ORAN (SONNY) MANN

MEMOIR

Alsatian Customs and Traditions

B7

ORAN (SONNY) MANN - 1914

PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape recorded interview conducted for the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B. Madeline Boubel was the interviewer and editor and Deanna Hoffman transcribed the tape. The interview took place at the home of the narrator.

Oran, or Sonny, Mann was born May 15, 1914 in Castroville, the only son of Alfred Mann and Margaret Suehs. Sonny's father was a barber in Castroville and Sonny was in the grocery business. He began clerking at an early age for various businesses in town and eventually opened his own grocery store, from which he retired in 1978. He was educated at St. Louis School and has always been active in the Catholic Parish. He married Corine Tschirhart and they have two children. Sonny has lived and worked in Castroville all his life and his memories of persons and events in the 20's and 30's are vivid.

Tape #B7
1 hr., 45 min.
transcribed

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Today is September the 23rd, 1980. This is Madelyn Boubel interviewing Oran, better known as Sonny, Mann at his home in Castroville, Texas. I am interviewing for the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B.

Q Sonny, I'm going to call you Sonny. The subject of this interview is family life, customs and traditions; but before we, before I start questioning you about those things I want to find out a little bit about your background. Where and when were you born?

A 1914, May 15.

Q And where were you born?

A On a back street, but I just don't know what the name of the street is, but it's the house where Tina Benites lives in right now.

Q Tina Benites?

A In front of Wilfred Tschirhart, on the side of Wilfred Tschirhart.

Q Okay.

A Better known as the Slayton house.

Q Okay. That identifies it fine. Was that where your parents lived at the time?

A At the time, yes.

Q So you were born at home?

A Yes, I was born at home.

Q Okay. What was your father's name?

A Alfred Mann.

Q And your mother?

A Maggie Margaret Mann, or Maggie she was called. Maggie Suehs.

Q Maggie Suehs. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

A No brothers or sisters.

Q So you were an only child?

A I'm an only child.

Q All right. What was your father's business? What did he do for a living?

A First he was a farmer and then he became a barber.

Q Where did he have his barber shop?

A First he was down the street next to the market, Mr. Galvan's Fruit Stand, right next to the bank, in back of the bank, which was a saloon at those days.

Q All right.

A And that's where he started. Mr. Louie Burell put him in business there.

Q Mr. Louie Burell's name crops up occasionally. He must have been very prominent.

A He put him there and put him in there with all the equipment and told him, "Now you're a barber and you're going to stay here" and that he learned on the ranch on the Groff boys how to cut hair.

Q So was he never trained really?

A Never trained.

Q He just learned --

A He learned to barber on Jim Groff who just passed away awhile back and Claude and all of those boys up and Mr. Pete Groff, Lorene Haller's brothers.

Q That's interesting. What was your mother's role? Did she -- Was she strictly a homemaker or did she go out and work?

A No, she worked in LaCoste for Dr. Kuntz.

Q What did she do?

A Housework, she done housework for Dr. Kuntz in LaCoste.

Q And this was after they were married?

A Before she was married.

Q After she was married she never worked?

A She was just a housewife.

Q I see. Okay. What language did you speak in home? What was the first language you learned?

A Alsatian.

Q Could you speak English when you started school?

A Fairly well.

Q Did you find that a handicap, speaking Alsatian?

A No, no. It's all we spoke is Alsatian.

Q Did it cause a handicap when you started school?

A No, not much, no.

Q You knew enough English?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A And we also learned to read and write German through the first year. We had German.

Q Just one year?

A One year and then it was stopped by someone in the Government or somewhere, no more German.

Q Can you tell me about what year that was?

A 1921, when I started school.

Q Do you think World War I had an effect on that?

A Could have. That was what - '21. That was just three years after World War I was shut down or was over with. The armistice was signed.

Q Right. Okay. Where did you go to school?

A St. Louis School, Catholic School.

Q Where was it located at the time you went to school?

A Where Moye has their music hall now on the far end corner of the Moye Building. _____ lot on the left-hand side.

Q Can you remember any teacher in particular while you were going to school there?

A Yes, Sister Marcella and Sister Laboria. That's two of them I remember there. In the new school we had Sister Fost and Sister Frances Helen and those are two of them I remember.

Q All right. And who was the priest at that time?

A Father Heckmann was the priest when I started school.

Q Did you attend Catholic school all of your life?

A Yes, 'til the tenth grade.

Q 'Til the tenth grade. Was that considered completing high school at that time?

A I imagine I have a diploma for bookkeeping. I don't know if it was bought at Kress or somewhere, but I do have one. I don't know -- anyway -- I always said I "quituated" school. I didn't graduate.

Q (Laughter) All right. Did you ever attend the newer St. Louis School?

A Yes, I finished at this newer St. Louis School.

Q What year was that built?

A I don't know what year that was built. I really don't.

Q Okay. But then you did attend both places?

A Oh yes, uh-huh.

Q Was it required that you attend the Catholic school because of your religious affiliation? You are Catholic, right?

A Yes. Yes, I think that time it was required you go to Catholic school.

Q What about your role in the home as a child and then a little bit older as far as work was concerned? Did you have any chores you had to do, before you went to school or in the evening?

A Oh, no, uh-huh. We did raise baby calves when I was younger, but then I went to work early for J. F. Schott and Sons. Well, J. F. and Schott Brothers in 1927. I was 13 years old when I started to work on Sundays for them. And finally then on Saturdays I was working for Blackie Tschirhart and Sundays for Schott's, Sunday nights I pulled soda water at the dance hall at Tragessers.

Q Tragessers Hall was located where?

A Right where Mrs. Whitehead lives. They had a nice house and a dance hall in those days.

Q So instead of having chores at home, you picked up your little money, spending money by going out to work at an early age?

A Work at an early age, yeah, I held down three jobs.

Q My goodness. All right. What about leisure in your home? What were some of the things ya'll did for fun? You know, just at home.

A Well, at home we didn't have much. Daddy was working most of the time, late in the evenings. And we just didn't have much going on unless he'd take me rabbit hunting or dove hunting when the season was open. But otherwise, or once in a while deer hunting, but that's the only thing we had at home.

Q Well, you said he worked late, how many days a week did he work?

A He worked six days a week and he worked late at nights, most of the nights 'til 6:00 o'clock, and then on Saturdays 'til 12:00, 1:00 o'clock. And Fridays at night they were open.

Q Well, what was the reason for working so late?

A Because money was scarce, and you had to work every chance you got to making a few nickels, every chance you had.

Q So, in other words you didn't have a lot of money?

A No.

Q And he picked up everything he could?

A Yes, right.

Q Do you think that he had to cater to rural people that this was the reason?

A That's all we had after the dam was built, that Medina Dam, when he had the barber shop at that time that was 1911 when that was built. And he used to go down at 6:00 o'clock in the morning and work 'til 3:00 in the night. On weekends we had all kinds of people here, and he'd walk home along the river to the Flat Rocks where Wiley Mangold lives now, at night, in the dark.

Q That was from the Medina Dam?

A You - no - from the barber shop.

Q Oh, from the barber shop.

A From the barber shop home.

Q And at that time they lived over there?

A Over there where Wiley Mangold now lives.

Q I see. Okay. So, they moved from the house where Benites --

A Well, that was before he was married.

Q Oh, I see.

A Before he was married.

Q Oh, he was a barber before he married already? Oh, okay. All right. I should have pursued that, but you said he was a farmer first, but in my mind's eyes he picked up the barber trade later.

A Right, yes, yes.

Q Was there ever music or anything like that in the home?

A Oh, yes. He played the violin and the guitar. He and Mr. Louie Mehr played for dances, traveled by horse and buggy on Sunday nights and used to play for dances. I still have his violins here, both of them that he had.

Q Is that right?

A Uh-huh.

Q Where did they play for dances? Do you know?

A Well, Rio Medina and old Bader settlement and house parties. In those days there lots of house parties or surprise parties or a barn dance, if somebody built a new barn, they had a barn dance.

Q Did he ever take music?

A No, everything by ear.

Q He just had a gift for it?

A Yes, French harp also.

Q You said that he played for dances, for house parties and this type of surprise parties --

A Yes.

Q Do you remember attending any of those?

A Yes. One night I went with him. It rained and rained all day Sunday and they had a box supper at Burell's school. If you remember Burell's school right across from Clarence Haby's? There was a box supper that night and at 9:00 o'clock they called him and said, "We're going to have the party, the box supper and the dance. Come on up." And I don't know who played with him that night, but anyway, he and I went up then in the Model-T, he asked me to go along. And they were selling the boxes about 10:00 o'clock up there. And there was people there like Tobin Mangold, John Boubel and all those people came from all around for the box. (Znd) it was for the benefit of the school.

Q Okay, now would you tell me what a box supper was?

A A box supper, the ladies would fix boxes with some real good food in it and decorate them real nice. And some were little wagons, some were maybe a little airplane or different models of things with different items. And they would be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Q And this was for the benefit of the school?

A That was for the benefit, and they would invite the one that had her name in the box they had and invite them to eat with them.

Q Oh, I see. This has never been brought up yet on one of my -- but I remember it now that you tell me, right. Well, what about surprise parties? Did you ever go to any of those?

A No, no, uh-huh.

Q Barn raising?

A Yes, myself in later years.

Q Yeah, well, I mean, just tell me your experience.

A Oh, yes. We went to one barn dance at George Balzen's out in Quihi. Raymond Biediger and I and Hilly Mangold and Dan Mangold and George Holzhaus. Must have been around 1927, '28 when we went out there to a barn dance. It was lot of fun there, just built a new barn.

Q Okay. It's been pointed out to us that weddings for a long time were on a Tuesday. Do you know this to hold -- to be a fact?

A To be a fact because I had to get married on a Tuesday in those days and that was back in 1935 when we got married. And it had to be Tuesday, it couldn't be no other day of the week.

Q Do you have any idea why?

A No. Never did learn why. But it had to be Tuesday.

Q Okay. Do you remember when this custom stopped? Do you have an idea?

A I would think when Father Lenzen came into this country, right around that area, I think.

Q That it wasn't always customary to marry on Tuesday?

A No. Then it got to be on Sundays and then on Saturday. Cause our daughter got married on Sunday.

Q Uh-huh. Do you have any idea why the change might have come about without -- other than the priest being instrumental in it?

A No, I don't think it was the priest, it was the people that wanted it that way, because people were off of work on Saturday and Sunday and could attend the weddings. Which on Tuesdays, they couldn't leave their jobs, wouldn't get off.

Q So, do you think that possibly because earlier it was more a agriculture or farming society, rural society and they could come anytime and then as later years came along people went to a job?

A Right, so true.

Q And this might -- this was probably, it was economic in other words?

A Right.

Q Okay. What -- describe your wedding. Did your wife wear -- also tell me -- also tell me who your wife is and your children's names. I should have picked up on that earlier and I didn't.

A Oh well, fine. My wife was Corine Tschirhart. And our children are Helen Lutz and Frank Mann.

Q And Helen's husband?

A Helen's husband is Francis Lutz, the youngest one of Wallace Lutz's boys.

Q All right. And Frank's wife?

A Frank's wife is Brenda Redding from San Antonio.

Q Okay. I should have gotten that earlier but anyway --

A And they have Brandon.

Q (Laughter) All right. Now, tell me about your wedding. Did your wife wear -- Did you have a big wedding?

A We had a big wedding for those days, yes, uh-huh. We had married on a Tuesday, September 17, 1935. We just had our 45th wedding anniversary last week.

Q Oh, uh-huh.

A And I'll never forget Grandpa Tschirhart and Mr. Frank Muennink was farming in Pearson at that time. He was a fishing friend of my wife's father and he made a deal with him to get some turkeys up there. And we had turkey and barbecue and we went to Mr. Muennink's house to buy three turkeys for the wedding. And we had barbecue. I just told my wife the other day, the day before our wedding anniversary, "You know what we were doing, I was digging a barbecue pit for the barbecue," for the day before and we were all getting ready for it and we had it in the back yard of Mr. Tschirhart's house. Next to where the Legion Hall is, next door. We even danced in the yard.

Q That's there your wedding reception was?

A That's where our wedding reception was.

Q Did Corine wear a white dress and veil? The traditional?

A Everything, yes, uh-huh.

Q And how many bridesmaids, attendants did you have?

A Four. I'm pretty sure. Charlie Suehs, George Muennink - um, I don't remember, oh, Lawrence Haby, maybe there was only three. I forget, I don't even know whether -- I know there was three.

Q What time of day did you get married?

A 9:00 o'clock on Tuesday morning.

Q Okay. When you and Corine got married, I think the custom was, after the ceremony you would go to the priest's house to sign the register?

A Right.

Q Did the altar boys intercept you at the gate?

A Lock the gate with the chain, that's what we used to do when we were altar boys. Lock the gate and we had a lock and we had all the gates locked until we got a few dollars. Generally we got ten twelve dollars and that's what happened to us in those days.

Q And what was the purpose?

A It was divided amongst the altar boys, that's the only thing. They got that money to let the bride and the groom out.

Q They did -- in other words --

A Out of the gate, yes.

Q They detained them from going through there until they got money?

A Money, yes.

A Oh well, fine. My wife was Corine Tschirhart. And our children are Helen Lutz and Frank Mann.

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A Out of the gate, yes.

Q They detained them from going through there until they got money?

A Money, yes.

Q I see. And this happened to you too?

A Right. And then after that you had to drive to San Antonio to I forget whose studio we went to have the pictures made. That took 'til 12:30 'til you got through there and then you'd go back home for dinner and the rest were waiting for you all that time.

Q Could it have been the Lewison Studio on West Commerce?

A I imagine, yes, right, right, Lewison Studio.

Q The cutting of the wedding cake, was that done the day of the wedding?

A I hate to say this. My wife says Doodie baked the wedding cake and I said Aunt Molly Schott baked the wedding cake. That was Mrs. Hans at the time, before she married Mr. Louis Schott. And I remember Mrs. Joe Schott which was Lucille, made my wife's wedding gown, wedding dress. Yeah, I remember that.

Q And this was in 1935?

A 1935. I was working for Blackie Tschirhart then and Corine was working for the bakery - Bluebonnet Cafe and Bakery.

Q And that was located where?

A Where Gene Suehs' Real Estate is right now.

Q I see. You mentioned Doodie while ago. Who is Doodie?

A Oh, her sister.

Q All right. Mrs. Holzhaus?

A Yeah, Mrs. Holzhaus.

Q Okay, after the wedding you said you had the dinner and then you danced at night. Who played for that dance? It's just in the back yard?

A Yes. Just in -- that's all we could afford cause I think we got 65 dollars in cash and that was a lot of money. I said I guess we'll get a check book next day then we're going to put this in the bank. It didn't last but about four weeks. We were broke. But we were both working. I was getting seven dollars a week and she was getting eight and everybody was envious of us and jealous because we were making so much money.

Q My goodness. (Laughter) Fifteen dollars a week.

A Fifteen dollars a week.

Q Okay. Did you go on a honeymoon trip?

A We went to Corpus Christi on our honeymoon trip, yes. We had a Model-A Ford Sport Roadster I had at that time. When you had a car at 18 years of age you were big stuff, but then we couldn't afford to drive it. I walked to see my wife before we were married all week long until Saturday evenings and Sunday we could drive it. Gas was two-bits a gallon, but we didn't have no two-bits to buy it with. And you drove in to a filling station and you said, "Fill her up" and held out two fingers on the side, two gallons is all you could afford. But you know.

Q How far did two gallons take you?

A Well in a Model-A in those days, they went pretty far. I guess about 40 miles, I imagine.

Q Okay. So at that time the weddings were typically on a Tuesday and you had a reception at home most of the time with just the immediate family?

A Yes. There was no place -- the godfather and the godmother that had to be there and they didn't go too far out in the family.

Q Probably couldn't afford to have a big party like they do now?

A No, no.

Q Did you ever participate in a shivaree?

A Yes, uh-huh, I sure did.

Q Whose shivaree was it, do you remember?

A Yes, Mr. Bob Rihn and who was the other one? Alfred Hutzler, no, was it -- I don't even remember. But I remember Bob Rihn's. And he lived right now where the City warehouse is, where the nuns own that rent house they have in back of the City warehouse. That's where Bob Rihn lived in there. And I was at another one, but that was earlier, and I don't remember who that was.

Q Just what does a shivaree mean? Would you tell me what it means?

A A shivaree. Well, they bring cow bells, plow shares and discs and all kinds, wash tubs, and they hammer on them until somebody comes out after they married a second time. When they make noise somebody brings them some food and some beer.

Q They don't give up until --

A They get something to eat and drink, and they won't leave.

Q And this is done to whom now?

A Well, people that are married a second time. I don't know how that works, I don't remember either. If it's divorced

or if their mate passes on, I don't know which it is. If it's for both ways, I don't remember.

Q But it's always the second marriage?

A Right.

Q All right. For one or the other?

A One or the other, right, um-hum.

Q Okay. Now we're going to talk a little bit about burials and baptisms and follow those two subjects for a little bit. When you think back over the funerals, were they -- were the ones you first remembered, was the body at home?

A Yes, uh-huh. And the undertaker was Milton Ludwig. And he'd come out from San Antonio. That was the only undertaker they had in those days.

Q Um-hum.

A He was a man who weighed about 350 pounds.

Q Is that right?

A Uh-huh. And they put the fans in the back of the church as people walked in. You remember those days? You grabbed you a fan, they didn't have no air condition in church.

Q Oh, yeah.

A Okay. And undertakers, well, there were none out here and people would sit up at night and they'd have food for the people that sat up and they would change off. At 12 o'clock a different group would come to sit up with the dead person.

Q This was called the wake? Right?

A The wake, right. And my daddy in those days, can I say that?

Q Sure.

A There were no undertakers here, so he shaved a many a dead person. They'd call him to go over and say -- I remember a many time, he'd get five dollars to shave a dead person, but it was some job.

Q I can imagine it was, yeah. That's something you don't think about. You know, it has to be done.

A Right.

Q True, okay. When do you think that this custom of having the body at home ended?

A Oh, I wouldn't -- well, after the undertaker started coming. Mr. Tondre, when he started undertaking business. I think that's when it ended right there.

Q Was it customary for people, say friends and relatives, to bring food to the home?

A Not in those days, I don't remember ever. You know, that there was ever anything brought in those days. It might have but I just don't remember.

Q It was -- in other words, it would be friends sitting up with the body or staying with the body until they left the house?

A Yes.

Q The burial?

A Yes.

Q But as far as relatives and friends, like the custom is today, this you don't recall?

A No, uh-huh, not that it's you know, you bring food to the family so they don't have to cook. Those days, I don't remember that.

Q Did the family get together afterwards, after the funeral was over as the custom is today?

A I don't think so, I just don't remember that they did. I mean they went home and that was it, cause they left them alone, you know.

Q Uh-huh, yeah, in their sorrow.

A Right.

Q Okay. The mourning period. How long was that?

A Oh. That was for a year. You wouldn't go to a dance or to a movie or to anything and the ladies would wear black and the men would wear either a band on their hat, a black band or a black band on their suit, on their coat.

Q And this indicated that they were in mourning?

A Mourning, right.

Q What happened or did you ever know of an incident, where say someone in the family, maybe one of the younger ones said, "This is just ridiculous, it's taking entirely too long for this period to pass", and went to a dance or wore a red dress or something like that? What was the feeling of the community?

A At first it was bad. People thought that was the worst thing you could do, you know. Some of the younger ones would go to a dance just after one in the family would die, but later on, well, she died, I can do it. So, it just kept getting better and better you know, in that part, I mean. You wondered well, you can't bring them back, you know, which is so true. And then, well some of the parents

died and the young ones went to dance within three weeks. So what?

Q Um-hum, true. But, the point I'm trying to get, you know, to is when, about when did people become more tolerant and say, "Well this is ridiculous"?

A I don't really don't know. I imagine about 15, 20 years ago that that really ---

Q Um-hum. Well, I think they started to get more tolerant as I can remember around 1950, I think. And it slowly, but surely more and more.

A More and more, right.

Q Right, okay. Did you attend dances much as a young man?

A No, no.

Q No?

A Uh-huh. Not until I started going with my wife, then we started -- She did. But I didn't go to dances. We went to dances, but we didn't dance.

Q You didn't dance?

A Uh-huh.

Q Why?

A I couldn't. I can't yet.

Q (Laughter) Yes you can too. Well, how did you learn to dance?

A Oh well I danced -- with my wife I imagine.

Q She taught you?

A Um-hum.

Q Where did you go to dances?

A Tragessers. Right up here where Mrs. Whitehead lives now.

Q Would you describe that hall to me?

A That was one of the finest halls in those days. It had a big silver ball like they have at the Roaring 20's, and it was kept clean and everything. I guess one of the first in this area that had a restroom on the inside for the ladies and for the men. They had the top bands at all the time. Like Jimmy Kline, Ralph Webster, which was music.

Q Um-hum.

A And they used to have the Niemeyers for a barn dance. Where they would a donkey on the stage and a milk cow on the stage and they had bales of hay to sit on for the musicians to sit on. And we wore overalls and the girls wore little house dresses.

Q For the barn dance?

A For the barn dance. And the Niemeyers played.

Q Then what did you wear when you had these other name dance? These --

A You wore suits. Tie and this full dress suit. Once in a while it's all you could get it with just a shirt with no tie, you know. But most everybody wore a suit if he's was going with a girl.

Q What did the girls wear?

A Dresses, mostly dresses. Not long dresses, just regular street dresses.

Q So the long dress wasn't in fashion at that time?

A No, uh-huh.

Q Okay. Did you -- were there any other places that you went to dances here in Castroville?

A Well there was Jagge and Hans had, the Wernette's Garden, which is Koenig Park now.

Q Um-hum.

A And there were dances down there.

Q How often were these dances?

A Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving and none during Lent and none during Advent.

Q Ah --

A Ones there every Sunday night, there was a dance at Tragessers.

Q Oh, that was every Sunday?

A Every Sunday.

Q But the ones at Wernette's Garden were still on the special or --

A Or every other -- they were -- no, they were too. They had them either Saturday nights or had them Sunday nights. I forget now.

Q Uh-huh.

A But they had them too, regular too. Before when Mr. Lamon had the Wernette's Garden, he used to have Theo Artz and his son Gene to play out here, old time music --

Q You said old time music like what pieces you were telling me?

A Like "Sweet Bunch of Daisies", "My Little Girl", "Over the Waves" and music like that they played. And "Rattaway". I didn't know what "Rattaway" was, but they played that too.

Q What about you mentioned masquerade parties?

A Masquerade dances, yes. They had those every before Lent started, in February. That had to be a masquerade thing. Best costume would get the first prize, which was $7.50, $5.00, I believe in those days. My daddy always masked like a doctor. And he walked like Mr. Fritz Etter with a limp. And people would say, and he had a little bag, M.D., "Hey, I believe that's Fritz Etter, it sure looks like him." So I masked after daddy didn't anymore, he was getting older, I did put on a many years ago and I still have the long-tailed coat, the derby, and I wrapped the little M.D. suitcase back there with M.D. on there and I took prize, second prize with it.

Q That's good. They had these masquerade parties you said in February?

A In February, before Lent starts. The last dance. And Mr. Lamon -- would you like to know how Mr. Lamon fixed that dance hall up?

Q Yes, yes.

A That was a skating rink at that time. It wasn't used for a dance hall anymore. So Mr. Lamon said "Jim," that's what he called me, never Sonny Mann or Oran - Jim. And I was going to school and he says, "When you go to school Monday, Jim, you get all the kids you can get together and tell them we'll have free lemonade and free ice cream - Saturday, to be at the Wernette's Garden at 9:00 o'clock Saturday morning. And he had some timber made out of 8 by 8's with like a push broom handle in it. Made real strong and he had about four or five of those and the kids could sit on there

and the others would pull them and he put corn meal that he ground down on that floor about six inches deep and those kids worked that corn meal on that floor all day long. And he'd feed them ice cream, hot dogs and lemonade. And by evening he had it like glass. And that's how that hall came back and Mr. Lamon had and I was his hat checker in those days. And lost a hat for one of the Balzen's, I put it in the wrong number.

Q (Laughter) Was that a tragedy?

A That was.

Q Okay. So -- which Mr. Lamon was that?

A Ed Lamon, Florence, uh, Howard Tschirhart's wife's daddy.

Q Okay. So, well how long was it used as a skating rink?

A Oh, I don't know, I was just a kid. My mama never let me skate. My wife skated down when she was a little girl. And she fell on her elbow and a knot came out on her elbow and was afraid to go home, covered it up with a sleeve, it went back down again, anyway.

Q What time -- what year was that about?

A Had to be '26, '25, '26, somewheres in that neighborhood.

Q See I don't think anybody has mentioned that.

A Yeah, it was originally a skating rink and run by who now Jim Clements and who was the other guy from Homdo, I don't even, I know the man, I can still see him skating, an older man. And people like Mr. Henry Vonflie and Mr. Alois Grimsinger that lived over, I'd go down and sit, go get in and sit down for free and watch them skate.

Q Well, you said you were a hat check. Was this for the skating?

A No, for Mr. Lamon. Those days that had a hat check cause everybody wore a hat and they'd check their hat for a dime or the ladies' coat or the men's overcoat for 25 cents and you'd get a ticket and you'd hang it on that number. There was numbers, 1, 2, 3, and you'd hang them in the back there. You remember that?

Q No. When was -- on what occasion did this happen?

A At dances.

Q Oh, at dances.

A At regular dances, uh-huh.

Q Okay. So they used it for two things then? At the time?

A No, it was a skating rink, they wasn't using it for a dance hall anymore.

Q Oh, I see.

A And see it burned down several times.

Q Oh.

A Mr. Adolph Ahr, Johnny Ahr, he had it, rebuilt it one time and had dances before Jagge and Hans had it without a roof on it and it burned down after he had it awhile.

Q You don't remember it then, being such a beautiful place with all the flowers and everything or was it still like that when you remember it?

A Well, there was some of those devils horns or what do they call them little orange things like a trumpet?

Q Yeah, yeah, I know what you mean.

A Those were growing and the well was there. I remember that. Outside when we were kids and we would go down there and the

Latin American people would have a tamale stand over there, they lived there and they would sell tamales, 20 cents a dozen.

Q Um-um. Now what are they? Dollar?

A Dollar and a quarter.

Q Dollar and a quarter a dozen. Were there still dances down at the what's now or was the L. M. Tondre store, had that already changed to a store?

A I remember, no, I remember going to a dance with my mother and daddy there. Oh, I guess I was 4 or 5 years old, upstairs. And they had kind of a wire in front, no was it, no, that was Miss Tragesser, they didn't have just, they were at an off-set where the people sit. But that's been a long -- only one I remember that I went to a dance. Couldn't tell you who played.

Q Well, so then Gene Artz I know played there at the Wernette, well it was the Wernette Hall at that time.

A Wernette Hall at that time.

Q And then so he also played here too?

A Oh, yes.

Q For many years. I wonder how many years he actually played?

A Oh, I don't know.

Q For dances?

A 'Cause my daddy use to talk about his what is -- his brother-in-law or different name too that use to play the harp with him. But I have never seen the man that played the harp with him right here.

Q Were there many horse races and rodeos around here at the time that you were a young man?

A Horse races were up at Burell's, Louie Burell's bottom, pecan bottom, they had horse races. But I was real young at that time, I don't remember much about that.

Q That's something that you didn't participate in?

A No, uh-uh.

Q Okay. When in school and then later, did you ever play a part in a play or anything?

A Many plays.

Q Right, really?

A Oh, yes. We always had a play after school year ended, you know. And then after we were out of school, we had what we called the Dramatic Club. Miss Ruth Lawler was our teacher, our prompter, whatever you call it. And I had a program of one of the plays we had. Lucille Halbardier and Alberta Geant all of those played in that play. I had some copies run off of that program. And Miss Ruth I think got $10 to teach us, which was worth $300 to teach that bunch. Herbert Holzhaus, Herbert Tondre and Irma Mangold, all of those girls were there and we had plays. Like I was trying to think of the name, the Houzars or something, we had some uniforms made with some high furry caps with the feather on top, and blue, red pants. It was a nice outfit. And I know my mama had to make one for me. But I forget the name of that play. But we had lots of plays. We made money for the church, I think it was.

Q And where did you have -- where were the plays held?

A In the parish hall.

Q Okay. And how often did you do this?

A I, maybe once or twice a year at least, we had a play.

Q So, you had -- they had box suppers for money raising.

A Raising and plays. And then plays again the school, the school children for the school.

Q Yes. That was for the parents?

A Uh-huh. And then we had a band, too, after I was out of school. And you know I've been trying to think who was in the band. I played the drums. August Schott played the trumpet, and Mr. Joe Schott the slide and I don't know who the others were. And all we knew was the Stein song, "Let's go through it again," and that was all night long. (Laughter) I was telling Alfred Schott. But I learned to play the drums pretty good.

Q (Laughter) Where did you play for dances?

A No, we just had a band. We never went any further, then it just dissolved, it was over with, about after a year, you know. But every week we practiced, the band.

Q And you were the drummer?

A I was the drummer. I had my own set of drums by the way, too.

Q Oh, what happened to them?

A I don't know what happened to them.

Q (Laughter) Were you ever -- were you a baseball player?

A No.

Q Were you interested in the baseball games that went on?

A I'm still -- yes, Highway 90 League, we followed them. My wife and I followed them to D'Hanis, wherever they played, we went every Sunday.

Q Uh-huh. That was part of the recreation?

A That's the only recreation besides watching the SMT truck line unload the freight on Saturday nights. That's the only thing you had. We didn't have a theatre. Bingos, after we were married. The whole block got together once a week and had a bingo party. And a bar of Palmolive coap was -- Palmolive soap was the first prize. Right -- I'll never forget that was our entertainment after we were married 'cause there was nothing else going on.

Q And you probably weren't economically or financially well enough off to go very far?

A No. In those days if somebody said, "We went to the Majestic Theatre Sunday afternoon to see the vaudeville show," you'd say, "Well, my god, those rich people, if we could just afford to go." And if you went out to eat, it was Mother's Day was the only day that you took your wife out to eat in those days.

Q Did you ever -- did they ever have bunco and card parties? Here?

A Yes, uh-huh. I'll never forget I was -- I don't know how I got in here, had to have parent's consent to have the first -- when St. Ann's had their first bunco party in the Koenig Park down here was Wernette's Garden.

Q Um-um.

A And I got to go in to play, I was real young and that was something big when they had bunco parties for the church. And what was it? High five?

Q Yes, that's right.

A High five, right, high five and bunco.

Q I knew they played cards, but I --

A And then they went with them in the parish hall later on. When bingo came along, well that was it. That wiped out all the other.

Q Um-um. What was the purpose of the card parties? And the bunco?

A For the church, benefit for the church.

Q Benefit, money raising?

A Money raising, yes.

Q Okay. St. Louis Day has been in existence for many, many years. When do you remember your first St. Louis Day? How far back can you remember? Participating?

A Well, when you went to school, I mean, I guess way back then, 1926, '27, '28, '29, you were doing something, a little something down there.

Q And they were always, as far back as you can remember, they were held here at what is now called Koenig Park?

A As far as I can remember, yes.

Q What day of the week were they held?

A I was told the earlier years they were held whenever it fell on the 25th. Now later years it was closer to the Sunday closest to the 25th.

Q So that's when you recall it?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q Okay. What kind of food was served as far back as you can remember at St. Louis Day?

A Barbecue was the main meal, that's all I can remember that they had. And sausage.

Q And the rest of the food that they served, how did they get that? Where did that come from? Your potato salads and everything.

A As far as I know, is all I know it -- the potato salad and the slaw everybody brought it in that time you didn't go to the store and buy the slaw. You'd cut it yourself, you know.

Q The parishioners contributed that?

A Right, right.

Q What about the meat, was that contributed by the parishioners?

A No, I don't think so. That was bought.

Q The church bought it?

A Um-um.

Q Okay. So it was for money purposes that the St. Louis Day was held?

A Right, it was for the church. Money raising funds or whatever you call it.

Q Okay. Were you a member of the St. Louis Society?

A Yes and I still am.

Q Okay. Did you ever hold an office in St. Louis Society?

A Yes, I was dues collector.

Q Dues collector?

A Um-um.

Q And what part did the St. Louis Society play in the St. Louis Day? The members, did they have any special role?

A Maybe in the earlier years, you know, before our time, 'cause it was St. Louis -- I don't know, I never have heard that they played any particular part just 'cause they were members of the St. Louis.

Q What did you do as an individual for the St. Louis Day?

A I was "hot shot" for many years.

Q And what do you mean by that?

A I was "hot shot" - whenever they needed some anywheres on the grounds, I would try to get it, scrounge it, like scavenger hunt. You find it, you get it, you bring it here, we need it. I don't care who it was, a bingo stand, anywheres I would try to get. If we'd run short of anything, I'd try to get it wherever I could get it. Red and White or Schott's or my place. We had the store in those days.

Q Um-um. Okay. Did they have a dance on St. Louis Day?

A Yes, they had dances until the last four or five years, I guess. Then they stopped it.

Q And when -- were the dances at night?

A At night. Well, it created a problem with the dances at night. The people would get home too late and they just stopped having it.

Q What kind of drinks have been served as long as you can remember, at St. Louis Day?

A Well, beer as long as I can remember -- I don't know before whether they had when the prohibition was here. I know one year we had slot machines behind every tree, you remember that?

Q No.

A Oh, yes, we had slot machine behind every tree. And we had beer to float a battleship, one year when beer was rationed during World War II. Nobody could buy beer, but Father Lenzen found beer.

Q (Laughter) That sounds like him.

A Right, right. We had beer, we wouldn't have no shortage of beer. But in the boot law -- the drink -- well in the bootleg days, that's where the people made then their business.

Q Um-um.

A Those days, you know, they sold lot of bootleg. I'll never forget, cars were parked all around these streets here and this is an old story and people wouldn't go home from the dances until 12:00, 1:00 o'clock. And there'd be a few cars scattered around here and my daddy would sleep right by the window next door to us here, and he heard this guy mumbling. Did you ever hear this story?

Q No, no.

A People were so mean and dirty in Castroville they steal anything and he -- Daddy got up and went out to see if he could help the man and he said, "What's wrong?" He says, "Well, I tell you, this is the dirtiest place I ever come to to have fun. He says, "I'm sitting here in the back seat of my -- I mean I'm sitting in my car and somebody stole my steering wheel. Daddy says, "You're sitting in the back seat." "Oh," he says.

Q (Laughter) Oh, that's priceless. Do you by any chance know about how many places sold bootleg drinks during the prohibition?

A What did we have? Thirty-one of them here in about 1931, '32, yeah, about twenty-nine and thirty. We had about thirty-one I counted one time.

Q That sold bootleg?

A That sold bootleg beer and whiskey. That's like the man that was on the pole that Mr. Lawler had hired to put in the electric lights. In 1921, I think it was, by the name of Red McGowen.

Q Um-um.

A He was up on the post right across from the church and this stranger drove up. And he says, "You know where a man can get a beer in this town?" Red McGowen was always loaded. He was up on the pole, he said "You see that steeple over there? There they don't have it."

Q (Laughter) The only place.

A "Every other house has got it," he said.

Q Were there many arrests because of the prohibition?

A I just remember one or two, that I really remember. And neither one of them was a big one.

Q Well, why do you think that -- okay, well let me rephrase that. Did the revenue agents ever come to town?

A Yes. But somewheres in advance people knew about it and there was nothing going on. They shut down and went fishing or something.

Q So, do you think that -- I'll ask -- I'll try to put this properly. Do you think they were tipped off by someone in advance?

A Right, right, sure.

Q So, that probably was --

A There's some old stories out about that, and you don't have to tell you 'cause everybody's heard them, I imagine.

Q Uh-huh.

A But the only one I remember that was really good, I don't know if lot of people -- there was one man bootlegging in the lower part of town, and Chute Haller was standing in the corner, and the revenue man came by and asked where he lived. And there was a street in back of Moye, where the nuns are now, a military school where Moye school is there was a street, it's closed now. That was mud when it rained for three weeks. And he said just take that street, and run the revenue man in that mud hole and they run down to this guy's house and told him they were on the way and he cleaned out.

Q He had the revenue man stuck in the mud? (Laughter)

A Yeah, stuck in the mud.

Q Oh, dear, that's funny.

A That's so true.

Q I hate to get off of this bootlegging, but I -- (Laughter)

A You could write a book about the one that, this still that two men had up here. It crossed the Medina River. Everybody knows about that one. I imagine you've heard too.

Q I think so. Go ahead.

A No.

Q No, you don't want to?

A No. I know the man who came to the barber shop and smoked ten dollar bills.

Q Oh, my word. You know, I've heard, I don't know it to be a fact, that a lot of people got wealthy, but very few held on to their money.

A Yes, uh-huh. Now, like -- well, there -- Monday morning they would go to their friend's bootlegging joint and they'd drink there again. I imagine they'd, well, go to San Antonio and blow it. But, I'm talking about that, on Monday morning I worked in the store for Blackie Tschirhart in those days. And, we had no self-service those times, the counters were in a square all the way around. I guess about 20 foot square. And there you could see they were getting ready for the next week. A can of Blue Ribbon, a yeast cake, five pounds of sugar and 15 cents worth of caps. One order after another. And I was driving all morning delivering to all the places that ordered, but getting ready for the next weekend.

Q To brew some more?

A To brew home brew.

Q Home brew?

A My daddy made his own for his own use and we -- he made 90 bottles out of 5 gallon crock every week.

Q Is that right?

A Yeah.

Q Well, how did that sit with the rest of the people here in Castroville? What was their feeling about the bootlegging?

A Nobody cared anything about nothing.

Q Nobody cared?

A Uh-uh.

Q Just do your own thing? (Laughter)

A Right. And business would get better. One would go around, the rest of the time the Rangers in town he'd open wide open and sell out.

Q Who was in town?

A The you know, when business was bad, no one buying, he'd go around and tell all of them had a few, but you know, one would go around the rest and tell them the Ranger's in town, and the other bootlegger would close up and he'd open wide up and sell out.

Q Oh. In other words, he'd lie about it. He'd say the Rangers were in town. Oh boy, I tell you. What about 4th of July? Was that a big day to celebrate?

A Not here, but in Hondo they had a football game in front of the Court House. That was the football ground, where the post office is now, I imagine --

Q Yes.

A Right there. That was the football -- when I was a kid.

Q They played football on the 4th of July?

A Right, on the 4th of July. That was a big day over there.

Q Is that right?

A No, I take it back. That was Armistice.

Q Armistice?

A Armistice, that was a football field. You remember that?

Q No, uh-uh, no. I'm not saying I'm not --

A 4th of July was what? I don't even know, not much. 'Cause I worked when I was a kid, 4th of July.

Q Oh, it wasn't a special holiday?

A Not here, for those people that were in the city, but out here everything was open. Schott's were open those days. When I worked for them, 'cause I'll never forget when the Renken boys drown up here on a 4th of July, right on this side of the Flatrock Crossing.

Q Who -- what was that?

A Paul Renken's boys. Two of them. They were on an outing up here on the river. Mrs. Renken was Joe and August Schott's sister. And the two boys drown in a whirlpool up there on a 4th of July.

Q Oh, how terrible.

A I'll never forget that.

Q But the business places were open?

A Yes, I mean the business place was open as far as I remember.

Q Do you think that -- they -- you said they did have something special at Hondo on the 4th?

A No, no, no. That was Armistice.

Q No, that was Armistice.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Let's see here. Let's stop this for a minute. We were talking about baseball games just a minute ago being a lot of recreation for you. Were there any -- was there real rivalry between any clubs, baseball clubs?

A D'Hanis and Hondo. That was the ones that Castroville wanted to beat all the time. Highway 90. Especially D'Hanis. And in the earlier days, it was LaCoste.

Q Is that right?

A Right.

Q How many months did they play? Did they have sort of like a tournament or something, or a season?

A Didn't they or did? They had a season but I think it quit Labor Day, September or -- Labor Day in September, you know. The first weekend, I mean, Sunday, that's when it ended.

Q Did they have --

A I don't know if they had play-offs or not. I think they did, yes, I think they had play-offs. Sure they had play-offs, right.

Q Would they have what was known maybe as a Highway 90 Champions?

A Right, Highway 90 Champions, right, they did.

Q Yeah, I guess it got pretty exciting.

A It did, it was fun to follow them.

Q Okay. You've said that you were born and raised a Catholic, and has your family always participated in all the church -- the things with church? Like the clubs, sororities and things like that.

A Well, the differences -- yes, aside like St. Ann's and St. Louis Society and all of those things, I think so, yes.

Q Okay. What about Christmas preparation? Can you tell me how your family -- what your family did to get ready for Cheistmas. I'm talking now when you were a child.

A Oh. Those days. Had to get the Christmas tree, the cedar tree.

In those days, they had candle holders out of tin for lights, you remember those?

Q Um-um.

A I found a candle holder the other day.

Q Did you?

A And well it was cooped off in another room. Shut off, "you can't go in there, 'cause Santa Claus is in there." And we're just the three of us, we didn't have much of a Christmas preparation. Just mama and daddy and I until we got married. I got married and the family started -- then it's a big day.

Q Uh-huh, yes. You didn't have as much Christmas preparation then as a family with more children?

A No.

Q -- I mean with just the only child.

A Just -- yes.

Q Okay, did you go to midnight mass?

A Yes.

Q Did you do this as long as you can remember, going to midnight mass?

A We went to midnight mass for 40 years, never missed since we're married.

Q Is that right?

A Um-um. 'Til the last few years, we haven't been going.

Q You said Santa Claus fixed the Christmas tree. When did you get your gifts?

A Christmas Eve.

Q Christmas Eve?

A Couldn't wait 'til in the evening so we opened up 4:00 or 5o'clock. Mama would let me in at 4:00 or 5:00 o'clock.

Q On Christmas Day, did you have any special meal or anything?

A Well, yes, uh-huh. We generally had turkey or something for the three of us, but that's all.

Q You didn't have any other family participation?

A No, uh-uh, no.

Q From brothers or sisters of your parents?

A No, no.

Q Okay. You mentioned while ago that there were no dances in Lent. What were the Lenten regulations as you remember them when you were younger?

A There was nothing. You just didn't go nowheres, but you went to church. What was it? Wednesdays and Friday nights during Lent and Advent they had church services. And you didn't go to movies, you didn't go nowheres during -- you done penance during Lent, 40 days.

Q Um-um.

A And the earlier days they didn't have a dance Christmas, they had the day after Christmas, which was St. Stephen's Day. That was the big day.

Q Oh, I see. Well, did you fast?

A Yes, you had to fast.

Q And what did you have to give up, any kind of food in particular?

A Yes, meat on Fridays and Wednesdays and if you wanted to do anything else on your own, well you could give up something

else. Or do something else.

Q Okay. When do you think this regulation about the fasting changed or became more lenient? Or why do you think it did?

A Why I don't know. But I imagine about 10 years ago.

Q Um-um. But, you don't have any idea why?

A No, no idea.

Q Okay. What was your participation in church during Holy Week?

A I didn't have much to do in the Holy Week. Not anything, really.

Q You didn't?

A Uh-uh.

Q Could you tell me about the Good Friday services?

A Yes, they used to be from 12:00 until 3:00 in the afternoon. And the later years, they began at 3:00 until 4:30. But the 12:00 'til 3:00 was more -- more you had more out of it than from 3:00 'til 4:30. An hour and half just isn't long.

Q Tell me something about the church services on Good Friday. Were they different than the daily mass, daily routine?

A Oh, yes, yes. It was very much a difference.

Q Did they ring the bells on Good Friday or go to Holy Communion?

A No, the bells left to get the Easter eggs on Holy Thursday morning when they sang the Gloria the last time, until Saturday when the bells came home.

Q Is that what they told you?

A That's what they told us when we were kids. The bells are going to leave now to get the Easter eggs.

Q Okay. Was Easter Sunday then a special day?

A That was a special day, yes. Easter Sunday.

Q In what way?

A In many ways. The ladies had to have new dresses and hats and new shoes. And church service was beautiful and there was no church Saturday night like they have now. They had church --

End of Tape 1

Q You were saying that the ladies had special clothes for Easter Sunday.

A Um-um. Bags -- sorry.

Q And -- Go ahead.

A Bags to match the shoes, you know. Men had new suits and ties and shoes. Oh, that was a big thing, Easter Sunday.

Q And did you have a special -- special foods or something when you got home?

A Oh, yes. There was ham. Ham for Easter Sunday that was always -- or turkey, some people had turkey. 'Cause ham was expensive at one time.

Q Let's go back to when you were a child. Did you ever hunt Easter eggs or have Easter eggs?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q Tell me what you did to get ready for Easter when you were a kid.

A Well, we got -- we -- my mother fixed some Easter eggs. And she got some kind of chips over at Mrs. Schorp that lived in back of it to make the eggs brown. And then she would take parsley leaves and dip them in wax and put them on the egg and dye some with onion peeling. Did you ever do that? Red onion?

Q Yeah, I've seen it done.

A But those chips, I don't know what those were. But they made the prettiest eggs you wanted to see.

Q What color?

A Brown.

Q Brown always?

A Brown, yeah reddish kind of red, they were pretty.

Q And what color were the ones from the onion peel?

A Brownish, and then you could buy some with stripes around them. The Muellers use to make or had an old sewing machine fixed up and they would do them for 10 cents a dozen. Boil them and stripe them for you. Silver, gold, beautiful, you never saw any?

Q Yes, I've seen them. What Mueller family are we talking?

A Julius Mueller.

Q Julius Mueller.

A And they used to have a bakery years ago.

Q And where was that located?

A Where the Gene Suehs' Real Estate office is. I found a token the other day - one loaf of bread free at Mueller's Bakery.

Q No kidding?

A And my wife worked for them, yes. And some days when Mr. Mueller didn't feel like baking, he'd get a load of Butter Krust.

Q (Laughter) He had days when he didn't feel like working?

A Right.

Q Baking huh? Okay. And you said they charged 10 cents a dozen?

A Ten cents a dozen to boil them and to paint them.

Q But who furnished the eggs?

A You furnished the eggs.

Q I see.

A You furnished -- for their work, you know. They charged 10 cents a dozen.

Q Uh-huh. Golly. Were there dances on Easter?

A Oh, yes. Easter, in our days, in the earlier days Easter Monday.

Q Really?

A Yes. My daddy -- that was the day you had the dance, not Easter. That's when you partied at the houses.

Q Oh, now --

A And Christmas too. That's why they didn't have no dances until St. Stephens Day. (Staphas-dawg).

Q So, then in other words, then let's say in your father's time, they spent the Easter Sunday and Christmas Day as a family day?

A Right.

Q And then --

A Easter Monday and the day after Christmas they would have their dances.

Q That's interesting. Corpus Christi Day. Do -- how do you remember that as a child?

A I remember that four of the oldest members of the church carried, you know the name of that thing?

Q Canopy?

A Canopy, would that be right?

Q Yes, if it had four sticks and a --

A Four sticks and like a roof --

Q A cover?

A A roof over it, yes. And the priest walked under there with the chalice or whatever it was. And that's where we had a procession around the plaza, I think in those days, didn't they? Yes, I thought so. In fact, that was a big thing. Now it's just a Mass, let's get it over with. We're going fishing.

Q Can you describe the procession?

A Well, all I knew it was a big thing. We got to go to Mass, Corpus Christi Day. Today's Corpus Christi Day. And that they'd have a procession around the square there in front of church. But that's all I remember.

Q You don't remember the girls dressing special or anything?

A Uh-uh, I sure don't.

Q No, okay. Did they have -- Excuse me.

A That was May Devotion when the girls threw flowers. You know.

Q All right. Would you tell me about that?

A The little girls had bows and little white dresses, then they threw flowers in front of the priest. And they had May procession. That's what I -- the only thing I can remember, I don't remember about --

Q Well, when did they have the altars placed at different places around the plaza and --

A Mmm, I don't know -- that exact -- that's, no that's stage -- that's Good Friday.

Q Do you ever remember going in a procession like at the School --

A Yes.

Q I think that was Corpus Christi.

A Yes, with the altar -- yes, was that Corpus Christi? Yes. They used to have one at the old drug store and one at the Marty House, I think, there where Belcher's place is, antique shop. I think there used to be one there. There was two or three altars, but that, ooh, I'd have never thought about that.

Q Did they have one at Moye?

A Yes, I think Moye.

Q The old convent?

A Yeah, um-um, I think they had one. I was --

Q Do you -- excuse me.

A I was a mass server in those days, but I just don't remember.

Q Did they have one, do you remember then having one at Rosalie Jungman's house, next to the bank?

A I don't remember.

Q No, no.

A I remember the one at the drug store, I'm pretty sure they had one in front of the old drug store, which is Dr. Eckert's house. Now, across from the drug store.

Q Across the street?

A Yeah. Uh-huh.

Q Okay. The people was Zuerchers? Do you remember Zuerchers?

A No, in front of Zuerchers' house. Oh, yes, uh-huh. Mr. Zuerchers with the Palm Beach coat on, always had it on, real light one. No, this was the old drug store in front of Zuerchers. It was the original, Bernard Fitzsimon's drug store.

Q Um-um.

A There I think was one, if I remember correctly.

Q Okay. But you remember more of the flower girls and that type of thing on May --

A May devotion, yeah.

Q May devotion. You said the little girls wore white dresses? And --

A Um-um and had baskets full of fresh flowers.

Q Okay. Was the Bishop ever here on any of those days, do you recall?

A Just the only time I remember the Bishop coming was for confirmation, that's all.

Q Uh-huh. So, you -- oh, so then in other words, the processions you remember are the Corpus Christi and the May Day. How about to the Cross Hill and All Soul's and All Saint's? Did you ever -- were there ever --

A All Soul's Day, they went to the cemetery and have a Mass up there at 5:00 o'clock in the evening. And during May they go up there, used to, to pray for the crops and go to the Cross Hill and pray the Rosary up and back.

Q And what was that called?

A Rogation days.

Q How many days did they do this?

A Did they do it every week, once a week in May? I think it was for the crops. I don't remember, I was in the procession I remember that, but I just don't know for sure.

Q Okay. So as far as you can recall you don't ever remember the Bishop coming for anything but to -- for confirmation?

A Right.

Q Okay. And how often was this done?

A About once every four years, I think, they have confirmation, or ever three years? I -- they wait until they have a good class.

Q I believe -- yeah, I think that's the answer. It depended on the number of children.

A Right.

Q Right, okay. All Soul's and All Saint's Day is a church day that was very much celebrated. Did you ever participate in decorating the graves?

A Yes, on All Soul's -- All Saint's and All Soul's Day. Yes, we always did decorate our graves.

Q How did you go about doing this? Did you have a special place to get flowers and --?

A Yes, we did. We had a special place we got fresh flowers. Some years we do, some years we put the artificial flowers up there. And it's quite a chore, 'cause well, now my wife's has a pretty nice size family, big family.

Q You'd try to put something on all of your relatives?

A All of --

Q As a little remembrance.

A Right, uh-huh.

Q Okay. Did the rosary play a big part in your home life or not? Did you pray the rosary a lot?

A We did, but not often. Maybe once a week or so.

Q Yeah, okay. How about St. Nicholas Day? Was that anything special, St. Nicholas Day?

A Oh, yes. That was special to hang up our stocking. Get a few apples and oranges and candy. No toy in those days. Now they get a little toy in there or something.

Q Do you have any idea where this St. Nicholas custom came from? Why this was done?

A No, I don't. I read it several times, but I don't know where it came from.

Q But as far as you hearing it around here why you did this, you don't know?

A No, uh-uh.

Q Okay. You don't hear the Angelus bell rung anymore?

A No.

Q What did that mean to you when you heard that bell ringing?

A Well, you were suppose to pray when the Angelus bell went off -- start ringing. What were you going to -- what were you suppose to pray, your mealtime prayer? Or what was it? I don't even remember.

Q I think it rang in the morning, at noon, and in the evening.

A Right, and you were suppose to pray. And then there was a time of the year where the bells kept ringing for how many, so long and you had to say three rosaries or four rosaries. And a whole block of the families would get together in one house and they'd pray the rosary. And the bells would keep ringing, what is that?

Q That's the first time I've heard this, I don't know.

A No, no, no. If they still do it or not. But, you know the bells would start ringing at 6:30 and they would ring for

an hour or half an hour and people would get together in one block and say the rosary.

Q Did this happen just once in a while or --

A Once a year. It was --

Q Once a year.

A But was the occasion I don't know. It was before some --

Q Some holy day?

A Some holy day and I can't remember what it was. Now, Blackie, a guy like that could tell you right quick.

Q Well now, see this is the first time I heard that so I --

A Yeah, yeah, right.

Q So I can't answer you and I should know, but I can't answer the question. I understand they used to ring the bells, too, at a death.

A Yes, they toll the death bell.

Q Was there anything that distinguished who the person was by the sound of the bell?

A Well, it would be if it was a child or it was a heavier bell, I mean a heavier toll, it was a lighter toll and a grown person it was a heavier toll, a bigger bell.

Q A different sound?

A Different sound, yes, uh-huh.

Q Okay. So then by the sound of it you knew?

A You knew it was a child or an adult.

Q Okay. Tell me about solemn communion. What did you have to go through in preparation? By this, I mean your schooling, your instructions and then finally the day of the communion.

A Of the solemn communion, you didn't go near a moving picture or a dance or nothing like that. You stayed away from everything for one year.

Q All right.

A Not even close. Well, you weren't allowed to do anything. And the last week of solemn communion, when I was a kid and watched the older ones at the old school across where the Moye has their music hall down there, the boys were sitting on one side of the fence and the girls on the other. And they weren't allowed to talk for the last two days to anyone. Just read the Catechism. And get their prayers for the communion. I'll never forget -- I can see them sitting in the pomegranate bush and we'd look out the window. Two would talk to each other, that's all. Not get in contact with anyone else.

Q Uh-huh. Well, did you have to take instructions, any special type of instructions?

A Yes, yes. By the priest. The priest gave instructions the last three months, every -- was it three times a week, I think it was.

Q Okay. All right, so then you had all this preparation for a whole year and then you were -- you said you couldn't talk the last day or two to anyone but maybe a friend. What about fasting?

A No, not that I remember that we had to fast.

Q You didn't have to do without water or food?

A No, no.

Q You didn't? Okay. Well, some of the people, older people told me that -- that you couldn't even have a drink of water until after the communion ceremony was completed. Yeah, but you don't remember that?

A No, uh-uh.

Q Okay. Well, then the day of the communion -- it's the day of the communion. Where did you go that morning and how were you dressed?

A You were dressed in a suit with the white little boutonniere in your coat pocket or -- lapel and had a candle. We've still got our candle holders up there.

Q Do you?

A Yeah, you had a white ribbon on the candle holders and then after that there was a big celebration at the house.

Q At your home?

A Uh-huh.

Q Well, when you went -- did you go directly to church when you went to make your -- to have this for this special day?

A No, you met at the schoolhouse and I think you went procession over to church from the -- there was St. Louis Society, St. Ann's and there people met you and went over to church in a procession. The girls were dressed like a bride, in veils and a white dress, yes.

Q Okay. Did you feel like this was a special day for you as a child?

A Oh, Yes, yes. You were big stuff. Had on a hat even.

Q Oh? And after all the ceremony was over you said you just came home and you had a big celebration at your home?

A Um-um.

Q What happened at the celebration? What did that consist of?

A Just like a wedding party.

Q Is that right?

A Right. We had all kinds of food and beer and soda water, ice cream even sometimes. Everything to go with it. And the kids would get a lot of money. I know, I know Helen had - I don't know - quite a bit and she got, in our days well, $40 was a lot of money.

Q Yes.

A And a lot of people brought different stuff instead of money, you know.

Q So, it was something you looked forward to.

A Right, uh-huh.

Q Okay. You said the Bishop came for, oh just occasionally for Confirmation. Was this as important as the communion day, the Confirmation, do you think?

A Not really, not really. I don't think so.

Q It was just a church rule, more or less.

A Church rule, more or less, and you had to find you what you call, sponsor?

Q Uh-huh.

A And I never knew why they called my grandpa Mann, everybody called him "Godfather" when they passed him. And I found out when he was I don't know "Godfather" for how many in Confirmation. You know, you'd walk up with one and another would stop and be my -- sponsor, and he'd walk up with another one.

Q Is that right?

A Yeah, and I never knew why they called him p'fedder.

Q (Laughter) P'fedder? What does that mean?

A Godfather.

Q Godfather. Okay. Did you make just one communion and that was it? Or did you make two?

A No, you made your first communion when you were seven and then you made your solemn communion when you were twelve.

A All right.

A And the children from the outlying places had to come here to make their communion. Like my good friend Joe Bilhartz were down at Pearsall. They had to come up here and stay with his grandpa Steinle right across there from where Mr -- umm I don't -- who owns Pioneer Flour -- Mr. James owns the old rock house on the corner. That's where Mr. Steinle lived. And the Pearsall -- the girls, Bilhartz girls. Joe and Winona and Hortence and Marcella, they all had to come up for one year to go to Catholic school one year so they could make their solemn communion.

Q They evidently attended a public school where they lived?

A In Pearsall, and they belonged to this parish. I never could understand it.

Q This was customary then from the rural -- for the rural children?

A Right, uh-huh. If you belonged to this church why the year you made your communion, you had to move to Castroville to come, like Clines Haby, and them stayed at Mrs. Karm's. They were kin to Mrs. Karm.

Q Okay. So now we don't have the two communions anymore.

A No. Just one and that's it.

Q Well, and I think earlier they only had one also but it was when you were older.

A Older, yes.

Q Now the children are about what age, do you think? About when they --

A In about the first year of school, I think.

Q Yeah. Okay. Let's touch a little bit on births and baptisms. Do you think that the baptisms were held sooner, say 30 or 40 years ago, then they are now or do you see any difference there? I mean, sooner after the baby was born.

A I think they were sooner in those days, than they are now.

Q About how old do you think the child was?

A I think when the child was what? A week old or so, they were baptized I think.

Q Do you see any reason for that? The change, the difference.

A No. I don't see --

Q You don't think maybe it was because that there were more deaths, more children died in those days when they were born?

A Could be, I don't know really. I wouldn't know why there was --

Q Was there a fear of the child not going to heaven if they weren't baptized?

A Yes, right, so true. They were.

Q Okay. Do you know of any -- did your family have a baptismal dress that was passed down through the generations in the family? Do you remember?

A I think we found my cap.

Q Oh?

A Lace cap, but I don't know where it's at. I think Corine said, "This looks like your cap."

Q Uh-huh. Well, that was -- I suppose a little bit oh, maybe 20 years maybe before your time where this was really a big thing. And I was wondering if you still had one in your family, maybe.

A Yeah.

Q Okay. Now, you said you were -- I'm going to touch on a couple of things and then kind of sum up on these things and then I want to ask you about your life as a grocer and a baker, okay? But, I want to ask a couple of more other things. You said you were a mass server. You're the first man I've interviewed, tell me what happened when you were a mass server. What did you have to do?

A First you had to go to school by the nuns to teach you the Latin prayers, which were beautiful. And today I don't know a one. And you had to know them, when to use them, when to -- when the priest would say his part and you would have to answer him in Latin.

Q Um-um.

A And you had teachers, like my teachers were Clark Tondre was one of my teachers and Blackie Tschirhart. They were the older ones finishing school and we were starting.

Q Um-um.

A And they were your teachers. You had to serve with them. And I served with Father Heckmann -- I don't know, he said something I didn't like one morning and I didn't answer him

the Latin prayers and he run me off of the altar in the middle of the mass.

Q (Laughter) Did this embarrass you?

A No, not me. And I had to go back and apologize and he took me back. (Laughter) But, those days you went to serve mass and if you didn't serve, or didn't go, you saw you had somebody and paid them 50 cents to go in your place.

Q How often did you have to do this?

A You were on every so many weeks. It all depended how many servers were there. And during the summer, well, father would - if he had a funeral, he'd call the ones here in town. They were the closest ones around. And most of the time, those days children didn't serve out of town. It was too hard for them to come to mass during the week, 'cause we had to serve a whole week, from one Sunday to the next Sunday. And then another one would start that Sunday. Another two, there was always two.

Q Um-um. Did this mean that you served at all the masses or did you rotate the masses?

A Now that I don't remember either anymore. But you had to serve on Sundays with one mass, either the -- where you started the one week and then the next week where you finished. But I don't remember which masses anymore.

Q Uh-huh. At what age did you start and what age did you stop?

A I started when I was in the second grade and I think I stopped just about two years before I stopped, quit school. About the eighth grade.

Q So you did this about 8, 10, 6 or 8 years?

A Right. And enjoyed it. And did a many of wedding, only should have kept a diary of who the people were, you know that you -- that got married.

Q Yeah, that would have been really special.

A Something nice.

Q Right. Did you enjoy being a mass server?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q Good. Okay. Do you think a lot of the traditions and the things we've talked about were nurtured by the church more or less? In other words, did your lifestyle say 40, 50 years ago revolve pretty much around church and church activities?

A Yes. That was a must.

Q It was a must?

A Um-um.

Q So, not only social but religion, social, everything?

A Right.

Q Okay. Did -- you married Catholic, right?

A Right.

Q And did you ever know any couples or any prejudice when, say a Catholic boy married a Lutheran girl? Was that any problem there?

A Earlier days, it was. But it faded.

Q Much more tolerant?

A Right, right.

Q When you say early days, how -- what?

A Oh, in the '20, in the '30's, maybe around in there, you know.

Q When you were a young boy?

A When we were -- when we were getting married those days.

Q Um-um. Did you ever feel uneasy or were you told not go go into a church of another religion?

A No.

Q Okay. So we have established that some of the traditions have changed and that the home -- the church influenced the social life and the community life a great deal. We also know that the church laws and everything had eased a whole lot. Do you think that this is good or bad?

A I think it's good.

Q Would you tell me why?

A Well, it's maybe more people join the church, 'cause the church laws have eased.

Q Do you feel like they feel more like going to church?

A Right, right.

Q It's easier to do?

A Right.

Q People are more -- they're more -- church is more understanding.

A Right.

Q Okay. Now I know that you -- you said you worked in grocery stores when you were a young -- just a child, a young boy. How long did you do that? How many years and what places did you work?

A I worked for Blackie Tschirhart what was Ed A. Tschirhart & Sons. That's the only job I ever had. Until he sold out in 1945 to Frank Keller, his brother-in-law. And I worked for him until 1948, three years. Then I went in partner with Stanley Haby and we had a bakery and grocery store where the Gene Suehs' Real Estate office is. And we had a brick oven

there, there was no gas, Mr. Haby hauled the wood every week, a load in an old truck. And we'd start work every morning from 2:30 on, we started the bakery.

Q Did you know anything about baking bread before you went over there?

A No, and I never wrote anything down, I wish I would, but I do remember some of it. I think I can bake a loaf of bread. I did only fry the doughnuts and ice the coffee cake and stuff like that.

Q And he did most of the bread baking?

A Right.

Q And you say you started at 2:30?

A 2:30, 3:00 o'clock in the morning, every morning.

Q Well, when did your work day end then? Was this all you had was a bakery or -- ?

A No, we had a grocery store and feed, cow feed, chicken feed, everything with it. And well, we didn't close, we closed at 6:00 in the evening. Saturdays we were open 'til 9:00.

Q Well, did you rotate your shifts or something to be able to handle that many hours?

A No, we both stayed there. We went home an hour in the afternoon for lunch.

Q You worked about 16 or 18 hours?

A Right.

Q Every day?

A Right.

Q What about Sunday?

A Sundays we were closed.

Q God, you were lucky. (Laughter)

A Well, I had worked all my young life before that and Corine too. When Corine worked in the bakery, when Mr. Grice bought out Julius Mueller, Corine was the only one he had. And she'd go to work at 6:00 in the morning and work 'til 3:00 in the afternoon. He'd let her go home until 4:00, be right back 'til 9:00 every night and she kept the books yet, for $7.00 a week. And when she -- when they were a penny off at nights she'd say he'd sit there and say "find that penny." And then he started getting bigger and bigger where they had homemade ice cream and the girls -- Do you remember when the girls churned the ice cream inside?

Q I remember eating homemade ice cream there.

A Well, they had three freezers. They got to where they had -- people were coming out from San Antonio for homemade ice cream. Three freezers.

Q And they made -- the girls --

A The girls made it, but, that was the only strike we ever had in Castroville was when my wife and Lloyd Rihn's wife, rest her soul, she's gone now, Madeline Halbardier, sat down on old man Grice and they wouldn't move no more. 'Cause they wanted off every other Sunday, one of them, 'cause they were on every Sunday, every day of the week. And he didn't know any better so they just sat down. That was the only strike we ever had in Castroville.

Q That is cute.

A And finally then they got off every other Sunday. And we were still going together.

Q Now, you said she -- okay, she worked in the bakery for Mr. Grice. Was this bakery located --

A Where Gene Sueh's --

Q And that's the one that Mr. Mueller had next -- and then Stanley --

A And then Stanley Haby, and then Haby and Mann.

Q Well, this Mr. Grice --

A And he had a cafe with the bakery, Mr. Grice.

Q Okay.

A And well, he couldn't -- the highway went through there in those days. That was Highway 90, remember that?

Q Yes.

A Okay. And you heard the story where the old gentleman couldn't wait in the morning to open up and he would open the doors. Finally the truckers would stop. Corine would walk down there in the cold in the morning, well go to work, dark, but he didn't wait in the mornings so, she come there one morning and the oatmeal was sitting on the counter. Did you ever hear that story?

Q No.

A And the milk and the sugar. And she said, "How come you're open?" "Well, they stop and then I open the door and I let them in, I don't know where this guy went and he's not eating this." She says, "No, you don't eat, you got to cook the oatmeal." He thought you eat it like Post Toasties.

Q (Laughter) Where did Mr. Grice come from?

A I don't know.

Q That name is not a familiar Castroville name.

A No. He was a truck farmer in Valley Wells, down here by what is it, on your way to Eagle Pass. In that area.

Q Um-um.

A And would you believe, and I'd like to meet the young man, his grandsom, met him, his grandson, somewheres at a dance in San Antonio?

Q I'll be.

A Yeah, and she was telling him that her aunt or sister-in-law --

Q You say she met the grandson in San Antonio --

A Somewhere at a dance in San Antonio, Mr. Grice. And she was going to bring him out here. We'd have like to met him, and I think she said he was not the son, 'cause that, uh-uh, couldn't be.

Q No, no, that's too long ago.

A No, yeah, 'cause I knew the son real well.

Q Okay, the recipe for the baked bread. Is that the same one still that say Mr. Grice, Mr. Mueller and Haby's and --

A Mr. Grice to Mr. Haby. I don't know about Mr. Mueller 'cause Mr. Grice was a baker.

Q Uh-huh.

A He didn't have to learn it. But, Mr. Haby learned it from Mr. Grice.

Q Well, now how did Stanley Haby learn it?

A From Mr. Grice.

Q Okay, right.

A He worked for him.

Q Oh, he worked for him?

A He worked for him. See, Mr. Haby, Stanley Haby, came in off of the ranch, off of the farm. And he was looking for a job and he went to work for Mr. Grice. And he was a grease monkey like I was. Grease the pans, and they didn't fry doughnuts in those days, they didn't have doughnuts, I don't think, I don't know. Anyway, he would watch the old gentleman and finally the old gentleman wanted to sell out, he was getting old and sickly and he bought him out.

Q So that's --

A For $200.00.

Q My goodness.

A I think so, I think that was the payment. That was another one that got -- anyway. And he paid -- yeah.

Q So, did he run -- then he had it alone for a while. Did Corine work for him too or did she quit working?

A No, no. She wasn't working then.

Q So he ran the bakery alone?

A He and his wife run the bakery for a long time.

Q Did they only have a bakery or did they have another --

A No, they had a big restaurant.

Q Oh, in conjunction with the bakery?

A With the bakery, yes. Then they built a new -- the new one, the original building -- I mean the building now that's there now. The original building was a wood building with a screen porch on it. But, then afterwards Mr. Suehs built a new one.

Q Well, okay, that's when you got into it, over there --

A That's when after Mr. Haby got tired of a restaurant and things were too hard to hire wages then. I walked in one day, he says, "Let's start a store." I said "with what?" He says, "I don't know but I'll help you find it." And that's how we got started.

Q Well, how -- how many loaves of bread -- can you remember how many loaves of bread you baked for a day's business?

A Not too many, 'cause we were off of the highway then and maybe thirty, pound and a half loaves, and maybe twenty pound loaves and maybe ten of the larger ones or twelve.

Q Okay.

A But now, we had big-like doughnuts, we had the Moye Military for a good customer that used like 40 dozen of doughnuts every weekend. Or they would change off maybe 30 dozen of sweet rolls for one weekend, or maybe thirty stollens for another weekend. That's when they had the military school over there when we were doing real good there.

Q Where was this located?

A Over at the Moye Military. Oh, that was the nuns that run the military school.

Q Is this where the convent was - used to be?

A Yes, that was where the convent was. My daddy happened to be the barber there and he had forty heads to cut every Monday. And the nuns had the names written down and he'd call them and they'd come up one at a time. And they had like a regular military school. They had horses across the river

to ride and Mr. Stecker at that time was something, a "chief" over there or something.

Q I think he was like a coach for the boys --

A Coach, something or --

Q Or father --

A Yes.

Q Stepfather, sort of (Laughter)

A Oh, General -- what was his name? Major Canty?

Q Uh, yeah, Canty.

A Canty, he was the man in charge.

Q He was the military --

A Military guy, yeah.

Q How many boys would usually be here?

A About 100 I think or more -- it was a hundred, I think.

Q And where did most of them come from?

A San Antonio and further off. By the way, I have a card somewheres in the file from one that came by the store here awhile back, in business in Austin. And everyone this, you see their name quite often. Canales' boys were from the lower country. They were going here to school and one walked in just before I closed the store and he says, "You know there used to be a military school here and I went over here and there was a barber there by A. Mann, the barber, cut our hair." I said, "Yes." But I don't know where -- I forgot where he was from. There -- every once in awhile one would crop up.

Q I think a lot of them came from Mexico too, right?

A Lots of them, yes, uh-huh.

Q Okay, let's get back to the bakery business. So you, then you went -- you quit working at Frank Keller's and you went into business -- partnership --

A Partnership for twelve years.

Q With Stanley Haby.

A And then one day it came up that we would move across the river so, I had already bought part into, or share into the property where the bakery is now.

Q Um-um.

A And then I thought to myself, now, no, people are not, the older people are not going to walk across the river on account of Sonny Mann and Stanley Haby to buy their groceries or drive over there. I'll just stay here so, we dissolved partnership with still being friends and in good health, or whatever you call it. Anyway, and he went over there and I stayed there and then about three years later I had to get out of there 'cause the Western Auto was going to expand. And Mr. Keller had just closed up his store, so he says, "Why don't you rent my place?" I says, "Well, I didn't know it was for rent." He says, "I'll fix it up like --" So I went over there and started there.

Q And that was right across from the --

A Bank.

Q That was the old Ed Tschirhart?

A Ed A. Tschirhart & Son, which used to be the Knippa Store years back.

Q So you made a complete circle? You started working there and you ended up owning the business?

A Where I was, yes. Anyway, yeah --

Q Knippa Store?

A Yeah, Herman Knippa that married, what was her name now? Miss Haleburton. She was a school teacher and she boarded with the Joe F. Schotts when they lived right in back of the store, that building. And Miss Haleburton and Herman started to go together. I think she's still living, I'm not sure, but he passed on. And they had, the Herman well, he didn't make it in that store.

Q Um-um.

A But Corine and I run that store then there for I guess I don't know, 'til 1978 we sold out.

Q And do you remember what year you went over there when you and Stanley dissolved your partnership? You don't remember when that was exactly?

A No, it was twelve years after we were in business, Stanley and I together, and I guess I was there about three or four years when Gene told me I had to move. Well, whenever Mr. Keller closed his store, when he sold out --

Q I think he did that when the bank, they started the Castroville State Bank. Because he was promoted or they asked him to be in, no that's no, no --

A Mr. Ulbrich.

Q Mr. Ulbrich was there first.

A Right.

Q That's not right either. Okay, it's not that important, I thought you might remember.

A No, but anyway, we run it then all these years. And finally decided we couldn't sell it, nobody wanted it and it was doing a good business so we just finally sold it out piece by piece and got rid of it. The last lady really done good that bought me out the last few things.

Q Is that right? She resold them and did good?

A Oh, she couldn't miss. She bought $13,000 worth of stuff for $6,500.

Q Oh, my.

A Equipment, shoes and everything.

Q Can you tell me some of the changes in the grocery business as the years passed? Please?

A Yes. In the country, I mean you can't keep up with the city anymore. They're getting too modern and too many gimmicks. And everyday I thank the good Lord I'm out of the business. 'Cause they're coming closer and closer, until everything is automatic. And they have too many schools and well, --

Q Too competitive for a small business alone?

A Oh, yes. And too close to the big city.

Q Um-um. Which is San Antonio in this case.

A Right, right.

Q Play. Let's -- how about this change? Tell me the change in the number of hours that you worked and the number of days a week when you were a youngster and some of the different duties you had.

A When I worked in grocery store?

Q Um-um. In the grocery business.

A We worked from 7:00 until 6:00 everyday in the grocery stores and we were open Saturday nights until 9:00. Now, when I started working for Tschirharts, those days the -- over there in back of the church, those streets were up on the hill over there. Those streets weren't graveled or paved. And that was their recreation to come to the store in the evenings, Saturday evenings, about 7:00 o'clock, cleaned up and doing their shopping. And you were tired standing there, ready to go home and well, you had to stay until 9:00 'cause there's so and so still coming, so and so is still coming. Then on rainy nights you deliver up on the hill and you'd have to stop two blocks from the houses. First carry the flour and five gallons of coal oil and then go back and get your box of groceries and carry it two blocks -- muddy streets, you couldn't drive to the house. And that was all during winter most of the time. And people would order cow feed and they'd never know, everybody had a milk cow in those days. That's when the earlier days when I worked for Blackie Tschirhart -- and they'd order a sack of cotton seed meal and a sack of shorts for the cow and put it in the back barrel that's in the barn. But, they never knew they needed it until 5:00 in the evening and then you had to carry it back there and empty it in there for them. Okay.

Q That was a delivery boy?

A That was a delivery boy.

Q For Heaven sakes. And you said, you just said something a minute ago, you said so and so is coming, so and so is coming, What do you mean by that?

A Customers, you had to wait so they wouldn't get angry at you.

Q Oh, you knew who you had --

A Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q You knew who hadn't been there that day?

A Right, right. And they would generally come at that time, see --

Q And you knew what time they --

A So, Stanley Haby after he and I were in partner -- he went around to Schott's and Tondre's and says, "That's foolish." He says, "Can't we close at 6:00 o'clock on Saturday evenings like other people?" They all agreed and then nobody said a word, it worked fine.

Q Well, how long did you continue with the delivering of things to people's homes?

A Oh, I guess it was about four years before we closed, I guess in about '78, &74, '75 - somewheres in that neighborhood. We quit, 'cause I use to lease my pickup from a leasing company to do my delivering.

Q Is that right?

A Right.

Q It was cheaper than owning it?

A Cheaper to lease one than own one. I leased three of them I think. Yeah, two Chevrolets and a Ford. The Ford was stolen - it was at Montgomery Wards under a street light, under a light in the parking lot. But, it was cheaper -- they were $54 a month. You couldn't own one for $54 a month those days.

Q No, not hardly. So, that definitely had a bearing on the price of groceries, all that chasing around all the time, didn't it?

A No, uh-uh. You marked up your groceries the same price as you did before. You didn't change -- and if you didn't have something, you'd go by the other store and pick it up to keep them happy.

Q In case you --

A We never were out of anything.

Q Is that right?

A Oh, no. We weren't out of anything. We tried to get it.

Q Just to keep your customers.

A Right.

Q How many grocery stores were there then?

A Three.

Q Three.

A Tondre's and Schott's. L. M. Tondre & Sons and Schott's and myself.

Q Okay. Then when you ahd Stanley had your store that made four, right?

A Yeah. We were four. Mr. Keller, I forgot about Mr. Keller, yes.

Q So there was a lot of competition for the --

A Yeah, and we all made a living, like Victor Tondre said when Stanley and I opened, he says, "Well, good luck, boys." He says "There's always room for another one." And I mean it was, I'd walk into Tondre's and I says, "Herbert, can I borrow a couple of boxes of powdered sugar 'til I get mine?" He told

Felix, "Get the man anything he wants and how much he wants." Great guy.

Q That's wonderful.

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A And there's things I couldn't buy, Victor would buy for me, Victor Tondre, his things -- he couldn't buy, I'd buy for him and bring it over to him for what it cost me. He would do the same for me.

Q So then you finally, well -- okay, were you ever open on Sundays?

A No.

Q No, you weren't.

A In the earlier days, Schott's were open on Sundays and Blackie Tschirhart was open on Sundays. And then after 12:00 o'clock we had a drape we drew through the grocery part and the confectionery just stayed open and I run the confectionery on Sundays. When Dizzy Dean pitched ball I can still see him drive up to Blackie's confectionery in that old station wagon, Post Laundry, where he worked.

Q So you remember Dizzy Dean?

A Yes.

Q Did you ever see him play ball?

A Yes.

Q Who did he play with?

A Pitched his heart out for Castroville Indians for a double home brew.

Q For what?

A For a double home brew after the game, and ten dollars, maybe.

Q Is that right?

A Yeah, I can still see him drive up. Blackie had a confectionery on this side where the old bank where the -- new -- where the old bank building is.

Q Uh-huh.

A That was before your time, I know, Madelyn. And Mr. Tondre always raised cane and Mr. Louie Tondre about the stores being open on Sunday. So to keep things happy, they just drew this drape across on a string and closed the grocery part off. And I ran the confectionery then on Sundays and in the morning we run the store. And people would wait to come to the store on Sunday mornings and then in make it all in one, they didn't come --. And they'd bring their cream to the store, to sell cream. Do you remember that when people sold cream and you had to get the sample of their cream and put it in a little bottle? And then the bottle had a tap with a number - "Madelyn Boubel" - number so and so, and you were out late the last night before, and you dropped it in there and forgot to get the number. And you were down in that five-gallon can getting all them little bottles until you found the right number. And then you had to go to Mass at 8:00 or 9:00 and ooh you stank like sour cream. Then the farmers, "Yeah, and I got eggs in the car and then I need a sack of cottonseed meal yet." That was all Sunday morning.

Q Golly. (Laughter) Well, I'll tell you one thing, a lot of young people that work in grocery stores now don't know what they missed, do they?

A No, and you didn't get a tip when you took out the groceries.

Q No, I'll --

A No, uh-uh. Not those days.

Q Oh, dear. Can you think of anything else interesting that happened? This is fascinating.

A Well, I'll tell you. I don't know if I usually go along like that I can think of a lot of things, I mean. Oh, my goodness.

Q Well, I'm going to ask you this, maybe something will come to you in the meantime. You said -- you mentioned a while ago that Highway 90 was different. Now I know where it went, but just for the record of the tape, would you describe where Highway 90 went.

A Highway 90 came up in front -- turned off by the second red light as you come across the bridge and go in front of the Lutheran Church and would turn by this Standby to the left, through town by the bank and make another turn in front of St. Louis Church, go up two blocks and take a left and go straight on out. That was old Highway 90. And I can remember when they start putting it there. Burt Pope's daddy would -- had teams and we were kids eating those -- what were they? Peanuts covered with chocolate, sitting on the sidewalk, when they were putting the Highway 90 in through there. George Holzhaus and I and Red Burell sitting on the sidewalk watching Burt Pope's daddy.

Q Is that right?

A Right. With the teams of mules that worked.

Q Why do you think it zigzagged like that?

A That was the cheapest route, I guess. 'Cause later on I saw two truckers going up on the hill and they -- one was standing on the sidewalk barely making it on this new one they built and he says "I wish I'd know who surveyed this road." He says, "You can't barely pull, hardly pull it up this hill." So they weren't too happy with the new one.

Q Um-um.

A And it was lower to go that way too. That's why I imagine. See the slopes --

Q Not as steep. Did people always pay cash for their groceries?

A No, that was your big business, charge accounts.

Q Was that a good business?

A It was a good business.

Q Did you ever have any problems losing money through charge accounts?

A Yes, I lost a lot of money. And you want to know amount?

Q Yes, give me an amount.

A I took in $5,000 worth of bad debts to the accountant at one time, to write off. That's Corine and I.

Q To write off.

A Off of your tax --

Q Mercy.

A We had all the tickets, too.

Q So, there were some people that weren't honest?

A No, no.

Q They just wouldn't pay.

A No, there were some people and people that moved in here and

moved out. And well, some of them went to St. Peter before you got a hold of them.

Q (Laughter) Okay. Went to heaven huh? With a bad debt at Sonny Mann's. When did -- well I know that isn't the custom now to have charge accounts. At the local stores, when did this change?

A Well, we tried to get it to go when we were still in business, you know, and we cut it down pretty much and we still had a few, you know. With the hard luck story and you'd go along with it and then you wouldn't get it anyway, see. But we were just like the minister and the priest and the nuns and the Moye Military, those were the only ones that were charging or a business place that would need supplies. We would charge to them. And then regular people that would come in and shop every Saturday and buy their whole bunch of groceries, we'd have some like that.

Q Um-um.

A But we had it cut down pretty well.

Q Well, did you have to get together with - I mean did everybody in the grocery business do this at one time?

A In Castroville, yeah. We got it down pretty well.

Q In other words, it was kind of competitive and if they -- everybody wouldn't go along with these things, you really couldn't hardly do it year round.

A No, uh-uh, no. And if they'd have made it strictly just to the people that were in business, it would have been a little better too. Not a friend here, not a friend there. Then you

would have had your money in the drawer to buy the next day. You know?

Q Um-um, that's true, right.

A If it's at someone else's house for just a few days, you still don't have the money you put out.

Q Did you ever have a customer that was a character? I mean, that was just hard to please, or different or unusual or something that made them a character?

A No, I couldn't, wouldn't listen to that. I'd go bend over backwards to make anybody feel like I needed them and which I did need them. And if they give me problems, well I would go along with whatever they said. 'Cause I needed the business.

Q Did you enjoy being in business for yourself, let's say more so than working for someone?

A Yes, yes, yes. Oh, yeah.

Q You probably did better and more --

A Yes, and well, we had what? We had this "youth" - it's got it's advantages and disadvantages, but more advantages I would think. Like Mr. LaBatt told me when we had this $7,000 fire that time. He said, "Sonny," he says, "I'm sorry to hear it, but you've got to bankrupt one time and you have to have a fire before you make it."

Q (Laughter) Before you're really a grocer.

A Right. And he says, "you need any help," - he's a lawyer - he said, "I'll come out and don't sign no papers until you see me and if you need anything else you know where I'm at

and you call me."

Q Okay.

A And you know every guy --

Q Go ahead.

A Every guy that I -- that came to me that I thought would be a good man to work for, that would make him a good man, I sent there and he says, "Send me some more of those boys."

Q So he would come to you --

A Well, I would send them there and call him before they'd come in.

Q Oh, I see. When they were job hunting?

A Yes. And that's just not too long ago, I send him one that's really doing good.

Q How many of these boys do you think you've helped to get jobs with LaBatt?

A Two of them that are way on top over there right now, I know.

Q And one that just --

A And this one is one of them. And several that were there and are doing real good, doing other work that got away from there that just stopped, quit working there.

Q Did your family help you in the business, I mean your children?

A Yes, uh-huh, my grandson was a great help, and my daughter kept the books for us. My wife kept them until the last ten years and then my daughter kept the books for me.

Q I under -- she sort of has a bakery business of her own now, doesn't she? You want to tell me a little bit about that.

A Well, she does wedding cakes and shower cakes for pastime mostly. Birthday cakes. She stays busy, something to keep her busy or she wouldn't know what to do with herself, but play cards.

Q (Laughter)

A And bunco.

Q Do you have any idea how many of the local wedding cakes she's baked in her career?

A No, I don't know. But if I -- she's got a sack of strips there that she puts a strip in a bag every time that she bakes one. I don't know how many are in that sack.

Q She's never -- hasn't counted them lately?

A Uh-uh.

Q Okay. I can't think of anything else to ask you right now. Can you think of anything you'd like to add?

A No, I don't, Madelyn, I don't know. I just hope it was what you were looking for.

Q Well, it was, so okay. Well, thank you very much for giving me your time and inviting me into your home and we're going to copy the tape and give you a copy of it.

A Okay

Q And I appreciate it and thank you very much.

A Okay, Madelyn.

End of Tape 2 - End of Report on Sonny Mann

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ORAL HISTORY OFFICE AGREEMENT

I, Orra Mann, volunteerly
interviewee's full name - last first

give Castroville Public Library the full use of the information recorded on tape on the 23rd day of Sept, 1980, in return for which I will receive a tape of the interview.

Orra Mann
Interviewee's signature

I, Madelyn Bonkel, the interviewer of Orra Mann hereby release all rights, title, literary or copyright interest in the interview conducted on 23rd day(s) of Sept., 1980, to the Castroville Public Library Oral History Collection.

Madelyn Bonkel
Interviewer's signature