



## **ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**An interview with  
Richard E. Costenborder, 1912-1995**

**August 10, 1989**

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**This interview was conducted by:** Maxine Menaul  
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### **PREFACE**

The Costenborder family moved from Dayton, Ohio, to San Diego in 1913. They brought their son, Richard, who was one year old at the time. The son, Richard Costenborder, has seen a tremendous growth and change in San Diego during his lifetime. Mr. Costenborder was educated in San Diego schools. After graduation from San Diego High School he became manager of Mission Beach Ballroom. In this capacity he met many of the Big Band leaders and is able to describe them. He also is able to remember and describe much of Mission Beach during those times.

There were other aspects of San Diego that he describes: the Benson Lumber Company, the San Diego Rowing Club, the old destroyer base, fishing in the Coronado Islands, and many others.

Mr. Costenborder also talks about the postal service as he worked for the Post Office for 32 years. This gave him opportunity to see community changes occurring over a long period of time.

Thomas E. Walt, Editor  
January 29, 1991

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## **INTERVIEWER'S NOTE**

I am interviewing Richard (Dick) Costenborder for the Oral History Program of the San Diego Historical Society on August 10, 1989. This is Maxine Menaual at Mr. Costenborder's home.

**MAXINE MENAUL:** When did you come to California?

**RICHARD COSTENBORDER:** In 1913.

**MM:** Did you come right to San Diego?

**RC:** Yes.

**MM:** And where did you live before?

**RC:** In Dayton, Ohio.

**MM:** Were you born there? And what was your birth date?

**RC:** Yes. March 19, 1912.

**MM:** What was your father's name? C: Clefus (Clifford) Clyde Costenborder.

**MM:** Where was he born?

**RC:** In Dayton, as far as I know.

**MM:** What was your mother's maiden name and what was her birthplace?

**RC:** Orate L. Gates. As far as I know it was Springfield, Ohio.

**MM:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**RC:** I had three brothers; one of them recently passed away. Edwin (Edwin James Costenborder) was quite a student. He belonged to Omega Xi fraternity at San Diego State University. That was in the thirties. During the time he was connected with the fraternity, it was an athletic fraternity. Some of the boys had a rough time of writing their papers. Ed did that because he was such a brain. He could scan through a book and write a term paper for an individual with no trouble at all.

**MM:** When did he die?

**RC:** Just three months ago.

**MM:** And did you have others?

**RC:** Yes, I have a brother, Forrest Elwood Costenborder who lives in Santa Rosa, California, and a brother, Robert Thomas Costenborder, who lives here in San Diego.

**MM:** Did they have anything to do with the Mission Beach Ballroom?

**RC:** No. They all worked with me, but I had the lease on it. I just kept the place going. It was a job, but I loved it. It was awful hard to get away from.

**MM:** We'll get back to that later. Where did you go to school?

**RC:** I went to the Logan Heights grammar school; then I went to Memorial Junior High School; then to San Diego High School. That was my education.

**MM:** When did you graduate?

**RC:** June of 1930.

**MM:** Could you tell us about some of the people you knew there in high school?

**RC:** I didn't know so many in high school as it was my contacts after I left high school. I was kind of a, oh, you might call me an introvert. I kept to myself, I did my studies and that sort of thing. I made a decent set of grades in school, but I was nobody to mix very deeply in anything.

**MM:** You were married on what date?

**RC:** I think it was in 1936.

**MM:** What was your wife's name?

**RC:** Virginia Dring.

**MM:** Where were you married?

**RC:** In Glen Abbey, the cemetery out in Chula Vista.

**MM:** Did you have any children?

**RC:** Yes, two girls: Laurie Anne and Deborah Louise.

**MM:** What are their last names now?

**RC:** Laurie's name is Ponessa, and Debbie's name is Wilson. She works at San Diego State University, that is Debbie. For a while she was a secretary for one of the deans, but that was a little bit too much pressure for her, so she asked for her old job back, and that is what she is in now. I don't know what that is.

**MM:** Were they born here in San Diego?

**RC:** Yes, at Mercy Hospital.

**MM:** Do you know their birth dates?

**RC:** Debbie's was April 26, 1949, and Laurie's birth date was September 12, 1947.

**MM:** I understand you were once the manager of the Mission Beach Ballroom.

**RC:** Yes, that was during the Big Band age where we had everybody from Guy Lombardo, the two Dorsey brothers, Fred Nichols and his Five Pennies, and just all the big names at the time.

**MM:** That must have been exciting. How long did you manage that?

**RC:** I started there in 1931 as a gate boy, watching the five cent tickets drop in the slot for a five-cent dance. I stuck with that for the summers while the ballroom was open. Eventually, it came to a point where another fellow and I, Stan Saville, took over management of it. Stan took a job at Consolidated [Aircraft] and I was doing all the work. Stan and I split on friendly terms, and I took over and managed the ballroom for about four years after that.

**MM:** That was almost at the beginning of the Mission Beach development wasn't it?

**RC:** No. Mission Beach was opened in 1925. Stan and I had nothing to do with that until about 1927 when I went to work there as the gate boy. I stuck with that, and it was in the early thirties when I was active as the manager of the ballroom.

**MM:** I understand that was a big project -- the dream of John D. Spreckels -- the whole of Mission Beach.

**RC:** The whole of Mission Beach was actually, as I understand it, a real estate proposition, where the whole area was owned by the Spreckels Company. They built this amusement center to develop the southern end of Mission Beach. Until then old Mission Beach was the center of everything. There was a plunge there, and there were places to change clothes. It was just small; you couldn't call it an amusement park, because there was nothing there but the outdoor plunge and the indoor changing rooms. That was about all there was there. That was just halfway between Ocean Beach and Pacific Beach that is there now.

**MM:** That is right. The bridge was across there from Ocean Beach to Mission Beach.

**RC:** The plunge was there long before they took the bridge out.

**MM:** So that is interesting. They had the plunge, and they had the merry-go-round and the Ferris wheel and the roller coaster.

**RC:** Yes, and the roller coaster is still standing there. They are talking about activating it again. I read it in the paper. I could have been one of the first riders on the roller coaster except I didn't have anything but a bathing suit on, and they wanted fully-dressed people. I was there when they ran the first commercial car over the roller coaster.

**MM:** When you managed the ballroom do you remember how large it was? I remember it as very large.

**RC:** It would dance comfortably six thousand people. It was built so that the whole interior of it was a dance floor. I don't know what the reason for it was, but they eventually cut down the dance space and put in loge sections on each end of the ballroom. It had comfortable davenport and back-to-back chairs that we called the loge section at that time.

**MM:** Wasn't it known to have a wonderful dance floor?

**RC:** Oh, it had one of the best dance floors in the whole country. It was before cushioned floors were built, but this was a marvelous floor. I, as the custodian, at one time took care of that floor, and I know how nice a floor that was.

**MM:** What did that eventually become? Did that become a roller skate rink?

**RC:** Oh, no, no. After Wayne Dailard took it over he locked it up and forgot about it. When he had the Pacific Ballroom downtown he controlled both of them. He just locked Mission Beach up and forgot about it.

**MM:** Why did he do that?

**RC:** For the good of his place in town, Pacific Square, down there on Pacific Highway. It was a selfish thing for him to do, but it was good for business and that is what he did.

**MM:** Was that around World War II time?

**RC:** It was during the first part of World War II.

**MM:** Did you know some of the band leaders pretty well?

**RC:** There was one in particular that I had a nice feeling towards and that was Jimmy Dorsey. He was a real nice guy. On the weekends that he played for me, after the dance was over at one o'clock in the morning, he and his close friends in the band would get into a limousine -- we'd all get into a big limousine -- and go to Tijuana. We'd stay down there until five o'clock. It was at the time that we were playing knock-knocks -- "Knock, knock. Who's there?" -- and that sort of thing.

He was a real gentleman where his brother, Tommy Dorsey, as I understand it -- this is hearsay -- was very temperamental. The story with him was that one evening after they completed their dance work -- I don't know where this was -- he opened the door where the musicians had their instruments stored, laid them out on the floor and stomped on them. He just ruined the whole bunch of them. That was the point where Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey -- it used to be the Dorsey Brothers Band -- that is when they split. Most of the fellows went with Jimmy. Tommy had to start from scratch and eventually he became the more popular of the two. My feelings were all towards Jimmy.

There were others like Eddy Duchin, a real nice feeling sort of a fellow. There was a story that his wife and he married against the advice of her parents. But then the family exonerated them. During the course of the evening, about ten-thirty, halfway through, I guess, he came to me and he said, "Dick, how are we doing financially?" I said, "Fine," and he said, "Boy, that makes me feel good." He was just a nice guy.

Most of them were real nice people. A lot of them were a little offish because they were just playing a one-night date down here where it didn't make much difference to them whether you made any money or not.

**MM:** Are there any others that you know?

**RC:** Phil Harris was one of San Diego's "pride and joys" at that time. Every time he played the ballroom was jammed from door to door. Personally, he was a real nice guy. Anything for a laugh. The story is that he was quite a drinker. All I can tell you is that before intermission went on, he worked so hard that he was wringing wet from head to toe during the time that he was on the bandstand. So just before the intermission I'd go over to the local beer bar and get a case of beer and take it up to my office. When he would break, he'd make a run for my office upstairs and I'd have three or four bottles of beer opened for him. He just gulped them down, just one right after another. Of course he didn't show much up on the stand but a little more perspiration.

**MM:** Was he married to Alice Paye at that time?

**RC:** Yes, he was married at that time.

**MM:** Did she ever come down to sing?

**RC:** No, to my knowledge, no.

**MM:** I understand that you also hired some of the local bands.

**RC:** One in particular that was very popular was Laurie Higgins, who is now one of the most popular physician/ surgeons here in town. Along with Higgins he had a vocalist with the band by the name of Sheldon Brockett, who is now one of the best dentists here in San Diego.

**MM:** Are there any other locals that you can remember? Were they going to school at the time?

**RC:** Yes, they were going to State College at the time.

**MM:** What type of work did you do before you went to the ballroom?

**RC:** Things were pretty short. It was during the Depression and you took any old job that came along. Cleaning up somebody's stable or anything like that would be acceptable. I worked in grocery stores; I worked for the Heller chain before it eventually became the Safeway Stores and now is controlled by Vons. Just anything that came along was acceptable. If you could make yourself fifty cents, why that was good.

**MM:** What years were those?

**RC:** Between 1925 and 1930. It was during Prohibition days, and two doors from where I lived on Newton Avenue there was an Italian bootlegger. In the mornings I would go over to his place and drain off some 50-gallon hogshead. It was this grape juice that had gone a little bit too far. I would drain that off into ten- and five-gallon kegs that he could deliver down on lower Fifth Street. After school I would go over and make up crushed grapes so there would be more fermented grape juice for him to use as soon as he got to a point where it was acceptable on lower Fifth Street.

**MM:** You were talking about playing in the bay when you were young.

**RC:** That was before my working days. I ran around with a bunch of kids that were very constructive in a way. We, at one time, resurrected logs that had escaped from the old Benson Lumber Company and ended up on the beach down by the destroyer base. We towed those logs back up to the foot of 28th Street. Eventually we built a swimming raft out of these logs to a point where we actually put a little diving tower on it. This was off the Standard Oil pier off the foot of 26th Street. During the summertime we had more of the kids from the Memorial Junior High School playground on our swimming raft than they had at the playground. We could swim out to the raft and it was just a place for all the kids to get together.

**MM:** Was that near the San Diego Rowing Club?

**RC:** No, the San Diego Rowing Club was at the foot of Fifth Street, and this was at the foot of 28th Street. The destroyer base is still down there, but that is about half a mile from where I am speaking of.

You speak of the rowing club ... I belonged to the rowing club for about ten years during more or less its heyday, when DeGraff Austin was the secretary down there. He was one hell of a nice guy. He used to put up with us kids that overused the facilities, wouldn't pay our dues at the rowing club. During that time I was under the tutoring of Kearney Johnston who was an old hand down there for years. Under his tutoring I made "Skeeter" which at that time was quite an honor to row one of their shells around the buoy out and back to the club in a certain length of time. During that time, though, we used to take advantage of the fact that they had six canoes down there, and we used to reserve all the canoes on a Saturday night and paddle out with a keg of beer out to what we called Deadman's Island over close to North Island. It is all covered up now. There is the Embarcadero through there now. We used to go out there and stay until the beer was all gone.

**MM:** What years were those?

**RC:** That was in the early thirties.

**MM:** When was the rowing club started, do you know?

**RC:** It goes way back, beyond the twenties. I couldn't tell you, but it was old, because the building itself has been ready to fall down for years.

**MM:** Were you one of those that went swimming on New Year's Day?

**RC:** Oh, yes, that was quite a deal down there, with all the beer drinking. We'd jump into the bay and then out of the bay as fast as we could. It was a little chilly.

**MM:** What did you do after you left the ballroom; what happened there?

**RC:** The day after I lost my lease at the ballroom I was called into the Post office and stayed there for thirty-two and a half years. As a sub I worked all over San Diego, including Coronado. But then, eventually, when I got a route of my own, it was in the South Park district, around 28th and B Streets, in that area. They talk, about lack of money -- of course they are getting pretty, good money now -- but I never regretted the time I spent down there. Since I've been retired I've been all over the world except the North Pole and the South Pole.

**MM:** Do you remember what you made when you first started working at the Post Office?

**RC:** Sixty-five cents an hour.

**MM:** And how many hours a week did you work?

**RC:** As a sub you just got called at any time, night or day. Most of it was collection routes in the late afternoon; that sort of thing. It took a long time to get yourself established and get a permanent appointment, but it all works out fine.

**MM:** Is that when the stamps were three cents?

**RC:** Yes. They went up gradually all the time. I can remember when we used to mail a postcard for one cent.

**MM:** Did you have any unusual experiences while you were a postman, with dogs or people?

**RC:** I was scared one time, not too far from here over near Kensington, by a dog. The screen door was locked and when I put the mail in the slot the dog ran at the front door and went right through the screen and almost got me. By that time the woman came out and grabbed the dog and I had to go out and sit on the curb for a few minutes before I could walk, I was so darn scared. It isn't that bad any more; people are more sensible about controlling their dogs.

**MM:** So when did you retire from the Post Office?

**RC:** About twelve years ago.

**MM:** And have you been traveling since then?

**RC:** Yes. I've been to Europe several times; I've been overseas to the west, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia and then back through ... Well, I've made trips through Japan. I spent six days in Communist China, Thailand, and the whole of what we call the Far East. I just recently made a trip that included a trip on the Nile River, a flight to Israel with several days there, and a flight to Milan to take a cruise ship that went all the way into the Black Sea and into Yalta where Roosevelt and Stalin had their confab years ago.

**MM:** That's really interesting. Have you lived in other places in San Diego besides here?

**RC:** Yes. When we came to San Diego, one of the first places I can remember living is Woolman Avenue which is now Ocean View Boulevard. We moved from there over to Newton Avenue which was opposite the old Savage Tire Company. From there we moved fairly close downtown on 17th Street and a couple of more moves around town. At one time we lived on Grim Street over what is now called South Park.

**MM:** Was that when you were a boy going to school?

**RC:** That was during the time I was up through high school. All the time I went to San Diego High School I registered to go to State College, but there were four boys and no money. We pooled the money and the smartest one of us went to school -- my brother, Edwin, who just recently passed away. He was the one that went to State College and did quite well by himself.

**MM:** I imagine you have some memories of your father that go way back.

**RC:** Yes, when we first came here from Dayton, Ohio, he worked on the first Pan-Pacific Exposition that in the first place built the buildings around Balboa Park. He was one of the gardeners at the time when the first Exposition there was first being planted and the buildings were first being built. He worked primarily around the old lath house that I think is still standing. As a result of that he was a little light-fingered, and he took home starts of everything in the lath house. When we lived on Woolman Avenue we had one of the showplaces in that end of town as far as plants were concerned in our homemade lath house.

**MM:** What years were those?

**RC:** He worked in the park long after the Exposition closed, so it had to be around 1913 to 1917. I can remember during the First World War years when we were all vaccinated for influenza at that time.

**MM:** Did they have very much influenza here?

**RC:** It wasn't good; it was a scare more than anything else. It wasn't anything bad like back east where the weather was so bad. The weather here isn't the type where you develop a serious cold with it and that sort of thing. During those years that my father worked in the park, we spent many a Saturday in the Pepper Grove when it was nothing more than just a bunch of pepper trees, not the beautiful site it is today.

Another thing I wanted to say about the family, we left Dayton and that area in 1913, and we were out here a long time until the rest of the family started to drift out here. Eventually there was nobody left in the Oates or Costenborder families in Dayton, Ohio, they were all in San Diego. One of my uncles, Earl, was a printer for years and years with the San Diego Tribune in their old offices down on Second and Broadway.

My grandfather on my mother's side was quite a fisherman. He was one of the best-known fishermen during the time he was alive. But he was very vain. He needed glasses and wouldn't wear them for years, and as a result of that he walked into a streetcar at the corner of Second and Broadway after he had visited the Union-Tribune offices and it killed him.

**MM:** What year was that?

**RC:** I couldn't tell you.

**MM:** I think you've probably seen many changes in the city.

**RC:** Yes, Yes. My first memories were of East San Diego being an incorporated city in itself. With the growth of that area, North Park and East San Diego just grew together and eventually the city of East San Diego was no more. At the same time, we here in Normal Heights, this area grew into a

combination of East San Diego and North Park itself. They all grew in together but they were separate communities, more or less, within themselves. The streetcar company used to run their old streetcars into this area but eventually they were done away with and the buses replaced them.

**MM:** Didn't they have a garage or barn for the streetcars up in this area?

**RC:** Yes. This is another point. Out at the end of Park Boulevard where it runs into Adams Avenue that overlooks Mission valley, there was a beautiful garden there supported by one of the wealthy people in San Diego. That area was beautiful in the landscaping they had done. And right next door to that there was what they called the Ostrich Farm. There was a fee to go in there, so we never got to go into the Ostrich Farm. But we could peek through the knotholes into the farm and that is as far as we got.

After that what developed right next door was a car barn for the old streetcars that were out of service, say for the middle of the day and times like that. That was a very interesting area up there.

**MM:** You mentioned the Benson Lumber Company.

**RC:** That was a pioneer lumber company here in San Diego that used to bring log rafts down from Astoria, Oregon. They were built in kind of cigar-shaped [forms] and the logs were chained together. They then were pulled down here by tugboats. They were taken to the foot of Crosby Street in San Diego and unchained. They would fill a big pond full of these raw logs. The lumber company would pull these logs up one at a time in through a master saw, a huge thing that would cut the logs up into first slabs and then the beginning of the lumber that was to be used for building houses. That was at the time that San Diego was growing so fast. But they had to dry that lumber out quite a bit before they could use it because building a house with wet lumber the house would shrink. It had to be kiln-dried.

**MM:** Do you remember what years that was when the housing was going so fast?

**RC:** About 1922. A lot of these figures are vague in my memory and I am just guessing at times. During my early days when I was learning to swim, there used to be a streetcar that ran from San Diego into National City over a trestle that is now close to the destroyer base down there. Underneath that was an area with a little bit of sand and that is where all the kids in the neighborhood gathered to swim. In my early, early days before I could swim, just wade is all I could do down there.

Another point that I want to talk about: I don't know if it has any historical value or not, but during the time that the destroyer base, the destroyers were first put out of commission down there. The old four-stackers, they were real fast destroyers. The structure of them was very, very thin; they were built very light and very fast. We, as a family, didn't have very much as far as money was concerned, but we had plenty of food and that sort of thing, but we had no ice cream or that sort of thing. So on Sundays my two younger brothers and I used to go down close to the destroyer base. There was a catwalk across the slough that the sailors, when they went AWOL, would use to get out of the base and into town. We went the other direction; we went into the base on Sundays and the sailors down there used to welcome us kids because lots of them had families at home. They would set us down and we'd have all the chicken we could eat and all the ice cream that we could possibly store away. We went out of there roly-poly for all the food that we ate.

But my worst experience there was we used to play above deck. We'd grab a pipe and swing it around us and land on a platform and that sort of thing.

**MM:** Was this on a ship?

**RC:** This was on one of the old destroyers. These destroyers eventually were given to Great Britain during the Second World War, patched up and sailed over there. They used them to run down submarines. This incident concerning me acting like an ape: this one time I grabbed the pipe to swing around and it was an un-insulated steam pipe. It scalded my hand into this sort of a shape and, of course, it hurt like the dickens. I went down to the pharmacist mate and he took one look at my hand and said, "Oh, my God!" They used to have five-pound jars of "kip" for bad burns. He took my hand and just scooped the whole thing into this can of "kip" and wrapped it with gauze. It never hurt me and didn't show a burn except that little scar. He wrapped that up and said to come back next week and we'll take the bandage off. I went around like with a boxing glove on for a week. But that was quite a painful experience.

**MM:** Is there something else that you can tell us about?

**RC:** Yes. This same area where the destroyers were placed out of commission was first used as a shipyard. They built a couple of experimental ships out there out of concrete. I don't know whether they were ever serviceable or not, but I can remember watching the initial launching of one of these ships off of a hill overlooking the now present destroyer base. It set up a minor tidal wave and swamped several skiffs that were out in the bay to watch this same incident that we watched from shore. I don't know whatever happened to those concrete ships. It was strictly experimental at that time.

**MM:** That must have been a big ship. Was it?

**RC:** Yes. It was what they called a freighter-type ship.

**MM:** You talk about going down Ward Road and down into Mission Valley. How was it in the early days?

**RC:** As a child I remember walking down Ward Road from the Normal Heights area and down to the Old Mission. Then we would have a sandwich down there and walk back. Later on while I was in this area we would go to the beach. We would go down Ward Road and turn towards the beach. About halfway, where we'd turn to go off to Pacific Beach, there was a farm down there that had the most delicious corn that was every grown in San Diego County. It was a very popular place for people to stop; they could hardly pick the corn fast enough to take care of the customers that would stop there and pick up a dozen or two ears of corn.

There is nothing down there now that is the same as it used to be. The old Mission is about the only thing that is left down there, and that has been rebuilt in places to a point where you hardly recognize it. I remember a story, though, about the bad Indians attacking the Mission, and to get away from this to get water, the Fathers built a tunnel from the Mission down to the river so that they could get enough water to exist during these times when the Indians were in revolt, more or less.

During my younger days I used to love to dance. I used to belong to a club. We called ourselves the Chiselers. We would go anyplace where we could dance and we would chisel in, not pay our way in. There were several of these old halls located around town. One was in East San Diego; I think it was over the old Post Office building. There was a clubhouse down here on El Cajon Boulevard and over in Hillcrest there was another ballroom located upstairs in a hall on Fourth Street; another one that was located -- the building is still there -- on the corner of Mead and 30th Streets. All of them little places but anyplace that we could dance was always welcome.

**MM:** They didn't drink in those ballrooms, did they?

**RC:** Oh, no. We never thought of that sort of thing. The only time anybody ever thought of beer or that sort of thing, you went across the line, you went to Tijuana.

**MM:** It looks to me like the young people had a lot more places to go than they do now.

**RC:** The individual places, the small places. The kids nowadays don't appreciate what we appreciated at the time. We had so little spending money, if you had a nickel or dime in your pocket you were a rich man.

**MM:** Do you remember how much your father made?

**RC:** Yes, I think the figure for the time he worked for the Post Office was \$2,200 a year. That was augmented at the time [by our] family [which worked as] custodians and cleaned up at the local motion picture theater. Upstairs at the theater was an apartment house and on Saturdays we did the whole upstairs in the apartments there. We had to go up there at five in the morning and light the furnace that heated the apartments upstairs. It was just anyplace you could pick up a dollar or fifty cents, that is where you went. It was trying at times.

**MM:** Yes, you've not only seen the changes in the city itself, but you've seen the changes in the income in all different types of vocations.

**RC:** When we came here North Park stopped and there was just sagebrush along University Avenue, then East San Diego started.

**MM:** And down at Highway 8 what was that?

**RC:** Down in the valley? There was nothing built up against the side of the hill. Highway 8 was a cow path, it was a dirt road, right straight down through the valley. Highway 5 was just -- I forget the name that it was called -- but it used to run along the Pacific, through all the villages all the way up.

**MM:** Was that Highway 101?

**RC:** That was it. It started in Pacific Beach, went through La Jolla and then up what we used to call Torrey Pines Grade, up onto the mesa, then through Torrey Pines Park as it is now, down into the flat, then up into Encinitas and all the villages along the way, all the way into Los Angeles. The only area that was free of growth and all is now what we call Camp Pendleton. That was right along the ocean and not much growth on either side, until you got to San Clemente. I liked that little place. They had a little ballroom there close to the beach. That was a nice place. Then on up the coast from there.

During the time I was at junior high school I had a [Japanese] friend whose father owned a small fishing boat. On weekends he used to take myself and two younger brothers on the boat to the Coronado Islands and land out there. The payoff was that the Mexican patrol boat there didn't care about what you did out there as long as you paid. In this case the Japanese would go to the local bakery and get a paper box full of yesterday's bread and take it out to the patrol boat and give that to the patrol boat first, and they could do anything they wanted around the islands.

We would all go ashore in the skiff. It was quite a job landing with the surge of the surf. [My Japanese friend] would dive down and come up with a handful of octopi in each hand, just small ones. We'd fish and get any number of different kinds of fish out there. On our way back to the harbor in San Diego they would cook fish on a charcoal broiler aboard ship and we'd eat fish in about ten or twelve different ways [that] it was cooked by the Japanese. It was quite a treat. On the way out they would net sardines. The net was a small mesh in the center and wider on the outside. You'd circle

the school of sardines then pull in the nets from the outside and eventually have the sardines all trapped in this fine net. They would dip those out of the net into the bait tank on the back of the boat. That would be their live bait to catch whatever was available in the way of yellowtail or whatever it might be. We kids got right in there and pulled the nets with all the rest of them. Nobody aboard sat on their rear ends and watch the show; everybody had to work. It was quite an experience.

During the First World War, years before my father went to work for the park, he worked for the potash company that was located between San Diego and National City, down close to the bay. As I understand it, that was part of the munitions development, though I am not sure of this at all. This is just very vague in my memory. During the time I was in high school things were pretty slim as far as money was concerned. At home if you had any new clothes it had to come out of your pocket, and one of the ways that we did this (my younger brothers and I), was to work in the fish canneries when the opportunity presented itself. The worst part of that was the pay was twenty-five cents an hour, which isn't very much at this time.

***END OF INTERVIEW***

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