

SW: Where did your children go to school?

AS: Torrance. Well, they started down in the desert in Indio. We moved out there so he could get work. The carpentry trade was sort of in a slump here. When we moved out there, we were there for several years and then they graduated from both eighth grade and high school in Torrance and we worked at the Wayfarers Chapel there.

SW: So, you were a carpenter?

ES: Retired for 20 years.

SW: Where did you do your carpentry?

ES: I started here in San Diego and oh, I can't remember the union number, but I can't remember...1296?

AS: I think so.

ES: And then we moved up to Indio in 1962 and it was the 1205, I think. I'm trying to remember. I can't remember numbers anymore.

SW: (Were) you were doing interiors?

ES: No, basically framing. I was never really a good carpenter. I could nail wood together.

SW: Where were the buildings that you helped to put up?

ES: All over in San Diego. When we moved out to the desert, it was in Palm Springs, Indio and throughout that area and I worked on the All-American Canal out of El Centro when they were changing over from a dirt canal to concrete. I worked for a company that was building the siphons and they had these things every 2 or 3, 4 or 5 miles or so and I never really understood what they did, but it was a huge project and we had big panels that were brought in by cranes, set in place and then we had to tie them all together and everything. I worked on motels and hotels and houses, bridges and whatever I could get a job on.

SW: So are there any structures (you built) here in the Uptown area?

ES: Not that I can remember. Most of the time, I worked for a young man who was just starting out and it was just him and me who would go and frame the house and two and a half days later, we'd walk away and then electricians and everybody else would come. Took us two and a half days to frame a house. My boss and myself.

SW: That was here in San Diego?

ES: Yes.

SW: What was his name?

AS: Jay Maynard? Is that who you're talking about?

ES: Yes, Jay Maynard. And he was out of Escondido, if I remember right. That's been about 45, 50 years ago. A long time ago.

SW: Do you ever drive past a structure or anything like that and go, "I remember that one"?

ES: Not in San Diego. I can out in Indio. Not here. Mostly, it was just like single houses. He contracted from another young contractor who would contract to build them, then he hired my boss to come in and do the frame work. Frame it up from the slab on up. And so that was all we did. Cut all of our cripples and headers and everything else that he'd want and build it, build the frames and then we would leave. I can tell you one story that I've always enjoyed. We were framing this house and this gentleman lived in the house next door on the next lot and one day he stuck his head out and said, "Can't you guys nail a little bit quieter? I'd like to sleep."

SW: Yeah, right.

ES: I said, "Sorry sir, but this rubber hammer just doesn't cut the mustard." But we were never around long enough to make enemies because two, two and a half days we had that house framed and we were out of there.

SW: Did you do any other type of work besides carpentry and then your pastorship that you worked at?

ES: Oh goodness. I had a lot of jobs before I became a carpenter. I used to sell Fuller Brush products. I was never a good salesman. And I sold Good Humor ice cream and I ate more than I sold. And I washed dishes in several of the cafés and restaurants downtown San Diego. I worked at Consolidated Vultee as a riveter and bucker.

SW: Oh really?

ES: That's both ends of the rivet, you see. For Consolidated. That's before it became General Dynamics. And one day I decided that wasn't going anywhere. I was only making $1.25 an hour and you started out as a apprentice carpenter for more than that and so I decided I could do this, so I went into the apprentice program here in San Diego and I worked here in San Diego the full apprenticeship, which was four years.

SW: Was that for Mr. Maynard?

ES: Jay Maynard and several others.

SW: So you were an apprentice...

ES: I was never good at anything so anybody would want to keep me, you see, so I had a lot of bosses.

SW: (Speaking to Annella) Do you believe that?

AS: Well, he had a lot of bosses.

SW: Oh, he did? Okay.

AS: He started out with Nielson, which is now Nielson and somebody else. But at that time, it was just Nielson Construction. When he started...one of the things we always liked about them, he started work with them in October and he worked with them about six, almost eight weeks, I guess and it was Thanksgiving and they gave the apprentice, brand new apprentice, a turkey, just like they did everybody else. And we always thought that was a good recommendation for the Nielson Construction Company.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about this church and is it affiliated with any other churches?

ES: Our corporate name for San Diego is San Diego Society of the New Jerusalem. On the cornerstone out there is Church of the New Jerusalem. And after we moved out of San Diego, the congregation changed its name to the San Diego Swedenborgian Church. The reason was that everybody thought this was affiliated somehow with the Jewish religion. Church of the New Jerusalem, you had to be Jews. And so they changed the name because it was hard to get Christian people in. So now we're the Swedenborgian church and people don't come in unless they're Swedes.

SW: Where did the church originate?

ES: In England.

SW: About how long ago?

ES: I don't know for sure. 1772.

AS: 1772, it was founded in London.

SW: So it has a very long history.

ES: Yeah. And then the first church...I don't like dates because I don't remember dates anymore. But I think the first church was formed here in the United States in 1779, something like that. You remember?

AS: No.

ES: We've done a lot of research on it. She's good at remembering dates and things like that...

AS: But I don't have those dates.

ES: ...and I don't. Most of the churches were all in the New England area, Boston and all around that area. We had churches finally that began to...what would be the word now...develop?

AS: Moved west.

ES: Came to San Diego, I mean California, I'm sorry. And San Francisco and El Cerrito and Los Angeles and the Wayfarers Chapel were built in 1949. And San Diego was built in 1883. The first one, I think.

AS: We didn't have a church, but it was incorporated in 1883 and they had study groups in homes until they got enough money together to buy the property here and actually built a building in 1907.

SW: So their first actual structure in San Diego was on this site?

ES: Yes.

SW: And that's this little...

AS: That's that building that you...

SW: That you are showing me here. (Photos being handed around.)

ES: ...That's the little wooden structure in the picture up there.

SW: (Stutters.) They had a pretty healthy looking congregation there.

ES: I'm glad I'm not the only one that gets my tongue tied.

AS: That's why they expanded and built the bigger sanctuary because they were outgrowing that little structure.

SW: Okay. And so this little building then was demolished?

AS: As far as I know.

ES: I've gotten to the place where I wish we had that one back. Because it's a little silly to have 12 people in the congregation that would hold 100. I mean the church can hold 100. A lot of churches are having the same problems. From what I understand, some of these big churches that hold 4 or 5,000 people are down to a third or even less. So I don't know. People just don't go to church anymore.

SW: Can you tell me anything about when this structure (we are in now) was built?

ES: This was built in 1927.

AS: It was dedicated in 1927. So it was started sometime in 1926. And Louis Gill.

ES: Louis Gill was the architect. He was quite a famous architect in San Diego.

SW: This is a gorgeous building. Was this entire thing built as one (structure) originally?

ES: The church?

AS: To this wall.

ES: No. This used to be the outside.

SW: Okay – I'm totally disoriented.

ES: You know where you parked downstairs? That area was added on in 1932.

SW: That's the (building) out there by the alley and on Tyler?

ES: That's our assembly hall now.

SW: The front's on Tyler. What was that originally? Was it the assembly hall?

ES: It was the gardens. From this point on was all garden. We have documents somewhere that I've seen somewhere that tell about the awards that the gardens used to get and they used to have tour buses or tour cars or tour something, I don't know, that used to come by and they would tour the church gardens and had little pads and stuff. And when they put that in, then that sort of ruined all the gardens.

SW: Was the alleyway always there as part of the...

ES: I have no idea. I don't remember.

AS: I think it probably was, because some of the kids said that from the reports they had that they used to go across over there and play when there were no apartments or anything. That was Wally and some of those. And one of the...

ES: They used to play over in the lot across the alley?

AS: Yes (in) the vacant lot. Until the apartments were built.

SW: So the front doorway; which way is that facing?

ES: East. It's an easterly direction if not...I'm not going to say it's due east...all of our churches have the altars toward the east, because that represents God. It's a symbolic structure.

SW: When people of your congregation buried, are you also oriented in a...

ES: Oh yes. I can perform all the rites and everything.

SW: Do the stones or anything like that ever indicate that they are Swedenborgian? Or is it just a stone?

ES: I doubt it. But I don't know.

AS: I doubt it.

SW: I'm asking because I was at a cemetery recently and, for instance, the Jewish (burials) often have the Star of David on it.

AS: No, I don't think so. Not any that I know of.

ES: In fact, I don't think we had a logo until just the past few years and I think it's still on the wall out there by the entrance.

AS: A great many of our people are cremated and then the ashes scattered in the ocean or something like that, so they don't even have a stone or anything in a cemetery. It's becoming more and more the custom.

SW: So that's been traditional to be cremated for a long time? Or is that more of a recent...

AS: It's fairly recent, but I'd say probably for the last 15-20 years.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the religious holidays that you have?

AS: The first Sunday in January, we always celebrate what we call the Renewal and Rededication Service. And we have a brazier on the chapel steps. We have charcoal in there that just burns down and everyone writes on a little slip of paper something that they want the Lord to help them with for the next year or what they want to rededicate themselves to and they burn it in the brazier and then the smoke rises up to the Lord. That's the first Sunday.

Then we always have a Palm Sunday special service and we have the chancel decorated with palm fronds from our church garden. We have several palm trees and this year we sang the hymn, "The Palms" and everybody waved palms to signify when the Lord rode into Jerusalem and they waved their palms.

And then of course, Easter we always have a celebration, usually with the serving of the Holy Supper and we always have a dinner afterwards. And if we have any children, we have the Easter egg hunt. If we don't have children, the adults enjoy the Easter eggs. However it works out.

The Sunday closest to June the 19th we call Holy City Sunday and it's a special celebration of our church, and the founding of the Christian church and so we celebrate that. Then we always join in Worldwide Communion which is the first Sunday of October and that's a Christian holiday, of course.

Thanksgiving we usually have something a little bit special on the Sunday nearest Thanksgiving. Sometimes we have a service on Thanksgiving Day, though we haven't done that recently because a great many people want to be with their families instead of coming to church.

Then we always have something special on Christmas. We always have a Christmas carol service and we celebrate the four Sundays of Advent. We have an Advent wreath in front of the chancel and each Sunday we light one more candle for this. So on the fourth Sunday, all four candles are lit in our Advent wreath.

SW: So that takes us through the whole year then. What do the children do in Sunday school?

AS: We wish we had enough children to have the Sunday school, but we do have regular Sunday school lessons that are put out by the church itself and we follow those and they follow both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

SW: Does this church do outreach? Community outreach?

AS: If we had enough members. We do to a certain extent. We don't do it as a church, it's like he was saying, our individual members have their own things that they follow, just like our organist, Bill Hayworth, who is a professional organist. He goes to the old timers homes. Ellie and Ralph Mazza work with the program of packing food for the people that need it, every Saturday, and things like this and so each person or family does their own individual charity work, but as the church as whole, no, because our members are so scattered that it's hard for them to get together.

SW: How about during the Depression? Was there an effect on the operation of the church that you can recall?

AS: Not that I have read in the minutes on the operation of the church as a whole, but there were members who helped other members who were having problems. I have read that in the minutes and then during World War I and World War II, the women did all kinds of, well, like Red Cross work. They would roll bandages and they had their sewing circles where they made things for various people who needed them.

SW: (To ES.) And how about you? Do you have anything you can add to that?

ES: Because I was just a young boy then, I turned 18 December 14, 1944 and I joined the Merchant Marines and sailed merchant ships for the rest of the war, which ended in 1945. And onto about 1947 and then a lot of the jobs that I had I was telling you about with the Fuller Brush and stuff was between 1947 and 1950 when I was drafted. President Truman didn't think that us Merchant seaman had done our part in World War II, but the records show that there were hundreds of thousands of Merchant seamen who were killed and not just out for the money. And so anyway, a lot of Merchant seamen were drafted and I was drafted and sent to Ft. Ord were I was processed and then they separated us in half and one half went to someplace and the half I was in went Ft. Sam Houston, Texas in San Antonio and there I took my basic training and then they sent me to Camp Gordon, Georgia to a military police school and I was trained to be a policeman and I served my two years in the Army as a military policeman. Then I was discharged September 1952. So then that's when I got entangled with my wife.

SW: Entangled?

ES: I was so used to taking orders. I'll drop that one. You can delete that one.

AS: One thing I was thinking about when you were talking about theatre here. For 38 years, we had what they called the Alpha Omega Players. And they gave two productions a year. Regular plays. They gave one in the spring and one in the fall. And they disbanded then in 1986. But they had been here for 38 years before that.

ES: Annella was involved in that in some respects sometimes. In fact, she was in one play when I first started dating her. She got to kiss this guy and I sat back and said, "Oh my..."

SW: You were jealous! So what was your role in the play? What was the play?

ES: *Silver Whistle*?

AS: Oh no, no, no. I wasn't in that.

ES: Not that one?

AS: I was trying to think...I can't remember. I must've been real impressed with it.

ES: But she used to help in other ways too.

AS: Rehearsal secretary.

ES: Rehearsal secretary? I was never involved in any of that.

SW: Where was this theatre?

AS: It's in our assembly hall. We have a huge stage.

ES: It's downstairs and in that part (pointing) in the building.

SW: So the acting and all that occurred right here on the church grounds?

ES: Downstairs.

AS: Downstairs.

ES: We try to keep them from (coming) up here. This is our sacred place. Actors get pretty wild.

SW: Can you tell me about that?

AS: The ones that are down there now, most of them are out by 10:00, 10:30, but you know, they are enthusiastic.

ES: They teach them to project and they sure do. Our apartment is right behind the stage. And so when they're yelling in a scene or something you know, or having an argument or a fight in the scene or something, we get the full benefit in our apartment. Our apartment is right there. Two rooms that used to be Sunday school rooms are now our apartment. They were remodeled by Melhorn Construction and officially designated as an apartment. We're not living illegally in the church. And so we get the full benefit of all the actors and their exuberance.

SW: Can you tell me the names of some of the plays that have been done?

ES: *Papa Is All*. That one I remember.

AS: *Papa Is All, Green Grow the Lilacs, Silver Whistle, Family Portrait*.

ES: What that the one where they go up in the mountains and they go down into this valley were nobody ever gets old? What was the name of that?

SW: *Shangri-La*?

ES: They've done a couple of movies on it too.

SW: *Shangri-La*?

ES: *Shangri-La*? I think, yes. They used to produce them real good here.

SW: You said they did this for 38 years?

ES: 38 years.

AS: 38 years, yes.

SW: So that means what, 76 productions, is that right?

AS: That's about right.

SW: Wow!

ES: If you want to, I can show you some of the awards downstairs, they're in a case, that they got for best stage and best production and stuff like that.

SW: I would love to see that.

ES: All of the personal awards, of course, went home. I mean, like for instance, Annella would get a best actress or something. She would take it home. She wouldn't leave it here. And that's the way it was for 38 years. The actors and actresses took their awards home. But Henry Swanton, who was the set maker, and is now deceased, built all of the sets for the full 38 years except for the very last one, which is still on the stage. They call that the "Last Hurrah," which was a big thank you to Henry and his wife Ethel for years and years of service. And so that's the only one that stayed. All the rest of them were torn down.

SW: How about the costumes? Who made costumes?

AS: Whoever happened to be in the group. We had people from all over that were – well, *Family Portrait* had a cast of about 35 people and Bob Quint, who is no longer alive, he lived in El Cajon, and he was a tailor and so he did all the research and it was about in biblical times. He did all the research and made all the costumes and so forth. But it depended upon who was in the cast. And we had the rehearsal secretary (also). And then we also had different people do props, and it was just a volunteer group – and anybody that wanted to, came in. It started with church people only and then when they got started, they brought in their friends and so forth and so it grew.

ES: It was quite well known in the theatre circle here in San Diego. And I think that D. J. Sullivan, whom we talked about earlier, was back in the Alpha Omega Players. So her days go back probably 30-35 years with the church.

SW: Did the actors keep their costumes when they were done with the play?

AS: Oh yes.

SW: So you don't have a collection of costumes?

ES: No.

AS: And no place to store them. The church is limited.

SW: Do you have documents, or, do you have an archive that tells the different plays and their programs?

AS: They didn't keep this, and I always thought that was kind of sad. But no, no one kept those.

SW: No individual members of your church made a collection like that?

AS: Not that we know of. We have a few things from the Swantons who were involved in it all 38 years, but nothing that is from the beginning to end. Just snatches here and there.

SW: Because that is very interesting. San Diego has quite actually a strong theatre community.

AS: Yes it does. Very much so.

ES: They were a member of what is known as a theatre guild or do you remember what the term was? They were a member of San Diego Theatre Guild or something...

AS: Well, it's little theatre, but I'm not too sure what all they were into, because we were gone for a number of years. But they were very popular and won lots of awards when they were here.

ES: And they always had standing room only. The hall seats about 100. And they would have 100 most every play, as I remember it.

AS: Yes, they did.

ES: My memory is becoming fuzzy at the age of 76, so a lot of my stories start getting incorporated with other stories.

SW: Did you have children involved in these theatre groups?

AS: Well, we did then, yes. If the play called for it. In fact, in *Family Portrait*, we had about three 8-year-olds that took turns taking the one part because they get too restless if you have the same one all the time and D. J., will take, for her classes, she'll take any age and John Descanso, who is here Monday night, has teenagers or early 20s here, the young people. D. J. will take any age. She had one little boy, I think, that was about 10 years old and our granddaughter was visiting us and so she wanted to watch. So D. J. let her go out and watch and D. J. said the young man had never given a performance like that before, because he looked out there and saw this pretty little girl watching him.

ES: He was really showing off.

SW: The audience was worth it then.

AS: Yes.

SW: That's really interesting. You have two nights where you have the acting classes, and then you have this other thing?

AS: Well actually, we have three nights and two teachers with acting classes. John is here Monday night and then D. J. is here Wednesday and Thursday night.

SW: You had one you were calling, "Theatre..."

ES: Theatresports.

AS: Theatresports.

SW: Okay, what is Theatresports?

AS: Well, it's an international organization. It's a charitable organization and they do improv. And they, the two people who are mainly in charge of it, go around to the various schools and help someone who may be handicapped or something in sports and so forth. And promote.

SW: It's like wheelchair basketball, that kind of thing?

AS: I don't think it's that extreme. But it is an international organization and they have groups all over the world that do this.

SW: How long has your church been involved with Theatresports?

AS: It will be a year this month. And they had what they called an Improvathon. Let's see, it was the last weekend in May. They came Friday night at 6:00 and they had continuous shows until 10:00 Saturday night. Straight through.

SW: Wow!

ES: We moved out that night. We went to Palm Springs and spent the evening with our daughter and granddaughter.

AS: But they come every Friday and they have, I don't know how many people involved. Probably about 20, so that they don't all come every week.

ES: On Saturdays, we have various other groups that rent our hall downstairs and Jackie Lowell has an improv group and so she gives performances, what, two or three times a year?

AS: About three times a year.

ES: And Annella bakes cookies and sells them and the money goes to the Ladies Alliance.

AS: We serve refreshments.

ES: Coffee. I can handle that.

SW: You can handle the coffee? Can you provide sugar too?

ES: Oh, once in awhile I get a little smooth.

SW: Okay... What is the Ladies Alliance?

AS: It's a group of women. Well, right now it's down to about three, but they're the ones who plan. We have a potluck luncheon the first Sunday of every month and when we have a Society or quarterly meeting, we always have some kind of a salad luncheon or something. When we have our Christmas buffet lunch or our Easter buffet lunch, anything like that, the ladies plan those and see that we have hostesses for every Sunday. We have refreshments every Sunday after church for social time. And the ladies always see that there is someone to be hostess and so forth for that. And then after we have our business meeting and do all of that, we have a book or something that we study and read. Right now, we're reading the book entitled, "Angels in Action" by one of our ministers. It's usually on a Saturday morning.

SW: What else would you like to add about your life here in the church?

AS: Well, I think our live in the church is very satisfactory for someone in our age group. It keeps us busy, we associate with lovely people and enjoy that and we don't have to fight the traffic, since we live downstairs. We come upstairs and we're at work and it's just a very rewarding type of retirement work, I guess, since we're the age of retirement – but we're busy all the time. And you feel like you're doing something that's worthwhile.

ES: Annella and I do all of the work here. We don't...well; we do have one volunteer now. I was trying to get our group involved in volunteering for doing maintenance or cleaning, whatever, and so I said that on Sunday. So one of our ladies has her gardener come up and do gardening work every 15 days or so. Which is not what I was trying to get. I was trying to get her involved in coming up and pulling weeds or taking a rag and cleaning a window or something and it all flopped. Because I got no interest out of it.

But for the most part, Annella and I do all the work. We do all the janitor work; we do all the maintenance work. I've been repairing windows now for the past umpteen years because the putty falls out and so I started around, I guess went all the way around the church and never did complete it. I got to the entrance and took every window out and put the glass panes back in with putty and everything. So we have projects like this going on all the time and we literally take care of the building.

She (gesturing to AS) does all the booking and knows all the dates and keeps the calendar and all that kind of stuff. So we do run the church. We do everything that there is to do here. I tell them I'm a part time preacher. I preach on Sunday and the rest of the week I'm a janitor. But that's not exactly true, because we make lots of mercy calls. We have one little lady that has Lime disease and...

AS: Toxic mold.

ES: Toxic mold. She breaks out in these horrible sores, so she can't drive, doesn't have a car and so we take her to the doctor's every time it's necessary. It was every Tuesday, for awhile. So when somebody else is in the hospital or something, we make our hospital runs and things like that. So we do have our ministerial work. That little lady that used to live across in the apartments over here had a stroke and fell and broke her hip and so we must've visited her three or four times. But I don't think that she ever knew we were there because she was so heavily sedated and she would just say, "Why am I here? I want to go home. Why am I here?" And obviously, it was not the lady that we knew mentally.

So we do what we can and go where we can. My authority is limited to San Diego County. I'm not supposed to perform outside of San Diego County. Although we just had a wedding up in Campo. There are some pictures that one of the gentlemen that got married gave us. It was outdoors and in the garden in the trailer park where he lives. So we have our ministerial duties also.

SW: Are there any final things you'd like to say?

ES: It's been interesting.

SW: That's it? Okay, well thank you both so very much. I've really enjoyed this a lot.

AS: And thank you for coming and including us.

ES: All the balloons you see flying around us are from our anniversary, on the 21st. Now that's something else you probably could tell about, Annella. We're celebrating 120 years of being incorporated as a church here in San Diego. And so in September...

AS: September the 26th and 27th, we're going to have a special program here after church to commemorate our 120th anniversary and we're trying to get in touch with as many of the young people, great grandchildren, grandchildren, sons and daughters of the people who started the church that we can track down. I'm not sure how much luck I'll have, because they are so scattered, but we're going to have quite a few of them that I've already contacted.

ES: This is our annual Pacific Coast Association meeting of delegates of the various churches. In the past few years, we've had several of them just fold up. The Los Angeles church is no longer here. It was torn down and I think it's apartments now or something, I'm not sure. The Riverside church was sold and a Catholic group bought it, so it is no longer Swedenborgian. In El Cerrito, where was it? I'm trying to think.

AS: Bellevue.

ES: And Bellevue, it folded up, so we've had a lot of churches that have gone down the tubes.

AS: Portland.

ES: And Portland. But (of) what's left, we have delegates. Each Society sends their members or delegates. They're all allowed so many people to be delegates and they have Association meetings all up and down the Pacific Coast. So this year, we volunteered to have it. In the past, we had it out at Carlton Hills Country Club. It's real nice out there. This year, because we're celebrating 120 years here in

business, so to speak, we're having everything here in the church except for sleeping, of course. They're going to stay down at the Great Western...no, not the Great Western.

AS: Travelodge.

ES: Travelodge. So that's one of our big events coming up and that's what the pen is for. She ordered 50 and got 100, so she gives them out to everybody.

AS: I liked it. I paid for 50 and got 100.

SW: I think that's a bargain. Thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW

13. GARY WONG

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 11, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Gary Wong on July 11, 2003, in his office at Union Bank of California. No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Gary Wong provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Gary checked the transcript; his changes are bracketed [ ], or added as footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	Taped at regular speed
color photograph	Taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
floppy diskette	the diskette contains all 14 transcripts from the Uptown project
release form	City of San Diego Historic Sites Board
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	- business card, Gary Wong

Transcript:

GW = Gary Wong
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Gary Wong for the Uptown Oral Interview Project. Today's date is July 11, 2003 and we are in his office. Gary, can you tell me your full name please?

GW: Gary William Wong.

SW: Okay. And when were you born?

GW: August 20, 1950, here in San Diego.

SW: Can you tell me your father's name please?

GW: Jimmy Tung Ling Wong. His Chinese name was Tung Ling Wong. When he came to the United States, he adopted a western name, Jimmy.

SW: So what was his Chinese name then?

GW: Tung Ling Wong.

SW: So he added Jimmy?

GW: Yes.

SW: Where in China was he born?

GW: Shanghai.

SW: And your mother? What was her name?

GW: Annie Yip Wong.

SW: Where was she born?

GW: Shanghai also.

SW: Did they meet in Shanghai?

GW: They met, I believe, in Shanghai, but definitely in the old country they became acquainted.

SW: When did they immigrate to the United States?

GW: In the mid to late '40s.

SW: What was the reason for that?

GW: My parents were never very specific about it, but in indirect references, I think they were trying to come here like many immigrants to improve their lot in life, so to speak. My father came here as a result of his father joining the U.S. Navy during World War II. I assume there was a labor shortage at that time. The U.S. Navy was recruiting Filipinos, Chinese, other people from other countries to build the force. And with that, my grandfather was able to bring his family to the United States. Probably two years after that, my mom emigrated to join my father.

SW: Did they come immediately to San Diego?

GW: Yes, they did.

SW: Do you remember where, or do you know where they lived when they came here?

GW: They lived in Coronado.

SW: Do you have brothers and sisters?

GW: One of each.

SW: The oldest one is?

GW: The oldest is myself.

SW: Followed by?

GW: Followed by my sister. She is about four years younger than myself, and then my little brother, who is twelve years younger.

SW: What's your sister's name?

GW: Sabina. S-A-B-I-N-A.

SW: Is she married?

GW: She is married.

SW: What's her last name?

GW: She has retained Wong as her last name.

SW: And your brother's name?

GW: Richard.

SW: Is he married?

GW: Yes.

SW: Did you get married?

GW: Yes.

SW: What is your wife's name?

GW: Kathryn.

SW: Do you have children?

GW: Yes.

SW: How old are they?

GW: Fifteen and twelve.

SW: What are their names?

GW: Let's see...Katy. Katy is the oldest and Andrew. Andy.

SW: Is Katy actually a Kathryn?

GW: She's a Kathryn with a different spelling.

SW: Your parents established a restaurant.

GW: Yes.

SW: Called the Golden Dragon. What is your earliest memory of that?

GW: My earliest memory is probably...yeah, I was about five. And I distinctly remember being in that restaurant, (or) what was to become the restaurant, (and) my father and my mother working on the

premises, the interior, getting it ready to open and a lot of construction going on. I was sitting in one of the booths, the dining booths that had been already set up, and just watching all of this activity. So that was my earliest memory.

SW: Did your parents have a background in the restaurant business before they first started this?

GW: My father had a background to the extent that he was a waiter at a very prominent Chinese restaurant in San Diego at the time.

SW: What was the name of that?

GW: That was called the Chinese Village. It was located in downtown San Diego and very prominent during the war years and after the war years. (It was) probably, from what I understood, the most well-known Chinese restaurant in the community at the time.

SW: Did he know anything about cooking when he started?

GW: None whatsoever.

SW: How did they start this business? Do you know?

GW: Yeah. They were saving for quite a long time to open a restaurant. He had been working in a restaurant. I would assume that he saw how lucrative it could be in that it could provide a living for him and be able to support his family. I used to hear little tales that mom and him would just essentially save their money and on the one day off that he had, they kept their dates out very frugal. They'd go downtown to the Orpheum Theatre which is no longer there and there used to be a hot dog stand next door. I think it was Johnny's Hot Dog Stand. They'd take in a movie and have a hot dog and that was their night out actually, their single day out in the week. But they were very frugal and saved their money and in 1955 with their life savings, which amounted to about $3,000.00 at the time, which was a lot of money back in the 50s, they took the step. That's what they told me.

SW: You know why they chose that neighborhood or that location?

GW: I don't know specifically. I do know that they had told me that there had been several other restaurant failures in that particular location.

SW: In that particular structure?

GW: Where the restaurant is, yes. And I don't know why he identified it, but he did identify it and several of his friends would say, "Well why do you want to go there? Restaurants don't make it there." But that didn't deter him.

SW: So you don't know why he chose it? Do you think maybe it was because it was available?

GW: I think it was possibly because it was available and it was close to downtown, relatively speaking.

SW: Was there community support for a Chinese restaurant in that area?

GW: They never mentioned anything and I don't think the community was cohesive and as organized as it is currently. I think it was just a storefront that had some problems with different businesses going in and out and he took a stab at it.

SW: Do you recall any of the neighborhood business, the people?

GW: I had never heard anything saying that he had been discouraged. I don't think there was anything that discouraged him from being there.

SW: Do you know what other Chinese restaurants there were at the time...in other words, his competition?

GW: Yeah. Obviously the place that he had previously worked, the Chinese Village, in downtown San Diego, but they were never specific. But they did say at the time that they opened, there were literally just a handful of Chinese restaurants in all of San Diego. So it did not appear there was a level of competition that we experience today. I don't think people were stepping on each other, so to speak.

SW: Do you know who he bought or leased the building from?

GW: No, I don't.

SW: How many years in total were your parents involved in this business?

GW: They opened it up in 1955 and they sold the business in 1986 to retire. So, what is that, 31 years? So for a small business to thrive for three decades is an accomplishment in itself.

SW: They quit in order to retire?

GW: Yes.

SW: Do you know who they sold it to?

GW: I can't recall anymore, but another Chinese immigrant family.

SW: Did they have prior dealings with this family?

GW: No.

SW: Tell me a little bit about the staff of this restaurant. Let's start with your dad. What did he do?

GW: I told you that he didn't have a cooking background, so he essentially was the promoter. My father was an incredibly gregarious person, very outgoing personality, gift of gab. Even though he was from a different country and had an accent, he just knew how to engage people. So I would say his greatest strength was being up front and I think when he started the business, that was his strength and he knew that. And many of his customers from the previous job came over. My father was a marketer and he made sure that his old customers knew that Jimmy was starting out this new venture.

My mom was bookkeeper and cashier initially. She always remained a bookkeeper. She really knew how to manage the finances. My dad was very bad at that, so good thing that was a great partnership in itself right there. My mom made sure that the bills were paid and there was stuff left over to take care of the family and invest for the future. My dad would have probably said, "What do I do with all this?" But he knew how to drum it up. So that was his strength.

He did hire some cooks from the places that he knew, that he worked at prior. And one of his cooks, I can't remember...it was one of the first ones that he hired to start this venture, he told my father – and it was great advice – he said, "Jimmy, you don't want to be held hostage in your own business." And because this is such a specialized skill, cooking Chinese cuisine, he said, "You really need to learn how to cook." And my father accepted that advice. So this cook said between busy hours, "Let me teach you." And my father learned. And I think that helped my father because he really truly was never held hostage.

Chinese cooks from the old country can be very temperamental. There were times during my dad's operation that cooks would just have a temper tantrum and walk out on him in the middle of a busy hour.

SW: Why? Why are they so temperamental?

GW: They just were. I don't know why. I mean if you told them, "Customer says this is so-and-so, can you reheat it?" He would say, "Go to hell," and they'd take off their apron and walk out.

SW: Really!

GW: And I tell you this story because my father learned to cook so he could just basically... He'd have his tie on and everything, he was working the front, he takes his tie off, slips on an apron and steps in. And I have known other Chinese restaurant proprietors that were in the same circumstances as my father, did not know how to cook, but could set up a business and they have had problems. Literally had to shut down the dining room when cooks walked off. So my father literally, he didn't have to placate. So yeah, that was a great bit of advice by this friend and employee of his. His cook said, "Let me teach you, Jimmy, how to cook."

SW: Wow. That's a great story. Do you have any other memories of any other cooks that worked for your parents?

GW: No. I mean as a child...they were probably younger than I am now, but to me, as a child, they were much older gentlemen that essentially worked these wok stations, stir frying and cooking at a horrendous rate and there was no menu, no recipes, they just did everything. My dad would tell them what he wanted, so obviously, the Golden Dragon had its own distinct recipes. But the recipes were all in the head and they would cook it and taste it and then go on.

SW: Really? So they didn't have a (recipe) that they followed as far as making a particular dish?

GW: They were taught it by my father, but then everything was...it was really funny. My father would teach them, "This is the way I want this done", because it produces this type of taste and texture and whatever. But the Chinese cooks didn't work off of recipes. It was all oral (instructions), and then they knew what the taste or the final result (was that) Jimmy wanted, and they would prepare by taste and end up with that result.

So it's funny, because you talk about recipes. As my father's restaurant became more well known, there were various cooking publications and cuisine publications, some of them nationwide that would, responding to their readerships' requests, would ask, write my father and say, "We'd like to have a recipe for this dish and publish it" and so forth, very similar to what you see in *Cooking Light* or *Sunset Magazine*. You see recipes from restaurants. And my father, at that time, I was probably in high school and I had the western background. I was raised here and I was educated here. He and I would sit at the kitchen table and he said, "This is what they want..." I said, "Okay, I'll write this down." "Now, how many tablespoons or teaspoons of this?" And he goes, "I don't know. You just pick it up and throw it in there and it's about right." It's kind of a pinch here, a pinch there, a dash here. And that really truly is it. But we did, to accomplish some of these requests; we were able to reduce it down to what we call a "western idea" of recipes.

SW: Wow. That's very interesting. Did your parents' restaurant follow a particular region of Chinese cooking? I mean now, we say it's Mandarin, or...?

GW: Right. His was probably what was most acceptable in America at that time in the mid 50s, Cantonese. And Cantonese is, I think it's a wonderful cuisine. It's distinctly milder than some of the more exotic cuisines from China that have come to the United States like Szechuan and Hong Kong. There is a Hong Kong style of Cantonese and so forth. But it was Cantonese and I would say this. I'd like to say it was authentic. It was as authentic as it can be, but it had to be tailored somewhat to western taste of the mid 50s era. So nothing too exotic, but I miss it. I miss my dad's cuisine. It was very good.

SW: What did you do in the restaurant?

GW: During the 60s, I was in high school and like any American, and I am an American boy, I wanted a car. My dad and mom were very successful and they had the means to do so, but they said, "Well, we can buy you a car, but we want you to pay for it. You earn it." So I bussed tables every weekend throughout high school to earn a paycheck. They gave me a paycheck. But guess what? Out of that paycheck, I paid them back. They were my bank. They went and bought the car, but I paid them back. So I won't say that I missed out in my high school, I think I had a very good life, but there were many Friday night football games that I missed because I was busing tables.

Then after the dinner rush, 9:00, 9:30, I would take off my bow tie and I'd be in my white shirt and black slacks and I'd go meet my friends at the local Jack-in-the-Box or wherever the hangout was going to be after the football game. And they always knew that I worked because no matter how much I scrubbed and washed my hands, the smell of Chinese food was on my clothes. So I probably ended up smelling like sweet and sour sauce. The only way I could do it was just go home and change clothes, but I didn't want to, I wanted to rush off and be with my friends. So yeah, I worked there as a bus boy. Paid for my first car that way.

SW: How about your brother and sister?

GW: My sister, on and off, worked there as either a cashier or a hostess or sometimes waited tables. My brother worked for awhile there, he had some aspirations of taking over the family business, so he learned to cook and to this day, he is a great cook. His wife is very fortunate to have a husband that is great in the kitchen. Great in the kitchen. So he was there. He did some stuff there. But ultimately, none of us ended up in the business.

SW: Did you have any other relatives that came into the business?

GW: No. My grandfather, my dad's father, after he retired from the U.S. Navy, in the 60s, worked there as the host and he was a very slightly built gentleman, probably about 5'2" or so, but always very put together. I mean he just had a proper dignity to him. He was always in a full suit and tie, and with his somewhat stilted English, he was just a charming man that many people just loved coming to see.

SW: Let me back up a bit. How about your language? Did you parents speak English when they came here?

GW: Yeah. They were schooled in China in English. So they could speak English. I mean they have an accent, but very conversant.

SW: Were there managers at the restaurant that you recall?

GW: My dad.

SW: Just your dad?

GW: Yeah, it was a small business. It was definitely a small family business, but because of my mom and dad's initiative, they did very well.

SW: How about other waiters and waitresses like your sister?

GW: I wouldn't regard my sister as one of the full timers. I think it was in between stuff like, "Dad, I'm between jobs. Can I come and make some money?" But my dad never had waiters. He had waitresses. And I don't think that was by design. It just happened that way. There may have been a waiter early on, the first year or two, but for some [whatever] reason, it just eventually migrated to all female waitresses and the funny thing about it is the waitresses were all Japanese except for one. One was Chinese. But all of them were Japanese and I would like to say that probably from an Anglo perspective, it didn't matter, I think, in the 1950 generation of being less sophisticated. I hate to say this, it sounds strange, that from an Anglo perspective, we all looked alike, so we were (assumed to be) all Chinese. But the waitresses were predominantly Japanese heritage.

SW: Did any of them speak Chinese?

GW: No.

SW: Were they Japanese born?

GW: Most of them were. I believe all of them were war brides. A lot of them were war brides who had immigrated here with their American husbands. Probably like a lot of immigrants, they didn't have a formal American education, so they took the jobs that they were able to obtain.

SW: Did the waitresses have a long period of employment?

GW: The typical waitress, the typical employee in general, was long-term employee. It was hard work, but I think it was a sense that my mom and dad treated people like family, so I think they felt a loyalty.

SW: Now, you were a busboy. Were there other busboys?

GW: No. It was just a little small dining room. You only need one busboy. Let me describe this real quickly. It was a 55-foot restaurant. Very small. Very small. But you know what, dad just put out a lot of business. He had just 55 seats, but boy, the place thrived.

SW: Did your family do catering?

GW: No, not as an established separate line. No. He did do a few catering jobs for old time customers, special requests. But most of the time, he declined.

SW: How was the restaurant cleaned? Did you have a custodial service?

GW: We had a general person that was employed, Frankie, and he did most of the cleaning and stuff like that.

SW: Where did your parents get the food that was cooked?

GW: Various produce companies within town.

SW: How about other supplies, like where did they get their dishes?

GW: Also restaurant supply companies in town.

SW: Did they use, what I think of as typical Chinese types of dishes?

GW: No, they didn't.

SW: They used American style, like hotel ware?

GW: Yeah. Predominantly. Very basic.

SW: Furniture? Do you know anything about where they got it?

GW: It wasn't imported from the Orient. It was basic restaurant style. I mean my dad had an artistic bent and he did use some nice graphics and stuff like that. Probably the most prominent thing when somebody walked in there – the restaurant is essentially a rectangular box – and when you walk in, on the ceiling, for the length of the premises is a dragon painted on the ceiling.

SW: In what color?

GW: The closest reproduction of gold as possible, so it's a yellow gold paint. My father...that's another memory that I have, of my father being on a ladder. It took him about a week and a half on a ladder, using a brush, painting it.

SW: So he painted it himself?

GW: He painted it himself. He drew it and painted it. He was very artistic and that was one of the prominent things there. There was also, in the small entry way, a wall relief of clay. He molded a golden dragon on it and painted it. It was a dragon painted in gold with a black background. That was there, too. He was very artistic. So he added what he considered Asian touches, Oriental touches, to it.

SW: Did he have a particular reason for choosing the dragon?

GW: I think he just always felt that it was obviously, in Chinese culture, a very imposing and commanding symbol. And in the Chinese culture, gold obviously – I think like most cultures – is valued.

SW: Let's walk through this restaurant from your memory. Going through the entry...

GW: Little entry. Single door.

SW: And then you see this incredible dragon on the roof. What does it look like as you step into the restaurant?

GW: As you step in, there is probably a small area, oh, probably six or seven people crammed in a small waiting area. There is a small bench, booth for seating. And then as you enter through the door to the left is the hostess stand/cash register. As you stand, from that perspective and look across the room, there are booths on both sides of the walls and down the middle are separate tables.

SW: And then how did you get to the kitchen?

GW: Well, you walk straight through the dining room and then you come to a little waitress station where they have the water and the soda machines, the prep area. And you go through there and there are bathrooms to the left and then you stay to the right and actually, there is no door. You can see the full kitchen.

SW: Oh really? Can you watch the cooking?

GW: No. Because my dad put a partition up that served as the waitress station and shielded the main dining room from the noise and the clatter.

SW: What was the kitchen like? How do you recall it?

GW: There was a wok station...that I would like to say (had) five wok burners. My father, for a 55-seat restaurant, had four to five full time cooks.

SW: At one time?

GW: At one time. And he put out a lot of volume.

SW: That's a lot of food, yeah.

GW: So there was a four to five burner wok and obviously all the prep tables and everything, and the refrigerators, and as you go through the kitchen to the left, there was the dishwashing area where they

washed dishes and all that stuff, and then as you go further; there were the storage rooms and the walk-in freezer.

SW: Did you have a back entrance also?

GW: Yeah. It's funny. He had a back entrance when he first opened the place and then probably somewhere in the 60s, at that time Security Pacific Bank, they built a bank building there and they walled off our ingress and egress from this back entrance. So we just walked into the wall. And I always found it odd...now that I'm older and my background now is in real estate and mortgage lending, so I know a lot about buildings, more so about buildings, and I always thought, "How did the fire department allow this to be sealed off?" But I don't know. Maybe I could be paranoid and speculate that money buys influence, but I always found that odd. They sealed it off, so basically we had one ingress and egress, which was the front door.

SW: So deliveries then came through the front door?

GW: Yes. We had to time everything to say, "When you come, you've got to come at these hours which are either before we open or shortly thereafter before it gets busy."

SW: How about parking?

GW: Currently, there is a building there now. It's been developed. But for most of that time...for all of the time that my father owned the restaurant, there was a parking lot adjacent, and they allowed us to park there. Then toward the latter years, they asked for rent. But yeah, there was good parking.

SW: What did the exterior front of the restaurant look like?

GW: The most prominent exterior feature is a large neon sign which, again, my father designed, drew out, and gave to the neon sign company to fabricate. From what I understand, that is now a...I don't know the exact definition. Somebody once told me that it is historically preserved or has some historic significance as a piece of neon art from that era.

It's a shame – I've been told, and I haven't been there to observe it – that the current owner, I guess it is malfunctioning and they chose not to spend the money to correct it. So it's not lit. But that's most prominent.

There was, at the time, I would call it, kind of like a marquee type overhang extending over the sidewalk and the neon was also an Oriental type of design. And my father actually carved the letters. There were wood letters at the time. It's now since been opened up to windows, but he had "Jimmy Wong's Golden Dragon" in large carved letters that were on the front of the building. He also did a carving that was [vertical], and he used a router and made those letters and the Chinese characters.

SW: Did he have his own wood shop for all this?

GW: No. My dad was just...whatever came to his mind, he would find the resources. If he needed to use a router, he went and borrowed a router and then he just went...and he never used one before, he just did it. He was pretty resourceful. He was a pretty incredible man. Both my mom and my dad were incredible people.

SW: Can you tell me about some of the customers? Did you have regular customers?

GW: Yeah. He had regular customers. Many, many mainstays. Because he was around for 30-some years in that location, I used to hear stories that not only did he have customers, but then subsequently he had customer's children. A customer came in with their children, subsequently; their children grew up and then brought their families in. So there was that connection where it just went from generation to generation that he experienced. Some of his customers were some of the more prominent people in town. So he had really a mix, a cross mix of people. Obviously, the bulk of it was regular people. And then he had some people that think, "They come in this little 55-seat hole in the wall?" But you know, it was the combination of my dad and his cuisine that drew these people. He had a wall in his little very small entry way with a photo gallery of some of the prominent people who had come to the restaurant during the time. Some of the celebrities at the time.

SW: Do you recall who they were?

GW: Let's see. There was a comedian impersonator back then called Frank Gorshin. Where I remember him, he played the Riddler on the TV show "Batman." There was a group, that is still around, probably not as prominent now as then, Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66. At the time, Sergio Mendes came in. Burt Bacharach, who has written lots of songs. So he had little photo gallery. Those are some of the people I remember.

And there were the sports figures. A lot of the Chargers used to come in. Dan Fouts, the Hall of Fame quarterback for the Chargers, and a lot of his linemen would come in after games, local games. Some of the Padres. Yeah. It was kinda neat.

SW: How about other Asians? Did the Chinese people come to the restaurant?

GW: Yeah. Yeah.

SW: In a regular way?

GW: In a regular way, yeah. It's not large now, but it was even smaller then, the Asian population. It was a gathering place. I mean people would go over there and if they ate, they ate, but they came in more for community's sake. The Asian, Chinese community.

SW: Just to hang out with each other?

GW: Yeah.

SW: Were there any special events that became traditional at the Golden Dragon?

GW: No, none that I can think of. No.

SW: Did you do a Chinese New Year?

GW: You know, dad and mom never did. They obviously personally observed it. We always knew that Chinese New Year we would celebrate at home, but from a business perspective, no. They never made

any big splashes or anything that the Golden Dragon was going do something special because it was Chinese New Year.

SW: Any other holiday type of events?

GW: No. The only thing of interest about the holidays is that the only two days he ever closed were Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Obviously, just from a business perspective, business was very good during Mother's Day and Valentine's Day. But other than that, there was nothing special.

SW: Did people rent the restaurant for special occasions; did they take over the whole place?

GW: He never made it available that way.

SW: Did your family sponsor a baseball team or anything like that?

GW: Back in the 60s, he sponsored a, I guess there were leagues through the municipal recreation thing down at Balboa Park, and they had a basketball league there. My father's best friend was a professor at San Diego State. He came to San Diego State in the middle of the 50s on a basketball scholarship and my father became acquainted with him in the 60s. They became best of friends. Ray wanted to...he had a group of people that he played ball with and they joined this league and he said, "Hey Jimmy, would you like to sponsor us?" and my dad said, "Well, what's that mean?" He said, "You pay for our uniforms and feed us every so often and the uniforms will have your name on it." And he goes, "Okay." So it was a team that played in the intramural leagues down here – I guess that's what you call it – and they had a winning record. I mean my dad would go down there with my mom and go down to the municipal gym down in Balboa Park where they played these games and the team would be playing and my dad would be sitting down there in his suit, his coat and tie, and my mom in a dress and they'd sit in the bleachers cheering on their team.

SW: Oh, that's so cool. What was Ray's last name?

GW: Dahlin. D-A-H-L-I-N. Just retired a few years ago as professor. He was head of the speech arts department at Palomar College. Great man. Very nice man.

SW: Did your restaurant ever win awards?

GW: Yes, awhile back. And I don't know if they're even still around. There was an organization or a publication locally that selected the "best of" so to speak. And I remember my father's restaurant being named best Chinese.

SW: Has the neighborhood changed since when you were associated with the restaurant?

GW: Yeah. Yeah, it's obviously gotten much more built up, much more cosmopolitan. To me, my recollection, especially during my junior high and high school years is that it was a nice, quiet little community. Obviously, where he was located was a business district, but it was a nice, quiet community. And I think right now it's still a great community; however, it's become more crowded, it's more cosmopolitan, so to speak. And I think it's just growing up just like all of San Diego is growing up.

SW: Is there anything else you'd like to add about experiences as a child growing up in the restaurant (business)?

GW: I think the thing that I am most proud of, and I think the restaurant is typical of this, is what my parents (were able to accomplish). It was a major part of their life, and it kind of exemplifies what my parents' lives were. They were immigrants that came here, and they came here to realize the American Dream. And through their hard work and perseverance and a lot of luck too, they grasped the opportunity that materialized within this restaurant and they realized the American Dream. It truly is...it's an immigrant story that is exactly how you want it to turn out.

SW: Thank you very much. It's been a wonderful interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

14. CHUCK ZITO

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 18, 2003 by Susan D. Walter
(No Photo Taken)

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Chuck Zito on July 18, 2003, in the lobby of Diversionary Theatre. Also present was George Gonzalez, in his adjoining office, and Rachael Van Wormer as a spectator. After the interview, Chuck gave Susan and Rachael a tour of the theatre and backstage areas; this walk through was also tape recorded. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Chuck Zito provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document, either bracketed [ ], or in the form of footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	NA
compact disk	the cd contains all 22 transcripts from the Uptown project
floppy disk	with Doris Nelson's original transcript
release form	City of San Diego Historic Sites Board
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	NA
ephemera donated by the informant:	NA

Transcript:

CZ = Chuck Zito
GG = George Gonzalez
RV = Rachael Van Wormer
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Chuck Zito on July 18th, 2003. We are in the lobby of Diversionary Theatre. First I want to know your full name, please?

CZ: Sure. My full name is Charles John Zito. That's Z-I-T-O.

SW: Where were you born?

CZ: I was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

SW: When were you born?

CZ: 1959.

SW: How did you get out here?

CZ: I was living in New York in Manhattan. I lived there from '86 to 2001, and the last years that I lived in Manhattan I was thinking of possibly relocating. I had friends who lived in San Diego I planned to come to see on vacation. I liked San Diego. It was on my list of places to relocate. When this theatre, when (I was) job hunting, put out a job search for an executive director, it was the perfect combination. I wasn't going to leave Manhattan if I didn't have something here. So it was the perfect opportunity.

SW: So you had a background in...

CZ: Theatre.

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about your background prior to coming here?

CZ: Let's see. I took a degree in 1984, a B.F.A. in theatre from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From there, I went to New York City where I stayed until 2001, where I worked on and off with different companies. Sort of highlights of it would be associate producer of a group called the Manstage Project in Chelsea. I was the artistic director of a company called the Spectrum Stage Company Theatre [located] in Soho. And I worked on a production team for a season [at Manhattan ... Company]. I've actually been an Equity stage manager, which I did for awhile for public theatre. That's kind of like the general (background). So most of my background is in small theatre. This particular job requires an artistic and business background and I spent many years in New York supporting myself as an office administrator for contracting firms, for other companies and I learned a lot about bookkeeping and record keeping and things like that.

SW: How did you actually get out here? Drive?

CZ: Oh, oh, oh...I flew.

SW: Did you come with your belongings?

CZ: I shipped UPS, and they arrived slightly ahead of me.

SW: Did you have a home to move to?

CZ: No, I didn't. I was staying with my friends. And when I got here, two, three weeks I went apartment hunting.

SW: Did you know the community at all before you came?

CZ: A bit. I had a vacation share for about a week at a time, I think four times. So I'd spent about a month here previous to that.

SW: What was your first impression of the community as a whole once you came here?

CZ: Once I came here...all of San Diego in general or this area?

SW: Well, start with San Diego and then narrow it to this area.

CZ: San Diego surprised me. I thought it would be much more conservative politically than it is. It's much more moderate than I had thought (it would be). Of, course, I came from Manhattan. But, San Diego is much more diverse than I realized. Of course, there is no...the population characteristics are very different from the East Coast to the West Coast.

What else about San Diego? The people are very friendly. Extremely friendly. People will talk to you all the time. It's very time consuming. When I first got here, I really had to get used to the fact that if you walked up to the counter and to do business, they were going to talk to you. I just had to get used to it. As a New Yorker, I just had to get used to it. Because in New York, you walk up to the counter, you do business, you're on your way. There are so many more people and so much less time. So people are very friendly here, much more moderate.

Much more politically active, certainly. The community that this theatre is based in as an LGBT theatre.[27] The community here is extremely politically organized and active. Which is very interesting and much more cohesive than I would have thought. But I don't know that I actually knew that much about San Diego in some ways. Most of my impressions were, "Oh, I thought it would be different." It is. I thought it would be different and I was surprised.

SW: Do you know anything about the beginnings of Diversionary itself?

CZ: I do know that a gentleman named Tom McVeigh, M-C-V-E-I-G-H, founded Diversionary Theatre in 1987 in Golden Hills. I never met Tom when I was in San Francisco. I don't know too much about the roots of the theatre. I know it did not have a home for many years. It moved from place to place. It had a string of executive and artistic directors after Tom left. In 1994, it moved to this space and he gathered the money to move in to renovate the theatre upstairs and this office space. I guess after Tom, the next major figure on the scene was a man named Robert Joseph. He manned the theatre for many years. He was much beloved in the community. The theatre has always been LGBT. It's just sort of grown over time.

SW: Do you know specifically why it was founded? Why Diversionary was founded?

CZ: I believe – I read some of Tom's stuff – I think specifically in 1987 he founded a theatre because he thought the community here which was getting so well organized deserved a cultural voice of its own.

SW: Do you have any idea who came up with the name?

CZ: No.

SW: Can you tell me any of the names of any early shows that they did?

CZ: Oh gosh. What they've done at the Diversionary?

SW: Yeah.

CZ: They do a lot of stuff that was written for the theatre. I know for years they did something called "Our Gay Apparel." Which was their annual Christmas show. They did a lot of Jane Chambers works, "Last Summer at Bluefish Cove" things like that. I know that in the 90s, they did both parts of "Angels in America," "Suddenly Last Summer." We're reviving "Love! Valor! Compassion" a show they did in '96. "Rocky Horror," "Weldon Rising."

I will tell you, that, you know the archives upstairs? (They) have a complete record. They collected everything prior to our coming out here. They would know, they would have that.

SW: Oh good. I was going to ask if...so that's at the Lesbian and Gay Historical Society or LAMBDA.

CZ: Yes. They collected everything.

[27] LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transvestite.

SW: Do you know if any of the performers who started here have ever become noted or known in theatre?

CZ: I don't know.

SW: You don't know. Do you know if there's ever been a history written of Diversionary?

(Phone ring)

SW: I wanted to know, do you have any idea of a history of Diversionary Theatre that has ever been written or compiled, maybe a newspaper, magazine articles?

CZ: Not that I know of.

SW: Can you tell me again what exactly is your position here?

CZ: I am the executive director. I report directly to the board of directors. As executive director I oversee the artistic end and the business end of the operation. In most theatres, it is called the producing artistic director.

SW: Is that what you've always done here or have you had other positions?

CZ: Here? I was hired as executive director.

SW: When you first came here, what was your first goal for Diversionary Theatre?

CZ: To set it up so the theatre could produce theatre

SW: Oh really.

CZ: They had nothing in place for producing show after show after show as a regular institution. Everything was being done from scratch each time without any plan or season anything. There was no budget – nothing. And so the first goal was to straighten the place out institutionally and devise ways so we could produce one show after another, designers in place, things like that, and improve the quality of work.

SW: So you are now implementing changes.

CZ: Oh we did all of that. That was sort of the first year. The second year was more about sprucing up, solidifying that and building our donor bases, foundation grants, things like that. This year is about greater media exposure. Sort of a three phased, building on solutions.

SW: What are some of the shows that you have been associated with here?

CZ: I can give you the entire list. I got here, the first show I did was "Breaking the Code" by Hugh Whitemore about Alan Turing. (There is conversation here that cannot be heard) That show was actually scheduled when I got here. So I arrived and it was already packaged. And then starting with the next set, "Psycho Beach Party," was the first one I produced here from start to finish. The next season was "Boys

in the Band", "Lot's Daughters" by Rebecca Basham, and a Kennedy Center playwright award winner. That production was its first professional production. "Jeffrey" over the holidays, Never the Sinner. After that, "Cloud Nine", then "The Fifth of July," and last fall, the season just ending, we started with "The Killing of Sister George," "The Mystery of Irma Vep," "Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde," "Deporting the Divas," and now we're doing "Falsettos." And I can tell you what next season will be too, if you want.

SW: Well sure, why not?

CZ: That starts in August with "Love! Valor! Compassion!" which is a remount of a show we did (previously), it was a Terrance McNally show. Then "Another American: Telling and Asking." It's a one-person show by Marc Wolf who is not performing, but he spent a few years recording essentially he was doing oral histories of people in and out of the military and around the military, "Don't ask, don't tell." And he put together this piece and one performer does the stories of male, female, some are anonymous, some names are changed, some are not. Some of the stories of these people are told in this play live in San Diego and are in the military. That's going to be followed by after the new year by "Brave Smiles...Another Lesbian Tragedy" by the Five Lesbian Brothers which is a collective of writers and then we're doing in conjunction with the Asian American Rep we're doing a co-production of "M. Butterfly." We don't know what the fifth show is.

SW: How are plays selected? How do you choose them?

CZ: We have a play selection committee, which is the president of the board, myself, the resident director and another board member and we, actually, it's funny. We're just collecting plays now, people are calling and they're sending them in. From now until the end of December, we will read plays. Last year, we read approximately 60 plays between us. And we will get these plays from all sources. You know, "Never the Sinner." Sean Murray, who used to be at the North Coast, (it's) director. He came to us and said, "I found a script I think you'll love." And we loved it. So we have "Deporting Divas," which we just put on, it was brought to us two years ago by one of our associate artists, an actor. There was not even a role for him in its, which is fabulous for an actor to be so generous. He was reading this collected book of plays and he said, "Oh, I love this play. This play is wonderful. It's like something you've never done before." So they come from all sources, recommended, and the four of us read them. And then we sit down and we try and think about all the considerations that go into putting a season together, five that we think go together that will make a good season. And so some of the plays we read last year we didn't choose to do but we might do this year. Because it just didn't...

SW: Didn't fit in with the...

CZ: Somehow, it just didn't all quite fit together. And then what happens, is the play selection committee will refer that to the board and the board will give its final approval.

SW: What are the steps taken to getting it actually into production once you've selected a play?

CZ: Oh my God. Well first you have to get the rights. Once the board approves, once we all decide these are the five plays we want and we have a few alternates, then we submit for the rights. Once we have the rights to a play, then we have to choose a director; that's the first thing that's done.

Now from this point on, I'm overseeing all of this. I choose all of these things that are now happening. I choose the director, I choose a design team. The production manager, George, and I will work together to get the technical staff, the stage managers, the technicians. All these things and we try to line up as far in advance as we can. It's easier to line up the directors and designers. It's a lot harder to line up technicians, because it's much more of a catch-as-catch-can type of job, technicians. Generally, we're a little more fancy free about that. But they don't want to commit too far upfront. And then usually, then we also have a design firm who designs all of our graphics and media work and as you can see already, all of next season already has graphic work. All of these plays and images. About two months before the play...well in the month preceding that, the director and designers will communicate and they will start to talk about designs and things like that and I'll sit with them and I'll look at designs with them. What happens about two months before, a month and a half to two months before, we'll do a preliminary photo shoot, get the pictures together, see if that works. (Then) we set up the schedule for everything, the technical build schedule, we take three weeks in between shows. One show ends, three weeks later the next one opens. There are about two weeks until we start technical rehearsals.

Rehearsing a play goes anywhere from four week to six weeks depending on everyone's schedule. Most of our actors work daytime. They work full time jobs. And usually the show opens on a Saturday, we have some Thursday openings. If a show opens on Saturday, then the weekend before, that Saturday and Sunday is what is called a technical rehearsal. You know all about that. And we work our way through that, work again on Monday night, Sundays, Monday night, Wednesday night. Thursday and Friday are usually preview nights. And then Sunday is...Saturday is the show opening. That pretty well sums it up.

And there are more photo shoots. And along the way, the designs are presented; renderings, models, materials are bought, supplies are arranged. For example, "Falsettos" closes on August 2. On August 3, we arranged for a crew to work to strip the entire theatre upstairs. And the prop master or mistress will take the costumes out, everything is out of the dressing rooms, the entire stage ripped out. On Monday, it all gets hauled away. It's all being hauled out as the guy who's building "Love, Valor" is bringing his material in, to start building (it).

SW: That definitely gives the public a feel for some of the things that we don't know about when a play is actually staged.

CZ: Oh yeah, it's very busy back there.

SW: Can you tell me a little about some of your other employees and coworkers?

CZ: In the back, we have George Gonzalez. George, wave to the camera. George is our production manager. George comes to us from – Palomar?

GG: Yes.

CZ: Palomar. He's been working in and studies community and technical theatre. He's an extremely accomplished carpenter, design and painting. He's also a designer; he's a scenic artist. And as our production manager, he oversees all the things that are attached to the show. Scheduling, interfacing with the designers, seeing to it when materials are coming and going, you know, they're not colliding on the steps, rehearsal schedules, all that sort of thing. He maintains a show once it's running. He also works with us on sort of, facilities inventory, keeping the lights, the electric room in order, things like that.

And then we have Bret Young as our other employee who is the patron service manager. He oversees things that are not connected directly related to the show. He oversees the box office staff, the house staff, special events; he helps me with donor stewardship. All the money that comes in, he makes sure we get the (acknowledgement) notes back. You know our letters. He works on the newsletter. All those things that theatres do that aren't directly related to a given production. That's Bret's job.

(Gesturing to George) His job is all the things that are directly related to the production.

SW: So which person is in charge of publicity?

CZ: Oh that would be me.

SW: You.

CZ: Yeah. Bret and I kind of do that together. Well, actually George did when I was on vacation, George was kind of answering...fielding all the e-mails and sending out the pictures and things. We're a very small operation, so when we give out these job descriptions, its very fluid.

When you look at the set for "Falsettos," if you see the show, have you seen the show yet?

RV: Not yet. I'm going to, I swear it – I promise. I wouldn't miss it.

CZ: Because you wouldn't want me booing your show.[28]

RV: No!

CZ: When you see "Falsettos" you'll see on the one wall there's a musical staff is painted with notes. Bret actually did that because he's also a painter and he had the time and George was running like a maniac doing a thousand other things. So everybody is sort of back and forth.

SW: Do you hire people to work the box office?

CZ: Our box office staff are volunteers. The volunteers are the box office and the ushers. Everyone else is paid. The actors are paid, the technicians are paid. The designers, directors. The board's not paid.

SW: Custodians?

CZ: Ahhh, custodians...we used to. It's funny, we had someone come in and clean every week. One of our volunteers said, "You know, I'd be happy to do that for you." One of our box office volunteers. So on Thursday now, he comes in and he takes care of our space. Now the building has its own staff. We are just renters. The building pays somebody to come and take care of the restrooms, the exteriors and the tree trimming and all that. But our volunteer – bless his heart – said, "You know, save that money. I'll come in on Thursdays. It won't take me long." He empties all the trash, he vacuums the theatre. It takes him a little over an hour to get it all done for us. That is very sweet of him.

SW: Yeah. Does he also clean the backstage areas?

[28] Rachael Van Wormer had written a play in production that week that Chuck was going to see.

CZ: Well, he will go into the dressing room and empty their trash and vacuum it. But the stage itself he does not touch. The stage manager, she and her people mop it, sweep it before a performance. And we urge the cast to be tidy.

SW: Yes. Can you walk me through your facility? Let's do it from the public view. They start at the box office and then what?

CZ: You pick up your ticket here.

SW: At the entrance.

CZ: Up the steps into the theatre itself. The public restrooms are at the top of the steps and at the bottom of the steps. And that's pretty much all you're going to see as a public member. Anything else is behind the scenes.

SW: How would the actor view it? Suppose an actor is coming in to do a performance?

CZ: They will come in about...our curtain is at 8:00. We open the house around 20 till eight is when we let the audience into the theatre. They're lining up before then hopefully, because its real crowded. And the actors get in anywhere from 6:30 to 7:00. They'll show up and they'll go into the theatre as well. They usually use the front entrance, but once they're inside, they'll open up the back entrance from inside. There' s an entrance down the walkway that goes to the dressing room. And that's the entrance they'll use from that point on. And they'll be in the dressing room, prop room backstage. It's actually a much smaller space. It's a very small cozy facility. They have to share the same restrooms with the audience. So actually, one of the reasons we don't let the audience up too early is because the actors are using the restroom. And then you have to sort of juggle it during intermission, to get people in and out without bumping into each other.

SW: That's one thing that I found interesting about this theatre is that it's upstairs. That must give you some logistical challenges.

CZ: In what way?

SW: Getting props up and down?

CZ: Oh props are light. Scenery is a little heavier. But you just design for the space. You just know it has to be lifted up those steps. And we also have the elevator.

SW: How about some of your support facilities as far the theatre goes? Do you have a prop storage area?

CZ: We have three garages we rent two blocks down. We store props, costumes and scenery.

SW: Do you have them divided up?

CZ: We have three garages. We've been organizing them. We have to reorganize the prop and costume facility. We have to organize them so they don't fall down! Of course, we carry complete general liability at all of our facilities, those garages, here, upstairs, are all insured.

SW: Can you tell me about your light booth?

CZ: Our light booth is...oh, that's something else. It's at the back of the house, it's not very large either. Actually, we're hoping to replace our light board by the end of the year. Because for some reason when they built this, it was very tiny dimmers... usually your dimmer packs are up on the roof somewhere. But ours are right in that room. It's real crowded but that's where light and sound operate from. And it's a fine facility, it's not as soundproof as I would like. (Unintelligible.) It's pretty standard.

SW: Sound equipment?

CZ: Well, actually, we had sound designer last year upgrade our facility. (Conversation cannot be heard here).

SW: How about your curtains and screens?

CZ: Well, we don't actually have a curtain.

SW: You don't?

CZ: No, we don't have a curtain. Our stage is kind of...well you've seen it.

RV: It's a triangle.

CZ: (Numerous gestures though this description). It's kind of like a wedge of a pie and literally, it's interesting, the direction goes like this, this is the theatre itself. The stage goes like this in a curve, so that it's actually deceptive. The house seats are this way so that if you're sitting here, or you're sitting here, it's essentially these views. That's why it's thrust. If someone is sitting there it's a 90 degree view to some of the stage. They're (the two different seats indicated by gestures) a completely opposite view of the center of the stage. It's almost as if it was across the stage, so and we don't have a curtain or proscenium. Though we used one in "Divas." We actually ran a track to put the curtain up. Much to the envy of any number of directors who have not been able to use that track and curtain. So usually, the space...the space is completely flexible then. As you've seen, you can open the back wall, covered in scenery, have just a tiny bit of scenery, so we have no permanent curtains.

SW: Do you have a regular sort of schedule of events that this theatre participates in? Like regular a Christmas program, regular, you know...

CZ: Well, we do five shows a year which run in approximately the same slots each year. (Unintelligible.) In the spring, in March, we do our annual benefit which we do here on site; it's a two-night event. In May, we have an annual announcement party to which our supporters come. We announce all the donors and subscribers the first issue of the season. We are starting this fall to do a Christmas holiday benefit in December. That pretty much covers, oh, and of course, we do participate in Gay Pride.

SW: Has Diversionary won awards for any of their shows?

CZ: Oh my gosh. We have won, since I've been here, we won five Patté awards, KBPS awards for theatre excellence in the year 2001.

SW: Five.

CZ: Yes. Acting, Ron Choularton won an award for "Breaking the Code." Following all of this, you know...it's all in your head...it's like oh yeah, yeah, I know this. "Jeffrey" won an award for ensemble, Tim Irving won an award for directing "Jeffrey." "Lot's Daughters" won an award for outstanding production and Karen Filijan won an award for her light design for several theatres including ours. Last year, KPBS theatre excellence awards Shulamit Nelson won an award for costume design for "Irma Vep." And "Never the Sinner" won an award for outstanding production. The Craig Noel awards were just started last year. Mike Durst won an award for lighting for "Never the Sinner." Maybe he won an award for lighting _____. And K. B. Mercer who performed in "Fifth of July" won an award for acting. And then, you know each show gets reviewed in various papers. The *Union-Tribune* has what they call the "Critic's Choice" which is their top designation, and we've had that for "The Boys in the Band," "Lot's Daughters," "Never the Sinner," "Cloud Nine," and "Fifth of July" this year we had it for "Falsettos." And then *The Reader* gives you "Critic's Picks." And again, all of last season, I think they skipped "Cloud Nine." And then again this year, "Falsettos." So yeah, we've won critic's picks in "Back Stage West" out of L.A. several times. We've been nominated for some Garland Awards.

SW: How as the community supported your theatre?

CZ: Very well. Our attendance has gone up in the last year from 45 percent to 65 percent. That's very good. And our donor base is also expanding. Our audiences are also very interesting. We're doing an audience survey right now. We are officially an LGBT Theatre, but our survey indicates what we have always sort of suspected, which is that about anywhere from...the survey's not done, so it's a rough figure, sort of fluctuating, I think it's going to settle somewhere between literally 34 and 37 percent of the audience does not identify as LGBT. That is outside of our core community, which is very exciting for us too.

SW: Well yeah. Does Diversionary partner or support any other theatres?

CZ: Well, Cygnet, which is a new theatre, they're opening "Hedwig" next week. God bless them. They're building a theatre at the same time. So they've been rehearsing "Hedwig" here daily. We've given them the space. Sean Murray is directing it. We just said, "Sean, whatever you need, just call us." We cross promote with all the other theatres all the time. I have a limit just because it doesn't look so good when you get lots of pieces of paper stuffed in your program, but it's first-come-first-serve. You want to stuff something in our program? Sure, bring it over. We do it for other people. We also occasionally and with great review and scrutiny and safeguards, we'll extend the use of our mail list for a one shot drive. And of course, they'll do the same for us. Like when Kirsten Brandt from Sledgehammer directed "Deporting the Divas," we borrowed their mail list, for obvious reasons, and highlighted her on the postcard and sent it to people on their mailing list. So there are things like that. We'll do the same. We'll pass stuff on to other theatres from those that have a great following of our theatre. For instance, North Coast does the same thing. They'll say, "Can you send us?" And we say "Yes."

SW: Who would you say are your competitors?

CZ: Videos, home rental mostly, Video on Demand is a real drag for Cox Cable movies, TV. That would be pretty much our competitors. Like any theatre.

SW: Does Diversionary have any outreach programs?

CZ: In what sense?

SW: In that you help aspiring actors, you go into schools.

CZ: Well, we actually just did, finished a pilot project with the Gay Men's Community Center and Arts Education for the Youth Center in Hillcrest. (Conversation cannot be heard here) And we're also trying a touring education program for high schools for Gay Pride. This is new for us.

SW: Do you have anything that you wish to add?

CZ: We also, just since you asked, we have supported every cause in San Diego. If they tell us "We are having an auction, will you send us tickets?" We say yes and send them tickets and subscriptions. We have supported every cause from pet care to Alzheimer's, breast cancer, MS, anything anywhere anytime as long as it is not attached to a political need. I have had to turn a few people down, but most people (get our) support. Pretty much if you go to an event in San Diego, you're going to see our name on the advertisement somewhere. And that may tell you more about this theatre than any other question you've asked.

(Telephone ring)

SW: My final question is kind of an odd one. A lot of theatres have their own personal little superstitions. Does this one have anything that you know of? He's looking off somewhere...

CZ: I'm looking at George's grinning while you're asking that question. Well, we never let George in after midnight because he gets a little weird.

(George says something in background)

SW: You do?

CZ: No, we don't.

SW: Aw, c'mon.

(George says something in background)

CZ: Who told you that? No one's mentioned...oh please. I don't think so. I've never heard of any superstition related to this theatre at all, actually. Honestly. No. It's funny; it's the only place I've ever worked that hasn't. But no, not this one. I think the theatre was only rebuilt in '94. I think what has to happen is everybody...when you develop a superstition in a theatre, everyone who is there when it was built and founded has to eventually die off. So it takes a whole generation of people, 20 or 30 years. They're all going to be gone so people can talk about them. And then they can't refute it and then you get the superstition. But too many people who were here when this building was opened are still alive and wandering around. So there's no way to make up ghost stories about them. The landlord is still here, so you can't talk about how he comes back at night and taps on the window. So no, no.

SW: Thank you so very much. It's been most interesting.

CZ: Okay great, you're welcome. I hope it was helpful.

End of Side 1

Tape 1, Side 2

Note: Chuck invited Susan and Rachael on a tour of the entire facility. The following is a recording of the commentary as they proceeded.

SW: This is Side 2 of the interview with Chuck Zito.

CZ: (Indicating the lobby and box office area.) Okay. This facility actually was not available in 1994. When we first moved into the theatre, it was all upstairs. And these were offices. I believe these were added three years later. They took over the renting of this space. Last fall, we repainted it, we redecorated for the first time in some time. Changing it...they had painted a fake faux deco mural around. It was just ugly as sin with deep, deep, icky blue walls. And we've changed all that. And actually, we are, I guess it's official enough now, I can tell you. Because I filled out the preliminary paperwork, so they've said yes, they're sending the grant paper back. County Supervisor Pam Slater has awarded us a Challenge Grant of $15,000.00 which we will match one-to-one and the purpose of that grant is to replace the platform that you'll see on stage, some new furniture for the lobby, a wireless communication system so that the people in the booth, the house manager, the box office manager, the person back, can all talk during the show and there will be sufficient money in there we think, to get a new light board as well. So yeah, we're very excited about that. So we'll also see some new furniture yes.

(Exiting the door and going to the staircase)

Supervisor Slater was just extremely generous. She loved "Falsettos" which I know you're going to come see.

SW: Yes.

(Climbing stairs)

CZ: And then from there it's upstairs, and we have, as you've noted, a theatre facility upstairs which is unusual.

SW: Yes, it is.

CZ: And I'm not sure, but that's just the way they did it. These are the leases that were empty at the time.

SW: We've entered the theatre.

CZ: This is the theatre itself and you can see what I mean about the stage. There is no permanence. It's all wide open. And if you're sitting here or you're sitting there, you're almost at 90-degree angles to the center of the stage. So essentially, it's a thrust stage, even though it doesn't actually look like it. It looks like it's a proscenium when you first walk in to direct a show here. I always...there's a whole speech I give to the director to point out to them the idiosyncrasies of the space. And that's one of them. The light booth is behind you. As you can see, for this particular show, we're using a spotlight, it is a musical. And

if you come this way, that door, that used to be the box office, that little area there, now leads outside, it's an entrance and an exit for the stage.

SW: How many seats are in here?

CZ: 104. 106. We sell 104 because we have two ushers. This...

SW: Whoa.

CZ: This is...

SW: Backstage.

CZ: Our electrics room, storage room. This is what George is always working on. One designer once described it as a "shell game" in here because essentially you really can never actually get too far ahead because you really mostly are just sort of shifting things around and making them more usable for whatever project you're working on. There's just not enough space.

SW: What we did was we went through a curtain, and what is this?

CZ: Oh, this is just a hallway here. We call this the electrics room.

SW: And it comes right out through the...

CZ: Out of the house left area and it's going to double around out back as it exits and it's going to also lead to the dressing room. And then there's another curtain. This just helps prevent light spill. And hm...this is the dressing room. I'm not sure what that is. This is the dressing room. You know, somebody's decorating something. This is the dressing room. There's only one dressing room. This is a prop run room as well.

SW: That includes refrigerator and...

CZ: Refrigerator, microwave...

SW: Microwave.

CZ: Coffeemaker, water, bottled water. We try to make it comfy for people who work as best we can in a limited space.

SW: So you don't really have a real ceiling in here, do you?

CZ: There's skylight there. No. They never actually finished that completely. And I guess these are things that the cast is doing to amuse themselves.

SW: We're talking about a bulletin board with off-the-wall...

CZ: Bulletin board with little phrases, "Falsettos Quote Book" it says.

SW: Quote board.

CZ: "Quote board" it says. And what are some of the great quotes we have... "Hey guys, have a great show." Oh Jeremiah, "Yep, those are some books."

SW: No, I think that's "boobs."

CZ: Boobs. Oh boobs! "Those are some boobs." Okay. "Where's Aldo?" I don't know. "He's growing." "First base is..." What? Okay... "I can hear the sounds of Susan being dressed." When I was a stage manager, I would actually do that often too. When you put out the daily reports, you would hear people say the strangest things in the course, just add a quote at the bottom. The director said this yesterday.

SW: I have to admit to being interested in this one.

CZ: Susan...

SW: Yeah. This is my name. Who's Susan?

CZ: Uh-oh. Susan Hammond plays Dr. Charlotte and I'm guessing that perhaps she wasn't where she was supposed to be one night or maybe a little late or something, or not saying what she was supposed to be saying and somebody was a little confused by that.

Back this way is an exit to the exterior and depending on the show; this can be used as a crossover from stage right to left. Because it just goes out right around and for this show we are using it. For some shows, we don't. It depends. Some shows we open up these back...for "Boys in the Band" we opened up the door to the back of the stage. You see two doors, they're upstage center. They're actually functional. And we open them, we open that window and we created out here on the walkway, the patio of the apartment and it was part of the performance.

SW: So it was part of the performance outside here.

CZ: Exactly. There was an apartment and people would retreat to the patio and you could see them back there, chatting, smoking, whatever, you know, doing the party.

SW: And this is your wheelchair access?

CZ: That's wheelchair access.

SW: Right outside this door. And we're walking back through this passageway behind and around.

CZ: The mystery hallway. As you see, we have speakers in various places. And that's our facility. This item you see here lying on the chair is this rigging of dowel rod and black curtain is what we use out here once a show starts. It hangs across here and is sort of a combination so that when this door is open and actors are coming and going to the performance, there is a light block as well. Because the show starts at 8:00 in the evening or 7:00 on a Sunday and in the summer particularly...

SW: Yeah, it's still light.

CZ: And we don't do matinees in the summer. We do matinees all the rest of the year. So we always have to have a light block. And yes, you can sometimes hear the sound of traffic. But in our own defense, I was at "Julius Caesar" last night at the Globe and we never hear the sound of seals here. You hear the zoo sounds over there. It can be very disconcerting to anyone. I guess the skies and the ducks were angry.

SW: Okay. Chuck, thank you once again.

CZ: Oh, you're most welcome, Susan.

SW: Very very much.

CZ: I hope that this is helpful to your project.

SW: It's been fun.

END OF INTERVIEW

15. STEPHEN ZOLEZZI

Uptown Oral Interview Transcript
July 11, 2003 by Susan D. Walter

Procedure and Method:

For the City of San Diego's Uptown Oral History project, Susan Walter interviewed Stephen Zolezzi on July11, 2003, in his office at the Food and Beverage Association of San Diego. No one else contributed to the interview. Recording equipment consisted of a Sony cassette recorder. The tape recording was transcribed by Doris Nelson. Susan Walter edited the transcript.

Note: The transcript is not completely verbatim. "Um hm", "uh uh" and similar sounds have been turned to "yes" and "no". Pauses, changes in direction of thought, and some wording has been deleted to make the information clear. Words inside parentheses ( ) are added to complete a sentence. Stephen Zolezzi provided comments on the draft transcript which are incorporated into this document in brackets [ ], or as footnotes. Sections not pertinent to the interview are not included.

Paper copies of the final transcript went to the City of San Diego, (archived at the San Diego Historical Society) and the interviewee. A floppy disk was included with the materials submitted to the City. An addendum sheet attached to the end of the transcript lists additional items included from the interview; those items are housed at the San Diego Historical Society.

The following items were included with the original of this transcript. They are archived at:

San Diego Historical Society
1649 El Prado
Balboa Park
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 232-6203

ITEM	NOTES
cassette tape	taped at regular speed
color photograph	taken by Susan Walter on the day of the interview
compact disk	one compact disk for the entire project; it contains all 14 final transcripts from the Uptown project, including edits and changes by the informant
floppy disk	first (draft) transcript produced by Doris Nelson
map	showing the project area with areas of interest indicated by the informant
pedigree	a pedigree list filled out by the informant
ephemera donated by the informant:	- business card, Stephen A. Zolezzi - recipes for bulk quantities of foods served at Zolezzi's, and Stefano's, Restaurants

Transcript:

SZ = Stephen Zolezzi
SW = Susan Walter

Tape 1, Side 1

SW: This is Susan Walter interviewing Stephen Zolezzi in his office. The date is July 11, 2003. Can you tell me your full name please?

SZ: Stephen A. for Anthony Zolezzi.

SW: And can you tell me where you were born?

SZ: San Diego at Mercy Hospital.

SW: The date you were born?

SZ: September 5, 1946.

SW: What was your father's name?

SZ: Steve Dick Zolezzi.

SW: Can you tell me where he was born?

SZ: Same place.

SW: Your mother's name?

SZ: Antoinette Zolezzi for married. Antoinette Sanfilippo was her (maiden) name.

SW: And where was she born?

SZ: Same place.

SW: Long term, huh? Do you have brothers and sisters?

SZ: I have one brother and one sister.
SW: Are they older or younger?

SZ: Younger. I'm the oldest.

SW: Who is your oldest sibling?

SZ: My sister, Barbara.

SW: And can you tell me your brother's name?

SZ: David.

SW: Are you married?

SZ: Yes. Married and have two children.

SW: And what are...

SZ: Ellen, who is going to be 26 and Christopher, who is 24.

SW: Your wife's name?

SZ: Katherine.

SW: And her maiden name?

SZ: Sullivan. And she was a Hillcrest resident too. She was born at Mercy Hospital.

SW: Really? You have a (lot of family) born in that one area.

SZ: In those days, Mercy Hospital was pretty much the place to go to.

SW: For babies. And everything, I guess.

SZ: For everything.

SW: You have lived a long time in the area there. Can you tell me about your childhood there? What is your earliest memory?

SZ: Well, I was raised on Kite Street, which is in the southern part of Mission Hills off of Sutter and Goldfinch. I went to school, from kindergarten through eighth grade, at St. Vincent de Paul School in Mission Hills. First recollections of the area? Well, things were different. We didn't have a lot of the fears that we have today. We walked to school. Not necessarily alone. You started out and by the time you got to school, there'd be two or three or four or six (more) who would have joined (as you walked by) where people lived. We all sort of took the same route to wind up to get to school together.

It was a very open community. You didn't have to worry about a lot of the things you worry about now. I remember always part of the journey to get to St. Vincent's was to go onto Goldfinch and then across Washington and on the corner was the Ace Drug Store. In those days...Ace Drug store is long gone now. But in those earlier days, the Ace Drug Store had a soda fountain and the soda fountain was a neat place to go to, especially if you could get a few coins together to go in and get a little treat.

SW: What did you get?

SZ: They were, like, floats. Yeah. Because they'd do everything right in front. It was a small counter. I don't think it sat more than six people, six or eight people at the most. Those are fun recollections.

SW: Were there very many children in the neighborhood?

SZ: Yeah. There were a lot of children in the neighborhood. And actually, a number of our family all grew up within a three or four block area too. So my mother is one of, was one of...she's still alive, but some of her sisters have passed on...one of eight sisters. And there were three, three of the sisters who lived, including us, within a three block radius.

SW: Do you remember the street address where you lived at that time?

SZ: 3530 Kite Street. My mother still lives in the house.

SW: Was the house there prior to your moving there?

SZ: Actually, it was a home that was moved to the site, so it was a home that was constructed earlier. I don't know where it was moved from. And they were the first buyers, owners of the home at that location and that would have been early in 1945. Just as the war was going to end. Second World War.

SW: Did the Second World War affect the family?
SZ: It didn't affect the family as much as I'm sure it did a number of others. My father was in the fishing business. Our original family, on my father's side, the Zolezzi side, were primarily in the fishing industry. They originally migrated from Genoa, Italy as merchant seamen. So they were very much fishermen and merchant seamen in Italy in Genoa. They come from a little town called Riva Trigosa south of the port city of Genoa. There were five brothers. Over about a seven-year period of time, they all migrated after they had been merchant seamen and traveling... My grandfather went two and a half times around the world in a sailing ship like the Star of India. Then he had enough of that and came to San Diego where his other brothers were by then, because he was the youngest of five. His oldest brother, Gioberto, came to San Diego in 1890. So my grandfather was here about 1896-1897.

SW: So he was a fisherman?

SZ: They were all fishermen. And so during the Second World War, getting back to your original question, my father was, they were considered to be an important resource because they were providing food, even though some of the boats, some of the fishing boats actually were commandeered by the Coast Guard or by the military and used as patrol boats. There were still a number of the boats who were encouraged, allowed to go out and fish for tuna in local waters and so they still had their profession. Because of that, my father never went in the service.

SW: When your family moved here, did they move into the Italian community here? Or did they think they had an Italian community here?

SZ: They were among those who actually established the Italian community. There weren't many...when my grandfather and his brothers came to San Diego, there were...what was the population of San Diego in 1890? About 3,500 people? There weren't very many people here and a lot of them were Native Americans. So the cultures were really just starting to establish. And they pretty much stayed in that central India Street and Date, in and around that general area is where they lived. Some of them went into other businesses and so part of the family was in the meat, poultry business. But most of them stayed in the fishing business from the Zolezzi side. Now my mother's (family), the Sanfilippo side, when they came here, my grandfather was also a fisherman, but nobody else was in the fishing industry. They were in retail business. Two or three of them were actually in the produce business.

SW: You went to St. Vincent school. What was that school like?

SZ: Well, it was taught by the nuns. And it was a parish. It is still there, a very large parish. The school had a lot of connection with the church and parish. Everybody knew everybody. One of my classmates was Maureen O'Connor. Maureen went on to be mayor of the City of San Diego. We were at St. Vincent's from kindergarten through eighth grade.

SW: Do you recall anything about your junior high school?

SZ: Well, there was no junior high because I stayed in the Catholic school system, so I went from eighth grade at St. Vincent's to ninth grade at Uni High.[29]

SW: And how about high school?

SZ: Well, Uni was in Linda Vista. It's still there. Actually, it's on its last legs. Uni is going to be closing down and moving to a new campus and they're going to change it to Cathedral. The name. So Uni will not be around too much longer. It was a boys school then. It was very small. My graduating class was a little more than 90 guys. Most all of our teachers were priests. Now I don't think they have...maybe they have one priest on the campus. There aren't very many priests to go around. There were priests and seminarians and deacons too.

SW: Did you wear a uniform?

SZ: No. Well, at St. Vincent's yes, but not at Uni. Uni didn't have a uniform. So that was a transition. From always having uniforms to then going and you had to buy clothes. Because you could wear pretty

[29] Steve later clarified that Uni is short for University of San Diego High School.

much, you could wear regular (street clothes), but not anything you wanted. There were definitely guidelines.

SW: Did they have a prom?

SZ: Yeah, they had a prom.

SW: What was it like?

SZ: You know, I didn't go the prom because I was always working and I never really did have a social life. Shortly after I started high school, I went to work for my uncle and my cousin who opened up Romano's Deli and Restaurant in Pacific Beach on Garnet. I worked there after school and on the weekends, and I wound up actually working a lot. I worked there all through high school. I graduated and then went to Mesa.

I graduated high school and then started going to Mesa and shortly after starting (there), my father had another back injury. He had had a back injury in 1949 while he was fishing on his brother in law's tuna boat. He had an accident while they were catching whole tuna. He smashed his back and had to be airlifted back home and then had to have surgery. He injured his back again about that time and required additional surgery. So at the tender age of 18, I had to – just starting Mesa Community College at that time – I had to give that up and use whatever talents I had acquired in the about four years I was working for my cousin and wound up opening up my first restaurant when I was 18 years old and supporting a family of five.

SW: Okay, I was going to ask you if you had a background in the restaurant business and that's it.

SZ: That was it. I was thrust into my career.

SW: What year was this?

SZ: That was 1965. We opened in May of 1965.

SW: And the name of the restaurant?

SZ: And that was Zolezzi's Italian Deli and Restaurant.

SW: And you were the owner?

SZ: Well, technically. Legally, my mother and father were the owners, because under 21, I couldn't have a...we had a beer and wine license.

SW: So were you considered the manager?

SZ: I was considered the manager. But really, I ran all of it. I put it together and I ran it. I was the one that made it happen.

SW: Why did you choose the neighborhood that you did?

SZ: You know, actually, it was because there was a space available. The location at 530 University Avenue had been the Barbecue Pit. Actually, it had a history of being a food service establishment. It was the second location that George Pernicano went to before he went across the street and around the corner onto Sixth Avenue, to the main location where he ultimately stayed and he still has. And then the Barbecue Pit restaurant was there for, oh gosh, I can't remember how many years. Twelve, fourteen years. They sold and a lady purchased it, Regina Kredoich. And then she operated it, but she also was manager of the food service in Sears, in the cafeteria at Sears. And so she decided, "I can't do both." And so she sold it. She sold it to two guys and the two guys who she sold it to just have no idea what they were getting into. And there wound up being a fire in the Barbecue Pit. Under suspicious origins.

SW: Oh really?

SZ: So the placed was closed about four months, (while) we were looking for a location. We went in and for $3,500.00, took over the location and opened up. You couldn't do that today.

SW: Oh no, I don't think so.

SZ: No. But it was a lot of work because there was a lot of smoke damage on the inside of the place.

SW: Did you do the restoration and improve the site from the fire damage?

SZ: Yeah. We did that all. Our family did.

SW: What did that involve?

SZ: Well, more than anything, smoke damage was 99 percent of it. There was a hole in the ceiling in the back, but I think most of which was made by the fire department to insure there wasn't anything burning up in there. It was cleaning and painting. And then we had to accessorize it for the kind of operation we were doing. Because it was a deli as well. We had a whole retail section. There were tables and chairs, but there were shelves and we sold all kinds of...it was like going through Mona Lisa today.

SW: Okay. Walk me through this place. You start at the doorway.

SZ: You start at the doorway and there are shelving units like you were in a grocery store. And then you went to a counter and there were displays of cold meats and cheeses and other kinds of antipasti items. And then there was a counter, an order counter and a list of sandwiches and entrees and you could order them to take out or you could sit down and eat them there. And that was the genesis. That's how it started. And then it grew from that through the years to where ultimately when it was Stefano's, it was a white table cloth, Northern Italian sit-down restaurant.

SW: Did you take the deli section out for Stefano's?

SZ: Yes.

SW: So you entirely redecorated?

SZ: Through the years. It went through about four metamorphoses through that whole period of time. Changing, retuning, as things are changing, how are we going to cope with that and try to continue to be successful. So it didn't just happen all at once. It happened over a period of time.

SW: Then when you turned into a regular sit down restaurant, did you have to put in a separate kitchen?

SZ: No. The kitchen had always been there. It was the Barbecue kitchen.

SW: What was the kitchen like?

SZ: It was really pretty simple. It was a square room with dishwashing in one corner and a big walk-in box in the back and a big hood with some stoves and ovens underneath it and it was really pretty simple. Some tables, prep tables and a counter.

SW: Did you have a back entrance?

SZ: A back entrance? Yes. That came in from the Sixth Street side. Still does. It's still in operation.

SW: What was the inside interior decoration like?

SZ: From the Barbecue Pit, it was knotty pine on the bottom and then it was painted walls on the top. We wound up putting in a number of Italian paintings and actually, in the beginning, Mr. Genoni had Genoni Travel Agency down on Fifth Avenue. He was also the Italian Vice Counsel for San Diego and he was a friend to all the Italians. Everybody knew Mr. Genoni. And so when I went to Mr. Genoni, I said, "I need some travel posters from Italy." So he gave me a bunch of travel posters from Italy and I put those up on the wall and in the beginning, those were a good portion of the decor. And they were large. They were the really big ones too. And then, the decor changed as time went on too.

SW: Did you have a predominant color?

SZ: Red and white checkered tablecloths. Other than that, no.

SW: Can you tell me (about) some of the neighboring businesses?

SZ: To one side of us was...none of these business are there now. In fact, one of the buildings is completely gone on either side of us. Where Celadon is now used to be a bar. And it was...what was the name of the place? The 21 Club? Don't hold me to that. I think it was the 21 Club. Corky, the guy who owned it, his brother has been in the restaurant – they're a Greek family – and has been in the restaurant business for – in fact, he still has one location now – Corky has long since passed away. But the bar, there was the bar area and then off to the right, was sort of a long narrow area.

Well that actually is where George Pernicano originally started to cook pizzas in San Diego when he got out of the service, as part of the bar. And he was there for just a couple years, I think, and then he moved to our location, which had prior to that been a furniture business. The whole building on the ground level had been a furniture store. I know because I've seen old pictures. And then George was in our space for some years, a few years, and then he was successful enough there that he was able to purchase some property, build a building and move across the street and around the corner onto Sixth Avenue and continue to develop the Pernicano's dynasty.

Now on the other side, were a small building that has since been torn down and it's now a parking lot for the big building on the corner. And one of the shops in that building was a clothing store. And even today, it seems that this clothing store was very much out of character for little Hillcrest. It should have been in La Jolla on Girard. It was designer clothes and it was Peck's. It was called Peck's Dresses or something like that.

SW: Ladies' clothing only?

SZ: Oh yes. And very high style gowns. Gowns. This wasn't a place for simple women's clothes.

SW: So were they formal dresses?

SZ: They were very high style, very expensive. And Mr. Peck was a real character. I don't really remember what his history was because it's been so long ago. But I remember his wife, who was younger, Mrs. Peck, drove the car. And the car was a great big Lincoln Imperial. The ones with...like the Kennedys' car, with the doors, the suicide doors? He had a big beige Lincoln Continental that he drove. And Mr. Peck was always in a coat and tie and hat. This guy was like off Fifth Avenue in New York.

SW: Did he carry a cane?

SZ: I don't remember that he carried a cane. But he really wasn't a real nice guy. He was really pretty stuck up. A real character. A real character in the neighborhood.

Then another place that was really unique was right across the street where I guess where Khyber Pass is today. The Afghani restaurant. There was a chocolate shop. I think it was called Hillcrest Chocolates. And they made the chocolates there.

And you know, next to them on the right side, were the Greeks. The father and son who had the open air market. The whole front of the place opened up and it was an old style grocery market. Produce all out in the front.

There were unique kinds of businesses that really added a whole lot to the character of the neighborhood. It was fun, because of all the different things that were going on and people were more gregarious, they were more outgoing. Everybody knew who everybody was. The buildings weren't as closed up as they are now.

SW: What were some of the other Italian restaurants that would have been your competitors, like Pernicano's?

SZ: Right across the street from us on the corner where City Deli is now was Caesar's. Caesar's was a landmark in San Diego. They originally started downtown, then they moved to that location. When we first opened up, it was not easy opening up a new business, even then. I can vividly remember, we'd have nobody. We'd have two or three people in our place and Caesar's had a line around the corner.

SW: That must've hurt.

SZ: Well, it did. It did. But it wasn't too long, we had the line. And they were half empty.

SW: Why do you think that that changed?

SZ: Because they sort of became passé. Things started to change, and the tastes of people started to change, and we offered a really high quality product and we were very attractively priced. We appealed. We appealed to people. And we'd got a huge advantage; because it's such a crossroads...Hillcrest is such a crossroads area.

We got a huge cross section of people from politics, the mayor; Pete Wilson was a regular customer of ours. His first wife, Betty, she loved the frittata and a lot of the times on the way home, he's stop and he's pick up some frittata to take home for dinner. When he was courting his current wife, Gail, he'd call. There was a back entrance, he came to come into the restaurant through the back and there was parking lot back there. So we'd get a call from the mayor's office. Is his table open? We had a table waiting. And typically, it was busy and we'd have people maybe waiting at the doors. And two of them, then he and Gail, would come through the back door. They wouldn't have to say anything to anybody. They'd just walk in, they'd come in, they'd go through the kitchen. They'd walk out into the dining room and come around the corner and they'd go sit down back in the corner and the table was waiting for them.

SW: You had a reserved sign on it? Or was it just left open?

SZ: It was left open.

SW: Any other well known or famous people?

SZ: Oh lots. Lots.

SW: Tell me some.

SZ: Oh gosh. Victor Buono, who used to be, when he was alive, he was a San Diego grown celebrity. Lili Tomlin used to come in all the time. She had a lot of friends in San Diego and they would come in, usually with parties, there'd be four, six eight people. She'd come in regularly. Jill St. John, Robert Wagner. Just lots of different people.

SW: So you had a lot of people in the entertainment industry?

SZ: Well, a number, not a lot, but a number of them who, for one reason or another, came to Hillcrest or found out about the restaurant.

SW: How about people in sports?

SZ: I don't really remember too many people in sports. Not specifically.

SW: Did you have other regular customers, people that came on a daily basis?

SZ: Oh we had tons of customers who would come on a very regular basis. Because we did a lot of to-go business too. So a lot of people, they'd call ahead or they'd come in and pick up food to take home.

SW: Did you do catering too?

SZ: We did catering as well in those days. We would cater weddings and parties and office parties. We did a lot of catering in those earlier days for Ratner Clothing Company.

(phone ring; break in interview)

SW: Did other Italians eat at your restaurant?

SZ: Yeah. A lot of Italians.

SW: Any other minority groups that you call?

SZ: You know, Hillcrest is such a cross section. I don't think there is any group that didn't.

SW: Everyone was there, huh?

SZ: Everybody was there. Because Hillcrest has always typically attracted... We had the people who would come in who lived in the general area, but then we had people who transitioned back and forth, so maybe they lived some other place, they did business or worked downtown and they would come through Hillcrest to go back and forth to work. And a lot of times they did that on purpose, because there were a lot of services through Hillcrest. There were a lot of little shops and kinds of places where they could buy this and buy that that weren't really available some place else. Maybe they had an appointment with their doctor. Pill Hill. Mercy, University Hospital and a huge percentage of the total doctors in San Diego, especially in those days, had their main or second office in the Uptown area.

SW: Where did you get the food that you cooked? Or had cooked?

SZ: Well, there were wholesale companies out of Los Angeles and San Francisco and then there were local companies that we dealt with, specialty companies.

SW: Did they deliver it to your restaurant?

SZ: Yeah, everything was delivered. The only thing that didn't get delivered in the beginning was wine. Some of the wine.

You know, wine was very much a part of our bringing up. Especially in the Italian culture. My grandfather made his own wine, and my father made his own wine and we helped them. I didn't use my bare feet, because they had us put boots on. But before my grandfather had a crusher that actually sat over the top of an open barrel, a little hand crusher, I was in that half barrel crushing grapes with my stomping. With my feet. Oh yeah. When I was a little kid. When I was seven or eight nine years old. Ten years old.

I became very much attracted to wine and the wine industry at that time – we're talking about the late 60s, early 70s – when the wine industry was really budding. It certainly wasn't new. It started in California in 1850, but it was really the renewal that we now take for granted. And this is when we had the retailing as part of the operation as well. And so I had one whole corner in the store that was dedicated to retail wine shelves and I had hundreds of different kinds of wines. In fact, there were a number of small wineries up in Napa-Sonoma – we were among the first half dozen places that they ever sold wine in San Diego to. But to be able to do that, you had to go there. And so at one point, I was up to four to five trips a year with a truck or a station wagon up to Napa, going to the wineries. "I want that...I'll take five cases. Here's

my car." And then bring them back. And then you'd establish relationships with them and then you could call them and they would ship it to you. But until then, they didn't know who you were. They were, "You're from San Diego? Where is San Diego? Is that part of Los Angeles?"

SW: Tell me about your cook. Who cooked your food for you?

SZ: Well, in the beginning, I did. And my mother. My mother and I were the primary cooks. And then as time went on and we got busier, there was a division of duties, then I hired cooks and I trained cooks. And I trained them.

SW: So you taught them how to cook the dishes you specifically wanted?

SZ: Absolutely. I provided the recipes and I oversaw their preparation.

SW: Did they have an actual written down recipe?

SZ: Yes.

SW: They did. Everything was exactly as you wanted it.

SZ: And they followed it.

SW: You made sure of that.

SZ: Yes.

SW: How about your other people that worked there? Waiters, waitresses?

SZ: I was very fortunate in that I had some really great people working for me who wound up working for me for a good long period of time. I have the recipes in here. Actually, it's one of the only things I kept.

(Stephen was looking through a file drawer.)

SW: Did your restaurant have (regular) special occasions, on a year-round basis?

(Stephen handed Susan a sheaf of papers.)

SZ: The recipes![30]

SW: Oh wow!

SZ: Did we have, what do you mean by special events?

SW: What would you do, like for New Year's, Easter?

[30] Stephen donated a copy of the bulk recipes that were used at Stefano's to add to this interview.

SZ: You know, in the old location, we didn't do stuff like that. In fact, for a lot of the major holidays, we were closed because we were so family oriented. When I moved over onto Fifth Avenue at 3637 Fifth Avenue, then we did special things. Like on New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and stuff like that.

SW: Why did the first restaurant close? What was the reason for moving?

SZ: From the first location? It didn't close. I just moved the whole location to a new location.

SW: And why did you do that?

SZ: I had an opportunity, and that location was becoming hemmed in too. It is still problematic for its accessibility. And I was looking to be able to do something a little different from what I had. It was very confining. It was a small operation. It only sat about 70 people. And this opportunity came about and it was great deal. And so I could move to a new operation that could accommodate 160 people, have a bar, a lounge area and I could do a whole lot of different things that I couldn't do before. So I took advantage of it.

SW: Let's walk through this one. You come in from the front, then what? This is the second building.

SZ: In the second location on Fifth Avenue, you walk in the door and you were immediately in a waiting area that was bordered by the bar. A full bar. Right in front of you. Then off to the right was a rectangular room that we used for dining, but it also turned into a lounge area and later on, when we had live entertainment, later on in the evening in future years, not the first few years, but afterwards, it turned into a cocktail lounge. Then you went up five steps and went into the main dining room area. You went to the top of the steps and there was a glassed in room. There was an exhibition pasta making room. We had all the machines. I had five machines in there to make different kinds of pasta and I had somebody in there usually during regular hours so that there was a show going on. And then you walked into the main dining room and the main dining room was long and rectangular as well but larger and to the end of the room was a private dining room area and then a patio area outside. And on one whole side of the room behind banquettes were wine display cases. (It was) huge, because I had a wine selection there that was about 600 different selections.

End of Side 1

Tape 1, Side 2

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the entertainment that you had in the second location? Who, and what did they do?

SZ: Jazz is primarily what we had and they were local artists. I (knew) a guy who worked for one of the jazz stations, radio stations, and he helped to book people. They were local people. Instrumental and singers. We did live entertainment two or three nights a week. And it was great. It was really fun.

SW: So did you get a lot people in for that?

SZ: Oh, a whole different crowd of people and it wasn't a very big area, but they would pack them in. But that was part of the charm of it too. It wasn't great big huge. Very intimate.

SW: Did you have community support for your endeavors? The two different restaurants?

SZ: Community support? We had a lot of the customers.

SW: I mean did you have...obviously you had people coming in from the community, but did you have, where there opportunities for your restaurant that were given to you by the city, anything like that?

SZ: Any special considerations? No. But I was always very much active in the Uptown community. And with a small group of people, we started in 1982, and wound up about a year and a half later, the early part of 1984, we founded the Business Improvement District. Hillcrest Business Improvement District. And I was the president for the first two years.

SW: Oh you were? Who did you sell the first location to?

SZ: Sold the location to a lady who wound up opening another Italian restaurant.

SW: And who did you buy the second location from?

SZ: It was a brand new building.

SW: Did you have it built?

SZ: Yes. That was part of the deal. I got to build the building the way I wanted the building built.

SW: So you had a lot...

SZ: Well, there was a small building on the lot. It was torn down pretty much just so that you could do a "remodel" and then I got to build – essentially, they built a whole new building for us.

SW: Did you hire an architect and went through that whole thing?

SZ: Yep. Went through the whole thing.

SW: What was the experience like for you, building this?

SZ: Oh, it was great. It wasn't the first time. I had built a location previous to that down on India Street in 1975.

SW: So you had more than one restaurant at that time?

SZ: At one time, I had three locations.

SW: Oh really? That I didn't know.

SZ: There were three different, four different locations through the years in Hillcrest.

SW: And were they all called Zolezzi's?

SZ: No. No, no, no, no. There was the original location for Zolezzi's, which then became Stefano's. And then in 1986, that location moved down onto Fifth Avenue.

But in 1976, I opened a yogurt shop where The Gap is now on the corner of Fifth and University on...what would that be...the southwest corner. This was really for my wife. Something that she could be close to and something to keep her busy. We called it "Katrina's Yogurt Shop." And it had sort of a Swiss atmosphere. It had a Swiss atmosphere to it. Yogurt, Swiss. She had old friends at work that are Swiss and they sent us a whole bunch of stuff from Switzerland we used to accessorize it. Katrina's. And shortly after we opened it, she got pregnant with our daughter, so she really didn't want to do that after that. And I really didn't want to operate it. So I wound up selling it as an ongoing business. The guy who I sold it to didn't do well with it and so after a period of time, I wound up having to take the place back over again. Well, this was like nine months later. By this point, he had really trashed the place. He had not done a good job.

So I figured, "I don't want to continue to do this" but I got this tiny little space. It had originally been a San Diego Trust and Savings branch bank when it was originally built. Not originally, but previous to us. It had all this tile around it and stuff. And so I had a friend who was a chef. I had a number of friends who were chefs, but this particular one he had a French background and he did some catering and he worked as a chef in a restaurant. So I called him and I said, "I need you to be a consultant. This is what I've got. This is what I want to do. I need you to do a menu." And he did. Taking (its size) into consideration, one of the unique things about this space, it went on to be called La Petite Café. Right on the corner where The Gap is. I operated it for nine years. It was very successful. But we couldn't cook there.

SW: Why not?

SZ: Because there are two floors of apartments upstairs and the landlord wouldn't let me put a flue in for the exhaust hood over the range. Everything had to be cooked across the street at Zolezzi's and then brought back over to La Petite Café where we had steam tables and we had other preparation and we would finish it off. So that had to be taken into consideration in putting the menu together. We wound up with a dynamic selection of stuff. Coquilles Saint- Jacques, we had ratatouille and Bourguignonne. You see, those were all things that we could do ahead. And there were ways that we could finish them off. And it was very successful. Quaint little place. It only sat 40 people. We were open very late.

Four nights a week, I had a guitarist, classical guitarist, who would come and literally sit in the middle of the dining room with people surrounding him and play this gorgeous guitar music. Spanish guitar music.

SW: Spanish guitar music in a French café?

SZ: Well, it was sort of Spanish. He played a whole wide selection. A young guy, I can't even remember his name, it's been so long, 20 years ago. I can't even remember his name. He had a wide repertoire. Never had a piece of music in front of him and he wouldn't ever play the same thing. And he'd play for maybe four hours in an evening. We would get people who would come in and have a light supper or supper, and then they would go off to the theatre, maybe the Globe, of they'd go all the way downtown to the Civic Theatre and then on their way back, they'd come back up Fifth Avenue and they'd stop by and they'd have some espresso, cappuccino and pastry or dessert. This is before Extraordinary Desserts and the whole proliferation of those kinds of operations. We were the only place to go. And we would pack the place back again until midnight or 1:00 in the morning. And we served beer and wine and it was a real fun.

SW: So what happened to that business?

SZ: Well, it changed. The whole market changed. In the last few years of it, the business went down a lot because there were a lot of other choices for people. There was Extraordinary Desserts. That's when Karen Krasne was just starting up in those days and a lot of other things were happening as well. And so it went down and so I wound up selling it and it became a Penguin Yogurt shop.

SW: Back to yogurt again.

SZ: Yeah. For a very short period of time and then it closed down and I can't remember what else it was. And then The Gap came in and took over what had been like four different businesses, four or five different businesses. Wiped out everything, completely revamped to what it is now.

SW: Tell me a little bit about your second location of Stefano's then. How did that end?

SZ: At that point, I had been in the industry for 35 years. And so it was a combination again of changing market. Gaslamp was going bananas. And two out of every three places opening up were Italian restaurants. There are still a huge number of Italian restaurants. And so I just decided, "I don't want to do this anymore."

Just about that time, the Food and Beverage Association, which had been the San Diego Tavern and Restaurant Association throughout the years, was going through a transition. I was asked to come and help that process, to be on the board of directors. And through that transition, I wound up being the temporary executive director which turned into a permanent position. So this was happening at the Association and then I wound up selling the location, the business, Stefano's, to two guys who were cousins. And then being here full time.

SW: Is there anything else you'd like to add, about life as a restaurateur, or anything else?

SZ: Well you know, though the years, I was very fortunate and had a huge number of really incredible experiences with people and circumstances and things and places, whether here in San Diego or in the wine country. It was a rich experience, as is what I'm doing now. And, you know sometimes events take over and they manipulate what you're going to do and how you're going to do it. In this case, that's what happened; it worked out to the better.

SW: Well, thank you very much. This has been really interesting.

SZ: Good.

END OF INTERVIEW