



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with
Fred Bregante, 1907-2006

December 2, 1999



[MP3 Audio File](#) [Length: 59:23] (27.1 MB)

This interview was conducted by: Robert G. Wright
Transcribed by: Betty Stevens
Supervised by: John Panter, Staff Coordinator

PREFACE

Nathaniel O. "Joe" Dunn is an avid fisherman and became a deckhand, and later a captain, in the sport fishing industry in San Diego. This interview gives detailed information on the activities involved in the daily, and/or per trip, business, and therefore is a worthwhile addition and of historical value to the archives of the San Diego Historical Society.

Shirley A. Brandes
December 29, 1998

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE

This is an oral interview with Mr. Fred Bregante. He is the brother of Katherine Ghio who started the Anthony's restaurants. He's about 92 right now. He came to San Diego in 1912 and was in the wholesale fish business most of his working life. Date: December 2, 1999 Interviewer: Robert G. Wright. To note in passing I interviewed Mrs. Ghio something like 10 years ago. A very charming lady.

RW: Can you give me your full name?

FB: Fred Sebastian Bregante. Originally it was Alfredo but I changed it to Fred to Americanize it. If you change that last letter to "i" in Italian, it means robber and assassin.

RW: Where were you born Fred?

FB: I was born in a little town south of Genoa, Italy. The town is about 18 miles south of Genoa. Anybody asks me where I was born I say Genoa, Italy. I was born June 18, 1907.

RW: You say you have a brother who is 101?

FB: Yes. Anthony Bregante.

RW: Is that how Anthony's restaurants got named?

FB: Yes, I guess so.

RW: How did you come to San Diego?

FB: My dad came to this country first and he worked for Palladini Fish Co. in San Francisco, either during the earthquake or before. Must have been before. He made a little money. He liked America so well he wanted to bring the rest of his family on over. From what I understand he went to the Bank of Italy then in San Francisco and they loaned him the money with a shake of the hand. He brought us to America. We landed in San Francisco, but because of the bad weather, my mother could not take that weather, so we moved to San Diego and dad got a job with his brother down here who had a wholesale fish market.

RW: Let's back up just a minute. What is your father's name?

FB: Anthony Bregante. My mother's name was Katherine Dentone

RW: So your sister was named after her then? What was your father's brother name?

FB: Germione. He had a wholesale fish market and my dad went to work for him and my brother went to work for him.

RW: So it was sort of a family trade.

FB: We never did any fishing. We were in the wholesale and retail end of it

RW: Is that easier than doing the fishing itself?

FB: Much easier. You are home with your family every night

RW: He brought you over in 1912.

FB: I was three years old. I don't remember a thing about it. I do remember San Francisco. They still had cobblestone streets, they weren't paved. I got my first automobile ride -- a friend of my dad's come over one day and gave me my first ride, which I never forgot. My mother couldn't take the weather. We moved to San Diego. We came down on a steamship. It was the Yale or the Harbor, I don't remember which one it was. We landed at 5th street. Then he went to work for his brother and my brother went down and started to work for him. My uncle put my brother in a retail market he had downtown inside of a butcher shop. It was on 5th and F Street.

RW: Did you live right here?

FB: We lived at 2227 Arctic, which is now called Kettner. It was a house that belonged to my uncle and my uncle rented it to my dad. There used to be an electric train that ran by there that ran out to La Jolla, but it had to go over a bridge on Arctic Street. There was a deep canyon right off of Laurel street there. There was a bridge across there for the train and a footbridge for the passengers and the wagons. Just on the other side Old Man Olson had a big sawdust pile down there that he used to supply the butcher shops and the bars with sawdust for their floors. The old brass spittoons were there. Of course, the butcher shops had it on the floors too in the refrigerator, when they hung beef up there. To keep the cold in and when it bled, it didn't fall on the floor.

RW: Did he have a sawmill, or he just acquired the sawdust and brought it in

FB: He acquired it from the sawmill because in the early days Benson Lumber Co. down there brought down great big logs -- a big raft of logs, about 600 feet long and Benson sawed them up and he got all the sawdust from the mills. He had a big pile down there. On Laurel and Kettner, where the big parking lot is. Hoboes used to go in there. Where the railroad track is today, the Bay came up to the railroad track, except for a couple of spots just on the other side of Laurel, south of Laurel, they had a brick factory there on the west side of the railroad track. Stuck out into the bay, kind of a little island. It caught fire then after that it closed up. Then we had the other brick factory in Rose Canyon. We had another one year at Reynaud Way.

RW: What did they use -- the clay out of the dirt?

FB: That canyon ran all the way down from State St. all the way down into Kalmia. Kalmia from India St. was a deep canyon there. That's why the bridge was across there.

RW: It's all been graded off.

FB: Filled in and graded off.

RW: You've seen a lot of changes here.

FB: Particularly in San Diego Bay because we were living right there. During World War I we could not get any warships into San Diego Bay because it was so shallow. Our piers were 1/2 mile long out into the channel. Creek St. pier had a little steam train running out there to pick all the freight up. Then at the foot of G Street we had the coal bunkers and then in 1915 they had just started to build a sea wall where the Municipal pier -- now it's called the Broadway pier -- because they finished it for the 1915 Exposition. From there up to where the depot is, that was all bay.

RW: The sea wall was put in in the 20's, wasn't it? That runs along what we call Harbor Drive

FB: No, that was finished for the 1915 Exposition because after the pier was finished, they had a big dance on the pier. That was finished for the Exposition because the water ran up to just west of the depot -- they had a freight house there where the wagons could break up and sometimes high tide water would come up to those bricks there. Then they filled that all in.

RW: Well, I know there was a sea wall built starting way down by the Navy pier, in that area all the way out to the Coast Guard and then it was filled in. The bay was dredged.

FB: The Naval Training Station and the Marine Station was all under water. That was all marshes. Tules grew there and ducks would migrate in the winter time, it was just black with ducks. You could take the shotgun, point it backward and I guarantee you'd get six ducks at one shot. That's all been filled in. That's when the Marine Base came in. I presume at one time early -- maybe centuries ago -- there was no division because all that mud must have been brought down by the San Diego River. Of course, we had a dam break down, I think it was Sweetwater Dam broke down at the other end of the bay and flooded the bay -- we had five days of rain -- the dam broke and it killed a lot of cattle, pigs, rattlesnakes.

RW: That was kind of fun to you as a kid; to others it was a tragedy.

FB: We used to get up early in the morning on Saturday, a bunch of us kids, and go fishing off the wall down there, catch 30 or 40 sharks and then go to school stinking like a bunch of fish.

RW: Did you go to Washington School?

FB: I went to Washington School when they had little green shacks in the back. The following year, then, they opened up the Washington School.

RW: This was probably in the early 20's.

FB: They opened up the Washington School in 1915

RW: Then you went on to Roosevelt?

FB: Went up to Roosevelt before they even had it finished. You had to walk on planks to get to the rooms.

RW: How did you get up there? Did you catch the streetcar up?

FB: No, my brother had opened up a fish market for himself at that time and I was getting up early in the morning and helping him out. I had a bicycle, that was our first delivery equipment. Later on he took all the big ones and I took the small ones and about a quarter 'til nine I would take off and pedal up the 12th St. hill to Roosevelt on my bicycle.

RW: You were working directly for him? Delivering fish. Did you have a little ice chest you carried the fish in.

FB: No, no, we just wrapped them up in a newspapers and the restaurants did the butchering. Everything is filleted at the market today and the customer gets the finished product. In those days all we did was scale the fish, wash it, clean it, cut the fins off, wrap it in newspapers and send it out

to the restaurants and the restaurants did their own butchering.

RW: Was that yellowtail?

FB: It was everything. We had an abundance of fish here.

RW: Was there a lot of fish within the bay itself?

FB: Oh yes. We used to fish out of the bay all the time.

RW: I understand sting rays were pretty good in there too.

FB: Oh, the sting rays, shovel-nosed sharks, you name it, mullet, smelts -- we had smelts galore -- flounders. I even caught 1/2 dozen shrimp off the municipal pier there. Those are all gone now.

RW: Was the water clear?

FB: Yes, water was clear. Although we had raw sewage going into the bay. Then after they dredged the bay and shortly after World War II they built Harbor Island and Shelter Island. So they could get the aircraft carriers in there. They also dredged in between North Island and Coronado itself because those two were almost separate except for a sandbar on the other side. My father-in-law would tell me when it was high tide he would row over that to go lobster fishing at the jetty.

RW: You worked for your brother through Roosevelt.

FB: I went to San Diego High School, the old castle.

RW: I went to those schools too. You kept on working.

FB: I worked until I quit in 1930. I went to work steady with my brother, Anthony

RW: Where was your sister all this time?

FB: My sister was married to a fisherman named Mike Ghio.

RW: What's your sister's name?

FB: Katherine. They called her Katie for short. She married a Ghio. He died.

RW: How did he die?

FB: If I remember correctly he had something wrong with his pancreas. He passed away and she became a widow with two boys and a girl.

RW: What were their names?

FB: The first boy was named Cap and the second boy was named Anthony after my father. The girl was named Adele.

RW: You know I interviewed your sister about 10 years ago. She lived right up at the top of the hill here. And she said that his arm got injured somehow, either on a boat, and he got an infection, that's what killed him. She said that at any other time that would have been a malpractice lawsuit. In those days you don't do those things. She sounded really bitter about it because it was so unnecessary for him to die. He was only 34 years old.

FB: And the kids were babies.

RW: And then she struggled to keep the family together.

FB: Well, we helped her out. We bought her her first car and then when we opened up that small restaurant in the Grant Hotel -- we had a little spot, we served cocktails and clam chowder up there. She made the clam chowder.

RW: That was in the 30's.

FB: That was in the 30's, yes. From then on the restaurant association boycotted our wholesale business, so we had to sell it.

RW: So you had to be either wholesale or retail?

FB: Not in the restaurant business. We lost a lot of customers that way. So as not to lose customers we sold it out. My sister got the idea she wanted to open up a restaurant. We helped her get started. But we never got any recognition for it.

RW: I wonder why.

FB: I don't know. I don't even want to talk about it.

RW: I understand she started out of desperation. She wanted to support herself and her children and she had this special coating recipe that came from your father, didn't it?

FB: She was experimenting. I don't know how it was. During the war we lost a lot of men to the service, so we had to close our retail. Then when she wanted to get started we gave her that spot at the ferry landing. We gave her that spot and told her we would help her out and go all one together.

RW: Didn't work out that way.

FB: I don't know what the story is. My brother has it. Getting back to the old days, that's how San Diego was in the old days.

RW: Yes, I got here in 1941 and I just got a touch of what it was like. A very, very pleasant city.

FB: Yes. It was hard to get started. No industries until World War II came and brought a lot of boys and ...

RW: Well the Exposition in 1935 helped. Did you have anything to do with the Expositions?

FB: We had nothing to do with them, except as a kid in 1915 we would sneak up there, go to the beverage building where all the free samples were. That's all we were interested in. Then in '36 while we were in business, we had three restaurants we supplied with fish in the Exposition. One of them was the World's Cafe and I don't remember the other two.

RW: Your memory is fabulous.

FB: Yes, I can remember all the things I did as a kid. I don't know why. I was an adventurous kid and I liked to venture. Get up early in the morning and a bunch of us kids go fishing or we would get an old log and a stick and paddle around in the bay. That's the way we passed our time. No TV. We had marble season, top season, kite season, pigs, peewee. Peewee was you would cut the broom handle about 6 inches long and you sharpen it at both ends and then you would cut another stick about 12 or 14 inches long and you would draw a great big circle and you'd flip that peewee and it would flip up in the air and you would hit it, knock it down. And the guys down there would say, I'll give you 20 feet, then you measure it. Anything over 20 feet, you got and whoever got the highest points won.

RW: You know when I grew up in New England we did our own toys and games.

FB: We had kites, marbles, games to play. These kids don't do nothing now.

RW: They go buy it. At *Toys R Us*.

FB: We had to make our own kites. When we would throw the skates away, we would make a skate board with the wheels and the kite string we go around scrounging around, tying pieces together in order to get a long piece.

RW: And you could do a lot with an inner tube. Anyway, after high school out of San Diego High, you graduated from there.

FB: I didn't graduate, I quit before I graduated. I was only in there two years and then I quit. I was helping my brother. I didn't make any money. There was no salaries in those days. My father didn't pay me any salary.

RW: So if you needed spending money you would get it from your dad?

FB: Yes, and always had a lecture to go with it.

RW: Was your dad pretty strict?

FB: No, he was strict to a certain extent. Mom was the one to straighten me out. I was the rascal of the family. She had nine kids. Ended up with five.

RW: Did you stay with your brother for years?

FB: I stayed with my brother until he retired and then my younger brother and I held the business for two years and he got hold of me and said, hey, we are working 12-15-18 hours a day and the help is making more money than we are. It's time to get out of here. So we sold out to Chesapeake Fish Co.

RW: What was the name of your company?

FB: When my brother started it, it was called Sunset Fish Market. Then when we opened up the place on Broadway in 1926, we operated for a couple of years under Sunset Seafood Co. and I got hold of my brother and said, hey, who the heck is "Sunset"? Let's get a personal name up there. Look when you mention the word Marston, you know who it is, you mention the word Wrigley or Hamilton or Broderick, you know who that is. So let's change it from Sunset to Bregante's. So for awhile we had Sunset Bregante's Fish Co. and then we finally dropped the Sunset.

RW: And that was the name it was sold under?

FB: Yes. We operated a couple of years after my brother retired and my younger brother wanted to get out. Too much for us. Let's join the crowd, work 8 hours a day and get paid vacations for two weeks.

RW: Where did you go to work then?

FB: I had to stay with Chesapeake for 6 months to show them the ropes. It's still in existence. The only one left of the wholesalers. In the beginning we had nine wholesalers. It's a different story now because a lot of guys are coming in from L.A. and it's all frozen stuff now. In our day, we had nothing but fresh. But getting back to old San Diego, I remember shortly after the depot was built there was a boxing arena north of the depot. There was a Bekins Storage Co. A boxing arena with a big 8-foot fence around it. On the same spot where Bekins was. When they put that building up there the boxing arena moved up to [a] building on First and A St. And downstairs was a boxing arena and upstairs was a dance hall. It was the Dreamland Marina Dance Hall. We had 6 or 8 dance halls then, Dreamland Hall at Ninth and G, Radcliffe's at 11th and Broadway, and we had one at Ocean Beach. When John D. Spreckels built the Mission Beach, that was nothing but a sandbar. During the wintertime when the high tides would come up against the wall and go right over the top. But he developed that and built that big ballroom, one of the biggest ballrooms there was and the roller coaster and the pool.

RW: I remember the dances there and I swam in the pool a lot

FB: You could have bought lots for \$150, 25 x 25. But they had a ballroom, it was called Wonderland Ocean Beach, right there where the channel comes in.

RW: Is that the one that got washed out?

FB: Yes, it got washed out. Then the ballroom where you start to go to Pt. Loma, used to be a concrete foundation there. That was washed out too in that winter storm. There was another ballroom at the end of Crystal Pier. The storm washed that away. We had 8 or 9 ballrooms in San Diego.

RW: I take it you liked to dance.

FB: Yes. I danced up until three years ago.

RW: Is that where you met your wife?

FB: No. Her father was very strict and wouldn't let her go out, so she didn't do much dancing

RW: Let's not lose track too much here. After you sold out the wholesale fish to Chesapeake what did you do for a living?

FB: I retired. I was about 63. Different markets would call when they were short of help and I would work a day or two here and a day or two there.

RW: Did you make enough money out of selling it, so you could retire?

FB: No, I had good Social Security then and I was getting by. Working a day or two here and there.

RW: When did you get married?

FB: I got married in 1931. To Antoinette Zollezzi. Her father was a fisherman.

RW: Did you have any children?

FB: Two girls. One named Maureen was the oldest and Jeannette.

RW: When were they born?

FB: Maureen was born in 1934 and Jeannette was born in 1936.

RW: How did you survive the depression years? Those were depression years. Was business fairly stable?

FB: Oh, we had a hard time.

RW: I have talked to a lot of the fisherman. They said they used to go down in Mission Valley and swap fish for vegetables with the Japanese.

FB: It was tough. In 1926 we had built that market and the bank had loaned us the money to build it with. My brother lost a big lot of money in the stock market in '29 and we worked together paying off the debt for many years. Finally got it paid off, so we were able to support the family, my mother and my sister and us three boys.

RW: You were buying the fish directly off the boats?

FB: We bought fish directly off the boats.

RW: How much were you paying per pound? Do you remember?

FB: Oh, it was around 6 or 8 cents a pound.

RW: And how much were you selling it for?

FB: Wholesale? You have to take into consideration your loss. 25 or 30 cents. And the retail was more because it was more of a finished product. We sold salmon for 35 cents a lb. Yellowtails, 15 to 20 cents a pound. Shrimp out of Ft. Lavaca, Texas, 6 shrimp to a lb. We couldn't sell them at 25 cents a lb. because people didn't know what shrimp were in this part of the country. Halibut and barracuda. Barlini used to bring them up from Mexico and he would -- live lobsters -- he got 6 cents a lb. for them. We had lobsters galore.

RW: And abalone

FB: We handled abalone. That was the most expensive item we had. I think it was 40 cents a lb. And nobody would eat it. When we started in the fish business we introduced shark. As a matter of fact we went to court for misrepresenting them. During World War I we had a food demonstrator, paid by the government, to demonstrate to the housewife how to cook fish and we gave this guy shark and we told him it was shark. And he told the people, you can go to the market and buy shark or sea bass would be the same thing.

RW: As I say sometimes people were leery of shark, so some of the restaurants gave it another name.

FB: In the old days you couldn't sell shark because of the fact there was a story out that they were scavengers and nobody would eat it. Yet they would eat lobster and crab which are the biggest scavengers of the sea and the most delectable of all.

RW: It sounds like you've had quite a full life. Egads.

FB: The things that I can remember as a kid seems to stand out in my mind. We had all the places that were there are all gone. There was the bath house down on 5th St. pier and Gunther's Bath House and we had a bath house. The bath house got the warm water off the San Diego Electric Co. at the foot of Broadway. They got all the warm water that mainly went out into the bay. That generating plant used to use salt water through its boilers and they had a big steam whistle, you could hear it for miles.

RW: During the war years they fired it off.

FB: They would blow the whistle at 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon and at 5:00 p.m. and then there was a certain signal that would get out to tell you where the fire would be. When my dad was working for his brother, originally it was down on Kettner, just north of Market St., one block. That was the original fish market. On the other side of the railroad track was the bay. In those days they had a horse and wagon and there was a certain horse they called Mike. When that whistle blew he took off for the stables and the stable was up on G and 3rd St. He would take off, brakes and all. That was feeding time.

RW: I would assume the guy that had them knew what was going to happen. Did you know any of the boat builders? Down at the foot of G St. there was a fellow who built boats, fishing boats. **FB:** No, there were no boats built at the foot of G Street. It was on Fir Street -- a boat works.

RW: That's the one. Now where was that located?

FB: That was right on -- You know where the north end of the Civic Center building is? -- it was right there. The old big tin shed.

RW: That would still be Hawthorne-Grape complex down there.

FB: Right on the bay.

RW: I got the idea it was at the foot of G Street.

FB: No, at the foot of G St. were the coal bunkers. Coal bunker wharf. And Broadway was the fish markets. Then they tore it down and the government took over that property for the Navy. Then they built the pier out there -- the Navy pier.

RW: That is all filled in.

FB: It's all filled in. You can figure from the railroad track west is all filled in. My father-in-law lived in this house on stilts. You know where Wall St. is? Just north of that there were three houses in a row and those houses were on the edge of the bay on stilts. It's Pacific Highway now. But there was no such thing as the Pacific Highway -- it was under water. South of Laurel St. there was a Japanese village and all the Japanese lived there.

RW: On the Pacific Hwy route?

FB: Yes.

RW: The cannery ...

FB: The cannery was built after they filled it in. Before that the canneries were on top of the pier. At Grape or somewhere along there.

RW: I remember it was a cannery when I first came out here because you could really smell it as you went by.

FB: One of them was called Neptune and I can't remember the other names. Two or three canneries in a row.

RW: The Japanese did their own fishing, didn't they?

FB: Yes.

RW: They kept their own fish?

FB: No, they sold it to the markets. They were good fishermen. In Little Italy down there we have a kind of division in the Italians -- there were the Sicilian fisherman and the northern Italian fishermen. The northern ones fished with nets and the Sicilians fished with hook and line. There were a few Portuguese. They became known later as the tuna fishermen.

RW: Weren't they more on Rosecrans? What brought on the decline of the fishing in San Diego?

FB: Fished out the bay. Porpoise also.

RW: You know there was a big ecology thing -- the purse seiners were going out and killing off the porpoises and then these self-righteous people started campaigning against fishing

FB: That was against the tuna -- not the other fishermen. They were badly mistaken and misinformed. Because without the porpoise the fishermen couldn't catch any tuna, so they did everything they could to preserve the life of a porpoise.

RW: I know they jumped over the net to release them.

FB: My brother-in-law who has passed away; he used to be a tuna fisherman. He had a shark bite on his leg. He used to go down scuba diving and release the porpoise.

RW: I know one guy said he was holding down the net with his elbow and the shark came up to bite him.

FB: There were a lot of guys -- I guess they are dead now -- that had shark bites on their legs. They were misinformed about that. But in the old days the fish was plentiful. As a matter of fact they were so plentiful, the guys went out for sardines and the boats would be loaded. There was no market for them, they sold them as fertilizer. We used to have schools of fish here, 2-3 miles long, 1/2 mile wide, just one kind of fish. They kept fishing all the time. Caught fish when they had the eggs in them. They knew what was going to happen. In my opinion, if they stopped fishing in the summer months, seafood is not too good in the summer months anyhow, that's when they are propogating, lobsters are propogating. They are changing their shell. The flavor is not there. If they would stop fishing from May to Sept. we would have plenty of fish today.

RW: I'm sure people that pointed that out, but they have ignored it because they wanted to make the money. In our case here, the Americans may be ecologically smart, but other countries fish everything they can get.

FB: That's the reason they are coming over here, because they have depleted their grounds over there and they are coming over here.

RW: We had the same problem with lobsters on the East Coast. I think they got smart and careful what they do.

FB: That was the one thing that kind of bugged me. There were two things that bugged me because when I was working retail people would come in and say, the Eastern lobster are so much sweeter than the western lobster. I said, poppycock, it's the same. So when my son-in-law was in the Navy we made a trip back east. We went down through Florida and started up the coast. And it came to me and I said I wanted to see why. So we landed in New York, went down to Fulton Market and ordered the lobster -- it was sweeter. They kept bugging me. I noticed that I would buy fish, it was sweeter. I couldn't figure out why. Finally, one morning it dawned on me. I said, look the Atlantic Ocean is not as deep as the Pacific. It's only 3,000 miles wide, you got the ice bergs coming down, diluting the salinity of the water, they get a lot more rain, so therefore the ocean is not as salty as the Pacific.

RW: What did you think of Fulton Market? Wasn't that a wild, wild place?

FB: That was a wild place. But I ate my first lobster there. And I have to admit it was sweeter. That's the history of the fish business, that's the reason it's depleted now. Overfishing. If they would stop fishing in the summer months and give the fish a chance to recuperate, you would have a supply. In the next 25 years you are going to be buying nothing but cultivated fish.

RW: I assume other people are well aware of this not fishing in the summer time. Have you told this to anybody?

FB: No, I've never told this to anybody. We used to eat the eggs. What surplus we had, we would salt them down, sun dry them and slice them off later when they were cured and made a salad of them. We did that with porpoise. Porpoise is delicious eating.

RW: You are in your nineties now. Do you think eating fish was what gave you the vitality you have now?

FB: I don't know. I've always said, buy fresh food every day, don't store it.

RW: That's the old world way of doing things.

FB: You look in my refrigerator, it's empty, I go out in the garden. Very seldom do I eat frozen food. Vegetables, fish fresh.

RW: Your health is pretty good?

FB: Yes. I'm 92 years old. I don't go see a doctor.

RW: You have a good mental attitude for one thing. You are pretty sharp.

FB: You know me and my brother both are sharp. I can remember things when I was a kid here in San Diego.

RW: Do you remember what happened 2 months ago? I remember what happened but two months ago, forget it.

FB: You could tell me your name and I would forget it two seconds later.

RW: Things do not seem to bother you too much.

FB: The only thing that bothers me, my legs are getting weak now. That's why I had to give up dancing.

RW: When did your wife die?

FB: She died in 1983. Thirteen years ago.

RW: Did you go dancing with her all the time?

FB: We did occasionally. She was not much of a dancer.

RW: But when you became single you started dancing.

FB: Yes.

RW: Where did you dance?

FB: Well, the last place we danced was the hall on 30th and El Cajon. I can remember when I moved to San Diego, Mission Valley was covered from bank to bank with water. It washed out the railroad track, plus it broke the dam, Otay.

RW: Mission Valley got flooded as late as 1934 or '35.

FB: They had another one later but I don't recall it because Ferrari had his ranch down there. He had cows down there and he lost a few cows.

RW: Was he another Sicilian?

FB: Well, he had the dairy ranch down there. He passed away and then the kids came on. They became millionaires because that today is the most valuable property in San Diego. Where the Stardust Hotel is. Ying Ying, a Chinaman had ten acres down there. During World War II he wanted to sell it to me for \$3,200.

RW: So you took a pass on it.

FB: I didn't have the money and in the second place -- see that brick mansion up there -- it belonged to Mr. Snell who had the PM Dairy. When his first wife died and then he died, the depression came along, I could have bought that for \$38,000. It's probably worth \$2 million today.

RW: You either don't risk buying something in those days because you don't have the money, then you look back and say, "Oh, my God I should have bought it."

FB: This one here McDonald owned it. I bought this lot from her. She wanted to sell it for \$42,000. I didn't have it.

RW: You are doing ok now?

FB: Oh yes, taking it easy. Enjoying life.

RW: You see your daughters?

FB: Yes. I talked to one of my daughters this morning. She lives up at Capistrano -- has a big home up there.

RW: They married well then.

FB: Oh yes. The other one is in a retirement home

RW: Thanks a lot for this interview for the Historical Society. I will make a copy for the Maritime Museum. So you'll be in both museums. And it's been a pleasure for me to meet you. I admire you, what you are doing at your age. Thank you again.

END OF INTERVIEW
