

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 1, Side 1

October 25, 1995

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society. The date today is October the 25th, I guess, and this is an interview with Althea Pratt at her home in Tualatin, and ...

A.P-B.: You'd better add the Broome. I did get married again.

M.O'R.: Yes. Okay. Althea Pratt-Broome.

A.P-B.: Thank you. I think my husband would get a little upset if it came out the other way.

M.O'R.: I wanted to just start by asking you about your earliest memories of being a child in Oakland. How far back do your memories go?

A.P-B.: When I was two.

M.O'R.: Oh, really?

A.P-B.: Uh-huh. I didn't know that those were memories until one day in talking to my mother when I was about ten I was saying, "You know, I've always had these interesting dreams," and I started telling her about a couple of them. And she just looked at me and she said, "Those weren't dreams." She said, "You couldn't possibly remember that."

One was my great-grandfather's funeral in Oakland, and I was two years old. And I remember this big room and all of the people and this big box in the middle of the room up on this sort of like a table, and people going around it and crying, and this lady

coming and wanting to pick me up, and I told her, "No, you have a fever. I don't want you to pick me up." She said it was because she had all this rouge on her face [laughing].

So anyway, I told her all about this room and everything that was happening and ...

M.O'R.: And your mother verified it as ...

A.P-B.: Yes. She said, "That was your great-grandfather's funeral. You couldn't remember that. You were only two years old." Anyway - because I told her the color of the room and everything.

And that funeral took place in Oakland?

A.P-B.: Uh-huh. And then there was one in San Francisco when - it was this long, narrow room with boxes all the way up and down the shelves, and they were all full of shoes, and I was so fascinated that they were all full of shoes. And then the man had me sit down and fitted me with these little black - they called them Mary Jane shoes in those days. They were black patent leather, and they had a little strap that went over, and they still had button hooks then, and so it had a little button. And that was one of the other memories.

And then there are some - they really begin very heavily when I was four, and then I have lots of them. But there were some others that apparently happened when I was two also, but - we had gone to San Francisco for shopping. And there are some of Golden Gate Park and things like that that she said, "Oh, that was when you were two." By that time she was beginning to get used to the fact that I really did have these memories, because to me they had all been dreams that I had had from someplace, you know.

M.O'R.: You didn't know where it came from originally, then?

A.P-B.: No.

M.O'R.: So was your mother able to corroborate details such as this conversation you had with the rouge-cheeked woman?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. She said that it was so embarrassing to her. I was not a very tactful child, never, and it used to bother her a great deal. Like she would have a lady friend come, and the lady friend would say, "And how do you like my hat?" and she'd have a new hat on, and I would say, "Well, it really doesn't look that good on you." [laughing] So my poor mother, she would just say, "Oh, no!"

And afterwards, she was so sweet and patient, you know, and she would sit down with me, and she would explain that one has to be tactful. And I'd say, "But you taught me to be honest, and I have to tell the truth." And she'd say, "Well, there are ways you can get around that," you know. And I'd say, "No, it's not the truth." Anyway, it took her a long time to convince me.

And then when I was, oh, I guess 21, and I was doing a lot of vocal work around Portland, and so I had this vocal teacher, and she was giving a concert. She was in her 60's. And in that time in Portland they had what was called the New Music Society, and they gave concerts, oh, like once a month, something like this. And so she was the artist for that one, and it was all modern music, and I don't know whether you sing or not, but if you've ever tried to sing modern music, it's very complicated and it needs a voice that is very flexible and that is still young enough to do it, and when you get older you ought to have sense enough to stop

singing, except when you're in the shower or something, you know, but publicly.

[train passing]

M.O'R.: We'll give the train a moment to get by here so it doesn't drown you out.

A.P-B.: Cuts out all conversation. Anyway, so this teacher of mine, she was giving the concert and she was singing modern music.

So afterwards other people were coming up and telling her how great it was and everything, and she came to me and she said, "And what did you think about it?" And so I tried to do what my mother told me to do, and I tried to pick out something that was good so I could be tactful. And she said, "You just stop that." She said, "I expect the truth from you. Nobody else is going to give it to me, but you will." So she said, "Don't try to be tactful. I want the truth." So then I let her have it. She said, "That was what I needed to hear."

M.O'R.: And she expected it from you because she already knew you; is that right? I mean knew your personality?

A.P-B.: Yes, unfortunately.

M.O'R.: Well, back to your mother. Can you tell me what kind of a person she was?

A.P-B.: Yes. She was truly Victorian. Very gentle, peaceful person, where my father was quite the opposite, and she was very interested in people. She - people would come to her with their problems because she was very understanding, and she would patiently sit and listen to them and try to help them. She was always trying to help people.

She loved children. The house was always full of children. All the neighborhood children in Oakland came to our place. She was full of fun. That was the Irish side of her. The English side of her, if anyone tried to tell her a joke, she never got the joke. You had to sit down and explain it to her, and we used to say, "That's the English side of you."

M.O'R.: So she was half and half?

A.P-B.: Her father was English and her mother was Irish. But she was wonderful to have fun with. She would take us hiking up into the hills around Oakland. We'd pack up a big picnic lunch, and all the neighborhood kids would go with us. And the fields would be - and the hills would be full of poppies and lupin, and we'd come back with our arms loaded with these things, and put them all in water all over the house.

She and my father would get off on one particular flower that they would become passionately involved in. At one time I remember the whole half of the front yard being nothing but dahlias. Just - it was beautiful, but I wanted a garden of my own, and I wanted to do different things because the neighbors across the fence had all these fascinating things there, and so I would lean over the fence and I would ask them all the names of the flowers.

So I finally asked my mother if I could have a little corner - the house came down and made a little jog, and if I could have that corner and that jog to have a garden. So my first garden when I was seven was zinnias. So she was always very good to me in all of these different ways, even though she had to struggle through some things with me.

M.O'R.: So you decided on all zinnias for your garden?

A.P-B.: Yes. All zinnias in this one corner. That was my first experiment, and then I could start experimenting - because my neighbors said to try one flower first, so I believed them.

And I was always out exploring all over the neighborhood. I loved old houses, old people, and everything they had in their houses because they could tell me what it was like back then. And so because I was always out exploring my mother never knew where I was, and again being as patient as she was, she tried to sit down with me and tell me all of the things - why I shouldn't be doing this.

So one day she said, "Well, if you're going to wander like a puppy dog, I'm going to treat you like a puppy dog." So she put a rope around my waist. She tied it to the fence on one end. It had plenty of room for me to walk back and forth, but that's all I could do. And I had to stay in the yard and be treated like I was a puppy dog.

M.O'R.: So she didn't want you wandering, eh?

A.P-B.: No, because she loved me and she worried.

M.O'R.: How old were you when you were ...

A.P-B.: Five.

M.O'R.: Okay. Still pretty young.

A.P-B.: Yes, but I'd already started school, first grade, so I figured that I knew what life was all about, you know.

M.O'R.: Well, how long were you on the leash?

A.P-B.: Only for the afternoon because I had been wandering in the morning.

We were right near, within a block or so, of Mills College, and they had this wonderful art museum that you walked down a few

steps, and it was always so cool and nice in there. And of course the campus was all these lovely eucalyptus trees, and I loved the smell of the eucalyptus. So I would wander through the campus, and then I would end up going down into the art museum and looking at all the beautiful pictures and all this kind of thing. So whether that's where I had been that day, I really don't remember.

I could have been way up at the top of the hill. There was an old lady who lived up there, and she told me that there were fairies in the attic, and I thoroughly believed in fairies. I found them in the grass, I found them in the flowers, you know, they were everywhere. And I read all the fairy tales I could get my hands on. So I would go up there and she would tell me stories and she would let me look at all the old things in her house. She would tell me all the things that she had done when she was a little girl. And so - but anyway, I explored.

M.O'R.: You mentioned that your father participated in the gardening also, or was - that was a joint project?

A.P-B.: When he was home on weekends. He was over in San Francisco working. He and another fellow had started a great chain of restaurants all up and down through California, as far as I know some of them are still in existence, but he was over there, and so he would come home on weekends.

M.O'R.: And so that was his business at the time, was running this restaurant chain?

A.P-B.: Yes, at that time. Right.

M.O'R.: Do you remember the name of the chain, or did it have a name?

A.P-B.: I'm trying to think of it, and I can't remember it. I know the last time I was down in L.A. there was one still down there, and it was big and going like crazy, and I had dinner there and thought back to when we would go over to San Francisco and have dinner over there.

M.O'R.: In the one that your father ran at that time?

A.P-B.: Yes, the one that was there. I don't remember all the different cities that they were in, but it started out in San Francisco and then sort of went all over.

Eventually he got out of that. He always wanted to farm, and of course my aunt and uncle had this ranch in - well, it was 60 miles north of San Francisco, and it was a thousand acres, and I think I told you that we got to live up there for nine months when I was four. I have wonderful memories of that place. I dearly loved it. I didn't want to come back to the city, but it was time for me to go back to school, so - I mean to go to school, and so we moved back to Oakland again.

So when I was four also - maybe I was still three - he bought a dairy farm not very far from my aunt and uncle's fruit ranch. I think it was only a couple hundred acres, where their ranch was a thousand acres, 500 in fruit and 500 in all these wonderful rolling hills and oak trees and woods. I also explored there, but I had to be told about rattlesnakes.

One time - that was one of my two-year-old memories was when we were up there and I was exploring down along this stream back of my aunt and uncle's, right along - just before you went over the bridge to the barn. And I was down along this stream, and my mother came along and there was a rattlesnake not very far from me.

And she said she had to quietly coax me to move very quietly towards her so that the rattlesnake wouldn't strike, because it was curled up and its tail was rattling because it was looking at me.

M.O'R.: You strayed a little too close?

A.P-B.: I had gotten too close, yeah. So that was another one of my memories.

M.O'R.: You remember that snake. That must have been in the nightmare category rather than the dream category.

A.P-B.: Well, I really wasn't afraid of it, and that was the problem. I wasn't afraid of it, and so that was why she was afraid something would happen to me. So I remember more about her than I do about the snake because she was so loving, and you know, she didn't scold me.

But when I was four I remember that I loved to ride the horses, but because I was four they would never let me ride the horse by myself, only if I was behind or in front of someone on the horse. So I watched, and they would tie the horse - the almond orchard was in front of us, and so they would tie the horse to one of the almond trees. Oh, I was also always climbing trees. So the almond tree had this low fork in it that I could climb and sit in, and so I looked and I figured if I could climb up that one piece of the branch that then I could get to where the horse's rein was tied around, and then I could take it off and throw it over the horse's head, climb on the horse's head - also a very patient animal - slide down its neck, and then I could ride the horse by myself. So I did.

M.O'R.: You did it?

A.P-B.: I did it.

M.O'R.: Did you succeed in this maneuver, then?

A.P-B.: I succeeded in it, and I rode the horse down through the almond orchard, down through the cherry orchard. We were a quarter of a mile from the big ranch house where my aunt was. So I got there, and she came out and she said, "Well, did your mother send you for the fish?" because the fish man in his truck used to come, and then the vegetable man, for whatever vegetables they weren't growing in their garden, the meat man, they'd all come around to the different ranches. And so it apparently was fish day, which must have been a Friday. So that I wouldn't remember, but I did remember she asked me if I had come for the fish, and I said, "No." And then she said, "Well, did your mother send you for the mail?"

"No."

Then she looked at me and she said, "Does your mother know you're here?"

And I said, "No."

And she said, "Does your mother know that you were on that horse?"

"No."

She said, "You turn that horse right around, and you go back home."

So I did.

M.O'R.: Oh, so she let you ride the horse back home, though?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. But in the meantime my mother had discovered I was gone and that the horse was gone. So she sent the hired man after me. Well, the hired man met me halfway home, and I was barefoot, because up there you had the luxury of going barefoot.

And he said, "Your mother wants you home, but you have been a bad girl, so I'm going to make you walk home, and I will ride the horse and you'll walk beside me." I walked the rest of the way, and there were these little stickers all over the ground, and I had stickers in my feet when I got home, and I didn't tell my mother that the hired man had made me walk. It wasn't till years later when we talking about it that I told her that he made me walk and I had stickers in my feet.

So the exploring was always getting me in trouble.

M.O'R.: Would the hired man have been in trouble had she known?

A.P-B.: Yes, he would have.

M.O'R.: Probably years later it didn't matter so much.

A.P-B.: Well, no, because he was long gone, and we were living up here by then, so we only went down to the ranch to visit from time to time. It was the love of my life, that place, and I guess that's why I always wanted to live in the country, because I loved that place so much.

M.O'R.: It sounds like you had a pretty good relationship with your mother, then, while growing up?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Oh, always. Yes. She didn't understand a lot of the things that I was about, and sometimes that would make me sad, but regardless of the fact that I wasn't her ideal little girl, and my older sister was - she was the ideal daughter, and I never resented it because I knew who I was, and I knew that I had to be who I was, and that if God made me this way, that's the way it was. There were things that I could relate - she could relate to that I was very interested in, but oftentimes - like I would

read all the encyclopedias, and I'd get so excited about something that I'd learned, and then I would start talking about it. And one of the things that hurt my feelings was she would say to me sometimes, "Well, you maybe just think you're smarter than the other children."

And I'd say, "No, it's just because these things are so exciting." So I got to the point where I didn't share these things with anybody because nobody wanted to listen, for one thing, and because I had gotten that response a few times. And so - and I would get it at school. So I got so I didn't talk about things that I was reading other than the school work.

M.O'R.: Because they thought you were showing off, essentially?

A.P-B.: That's right.

M.O'R.: Or your mother thought that, anyway.

A.P-B.: That's exactly what it was. And it wasn't that. It was just that I just loved these things that I was learning about and I wanted to share them. It wasn't until I got up to the medical school that finally people wanted to share with me, and that was one of the most glorious experiences, the years that I spent up there.

M.O'R.: At the medical school?

A.P-B.: I was in cancer research up there.

M.O'R.: In Portland, or down ...

A.P-B.: In Portland.

M.O'R.: In Portland, okay.

A.P-B.: Yeah. For my residency. In my early 20's. So there the fellows would come and they'd say, "Oh, have you read this?"

And they'd say, "Go home and read it tonight, and come back and we can talk about it tomorrow." And they were all interested in history and art and philosophy. One of the doctors I worked with was very much into philosophy, and we could talk about all these different things, and then some of them were musicians as well as doctors, some were artists, and we could just talk about all of this together, and it was a wonderful, wonderful experience. I finally was able to open up and talk.

M.O'R.: But not before then?

A.P-B.: Not before then. One boy from - a Jewish boy from Germany just before the War - in fact, the War had already started over there - no, it hadn't. It was just before, when the Jewish people were starting to try to get out. Hitler had started the Jewish thing, the Holocaust, only in a very mild manner, but those who could get out. And Billy had gotten out. His brother had gotten out before him. His older brother was an attorney, and he had made it through South America and to Portland. Later he became a politician in Portland.

But Billy was a good deal younger, and he got here, and we could talk about things, and he was interested. That was the only time other than that till I got to the medical school in my 20's. It was lovely. I used to have people say to me, "Nobody's ever going to marry you because you're always reading too much and you're too interested in all these other things, and no man is going to want to marry you." So I said, "Well, too bad. Guess I'll never get married." But at the medical school I had them all proposing. It was lovely.

M.O'R.: Yeah, it sounds like kind of a traditional view of marriage and I guess a woman's place and whatever.

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

M.O'R.: In fact, I was going to ask you, you described your mother as very Victorian. What exactly do you mean by that in her case?

A.P-B.: Manners. Religion. The way you should be. Both of those come into the way you should be. She was understanding of other people's problems, but - and she wasn't strict in that she would criticize you, she had a very nice way of telling you what you were doing wrong or right, and how you should dress, and she was always very sweet about it.

M.O'R.: But she had very definite ideas about these things as well?

A.P-B.: Yes. Yes.. And how you acted towards other people, which all came under manners and being thoughtful and being kind to the poor and giving to the poor. And - well, what else is Victorian? The things you read, of course. And a woman's place, though she was stifled totally under it because my father was also Victorian and extremely domineering, and a woman only did certain things, and she most certainly did not work.

I had to babysit on the sly if I were going to babysit and earn any money. You were supposed to come to him and ask for everything, and if he agreed -. So I hated being in that position, so that I didn't even want to ask for bus fare, which was streetcar fare in those days, and I would earn my own money by babysitting, but when he would find out I was doing it, then I would be punished. And you didn't go certain places or you were punished.

And my grandfather, he would wear white - this was my father's father, the one who had all the property up here, who was friends of Lloyd - he would dress in these wonderful white suits in the summertime, and the lawn was always immaculate, and I would be on the roof helping the painters or learning how to shingle a roof. I loved to learn whatever was around. And he would stand down there, and he used my first name, Flora, and he would call up to me and he would say, "Flora, come down from there." And I'd say, "But I'm helping. I'm working." And he would say, "You are a lady. Come down from there." And I would say, "When I'm through working."

M.O'R.: Now, this is your grandfather?

A.P-B.: This is my grandfather.

M.O'R.: Your father's father?

A.P-B.: Father's father. So he would go to my mother and he would say, "You tell that young lady I will not leave her anything if she cannot obey me."

And so one day he came to me and he said, "If you want to work" - there was this big brass mailbox on the porch, and it always had to be polished. So he said, "If you want to work, I will pay you to polish the mailbox."

[end of side one]

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 1, Side 2

October 25, 1995

A.P-B.: So I was in trouble with my grandfather, too.

But when I was 15 he was dying of a very terrible bone disease, and my father would take me to see him. He started sending little personal things home to me, things that had been his. And he finally - he said to my father, "You know, if any of the children do something worthwhile, she's going to be the one." So he said, "I understand her now," because I wasn't interested in money; I was interested in what I could do for humanity.

So he sent his favorite tie pin home to me. He collected diamonds, and it had three of his favorite diamonds in it. And he sent poetry books, little leather-bound poetry books, and *Marcus Aurelius* over there is one of the books, and I think one of the little poetry books is down there. I ended up with the Ming lamps, these ancient Chinese things, and all kinds of little things: his fountain pen, his favorite fountain pen. But anyway, they were all Victorian.

M.O'R.: So did you perceive a change in your relationship with him over the years as he gained this realization, or is this something ...

A.P-B.: Only while he was dying.

M.O'R.: Only then?

A.P-B.: Yes, only then. But I can remember when I was seven and he took us all over to Gump's in San Francisco. This was when we were still living in Oakland. And we went over there, he took

us shopping at Gump's. And I remember I wanted everything in pink. I was either six or seven. So I had to have pink socks and pink petticoat and a pink ribbon for my hair. Everything had to be pink, and I remember him laughing about it because he said, "She's the pink girl."

M.O'R.: He lived in Oakland, also, or ...

A.P-B.: He lived in San Diego, but he owned a home up there in San Francisco, also, and he had the - I don't know what all business he had in San Francisco, but he had the San Diego Hotel, which was a big hotel in those days, and he had a big home in the hills in San Diego, and that was his main home.

But he had a place in Texas, because he went there to take care of the oil wells. He had oil wells in California. He had his fingers in the movie business, the early movie business. I remember one time after we had moved up here when he brought a young movie star and his mother up here to visit with us. And he - I remember when - I guess I must have been eight-and-a-half or - I don't - it was right after or just before we were ready to move up here. I don't remember exactly whether we had made a trip up here with him, but I remember we went into the big U.S. National Bank, and everybody was coming up to him and bowing and scraping and all of this business, and I thought it was kind of odd. I wasn't very impressed by it, but I thought it was strange that they would do this.

But then later, knowing about his wealth and everything, then I knew why. But it was a long time later before I knew all about that. And I can remember him taking us to a restaurant, and it was

always fun when we were with him, because he was always doing things.

M.O'R.: Had the money to treat you?

A.P-B.: Had the money to do it, yeah.

M.O'R.: Now, how did he acquire his wealth? Did he inherit or did he make it himself?

A.P-B.: No. He made it himself. He invested in real estate and got in on the early stages of things like oil, and he just ended up buying property all over the place. There was a ranch in Denver and a ranch in - out of Fresno in California, and the property that he and Lloyd had purchased up here.

They had started a hotel up here. They were going to build a big hotel over there - where the parking lot is for Meier & Frank across from Holladay Park, that was this huge hole where they had dug the foundation - for the foundation of the big hotel. And then the Crash came, and people didn't have money to travel, so they didn't go on with the hotel.

M.O'R.: So this was in the 20's, then, that they were planning to do this?

A.P-B.: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

M.O'R.: And where was your grandfather from originally? Was he always a Californian?

A.P-B.: Ohio.

M.O'R.: Ohio.

A.P-B.: And this was where my father's family were, and they owned a chain of hardware stores all over, and so my grandfather was actually my grandmother's second husband. She - my grandfather

said that she didn't even know how to wash out a handkerchief when they got married. She didn't know how to do anything.

I remember as a little girl that in Oakland when she would sweep the floor in the kitchen or something, she'd say, "Look at me! I'm sweeping the floor." And I would think this was very strange because my mother's mother - they didn't have servants, and they - my grandmother on that side knew how to do all kinds of things, and I adored her and I wanted to be like her, who could do all these things, because they were not wealthy. They were middle class. They had a beautiful home and everything, but my grandmother did all the work, and my mother did the work. She didn't want servants. My grandfather couldn't understand it, but she didn't. There were times when he would get people to come in to help her, and she would scurry around and get all the work done before they got there. [laughing] They could do the ironing or something like this, you know, but she didn't want anything like that.

M.O'R.: Now, what was your grandfather's name?

A.P-B.: His name was Joseph Meier, and that was one of the confusing things when we came here to Portland, because of Meier and Frank.

M.O'R.: Oh, yes.

A.P-B.: It was spelled the same way. During World War I my father and my grandfather had been sort of on the persecution end of things because they were German. My grandfather was German, and so my father was half German and half Irish. My mother was half English and half Irish. So I came out with Irish from both sides, and German and English. So with a name like Meier in Portland here, well, because of where we lived, the school there was almost

exclusively wealthy people, and the only people who weren't wealthy were these three little servant girls, two little Oriental girls and one little Black girl.

[interruption]

Anyway, when we got up here a lot of Jewish people were in the school, and because there had never been any prejudice in my family, I didn't know the difference between one race and another. They were all the same to me. They were all God's children. This is what I grew up with.

So when I started school there, all the Jewish kids took me in because my name was Meier, and they would take me home to their parties, the Schnitzers and the Zeidels and all of them, and then they wouldn't ask me back because Mother and Father would pump me as to who I was and what synagogue I went to, et cetera. So then all the Jewish kids dropped me. And the Gentile kids in the meantime had assumed I was Jewish, particularly when I was going to all the Jewish parties and things. And so when they dropped me, the others excluded me, and so I learned what real prejudice was. I hadn't known until then.

So I was left to play with the little Black girl and the two little Chinese girls. So there were four of us who could play together, and I learned what it was like. And I went home to begin with and I would cry and say, "What is this?" you know. "What's happening to me?" And My mother would explain to me what was happening.

And then I learned from my grandmother that when she was a girl growing up in Boston that if you were Irish you were called Shanty Irish, because my mother didn't know she was Irish until

when I was a little girl, when I was seven - of course, I was reading all these things, and interested in what people were like.

Hear that? You can hear it.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. What's with this train?

A.P-B.: This is an old steam locomotive.

M.O'R.: Oh, okay.

A.P-B.: It's the one that's going to make the run up through to Boise, Idaho, and making stops all along the way. And so they gave it the test run down the valley and back up.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: And it has this haunting sound of the steam locomotive.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah.

A.P-B.: So at any rate -.

M.O'R.: Well ...

A.P-B.: When I talked to my grandmother to ask her the family names, she - I asked her what her maiden name had been, and she said, "Well, I was Kitty O'Clary."

I said, "That's an Irish name. You told me you were English."

She said, "Well, dear, you never told people you were Irish if you lived in Boston. They'd call you Shanty Irish."

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. There's the whistle.

A.P-B.: And so she said, "I always just said I was English."

And I said, "With a name like Kitty O'Clary, and no one questioned you?"

She said, "No."

I went home and I said to my mother, "You're Irish!" [laughs]

So anyway, she knew what prejudice was, and I learned.

M.O'R.: Did you want to break to see this train, or is it going to come right by the front here?

A.P-B.: It doesn't come by here. When I heard it when it went down, I stood at the bedroom window and watched because I thought it was coming by here. And Richard and Rebecca had discovered that it was coming on the line up here, so they had taken off and gone up there and watched it.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: So - no, I grew up with them. They didn't.

M.O'R.: So you've seen them before?

A.P-B.: Yes. And they are, they're beautiful, but I get enough of trains, I guess.

M.O'R.: Well, you've given a bit of a picture of your grandmother, too. Now, we're talking about your grandmother on your father's side, right?

A.P-B.: She was the one who didn't know how to wash out a handkerchief.

M.O'R.: And the one that ...

A.P-B.: And my mother's mother knew how to do everything.

M.O'R.: Right. But it was your father's mother you were talking about just a minute ago, the one McClary?

A.P-B.: No. No.

M.O'R.: Oh, no. That's your mother's mother. Okay.

A.P-B.: No. They were Dungamins, O'Neills.

M.O'R.: Okay.

A.P-B.: So she had - well, her mother had become invalid, my father's mother, and they wanted before she died to make sure that my grandmother was married properly. And so they married her to a

wealthy older fellow so that she would have everything that she was accustomed to having. Well, she wasn't in love with him.

M.O'R.: And this is after your grandfather died, then, you mean?

A.P-B.: Well, this was before my great-grandfather died.

M.O'R.: Oh, okay.

A.P-B.: This was before my great-grandmother died that they married her off ...

M.O'R.: I see. Okay.

A.P-B.: ... to this wealthy man in Ohio. They lived in Ohio. And so she - her husband, the one she married, owned this string of insurance companies that they had started in Ohio. When I was a teenager I looked it up in the book, the telephone directory, they had a branch of it here in Portland.

So her brother, two of her brothers, I guess, began to work for her husband in the insurance business. And my grandfather came to work - he knew my two uncles, and so they talked him into going to work for the insurance company with them. And they had a big social occasion one time, and they spent a week with my grandmother and her husband, being entertained, and my grandmother fell in love with my grandfather. He was a young man. He was handsome. She was married to an older man she was not in love with, and she fell in love with my grandfather.

And at the end of that week when he left, she went after him. She left her husband, her child. She had had two children by this marriage. The little boy was four or five; the little girl had died. One of the nurses who took care of her had given her too much medicine when she was sick, so the little girl, the first

baby, had died. And so they had a second one, a little boy, James, and she walked off and left him. And we didn't know any of this until ...

M.O'R.: To marry your grandfather, then, or to get together with your grandfather?

A.P-B.: My great-grandfather ...

M.O'R.: Your great-grandfather?

A.P-B.: ... followed them and had the first marriage annulled and had her marry my grandfather, because she had followed him to his hotel, and you didn't do things like that in those days. And he disowned her.

After my father was born, a couple of years they were married before my father was born, and later my grandmother ran away from him, also, because he took her to live with his family after the baby was born, and she hated it. She wanted to be with him, and he refused to take her with him and bring a baby along. So she had to stay with his family because her family had disowned her. And so she ran away finally and took my father with her.

My father was about four at that time, and he told me stories about when he was a little boy how she tried to make a living when she didn't know how to do anything, and she began to go door to door selling this medicine for women's ailments, and I still have one of those books that she took with her explaining women's reproductive organs and how if they were out of line or anything was wrong that this medicine was a cure-all.

And he told me that he can remember being in this little tiny house, no heat, because she couldn't afford any fuel, and he'd be all bundled up and she would leave him there to go and sell this

stuff, and how he would trace the patterns of the frost and the ice on the window, all these beautiful patterns, and how he would study them when he was a little boy.

Well, finally her family found out about it, and they came and gathered them up and took them home. And my father told me how wonderful it was to be in this big beautiful old house and how he loved his grandmother in the wheelchair, and he would wheel her around, and he would chase the fireflies across the lawn in the summertime, and he would tell me all these things.

M.O'R.: So now, which family came and collected - was it your grandfather, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. My father's - no, my father's grandfather.

M.O'R.: Okay.

A.P-B.: My father's side of the family, on his mother's side. My grandmother's side, but not my grand - I never met any of my grandfather's side, and I have no pictures of them nor pictures of where they lived or anything. I have no idea. I would like to find out. They were from Germany, and they lived in Wapakaneta, and that's all I know.

M.O'R.: So now let me make sure I've got this straight here. So your father remembers living with his mother ...

A.P-B.: ... mother's family.

M.O'R.: ... and mother's family. I see. And at that time his father, your father's father ...

A.P-B.: Didn't know where my grandmother was. She had run away from him.

M.O'R.: I see. Right. Okay, I get it now.

A.P-B.: And then he went looking ...

M.O'R.: And so was there ever a reconciliation, then, between them?

A.P-B.: Never.

M.O'R.: So they were - so your father and his mother were taken in by her family?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: After they had disowned her earlier.

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: And so then later one of her brothers moved out to California, and then another brother came out and they lived in Oakland. And then they - after my great-grandfather was a good deal older and my great-grandmother had died, and so he was living all alone just with servants, and so they talked him into coming out to California. So my grandmother came with him and brought my father. And so that's how we got to Oakland.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: And my mother's family in Boston, they came out to Oakland when my mother was a couple of years old.

M.O'R.: And so your grandmother, then, your father's mother moved to Oakland but still had nothing to do with your grandfather?

A.P-B.: No, my grandfather didn't know she was there. And she lived with her father, my great-grandfather, and kept house for him and - in the way women kept house in those days. They had somebody come in and do the work - except my other grandmother, no.

M.O'R.: And so - but your grandfather, then, at that time was not in California himself? Was he still back in Ohio, then?

A.P-B.: He was everywhere.

M.O'R.: He was all over the place, huh?

A.P-B.: He was in Texas. He was in Ohio. He was in Oregon. He was in California. He was all over. But he kept trying to track down my grandmother, and every time he would find out where she was, if she heard about it she'd pick up and move again.

M.O'R.: So she didn't want any contact with him, either?

A.P-B.: No, she didn't. He finally found my father when he was in high school.

M.O'R.: I see. And so he still didn't forget his grandson, then.

A.P-B.: His son.

M.O'R.: His son, rather. Right.

A.P-B.: Right. No, he didn't. And he wanted to raise him, and that's why my grandmother wouldn't let him. And so he lived with my grandmother and her father, and then as I said when I was two, that was when my great-grandfather died. So my father, of course, was married and already had a six-year-old and a two-year-old daughter, me. And by that time I guess my baby sister had been born, because there's two years between us. So my father already had a family when my great-grandfather died. But I don't remember my great-grandfather.

M.O'R.: You remember his funeral.

A.P-B.: I wish I did. I'd love to have known him.

M.O'R.: And so - but anyway, then, obviously a relationship did bloom eventually between your father and his father?

A.P-B.: Yes. My father was working in San Francisco, as I said, and his father - well, his father found him when he was in high school. And - but my father didn't want anything to do with

him because of all the stories my grandmother had told him. And so he thought my grandfather was a bad person, and he didn't know the truth about my grandmother at all. She never told him she'd been married before. She never told him that he had a half-brother. She never told him any of these things. All he knew was that she was a deeply religious person and that she took care of her father and her brothers, and he only knew those things.

So my grandfather, when he came my father didn't want to have anything to do with him, and it was only after my father had his own children that then he realized what it was to have children of your own. And when my grandfather came to him then after he was married and had his own child, then my father let him come to the house. And then ...

M.O'R.: Was your father's mother still living at that time, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. But she - and she was living with us. And so she found that he was going to come to the house, so she went over to my aunt's place, to her brother's place and was very upset. And my grandfather then told them that my grandmother had run away from him and that she had also been married before, and that my father had a half-brother.

M.O'R.: So at this point your father was in his 20's?

A.P-B.: Yes. So then they faced my grandmother with this, and of course she was very upset. And then she said, "It's true, all of it."

M.O'R.: And the reason she didn't talk about it, I suppose, is because this sort of thing would have been pretty embarrassing to admit to in those days?

A.P-B.: Very much so. She was very Victorian, also.

M.O'R.: So you must have memories, then, of your grandmother?

A.P-B.: Oh, very much so. Both of my grandmothers. I loved them. She was Flora, and that was why I was named Flora, because my oldest sister had to be named after my mother, and my grandmother, Flora, was very upset that she was not named Flora and named after my mother. So the second daughter had to be named after her.

But my other grandmother gave me the name Althea, and that was the name I wanted.

M.O'R.: And that was her name?

A.P-B.: No. Her name was Katherine. That's why she was called Kitty.

M.O'R.: But she suggested Althea?

A.P-B.: Her first child who had died was Althea, and Althea was the Rose of Sharon. So it was a Greek name; the Irish had taken it over some time back in the centuries, and the Rose of Sharon was Althea. I have three of them in my garden out here. The althea; it looks like hibiscus. It's a big bush.

M.O'R.: Well, it's too bad the garden's not in bloom now.

A.P-B.: I know. I'd take you out and show you what an althea looks like.

[end of tape]