

DRAFT

Interview with Fred Rose, Etta Bell Rose and Bill McClendon
February 27, 2008

Key to speakers:

Boldface = Susan Walter

Regular face = Bill McClendon

Italic = Etta Bell Rose

Bold italics – Fred Rose

SMALL CAPS – JIM MCVEIGH

This is Susan Walter. Today's date is February 27, 2008. And we are interviewing three people today. The first man is –

Fred Kirk Rose.

Thank you. And you are –

Etta Bell McClendon Rose.

And you are –

William C. McClendon.

OK. What we're going to do is, I'm going to go through each one of you individually to start to establish your relationships, and then after that we're going to talk about your lives here in the South Bay of San Diego County. So, Fred, your first name – is Fred a nickname?

No, it isn't. That is my name.

Do you have any other nicknames?

No.

When were you born?

May 14, 1929.

Good. In what town and state were you born?

San Diego, California.

Can you tell me your mother's name?

Edith Grace Kirk.

And where was she born?

Edmonton, Canada.

And your father's name?

Fred Otto Rose.

And where was he born?

San Antonio, Texas.

How did your parents meet?

My grandfather had a post office in Canada, and he was caught in a blizzard walking from Edmonton to the post office to his home. And he almost was killed by the blizzard. He was able to get in, my grandmother heard him at the door, he fell through the door and they, right then and there, they decided they were going to go to the warmest place in the USA, either Florida or San Diego. They rejected Florida because of the humidity. And that occurred about, oh, I don't know exactly, sometime in the teens, 1915 or so.

Why did they come – so they came out here to California for what?

They came out here for the climate. They also had daughters here, three daughters, including my mother.

Who had moved out here before they were here?

The other two daughters, I believe, had moved out before they did. That probably influenced their decision to come to San Diego.

And where first did they come to in the San Diego area?

They had a dairy over on Logan Avenue in San Diego.

And how did they get from Logan to the South Bay, Chula Vista area?

My parents and I occupied a house on Idaho Street, right across the street from the big water tower. Actually, the house belonged to my mother's parents, but they were working at the dairy so the house was available to us. In 1937 Dad wanted to move to Chula Vista. And we did. We moved to 617 D Street in Chula Vista.

Why in particular did he want to move here?

He wanted to raise show chickens, Silver Laced Wyandottes, and where they were it wasn't suitable for that. So that was the reason.

So he went from cows to chickens?

Oh, no, he had nothing to do with cows.

I thought you said he was on a dairy.

My grandparents worked at the dairy.

Oh, I'm sorry.

Tell him what your dad did.

My dad worked at Monarch Drugstore on Broadway, Fifth and Broadway, and my mother worked for Frazee's Paint, about Ninth and Broadway. And she would walk down for lunch, and that's how she met my dad.

Are you married?

Am I married?

Yes.

Yes.

And can you tell me your wife's name, please.

My wife's name is Etta Bell Rose.

Do you have children?

I do.

And what are their names, oldest to youngest, please.

Nancy Ann Rose, Marilyn Rose and Barbara Lynne Rose.

Thank you. Now we're going to move on to the lady he's claiming is his wife, who is sitting next to him. Etta Bell, first, can you tell me your full name please?

My full name is Etta Bell Rose.

What was your maiden name?

McClendon.

Where were you born?

In Otay, Chula Vista now. Otay was three miles south of Chula Vista.

What part of Otay?

It was on Montgomery Street.

Montgomery Street, two blocks north of Main.

And when were you born?

1930.

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

Laura Ann Simpson McClendon.

Where was she born?

In Alton, Missouri.

What was your father's name?

Albert Lee McClendon.

Where was he born?

Bond, Texas, I believe.

We're going to have to look that up.

How did your parents meet?

My mother was teaching school in Oklahoma, and she was teaching my father's brothers, and that's how she met my father.

So, you father, then, was older –

Yes, he was the oldest in the family. He had had to quit school to help on the farm, and that's how they met.

What kind of farm was it that his family had?

I assume it was cotton.

Cotton and ?? corn and watermelons. They grew watermelons inside the cotton fields. That's what they used for waterproofing in between the hot spells. If you were picking cotton, you could open up the watermelons and eat them.

Etta Bell, can you tell me your siblings' names, oldest to youngest?

William Clarence McClendon, Jimmy Dale McClendon.

And where do you fit in that lineup?

I'm the third one, the baby.

You're married?

Yes, I am.

To this fellow here?

Fred Rose.

And I assume that these children are the same kids.

No.

No? You have different kids?

I have – I was married before. I have to tell you, this is my third marriage. I was married first to Donald Chapman, and I had three children, Don Chapman, Janet Chapman and Corrinne Dalfort. And that marriage ended, and I married a friend from Chula Vista who I had grown up with. He was a quadriplegic by that time, he had been in an accident – Don Rice. His stepfather was Dr. Bill McCausland, here in Chula Vista. Everybody knew the McCauslands, because he was about the only doctor around. And we became reacquainted and I was never going to marry again, and he didn't figure he could. And we became really good friends and fell in love and had almost 25 years together. Then he died in the year 2000 and in 2003, Fred's wife died, and because we had worked together on our high school reunion committee for 15 years, we all knew each other really well. And we were already good friends, and we fell in love and got married! So we've been married almost five years now.

OK. So we have –

His and mine, but not ours. Too old.

Thank you.

I have two grandchildren I didn't mention.

And what are their names? Test.

Andy Michael Bartkiewicz and Kathryn Bartkiewicz.

And do you have –

I have three grandchildren.

What are their names?

Mathew Dalfort, Virginia Dalfort and Stella McClendon. And I have two step-grandchildren, also. And I forgot to mention my stepdaughter, ??? O'Reard, here in Chula Vista. She raised her children here, Patrick O'Reard and Alia O'Reard Ferguson. And then I have a new great grandson, Garrett Ferguson. They feel like my own kids.

I'm going to go on to this guy, and you are William or Bill –

Bill. I go by Bill.

So your full name is –

William Clarence McClendon.

And your nickname is Bill.

Bill.

When were you born?

I was born on May 28, 1925.

Where were you born?

Born in Elk City, Oklahoma.

And your mother's name?

My mother's name was Laura Ann Simpson.

And so you are the sibling to Etta Bell.

I am her older brother, oldest brother. She's my oldest sister and also my youngest sister.

And your only sister.

So, your brothers and sisters all together – you're the oldest –

Jimmy, Jimmy Dale's the second one.

Jimmy's second.

And then Etta Bell. And what was your, or is your wife's name?

My wife's name was Anna Louise Snider, but she married me and became McClendon.

And can you tell me your children's names, please.

My oldest is Gregory Lance. My second one is a boy named Gary Dean. My third boy is named Fred Albert; he's named after his two grandparents. The fourth one is Michelle. My daughter, Michelle Ann, she was named after her mother, too. The youngest one is Kenneth William McClendon. I could tell you stories why I named them that.

We might get to that, too. But first I want to find out how it was that your parents got here to Chula Vista.

Oh, real easy. In 1890 something, they opened up the Oklahoma territory, the Indian country, opened it up to the Sooners. And my grandfather was living in southern Texas and he rode his horse up there, staked out some land and went back to Texas. I don't know when he married our grandmother, but our dad was born in 1901 and they still lived in Texas. They waited until he was a year old before they went back to Oklahoma. And they got up there, it was winter time, and the property had kind of a little creek running through it, and he had to dig a hole in the side of the creek area, and lived in that with a tent from the wagon train. I used to go see my granddad and listen to all the old history. I enjoyed that stuff. He'd tell me about his dad and his granddad, riding on the Chisholm Trail, driving cattle up to Omaha from southern Texas, all those things. And, anyway, you wanted to know why they came out here. They were living in Oklahoma in 1925, and my grandmother, she had been born in Arkansas, but was living in Texas when they got married. She got so she couldn't stand the dust and the weeds – she was allergic to them, so out in the West here, which was hardly populated, they were advertising back East to get people to move out here. Put ads in publications and magazines and stuff. So my granddad bought a house in Otay, sight unseen. So they came out here in 1925 and he had two – my dad had two younger brothers still living at home with my granddad – and my grandfather told them, you can stay here and work on other farms, or you can go to California with us. Uncle Tom and Uncle Rufus.

Uncle Paul.

Uncle Paul was already married. He came out later. But anyway, they were two single guys and they came out. I wish I had tape recordings of Uncle Rufus talking about how they came out here, 1925, old

Model T in the wind and the rains, all that kind of stuff. They were very interesting. So they came out in 1925. So my dad came out here to vacation in 1929 and went back home and he sold his farm. And he was one of the last farms on the auction that made any money because the Depression hit right after that, in the 1930s, the early 1930s. And he went down and bought a brand new Model A Ford, and we came to California in style. We weren't like the "Grapes of Wrath"-ers that came later. I can still – I was 4 and a half years old when we left there right about Christmas time, and we didn't get here until January 8, on my dad's 30th birthday. I can still remember that. Every night, where we stopped and what we did.

So when you were coming out here, did you stay in hotels or –

Oh, we stayed in motels, in cabins.

In cabins?

They hadn't created the word motel yet. Anyway, I remember Las Cruces, where we stayed in a cabin right next to the railroad station. All night long, the damn trains were going. I was just a little kid, 4 and a half years old, but I can remember all that stuff. Coming across the white sands in New Mexico, seeing all that. Running on the corduroy road over there, east of El Centro.

Were you on the wooden plank road?

Yes, wooden planks. They called it a corduroy road, because it was woven with cables, big 12-by-12s to hold it together out there in the sand.

I never heard it called the corduroy road before. That's interesting.

Oh, we called it that. We used to go hunting out there, back in the 1930s.

So, let's – Fred, can you tell me, what is your earliest memory, or some of your early memories of living in the South Bay, or being in this area?

Well, it was 1937, was when my parents and I moved from San Diego to Chula Vista, and I can remember we had a corner lot – this is very unusual, you don't see these today – a corner lot where all the kids would gather and play ball, right at the corner of Madison and D Street, which is now a high-rise condominium. Well, of course, I remember the second grade in the E Street elementary school, and when I was in the fifth grade, my parents moved to Pacific Beach to manage the Crystal Pier villas.

Oh, you did.

We stayed there about a year and a half. I came back and finished sixth grade at the Chula Vista E Street –

F Street.

Yes, F Street elementary school. And I can remember the playground was divided into three sections, for the very young children, the middle-aged, and then the older, bigger kids. Of course, we were supposed to stay in our own area. I can remember when we were in the big area, the girls were all bigger than the boys.

Yes.

They could run faster, they could kick the ball farther, I guess that's just the way it is. The boys get their growth a little later than the girls.

Were there minority children that attended school with you? Did you have Japanese students?

We had minority children, yes, Japanese. Suri Yamada, Henry Yamada. Suri was one of my best friends. I don't recall any African Americans in elementary school.

No. They weren't in Chula Vista. They were in Otay.

But in junior high, there were African Americans, outstanding athletes.

How about Mexican kids?

Well, yes.

In Otay.

Yes.

He says in Otay, but do you remember them in Chula Vista, E Street?

I can't be sure.

If there were, they were very few.

It wasn't a big deal at that time. We didn't –

No problems.

Yes, that's right. We didn't separate ourselves. I think it was much better at that time.

Etta Bell, how about your memories of this school?

I went to Otay Elementary. There were only four classrooms. I thought it was a great experience, had a lot of fun. I went to school with - I actually was one of the few white children. Most of them were Mexican, African American and Japanese.

Oh, really.

I never thought anything about it. They were my best friends. And to this day – well, most of them have gone on – but we still have my neighbor girl, who is part of our high school reunion committee. I just thought it was a great time to grow up. And I loved going barefooted, and today you can't; you have to wear shoes.

You went barefoot to school?

Sure.

I did.

Nobody wore shoes.

Well, I took shoes with me and put them on when I got to school. But as soon as school was over, they came off. Because we all went barefooted. One of the interesting things – well, I told Fred this story, when my folks gave me roller skates for Christmas one year. Well, we had no sidewalks in Otay. So I'd get out in the street and roller skate on the street. And pretty soon I was roller skating up to K Street to Chula Vista on Third Avenue. If I'd hear a car coming, I'd step off and then I'd get back on. In those days, very few cars were going on Third Avenue, so I roller skated to K Street. When I got to K Street, I had sidewalks, and I thought I was in hog heaven.

I remember when you got those skates.

But it is kind of funny, when I think back on it – why they would give me roller skates when we didn't have sidewalks to skate on. But the roads worked fine.

Third Avenue was the only paved street going through Chula Vista. In Chula Vista, all the streets were dirt, except Third Avenue.

And how far was Third Avenue actually paved?

Main Street.

It was paved all the way to the Tijuana, to the San Ysidro border.

No, Third Avenue stopped at Main Street. It went down a little ways to the valley.

Oh, yes, I guess you're right. In the early 1930s –

Main Street was really –

Then they finished it later on. Before the war, by 1940, it was paved.

D Street was paved. We didn't have sidewalks, but it was paved.

Yes, it was paved, and those people from Hollywood came down to San Diego to National City, turned on D Street, came down Third and went down to the border.

Do you remember people from Hollywood coming down?

Oh, I remember them coming down Third Avenue when we lived in Otay. They'd come by and we'd wave at them. One of them was John Wayne.

I was going to say: Drop some names. John Wayne made it, huh? Who else?

I don't remember.

That's the only one I remember. Because he'd always come in a convertible, he had his hat on and all of that.

Did you ever get to see him outside of his car?

No.

Because he was such a tall man.

On his way home he'd stop in National City, National Avenue and Broadway, I don't know what it is now – there was a little taco shop there, and he would stop and buy six tacos, put them in a sack and eat them on the way back to LA. We used to go there during the war and buy those same tacos. And they'd say, "John Wayne was in last week." It was just a little kind of a taco shack sitting there.

Do you remember the name of the taco shack?

No.

Were there lots of Hispanic food restaurant-type places around here?

Oh, no.

Not too many. There was one real good one, over there on National Avenue, about at the end of – you'd turn to go down the main street in National City? At the end of World War II, everybody went there and got taco meat, took it home and made tacos.

There wasn't a whole lot of eating out in those days.

Nobody had any money.

Right. Let's ask about that. Restaurants. Were there any restaurants around that you recall?

Zontac's was in Chula Vista on Third Avenue, north of F Street, between F Street and Davidson. Zontac's.

What kind of food did they serve?

Just regular, American.

Regular meal.

And the drugstore served sandwiches.

They had counters at the drugstore, you could go over and eat sandwiches.

We had two drugstores at that time, Serge's Rexall and –

The one on –

Gilbert's. It was on Third and F.

What did you do for food then, did you raise your own food?

Yes

.

Oh, yes. Almost everybody had gardens.

Did you call them Victory Gardens?

No.

No, survival gardens!

We had a Safeway on F Street, and a Piggley Wiggley, on Third Avenue, north of F Street.

In the 1930s, there were three car dealers in Chula Vista, too.

Back to the gardening, did you have gardens?

We had fruit trees in the side lot, along D Street.

What were the fruits?

Avocados, pears and –

Figs?

Figs, probably. I was pretty young. The only thing I had to do was make sure the weeds were taken care of.

And did you have a vegetable garden, too, or was it mostly –

It was mostly fruit trees.

And then you guys –

We had a vegetable garden.

Tell me what you guys were raising?

What foods?

Yes, what did you raise?

Oh, onions, tomatoes, green beans.

Radishes.

Squash.

Okra.

Okra. And we had fig trees. And loquat.

Loquat trees. Pomegranate trees.

Ugh.

Pomegranate trees?

Grapes, oh, my dad liked to grow grapes. He built a lath house in the back of the house there. He grew grapes, they just went all over the lath house. They were great.

Did your family ever make wine or anything like that?

No.

No, my mother wouldn't allow that.

But he went to Poway on Sunday afternoons to the winery. He bought a gallon of wine when he went there.

The fruits that your family were growing – Fred, did your mother pack them or did she can them?

My grandparents lived with us for several years. My mother was working, and both my mother and dad were working, so my grandparents came to live with us – to take care of me, I guess. And they did a lot of canning, canning peaches, things like that.

Did you have a cellar or basement to store them in?

No.

They were kept where?

We had a cooler, it's an air-draft device that takes cool air in at the bottom and discharges hot air at the top. That's what we had just prior to the purchase of the refrigerator. And the first refrigerators were –

Iceboxes.

Iceboxes.

Yes. Iceboxes.

Union Ice.

Let's imagine we're going to walk through this house. You walk up the sidewalk, well, if you had a sidewalk –

We did.

Up the sidewalk to the front door. Then what?

Well, the house was built in 1910, all wooden type construction. The house was symmetrical. You'd go in the front door; the living room was on the right, bedroom on the left. Go down to the dining room, then to the kitchen, to the back porch, where they did the laundry. And then the other bedroom was on the other side. And that was about it. There was a garage to the rear with a driveway and sidewalk.

Bathroom?

We had one.

You had one inside?

They did.

You had an inside bathroom?

At first we didn't.

Oh, yes, when we lived where you were born –

The house that you lived in, give me a house to start with. We are at the road that is not paved, we are going up to a house with no sidewalk. And which house is this?

That's where we moved –

From Oklahoma.

They were poor folk.

That was Montgomery, but then we moved up to Tremont.

Yes, but do you want to go back to the house you lived in when you were born?

Do you remember any of that?

I do.

OK, then you tell me about this house.

My grandfather bought probably the nicest house in Otay at that time, a white house, really nice. Next door to it, west, were two little houses, four-room houses. It had a kitchen, two bedrooms and a living room. And an outdoor toilet out back. And we lived there until, what, 1934?

I think so.

I think it was 1934, about four years. And then about two blocks north, they had a Mexican store there, and the Mexican family lived in the back of the store. They sold it, and my dad bought the thing and he took everything out of the store and put some rooms in there, and that's where we lived in our early years when we were teenagers. I remember, when he bought it, whoever he paid – whoever owned the land lived up around North Park, and every Saturday night we had to go there and give them money. Every week, to pay for the lot. And we got to go to the North Park Theatre. We'd get to go to a show while we were up there. I still remember some of the old movies that they were showing - **??, ??** Island, all kinds of stuff. Do you remember –

Well –

Well, you were about four or five years old then. Anyway, my dad bought this property in Otay, right on Third Avenue. And there were three lots, west, right before you got to the house and the house sat on three lots. And there were three empty lots on the west of that and the guy that owned those lots never

paid his taxes, and the county put it up for sale. So my dad went down to the county courthouse and bought them. He paid \$15 a lot for those, for six lots. He said, "I don't want anybody living next to me." They stayed bare all the time, nobody ever lived in them.

So you said this one had an outdoor toilet. Where was that located in relationship to where the house was?

Back yard. And every once in a while, my dad would say, on a Saturday morning, he'd get ready to go to work, and he'd say to me and my brother, "Get out there and dig another hole over there" so we can move the outdoor toilet over there. So it just moved around.

And when you –

But we had an indoor toilet, too, but he never went on it. He never went on it. We even had a bathtub in the house, too. Before that we were taking baths in washtubs.

So you remember doing that?

Oh, yes.

Sure.

And talking about grammar school, I went to grammar school there when we only had six kids in class, three boys and three girls. All the way through the first and sixth grade. There was a Mexican boy, a white boy and me. And the three girls were my dad's cousin, which was white, a Mexican girl, who is now my son's mother-in-law, and a Japanese girl, who was my sweetheart, Amy Inouye. She's still alive and lives up in Oceanside now. We left Otay and went to Chula Vista Junior High. You talk about going into another world, you talk about all those people from Otay.

Hicks.

They looked down on us, we were hicks.

Yes.

Oh, we didn't do that.

Chula Vista thought they were the upper crust. We had to fight that from the first year in junior high.

He did OK for himself, though. They voted him the governor of the junior high school, the whole school, when he was in ninth grade. So, they accepted you, finally.

Oh, yes, I was a ringleader. Good or bad, but I was a ringleader.

When you – after that house, where did you live? The house that she was born in, where did you move from there?

We moved to this grocery store.

Yes, two blocks north.

He took out all the shelves and stuff and made bedrooms and all that. We lived there.

OK, let's walk through the grocery store home. You'd walk up the dirt sidewalk –

It had a living room, it had a nice big family room, it had two bedrooms, it had a bathroom, had a kitchen –

No, we had three bedrooms. One was –

Yes, I was going to say, after he bought that, he added that place where Jim and I slept.

No, there was a little room in the dining room, that was my bedroom. You guys had –

That's right. There was a bedroom inside the dining room for you.

A small bedroom. Then they tore that out to make a big –

Big family room, living room out of it.

And then he built another bedroom out in the back for the boys. So there was always the three bedrooms.

Yes, there were. But I forgot that one that was in the family room.

So, you've got the bedrooms. Where was the kitchen, was it behind?

It was in the back, it was a step down. It was an add-on. When the Mexican family moved there, they built that on for the kitchen. It was one step down, you had to step down out of the regular house into the kitchen area. It was kind of long, long, narrow-like.

At the back of the old house.

And then my dad remodeled some of that area. He put one of those coolers in, too, because we used to raise chickens all the time, and the eggs. He built stuff there and those little trays. Put the eggs in and let them cool all the time.

What kind of chickens did you have?

White Leghorns.

They weren't show horses, [they were] show chickens.

I raised 400 chickens for 4H club for four years. I'd go down to Whitney's in San Diego, paid a penny a piece, cost me \$4. And I'd take them out there and I'd raise them until they were fryers. Over in National City, there was a Shep's Café, and all they served was fried chicken. And in the back there in National City, we'd take my dad's Model A pickup truck, they had these coops with all these chickens in them. We'd drive over there, and I'd sell them for 15 cents. And they put them in their coops, so when you went there to eat a chicken dinner, they'd go out and get a chicken, kill it, clean it, cook the chicken –

Fresh chicken!

And people were standing in line all the time who wanted to get fried chicken at that little Shep's restaurant.

That's great. Let's move on to junior high school. You went to –

Chula Vista Junior High School.

Chula Vista Junior High. Can you tell me any stories about going to that school?

I remember seventh grade. It was late in the fall, and we heard on the PA system, "This is a day that will live in infamy. The empire Japan has bombed Pearl Harbor." It was actually Sunday, the bombing, but it was Monday when President Roosevelt came on.

You heard that on TV, in school.

No, no, -

We didn't have TV.

No, the intercom in school.

In school?

Yes, all of the classrooms had speakers.

We didn't have TV in those days.

No, sorry.

I used to ride my bicycle to school, and let's see, what else can I say. Oh, during the war, they had a program whereby the kids would make scale model airplanes, miniature planes. And they were used for identification purposes by the pilots that were actually fighting the war. And I was very active in

that. I came out the highest rank of admiral, 50 airplanes I had to make to get to admiral. And, you know, a lot of the girls were participating, too. They'd start out as an ensign, lieutenant, work their way up.

What happened to those?

I wish I knew. They were distributed to the people that needed them for identification. And I enjoyed orchestra, played the clarinet. And I remember Mr. Boling, who taught algebra.

Oh, yes.

Mr. Robertson in woodshop. I don't remember many of the – what was the -

Miss DuPree.

DuPree, our homeroom teacher was Miss DuPree. Fred Mahoney was our vice principal, or something like that. Can you think of anything I've missed?

Well, it's going to be her turn next. So, now, Etta Bell, what are your memories of junior school?

I joined them at Chula Vista Junior High School, in seventh grade. It's true. I felt, like Bill, that we were kind of looked down upon because we were from the country. But it was OK, I didn't let that bother me.

At least you put your shoes on!

We did have to wear shoes in junior high school. And I was active in Girl Scouts, and music. I sang in the glee club. That was fun. And sports, I really was involved in sports. Having two older brothers who were involved in sports, of course, they taught me how to play softball and football. When I was in school, I thought, gee, I wish I were a boy so I could play football. But, of course, girls couldn't play football. But I did well in softball. I was captain of the championship team, so – well, it was fun.

That's because you had a gal from Otay that was an outstanding pitcher.

She was!

Oh, yes. Hattie Booker.

Hattie Booker, yes.

Hattie Booker. She was African American and she could pitch that ball –

Oh, yes.

And she was always on my team. So we had a pretty good team.

Do you recall any of your other teachers that you had when you were in junior high school?

Yes, I had Mrs. Gasoway, Miss Herzog, Mr. Bolling, whom I did not like –

Old Bolling. I liked him.

I didn't.

I liked him.

Why not?

Because he liked the girls, you know.

Oh, no.

He had a blond wife, too.

He was harmless.

Well, I'm sure he was, but you know, we just didn't care for him. Miss DuPree was my music teacher, and I really liked her. I know Fred said that the homeroom kids gave her a really bad time, but –

Talk about your piano playing, Michelle.

I'm not Michelle.

I mean, Etta Bell.

OK, tell us about your piano playing.

Well, my mother had started me playing piano when I was just 3. They bought an old piano, I still have it. And I started taking piano lessons from Mrs. Steinbock. She and another lady were the only two piano teachers in Chula Vista at the time. It opened up a whole new world for me. I learned to do a lot of accompanying. While I was in junior high school, Mr. Skinner came down from Sweetwater High School and asked Mrs. Steinbock if she had a student who could do some accompanying at the high school level because they needed somebody. And so I was chosen, and I really thought I was hot stuff to get to go to high school to play for these kids. So that was quite a nice experience.

Now, Bill. Tell me your junior high school memories.

Oh, that was an experience and a half. We got up there in seventh grade. I had to wear shoes.

A tragedy.

Let me go back to grammar school. My first grade of grammar school, I had to wear shoes the first day and I took them off, set them under the desk. Left them there all week. On Saturday, we always had to take a bath in the washtub to get ready to go to church Sunday morning. My mother says, “Where’s your shoes?” I said, they’re up at school. This was early Sunday morning. She had to go get the janitor, who lived about five, six blocks from us, to go up to the school and open it up to get my shoes out so I could wear them to church that morning. I’ll never forget that, because I got a spanking for that. I got spanked plenty of times. But anyway, we got to junior high, we were in the seventh grade, and I liked kids, I liked people. I still do, always. But there was kid that sat across from me, and I hated that kid. Every time I’d see him, I’d want to poke him in the face. We became halfway good friends over the years, but he was just a different kind of kid. I won’t even mention his name.

I was going to say –

Yes, now I’m anxious to know who it is.

But, anyway, it was Walt Tussinger, ???’s brother.

Walter Tussinger.

He’s gone now.

Yes, he died on Pomona Freeway. I heard it coming home from Rohr, I was working at Riverside, back in the 1950s. I had the radio on and he was coming home on the Pomona Freeway, had a wreck and got killed. They mentioned his name that night. Anyway, back to junior high days, in fact the early days – in third grade, my folks wanted me to play the violin. Well, I was born with one arm. My dad fixed up something to hold a bow in my right arm, my half arm. It didn’t work out good, but Harlan Skinner says, “Well, let Bill play the trumpet.” So we got me a trumpet and I started playing by third grade. Went to junior high, and who’s my music teacher in junior high but Harlan Skinner. He was the one that developed the national band revue in National City. Well, three years went by in junior high, and we went to Sweetwater High School and they got rid of the music teacher up there and brought Harlan up there. So I had him from the third grade through the 12th grade. I was a mid-year graduate – I got out in February. Well, the September before, I didn’t sign up for orchestra. I’d played orchestra, in the symphony orchestra all the time. I didn’t sign up for it. I was in another class, and Harlan came and dragged me out of class and wanted to know why I didn’t sign up for orchestra. I told him, I said, I’ve been playing “Pomp and Circumstance” every year, twice a year for graduation for everybody, but I’m not going to play it for my own graduation. That’s why I didn’t sign up. Well, he kind of hated me for that. But later on, years later, when I had a boy, I walked out of Church’s Drugstore with an “It’s a Boy” cigar. I gave one cigar to Harlan right then, he was out on the sidewalk. And when he died, he still had that cigar.

He did?

He did. Yes, Gus told me about that. But very good memories of our early days. Back in the old days, just – I think about all those things all the time. I know those days are gone, we’ll never get them back, but they’re good to think about anyway.

For you, what was the neighborhood like when you first moved in to the –

D Street. We were one block west of National Avenue. And, like I've said before, the streets were paved, but there were no sidewalks. We had mail delivery by a Mr. Nation, who rode his bicycle.

Yes, he did.

He rode his bicycle so slow that I just couldn't figure out how he could keep himself upright. But anyway –

He was ?? Nation's dad.

Yes. And I do remember playing on that corner lot. That was a real treat. It's something that most kids today don't have.

That's right.

All the neighborhood kids could get together to play softball, we pole-vaulted, played basketball, the whole works. It was just a beautiful vacant lot on the corner of Flower and D. Everybody came.

So the boys and girls played together?

Yes.

Oh, yes.

Trudy – what was her last name? She lived on the corner, her brother was handicapped.

Connelly.

Bea Connelly. Bea Connelly, yes. She played, she was a tomboy.

A few years later, we had a girl named Shirley Bates. She was a super, double tomboy. Man, she could play sports.

?? played with us, she moved down the street.

You just feel like it was a wonderful time to grow up, because we had those times. Today it seems like the kids are just really into computers and don't take the time to get out and have fun together and exercise. But we did the same thing, we had a lot across the street from our house, where the kids congregated to play softball and football. It was just really great fun.

What was your neighborhood like then, you were in a more rural setting –

Yes.

We were what?

More rural.

Oh, yes, it was rural down there. Only a few hundred people lived in Otay Valley. There were two Japanese families down in Otay Valley, a lot of Mexicans and a few white people, but predominantly industry down there was lemon orchards, chicken ranches and celery fields. Open space for farming.

Yes, we had oranges and lemons across the street.

Oh, yes.

Orange groves.

We used to go there in the lemon orchard, shoot quail all the time. Right in our backyard.

Did you bring them home and eat them?

Sure.

Oh, yes.

Rabbits, we'd go down to Otay Valley, shoot rabbits all the time.

Yuck.

Yuck?

But I remember, talking about the early days of things – I remember coming home from school one afternoon, down on the riverbed, marijuana grew wild. And a cow had gotten loose and got down there and ate that marijuana all over. I was coming home, about half a block west of us a ways. That cow had died, and it was stiff – I can see it laying there. Legs were just stiff, it was deader than heck. And here comes some people up, and they butchered it right then. But that cow died from eating all that marijuana! I was just a little kid, but I stood there and watched all that was going on.

One of the wonderful things about this town was that Etta Bell, by herself, could walk over half a mile, through orchards, and there was no need to worry about it.

No. Nobody ever locked the doors on their houses. Nobody ever locked their cars. This happened even up until World War II. I went up to Riverside in 1952, we lived in Otay just before that, never locked anything up. I came back from Riverside in a year or two to see my folks, they said, "Did you lock your car up?" Everything was changed overnight, in the 1950s, early 1950s.

What was the reason for that change?

I think television.

Television?

I have no idea.

Television. I think it was a little early for computers to happen.

Oh, yes, they didn't have computers then.

Of course, we had people moving in from all over.

All over.

Chula Vista just grew by leaps and bounds.

It really grew after World War II.

We like to think they were all wonderful people that came, but there were some that were rather shady. There's no way that I could have been riding my roller skates from Otay to Chula Vista alone on that highway.

From ten years later.

So they were great times to grow up.

One thing Etta Bell left out about her music stuff, Pearl Harbor day, she had a recital in Chula Vista Woman's Club. And my dad owned a garage in Chula Vista, right near the mortuary, and we went up there early Sunday morning, got a lot of chairs and took them down to the Woman's Club for the recital. *And then they announced Pearl Harbor.*

When they announced Pearl Harbor, I was in a liquor store right next to the mortuary. My dad and them went over – they were putting these chairs together – went over to get a beer. I was playing pinball machine, and they had a little radio on the back side of the pinball machine. 7:30, that's when they announced Pearl Harbor was hit. Right then, that started the war.

And I thought I couldn't have my recital. And I was so upset. My mother said, "No, it's all right. You still get to have your recital." So I'll never forget that date. My first recital by myself.

You were what, 10, 11 years old?

Eleven.

What did you wear for this recital?

I had a pink dress that my mother made. It had little blue things here – I have a picture of it.

One thing, we've got lots of pictures of early days.

That's really nice.

And, our mothers made all our clothes in those days. And to get to go to the store to buy something was really a treat. Because, well, we just couldn't afford to buy things.

You had alluded to a story of your misspent youth, doing something to the watch factory.

See that picture in that book I've got, of the watch factory? It's in there. Well, anyway, when I was a little kid, we always played marbles at school, grammar school. And my granddad, he paid 50 cents – this was the early 1930s – he paid 50 cents for an agate, a shooter, a good marble. And I never put that up – when you played marbles, if you won the game, you kept the marbles from the other guys. Well, I'd go to school with 10 marbles in my pocket, and I'd come up with two pockets full of marbles all the time. My granddad smoked cigars, and he had empty boxes, and I was putting these marbles in these boxes. I had about three full boxes of marbles. We found out the watch factory was going to be torn down, so I got up one Saturday morning – my folks both worked, so I got Jim up, my younger brother. I got the box of marbles, I said, let's go by the watch factory. I want you to throw these marbles at me and I'm going to hit them with my baseball bat into the windows, knock them out. And I knocked them out, and I learned how to hit a marble better than I could hit a baseball with my baseball bat. We both had catcher's gloves, and we had footballs, we had volleyballs. We had all kinds of sports stuff when we were kids, played with it all the time. I could really hit, with one arm. I remember playing ball in Chula Vista at F Street diamond, and little kids would be standing next to the fence, and I could hear them, they'd say, "Watch that guy. Watch that guy. He'll hit a homerun." They came there and watched me. I played baseball in San Diego, played a lot of sports in San Diego, basketball. My one arm didn't hurt me one bit, I don't think.

I credit our parents for that.

Oh, yes. My folks, my folks never made it a handicap. I had to cut weeds, spade the garden. And my dad owned a garage in Chula Vista - 10 years old I was tearing motors down to rebuild them. I'd get mad he wouldn't let me put piston rings on them and rebuild the motors. I'd take them apart, but he wouldn't let me put them back together. I was pounding out fenders, changing tires. I learned all that stuff when I was a little kid. But I'm glad the war came on. I went to work for Rohr Aircraft, Aviation, stayed for 41 years and didn't have to do garage work.

One of the nice things in Chula Vista, too, talking about the baseball diamond. Next to there was a building that had all kinds of sports paraphernalia that we could sign for, take out. We could take it home.

Oh, yes, there's all kinds of good stores down there.

Well, it wasn't a store, just a place that we could sign out to take softballs and bats or volleyball or whatever.

Probably the city recreation type of thing.

I would think so. But it was great. The girls could meet there and –

They put lights on that little old field, too. They played ball at nights there, too.

Let's go on to high school. Where did you go to high school?

Sweetwater!

Sweetwater. You were a Red Devil!

Red Devils.

OK, tell me about high school, what was that like for you?

My favorite class was woodshop.

Mr. Buby?

No, I enjoyed the sciences, biology, physics and chemistry. And woodshop, of course. Fred Teeter taught us civics.

Yuck.

Getting comments from the peanut gallery, here.

That's all right. I liked Fred Teeter, I liked Mr. Teeter.

I did, too.

Who else did you have?

I was one of these guys that would stand in the hall to keep order –

Oh, a monitor.

Safety monitor.

Safety monitor. And Etta Bell says she knew me at that time. But she was one of the "little" girls, and I –

Not a country girl, a little girl.

Well, I was.

Fred, she wasn't really well-endowed in her early age.

Well, I was almost two years younger than the girls in my class. I had skipped a grade in grammar school.

Oh, really.

And my birthday was late in the year, at the end of November, so I was 13, when I started high school, in 10th grade. So, yes, I was not well-endowed!

Right!

So, you know, being 15 when you started your senior year, you were competing with these girls, a lot of them were almost – they were 17. It was kind of rough, because I couldn't date, couldn't drive, like the other girls. Although I was able to get my license at 14 because my dad had the garage in Otay, and he needed somebody to go to Chula Vista to get parts for him, so I was able to get a special license to drive to Chula Vista and back. But I couldn't drive anywhere else. But I could drive with an adult.

That's what happened with me. I was 14 and got my license to drive. But I could only drive in the daytime.

Yes.

I've still got the license, the license I got when I was 14 years old, I've still got the same license number.
**Tell me a little more about your memories of high school. You had a totally different perspective.
 Were you part of clubs and so on?**

Yes.

Oh, yes, I was very active in school.

There were High-Y clubs that –

Yes, boys –

What's a High Y club?

That was through the YMCA, and Tri Y was through the YWCA.

The Chula Vista guys were in the Zorro Hi Y.

Then you got to be -

The National City guys were in the Sioux Hi Y.

And you had Chula Vista Hi Y and National City Hi Y. For the girls, there were other activities. I took up the cello when I started high school. Harlan Skinner, he said, "We need a cellist. Would you learn to play cello." So, I said sure. I was pretty much self-taught. I played for three years there and then four years at San Diego State. But while I was in high school, I got to go to Interlochen, which is an international music camp in Michigan. It was an eight-week course there, and I played in an orchestra of 350 students from all over the United States and England. That was a tremendous experience. I took piano lessons while I was there, too. But I did – again, in high school, music was my thing. Sports and music, I participated in both of those. And my senior year, I was captain of the majorettes.

The band.

Well, there was a majorette corps, and I was captain of that.

What was your costume or uniform for that?

It was red and gray.

Red and gray!

Little skirt?

Yes, little grey pleated skirt.

With a hat.

But it was fun.

Did you have boots and things?

Oh, yes.

Did you go out of the district for your –

Well, we marched in parades. Mostly at the high school games, football games, we'd march. And then we marched in the first Maytime Band Revue in National City, and they had a celebration for – was it – 50 years.

50 years, I guess. Harlan contacted a lot of the kids in the school at that time, and we were in the parade on a truck. So that was kind of fun to go back and participate in that. High school was a lot of fun.

It was.

I really enjoyed our high school time.

Back when we were in high school, when I was there in 1943, 600 kids were in the whole high school, and that was from San Diego city limits, from the border to the mountains to the ocean – there were only 600 high school students. Three years of kids.

You probably know that.

Now we have, what, 11 high schools in Chula Vista area –

Fourteen.

- and 3,000 kids in the classes now. Loaded with people anymore.

OK, Bill, what are your memories of high school?

Oh, great. That's when you discovered girls.

Troublemaker.

And I did. And I didn't go with a girl from Sweetwater, ever. I went with Coronado and Julian and La Jolla, Hoover, and all that.

Sweetwater girls weren't good enough.

But I finally married a girl from Sweetwater. And I was married to her for 46, 56 years. But anyway, when high school, let's go back and review. I liked sports, so I was on the track team for three years, I was on the football team for a year. Broke cartilage in my leg, so I didn't get to play my senior year, but anyway, I had a scholarship to go to Laverne College. Did you know that?

Yes.

You knew that. Yes, Mr. Leonard and the coach from Coronado High School, they were both graduates from Laverne College up near Pomona. And I worked the summer of 1942 at Camp Marston, which is a YMCA summer camp up by Julian and Pine Hills, worked there that summer. Mr. Leonard, who had been working with the YMCA, he was my seventh grade homeroom teacher, and he and I got along real good. Anyway, that summer, they got me a scholarship to go to Laverne when I got out of high school in February of 1943, but I said, well, I won't go up there until September. So I went to work at Rohr and the war was on, and September came, and I said, well, I'm not going to come up there until after the war's over. Stayed at Rohr. Rohr went from 14,000 people to 600, and I still had a job there. Meantime, I'd gotten married, had a baby, and my boss said, "Well, I won't let you go if you don't want to leave Rohr. I'll keep you." So, I stayed at Rohr all my life, turned my scholarship back to the college. It was all right. I had a good job all my life. I retired as a chief engineer from there. I went to Riverside, helped build that plant for 12 years, 11 and a half years. But I always had sports on my mind. I bowled, I always had something going on. I worked in midget auto racing and bowling and they used to have an industrial recreational thing here in San Diego back in those days, during the war and after the war, with Solar and Convair and Ryan and Rohr and other industries around town. They had baseball leagues and softball and -

Basketball.

Basketball leagues and badminton leagues up in the federal building

END OF SIDE ONE

That was when she and I got out of high school, a month out of high school.

I GUESS WHAT YOU STARTED WITH WAS THE GIRLS.

Right.

In high school, in those days it was World War II, and the Convair plant hired 48,000 people, people came into San Diego. We didn't go to school all day, we had half-day sessions. The younger class at Sweetwater, like the 10th -

The 10th grade went in the afternoon.

The 10th grade, they went from 12:30 to 5, and the other class, two classes, went from 7:30 to 12:15, I think. I was in sports all the time, so I'd stay around school, take a couple classes in the afternoon, do my homework, take another class, go out for sports and get home about dark every night. That was just part of the life. If you wanted to be in sports, you had to do that, too. And sometimes, I'd go to work in my dad's garage, too, and then go back for sports for a couple hours.

How did the war affect you in your life? Let's go with Etta Bell. How did the war affect your family?

I don't know – I don't feel like it affected us particularly, except that Mom was at work, and wasn't at home, when she had been before.

Where did she work?

At Rohr.

She was the fifth woman to go to work in Rohr production. She worked in the electrical assembly department. They were making electrical junction boxes for the motors for the B-24s.

She had been a teacher before she came to California, but as you know, she would have had to go back to school and start all over again, just like you do today almost. She just didn't do that. She would have been a wonderful teacher, because she was really good working with kids.

Can you remember rationing?

Oh, yes.

Oh, yes. World War II gas rationing, food rationing, food stamps.

Food stamps, we had food stamps, and we'd save up – I know my folks saved up their gas rations because they wanted to go back to Oklahoma to see relatives. So we had saved up the stamps to be able to do that because you couldn't get gas unless you had stamps.

And tires. You couldn't buy tires either. Tires were rationed, too. If your car was running out of tires, you were just stuck. You had to go down to some kind of federal office in San Diego and sign all kinds of papers, why you needed a tire. If you needed a piston, a ring to go in the engine and all that, all kinds of paperwork to get these things. Because all these things went to the war effort.

I'd forgotten about rationing food, but we did have stamps.

I was in Fresno when V-J Day hit. I'd taken a week's vacation and was going to go to Sequoia. We got up there in Fresno, the next morning, after V-J Day had started. I went to get gas in my car, and I said, I just want two stamps worth. He said, "There's no more gas rationing. You can get all you want." Man, food stamps were off. We went over to the Safeway store, we were going to go up to Sequoia to camp, the wife and I. We went over to the Safeway store, and we bought fruit cocktail, we bought corned beef, stuff you couldn't get during the war except you had a million stamps to get them.

You could get Spam.

Yes, you could get Spam, but we wanted corned beef.

To this day, I can't even think of Spam.

Oh, God, that was something else.

How do you remember the war affecting your family?

Well, I wasn't affected very much by World War II. I was going to college in the daytime, and I was working at Solar Turbines -

That was after the war.

That was after the war.

That was after the war, yes.

Were you going to San Diego State?

Yes, San Diego State. That was the Korean War that I was involved with. I was going to school and had a wife and child, and I was at Solar Turbines, making jet engines. Eighteen months later, I graduated from college and went into the research department at Solar Turbines, process engineering. And I stayed there for 35 years, when I retired. Had a lot of fun. We were looking at high-temperature materials, low-temperature materials, materials for re-entry from space and all sorts of things. As I said, it was fun. They paid me for it, but it was fun.

That's a good way to work, to do something you like. Then you said the Korean War had affected you. How was that?

Just because I was 20 at the time, 20, 21. Is that right? And I was married and we had an infant, and I needed a job – I was working at the dairy prior to that, tending the cows, whatever – and they fired me. I won't tell you why.

Oh, darn.

It was actually a family-owned dairy, and I got fired. I think they thought - I think they thought I would be better off working somewhere else. And they were right. So I got fired. I went to Rohr, and they wouldn't hire me. I don't know why. I went to Solar, and I was hired immediately. And I stayed there a long time.

Let's stop for just a minute here . . .

I got out of Sweetwater the first week of February, and my mother was working at Rohr, and we didn't have much money, but I was supposed to go to college in September. She said, "Well, maybe I can get a job for you during the summer at Rohr." So she went to Rohr and looked around, and she finally found the chief timekeeper, who knew me from my dad's garage, because he was always banging up his fenders and had them in there. So I'd go there after high school and straighten them out, paint them. He knew what I could do. So he looked around and found me a job in the engineering department, and he asked the guy, the head of – the engineering chief. He said, "This kid's only got one arm, but he can do everything." And he said, "That's good because I went to Oregon State for four years, and my roommate had one arm, and he did everything. Bring him in." So I went down, and I signed my application. Jim Hobel was the chief of employment at that time. He got the application, and he looked at it, and he said, "Bill, I'm sorry. I can't hire you because you're handicapped with only one arm. I can't hire you." But he said, "I'm going to talk to Mr. Rohr and you just stay right here in the office." So I stayed there about a half-hour or so. He came back, and on my application, Mr. Rohr had written, "Two weeks' probation. Fred H. Rohr." He told Jim Hobel, "If he doesn't cut it in two weeks, let him go." I stayed 41 years.

I guess you cut it.

And Mr. Rohr and I became good friends.

Let's talk about Fred Rohr, what was he like? What kind of person was he?

Oh, he was just super, super, super. There were 14,000 people working at Rohr during World War II, and then they went down to 600 people. We know that the people that stayed there at that time, we could have retired millionaires if Mr. Rohr had not passed away in the late 1960s. But after that, the company almost went down the tubes for a long time. They came back. They're still going good. They sold out to B.F. Goodrich, but they've got about eight more years' work in Chula Vista, with that new Boeing contract, so -

Etta Bell, what kind of work have you done?

Well, I was a liberal arts major in college, which really didn't prepare me for much of anything. But I did become eventually a guidance information specialist in high school, educational counseling. I loved it. It was fun working with the kids, and I just thought it was a great job.

She made a great impact on a lot of kids.

Anyway, I made some nice contacts and people who were very appreciative of all the work that you do. That's basically – I was at home when my children were growing up. I was a stay at home mom. And I felt it was important to be there for them. So I really didn't go to work until after my children –

Had gotten older. Yes.

My youngest daughter was a senior in high school when I went back to work, and I had to do that because my husband and I had separated, so I needed a job. So anyway, I went to work at the Grossmont High School District and worked myself into this job, worked at Santana High School for two years in that capacity, and then went back to Granite Hills and retired from there in 1993. It was a fun job.

Let's talk about holidays. What did you do for January 1 or New Year's Eve? Was that a holiday for you?

Go ahead, Fred.

We had a group. It was a tailgate group, and we all went to watch the Chargers and tailgated there in the parking lot. And one of them happened to have been born on December 31, so we always celebrated her birthday on, essentially, New Year's Eve. Other than that, I don't remember much celebration of New Year's. Christmas was always a period for family to get together. I guess that's basically it.

And how about you, Etta Bell. New Year's for you?

It was just a fun time. When I was going to college, I was working up at Julian, as a waitress; that was how I got myself through college. But on Saturday nights, I went down and played for dances in the town hall.

Boy, that was great.

There on the corner. It was \$10 for the night, and at that time, 65 cents an hour minimum wage, \$10 was a lot of money. But, anyway, we played for New Year's Eve parties every year, and of course, that was fun. It was a fun time in my life.

And, Bill?

Oh, New Year's – I got married when I was just 19, and my wife was 16, and we started spending New Year's Eves in Tijuana with a group of kids we ran around with and played ball with. We always went to Tijuana because you couldn't drink up here under 21 years old, so we always had New Year's Eve for several years down there. That was in the old, old days. I'd never go there today to do it, I'll tell you.

Then we used to go to Bostonia Ballroom. That was another big thing in San Diego, the Bostonia Ballroom on Saturday nights. They always had country-western stars coming out there on the weekends.

In Santee, was it?

No, it was in Bostonia.

Bostonia. I still don't know -

It was north of El Cajon. But they had, like, Tennessee Ernie when he was first starting out. God, they had all those old cowboys – Hoot Gibson. Not Hoot Gibson, Spade Cooley. They had all those old cowboy guys come there. We used to go there on Saturday nights a lot, too.

I don't know. New Year's Eve wasn't all that -

It wasn't a big deal.

No.

How about Valentine's Day?

No.

Did you guys do Valentine's Day, make Valentines and so on?

In school we did.

When you were in elementary school –

You had to make them.

You had a Valentine for every kid in the class. And there was, there was this girl in the second grade. I was in the first grade and I kind of liked her, so I gave her a Valentine in the second grade. I hadn't seen her for years. And we went to the Sweetwater picnic – Picnic? Is that what it is?

And then when we started down in -

Down in Swiss Park. I hadn't seen her for years, and she said, "Bill, I've still got that Valentine you gave me in grammar school." Her name was Ida Bell Pradel. I still see her even today.

There's something we used to do as high school students. It was the Pacific Square Ballroom.

Oh, yes, big time.

They had great bands.

Big bands.

Big bands, Glenn Miller.

Glenn Miller.

Tommy Dorsey.

That was really a treat. Do you remember where Pacific Court Ballroom is?

No.

It was on Pacific Square.

Pacific Highway, right near the county building there.

Across the street.

It was the Palladium of San Diego. The Palladium in LA was big dance place, too, in Hollywood.

Mission Beach ballroom was the same thing. We used to go see big bands there, too.

We had our proms there, too.

The one thing about Bostonia Ballroom, you could dance on that floor all night, because they put a subfloor, then they put two inches of felt in there, then they put the hardwood floor on top of that. Man, you could dance on that and never wear yourself out.

What did you guys do for Easter?

We went to the Easter sunrise service up on Mount Helix. From our church, our youth group used to go every Easter Sunday morning up on Mount Helix to the Easter sunrise service. That was tradition.

Are you interested in high school days?

Any memories about Easter.

We were in high school, and we had a minister in Chula Vista who played football at USC in 1932. He played in the Rose Bowl, and – Mr. Thompson – and he was a gung ho guy. We had like youth fellowship, and the boys, we got up one Easter service morning, early – oh, before daylight – and Mr. Thompson, we drove out to the foot of San Miguel Mountain, and we climbed up top of San Miguel and went to church. I'll never go back up that mountain again!

And did you have any particular memory about Easter, Fred?

Well, of course, we had the traditional Easter egg hunts around my house, particularly after the children came along. It was a big thing for them.

Oh, yes, you always had a good dinner that day, too.

And now, it's a big thing for Etta Bell and me, we sing in the choir at church. We sang in the Easter cantata, which was joyful.

That was Christmas. But Easter's coming up again.

Did you in school ever do anything for Arbor Day?

No.

No.

We used to have the Fiesta de la Luna parade.

Oh, big time in Chula Vista.

And what time of year was that?

It would be in June.

In the 1930s.

Summertime.

In the 1940s?

It was kind of a Lemon Festival type thing. It was called Fiesta de la Luna, which was to the moon, but - *All the kids in town were in that parade, it didn't make any difference what you did. I had my buggy with all my dolls, dressed up like a little old woman, pushing my buggy in the parade.*

Gee, one time, didn't you have your dog in there?

I was riding my little black Welsh pony with a Zorro outfit on.

That was big time, because on Saturday night all the kids in downtown Chula Vista, there in the plaza area, they closed off the streets, and it was just party time. Everybody was having a good time.

Oh, yes, it was a lot of fun.

I miss that even today. Of course, I'm so old, I don't even go down and watch the Christmas parade anymore with my grandkids.

May Day? Did you ever do May Day?

No.

No? You never did. July 4, what did you do for July 4?

Shoot off firecrackers.

Firecrackers. We went to Mexico and got firecrackers.

Went to Mexico didn't we? Yes, down there you could get all you want. In the early 1930s -

In those days, you could bring them back.

In the early 1930s, when we lived in Otay, my dad's two uncles who lived with their parents, my grandparents, they would go out and buy all kinds of fireworks, and the kids in the streets, there, we'd have fireworks. You couldn't believe it was there, right in front of the house.

That was a big deal, fireworks. Other than that -

Did they have picnics for July 4?

Have what?

Did they do 4th of July picnics here in Chula Vista?

Oh, not too much, really.

How about Thanksgiving?

Family day.

That was always a big family day.

Well, our family, or my dad, in the 1930s, we'd go to Imperial Valley and we'd shoot pheasants, two pheasants, and we'd have pheasants for Thanksgiving dinner instead of turkey.

Again, yuck.

My dad liked to hunt.

Well, they would hunt, and they got deer. That was supposed to be a big deal, but I couldn't eat that either.

You didn't like it, huh?

No, to me, it was Bambi.

Soft-hearted, then. OK, so your father went hunting. Did any of you ever go fishing?

Oh, yes.

My dad went fishing all the time.

All three of us were raised -

We were raised with fishing, and my dad liked to go to Coronado Island, catch yellowtail all time.

So he went on the -

On the sport fisher boats, yes.

My father had a small power boat. Well, it wasn't real small, about 35 feet long. And he and his friends - and they'd include me occasionally - they'd go out and fish for marlin, which is a trolling operation, and you have operators, and the fish hits it and the reel starts to sing, you know, and then the fight begins. I didn't feel sorry for them then, but I do now. Beautiful fish.

They truly are. Incredibly strong, too.

We all liked, we all liked lake fishing, all three of us as kids.

I think it was during the war, Jimmy Zircher owned the Rexall Drugstore. I don't remember when he took it over from Mr. Smith, but anyway, he liked to go deep-sea fishing. He caught a marlin. Anyway, they had this counter for food there and they had a little kitchen area there, and he cleaned that fish out, and he had free – no, it was swordfish, it wasn't marlin, it was swordfish. He caught a big swordfish. And he had free swordfish for a couple of days for everybody that wanted to come in and eat swordfish dinners. I remember that.

So the lake fishing, where did you go for lake fishing?

Otay. Sweetwater

Lake Morena, Lake Barrett.

Yes, Lake Morena.

Did you take your –

Cuyamaca.

Did you take your own boats there, or rent them?

We used to rent them.

Fish from the shore, mostly.

Shore fishing, then.

Yes.

Did you do boat fishing?

Not until I was an adult.

Mostly shore fishing, then.

That summer in the 1930s, we went to Otay Lake, stayed a week, that was fun. Every day we'd get a boat, go out on the lake, go all around. I remember Etta Bell was just a little kid. We couldn't find her one day. There she was playing with a tarantula in the dirt.

I was going to talk about the tarantula.

Were you?

My mother almost came unglued when she saw that.

Tell me about the tarantula.

Well, I never thought anything about it. It was just a big bug.

Crawling around.

And one of the other little girls that was out there camping, because today I can't stand any kind of bugs.

THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE.

Yes.

I'm sure they are.

So, did you actually touch it, poking it or something?

I don't think so.

I remember, I came out of that little tent house and she was playing with that tarantula.

I think I had a stick or something.

Did you guys ever see horned toads out there?

Oh, yes.

Oh, all the time.

Because they're, most of them are endangered now.

Another thing I used to look for down in Otay in the wilds was little spider things that had trapdoors.

Yes, trapdoor spiders.

Trapdoor spiders. I used to go get those.

Have a little door that they -

Little thing there that they'd open up – I don't know how they'd work it. I'd go catch those things, too.

How about snakes?

No.

Oh, yes, snakes were all over Otay. I didn't like snakes.

We had a garter snake when my girls were growing up. Homer was his name. He spent a lot of time inside the house. But he was just a little guy.

I heard this morning on the radio, a python swallowed a Chihuahua! Somebody's pet Chihuaua! I don't know where it was located, probably in Florida. It was on the radio.

Do you remember any other wild animals that were of interest in the area where you were living at the time?

Wild animals . . .

Skunks? Possums?

Oh, we had possums and skunks.

I don't remember any of those.

I'd run over skunks and the whole damn car'd smell like skunk.

How about foxes?

Possums, once in a while.

No, foxes, she said.

Oh, foxes? Yes, in the mountains, up by Julian. Coyotes, lots of coyotes.

Rabbits?

Oh, all kinds of rabbits. Cottontails and jack rabbits.

We even have them here.

Otay Valley, back in the 1930s, it was kind of wild. My great uncle, he used to drive wagon train from Omaha to Santa Fe. Back in the 1870s, he lived in Otay, and he'd go down there every day to hunt rabbits. He'd come back, cook them and eat them.

OK, now when you were going fishing, what kind of fish was it that you were catching?

Out here?

Bass.

Surf fishing, it would be cordina (?) perch. We'd throw the perch back.

Out in the ocean, you'd catch yellowtail, barracuda, sculpens.

We'd catch some trout.

Sculpens? Oooh. Have you ever been stuck by one?

They're very good.

Dangerous.

Sculpens, they're poisonous.

Yes, but they're good eating. But they're tough to clean. I'd try to clean them with one hand on my arm, and I'd get stuck, boy, I get infection in that all the time.

Did you guys ever get abalone?

Yes.

Yes. One -

I used to be in the diving club, when I was in high school. I don't know why we called ourselves the diving club, the Manta Rays. Have you ever heard of the Bottom Scratchers? That was an adult group that was doing basically the same thing, and we would dive without air, we just had mask and fins, and take the abalone off the rock. It was an all-summer long, almost all-year long for seniors. I think we were seniors in high school.

Did you eat them?

Yes.

Oh, yes.

They're delicious..

They take a lot of preparation.

They do, you have to slice them and pound them, cause it's just a muscle you're eating.

When abalone season started, between Tijuana and Rosarito beach, on the coast, there was abalone everywhere and I'd have guys working for me, they'd take that day off and go down there and get gunny sacks full of abalones, bring them back, give them out to everybody.

Pretty scarce now.

Oh, yes.

Yes, scarce.

Just like lobster. Puerto Nuevo, over in the Rosarito Beach area. They fished the ocean out, no lobster left out there. Then you bring them in to South America, Australia, Africa and everywhere else and sell them.

OK. I was wondering, Jim, do you have anything in particular that has struck you that you'd like to ask?

NO, I DON'T THINK SO.

Are there any other things that you guys would like to tell me? I think I'm coming to the end of the second tape here.

Well, we could talk here all night, if you'd turn us loose.

Bill could.

I had a sign in my office, I was one of the chief engineers. It was an 8-by-10, said, "You ain't learning nothin' when you're talkin'." And my wife would always say, "My husband is the dumbest guy in the world, because he never shuts up." Etta Bell will attest to that.

Yes, I'll attest to that, too.

But I have fun talking and I meet lots of people and I enjoy life. One thing I don't do, I don't worry about it.

Let me ask you another thing. I do have more time than I thought. First car. What's your memory of your first car? Fred?

Model A. Model A Ford.

What year?

It was a 1931 or 1932. I used to drive it to Sweetwater. They had a special parking lot for students. And I used to drive it to National City on Second Avenue and come to a stop in front of my girlfriend's house, race the engine and turn the key off. And it would BANG! Good way to destroy a muffler. But anyway, that was my first car. I was licensed to drive when I was 16 years old, on my 16th birthday.

My first car, I was in high school. One of the guys in my class had a 1938, Ford V-8 four-door sedan. He wanted to sell it for \$100, and I went to my dad, and I said, hey, I need \$100. I want to buy it. I had to

work in the garage for a long time to pay for it, but I had that – what was it, a 1935 Ford V-8, not 1938. Then I had a couple of Model A's after that. Later I had a Lincoln Zephyr. Remember that big Lincoln Zephyr I had after I went to Rohr? 12-cylinder car.

One thing that we did in high school, it was very interesting and kind of innovative. When we were seniors, they had a class called aerial flight. And Mrs. –

Margaret Ward and –

Margaret Ward and -

Charlie Moorhouse.

Charlie Moorhouse took the students up to Brown Field, where we learned to fly. We actually flew these Piper Cubs, not alone, we were with someone. We were not taking off or landing, but we were flying around the area. And I thought that was extremely interesting.

Yes, I guess so.

I'm not sure how many students were involved in that, probably a couple dozen, in 1947.

Etta Bell, your first car?

Model A. You'd pull the rumble seat out and make it into a little truck.

Pick up truck.

So, I used to drive that to Julian. Actually, I had it while I was going to State, and I would drive it up there to work, and then drive back down Sunday night or early Monday morning for class. That little car just drove and drove and drove.

She'd make that trip by herself. Today, we wouldn't think of it.

I don't think Michelle, or Etta Bell, would remember this, but I was 10 years old, and my dad had a Model T pickup. And Saturdays my mother and dad went to work – where is it they used to work? The lemon-packing house or somewhere. I don't know where they were working, but anyway, I got up that morning, and I got Jim and Etta Bell and put them in that Model T, and we started it up and got it going. I was only 10 years old. We left Otay, and went up to Palm City, over to Imperial Beach, up the Strand and to Coronado, drove around Coronado. I didn't even know how to make it stop! We just went through stop signs and everything. We drove back, and I got back to the house, and where my dad had the car parked, there was a pepper tree right there. I couldn't stop the car, and I just ran it into the pepper tree and the car stopped. Bent the front bumper in. They came home and had lunch – did I get my butt spanked for that, I tell you.

It's on tape.

But I was having fun!

How about radio. Do you remember listening to radio shows?

Yes.

All the time.

Lone Ranger.

What shows?

Lone Ranger.

Oh, yes, Midnight Merry Go Round.

I can remember World War II starting by the Germans invading Poland, and it was on the radio at that time, at my grandmother's house. And my dad used to have crystal radios, not very sensitive, but it was – they could pick up the local stations.

We listened to all the half-hour programs, 15-minute programs, I guess.

Little Orphan -

Little Orphan Annie, Jimmy Duke,

Jack Armstrong

Jack Armstrong,

Captain Midnight.**Captain Midnight?**

But the Lone Ranger was very –

In the early 1930s, we didn't have much money. We didn't have a radio. I was a little kid, probably 6, 7 years old, and we had a Rio Grande brand gasoline station -

They had invented radio by that time -

{Laughter}

Down on, down on Third and Main where the Arco station is now. And I'd take off before dark, and I'd go down there and the old man, he had a little radio sitting there, and he'd listen to it all the time. Well, about 6 o'clock every week, they had what they called Gangbusters. It was all about prisons, gangsters and stuff. I'd go down there and I'd sit – well, in the wintertime, 6 o'clock was dark. My dad would come down there, and he'd spank me all the way home for staying out that late. And then we had, where that watch factory was, they had a maintenance annex on the east side of it, and the hoboes used to come through Otay, wanting a little work so they could get a potato or anything, do something for food, all the time in the early 1930s. And they slept up there in that little annex thing. And I'd go up there, and they'd get these cow flops out there in the field and they'd cook their potatoes. I was just a little kid. And they'd tell me stories about riding the rails and the hobo camps and all kinds of things. And I enjoyed that type of stuff. And, man, I'd get spanked at home, too, for being out there with those people all the time. But then you talk about – you didn't mention Halloween.

Oh, that's right.

But one time at Halloween time, there used to be a man named Mr. Petlow, he owned pigeons.

Remember him? And all the kids hated him. I don't know why, but my mom, she'd find places around that needed weeding, and she'd say, "Why Bill will go over there and weed for you," and they'd pay me 15 cents or whatever. Anyway, I'd go over there, and I didn't like him. We had a Halloween party, the PTA in Otay Grammar School, and all the adults were in there partying. All the kids were outside playing around in the yard, in the school yard. And I say, there's Mr. Petlow's car there, let's go down to my house. My dad's got a big chain, let's go get it and bring it up here. We dragged it up to the school, and I tied it around the tree and around the rear-end housing unit on his car. And he got out there and took off that night. And took off and – boom, the whole rear end flew off the car. Well, the boys, my dad came out there and he saw that chain. And you know who got spanked good that time.

I think you deserved it.

I think so, too.

Dad had to fix the car the next day for him.

Well, I guess.

And we used to turn over, was it Halloween night – they used to turn over outdoor toilets all the time, too. That was the thing that everybody did.

I don't remember a thing about Halloween. Because we never did trick or treat or anything like that.

Being out in the country you just couldn't go door to door.

My dad's got a cousin named Royce Huddleston. He was a few years older than me, and they were going to have a Halloween party up at the watch factory, on the second floor, cause they'd cleaned it up and they were going to party up there, the older kids. And he wouldn't take me up there. So I ran home and I got my BB gun, and I came back to Royce and I stuck the BB gun right in his stomach, and I shot him. And that BB went right through his Levi's and stuck in his skin.

Why'd you do that?

Boy, did Royce beat the hell out of me.

Well, yes. Why did you do that?

Because he wouldn't take me out to the party up there at the watch factory. Anyway, I talked to Royce a few years ago, when we met out at Jeannette's, you remember that -

Oh, my gosh.

He beat me up good that time.

You deserved it.

Absolutely.

I'm still alive.

So you had BB guns when you were a kid, then?

Oh, yes. We shot rifles, my dad and I. My dad was a real good rifle shooter. They used to have Ramona turkey days, up in Ramona, and they'd put 50 cents in, shoot targets for turkeys. He'd get turkeys for all the families and everything. He was good.

Our grandparents lived out here, at the end of San Miguel road.

In Bonita?

Sunnyside.

Sunnyside. They had a 15-acre farm out there.

But they would go out and target practice in the valley there, so dad taught the boys how to shoot.

Girls?

No, I don't like guns. Never did, still don't.

How about you, Fred?

While I was a senior at Sweetwater, I was going to school in the morning. In the afternoon, I'd get on a bus and go over to the Midway driving theater. And I'd walk about a block from there to a little building that was in the middle of nowhere. And in there, they were building bows and arrows, patterned after -

I remember that.

Patterned after the reeker bows that - I'm not sure what age group it was, back in the early, probably before the year 1000, I guess. But anyway, it's a reeker bow that gives the arrow exceptional speed. And I did that for about a semester, learned to shoot. In fact, I used to hunt - never really successful, but it was fun to get out and get so close to the game. The deer would talk within a few feet of you, the does.

Right.

That was fun.

You know, Etta Bell was talking about kids, grandkids. I didn't mention about my grandkids. I have 13 granddaughters and one grandson.

OK, this is a test. Give me their names, oldest to youngest.

All 13 granddaughters? Well, the oldest one is probably at least 40 years old. And the youngest one is 10 years old. And don't ask me how many great grandkids I've got because I don't even keep track of them.

OK, we'll get that on paper some other time. Is there anything else you guys would like to add?

I think you've pretty much covered it.

Yes, this is -

Well, we've had a good time. I have, anyway.

Yes, it was fun.

I hope there was something there that you can use.

Oh, something - I'd say lots. There was so much. Just totally different stories than anyone else's.

I WANTED TO ASK ABOUT THE HOTDOGS, IF THEY GOT HOTDOGS AT – OH, WHAT WAS HIS – THE SUPERMARKET ON THIRD?

Supermarket on Third?

DOOGIE'S?

Miller's?

Glenn's.

Glenn's.

MUST HAVE BEEN GLENN'S. KATHY KORKIS SAID THAT SHE WOULD GO DOWN THERE, AND THIS WOULD BE 1940, 1939, 1940, 1941 – THEY WOULD GIVE HER A HOTDOG TO EAT.

Yes, they did.

DIDN'T GIVE YOU ANY HOTDOGS?

No.

OK, I WAS JUST ASKING. I THOUGHT THAT WAS -

That must have been Glenn's Market.

YES, IT WAS GLENN'S MARKET.

Because Safeway or Piggley Wiggley wouldn't have -

SHE'D HAVE A HOT DOG AND SHE'D JUST TAKE IT AND EAT IT ON THE WAY HOME.

One thing else, my sports activity in San Diego – I guess I was pretty good – but anyway, I had a Rohr team all the time, and during World War II, they had these Navy bases around, like Green Field and Brown Field and Camp Elliott, the Marine base up in Mira Mesa, Palomar. They'd always want to play basketball against us. So we got to playing with all those guys. Well, one of the guys I played with at Rohr, he got drafted and was stationed at Green Field. And he was a Specialist A, that was an athletic guy that made all the rest of us sailors do exercises. He was on the basketball field at Green Field, and we went down and played, and at that time – I recruited three guys on that team from Green Field and they played on the Rohr team. We played in the San Diego league here in town. And one of them had played for Kentucky for two years and got drafted, and he was stationed at Green Field. After the war he went back to Kentucky in 1946, 1947 and 1948, and they were national champions of NCAA basketball in 1948, and the first five on that team were the first five on the AAU champions, were the Olympic team that went to England. And this fellow from Green Field, his name was Kenny Rollins, and he was captain of the Kentucky team, and he was co-captain of the Olympic team, and he's still alive. I talk to him in Indiana all the time. A few years ago – my youngest son, Kenneth, was named after Kenny Rollins and me. We didn't know what else we were going to name that one. I keep in touch with him all the time. That team from 1948 still has reunions in Kentucky, they're going to meet next month. There's only two of them left from that team, 1948, and he's one of them. I hope this summer I can get Kenny to come out. Another kid went to Idaho, went back to the University of Idaho and played basketball there. And a few years ago, both of those people got put into the Kentucky sports hall of fame and the Idaho hall of fame for basketball. And I enjoyed that.

You met them out here.

Nice guys.

Oh, yes. I've had a lot of fun with my sports activities. I bowled a lot for years. Was president of the Citrus Belt bowling association. I was one of the top left-handed bowlers in Southern California for two years, years ago. Our whole family bowled a lot, too, right?

Yes.

Oldest son, he was good. He belonged to the Pacific Coast pro bowlers association for several years.

Anything else? No?

I think you've pretty well covered it.

I think so, too.

Thank you so very much. Had a wonderful, wonderful time.

(AUDIO AND VIDEOTAPE ENDS AND BEGINS AGAIN)

. . . and we were at Sweetwater that day, and the Japanese kids had to go get in the buses and they hauled them up to Santa Anita racetrack. Well, I stayed in touch with a kid that was on the track team with me, Tommy Kasono, all for a long time, and eventually after the war, they settled in Chicago, and then I lost track of him. A few years ago, his cousin was in the 1942 class, Edith Kasono, and I went to the reunion and I asked her about Tommy, who was a cousin to Edith. She said, oh, no, he's still living in Chicago. He was service manager for the Chevrolet agency for years, he's retired and all that. So we got him to come to our 50th school reunion. And I had a 5-by-7 picture taken of him in the track; he was a C-dash man. Had a picture of him and had it blown up to 5 by 7. I kept that all these years. I put it in a frame, signed the dates and all that stuff. I gave it to him that night.

At the 50th -

At the 50th reunion.

It was really sad when they jerked those Japanese students out of our -

They did. But you know -

Classes.

But I know what would have happened, if they hadn't taken those people away. They would have all gotten killed.

I don't think so.

You think so?

I do. I know. We know Japanese families in this area down here, they had underground stuff with short-waves, they had guns and everything else.

Well, Gaudis did.

So you believe they were -

Well, Yamamotos did too.

So you believe that they were communicating with the Japanese -

He went down there all the time, he'd go down there and drink sake with them.

The submarines?

That's what they say.

They had a shabby old house, but underneath – And the Japanese women would go over to Japan every year. They couldn't take American money. But they would take and sew the money inside their dresses, their clothes, to get it out of the United States.

Yes, people still do that.

It's crazy. They bring dope back, too.

(AUDIO TAPE ENDS)

What a way to end!

You got that on tape.

Not only that, Susan, I had a house in Rosarito Beach for 30 years, too. But I haven't been down there –

(VIDEOTAPE ENDS)