

LANDMARKS SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

1600 Juanita Lane Belvedere-Tiburon, California 94920 415-435-1853

Transcription of Taped Oral History

SIDE A

Narrator: Francis (Frank) Brooks

Interviewer: Jeanne Ortalda

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I: This interview is made at Frank Brooks home at 1731 Centro West, Tiburon, CA. Let's start with your mother and Father and where they lived, Frank, when they first came here.

N: Well, they lived over in Belvedere in the... right across from City Hall, now. And my father was in Tiburon and I have letters that he wrote to his mother and he was here in 1907. He was a fireman in the railroad in Tiburon and he finally went over to what they call the Coaling Station. People who are familiar with the Net Depot which during the war used to make nets, well, that was the Coaling Station. So he transferred over there and in the meantime, he bought a lot up on Centro West St. right below the old church which at that time was a mission. We have a document for that; it was \$75 and he paid \$25 down and monthly payments to follow, which he didn't say how much the monthly payments would be, but anyway, we have it verified it was \$75 for the lot.

Then when my father built the foundation out of stone off the hill and he had the foundation complete from what I understand from my mother and I was ten months old when my father died so I didn't know my father, but he was 31 and I figure a lot of his buddies were working in that area there in the 30s and the 40s. My mother had four children, I was a baby, and all his buddies built our house, and I also have it verified, it cost us \$800 which

was a lot of money in them days. They used to work on the weekends and Saturday they worked like mad; Sunday was kind of a holiday that they had the sawhorses out and planks and it was more or less a potluck. Being a lot of Italians and Irish up on this hill, they just had a good time; it was the biggest event in town. I remember my mother talking about they had horseshoe games out in front and one of the Italians played the accordion and they used to have a lot of good times. A lot of people, not only of the railroad came up; I remember Mr. Bryruis, my grocery man, he used to come up there and talking about banging his fingers and what not, trying to hammer nails. And the family joke now is that the damn railroad didn't have windows big enough. We had cabooses, the windows were too small so we had to buy the damn windows and that was terrible and a bathtub.

I: But you got the wood from....

N: Yeah, the railroad, from what I understand, I know they got a lot of wood from the railroad. In my day, when I remodeled the house I used to see lot of NWP in the stuff and boxcar red paint on the boards and , oh my God.

I: That must have been good oak wood.

N: Well, no. Yes, it's redwood. It's good wood, better than you have nowadays. Well, anyway, when I realized that I said we'd have to paint this quick or the railroad will come up and say, "How do you like living in my house?"

I can't say too much about my father because as I said, I really didn't know him. It's hearsay, I remember people talking to me about my dad and he was the one that was on a locomotive (he was a fireman) that went off the pier.

I: Was that Number One Twelve?

N: Yeah, it was One Twelve; it's up in Sacramento, now in a museum. I was told that he was the hero of the day because everybody had the bib overalls on and the engineer got caught in one of the brake levers and he didn't come up and being my dad was quite a boatman, from what I

understand, he went down and freed him and he saved him and that was a big deal.

I: His job was fireman on that.....

N: He was the fireman on that, yes. How I knew he must have been a good swimmer and a good boatman because uh, and my son now works down at the yacht club and they remodeled the yacht club and there were the artifacts there and a picture of my dad's boat. So he was a member of the Corinthian Yacht Club like I am, now. So it kind of goes back a long ways. And another thing on my father, I remember that my mother said that he made as much money on his launch by taking fishing parties out on a weekend as he did working in the coaling station. So that's about all I can say about my father because, as I say, I didn't know too much about him.

I: Oh, yes. Would you tell us a little about your mother going to the hospital in San Francisco when she was going to deliver you?

N: Well, yeah, my mother actually told us that we were all born in the French Hospital in San Francisco and she used to get the ferry for the Little Marin, leave from Tiburon and stop in Belvedere and Sausalito and get on (most of the time) the Eureka or the Tamalpais and go over to San Francisco and then get the trolley and go up to the French Hospital which was off of Geary St. and that's the story of where we were all born, but I do know that we were all born in the same room.

I: That's amazing that she would go all that long way when she was about to deliver a baby!

N: (Laugh) So that was it and I don't remember living in Belvedere, but we did and until our house was being built and then I do remember, in Tiburon, of course I was pretty small but I remember I used to feed the chickens and everybody had chickens in the whole neighborhood. All the Italians and we had the de Tomasis, the Clancys, the O'Neils and Tom Canelli, Pastoris and Sumatachis. There was a mixture of Italian and the Irish that got along pretty well. And I do remember, in my days, It was a bargaining thing. My

mother had the first barbershop in town and I remember it was fifty cents for a haircut, but some of them (it was Depression time) couldn't afford the fifty cents so they used to come here with eggs or a chicken or vegetables or whatnot. It was kind of a bargaining situation there. I also remember that we had the telephone, I guess it was one of the first ones in Tiburon because I remember my mother used to be on the porch and she'd call for Mrs. Sumatachi or Mrs. Zukki or Mrs. Clancy, "Telephone!" and then we'd tell them they'll be here and they'd call back. So when they came over, they'd bring something over for their gratitude. Mostly vegetables. All the Italians had vegetable gardens here. And of course, the Irishmen would always bring over a bottle of wine or something. That was kind of a bummer.

I: (Laugh) But your mother had the sole support of the family, then. It was a barbershop.

N: Yes. And she did take in, I remember she took in a little laundry, too. Her stove used to be going all the time, a wood and coal stove in the kitchen. In them days all our kitchens were big and we had a big wood and coal stove and she would heat the water. She called it the Irish piano. She'd do a lot of laundry and hang 'em up on the line in the back. The whole back yard was clotheslines. Between doing the laundry and cutting hair and we also had a paper route in Tiburon. My mother had a route, my sisters and I and my brother didn't too much because he was working for a peddler over in Belvedere called Jason. He used to deliver groceries there and then on the weekends, he'd be up at the golf links which is now San Rafael Ave. I don't know how many holes, whether it was nine or eighteen, but he used to make a lot of money there. A lot of money was probably two and a half a day; he carried double bags.

I: That was Belvedere Golf

N: Belvedere Golf and Country Club.

Then my sister, my oldest sister, she did a lot of work. She didn't have a paper route so she started to work over at Belvedere helping people when they had parties. She used to wait on table there and maybe do the dishes

and stuff so she made a couple dollars out of it. My youngest sister and my mother and I, we had the paper route and I always had a dog, so my dog...I used to have one dog that would help me out. He took the paper in his mouth and drop it off when we had to go up some big stairs. We had a lot of cranky people here, too. If we didn't get the paper right in the doorstep, they'd let you know about it. Of course people in those days were pretty honest; we didn't have too many that would skip on the bill. Of course, knowing my mother, she'd probably go out and raise hell with them. They'd pay it in a hurry. (Laugh) Not like my son did when I'd go on the papers with him. He'd get beat out of quite a few with the new people coming in. But the old people were much honester and they were a good bunch of people. Had a good time.

I: What schools did you go to? And tell me some of your experiences at school with your friends.

N: Well, I started at Belvedere Grammar School because I think my brother and sister started there and they had a good teacher there. I don't know; I didn't learn anything in Belvedere.

I: What was her name?

N: Mrs. Hodge and Mrs. McCurdy. And then I come over here to Tiburon because we're so close to Tiburon. Throw a rock and we'd hit the school. Which I was always late, but anyway I.....

I: It was located where?

N: Right where the Bradley House is now. As a matter of fact, it was Brownie Bradley was our teacher for first to the sixth grade and we had Mrs. Beane for the seventh and eighth grades. Mrs. Beane was kind of a tough one there; I remember she'd get the yard stick on us once in awhile. She'd give us a bad time. But, you know, we had a great time in the school yard because it was so close and we used to play (all us kids) we used to play Kick the Can and Hide and Go Seek and so we had a good youth down here. We had no policeman. And the policemen think, "Well these kids

must raise hell", but they didn't because if you [did something bad] one of these Italians or one of the Irishmen, they'd just grab ahold of you and they took you in the back of the neck and "You go home and tell your mother what I did". Well, you wouldn't do that because you'd get it again. So we just laid off the ones that were mean. A couple of them that we did give a bad time to, they'd used to chase us which was the wrong thing to do and we just tormented them to no end. That was my grammar school days and we had good times there and I did go to Tamalpais High School.

I: Tell me about Tamalpais High School. How did you get there?

N: Well, it's in the same location and we had a bus, Barr's bus and as I think about it now, he used to charge... well, I don't remember because I never paid. I guess maybe because I didn't have a father, whatever, but I was a mean one and gave him a bad time. But he used to take us up to high school and that's how we got up to high school 'til my junior year, then I got an automobile which is another story. I paid seven dollars for it and I had no idea what automobiles were like and I was approached, "Would I like to buy a car for seven dollars?" I didn't have seven dollars, but I finally got seven dollars by working twenty-five cents an hour and I made seven dollars and I bought this car and they showed me how to drive it. It was a Model T Ford and they had what they call a ruxell on it; that was an over and under (high speed and a low speed). And I bought that and I drove it back and forth to high school for about a year and a half. I remember the gasoline was seventeen cents a gallon. I shouldn't say this, but I couldn't afford seventeen cents a gallon because my mother used to take all my money. So a couple of us guys that went to school (I played football with a few of them there) so we used to go out in a rowboat and we'd have five-gallon cans that were square so they were pretty easy to carry. So we'd go out [with what] we called a Oklahoma Credit Card, and we used to siphon gasoline off of these boats that were on the moorings and we'd get maybe two or three of those five-gallon cans and that would last us almost a month. That was hell to siphon on that and get sick and throw up and anyway it was worth it to get back and forth to school.

After I got out of high school, I remember that someone wanted to buy it from me and I was going to sell it to him. "You got a pink slip?" "What the

hell is a pink slip?" Theoretically, they stole it and I bought it and I was driving it for a year and a half and I didn't know the difference. But, today, I'd probably be out in San Quentin over that, but that was what did happen. And I sold it for a car radio for my first car when I went to work.

I: What a story! Well, tell us about Main St. and what was the topography around here? You said that Tiburon Blvd. was a levee?

N: Yeah, it went all the way where it is right now and it *was* a levee. At one time, before my time, I remember, I vaguely remember, that it was just all covered with water and they dredged all the Belvedere Cove and part of Tiburon and dumped all the mud spills into what they call now (we'd used to call it the mud flats) where Safeway, the Lodge and all that is today. But, prior to that, when it was a levee, they had a gas station where it's still a gas station right at the corner of Beach and Tiburon Blvd. and that was Ismall's. Jack Ismall's gas station. We had a ball club right across the street, had a back stop and the kids would go out and the railroad cars were parked out in front and when they hit a home run, the ball would go over the boxcars and that was a home run. But they got to be pretty good because it was a semipro team. I didn't play on it, but I had a little concession going on that. Lou Foster and I, I guess we were both characters then, we used to go down and buy soda water from Hooper and we used to get it for what his cost was. I think it was a dollar and a quarter or a dollar twenty cents for a whole case and we used to sell it for ten cents, so we made pretty good money on that.

I: Was Hooper's a store?

N: Hooper's was a bar in town. He was a great guy and everybody loved him. He was quite a character. I could go on with Hooper's bar for quite a bit, but, anyway, getting back to the little concession that Lou Foster and I had, he used to help us out, so we picked up about eight, ten dollars on a weekend selling soda water to the people out watching the ball game. Incidentally, the Tiburon ball club was a great club and people wouldn't believe it, but people used to line up from way down almost to Main St. all the way up to where the Cove Nursery would be now and a lot of them

would be dressed up in suits and ties and it was a big event. It was the biggest event in Tiburon because there wasn't nothing else to do.

I: Was it all played in the railroad yard?

N: No, in the mud flats.

I: Where were the railroad yards then, in relation to the mud flats?

N: Well, there was Tiburon Blvd. and then there was the mud flats, there was quite an area there, oh, maybe six or eight hundred feet out and that was the start of the railroad and they used to park their railroad cars in there for the repair shops and so when they were playing baseball and someone would hit a good ball, it'd go over those boxcars, it was a home run. And we had a lot of characters watching that. I remember one of them. We had a laundry, Japanese laundry, Nobe's uncle, I believe it was, and we used to call him Charley Laundry; so we knew him by Charley Laundry. He'd like to have a couple of drinks and he'd get down there and he hollered, " Hit'em home flat!" And we also had some characters here, the Sumatachis, there were three of them on the ball team. The uncle used to come down here. There were only three good players from Tiburon, Johnny Sumatachi, Sumatachi and Sumatachi. That was a kick there; we used to give that poor guy a bad time because he had to wear a Sunday hat and we used to throw little pebbles and try and knock his hat off. He'd scream and raise hell with us, but he never did catch us. There's where I think the characters started in Tiburon was with the ball club. They had, to mention a few, Johnny Peep Peep...

I: How do you spell Johnny Peep Peep?

N: Johnny Peep Peep, that's all. P double E P, that was it. He'd get a little bag on and we knew he had the heat on because "Peep, peep! Peep, peep!" So we gave him a bad time, As a matter of fact, the kids used to come over just to see him; he was such a character. Always wore his wine-colored suit and derby hat. Oh, years ago, hey, we used to leave early in the morning when I worked on the bridge and I used to see him down in the Laundromat

He was standing there in his long-handles and watching the clothes going round and round and each time I see him his pants were getting shorter and shorter. If it'd been much longer, it'd have been knicker-bockers. But he was a town character.

I: What did he do for a living?

N: He worked in the railroad yard. He was a laborer there. He was quite a guy; he kind of kept to himself, but he sure liked to drink his wine. Every Sunday he'd tie one on and everybody called him Peep Peep because that was all he would do, sit at the bar and get a big bag on and "Peep peep, peep peep". So that's what happened with this handle of his.

Oh, we had a lot of characters in Tiburon. We had Champ Sawyer; he worked down at what they called the car shop and he wasn't too bright and they got him in a fight with a great big fellah, I remember that. They sent a fellah, name of Chetta; he weighed about 300 pounds and they were putting on some kind of event, so they had that poor guy running in the summertime with an overcoat on and rocks in his pockets, trying to get him in good shape. And then I remember the event of that. He went in and they had it all rigged up for him and he fought Chetta. He saw Chetta come out at 300 pounds and he just about.....fell over, right there. They had a ring, I remember, it was up in the old motorboat house over on Beach Rd. which is Allen apartments now. It was a theater and they set up a bar there, I mean a ring and Chetta and (we called him) Champ Sawyer, they got into the ring there and Chetta took a dive, so Champ really knocked him out so everybody called him the Champ.

Oh, I could go on and on with the characters of Tiburon and some of the events that they had, but I remember at one time when we were at Dick Williamson's when he still owned a garage on Main St. and then he was assistant fire chief in the volunteer fire department, a whole bunch was there, all the old timers, we took John Musso up with us. Oh, there was about a dozen of us, I guess and we went up to St. Helena. "Let's see Dick." He was in a rest home. It was his 90th birthday. A lot of laughs up there; he was delighted to see us. I remember he didn't have any teeth and the people sent us a big lunch and they had peas and old Dick said, "God damn peas taste like rocks. I can't chew 'em." You know, we laughed. So Musso

was up there; we took Musso up and he kept falling asleep all the way up, but after the conversation going at lunch, we were kidding one another back and forth, Musso, I'll never forget this, he said, "Dick, you remember Sam the time he shoot Charley? I know you see him; I see you run around the corner. What the hell, Dick, we're too old to put in jail, now; we're gonna die pretty quick." And old Dick, he kinda smiled a little bit; he didn't acknowledge it. He did see him, but then Musso said, [Frank is imitating an Italian accent] "The son of a bitch. He shoot Charley, he run away, he come back, he pick him up, he kiss him 'Charley, my best friend.' You know that. He leave him. Sam was a big bootlegger; I think Charley, he tried to get in on the I don't know, but he shoot him! I remember" So that was...everybody kinda got a big kick out of, well, not a kick, we were kinda surprised on that. But that was another one of the characters. Pop Mantegani, he used to tell us he was getting pretty old. He worked in the railroad yard and he owned all of Tiburon after awhile. He owned the building when they first started the Corner Market. he owned the bar downtown. To me, he'd say, "How the hell do you think I got the money, work in a railroad yard? He was one of the biggest bootleggers in town. He come out and admitted it. There were four or five little bootleggers around here; it was way before my time, but there are a lot of good stories on that. They can be verified by a lot of the old guys that listened to it. Getting back to Main St., well, right where the ferry comes in now, we had a big ferry slip where the Eureka used to come in about once a day to pick up the mail and deliver all different things to the railroad yards, but most of the time it was all the Marin. It used to go over to Tiburon, Belvedere and Sausalito and that was the main transportation out of Sausalito. At the ferry slip we used to have a lot of fun when we were kids spearing the fish. We used to go out between the piles and had a lot of fun doing that. A lot of people don't remember, or don't believe it, but where Guaymas's is now used to be a boat way . And that was kind of fun watching them pull up the ways Then he had a big hardware store and, you know, people would go down and buy paint and buy nails and whatnot.

I: What was the name of the hardware store?

N: Old Dag Hardware Store. And then, next to Old Dag was the where the Corner Market first started in the McNeil building. There used to be a pool hall in there. Prior to that time, I understand it was a big saloon. Next to that was Sam McDonough, Milt McDonough's father, and that ark that he lived in is still there. They used to have a string of rowboats and I remember he used to rent them out for two fifty a day and he had motor launches that he used to take the boats out and then when he 'd come in in the evening, he'd get us kids (we'd go down and hang around to see what was going on), we'd help tie up the boats and hose them down and Sam used to hook them up and Sam used to pick them up at the dock. We kind of helped out and by doing that, he didn't give us too much. Once in awhile we'd get a couple of tokens, but if we ever wanted to row a boat or whatnot, Sam would never say "No" to us. We'd always go rowing out to Belvedere Cove and go fishing. Fishing was good. I remember one time I was fishing, my grandmother used to come down, and all of a sudden she popped up at the front door and Holy Criminey, my mother wouldn't know what to do; we'd have to kill another chicken and us kids used to cry with chicken; we wouldn't eat the chicken. They were our pets. So, my mother said, "Go out and catch me a fish". And by gosh, there weren't too many times when I didn't come back with a fish, fishing was so good. Striped bass with a limit of five, but, as a kid, if they were biting out there you'd just keep on catching them and give them to the neighbors. I used to catch quite a few bass in my day, mostly out of Bel Aire Point. If we didn't catch bass, we'd catch rockfish. Rockfish was pretty easy to catch.

Well, that was Sam's and Dick Williamson was next door and he had a big garage and he had a gas stop for the boats. The gas stop went on for a long ways, I don't know whether Sausalito had one or not, but there used to be a lot of boats come in to get gas..

I: It was a Standard Station, wasn't it?

N: It was a Standard Station. We used to help carry gas down to the boats. I 'd know it was good for a tip or so. And next door to that was...oh, incidentally, in Dick's, after we learned how to swim, we used to dive off his dock and it was kind of fun.....and it was Sam Vella's, the restaurant and next to the restaurant was where he lived. Then they had, where the Sweden

House is, the shoe shop at that time. And later on, my sister had her first beauty shop there, But anyway, that was.....

I: Her first beauty shop was in the Sweden House?

N: My sister's. This was the first beauty shop in town was right here [in his own home].

I: But I didn't know that the Sweden House used to be a beauty shop.

N: It was a shoe shop and my sister took it over for a beauty shop. And they had a trap door there and the rum runners used to bring in their stuff and put it through the trap door. They had a garage door there at one time; it looked like a regular garage door and they used to bring their boat in at high tide and unload their stuff and haul it out in trucks from there. So that's quite a story in that. Of course I'd never seen it; I was too young, They'd do it at night, anyway.

Then, next door was the big place, the big hangout, that was Hooper's bar and Emily Hooper and Bert. Everybody loved them. Matter of fact, I used to clean up, when I went to high school, I used to clean up the bar every day. I'd go down there at six 'clock in the morning and they had Mattie, which was a black lady, she used to cook my breakfast about a quarter to eight. I started at six and I'd mop up the place and clean up and she gave me a great big breakfast and sometimes she'd even make lunch for me. Gee, I'll never forget the day I was cleaning up and they had a bath in there and a pair of false teeth in the john. [Laugh] I called Mattie; I didn't know what to do with it, so she just picked it up and "Oh, (it was Frotian or somebody) "Oh, that son of a bitch got drunk last night". She picked the thing up, put it in a glass, left it over the register. I never forgot that; it blew me away, but that's how it worked

SIDE B Tape I

N: Then we had Hooper's [on Main St.], then Chapman had a grocery store there, I remember that, and that was a Post Office and a grocery store and then we had Weller's, an ice cream store, next to that was the Corinthian Pharmacy, of course, the Corinthian Yacht Club. Then across the street, they had Barr's garage; they used to do repairs and had a gas station there and run a taxicab and then the bus to the high school. Plus he used to take us Tuesday nights and Saturday nights up to Mill Valley Sequoia Theater. It was ten cents to get in. I had a story on that; we used to try to sneak in. Somebody would get in, we'd give him ten cents, we didn't have enough money. And we'd sit by the exit and we'd all get lined up and as soon he opened up the door, we'd run in and close the door and they couldn't find us. So we lots of time got in for free.

Then across the street from Barr's, they had Byruis's grocery store and they used to have free delivery. And then there's Harvey Anderson's butcher shop. And we had Hazel Hunt's; it was a restaurant, this black lady and they'd been here for a long time. And then they had Rossi's bar of which a lot of stories we had here. After the war we had a lot of fights in that.

I: Was that where there was Harbor Lights?

N: Harbor Lights, yeah. It was Rossi's bar. Then they had a big lot; it was Musso's lot; there was nothing there from the bar over to the corner and every once in awhile they had a carnival coming into town. And that was a big deal. They had a big tent up there and they had the parade of concessions, you know, throwing the balls and knocking some of these things over. So that was quite an event in Tiburon. I'll never forget that. They had one of the locals up there. They had a ring and had prize fights. They had some pretty good sized boys here. It was before my time; I was a kid, then, but they used to get in the ring and they'd fight and they used to get, I guess, ten dollars or so and that was good money. There were some pretty tough kids here. So they used to get in there and, I never forget one time I couldn't get in; I don't know what the price was, but one of the guys got in and I gave him some of my money that I had and he got in and he started poking the tent where I was going to go through and I found it. I started underneath the tent and I got a kick in the rear end and it hurt so bad

I had to come home. But I remember I got in a couple of times and watched the fights.

We used to run through the railroad yard, though, all the time and that was sort of a kick. We had what they called a railroad cop. He used to chase us and that was a lot of fun. We used to torment him; we'd get on the train and ring the bell and he'd come running at us and we were hiding under the car or over the car. Ballard, that was his name, Ballard. He knew me by my first name. I used to go down to the freight yard just to go through all the apples and pears and stuff and we used to steal those right out of the car and he used to go crazy. But anyway, not that we wanted to eat them, but just the idea that we'd have him chase us.

I: Well. there was a big trestle walkway over the top of that.

N: Yeah, they call that the via but seemed to be a long way down for me at that time; it was way down almost to the point at the sewer place. That was alright, but it was a lot more exciting to cut through the yard. We'd knock a hole through the fence and sneak through there and then everybody would holler at us, "Damn kids!" So that was kind of fun; we used to do that. As a matter of fact, it was great when they chased us because it was something to do and there was nothing else too much to do around there except we did have a good time. We all had our fun downtown; we used to play baseball, believe it or not, right on Main St. We had a ball and bat and we used to throw a hat or something down for second base or first base. Not many cars were there when I was a kid.

I: Did you break any windows?

N: Naw, I don't know; I don't remember if we did or not. Probably did, I don't remember. I used to hang around a lot down on Main St. because I delivered the papers down there. I used to sell the papers to the railroad men and I had a route down there all of Main St., Corinthian Is. and part of Paradise Dr. That was a drag; I had to do that six days a week. But I remember selling papers was quite an experience because I worked three days a week down there and it was three cents a copy. I sold the *San Francisco News* and the *San Francisco Call Bulletin* and once in awhile

you'd get a big spender and he'd give you ten cents for the three papers and that one penny I got...sometimes I'd get it but most of the time I didn't, my mother would let me have it to save up to go to the show which was ten cents. How I made most of my money was we used to go along the beach and try and pick up a coca cola bottle or something and wash the seaweed off. It was always good for a penny. I used to bring it down to Weller's ice cream store. He was such a nice guy we didn't want to do it too much, but once in awhile he'd put them all out on the porch and we'd turn around and steal them off the porch again and come in and turn 'em in again to get enough money to go to the show. We didn't like to do that because he was a great guy; I really used to like him. I'd buy an ice cream cone for a nickel and he'd give me a scoop and about a half, you know, and he always liked us, so the kids always liked Mr. Weller.

I: You were saying something about Jason; I heard his name before and he was the vegetable man. Could you tell me a little bit about what he did?

N: Well, no, not too much. My brother worked with him. I remember he used to have a route around Belvedere and he used to deliver, you know, the fresh produce and stuff. My brother used to carry them down the stairs, you know and whatnot. It was pretty good because at the end of the day what he didn't sell, then he would give to my brother. So we had quite a bit of goodies that way. Of course, my mother used to make more soup; we used to have a lot of soup in our day. But, I don't know, looking back at that, I mean, I think, "How the hell did they do it?" You know. But it's a different breed of cat them days; I mean everybody kind of took care of one another and my mother was a hard-working, honest person. And they took care of her and I imagine, thinking about it now, there were probably many a meal she did miss, but she took care of four of us. So we had a good, happy life.

I: You must have known just about everybody in Tiburon in those days.

N: Yeah, it was a kick, you know. I did after my years and then I came back to Tiburon after the Service and I got married and I was doing a lot of construction work so I was never home too much until one day I realized that, "Gee, my kids are growing up so much; I'm missing the boat." So I

went to work for the Town of Tiburon for a short time and ended up with a piece of cake. I remember Lou Brunini was taking me around and showing me the town. Well, he couldn't believe it because everybody was, "Where is he now?" and I got a kiss from this and a kiss from that. I knew everybody in town. I didn't know the street names so much, but I knew where the Creighton's lived and where the deTomasio lived and where the Weldons lived and the Ericsons lived and I know everybody by name. That's how I know Tiburon. And that was a big kick there. I still, at this time, I know more about this town than most of the police department, all the police department. You name it and I know the house, you know. Still do.

I: And what did you do for the City? What was your job?

N: I, uh, well I ran the street sweeper so I knew every house in town. When I was hired in the City, it was the Public Works. So I did about everything, road patching, tree trimming, painting and, you know, everything that had to be done, we did. We started out with a pick-up truck and finally we got a dump truck and then we got a skip-loader. I know how to run a skip-loader. So then, things just worked out. It was a good job; I worked twenty years to the day and that was my last job.

I: Well, tell me, when you got out of high school, did you go straight into the Service?

N: No. I graduated from Tamalpais High School in 1941 and I went to work the next day up in Napa ...rock quarry Rock Company and I worked on a power shovel which everybody used to call in them days a steam shovel, but it wasn't steam, it was gasoline. I worked up there for about nine months and I learned how to, the guy liked me and I learned how to run the machine. My uncle was an operate engineer in San Francisco and he got me a job down here. I started playing around equipment; I was running the crane and I worked for a lot of contractors in San Francisco. Then I met some gal over there; she was a cute little girl. I thought, "Ah, she was something else." She went to work in Marinship and I went over there to follow her over there and I went to work and they put me to running a crane.

I: Where was Marinship, exactly? They built boats for the war...

N: Yeah, they built the oil tankers. That was.. well, they used to have a distillery what I used to call...right where the distillery was which is, uh..

I: In Sausalito?

N: Yeah, which would be the northern part, it'd be up by, uh, well, I guess they call it Gate Five and then that was right where it was. As a matter of fact, they still got going there, it used to be the mole loft they call it. There's a lot of little art shops and boateries and whatnot there right today. So, uh, yeah I run a crane there; I run a bridge crane for awhile and I went on a gantry and then I didn't stay there for very long. I went into the Service.

I: But you met somebody there. Before the Service? You met this cute girl?

N: Yeah, that was before the Service, yeah. Actually she was already married, so...

I: Oh, no!

N: No, I met my wife after the Service. I met Pat at a dance and my mother was in the hospital at the time and I went up to see my mother. By God, she had this girl with her that I met at a dance. It was my wife. At that time I wasn't going to marry anybody and so we got chatting around and I couldn't get a date very easy with her because she was working so much; she was a student nurse. And then after, we kinda got together. I say to you, she was my best friend and I married my best friend and we still have a great time, a wonderful time. I wish that could happen to everybody.

I: So, right out of high school, you worked for awhile and then..Let's see, that was '41 when you got out of high school and the war was about started...

N: Yes, the war got started and then I tried to get into the Navy and I couldn't because I took my glasses off; I had to step up and go home and eat more carrots and carrot juice and all that. So I went back to the Merchant Marine; it was the same thing. I couldn't do it. So I had a guy, Bob Weeks, over here. He and I ...he stalled a lot. He could have went in; he stalled a lot, waiting for me to go back again. And I went back again and I couldn't do it so he went in and I kinda of flaunted around and they wanted to give me... I had one deferment because I was running a crane over there in the shipyard and, my gosh, it was a dollar thirty-three and a third. That's what I got per hour.

I: Was this Bob Weeks, was he Ray Weeks father?

N: Ray Weeks' brother. So he went in and I corresponded with him a little bit. So then, I went into the Service at the end of '42 and I got out in '46.

I: But where did you go? What were you doing in the Service?

N: Well, I went at Basic Training and I went to school for the Army in Baltimore. It's a tank recovery. So I ended up in the South Pacific and I went up to New Guinea and was in New Guinea for a long time. From New Guinea, I went up to Moratai Is. when they invaded Moratai Is. I was in the invasion of Luzon and then I was transferred into another company just about a month before the war started. And we started doing Basic Training again and getting in physical shape, combat shape, I guess they call it. A new thing, we got all new uniforms and they worked the hell out of us. Then, all of a sudden, the Atomic Bomb went off and we couldn't believe it there for a while. But it happened and, wow! So I did end up in Japan, but after the war was over with and that was quite an experience. I'm glad I did. I was there for about two months. I had enough points to come home, so I came home and then my mother left Tiburon. She went over to San Francisco to live with her sister...or to not live with her, but to be with her.

I: So she left this house, then. But who was in this house....

N: We rented this house; we rented it for forty dollars a month. Then I went back, after the Service, I went back to San Francisco. I was there and my mother passed away and that's when I met my wife and we came back to Tiburon and everybody, all her friends, were moving down the Peninsula, down to Burlingame and South San Francisco. In the meantime, I went to work. I run a backhoe down by the Holy Cross Cemetery doing a big housing down there, the guys liked me and they told me they were going to build a house and I got the first lot. Any lot I wanted; I picked out one and it was a hundred dollars down. In the meantime, my wife was pregnant with the first child...

I: Didn't you get on the G. I. Bill?

N: Yeah, I could have had that, yes. I didn't take the G.I. Bill, no. What I did, I got a Cal Vet on another house. Then we came over here and I'll never forget, she'd never seen the house. Financially, we were gonna ...I owned one-fourth of the house at the time because we inherited it. So we were going to come over and save some money to do this and do that and we came in to Tiburon; we didn't have a heck of a lot of furniture and I ordered a truck from a friend I know. She come in and she had grass up to her knees. "Don't unpack the truck" [Laughter] We had a chicken house up there in the back and the guy who had lived here had a monkey in there and there were...Oh, she walked up there and there were fleas all over her legs, walked in the house, it was a shamble and she says, "The hell with this Tiburon". And I said I have to bring the truck back and I said just give me a break and I'll....I was hoping everything would work out. So we worked like mad and cleaned the place up. We didn't do too much to it. And then we got a call one day (I did have a telephone) I got a call and my wife was starting to cry and I grabbed the phone ...give my wife a bad time I'd kill 'em, you know. And it was, "Congratulations. Your house is completed". And she said she didn't want to leave Tiburon, then. Wow! That really made me feel good. So I decided to buy another house in Tiburon and in the meantime, I needed some money for the down payment so my sister furnished it and my brother, he was kind of reluctant, but he finally let go. And so we had the house appraised; it was appraised for sixty-five hundred dollars in 1951. So I tried to borrow two thousand dollars to remodel the

place to get rid of our barbershop which was the first shop in town which was right in the porch here. And I couldn't borrow two thousand dollars because it was the wrong side of the tracks.

I: Just a minute; would you tell a little bit about what "the wrong side of the tracks" meant.

N: Tiburon was the wrong side of the tracks.

I: Because Belvedere...if you lived in Belvedere, you would have got the money.

N: I'd have got the money, most likely, yeah. Because we were all blue collar railroad people and a lot of soot used to come up the hill, you know, so we were undesirable, I guess. So I cashed in whatever I had. I had some life insurance and my wife had life insurance. We just put everything we owned, everything but our shoes and we put this money I had, \$500 or something, that's all I ever had. I put it in a savings account and they turned me down here in Tiburon. Gene Trenham, I'll never forget him. I just.. I cried. So I went up to San Rafael and put my money in a savings there and I left it there for a couple of months and went back and they wouldn't lend me any money and finally I told them, "Well I thought maybe I'd come here; I do have a little savings account." They saw that I had, I guess, \$500 (I wouldn't swear to that). But, anyway, the assistant manager came up, saw that I had that and I had a job and, of course my wife was pregnant; she couldn't work, but she had a profession; she was a nurse. So, we got \$2,000 and I tell you, we worked night and day on this place getting it going. I remodeled. I got one wall and made the room bigger. So we kinda fixed it up the best we could for \$2,000. And I wanted to get some more money and they came down and looked at the place and said, "How much do you need?" And from there on in, I got a little more. And then I've been working on my house for thirty years. Now that I got it completed, all my kids are married and gone. But anyway, that's the story of my life, but we had good times here. Our kids had bunk beds ; we used to stack up four of them in one room.

I: But you did that in the basement, didn't you?

N: We did that in the basement and I also added on in the back. I had eight people living in here, so this is a big house, now. So that is the story of our house here.

I: How about your children and their experiences going to school and what the town looked like when they were going to school compared to when you were going to school?

N: Well, I think they had a good time; this is a great place to raise children because, say, in our block to Esperanza St. up to Racoon Lane, we had 26 kids here. [You'd say] "It can't be." But it is, because we had six, the Kuatanis had three, D' Amatis had seven, Pastoris had two, the Locatis had two and the Mosers, they had three and Ed O'Connor, he had three and next door, (I forget how many there; there were a couple of kids in there, too.) But there were twenty-six kids so they all played down in the school yard which was the Bradly House. So we could always look off the porch and see them and we also always had a dog and the kids would time it; about six o'clock, time we eat and they'd call them and a lot of the kids started to takin' a hike and tried to hide, so we sent the dog down and the dog would go right to the kids and we'd follow the dog and give 'em a whack on the backside and they'd come home. But they had good times, but I think we had better times. And of course, they did a lot of what we did, too. They had grass down there at where the TPC is. They had the big pond they used to fill up; it was just nothing but water. They used to get the railroad ties like I did and they used to go rafting there and they used to be soaking wet and come out with runny noses all the time. But that was part of life.

I: This pond was where, exactly?

N: At the tennis courts...down there at the lower courts.

I: Oh, near where the marsh is now.

N: Well, that marsh, the whole thing was full of water; they filled that one part in. So that was, you know, only two or three feet deep, but we used to go down there with railroad ties right off the railroad. We used to throw them in with a couple of boards, put 'em together and get a stake to paddle yourself around or push yourself around. They used to have a lot of fun. So, but, I think we had a better time because when I was a kid at their age, I had a rifle, a twenty-two rifle at age of ten and everybody here...I remember Buscher, the fire chief's brother...he and I were great hunters. Charlie Locati, which I met in the war over in New Guinea which I was talking about...still sailing with him to this day. Well, we had plenty to do here; there were no houses up on the hills and we'd think, "Who'd ever build on that rock pile" so we always had things to do. It was good huntin' up there, jack rabbits and ground squirrels, some birds. "What season?" Didn't need no season; we just shot 'em anywhere, no game wardens here. As I said, there were no police in Tiburon, but you didn't mess around here because someone'd grab ahold of you and give you a whack in the backside and that was it. You wouldn't mess around with them. So that was pretty good. And then we had good fishing and in my time I could always get a rowboat at Sam's and go rowing. And in high school I built the boat, a sailboat. It was in a storm, a rowboat came on the beach and the fellow that owned it looked at it and I tried to help get it up. I did help; I was in the water, trying to save it and pull it up. He didn't want it so he gave it to me and, Boy! Sure! I'd take it - like giving me a hundred dollar bill at that time. So I got...I was a high school kid and we got it up on, by what they call, a bridge. So after working hours we got one of those carts from the railroad and put the thing on and pushed it up the hill and in my basement here. So we built the boat, the both of us. We called it the *Lou Fran Charl*. I was Charley Locati, Lou Foster and I.

I: Now, you said it's by the bridge, is that the Corinthian drawbridge?

N: Yeah, the Corinthian drawbridge; that's where I got the boat. And then we went down and got the...after...they used to bring in these big carts that pull 'em by, uh...they had a little jitney pull 'em or they had wheels on it. We had enough guys to pull it, so we pulled it all up the way to the house

here. And then we built it and that was a kick. We knew that the keel needed a piece of sheet metal and I went down to see an old-timer there, Sandy McClain. He worked in the mill down on the railroad yard. "Hey, Sandy, any chance we could.." "Oh, for Christsake, don't bother me" "Hey, Sandy..." " Oh, what you want; I can't figure out what the hell you want," He talked kinda rough. "All right. Be here at five o'clock." You know, sure enough, there was a great big steel plate at five o'clock. And then we needed a few things cut on a band saw and we tell Sandy what we wanted and "Draw it out, Goddammit, draw it out". And we'd draw the thing out best we could. Sure enough, he'd cut it out. And then, in high school, we had a wood shop teacher and we took wood shop so we could work on the boat. A couple times he'd come down and kinda looked it over. He drove down all the way from school, after school he'd come down. And we'd tell 'em, "What d'you think of this?" And he'd tell us what to do and matter of fact, we'd make a pattern and he'd help us make it so he kinda helped us put the boat together. Then to get a sail, man, I didn't have no money; none of us had any money, so we would go down to the yacht club and sail under old Joe Mackley, the sailer and Jake Wasser. But old Mackley, he'd make us sand that boat and I'd work until my arms fell off. He gave me an old sail that was ripped. So I got that and then we needed a sewing machine and whatnot and down there at Old Dag Hardware Store, there was that guy, Charley King, he had a big sewing machine. He cut the thing out for us, no charge at all. We didn't have nothing. So we got a sail and got the boat and to launch that thing, it was a kick. I played football in high school; I got a bunch of guys down to lift that boat up on this here flat car. So we took it all the way down around the road. Got it down to Old Dag; they had a hoist, you know, to take up their fishing boats, just like Sam. So we put the boat in the water and, uh, a good story on that, what we did, well, I can't mention that, took a gallon of wine from his dad's wine cellar. All these Italians made wine, so we were going to christen the boat, so, instead of christianing the boat, we started drinking the wine. Oh, we got sick as a dog, but anyway, one day we didn't launch it, but the next day we did. So that's how we got started on the thing and then I had to put it some place. Dick Williamson and Sam there had a place there; we tied it up. They let us do that. I had it out there on a mooring for awhile; we put a big anchor out that we got somewheres. And then to get out to the boat, we used to dive in

the water and swim out to it then paddle it back over to Dick Williamson's and then put the sails up and go sailing. So, we had a lot of fun on that. And then each year we'd learn to modify it a little bit; we could turn the boat over and wouldn't get any water in it. We used to show off in front of the high school girls. We'd come in close to shore, flop it over and then jump on and everybody would scream and thought we were... So that was kind of a big show-off. We had a lot of fun on that. I had it until I went into the Service and that got busted up in a storm.

I: Oh, did it? You lost it.

N: Yeah.

I: Oh, too bad. Ah, when you moved here with Pat, is that when you had the job with the dredger?

N: Yes, uh huh.

I: And so tell me about how you actually changed the topography around here with that dredging.

N: Well, where the Cove Shopping Center is, right across the street was the Cove Apts. now already. And that was just all mud flats and it was a pickle grass. Oh, I tried to impress my wife, not my wife, but my father-in-law because I was just a grease-monkey in the...working on the dirty machines. So I went to work as a bakery salesman. I used to sell the donut flours and I used to make stuff. Anyway I worked there for awhile and wasn't making any money.

I: Was that a bakery right here in town?

N: No, that was in San Francisco. And then, I was coming home to Tiburon
[TAPE II SIDE A]

I: We were talking about when you came over and saw the big machinery at the Cove.

N: I was coming home one night after work, working in the bakery supply house and I saw this Charles Holburn. I recognized the name because we did a job...he was on a job with us on a different piece of equipment. So I knew who he was and what he usually did. He used to hit the bar down there in the Harbor Light and I went down and I really don't put out too much, not since I've been married, anyway. I went down to the bar and there he was and I had a beer, talking to him and asking what he was going to do and I asked him for a job. He asked me if I was OK with the union and I said I was. I had a withdrawal card, but I knew the fellow in the union, so I called up and I got cleared with the union and he told me to come to work and I went to work. I took the first bucket of mud out at...it was a drag-line...out at the...where the Cove Apts are now. And we were out there for about a year and a half, I guess. We used to put just a small pile of mud; we didn't dig down too deep. That's what we did. I learned quite a bit about doing mud work though Leslie Salt, because, of course I worked for Leslie Salt for a long time. So we had a pretty good knowledge of how to handle the mud. So, we were in and out in the Cove, but mostly in the drag-line and then as we left from there, I went up to Napa. I was up there for about three years putting all the levees in for Leslie Salt. We started from all the way up to Napa. And then we kept coming back and forth. We'd hit for maybe a week or two at Tiburon in the Cove and let it dry out, go in a tractor, a regular plow, and turn it up and let it dry and come back and put another lift on it. And when we were doing that, we went over by the Day home just past, oh, Paradise Cay and get a job there and then the fellows at Paradise Cay come over and asked us if we'd do some work for them. We ended up there for about, oh, I don't know, two and a half, three years. We did a lot of the dredging. They started with a small steam dredge and we come in with a big Lorain crane which was mounted on a barge and we took an eight-yard bucket and we had an inch and a half cable which is pretty good size. So, imagine, each bucket we took was a truck load. We actually built Paradise Cay. So I knew that place like the back of my hand and I could have made a lot of money because I could of said, "Don't buy here. This is where you want to buy. Don't buy there; buy here" because there was, looking at the photographs before it started, it looked like a little peninsula; it looked like a tear-drop. It was

real shallow, then a rock. In a big area it was all solid rock. So I had a lot of stories out there I could tell, but there's not too much interest in it now. Then I went over and we were working at the Cove again and we did Strawberry Spit and from there, Allen got ahold of us and we went over to the West Shore. I took my first bucket of mud out of West Shore...

I: What year was that about, Frank?

F: Oh, that was, I'm terrible on dates, but that was in the late fifties? Oh, and I'll never forget because I remember I used to take my kids walking out there to the old cod fishery and we used to pick up clams right on the shore; you didn't even have to have a shovel; we just had a little...oh, like a small rake. We used to rake a few rocks and get enough cockles there to make a big clam chowder and a matter of fact, it used to freeze up pretty well, too. But the kids enjoyed it and they'd go out there and get a little mud on their feet and catch clams and, uh, it was fun.

And then we took our first bucket of mud out of there and seen all the clams that we were destroying and trying to get people to come out and get 'em and it just never happened. And so that was kind of a sad situation because of all the fond memories I had, especially when I was a kid. We used to go out to the cod fisheries there and we used to get underneath the cod fish and the Chinese cook there and we used to make a lot of noise and he'd holler down to us and he always made a sheet cake and he used to bring us some. Of course when we were kids we were always hungry so we'd have a big piece of cake. Sometimes he'd have some milk for us there. We couldn't understand what he was saying, an old Chinese, but he was a great guy. I remember we did a lot of trips out there. We were hungry; we couldn't go down to the store and buy a bag of cookies, so we were glad to see the Chinaman. He'd always have a sheet cake for us.

And those were wonderful days. The days before that, we could talk about the ships out there; we used to row out to the ships. In a matter of fact, when I had my first sailboat, we used to sail out there and tie up and that was kinda a lot of fun. I remember seeing the big rats on the boat and sometime that was scary; they were as big as cats. We'd always go out to the four-masted schooners that used to catch the fish up in Alaska, codfish. Those were the days that people wouldn't believe, but some of my old

buddies could tell you about it and it's true. We had a lot of fun out there. But anyway, the West Shore, that was kind of a bummer around here, but I've seen that all happen. I've seen the spit (they are still fighting over the spit) but we did that job, we did the Cove and we did Paradise Cay and that's just around in here. Oh, I did several jobs on the dredge; I worked about seven years on the dredge. We put Tinsley Is. up there; that's a yachtsman's paradise and that was a job that they'd come out on the deck of a boat, on a barge, I should say, "Well, we want to save this. I like to have that. This is what we like to do." So we just kinda went along with the idea of this and that and we worked along with the vegetation. We made a nice place up there.

I: Where is Tinsley Is.?

N: It's up by, uh, it's up in the Delta. It's, oh, I'd say between Tracy, no, it's up a little bit past Stockton. Between Tracy and Stockton right up in the sloughs. That's the St. Francis Yacht Club owns that. And they took the Southhampton Light House which is over here north of Racoon Straits; they took that lighthouse and put that up there as a clubhouse on Tinsley Is. So that was a great job we had. There's a lot of history and a lot of things that we have done there in out there in Vallejo. I worked with Leslie Salt, worked *for* them (I didn't work on the contract) doing all the levees. Then we worked down in Alviso, went down well past Moffett Field in the south part of the Bay and we worked down there quite a bit. We used to work two shifts or three shifts. I remember, right behind us was a duck club and during duck season, I used to get more ducks off the dredge than they did. They'd shoot a duck and it'd come over the levee and land in front of the barge and we'd go out and look for it. Didn't have to shoot a shot and I'd get a lot of ducks. And that was kind of fun.

And after working on the dredge, I kinda got off the dredge. There were two reasons: They started getting the BCDC and we had permission to do this job and that job and nothing was happening because it had to go through meetings and meetings and meetings and then they had to get an OK from that and in the meantime we were being paid by the hour, so I started losing time and the boss said he was going to take off for two, maybe three weeks and I couldn't afford that rate with six kids. So I went to work

for Shamrock Sand and Gravel because I knew how to run the equipment up there. I didn't run the equipment, I run just the skip-loader. I used to keep all the bunkers full and I'd fill up the trucks when they needed it. And then I worked on the bridge; there was a pile driver down here and they were doing the Corinthian Harbor and they told me about it and said I should go down and see them. And I just happened to think, "These guys, I don't see my kids that much because I have to leave early in the morning and get home late at night and most of the time I'd see 'em in the morning they'd be asleep and at night they'd be asleep. I'd see 'em on a Sunday and then on Sundays I'd have to repair what they messed up, so I wasn't really a good father. My wife was a father and a mother, so one day I woke up and realized, "What the hell am I doing? My kids are growing up and I don't realize that I'm losing 'em." So that's when I decided to get off the dredge and I started in....I went to work in a yacht club and then from the yacht club I went to work for the City of Tiburon. I worked there twenty years to the day. So, today, I'm retired and I still keep busy; I help my son in the tree business. I don't climb trees, but I help him use the chipper and I get a lot of the wood and I stack wood and I have a little business on the side, selling firewood. And I got a little garden work that I do just to keep me busy. I'm very active down at the yacht club, yet. I still have a sailboat, of course, since high school. As a matter of fact, I'm sailing with Charley Locati. He's the one that helped build that first boat in high school and here we are, the old timers, but we aren't so old, yet, because we won our series last year.

I: That's wonderful. What is the class of your boat?

N: I have a Santana, twenty-two feet and we sail Friday night series. We won on not a spinnaker in our class. That's kind of nice; we worked hard at it, but we did it and it's more or less the idea, here come these old geezers, you know, "What the hell are you doing out here in the Bay, you old bastards?" you know. We always stay together; you've got to get up early in the morning to beat us. So, that was a thing that happened this year, so we were both kind of delighted. We're going to do it again next year.

I: That is wonderful. I wanted to ask you a couple more things and one was about the Rec. Center and your part in establishing that.

N: Well, I used to go down and that was another thing that we used to do on a weekend. It's just more or less like what they did around my house. On a weekend, there was not too much going on and you didn't want to hang around the bars all the time. So we went up and I used to help out whenever I could.

I: What year would that be, about?

N: Oh, that was in the early '50s. I remember, at Reed School, they had this great big redwood planks (and they were real redwood) and we tore the barn down and took that wood and put it over at the TPC [Tiburon Peninsula Club] and they helped build the clubhouse. And I remember, on the fireplace, there were a lot of rocks there, we used to go up and we got the rock off the hill. Pop Mantegani's brother was a good mason; he did a lot of fireplace work and he built that. I didn't do anything; I was just kind of a laborer there. I kinda helped moving the stuff around. One of the things...everybody hung around there because we had beer, the ball club, you know, they always had a little extra money and we had beer so we had free beer out there. There were a lot of laughs, kidding one another. We didn't work that hard, but we worked...that was kind of a recreation. You can't say we built anything; I would never take that credit. But, I do remember, people won't believe this, but they had a turkey shoot about this time...around Thanksgiving. To raise money for the TPC, we called it; now we call the Rec Center. I remember Hugo Tattani, one of the old timers, he built the big eagle and we used to shoot that. If you knock a wing off, you got a turkey or something. For twenty-five cents a shot. But, as kids, we used to hunt a lot, so we weren't no slouches, you know. We did pretty good. So that was just enough money that they would get me at different prizes. I remember Nikki Lamott. she used to write for the newspaper, I forget what it was now, was it the Ebbitide?

I: The Pelican, I believe.

N: The Pelican, I guess it was, yeah. and that's where I first met her, 'cause she was down there taking all the notes, who won this and that. Talking

about that, when I come out of the Service, I was talking to a lot of these guys, we don't talk about the war, but we all ended up with Expert Riflesman, whatever. We were all good shots because we hunted up there. It was good huntin'. There were no houses up on the hill; it was a rock-pile up there. Good huntin'. We'd shoot the hell out of everything, you know. It had to be pretty good shootin' because we did it two or three times a week. We used to hunt there and fishin' and boating and, I don't know, I think we had a better time when we were young. 'Cause nowadays, you can't launch a boat, you have to belong to a yacht club. We used to go off the beach to go swimming. Now they call the police on ya. No, we had a better time. Everybody respected...we raised hell, I don't think we were no angels, we raised hell. But we didn't raise hell like they did. We didn't steal out of houses and stuff, but we did...we used to go into yards, you know, and steal an apple or two. They taste better than ..someone give you a bagfull, I didn't want it, but if we could steal 'em, they'd taste better. And that's about the extent of it, you know. Of course, some of these little Italian kids that went there that weren't really with it, they'd chase us or something like that or throw a rock at us or something. Oh, that was all we needed; then we just tormented them. But if one of them grabbed ya and give you the back of the hand, you didn't mess with him anymore. Oh, the old church up here...

I: Did you go to that church? You're Catholic, aren't you?

N: Yeah. I was an altar boy for fourteen years, so I've been there a couple of times.

I: And you went to Old St. Hilary's to start with?

N: Yeah, yeah the Old St. Hilary's is what I'm talking about. Yeah, I can almost see it now, I mean I can see the Bradleys were in the front row and Tommy Cannelli. I can see them right now, I mean. And everybody wore their suits, all dressed up. I used to be an altar boy there and then I did collecting up there after I got over the altar boy stuff. I didn't know what the hell they was talking about when it was in Latin; they used to have it in Latin. I used to be able to read some of it, but I wouldn't know what they

was talking about; they could be swearing as far as I could tell. I didn't know what the hell I was doin'. I do remember it was Charley McNeil, one of the characters, and he liked his tea. I remember, every Sunday morning, he'd be up there about quarter to nine and he'd start ringing the bell. Everybody'd know it was time to get ready to go to church. One Saturday, I'll never forget that, he was up there and he had a little heat on for himself. This Saturday morning he was all dressed up and he was ringing the bell; it was Saturday instead of Sunday. [Laugh] I do remember that, you know. Poor Mrs. Bradley lived down at the corner, here and all the priests come down, you know. Every Sunday, they'd come down and she'd cook them a breakfast and they used to go down and and one of them used to stop down at Sam's and have a couple of drinks before he'd go back to Sausalito. He come from Sausalito over to here. I took care of that church there for awhile. When they got the new church, I kinda looked after it a little bit. The front door was kinda busted up and, actually, Mr. Buscher fixed it. I used to kinda look after it and, uh...

I: That was before the Landmarks bought it?

N: Yeah, and, well, lot of us like Mr. Testus I think, behind me there, he used to kind of watch it. One time I got up there and Hawthorne Terrace was just developing and somebody come up there with a trailer and loaded up a lot of rocks and Mr. Testus come down and talked to me. Of course, I was young then and I was in construction work. I was a pretty strong boy. He said that he went up and tried to stop them from taking a rock off the wall up there. He wouldn't do it. So I went up there and I made him do it. I'd push 'em right off the hill. And, "Who do you think I am?" I think I grabbed him. I'd take no stuff from him and I stopped that. Not only me, but I used to keep an eye on the place, too.

I: Oh, that was great. You were going to tell me also about the painting of Main St.

N: Yeah, that was the lady right next door, Connie Field, and her husband was with Fuller Paint and I think it was a promotional thing, but she got the consent of the whole town to paint it. And we got volunteers and I didn't do

too much paintin'....none. I don't think I did any painting because I was working on the dredge and I left early in the morning and wouldn't get back. My wife was involved in getting the lunches ready. They did a lot of volunteer work, going to the grocery store and they would donate whatever for the bread and someone would donate this. All the ladies around here would pot luck and feed everybody that was doing the work. And the workers, kids, grown-ups, older people, the whole community turned out. And it looked pretty nice, pretty good. The spirit they had around here, I remember my mother instigated putting up the stairs for the old church up here. Well, they didn't have any money, you know, ...

I: Stairs for Old St. Hilary's? You mean those outdoor stairs going up the hill?

N: Yeah. The main stairs going up, the concrete stairs. Well, they got together and they made spaghetti feeds. All the Italian ladies donated -

Everything was kinda donated. But the ladies that were putting up the yacht club, that was donated and they cooked up a big spaghetti feed. Oh, two or three dollars it was and when the word got out, people were lined up. But they made some pretty good money and that paid off for a lot of the improvements that they had. You know, you couldn't ask these people in Depression times, ask them to donate five dollars. Five dollars in them days, it'd be like five hundred today. There was no money. So they did that. I do remember that because I did a little work down there, as a kid I scrubbed the pots and pans and help clean up a little bit. So that's how we got a lot of that money.

I: Well, that is a wonderful report, your life and times here in Tiburon. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

N: Well, I think we could go on and on, you know. I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I think it would be a good idea maybe if you got some of the old timers together and listen in when they got started shootin' the breeze about, "Hey, do you remember this?" "Oh, no, gee, who'd remember that?" And we could keep goin' on about stuff. but what I say, a

lot of the things that happened in this town people wouldn't believe it today. But, I mean, don't take my word for it. If you want to be real technical, get four or five of us together, the old- timers before we die off, we'll tell you what it's all about.

I: Well, let's try to do that sometime.

This is the conclusion of the Oral History tape of Frank Brooks. The date is Nov. 21, 1993. Thank you, Frank. We appreciate your giving us your story for the Landmarks Oral History Program.