HOWARD TSCHIRHART

MEMOIR

ALSATIAN CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

B29

HOWARD TSCHIRHART - 1904

PREFACE

This file is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B. Madeline Boubel Koepp conducted the interview at the home of the narrator in Castroville on June 5, 1981.

Howard Tschirhart was born the oldest of ten children of Frank Tschirhart and Annie Groff, both of Alsatian descent. His father was a farmer, and Howard tried many jobs before he decided to attend Lewis Barber College in San Antonio. He opened a barber shop in Castroville in 1925, and continued that profession until he retired in 1970. He married Florence Lamon in 1930 and they have one daughter, Jo Ann (Mrs. David Beck).

Howard and Florence lived and worked in Castroville most of their married life. In 1980 they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Howard is still very active. He gardens, ranches, and works with wood. Purple martin bird houses are his specialty.

In this interview Howard talks about social customs and recreation in Castroville during the early 1900's and his memory is vivid about many residents of Castroville of that time.

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Interview of Howard Tschirhart by Madelyn Boubel Koepp at his home in Castroville, Texas.

Q Howard, the subject we're going to talk about today is recreation. Things you did for fun as a boy, a young man and all through your life, which is part of the Oral History project. But first of all I want to get something of your family background. First of all what were your parents' names?

A My daddy's name was Frank Tschirhart.

Q All right. And your mother?

A My mama's name was Annie Groff.

Q Okay. And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

A Five brothers, no six brothers and four sisters.

Q All right. Would you name them for me please?

A Well, I was the oldest one, Howard. And then was Harry, he died in '18. And then was Clarence, and then was Alma, then was Corine and then was Sylvie and then was Alvie and then was Billy, Marian, and then it was Sis, Florence.

Q And what was your birthdate?

A My birthday was 15th day of August, 1904.

Q Okay. And where were you born?

A Down on this lower LaCoste Road. Not far from the Hutzler clan there.

Q Okay. What did your father do for a living. What was his occupation?

A Farming.

Q Okay. So you were the oldest of a large family, and so what did you children do for fun say up until the time you were teenagers? What did you play, what games?

A Well, we had, we played ball and mama made us some balls out of old socks and stuff and knitted them together and that was our balls, and we had no money to buy a ball and we had no bat, but we took a grubbing hoe handle. That's what our bat was.

Q Uh-huh.

A We played ball and we got in a fight once in awhile.

Q Did any of the neighbor kids come over and play with you?

A Yeah.

Q Did you have neighbors?

A Not too many. The neighbors were Uncle Adolph, Wilfred Tschirhart. That was the neighbors, and the Fischers were all too young. So they come over and then two Mexicans that lived with Wilfred's daddy, Uncle Adolph, my uncle, and he had a Mexican family and they had three boys, and they used to come play with us.

Q So you say it was sort of the family that entertained each other?

A Yeah.

Q Were there any other types of games you all played?

A Well, we made our own kites and flew 'em, and mama used to raise the roof off of the house when we got the flour can and got flour out of that and made paste. Flour and water to glue 'em together.

Q That's what you glued your kites with?

A Sure.

Q Oh, I see. What did you use for paper?

A Newspapers.

Q Newspaper.

A Mostly Sears Roebuck catalogues. Newspaper, we didn't have none. But they had Sears-Roebuck catalogues, them oldtimers, and we'd take them papers and glue 'em together.

Q I see. Did you get little sticks or something?

A Yeah, we had little sticks we tied together with string.

Q Well, how did you manage to get enough string together. How did you get that?

A Well, we had tied a lot of 'em together, and then once in awhile mama brought us a ball of twine, and then that's what we flew the kites with.

Q So that was something special --

A And then in wintertime when they made sausage we used the kite string to tie the sausage. Then in summer we didn't have no more kite string. We had to tie it with kite string.

Q I see. Oh, okay. Did your family have a lot -- did they have company, people coming in on Sundays?

A Oh, yeah. Every week there was company.

Q Uh-huh.

A Like Uncle Herman Bippert that was -- his wife was a sister to my dad. And then Uncle Adolph come down and

Uncle Willie and we'd go to them on Sundays and visit families. Every Sunday there was something brewing somewheres. And then they'd call each other. Well, they had telephones and they'd call and ask if they was home tomorrow or Sunday. Yeah, well we'll come over then.

Q You mean they had telephones?

A Oh, yeah, we had a telephone.

Q Oh.

A A party line.

Q Uh-huh.

A Line four, I don't know if it's still operating or not.

Q Well, I'm sure it operated until we went to Bell telephone.

A Probably yes. It probably lasted as long as the San Geronimo deal was on.

Q Uh-huh. Well that's interesting I didn't realize you were that modern that you had telephones.

A Oh, yeah. We had a telephone, one of them big old boxes. And it had two batteries on top and a handle on it, and that's what we had.

Q Well then when the families got together like that when you all were kids and you visited back and forth what kind of entertainment did they have then. Was it just visiting or did they sing --

A Well, the old ones was generally, well they come in the morning, early like that, and then they stayed all day. And eat lunch then. And sometimes in the eveing they'd

stay for supper yet and sometimes they didn't, just all depends. And them old ones played cards. They played High Five and Pitch and Rook.

Q Oh, I see.

A Femph hundred. Five Hundred, femph hundred they called it. And then when that started well the kids all had to go out, including the little ones that crawled, they even sent him along so he wouldn't aggravate 'em.

Q Okay. Did the women get involved in these card games?

A They played with 'em, with the men, sure.

Q I see. Okay.

A And Grandma Groff used to play with 'em yet.

Q That was your grandmother.

A Uh-huh.

Q I see.

A That was mama's mother. And we used to play with 'em too at night you know, not when company was there but at home we played cards with the old ones too.

Q Well, they didn't do any dancing then or did they do any dancing for entertainment?

A Yeah, but they only had about three dances a year.

Q So they didn't dance at home then, they would go to a public dance, right?

A They went to the Beetz dance hall here where Carlie Suehs lives. That hall they pulled down too.

Q You mean your folks went to that dance hall?

A Sure.

Q You're only the second person that has talked to me in all these interviews about that Beetz hall. So tell me about it. Tell me what you can about it.

A I was a kid about that ime. I guess I must have been about nine years old. Or ten when Nick Tschirhart had dances there and he had the saloon where Gene Suehs' old station is, that old rotten building there. That was the saloon. And the dance hall was back there where Charlie Suehs' house is, the old man's house is. Right in there and then Nick had a livery stable, and he kept horses there and the people that brought, come there and wanted to keep their horse all night, you know. Well salesmen and stuff used to come on horses. I don't know where they hailed from

Q They were travelers I guess.

A Yeah, yeah and then they stayed there and Rosa Biediger, this Vivian Beck's up here Grandma, she run a hotel there, a rooming house in that old bakery, that long building but they tore it up now where Gene Suehs' western store is.

Q It was a long building with rooms?

A Oh, yeah, had about eight or nine rooms.

Q I see. And Rosa Biediger ran it.

A Rosa Biediger was the owner of that place and Nick, her brother, he run the saloon. And the dance hall they run together, and old man Artz played there, I heard him play

quite a lot of times. But I didn't dance yet then, I was too young.

Q Right. So when -- what type of a hall was this, can you describe it?

A It was a real pretty hall. A good floor in it. I danced in that hall later on, you know. When I started dancing I was 16 years old. And then I used to dance there and later on, I forget what years, it must have been about 1919 or '20, somewheres in there when Joe Schott and them played, August and Joe and Willie Schott. They played there.

Q This is at the Beetz dance hall.

A Uh-huh, yeah. And there's where I started to dancing was where L. M. Tondre's Store was, upstairs. There's where I started. And I remember the girl that danced with me the first time I danced.

Q What was that?

A That was Carrie Brieden, August Schott's wife.

Q Oh, really?

A Yeah.

Q That was the first dance, huh?

A The first dance.

Q Well that's interesting. Will you describe this Beetz Dance Hall to me?

A Well the Beetz Dance Hall was facing I'd say north and south. You know.

Q Yes, right.

A And then the long deals was east and west.

Q That was the rooms.

A That was the dance hall and then on the north side it had a bandstand, a stage. They used to have, well they called them in them days, I don't know aht they call 'em now. Entertainment. They had shows you know.

Q Oh, like traveling shows or--

A No, local people.

Q -- local people put on plays and --

A Like when the school plays was on they had 'em in these halls.

Q Oh, I see.

A Yeah.

Q Well also I guess maybe played music and sang and this type of thing.

A Yeah.

Q School plays and maybe adults put on a play?

A Yeah, adults put 'em on, yeah. Tennage girls and boys too. And us younger ones was there and watched 'em. Regular vaudeville shows. Used to call 'em vaudeville, well it wasn't no vaudeville, they was no pros but they --

Q But they sure went up and there and tried --

A They tried their best, yeah.

Q Right. Okay. Well, so when, what happened to this hall? Did they pull it down or what --

A I'll tell you what, that hall was sold Fritz Droitcourt up here where Milton Tschirhart lives. That was Fritz Droitcourt's place and his wife lived there, and he bought that old dance hall when Charlie Suehs bought that place. Old Charlie bought that place from I guess Nick Tschirhart bought it from somebody. I don't know who owned it when he bought it. And that time the bakery shop was there. Old man Gries. And that hall was sold, and I don't know whether Nick Tschirhart sold it to Fritz Droitcourt whether Suehs bought the whole place and sold the hall to Fritz Droitcourt, that I don't know. But I know Fritz bought it and pulled it down, and he built some barns up there with the lumber from that old dance hall.

Q Do you know about when that was, what year approcimately? Do you have an idea?

A I really don't know Madelyn, just --

Q Well, you said you were born in 1904, is that what you said and you were 16 when you started dancing.

A Dancing, yeah.

Q It would have been after 1920 or somewhere along that time.

A Somewheres along in there, yeah.

Q Well, that's a shame because it must have been a nice building.

A It was a nice building and had windows, all you had to do was pull a rope up yonder, it had a little --

Q Pulley?

A -- a little pulley and a little rope went through it and they pulled them windows up any height they wanted, and when the people sat in it there was about right about the shoulders behind the wall, they could see out of the hall anywhere. That's the way it was built. Lot of air, never had no fan, no microphone or nothing else.

Q It sounds like it was one of the places to go to at that time.

A It was a place that people went.

Q Uh-huh. And then for the drinks they had to walk over to the saloon.

A Over to the saloon, yeah.

Q Yeah. Okay.

A And at night at 12 o'clock they had lunch.

Q Oh.

A And they had tripe and homemade sausage every dance, but there was only about four dances a year.

Q Yes. Well, did you pay for that? You had to pay extra for the lunch or --

A They paid whatever I don't know, but they paid at the hall and whatever they paid there that went with it. The kids all eat there too. As many as there was.

Q Well, all right. You said your parents went to the Beetz Hall a lot to dance. Did all of the children go along when they did this or --

A Most of them. There was no other solution. The young ones laid under the benches and the other ones run around and we used to fight outside and everything.

Q So you didn't have babysitters.

A No babysitters, no, no, no.

Q Took all the kids along.

A All of 'em.

Q So you all looked forward to that too.

A Oh, yeah, sure.

Q Even though you couldn't dance.

A That was a treat for us. See something else besides the four walls at home.

Q That's interesting.

A And there was a peddler that come out here and he was selling vegetables.

Q Uh-huh.

A His name was Sivahor.

Q Sivahor?

A Sivahor.

Q Well, I'll be.

A And he brought, he was out here every time they had a dance. He was out here and them old folks bought every fruit he had. Then maybe about that time when he opened up his fruit stand, about that time they were about three-quarters drunk them guys, and they bought everything he had.

Q So he would make it a point to be there --

A Every time they had a dance. His horses he had in the stable over there in back.

Q You said his name was Siva-Hor?

A Siva-Hor, yeah.

Q Is that really his name?

A That was his name, yeah, Siva-Hor.

Q Well that translated is "seven-hair."

A "Seven Hair"

Q That's interesting. Do you know where he came from? Do you have any idea?

A From San Antonio. There's where he brought them vegetables and stuff from, the fruit.

Q Did he speak Alsatian?

A No, he spoke English.

Q Well, that's interesting. You don't know anything else about him?

A Other than that, I don't know nothing about him. I know we used to buy apples from him.

Q Yes, yeah, okay.

A When we had a nickel or a dime. We bought apples from him. And sometimes daddy bought us some and give 'em to us. We never had no money. Johnny Ahr sold hamburgers there for five cents a hamburger.

Q He was already in the hamburger business then.

A He had a -- and that big pecan tree I believe is still standing there. He had a coal oil burner hanging on that

tree and his pan under it. And he fried hamburgers and made hamburgers, five cents a hamburger.

Q Oh, my goodness.

A Egg sandwiches too, he sold.

Q Egg sandwiches?

A Eggs, you want an egg sandwich? I got them too. Yeah, make me an egg sandwich. He'd knock an egg in the pan, fry it a little turn it over and put some mustard. If you want mustard or sempft he says.

Q Sempft being mustard in Alsatian.

A Yeah.

Q Right. Well that -- so your parents then they enjoyed going out and having a good time.

A Oh, yeah, all of us.

Q The whole -- all the Tschirharts and Groffs were fun-loving people.

A Well and not only the Groffs and the Tschirharts there were Bipperts and Schotts and whatnot. Everybody come.

Q Everybody.

A From Rio Medina, from LaCoste, from everywhere they come.

Q Well, what time of the night would these dances start and how late would they play.

A They'd start about eight o'clock until one o'clock.

Q Well, we've had several people tell us that sometimes they would dance all night. Do you remember this at all?

A I remember that at these surprise parties but not at a dance hall.

Q Not at a dance hall.

A They had them private parties at the homes. There they danced till sun-up.

Q All right. You said you started dancing when you were 16 and the first girl you danced with was Carrie Brieden.

A Yeah.

Q All right. And you started dancing at the Wernette's Hall. You said the old Wernette Hall above Tondre's Store.

A Above Tondre's store. I don't know who owned it then.

Q Okay.

A There's where I started dancing.

Q Well, what was the custom then at this time when you were 16? Was it still the dances on special occasions only or did they have them more often?

A Oh, no, they had Christmas, they had Christmas dance and they had New Year's dance and they had Easter dance, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday they had two dances, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday.

Q Uh-huh.

A On the 4th of July they had a dance. And let me see, I don't even remember. About four or five dances a year they had.

Q They had two for Easter?

A Oh, yeah. "Ohster Mandig" in Alsatian they called it. Easter Monday.

Q Easter Monday. You said they had 'em on Easter Monday.

What about Christmas? Were they on Christmas night?

A Christmas night they had, not on Christmas Eve, Christmas day night they had a dance. Yeah, they had a big dance.

Q I had some people tell me that sometimes they would have them the day after Christmas. Do you know anything about that?

A No, that must have been after my days, before my days.

Q I think it was before you days.

A Before my days, yeah.

Q Okay. Well, you said -- ikay, all right, where did you dance then when you became a young man? What places in Castroville had dances?

A Well, when I went to dances pretty regular the Wernette Garden the old hall they pulled down, that's where we danced. I danced a lot at Rio Medina, Quihi. No, I didn't go to Quihi too much. Once in awhile I went to Quihi. But my main route was here in Castroville and Rio Medina and the Woodman Hall at LaCoste. I went down there. And then when Tragesser built that hall up here then we went there and at the Wernette Garden down here. The old hall that they pulled down.

Q All right. I'm going to backtrack here on one point about your parents. What kind of transportation did you have when you went with your parents to get to these dances?

A Buggy and horse.

Q Buggy and horse.

A We had a two-seated carriage, we was all sitting in that carriage, it looked like a bunch of turkeys on it, on a turkey wagon.

Q That was a load with ten kids.

A Yeah. Well there was only eight, two of 'em died.

Q Yeah, but still that's ten people. That sounds like it was fun. So then what kind of transportation did you use when you started going?

A Afoot.

Q Walked?

A Walked, yeah. I walked most of the time.

Q Well, where did you live at the time when you started going?

A When I started going to dances?

Q Uh-huh, where you all still down there on the Lower LaCoste Road?

A No, we lived out here where Mrs. Hiesser lived.

Q Mrs. John Hiesser?

A Mrs. John Hiesser, that was our home.

Q On Highway 90?

A Yeah.

Q Okay.

A That's where we lived. And I come to Castroville with a horse and Grandpa Groff lived where that old Philamae Bohl place.

Q Who owns it now?

A Right there, where that young Coyle lives. That Col. Coyle.

Q Oh yeah, down there next to Gene Suehs.

A Right there is where he lived and I rode a horse, then from there I went with "Pine" Tschirhart. He run the garage here and I rode with him and Oscar Karm a lot.

Q Oh, I see.

A And then I bought some gas for him and then --

Q And they'd take you along.

A They'd take me along, yeah. Not only me. And then Richard Ahr had a little Model T with just two seats in it. One for him and one for a partner and no hood on it and nothing, just four wheels and I rode with him a lot. We went to Rio Medina to the dance. I danced alot in that hall.

Q What was the name of the hall at Rio Medina?

A Mayflower.

Q Could you describe that to me?

A That was round.

Q A round dance hall.

A A round hall, you never found a corner there.

Q Can you describe the difference to me between a dance hall, present day dance hall and the way they used to be. You know, did they have tables and things like they do now or how --

A They had nothing in the hall, not even the soda water counter was built outside in a -- against the hall. The

four walls were square, not square but long and they had benches all around for the women to sit down or the men, those that want to sit down. But there was no table in there and nothing. When the music played the whole place was for the dancers.

Q And if you wanted to drink anything, you had to go outside or somewhere else to get it.

A You could get it from the inside.

Q I see.

A But it was built --

Q Built separately.

A Separately outside. It wasn't built in where you had to dance around it.

Q And you didn't sit down to a table to drink.

A No, no, no, there was no tables.

Q Well that's a big difference you know.

A That's a big difference.

Q Right. Okay.

A And everybody that wanted to dance had a partner every dance. I had a partner every time the music played. And not the same one either.

Q You danced with all the girls.

A With all of 'em.

Q What were some of the dances you danced? The names of the different kinds.

A Well, I tell you what Madelyn, there's so many I don't

even -- I forget half of 'em but I used to flea hop.

Q Flea hop?

A Uh-huh.

Q All right. Can you describe that, what -- can you tell me how that went? I never heard of that before.

A O yeah, flea hop. Me and mama now yet if I wouldn't be so damn old I still like but my legs don't take any more.

Q The flea quit hopping?

A Yeah. The flea quit hopping. (Laughter)

Q All right.

A Well and then we danced waltzes. Polkas, two-steps, one-step, seven-step, schttisch and flea hop.

Q Put your little foot?

A Put your little foot, yeah.

Q Herr Schmidt maybe?

A Herr Schmidt, all them we danced. Years ago.

Q Well, how did you learn to dance, did you just learn by yourself or did somebody teach you?

A No, I tell you what. My mother was a good dancer, she could dance and I used to dance when I got a little bigger, mama come and said to me, "Let's dance this one." Whatever it is and she learned me how to dance it, she was a good dancer.

Q I think a lot of the mamas taught the kids how to dance.

A Yeah, yeah.

Q So you went to the Wernette's Garden. You went to the

Mayflower and Wernette's Garden which is now Koenig Park.

A Yeah, Koenig Park.

Q And then --

A Tragessers.

Q Oh you went to Tragesser's too. How did you like Tragesser's Hall versus the rest of 'em. I understand it was different.

A That was the best hall that I ever danced in.

Q It was different. It was more --

A And the best kept place too. There was no shennanigans pulled around there. If somebody got smart in there he found the door pretty quick.

Q Did you have to dress in any special way to go to their dances?

A You had to wear a coat.

Q How about a necktie? Did you --

A Necktie too and no hat on either. No hat and no blue-jeans either.

Q You didn't dance with a hat on.

A No, no, you didn't have one on even if you didn't dance. When you go in there you take your hat off and leave it in the car. If not they'd take it away from you or put you out, one or the two?

Q Did the girls have to dress special for that dance hall?

A Yeah.

Q In other words it was sort of like more formal? Much more formal than the rest of 'em.

A Yeah, yeah.

Q Who were some of the dance bands then in your day. You said you danced to Gene Artz but can you think of some of the others?

A The Niemeyers.

Q Okay.

A There was five brothers and Lillian and then Emil Holman, he was from San Antonio and old man Willard. Willard Orchestra. And then Snow Deer Fox Trotters.

Q Snow Deer Fox Trotters? Where were they from?

A From Bader Settlement. Slim Haby and Riff and them.

Q Tell me their names, if you can remember.

A Joe Riff and Henry Carle and Slim Haby.

Q What instruments did they play?

A Slim played the violin and Carle played the flute and Joe Riff played the guitar.

Q And what did you say their name was?

A Snow Deer Fox Trotters. That's what they called them.

Q I love that, I hadn't heard that. That's the first time I heard about that. Did they play dances around here a lot?

A They played at Rio Medina mostly.

Q I see.

A But other than that, they didn't play.

Q Not too much.

A At Dunlay, well at Dunlay I danced about wo dances at Dunlay.

Q Well I guess they just got together and played --

A And they played at Quihi I believe too.

Q They probably just got together and learned to play together. Probably couldn't read music.

A No, no.

Q So they weren't quite as sophisticated as these other bands that came.

A Yeah. Well I played music for 12 years myself and I can't read a note.

Q You can't? Well, we're going to get to that music bit in a little bit here. We're not going to forget it. We're -- so you really preferred then the Tragesser Hall to all of the rest of 'em.

A To all of the rest of 'em, yeah.

Q Okay. Then when did you get married, Howard? In what year?

A '30.

Q 1930. So all of these dances and things you're telling me about now that's before you married, right? That's before.

A Yeah, long before. That was before I barbered and I barbered -- when I started barbering in 1925. In '24 I went to barber college and on the end of '24 in November I got my barber diploma and in '25 I started a barger shop,

Q Uh-huh. So all of these things you've been telling me

you did before. Plus up to this point you didn't have your own transportation, as far as a car was concerned, right? You were hitching rides with your friends and paid for gasoline --

A Drove with my friends and with the family and things like that.

Q Yeah. Well, what about box suppers. No, I think that came along later --

A That was all in that same time.

Q That same era. That same period. Where did they have these box suppers and when. I mean about how often did they have 'em and for what reason?

A They had 'em to raise money I guess to help pay for the school expenses or what. Now they have, I don't know how they raise money. And each girl had to bring a box with food in it and she'd invite a boyfriend or a boy, a partner to these box suppers and I was invited to a lot of 'em. And then you were supposed to buy the box you know. Well, I didn't have no money to buy one.

Q You were saying you were invited to a lot of these box suppers but you didn't have any money to buy one, correct?

A Once in awhile I did, yeah, but not too much.

Q Well, what were you doing to earn money at that time. You told me you went to the barber school later. What were you doing then for earning money.

A I worked around these farms. Shocked hay and pulled corn

and whatnot. Fifty cents a day.

Q So you didn't have much to spend.

A Fifty cents a day. I was 25 years old till I started barbering till I knew there was a bigger piece of money than 50 cents.

Q Okay. Now back to the box suppers. You said that the girls would fix them and invite someone and that person was supposed to buy them. Now where did they do this. Where did it take place?

A Mostly at the school houses Madelyn. Where the City Hall is was the public school. Upstairs, there's where they had the box suppers. And Burell School up here. They had 'em there. And they had 'em at LaCoste and up at Red Wing, not Red Wing.

Q The Yellowbank School.

A Yellowbank, there they had 'em.

Q Well, was there any --

A And then they brought some boxes there and they auctioned them off, maybe 15, 20 boxes and had fried chicken and all kinds of food in 'em.

Q Well, did they look any particular way? Was there anything special about the box or anything or was it just a plain old box with food in it.

A It was a plain old pasteboard box and had a nice gift wrapper around it.

Q Decorated?

A With a bow on top or on the side or where ever.

Q Something special.

A Yeah to attract it.

Q Yeah. Well, did they eat the food then right there or --

A No, they eat it right there.

Q Okay. Well, was that all there was to the evening or was there more entertainment of some kind?

A Then they danced again. See they danced awhile. That's what they did, they danced.

Q And then sold the boxes?

A And then the boxes and after the boxes were sold they started dancing again.

Q I see, I think that's the first time this has really been cleared up, that there was a dance that included the sale of the box supper which probably both events helped to raise money.

A Raise money with the dance and the box supper raised money for the expenses of some part of the school, I don't know which. But I know that's what it was done for.

Q Yes, right, well as a child I remember going to one myself. I kind of remember it, and that was at the old Maverick School and of course they were always trying to raise money to buy chairs, floding chairs or things like this, you know, for the school. Right, Did you attend any house parties?

A A lot of 'em.

Q All right. What was the reason for house parties? Was there any special event that happened or did they just have house parties to have a party?

A Well, I tell you what the reason was, I think. Because there wasn't enough public dances at that time. So they decided to dance a little more in their younger lives they were going to have surprise parties, and they'd pick certain houses and they'd sometimes they didn't even tell 'em that they were coming there and the whole raft of 'em, but the whole bunch knew about it, and we're going to have a srrprise party on such and such a night at such and such a house and come on over and tell all your friends. But the owner didn't even know it sometimes. When they come there, there they stood in the yard and they say wonder what's going on here. And the band was along while they drove up there they was playing in the buggies.

Q Oh, that sounds like fun. So you got surprised for no reason?

A For no reason, no reason.

Q Well, isn't that great. And so a house party and surprise party were the same thing really?

A Same thing, yeah. Some called it a house party, we called 'em surprise parties then.

Q Because everybody knew but the person that had the party?

A Everybody knew but the person that owned the house didn't know nothing about it. Some might have found out and put

on but most of 'em shouldn't have but things like that leak out.

Q Oh, yes, they do. Did they take any refreshments along?

A Oh, yeah, they took homebrew along and bootleg whiskey. That was in bootleg days.

Q Uh --

A They took homebrew along. Washtubs full.

Q Well, okay. You said the band went along, the music went along. Who played for those parties, was it just home groups?

A Home groups, the Groff boys played and Otto Naegelin played, and sometimes Otto played the violin and one of the Groffs, the quitar, and Charlie played the flute, and then Fritz Etter and John Koenig played out here at Saus, there's another school house that had box suppers. The Saus School where that Mechler filling station is.

Q Oh, yeah.

A There's where I went to a few box suppers. That school building. And there Fritz Etter and Johnny Koenig played their violin and guitar and they danced till the cows came home.

Q That's what I was going to ask you. What time of the evening would these parties start and how long did they last usually?

A Them parties generally start right after dark, I don't know just what time.

Q Well that would have been about seven, eight o'clock.

A Seven-thirty, eight o'clock and they danced till the chickens crowed.

Q So there's where you danced all night at a house party.

A At a house party.

Q Not at a public --

A Not at the public places, oh, no.

Q Okay. Well did they have -- you said they had home brew and bootleg whiskey, did they have food?

A They had food too, they took it along.

Q Everybody brought --

A Yeah, they brought sandwiches and whatnot.

Q So that custom has come from a long way back with everybody bringing their -- like they do now, bring their beer box and something to go along with the party.

A Yeah, that's the way they did then, but they didn't have no beer box, they had washtubs.

Q Yeah, right, right. The beer box changed from a washtub to a beer box.

A Yeah, that's right.

Q Were there any -- was it a birthday party for instance? Was that ever a special occasion?

A Lots of birthday parties too that they had, yeah.

Q And again it would be --

A Well, the birthday parties -- the birthday parties that I went was for teenagers you know, when I was a teenager

and later on but that time there was nothing to drink.

Q They probably didn't want the younger people to--

A Yeah, well that's it, the younger people you know, they didn't want 'em to get to drinking like they do now. Them old fellers was pretty strict.

Q You had to be more grown up to --

A You better believe it.

Q What happened if they caught you with something?

A Well I don't know what happened but the first thing you got a whipping and after that if you didn't behave I guess it would have been a rope on the neck or something.

Q They were pretty strict in other words.

A Pretty tough.

Q Uh-huh.

A When they said something them old ones that's what it was and there was no other way. That was par.

Q Did you ever got to a barn raising, a barn, you know, where everybody got together and built a barn or something like that. I had one person to tell me about that and I wondered if you did.

A I tell you what I done. That two-story Hermann Son Hall that used to stand there where this one is now. That was a two-story one. It was the Hermann Sons Hall and it was pretty darn old, I don't know how old it was but it all was collapsed, it was leaning and the Hermann Sons got a bunch of these Hermann Sons members together, and we

pulled it down board by board. I worked about two weeks stright for glory, no pay. And then not only me but a bunch of them Hermann Sons guys worked there. Older guys than me, quite a bit older like Max Bippert and all of them. And we was young men then, and we pulled that thing down, and they built this out of the lumber that's there now. And that's, I guess you call it, a party or whatever you call it.

Q Yeah, sort of like a Verein hall. That's what it would be I think. Did you ever got to any masquerade parties or participate in any masquerade parties?

A Oh yeah.

Q About what year was that? What era, what you know when they had the masquerade parties? Can you tell me that about so we can place a time you know.

A Well I tell you what, I was married already, it was after the '30's. We masked -- you remember that Gorgeous George, that wrestler?

Q Yeah, he was a wrestler, yes, I remember him, uh-huh. That must have been in the late '40's maybe.

A Me and Mary Fitzsimon and Florence and Bernard masked one time up here in this Wernette Hall and me and Mary, Mary was my second and I was Gorgeous George, I dressed like him. And I don't know what Florence was and Bernard was. And by God we took first prize.

Q Can you describe how you were dressed?

A I was dressed just like Gorgeous George was. But I don't remember no more what it was.

Q Well, didn't he wear a blond wig?

A Yeah, I had a white wig on all right and I damned near smothered under the thing too. I had on a suit and you know he always throwed, they said it was golden bobby pins he threw in the audience and I don't know, I had a bunch but no gold ones. I picked a bunch of old ones and I threw 'em out. Walked around that hall till the time come and Mary was my second. Till it was over with and when we pulled the masks off well some people damn near run off. They said what the hell is they?

Q Well --

A And the next time they had a masquerade me and mama here, Florence. She masked Aunt Jemima pancake lady and I masked the Cream of Wheat negro. And we took first money at Quihi with that.

Q Well, was that the only two times you went masked that you can recall?

A No, it was somewhere's else I masked yet but I don't remember where. I believe it was in Rio Medina, but I didn't take no prize that night, but I don't know what it was no more.

Q Well how were you dressed as Aunt Jemima and the Cream of Wheat kid?

A Well you remember how that Cream of Wheat colored guy used

to be the picture on the Cream of Wheat box. Exactly like they were, a white suit and a straw katy.

Q I see and Florence --

A And Florence had Aunt Jemima, yeah.

Q Uh-huh, I bet that was cute. Well how much did you get when you won a prize? What did you get?

A Five dollars.

Q Five dollars.

A Uh-huh.

Q Did a lot of people mask?

A A lot of 'em.

Q Was this advertised as a masquerade party?

A Oh, yeah. Advertised it in the papers, yeah.

Q And so it was a special event and a lot of fun to do.

A Yeah, maybe it was once a year.

Q Once a year.

A In different, like this hall once a year and maybe Quihi once a year or somewhere's else. But these are the only two halls -- I masked somewhere's else but I don't remember where no more. It must have been Rio Medina, I believe they had a masquerade dance there.

Q They probably did and they might have had some maybe once or twice at some of the schools, you know, to raise money.

A That too, yeah, yeah.

Q I think they did.

A And now maybe it was one of them schools like the Yellowbank

up here.

Q Or maybe the Cliff School or Rio Medina, something like that, yeah. In fact they probably did. So then, okay. You came in to -- describe what you did when you went to the masquerade dance. You sent in masked? Is this right?

A We both got there -- somebody hauled you up there in a car, you and your partner. You got out of the car and you walked right in to the dance hall and you told the door man who you are and who your partner is and that was it. You walked on in and you walked around the hall. Just walk around like you owned the place. And later on some more come and some more come and some more, and finally, sometimes it was as high as 20 different parties.

Q Couples?

A Couples and some were singles too and maybe about 18 or 20 of 'em walked around the hall masked, and then they played and while they danced these guys walked, some of them danced with their partner, you know, and like I danced when I masked with Mary, and I danced with Mama when we was masked Cream of Wheat and Aunt Jemima and like that. Like the others danced. Some guy says who are you and I never answered him.

Q Didn't even dare talk so they'd recognize your voice.

A Never talked to him. Never talked to one of 'em. Who are you? I never said boo nor nothing else, just went on. And then when the ghing was over then they had judges not

from around here. They generally had like Tragesser and this hall down here and Quihi had 'em from Hondo, the judges that judged the prize winners and we walked around and walked around and then they sift 'em out, you know. Like they do in anything like stock show or anything. The ones they don't think is doing any good they call 'em out of there and set 'em to one side, and the rest of 'em they'd let walk a while and then they'd maybe take some more out and the last one that stays in there, he's the winner. And there's no second with a prize. There's a first prize only.

Q And then everybody takes their mask off, is that the way it goes?

A Then when it's over everybody takes their mask off.

Q And then everybody's surprised.

A Yeah and then everybody's surprised.

Q Well, I bet that was a lot of fun to do something like that. You know it took a little courage too to do it.

A Oh, yeah.

Q Everybody looking at you and staring at you. Did you ever participate in or attend any womanless weddings?

A Huh-uh.

Q No, you don't know anything about that.

A No, I don't.

Q Well you told me that you played music. When did you start playing music? When did you first --

A I don't know Madelyn what years it was.

Q Well how old were you approximately. Maybe you can remember that. Were you a young boy --

A No, no, no, I was married already long time. I lived here already.

Q Oh, I see.

A When I started playing music.

Q And what instrument did you play?

A I played flute.

Q Flute and no other instrument?

A Huh-uh.

Q Did you play with a group of people?

A With the Well Diggers they called 'em.

Q Oh, and who was in the group?

A Emil Groff was the violin player and Alfred Schmitt was the piano player and "Cook" Mangold was the guitar player and Uncle Paul Tschirhart the drummer and a lot of times Bill Spivey come out yet from San Antonio and played the banjo with us.

Q Oh how nice. Well, why were you called the Well Diggers?

A Uncle Emil Groff dug wells that time and he wanted to advertise his well business, so he called it, the band, Well Diggers.

Q So he killed two birds with one stone, he played music and advertised.

A I says, "I don't mind being called a well digger but don't

ever ask me to dig in one."

Q Well where did you all play? What places? What dance hall?

A Well, we played at Johnny Ahr's up here when he had his dance hall. We played there, we played at Macdona and we played down here at Frank Rihn's and we played in Dunlay and in Quihi and up there in Braun's Hall.

Q Oh.

A We played up there about three, four times and LaCoste Woodmen, I believe I said that. We played there. And D'Hanis, we played out there about twice or three times.

Q And well, how, did you just learn to play the flute, by trying or did someone teach you or how did you --

A I tell you how that come all about. When I was about 14 years old, 12, 14 years old in the summertime I'd go out here to Grandpa Groff where Mrs. Hiesser lives. There's where these Groffs was all living and them Groffs, all of 'em was musicians. My uncles, all of 'em.

Q This was just a natural ability, they didn't take lessons --

A No lesson, neither one of 'em could write a note. I mean read a note. I used to go out there and pick cotton. Well, Charlie was the youngest one. He was five years old to the same birthday than I was. He was my uncle. And he played the flute, Frank and John played violin, Emil played violin and guitar and Albert played guitar, Robert played guitar, Henry played violin and guitar and Adolph

played flute, and every night they got this violin out and one played the violin and one guitar and Charlie played flute and he says, he had two of 'em, he says, "Howard take that other flute and play too." I said, "I can't play." "Sure you can play." Well I fooled around with that flute, first thing I knew I started playing and I could play flute pretty good. So sometimes when I'd go to a dance where them Groffs played yet I danced already then. And they played there, you know, and Charlie says, "Say Howard come and play a number or two I want to dance." And at that time he was kind of going with Jolie Schuehle up here. You know, and I said, "Not too damn long," I says, "You get paid to do this and I said, "I don't want to play, I want to dance." So he done that a few times and I'd play about two numbers and then he'd come back. Well that was all right. One night he says, "Say come and play about two numbers. I want to dance." He danced two sets and he was gone, and he never come back no more till the end of the dance was over. I says well that's pretty good and after that I never played for him no more.

Q He just left you hanging, huh --

A He left me hanging, yeah. He got the money and I played.

Q That's pretty good.

A I says no more of that stuff.

Q But now those were your uncles --

A Yeah, he was my uncle. All of 'em.

Q That's where you kind of learned.

A There's where I learned to play.

Q Well, then who got the group together, the Well Diggers?

A Emil.

Q Emil did.

A The well digger, the well man.

Q Yeah, well what -- can you give me a date or an approximate year on that when you were with the Well Diggers?

A I don't even know. Let me ask my wife once, maybe she knows.

Q Now approximately what year do you think this was?

A It was about '35 or '36 when we started.

Q Okay. And you played -- how long did your group stay together and play?

A Well, we played about, I don't know, ten years I'd say. It might have been more or less but then Schmitt died. Alfred Schmitt, the piano player, and then Pat Lafferty and "Cook" went then to Pat Lafferty. Well we didn't play no more, then we had no more piano player. And I didn't care to play no more either I got tired. I used to work in the barber shop till seven, eight o'clock at night and then go home and take a bath and go -- we'd take the car and go play music till one o'clock, and that appeal too good to me.

Q It was pretty tiresome.

A Saturday night, yeah.

Q Can you -- do you remember how much you got paid to play a dance?

A Seven and a half dollars a dance.

Q Per person?

A Per person, yeah.

Q What -- you said, what time did you start about?

A Start about eight o'clock and play till twelve, 12:30, one o'clock.

Q For seven and a half dollars.

A Yeah.

Q So you were earning about a dollar an hour approximately.

A Yeah. If a guy robbed you when you went out of the dance hall he was sorry, there was no money there.

Q Okay. Did you ever play baseball or any kind of athletics?

A Yeah, I played baseball when I was young.

Q Did you belong to the local team, the Highway 90?

A I was on the team that they called them the Blue Jackets. Played ball with them. Not too long either till I broke my finger and then I quit. But I was farming already then.

Q Was that a Castroville group of boys?

A Yeah, all local guys.

Q Well, who did you play ball against when you played?

A We played against -- well, Biry down here, Macdona, LaCoste, Natalia and then some San Antonio teams.

Q Was this a regular league or did you just invite people --

A No, no, no. It was just --

Q An invitation type thing.

A Yeah.

Q Were they pretty -- was there a lot of rivalry when you played? Was it real exciting, I mean a lot of arguments --

A Oh, yeah, it was pretty exciting. Then they had another team here, the town team. The only time we had a diamond was when they played away you know. We didn't have no diamond to play on, we played on their diamond.

Q Oh so there were two groups here?

A Two groups, yeah.

Q I see. I didn't know that. And that was after -- you said that was after you were a barber.

A Yeah.

Q So when did you start barbering did you say?

A In '25.

Q 1925.

A On the 7th day of November.

Q Okay. And as far as that -- well I'm getting mixed up here -- as far as athletics was concerned you did belong to a baseball club but not long and you didn't -- there was no other type of athletics that you went into. So then you said you started barbering in 1925. What made you decide to become a barber?

A Well, I farmed with my dad when we lived out here and the

place didn't have enough land and we always had to lease land. So we went down to an irrigation farm and leased some land down there and farmed down there.

Q Where was that?

A Down at Pearson. And we farmed there about nine years and then I told the old man I says I'm going to quit this irrigating. This is convict work. That's not for me no more. I went down here to Yancey and leased 260 acres of farm down there. We had 14 mules and horses and farmed one year and raised a good crop of corn and had to sell the corn for 22 cents a bushel delivered at Devine. Hauled it 19 miles on a truck. Well, when that year was over we plowed again and planted again, that was in '23. And every Saturday we'd put the mules out in the pasture so they'd have a little greens till Sunday, and we kept the burro in, and Monday morning I'd sit on the burro and I'd gather the mules up to go to work in the field again.

Q Did you travel home from Yancey for the weekend?

A No, no, we batched down there. We batched. We'd stay down there, me and a Mexican and my brother Clary. And one morning when we woke up the whole yard had water in it, and we had a house that had a kitchen and a bedroom and little attic. And the whole yard was full of water and we had three steps to walk in top of the house, and it was up to the last step with water.

Q Was that from rain?

A From the Seco Creek when they had that flood when it washed D'Hanis away out there.

Q Oh.

A When it washed the railroad track and everything away.

Q Uh-huh.

A Never rained a drop down there. We had all them mules down there in the Seco Creek and when daylight come, well I got up when daylight come and I called the rest of 'em and said, "Look at all this water out here. Wonder where this comes from." But we seen it lightning. And I says and them mules are all down in this water. Well, I went to the neighbor over there, a Mexican had a car. Our truck we couldn't get out because the water -- it was standing in the water up to the seat. So I walked over there through the water and told him to take me to Yancey I want to call home and I went -- so he took me to Yancey and I called home, and I told them to come down here. Everything's under water here. I don't know what happened. What broke loose. So the old man come and Uncle Adolph come down there in a Model-T car. We had a Model-T truck down there but we couldn't get to it. They come there, well by that time the water kind of run down but still it was about from here to your pickup yet they couldn't get to the house. Well we walked to the --

Q That's about 30 feet, 40 feet --

A Yeah, and we walked out there and they said, "What happened?"

Well what happened, I don't know. They turned water loose somewheres and it all come down through here. Well, I thought a dam or something broke or something somewhere's, I didn't know that Seco Creek -- and the next day when that water run down we went in there with rubber boots in that mud and looked for them horses. Well, we found all but four handing in trees drowned, every one.

Q Oh, no.

A All of 'em drowned. 14 we had, we had four left. Ten drowned.

Q Oh, for heaven's sake.

A And then --

Q That ended the --

A That ended the rodeo for me. I told the old man that evening I says, " This is the end of the Mohicans for me."

Q So after you lost all of your animals except four you told your father you weren't going to farm any more. Incidentally, while we're on that subject, what would that loss be in dollars and cents? What was an animal worth. Well, I know it was a loss because you couldn't work any more, but what were they actually worth?

A That time?

Q Yeah, at that time.

A That time a span of mules cost -- that span of mules is two of 'em, they call 'em spans.

Q A span of mules?

A A span of mules, that makes two of them.

Q That's a pair then?

A A pair, yeah. And they cost around four, four hundred and fifty dollars.

Q A pair?

A Yeah.

Q And you lost ten.

A Ten.

Q Good night.

A And so we didn't have -- we didn't have the four hundred fifty dollar class. I'd say about 300 dollar pair. There was you know four hundred and fifty dollar, they was one of the better class mules. You know, they had 'em like they have now. But anyhow I told the old man, I says, "I'm going to quit this place." He syas, "What are you going to do." I said, "I don't know what I'm going to do, but I ain't going to stay here no longer." Well, so I stayed till we had all the mules found and knew what we had left and we had four of 'em left, a gray mare, she wasn't worth 15 cents. She was there and then two pretty good mules yet and one, one bay horse was a good horse and this Pope and Elliott, they built that old highway roadbed here from the Bexar County line out here through Castroville where this old route goes through here and comes out at Three Points.

Q That's the old route that goes -- went in front of St.

Louis Church?

A Right.

Q And you said Pope and Elliott was that the company?

A They was a contractors to build a roadbed.

Q Uh-huh.

A And everything was run by mule power. There was only one machine they had, and that was the roller when they had the gravel on the road to roll it and water it. The water -- the water tank was pulled with mules, the maintainer was pulled with mules to spread the gravel, and it was hauled with mules and it was loaded with mules, and the only machine they had was the roller. And that was an old gasoline engine with them big flywheels on top. To run the machine and whoever run it put it in gear and it slowly went along the road and rolled the gravel. And I worked there about five months. Walked behind a Fresno with three mules on it.

Q Now, okay let's bring this into the time here. You lost your horses and so you came here, and you went to work for Pope and Elliott. That's what you did?

A That's what I did.

Q Okay. You walked behind a Fresno. What's a Fresno?

A Well first thing I went to my Grandma. She lived over there where the firehouse is, in that old house.

Q All right.

A. And I says, "Grandma can I stay here?" She says, "What

are you doing here?" I says, "I quit the farming."

Q Now how old were you then?

A I was about 22 years old.

Q All right. So you went to your Grandma.

A And I told her that I'm going to work for Pope and Elliott and I want to stay here if I can. Sure you can stay here. And then I told her what happened down there. And she says, "Does your daddy know it.?" And I says, "Yeah, he knows it. He come down there yesterday." That was about three days after it happened when I left, and he says, "What am I going to do with this corn here?" The corn was about 25 cents that year, the second year. "You do with that corn whatever you want to," I says, "I don't want no part of it." See I got a share out of it but --

Q That's what I was going to ask you.

A -- the share was so little that it didn't amount to nothing.

Q What share were you --

A About a third part.

Q I see. And it didn't amount to much.

A No.

Q Do you have any idea how much you might say you earned --

A I might have earned three, four hundred dollars.

Q A year?

A A year.

Q All right. So you're with your grandmother now.

A And I told her I'd give her five dollars a week to board

there and sleep. Well, I went to Pope and Elliott's offices, they had the office down there at the old Vance building where the inn is now. Miss Lawler's.

Q Oh, all right. That's where their headquarters were?

A That's where -- on that hill is where they had them mules. That was the campyard. And they had their office in that old Vance building. And I went over there and this Bert Pope that was here, his daddy and Elliott. The two contractors. I walked in there and one of 'em, Idon't know whether it was Elliott or Pope, but he says, "What can we do for you young feller?" I says, "I'm looking for a job." He says, "Can you skin mules?" I says, " Yeah, that's my trade." So he says, "Well you -- we'll hire you. We'll give you three and a half a day and nine hours walk behind a Fresno." "Okay." I took the job and started tomorrow morning at eight o'clock. Nine hours. And he was working out here on Highway 90 between here and the Bexar County Line about somewhere's around where DeCock lives.

Q Uh-huh.

A There's where we build up the highway bed, you know, and up here through town and up by the canal there, that hill there the old bridge there, the little old bridge and then out by Three Points there. But see the road used to go a bow there in front of that old Bader filling station.

Q Made a curve?

A Yeah, where the new road come in. From there to Hondo bridge they had the contract, and I worked till they had all that road fixed with walking behind a mule, three mules, A Fresno.

Q What did a Fresno do?

A A Fresno, Madelyn, you take a Fresno, it drags on the ground and you got a rope and then you tilt it a little, and it starts cutting dirt, and when it's full you pull it back and then it slides like that and it's a thing about, oh, about six, seven feet wide and about three feet high and about four feet deep, and it holds a lot of dirt.

Q Well, what you would do then was you were like blading dirt up but --

A Blading dirt out and dragging it in the low places and then dump it and scatter it, that's what the thing was for.

Q And you walked behind --

A All day long.

Q Well was this heavy work? I mean, besides the walking, was it heavy to do this?

A No, no, it wasn't heavy.

Q That wasn't heavy.

A Huh-uh. The mules pulled it, once you just tilted it and then you handle the ropes and don't dump it all in one place so you held it and scattered it as you seen fit.

Q So it was like a blade we have today only behind a big

piece of machinery.

A Right.

Q Oh, I have been trying to find out what a Fresno was. This is about the second or third time someone's talked about one, but I didn't know just what they were.

A That's a Fresno.

Q And you did that for five months. Did you work five days or six days a week?

A He worked five to six days a week. Saturdays too.

Q So you were earning three and a half a day, so you were in a lot more money than --

A I was in the chips.

Q So this job lasted, you said, five months.

A Uh-huh. Then when I had all my money in the Courand Company Store down here where that antique, where Frank Keller had his store there and Blackie. In that building, that was Courand Company, old man Courand owned that store. Louis Scherrer was the manager.

Q Was this customary to let the local store people keep your money for you?

A That was the bank here. There was no here and L. M. Tondre and Sons, Alex Boehme and Sons, they all done banking.

Q Well, did you write checks --

A Sure, you had a checkbook.

Q Oh, it was just like a real bank.

A But I tell you when it stopped. Do you remember when that bank in San Antonio went down the hill, that City Central?

Q I remember a little bit about it, yes.

A Well that's when Roosevelt, not only that one but some more in the country these big banks went down the hill, and Roosevelt stopped all of that.

Q I see.

A When Roosevelt was president he said, "Now, they're going to have to have a charter or quit banking in these stores." Then is when that insurance come in.

Q I see. Okay you had your bank at, I mean, your money at Courand's and well, your job was over, so then what happened? Is that when you decided to become a barber?

A Then when I decided to become a barber is when the time was when asphalt was all hauled on the -- when the road was finished, they hauled asphalt to Dunlay by rail and there they unloaded, and they built a scaffold and conveyed the asphalt off in a box on that scaffold, and the Mexicans shoveled it off of the railroad cars on that conveyor belt, and they run that with a little gasoline engine. And you -- Blacksmith, Blackie's daddy had two Model-T trucks and he says, "Howard, you want to drive one of my trucks?"

Q That was Eddie Tschirhart?

A Eddie.

Q All right. Okay.

A "Want to drive one of my trucks?" I says, "Well, I don't know, I might." I says, "I'll drive that old one but I don't want that new truck. Let Elmer Groff drive that. I'll take the one with the _____ shift, but I don't want that other one." Well he gave me that one and I drive asphalt, hauled asphalt till the last load was dumped. Of course that didn't last so long there was quite a lot of 'em hauling.

Q Uh-huh.

A And when that was over with, well, I had no job and I had about four hundred dollars saved up in the Courand Company and that time they was selling that Lone Star Car factory stock and Fuller's Earth mine out here was --

Q What is that?

A Fuller Earth Mine out here on --

Q Fuller's Earth Mine?

A Earth mine, yeah.

Q Oh, what was that?

A That was the dirt that was supposed to been something they could make brick out of it or --

Q Oh, okay.

A And that all went down the hill.

Q All right.

A The fuller, the Lone Star car manufacturer went down the hill and Grandpa Groff told me, there's where I stayed, he says, "Howard, don't let them crooks steal your money from you. There's nothing to that business."

Q What they were trying to get you to invest?

A Buy stock in it.

Q Stock, okay. All right.

A And I said, "NO, they ain't going to get my money." So I decided I believe -- and mama years ago when we was all at home mama got a -- they used to have coffee pound, and they called it Arbuckle Coffee, and it had a coupon on it in the package. So many of these coupons and I don't know, a few pennies of money you could get a little barber clipper and a comb and a scissor, and mama got that set, and I started cutting the rest of 'em's hair, including mama and the girls, and I could cut hair pretty good but I wasn't a barber then yet but -- and I like it pretty well, and old man Mann here run the barber shop here and --

Q Alfred? Alfred Mann?

A Yeah, Sonny's daddy.

Q Yeah, okay.

A And he said one day to me and I get my hair cut, the old man's hair and my brothers, and Uncle Adolf come down, John Fischer, and I cut all them hair on Saturdays there at home on a chair.

Q With the little set from the Arbuckle Company?

A Yeah, yeah with that little set. So, and he knew it. He says, "Howard, why don't you go learn to barber and come and work for me?" I says, "I might do that yet." Well I went to barber college and I tell you who picked me up.

I was standing there on the corner by where that old tin garage is, George Etter run it at that time there, right down here by the Hans Meat Market, right across the street.

Q Oh yes, all right.

A That old tin --

Q Right, right, okay. Bill Burges has his office across the street right now and the Hans Meat Market.

A And George Etter run a garage there and I talked to him that morning, it was on a Monday morning, and I had my suitcase with my clothes in it, and you know who come by there and stopped, Gabe Haby.

Q Really?

A Yeah and he says, "Say Howard, where're you going?" I says, "I want to go to San Antonio. I want to go to Lewis Barber College." He says, "Get in, I'll take you there." He says, "I know where it is and he knew where it was." It was on Commerce Street right below the Nacional Cafe -- theater on Commerce Street below the old market house right there is where the Key Furniture Store is, right across the street there. There's where the barber college was and I went in there. Enrolled. I asked that guy where can I get a place to stay. He says, "I'll take you there." Miss Ballard down here at Hermann Sons Hall on Garden Street.

Q What was the lady's name?

A I don't know -- Ballard.

Q Ballard.

A Ballard, yeah.

Q All right.

A And she lived on Garden Street. Right across the street from that Hermann Sons Hall what's down there.

Q All right.

A The building is still there. I drove by there not too long ago. Went in there and he took me there, and there were 28 of us there including myself. Enrolled there for twenty-eight dollars a month board, room and board, and I stayed there till I finished.

Q How long did it take you to finish? How many months?

A Twelve weeks.

Q Twelve weeks. What did they charge you to take the course at the barber college?

A They charged me a hundred and fifty dollars for a course and includes clipper, two razors, a clipper and two shears, combs, and a neck duster and a hairbrush and tweezers and all different little things, I forget what all it was.

Q So the equipment was included in the price --

A In the hundred and fifty dollars, yeah.

Q All right and twelve weeks. Okay. So then you finished that and then --

A And when I finished that I come out, and I went to Alfred Mann and he said, "I don't know what to do now." See Vollmer -- he had Vollmer there, and he got drunk on him

once in awhile and he got mad at him, when he got mad at him he wanted to fire him, but then when he didn't drink he got glad at him again so he pushed me off about three weeks, and I finally went to Adolph Mangold and asked him if he'd built me a little barber shop. I couldn't do nothing, I was broke and I had my school and my board and everything --

Q Yes.

A And so the third week I says well I'm going to Adolph Mangold and I asked him and he was a pretty good friend of mine, Adolph Mangold. I says, "Adolph, why don't you build me a barber shop?" And he owned all that property where Burges is now, what the printing office was till to where that Jimmy Burrell's. Adolph Mangold owned all of that, and Dan Burell bought it then from him later years. And he says, "I'll figure on it once." Well he did and I said, "Let me know in about two, three days." All right. About two days he come to the house and he says, "Say, I decided to build you a shop. For five dollars a month rent I'll build you one." All right. Him and Louie Gerloff and another guy, I forget who the other feller was built it. Then I went to the old Blacksmith, that's Eddie Tschirhart, Blackie's daddy. I says, "Eddie, I got to have a hundred dollars." "For what?" I says, "For what, I gotta have a barber chair. I got a diploma here and you can't cut hair if you ain't got a chair." And he

said to me, "You ain't never going to make it." I says, "If I ain't going to make it I'll work it out on your farm." I says, "I'll make it. Don't worry about me." Well he took me over to Courand Company there. I had no more money. I had spent all of mine through school and board. Bus fare and whatnot. So he says to Joe Rihn, Maurice's daddy was, Maurice Rihn's daddy was keeping books there, Joe Rihn, he says, "Give Howard a hundred dollars." "All right." And he says, I says, "I'll pay you back five or ten dollars a month. I'll tell you in about a month from now what I can pay you." Well the first month I paid him ten dollars. Paid him ten dollars every month till I had it paid off. He says, "Take it over here to Joe and gave it to Joe." "All right." Every month I went over there and says, "Here Joe, is ten dollars for Eddie." "All right." He gave me a receipt. Had it paid off in no time and that's the way I started barbering. Well then I barbered, I don't know, about two years and then I made up my mind, some of these days I'm going to have my own barber shop. It took a long time but I finally made it.

Q Well, what were you charging for a haircut or a shave or whatever at that time when you started? And what year did you start?

A In '25.

Q '25, okay.

A I charged 25 cents for a haircut and 15 cents for a shave.

Q So you had to cut quite a few hair, heads of hair, and shave quite a few faces before you had that fifteen dollars you owed. You owed fifteen a month, right?

A Right, fifteen a month. The rent and the pay off on the chair, yeah. Yeah, sure, I had to make ends meet. I had to sweep dust and everything up to make it but I did.

Q And how many years then, did you barber totally before you quit?

A I quit on the 15th day of January, no, I didn't on the 15th day, I sold my place on the 15th day of January, 1970, but I stayed there about a month or two months yet. Till old Mumme made me mad, and then I quit altogether.

Q You sold it to --

A Mumme. Ray Mumme.

Q Ray Mumme, that's right. So you actually barbered about 45 years.

A 45 years and three months.

Q And from your 35 cent haircut and your 15 cent shaves what priced did you wind up charging?

A When I quit in '70 I got a dollar seventy-five cents for a haircut and I got a dollar and a half for a shave. And if I'd have got that price when I started, I'd a built a chain link fence around Castroville, kept everybody in and let nobody out.

Q Why would you have done that?

A I'd have fed 'em all in there and I'd have had enough

money to do that.

Q (Laughter) You'd have been that wealthy, Huh?

A Yeah.

Q Okay. So I was going to ask you, you said your father -- this is getting away from the story again but I just want to know. How much land did your dad have out here, you said he had property out --

A 80 acres.

Q 80 acres.

A Field and a 60 acre pasture.

Q And that wasn't enought? Okay. All right, we've covered a lot of things about recreation and your music and then your career as a barber. Now I also understand you liked to cook. Can you tell me some of the things, some of your favorite things to cook and how you got started doing that?

A Well, I was asked by Leon Suehs one time when I cooked for the firemen. He says, "Howard, where'd you learn to cook like that?" I says, "Well, I want to tell you one thing, my mother was a good cook and I learned it from her. And I batched eleven years. If I want to eat, I cook and if I didn't cook I didn't eat." And then after I got married I still do a lot of cooking right now. Not as much no more as I did when we both worked. But I still cook once in awhile. I can cook anything, it don't make me no difference what it is.

Q What are some of the things that -- your favorite things

to cook? What for instance?

A I like to cook chili and I like to cook beans and I like to make cornbread and I like to fix chicken and dumplings and I like to broil steak. I like to cook stew, Irish stew with potatoes in it. Different things. Cabbage slaw, mashed potatoes.

Q Do you have a favorite recipe that you might want to --

A I don't have receipe one. Everything I cook I cook out of my head.

Q You just put in the spices and things that you think will taste good.

A I take -- I taste it and if I think it's good enough for me, those that like more what ain't in it should put it in, and I have never had any complaints about not enough salt or too much of this.

Q Do you cook for any groups of people an time, you know, like a party or something?

A I cook a many a many stew and stuff up here at the garden for the St. Louis Society. And for the Hermann Sons I cooked a lot two years, and for the firemen over here at the Legion Hall, I cooked a lots for them.

Q Now this is when they're having their meetings, is that --

A Yeah at meeting time.

Q Uh-huh. Well what kind of stews do you cook for them?

A I cook Irish stew for 'em and I cook chili and beans for 'em and I cook chicken and dumplings for 'em and beef ribs,

calf ribs and dumplings, makes a good dumpling stew.

Q How do you make your dumplings?

A How do I make 'em?

Q Uh-huh.

A I take some eggs, I beat 'em up in a pan and then I put salt in that egg, water and egg, put my flour in there, put it on the table and take a rolling pin and roll it out flat and cut it in strips, and then I cut 'em in little blocks.

Q And that's all you put is four and eggs and salt.

A Uh-huh.

Q That's all.

A And water.

Q And water.

A Yeah.

Q Okay. Well, then --

A And then I cut 'em and I lay 'em out on wax paper and let 'em dry so they don't stick together and my chicken is fried, that I take out of the pot and put it in another thing, and then I put my dumplings in there and then I cook my dumplings about half done, and when I get them half done I throw my chicken in there. So the chicken don't cook to mush.

Q Oh

A Cause if you don't that dough will just tear it all and you got nothing but mush.

Q So you said you fried your chicken, but do you have it partly stewed before you take it out of the gravy or don't you put it in the gravy at all?

A I put it in the gravy, first you fry it.

Q All right.

A And take it out and leave it there about, I'd say half done, and then when the dumplings start cooking pretty good then I put it in there and finish 'em up with the dumplings. If not, the chicken cooks and falls off of the bone and you got nothing but mush.

Q Do you put any other seasoning with your chicken besides salt?

A Just salt, just salt, that's all.

Q Nothing else in the gravy?

A Nothing else in the gravy.

Q Hmm, that sounds -- well, I never knew about putting the chicken in later, you know. I really didn't.

A Madely if you cook at home, say you cook a fryer at home. A fryer is about the worst thing in the world to cook your dumplings with because it cooks to nothing.

Q Yeah, that's right.

A It takes an older hen or something. Well, there you can put your hen in, in your pot but byou cook for a big bunch, it takes a lot of it and if you put too much of that dough in there, the dough gets hot and it just tears the chicken apart.

Q Yeah, yeah, I guess it does. When you cook for 25 people or 30, how many chickens did you use. How do you judge? What do you judge one chicken for how many people?

A I figure one chicken to feed six people.

Q That's the chicken and dumplings.

A Uh-huh.

Q Yeah.

A Six people.

Q Uh-huh. Okay. We're getting pretty close to the end of the tape and we -- so before we stop this one tell me who you married and what year, your wife.

A I married mama, my wife Florence Lamon, in 1930 on the 29th day of April.

Q 29th day of April. And how many years have you been married?

A In April it was 51 years.

Q 51 years. Do you have any children?

A One.

Q And her name?

A Jo Ann Beck.

Q Jo Ann Beck. I said her name, see, I knew before I asked the question. So you and Florence have had a long life together then.

A Yeah, 51 years.

Q 51 years. Yeah I had a great time interviewing her because she was -- especially on the weddings because her

being a flower girl in my mother's wedding and everything, you know, we really went through that. Well Howard I thank you for this portion of the tape and I'm going to turn it over -- turn it to the other side and let you just tell me some old stories about some of the oldtimers around here, okay?

A All right.

Q Tell me about when you started school.

A When I started school I was six years old. We had an old buggy horse, a black one, his name was Coaley. Mama says, "Howard go hitch up Coaley, today you got to go to school." "To School?" "Yeah, you're six years old." At LaCoste when we lived down here where them Burgers lived. And the Hutzlers lived about a hundred yards from us. That was Ernest Hutzler and all these Hutzlers, Alfreda and Mary and Clara and the whole bunch.

Q Was that a Catholic School or public school?

A No, no public school. A lumber, a lumber building. It was made out of -- the walls were one by twelve and no ceiling in it and between the boards you had cracks in it you could shoot sparrows with a BB gun. And one school-master at school, a man. And mama, we went down to LaCoste with the horse and mama says, "I already talked to the Hutzlers, you come home with the Hutzlers this evening." Well we walked from there home four and a half miles. And anyhow, when she enrolled me said, "Well, you come home

with the Hutzlers this evening." "All right." And the Hutzlers knew about it. They were bigger than me, not all of 'em but most of 'em, older. In the evening when I come home that schoolmaster gave me a arithmetic book and a first reader, a primer. And mama says, "Well, how was school?" I said, "Mama, I don't have go to that place." I says, "I don't understand that man." The only language I could talk was Spanish and Alsatian. I says, "I don't know what he's taling about." She says, "That's what you to to school for to learn." So I was whipped there. Well the next day I went back. I had my lunch bucket and I went over to the Hutzlers and we walked to LaCoste, and at that time there was already some of these freight haulers, these contractors hauling this lumber for these flumes they built here. These colored guys driving them wagons and we'd -- and them wagons was coupled with that long lumber, sometimes they were coupled pretty long so that they had that long piece of lumber laying between them hounds on the wagons. No bed on 'em, just the wheels and the axles and we'd ride them coupling poles in back, you know, and them coupling poles stuck about this far behind the hind wheels out, and we'd sometimes ride on one of them down the road till we fell off or something. And then I told mama I don't have to go there. So the next day I went to school and the professor wrote on the blackboard figures from 1 to 20 and ABC's, and Herbert Keller

was sitting right next to me and Herbert Keller's about two months younger than I am. We talked about it not too long ago when I seen him. And then he wrote that and he said to Herbert, and Herbert knew a little English because his daddy run a grocery store at LaCoste, and he was around there a lot. And I said, "What'd he say." He said, "You should write that on your slate." We had no papers, a slate, fold 'em like a book. I wrote on there the best I knew how and wrote it both of 'em. Later on the master come by and didn't say nothing. So that's was my beginning of the school. The only language I could talk was Spanish and Alsatian.

Q Well how long did it take you to master English then?

A Not too long. I'd say about maybe two, three months. I'd pick it up --

Q That's fast.

A Yeah.

Q You said -- I got to ask you this. You said you took your lunch bucket. What did your lunch bucket look like?

A A half a gallon syrup bucket, a karo syrup bucket.

Q Okay.

A With holes in the top.

Q All right. And what kind of lunch did mother pack for you?

A Bread and molasses smeared with butter and a piece of sausage or a fried egg. In wintertime a piece of sausage and a fried egg.

Q Homemade bread possibly?

A Homemade bread. There was no other bread.

Q No fruit or anything like that.

A Oh, no, fruit only we got Christmas, no other time.

Q I see, okay.

A Candy, that stick candy they got in the store for pelone, that peppermint and lemon and then once in awhile jelly beans. That's all the candy we had.

Q You mentioned the flumes while ago and I'm assuming that you're talking about the canal flumes that --

A Canal flumes, yeah.

Q -- from which are a part of the Medina Lake system.

A That is the irrigation company outfit, yeah.

Q All right. Can you tell anything about the building of the dam at Medina Lake?

A I can't tell you too much. I was up there with my daddy but when they worked on it but I was too young. I seen things they had there. I was about, I don't know, I guess I was about --

Q Six, seven --

A Seven, eight years old, something like that and I seen they had like the lumber they hoist down there to build them forms. They had a stationary engine up on the hill to run that hoist down there with a cable and wheels on it and hooks, and then they got to the place where there was a rope hanging down and the guys down there worked down

there when it was in the place where they wanted it they pulled that rope and then the thing opened up, and the lumber fell down where they wanted. Well, it didn't fall too far, about this high and then it fell down.

Q About four, five feet?

A Yeah and then that thing went back up and clutched against that machine where that roller was on, that rolled it along that cable, and then they pulled it back again with the engine. It was all run by a stationary engine, little gasoline engine.

Q Did you know anybody that worked for the --

A No, I don't know nothing about it.

Q Did your dad work --

A My dad, all he done is hauled the materials up there, lumber. Like shiplap and stuff they used to make them forms and the walls.

Q He would -- where did he get -- where did he pick the lumber up?

A At LaCoste. They hauled it -- they shipped it by rail to LaCoste and there's where these lumber haulers loaded it there and hauled it up there. And they went this Rio Medina Road by Alois Haby through there.

Q Uh-huh, that's the old Red Wing Road.

A The old -- no, no, yeah, by Red Wing, yeah.

Q Yeah, by Gene Schott and across the river.

A Uh-huh, by the little dam that route they took. That's

the route they went.

Q You mentioned that -- they were usually black men or colored men, negores that were driving some of these teams.

A A lot of 'em, yeah.

Q How did you feel about that? What impression did that make on you as a kid?

A That didn't make no impression on me.

Q None at all?

A They were the comicliest drivers, they had names for every mule on the place and they talked to 'em. "You sweet thing, you shouldn't have done that." "I'm going to get mad at you and you know what happens when I get mad." "That line's going to pop." You know they hit 'em with a line and every time they hit 'em the hair fly. And they talked to mules like they talked to people, comical, you know.

Q So this didn't make, didn't impress -- the color of their skin or anything didn't impress you.

A No, no.

Q That's interesting. I think I understand a long time ago the oldtimers, well not a long time ago but when you were a kid possibly, there used to be old people, fellows that sat in front of the Hans Meat Market and talked --

A They talked there and lied to each other and all kinds of things happened there.

Q Can you tell me who some of these people were maybe. Do you remember who they might have been?

A Oh, yeah. Well Andrew Halbardier, he was the king of the bunch. He'd sit there every morning and then old man August Tschirhart, Sebastian Tschirhart. Well younger guys, August Tschirhart and there they're sitting, arguing about things you know in general.

Q Well when a stranger came to town, what was the attitude of the people? You know, someone that they didn't know at all.

A "Wunder wu da hargloffa har kumt. Wunder wu da and -- wunder wu -- I don't know how you say that -- harfloffa -- Tramp, I guess you'd call it." Womder what this tramp wants -- was coming from. Wonder where he wants to go.

Q They usually weren't very receptive to strange people, people they didn't know.

A Oh, yeah. When a strange man come here they seen it right away. They wondered where he come from and where he's going.

Q Wonder why they were so suspicious of strange people. Do you have any idea?

A I have no idea. Well I tell you what I believe. I believe one thing is because they was mostly people that never left Castroville, when they seen somebody strange they figured he don't live here, wonder where's he coming from? I guess that's the only reason.

Q And wonder what he's up to?

A Yeah, wonder what he's up to.

Q Suspicious in other words.

A Suspicious, yeah. Detective kind.

Q Yeah, yeah. How many -- you mentioned Courand's store while ago when you were talking about having put your money there that they were like a bank. How many stores were there at that time in town?

A Well there was Courand Company, L. M. Tondre & Sons, Haller and Mangold and Joe Schott and August.

Q Four stores?

A Four stores.

Q How did they get their supplies for their store?

A Well, Courand they got their supplies from LaCoste. Henry Naegelin hauled most of the stuff and Tondre they had their own truck.

Q Uh-huh.

A They had an old Doge truck that Victor drove and they got all their stuff with that ruck from LaCoste. They hauled most of it from LaCoste.

Q Well at any time did they ever have any freighting with mules, teams of mules?

A This was all mules except Tondre was the only guy that had a truck.

Q Oh, and the rest --

A Tondre, I mean Courand had his freight hauled, Henry Naegelin up here hauled it from LaCoste. And Haller & Mangold, Joe Schneider hauled their groceries from LaCoste too. And that was every week. And Tondre had that truck,

they hauled their's with their own truck.

Q How did they get their -- this was of course before bootleg times. How did they get the beer out for the dances and for their saloons and things? I understand there were a number of saloons in town, right?

A Yeah, there were. Well, there was Nick Tschirhart and there was the Wernettes and there was Adolph Tondre in my days. There was three saloons at one time here in my days.

Q Well, how did they --

A And there was more before my days because Beetz had a saloon too. But I don't -- that was before my day.

Q Well, how did they got their --

A They got their beer by mule poower. The freight haulers. They hauled. Robert Tschirhart hauled and Fred Jagge hauled beer from San Antonio with mules and old Ahr, Lorenz he hauled beer and who else, somebody else.

Q John Boubel?

A Well John Boubel was working for Fred Jagge when he hauled that time. He worked for Fred that time. I hauled beer from San Antonio when I worked for Robert Tschirhart, living out there where Albert Mechler lives.

Q Freighting with mules?

A With mules, yeah, we'd go to San Antonio to the brewery and get a load of beer and bring it to Castroville to Adolph Tondre here where the old bank building is here.

Q Okay, well all right. Now, how long did it take you to do that?

A To go in there?

Q Yeah.

A Went in one day and come back the next. Stay all night in a little old room there at the brewery.

Q What brewery did you go to?

A To Pearl Brewery. Well, at that time it was City Brewery.

Q But it's the old Pearl Brewery.

A Yeah.

Q How many mules did you have?

A Four on a wagon and when it rained, that time the gravel, there was no gravel on this road, it was mud from San Antonio to Castroville when it rained. And when it rained got to the first telephone out of San Antonio. Phoned out bring two more mules.

Q Well who would bring 'em to you?

A Well, when I didn't go in with him, Spurry, Robert's brother.

Q Rudolph?

A Rudolph. And when Rudolph went with then I brought 'em when he called. Well if it didn't rain you didn't do it, but if it rained around there where Bruno Meyer is and along in them flats and them slews, ruts this deep in that black mud.

Q A foot deep?

A Oh, I tell you what.

Q Well, okay. You said you took them two mules. How did you take 'em out there? Did you walk behind 'em?

A No, no, saddled a horse and lead 'em to him. Put the halters on 'em and lead over there.

Q Okay.

A Rode a horse.

Q How many barrels of beer would you bring on one load?

A About 12 half barrels and about four casks of bottle beer. That time the bottle beer came in they called it casks, in barrels. And each bottle had a cover over it made out of pasteboard. And that bottle just slipped in it like that. So they wouldn't break and then they was sitting in this keg.

Q In a keg? A wooden keg?

A Yeah, in a barrel.

Q A wooden barrel?

A Yeah. Had shingles on it.

Q Oh, I didn't know that.

A Yeah, but that's the way the bottle beer come, there wasn't no boxes or nothing. In kegs.

Q No cases?

A No, no cases.

Q Well was there ice on it?

A No.

Q Or was it warm?

A It was no ice on it. It was just packed at the brewery like that and these barrels was loaded on the wagons and there was no ice on it. When you unload 'em here then they put 'em in ice, opened 'em and put 'em in ice boxes.

Q I see.

A There was no ice on it.

Q Well did they have a crown cap like they do now?

A A crown cap like they do now.

Q Okay.

A They had Pearl beer, City beer and Shoafer beer.

Q Would that possibly be spelled S-C-H-A-F-F-E-R, Schaffer?

A I wouldn't know.

Q You don't know, okay.

A But anyhow the bottle beer all come in kegs.

Q Well all right. Then you brought the half barrels and you brought the bottles. Did you bring ice or did you ice any of it to bring it or did you --

A The keg beer was in wooden barrels.

Q Oh.

A And the keg beer each came, each barrel of keg beer had about a 15 pound block of ice laying on top of the barrel in that hollow you know.

Q Uh-huh, in the hollow part.

A Right on top and after it was packed straw on top and then a wagon sheet over it.

Q Oh and that kept it cool all the way.

A That kept it cool till you got to the place where they put it in the saloons. And then they put it in a, in their ice boxes you know at the saloon they had ice boxes.

Q Like walk-in chests?

A Walk-in places. They rolled them barrels in there and they had their hundred blocks of ice in there and they put some more ice on 'em and that's the way they kept it cold.

Q Well did you guys bring them the ice?

A We brought the ice, yeah, on the wagon too. The ice was loaded first in front, the beer in the back.

Q I see.

A And then the last that was loaded was the keg beer. The bottle beer, them casks, I don't know how many bottles was in one but they were 50 gallon barrels, they call 'em casks. There was the bottle beer. First the ice, then the bottle beer and then the keg beer in the back. Three, four, maybe five, six barrels of beer and each one had a chunk of ice laying on it and then starw throwed on it, oat straw or what kind of straw. Sometimes they had this prairie hay, throwed that on it and a sheet over it and that kept the air from it and sometimes they still had ice on it when we got to Castroville.

Q Uh-huh. So it took you a day to go and load up and then a day to come back.

A A day to come home.

Q How often did you do this?

A About twice a week.

Q And only one wagon went at a time or were there more than one wagon?

A Well Robert hauled for Tondre.

Q Uh-huh.

A And Fred Jagge hauled for Wernette and Rihn here.

Q Uh-huh.

A And I don't know who hauled for Beetz, I believe old man Ahr, Lorenz hauled for Beetz. There was different ones hauling beer.

Q Ahr, Lorenz, that's Lawrence Ahr, wasn't it?

A Lawrence Ahr, that's Johnny Ahr's , was Johnny Ahr's daddy.

Q Okay.

A They always claimed he was stuck one time in the Medio out here and his wagon was stuck in a mud hole and he had Lawrence, he had a boy, name was Lawrence. And he told him to stick the stump under that wheel and he laid under the wagon and lift the wagon up with his feet laying under it. He said he should put the stump under there. I don't know if it was so or not but that's what I heard.

Q Well put the stump under --

A Under the wheels in the mud hole.

Q Yeah.

A So it wouldn't sink so far, he pushed it up till he had the stump under it and then he let it down again.

Q And on his feet.

A Yeah.

Q Oh my gosh.

A Laying on his back pushing up with his feet.

Q I've heard that they had a tinner here in Castroville who was quite good at his job. That was Billy Fuos, is this correct?

A Billy was a good tinner, yeah.

Q Can you tell me about some of the things he made that he just actually made himself?

A Well, I tell you what, he made some minnow buckets for me, real good ones and he was a good man to put a roof on a house. That standard seam they call it. Put by tinners he was number one with that. These old houses most of 'em around here he put that tin on it.

Q That's a name you don't hear around here at all any more. Where did he come from, do you have any idea?

A I don't know where he come from. They were German people.

Q Well, there were some Fuos (Fuchs) in Hondo and Dunlay.

A Yeah, but this is a different Fuos I think. I think they come from Germany here. He had a brother his name was Louie Fuos, he was a carpenter and Bill was a tinner.

Q Uh-huh. Yeah I hear that name before. Did they marry?

A Bill never did, Louie did. Louie was married. But I don't know, I know where Louie Fuos lived but I don't know if he ever had any children or not. I don't know that

either. He was married I know.

Q What are some of the other things he made like did he make --

A He mostly anything. He made washtubs and buckets and all stuff like that. Sprinkling cans, all stuff like that he made.

Q Gutters maybe.

A Gutters and that standing seam on these houses and flues and these caps for these flues and all stuff like that. And they used to have an old wooden stove here, it had a cast iron bottom and a cast iron top and it was made oval shaped and a good heat. I used to have one in my barber shop years ago. And the sides were made out of that tinner's tin out of that real heavy stuff and after it burned out again, you'd take it to Bill Fuos and maybe last four or five years and he'd put 'em a new wall around there, you'd think it was factory built.

Q Is that right?

A Three little holes in it and put holes in it. Stove pipes, he made all stove pipes around this town I believe. Everybody that had a stove and most of the people had some. He'd make stove pipes.

Q So you had grocery stores and you had the beer brought in by freight and you had the tinner who took care of all those kinds of problems. What about the meat markets. Can you describe or tell me a little bit about those?

A We had, Ed Hans had a meat market here as long as I remember. That's the old Hans Meat Market. When he died Harry run it, and then old man Schott married his mother and he run it, and Robert Tschirhart had a meat market one time there right between the Hermann Sons Hall and where the bank is now.

Q Oh, really?

A In that lot there right where Mann's barber shop used to be, that little shop, right below it, and Frank Burell and Johnny Sittre run a meat market in that place where Gene Suehs got his, that old place there with that old station, they run a meat market in there for a long time. And then Johnny Sittre went to Rio Medina and started him a meat market there, and Frank Burell went over here where Dan is now and he built that place, and there he stayed till he sold out to Dan.

Q Well how did they go about butchering, where did they get their meat from?

A They went out here to these farms and bought some calves and butchered 'em right there and hung 'em in a tree right there. Harry Hans and old man Burell and all these guys that butchered cattle here. They didn't have all these inspectors running around then.

Q No packing houses?

A No packing houses, they packed their own meat. Brought it home and all of 'em had ice boxes with ice in it, and

they'd put that meat in there. They had just as good a meat as they have now or better.

Q Tasted pretty good, didn't it?

A Darn right.

Q How many times a week did they have to do this?

A To kill?

Q Uh-huh.

A Sometimes, well it all depends, sometimes twice, sometimes they run short. Three times towards the last. Just all depends how the meat sold.

Q Did any of 'em have routes in the country?

A Meat routes?

Q Uh-huh. Meat routes.

A Yeah, Frank Burell had one, Dan Burell when he worked for his daddy and when he bought him out he, they had a meat route up the road here. Sold meat all along the road.

Q What kind of a vehicle did they have?

A Model T with a little screen box in the back. And the steaks were already cut laying on trays in there.

Q And where did they go?

A The route went up to where Sam Haby's home was.

Q Oh they went out in the country to the farms?

A To the farms, all the way up.

Q And that's the way the farm people got fresh --

A Fresh meat.

Q I see.

A They peddled it.

Q Peddled it to 'em, okay. You were working for your uncle?

A Not uncle, he wasn't my uncle, he was a first cousin to my dad.

Q Okay, first cousin.

A Fritz Tschirhart.

Q All right.

A And then I hired out to him fifteen dollars a month and my board. Went out there, started milking cows at four o'clock, me and him and his wife. Pauline was his wife's name. Good people and I liked to work for Fritz. He was a good guy, so was she and the kids they were all nice kids. And I got on that milk truck and I went all by them Mechlers, Jungman, Bruno Meyer, Kriewalds, Blumes, picked up milk and on the way back I'd go by and take the empties again by all these places and load ice and load meal, all kind of stuff like that.

Q You went to San Antonio?

A To the creamery. And at the creamery I loaded the ice and the meal and the feed for the cattle that they ordered, unloaded all of that and come home about one o'clock and eat, and then I hitched up the plow and plowed till four o'clock, and at four o'clock I went to the house again started milking cows till the dark. Put the milk in the ice box, went in and ate supper, took a bath and went to bed. And one winter it got so cold and about two o'clock

Fritz come to my room and said, "Howard, come here. I want to show you something," talked Alsatian you know. I says, "What's the matter?" "I want to show you something, get up once." No electric lights, coal oil lamps and he lit the lamp. He had the lamp lit when I walked in, and we had to lay them young ones in front of the fireplace because it was so cold on a mattress, we done that already before we went to bed. About two o'clock this Noodley (He was called Noodles) -- was a little old fat boy. He started whining and grunting and Fritz got up and flipped the light on to see what's wrong. And he had 40 cats around that place, the dairy barn. Young ones, big ones, old ones, all sizes. And one of them little ones got in the house, I guess one of the kids let the door open and he got in there and that little bugger sat on that kid's face like that and he was sucking on his nose. And I ready already that a kitten can take the breath away from you. I read that already and he was sucking on his nose and this little one was whining, fought this cat away and Fritz showed me that. I says, "I never seen this before." And outside of the door where you go out of the front door there was a big yellow rock about this big and about this thick for a door step, and he opened the door and threw that cat --------

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ORAL HISTORY OFFICE AGREEMENT

I, TSCHIRHART, Howard, volunteerly
interviewee's full name - last first
give Castroville Public Library the full use of the information recorded on tape on the 5th day of June, 1980, in return for which I will receive a tape of the interview.

Howard Tschirhart
Interviewee's signature

I, MADELYN BOUBEL KOEPP, the interviewer of HOWARD T. SCHIRHART hereby release all rights, title, literary or copyright interest in the interview conducted on 5th day(s) of JUNE, 1980, to the Castroville Public Library Oral History Collection.

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