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**Anne T. Kent California Room**

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**INTERVIEW WITH ANNE T. KENT**

by Carla Ehat  
April 5, 1976

INTERVIEWEE: Anne Kent (AK)  
INTERVIEWER: Carla Ehat (CE)  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 5, 1976

CE: Today is Monday, April 5, 1976. Continuing the Oral History Program of the California Room, Marin County Library at Civic Center, this is Carla Ehat of the Moya Library Guild. Today I am driving out from Ross, The Marin Art and Garden Center, where we just had a board meeting of the Moya Library, and we're driving out to conduct an interview at Point Reyes Station. With me today on the trip is Anne Kent. So, we thought it would be fine to utilize the time to have Anne reminisce a little bit about her beginnings in Marin County. Now, Anne Thompson Kent married Thomas Kent, the second son of William Kent, the well-known Congressman and conservationist of California. Tell me Anne, what brought you to California?

AK: Well, it was war time and I was a librarian on Long Island, and Tom came in a very unexpected way to Long Island, really on his way to West Virginia. I happened to be going to the cathedral at Garden City that day, a Sunday, and there in the most complicated way, I met Tom and two other Yale men who were about to fix a way to learn to fly so that when the Air Corps was ready they could say they knew how to fly and they could be all ready to go in.

CE: What year was this again, Anne?

AK: This was 1917, one week after war had been declared, I guess. It was about May, 1917. Things didn't go the way the boys had planned them. In the first place, nothing went the way they planned it. They came from all directions as all college people did, or many college people did, trying to see whether there would be a way to enlist with their classmates. So, these three knew they wanted to fly and they couldn't find any unit that was flying, so this was the way this was going to be worked out. It was a very chancy

kind of a way that we met, and it ended up in a year later that I married that same Tom Kent. We were no sooner married and started up to --

CE: Where did you go when you were married? Where were you married?

AK: We were married in the same little church in my town of Whitestone, Long Island, where I was christened and confirmed. Although it was a quick wartime kind of a wedding, it was a very nice one. His father and mother and sisters came from various directions and were there.

CE: Were you born in this same community?

AK: I was born on Long Island. I was born on the other end of Long Island but came to this particular little town when I was a very small baby.

CE: When were you born, Anne?

AK: I was born a long, long time ago, January 12, 1892.

CE: I see.

AK: It was in that same little town where I was a librarian, and the few times that Tom was able to come after he finally was in the Army, in the Air Corps, the few times that he came he had to sit in the library and wait for the closing hour. That was the only kind of time that we had to visit. But at any rate, when we were married we were to start up to Cape Code where we were going to meet some more of the family, but --

CE: Had it been a Kent tradition for all the men to go to Yale?

AK: All of them, yes. Generations of them, all kinds of generations on both sides, the Thacher side and the Kent side, were all Yale. And we got as far as New Haven and he wanted to show me the campus. Another funny thing about going up -- I guess it was a Saturday, and as we were leaving New York to go up the post road there was navy. All along the line, navy thumbing rides, so we had a funny old car with a long front snout and a long back, and it was actually filled with sailors. We took then all the way to New Haven. Anyway, the next morning we were greeted with a telegram. A telegram had been sent, copies had been sent to wherever we might have been staying that Tom was to sign in at North Island at the end of the leave. Which was a very, very hard thing, an impossible thing to do, because a good part of the ten days had been gone already because Tom had come up from Lake Charles, Louisiana, and it was a very bad spot for him to be in. I told many people that he had changed from a very cocky lieutenant to a very scared little soldier, and he didn't know what under the sun was going to happen to him because he surely could not get there on time. Well, we rushed back to New York and they had received the same telegram at home so they knew what to expect, and we packed the little bit that we did, a suitcase for each, and started for California as fast as we could come.

CE: How did you come?

AK: We came by train, of course, that's the only way you could come, and we landed in San Diego. Funny thing too, we landed in San Diego where Tom had told me it never, never rains in the summer, and it was pouring.

CE: I suppose you didn't have an umbrella?

AK: I didn't have an umbrella, my beautiful umbrella. At any rate, Tom hustled around to find a place to live without waiting to have me find it, and rushed over to North Island as fast as he could, looking, I suppose, very sheepish like a poor little school boy, and of course, they did confine him to the post. He didn't arrive on time and that was it so he

was confined to the post and here I was in San Diego, California, for the very first time in my life.

CE: A bride, and your husband --

AK: Yes. So, very shortly I found out that the only way to go to North Island or Coronado either was by the little ferry and I could see that commuting from San Diego to North Island wasn't going to work, so while he was stuck over there in North Island I went over to Coronado and looked around and found another apartment. The sad thing I always felt for all army people was that the woman who had rented us the place would not refund a single cent, although we kept it only three days.

CE: Sounds like wartime situations.

AK: That was a very bad thing to do I thought, especially they were doing it to all the army people. But we did find a nice apartment; it turned out to be right opposite the park. There was Tom stuck over there in North Island, so I just could go over to the fence and visit him like a prisoner for those ten days or whatever it was they put him there. And we stayed and had a very nice time. It was necessary, you know, for people to be on the flight line at half past five in the morning, so you could see how it would not work from San Diego. But from our house it worked very well. We got a little old rattletrap of a car and went off then every morning to the flight line, just the way all the rest of the people did. Coronado was full of army and navy. In those days the army had more of North Island than the navy had, although I could see that it was a perfect place for the navy. The navy took over more and more, until now I believe it's all navy. I'm not sure, but I think so.

CE: How long was he in the Army before he was released?

AK: Well, everybody was in until after the Armistice then, you see. Not too terribly much time was left.

CE: It wasn't too long.

AK: But he never was sent over, although every week there was a list put up for people who would go over and the people who were left thought they were insulted. But he was teaching acrobatic flying, which was a very, very bad thing to be doing. Quite a number of them were doing that. Oh, then flu came along. The flu time came along and we were quarantined, so we couldn't go any other place. Everybody who was in the army over there, everybody who was on Coronado had to stay there, which was a very lovely place to be staying anyway. And then came a time, I think it would be Thanksgiving, anyway they thought that they could let people go, so they did, and we went to Los Angeles along with quite a few other people. No sooner got there when Tom got the flu. I got it, too, but not as bad as he did.

CE: Is this the same flu that took --

AK: The same terrible, terrible, flu. He didn't die, but he was pretty close to it. It was an awful time and it was a dreadful time for our pocketbook because we were in a hotel and we had to have a nurse, and the doctor who took care of him, I guess, lived in the hotel, so every time he came up and down the stairs, I think, he came to see Tom.

CE: Well, tell me, Anne, at this time had you met either of his parents?

AK: Yes, I met them at the wedding.

CE: They did come to the wedding?

AK: They came to the wedding. I met his sister who was very pregnant at that time, and another little sister who wasn't married, and an aunt and a few other people came at that short notice.

CE: Were you aware then who the Kents were?

AK: No, no, I didn't really know them. Except for what Tom had told me. Everything we ever tried to tell him, every nice thing we showed him about Long Island whenever he came, he'd always say very politely, "Oh, that's very nice, but wait until you see California," which didn't make him any, endear him any to my mother. She thought Long Island was a pretty wonderful place. But, at any rate, I have learned to know that it was just as beautiful. After all, he wasn't born there either, you know; he was born in Chicago.

CE: What was he, the second son?

AK: He was the second son. His older brother was Albert. He didn't marry. He was a rancher in Nevada and he was a darling. I met him then, because when Tom was so terribly sick, his parents, I guess, wrote to Albert and Albert came rushing out to California to see what he could do to help us, so he was the first of them that I met.

CE: Who were the other members of his family?

AK: Oh, the others were pretty scattered then. Billy was in the Artillery in France.

CE: Is that William Kent, Jr.?

AK: That's William Kent, Jr. And Elizabeth is the one that I said was so pregnant when she came to the wedding, and that was the mother of Stanleigh Arnold who later became my godchild. And I always say that Stanleigh and I came into the Kent family at the same time and so we celebrate sometimes like that. He now is my across-the-street neighbor and has grown children of his own.

CE: Now you live, now and have for some few years, at 131 Goodhill Road?

AK: Yes. The house I live in is called New Haven. And I think of it always as my mother-in-law's house. She built the house when she was not too young, and she built the house around two mantelpieces that had been in her home in New Haven when she was born, so that was a long, long time ago. And in later years when the house was torn down her husband had the two mantelpieces crated and sent out to our barn in Kentfield. There they stayed until she did build this New Haven house.

CE: Now before we get to that, could you continue on the other members of the family, Tom's other brothers and sisters?

AK: Well, let's see. Billy was the middle one Albert was the first, Tom was the next, then came Elizabeth, who married Stanleigh Arnold, then came Adeline. Did I forget somebody in there?

CE: I don't know.

AK: Adeline was the artist-sister who married Robert Howard and had nice girls of her own. Then later Roger and Sherman were born, well Sherman and Roger were born. Roger was the last, he was born in 1906.

CE: He's the youngest.

AK: He was born the year of the earthquake. And the house they lived in Kentfield is just as old as the original house, the old Kent house. They both were built at the same time and the additions were put on the Arnold house as children were born.

CE: Well, Roger lives in the original home?

AK: He lives in the one his great-grandmother built, and the house that his mother and father added to as the children came. I say the living room was put on when Roger was born, that was 1906, and those two houses are the two oldest and the two most interesting ones, I think. The one that's New Haven is very nice and Mrs. Kent built it late, I'd say 1936, when only one of her numerous brothers was living. So, it was really built for her and her brother. A very comfortable, nice house, supposedly like her home in New Haven, Connecticut.

CE: Well, now, Anne, when you left San Diego and Tom had recovered from the flu, you came north. What were your plans then?

AK: Well, Father was in Congress, you know, and he was thinking about all the things that would happen after the war was over and he had planned for Tom to go up to British Columbia where there was a mine which had some trouble in the smelting. Where something was being wasted where all of a sudden was pretty good. I think it was zinc. So, he wanted Tom to go right away to the School of Mines at Berkeley and brush up or find out something about these problems and then go up to the mine. That's where we were supposed to have gone. And so Tom did, just the beginning of it.

CE: Is that when you lived in Berkeley, then?

AK: Yes. We went over there. We had no vacation between coming out of the army and having this message of his father's to go. And I think that year the college opened in the middle of August and we never heard of such a thing, we didn't know that was going to happen. Well, we rushed over there to Berkeley and we couldn't find a single place to live, rather like this day but only on a small scale. There just wasn't anything; people took us around and showed us things that I never would believe human beings would be asked to live in. So, we found a house that was not quite finished. I believe the man who built it failed and it was up on the Arlington and --

CE: Is that the one you showed me near Marin Avenue?

AK: Yes, that's right. So, we bought it and we had to finish it and we had to furnish it. We had to do everything. We rented a sewing machine and made curtains for the whole house and we had to just buy every stick, we didn't own a thing. We had to buy everything for it. But we thought, and this was too bad, too, in a way, we thought that if we couldn't find a place to live that when we went to British Columbia it would be a good investment; other people would live in it.

CE: Rent it.

AK: So, we bought that kind of furniture which we still have today.

CE: Utilitarian.

AK: It's too good to throw away and not the kind of furniture you wanted to live with, but that's what happened to us. At any rate, we continued to do that. Every Friday Tom had to run home. We went home over the Richmond ferry, no matter how stormy it was. Oh, it didn't matter, he just had run home because he had gone through about a year and he thought he was never, never going to see Kentfield again. So, over we'd go. Sometimes the storm was so terrible that when we'd wait at the Richmond ferry the man would say, "You stand there and when I say go, you go on as fast as you can," because the apron of the ferry was flapping up and down; it was really terrifying. But anyway, we would go home.

CE: Well, tell me, Mrs. Kent, do you recall your first meeting, again since your marriage, with the William Kents at their home in Kentfield?

AK: Well, they didn't come all at once. There was no family there when we came. The house had just the housekeeper and --

CE: The Kents were away.

AK: The Kents were in Washington. They lived in Washington at 1925 F Street, you know, which is now a very famous --

CE: And they would come home just when he took a holiday?

AK: Well, they didn't come home too often. When Congress was out they'd come home. But at any rate it wasn't that time when he was deep in other things in Washington, like the tariffs. By that time he was working long and hard on the Tariff Commission so he didn't come home then.

CE: Do you recall, offhand, the years that William Kent was in Congress? Was it around 1910?

AK: Well, he was in in 1910. He was in before 1910, then he was in a long time after. I should know those things, but I don't.

CE: But he was a Congressman when you married Tom?

AK: Oh, yes. At any rate, of course, Margaret, the housekeeper, was a perfectly darling person who had been in the family for many long years. She had been with the Grandma Kent, the original Great-Grandma Kent, before Mr. Kent was ever grown up. And she was there through a couple of generations, knew them and brought them all up. She took it upon herself to take care of Tommy and that's one reason he wanted to come home, because she fed him so well and she took such good care --

CE: And he loved her.

AK: Yes, it was just wonderful. And then they had to get ready for the family to come home, and I had my first view of having to -- Well, I think Margaret did pretty much all of it. She had to get a whole army of people in, which I discovered were Chinese. Almost all of the help on the place were Chinese and had been for long, long, years before. So then, when the family was due, the people were all finally hired and in place. And out in back there was a laundry and there were very nice quarters for the Chinese people to live. Anyway they all began to arrive, so I really learned to know them before I met the family. And I had already met Albert and I had met Elizabeth, who did not arrive. Elizabeth was living in Washington, too, because she was married to Stanleigh Arnold and she and Stanleigh had some kind of dollar-a-year job thing, whatever they call those, in Washington, so Elizabeth didn't come back to Kentfield for quite a while and before that she came to San Francisco where Stanleigh, as a bachelor, had lived on Pacific? I forget. The one that runs along the wall of the Presidio. There are some houses that run all along the Presidio wall and they get smaller and smaller and smaller all the way down.

CE: Yes, I know the road.

AK: He lived in one of those.

CE: Pacific Avenue, and it goes down below Presidio Terrace there.

AK: That's right.

CE: It's a brown shingled house that comes in a perfect triangle.

AK: That's right, that's right and he loved it. But he was too much of a bachelor to realize that for a wife -- and by that time they had a third baby -- it would never do. Oh, I skipped something. Tom went to school all right enough, but the longer he studied the more he realized he was not smart enough, didn't know enough, to go up to take such a job as that in Canada.

CE: I guess that was a disappointment to himself and his father.

AK: Oh, it was very disappointing to his father, anyway. And in the meantime, when he came home to Kentfield all the time these people began to talk about real estate just the same as they do now. Again on a much smaller scale.

CE: Well, he had a love for the land, didn't he?

AK: Oh, yes, he had a love for the land all right enough. So, he decided that he would go into real estate and he would not go to Canada. And it was a little eye opener to me to see the difference in people. Now when his brother came out of the army, his father offered him the same opportunity and that boy, that was Billy Kent Jr., he didn't hesitate but he said, "All right, I'll take the job, but you tell them to send the ore down to me." So, that's just what they did. They went over to where smelters are along the bay, you know --

CE: And had it done?

AK: And they had the ore sent down and he was so right, because the system they were working on was too expensive, or wrong, or something, so that it didn't pan out the way they thought it would have. What a difference in one boy who wouldn't think of saying no to his father and the other one who spoke right up and said, "Do it this way." So that was it.

CE: I'd like to interject something for a moment. You talk about your husband's reaction to his father; was he a strict man, William Kent?

AK: Well, yes, I suppose he was very strict.

CE: Was he demanding of the children?

AK: No, he didn't seem to be too demanding. He couldn't help being disappointed in both of these things, but he appreciated their thoughts and feelings and fell right in line with it all right enough.

CE: Excuse me, Anne, for interrupting you. We're now driving up here, we're at Tocaloma; do you think we should turn right at Nicasio Road and go through that way? We'd better check on the water, don't you think?

AK: Oh, I think it might be kind of fun.

CE: All right, we'll turn right off here. It's been a beautiful drive out. So far, nobody's on the road but us.

AK: Isn't it nice? And our dear friend, who owned all this land, that we just interviewed, that was --

CE: Helen McIssac.

AK: Yes, Nellie, Nellie McIssac.

CE: Getting back to this business that Tom went into, the real estate business, did he start off by himself or was he in a partnership?

AK: Well, he apparently had been thinking about it quite a while, didn't tell me anything. In fact, all along he never did tell me much about these things that he was thinking. But he went down to our little railroad station at Kentfield where he had a friend, Tom Minto. Tom Minto was the station agent, he was the --

CE: Oh, that's the man we interviewed.

AK: That's the one. He was in the middle of everything there, the railroad station, the baggage, and all kinds of things were all in that one little unit just down across from our entrance. And I guess he must have gone around the town, he must have gone and talked to other real estate people. There was a regular real estate row in San Anselmo which is

not exactly so any more, but I think he must have talked to quite a number of the men. He decided that he would go into the real estate and he asked Tom Minto if he would be his partner. I don't suppose anybody --

CE: Just like that.

AK: I don't think anybody could have been more bowled over than Tom Minto was; he had just come out of the army himself.

CE: Well, you remember the interview we had with him. He was -- He just loved your husband.

AK: Oh, I think they were real partners.

CE: He just thought he was a great, great man.

AK: Yes, it was a wonderful partnership. Of course, Tom Minto had been in the railroad business ever since he had been very young, up in Healdsburg, I think, and he'd been in all kinds of different jobs on the railroad and he was a very smart boy. He had spent his time in the army and, I guess, was just feeling his way, getting back into the harness again, when Tom made this proposition to him and he thought about it and then I guess two, in ignorance, really started off. I don't see what else it could have been.

CE: Could you interject right here for a moment, Anne, the charming story about that Kentfield station? There is a story to it; it wasn't always called Kentfield.

AK: No. Well, I'll tell you. The real name should have been Ross Landing, that whole area. People ask, "Where is Ross Landing? What does it mean?" It means everything that is now called Kentfield and Greenbrae and all of that area which is not Ross or Larkspur, everything in between. And the railroad came, I believe, in '72, and when a railroad comes through it has to have stations and in many cases the stations are named or are given for the people who give the land which is taken. And that didn't quite happen in this case because Ross was a very settled town and very proud of being Ross, so they didn't want the railroad to have a next station called Ross Landing. They didn't want that. So, whoever had the say, and it might have been Aunt Elizabeth who wrote the wildflower book, someone in the Kent family, I think, must have said, "Tamalpais. Name it Tamalpais," and so they did. They named it Tamalpais and they put it on all the time tables, all the printing, all the tickets, everything was made up for Tamalpais. And then the people bought the tickets and they came, got off at the station and they were not at the top of the mountain and they were very mad indeed. So, the poor railroad had to change that in a hurry. They had to call in all the printing, all the rest of it, and they were in a quandary over what to call it. They sent some men out, saying, "You get a name for that place and hurry up about it!" They were standing there talking and our place, which is the Kent home place, had big fields in the front which were always planted to either wheat or flowers or something because it was a nursery there that liked to use the land. So, while they were standing there, one of the men said, "Who owns that field?" The other man said, "Oh, Kent owns that field," and the man said, "Good enough, good enough, we'll call it Kentfield." And so they did.

CE: That's a charming story.

AK: I think it's pretty good, too. Well, anyway, I don't know who took Tom's place on the -- at the little railroad station, but --

CE: Tom Minto, you mean?

AK: Yeah, Tom Minto. But they went into business up on the main road in San Anselmo, right opposite the railroad station, where Jim Leach and Mr. Lang and all the rest of them were in a row.

CE: What year would this be by now?

AK: Gee, I don't know what year. It was early 20s, anyway. Something in the '20s. I'm not sure.

CE: When you -- When he had that business, was the old Perry house still standing, where the nursery is today? Do you recall, Anne? The family home?

AK: I think it was.

CE: Must have been.

AK: I think it was. Yes, because I didn't know any people or anything and I don't think Tom did very much to help me find out who people were. But, the way I learned to know the people was because, in the years gone by, his father and his grandmother had given a great piece of property opposite this railroad station where the gym of the college is now and all the way to the creek. They had given that for recreation and education and had built a beautiful, beautiful club house. And when I came into the family his mother was the president of it. It had been running, a very successful thing.

CE: What was it called?

AK: It was called Tamalpais Center, and the building itself was called The Stadium.

CE: You have photographs of that.

AK: Yes.

CE: Is that the one in the Spanish architecture?

AK: Yes, it's lovely architecture. And I guess they had a fine architect do the building, but he loved California and he wanted to use the Mission style. He had visions. This is my father-in-law. He had visions of having that whole center to be a wonderful place of clubs and play fields and things, but all in the Mission style, I think. At any rate, it is working out now to be that kind of a thing. But at that time his mother was the president, and then I was taken down and I met many, many people there. We all worked in this particular center.

CE: That was your beginnings then, entering the Marin community?

AK: Yes, that was the beginning, and civic work on all sides.

CE: Well, you've lived in Marin, Ross, Kentfield, now close to sixty years, do you know that?

AK: I hate to think of that, but that's it, I guess. I guess that's so.

CE: Well, to detour a minute here: I've often wondered, and other people, too, of all the members of the Kent family; those that are Kents and those that married into the family, it seems that you have a greater interest in the history of the area than other members. Can you give us a reason for that?

AK: Well, I don't think that's so, but --

CE: Well, it seems to be so, from people who have known you --

AK: Well, I'll tell you why. Because William Kent was always interested in the people of Marin. That is, he wanted, from the time he was a very young boy and used to go out in this very area with his father on hunting trips or fishing trips or anything, he was always struck with the number of different nationalities that they would meet. I always wished that I had known the old Olema Hotel, for instance. He told from time to time, he would tell about going to that.

CE: So, he'd come to these places and see the Portuguese, the Swiss, the Italians, the French.

AK: He'd talk to all of them and he wondered why did they come from so far away to this country. Why was it? What was it that brought them? He never got over that. He was always wondering and always hoping that there'd be some history written because he thought, for a small county to have so many different nationalities, so many people from so many different places --

CE: Well, Anne, here we are on our way back from Point Reyes Station. Wasn't that an interesting visit with the McDonalds?

AK: It was, indeed. It was very enlightening, I thought.

CE: And that story of teaching school up there at Marshall, when most of her children were Indians.

AK: Yes, I never heard any of that before. That would have been a good thing for Mr. Kent to hear. That was one thing I don't think he ever did hear.

CE: Well, how come it came about, Anne, that you made some of these historical sorties and trips with Mr. Kent? How did that come about?

AK: Well, I think it was because most of the young people, most of the people my age, were busy with families, and I was new out here and we had no children at the time. And often I went because I was practically a taxi driver for him.

CE: You were his chauffeur.

AK: I was his chauffeur very often, and it was very interesting, too.

CE: You know, when you look back, it was a wonderful opportunity for you to learn, and very quickly.

AK: Yes. In fact, one of the very interesting chances I had was when Judge Lindsey was expected from New York, and he had written to Mr. Kent that he wanted to come to visit him, but he also wanted to visit Luther Burbank.

CE: In Santa Rosa?

AK: In Santa Rosa. And so long ago, when I had been children's librarian in New York, I had studied Judge Lindsey. In fact, he was one of my idols, I guess. I thought he was one of the most wonderful people I had ever read about and I had a picture of him in my mind, the kind of picture we used to think judges were.

CE: Was he a Superior Court Judge in the State of New York?

AK: I guess he was. Now I'm not sure what he was called. But at any rate, he was doing just about the kinds of things that people are trying to do for young people today, and he was very, very much ahead of his time, I'm sure. But at any rate, he had these two appointments, one with Mr. Kent and one with Mr. Burbank, so I was invited to do the driving and go along, which I did. I've always been so thankful because it was a wonderful, wonderful chance. But the benevolent old judge turned out to be a quite youngish, snappy, black-eyed, black-haired young, not so young, I suppose, but slender kind of a man. Not my picture of a judge at all, not a bit. But he was a most interesting person. Of course, I didn't hear all of the conversations that went on up at the Burbank ranch. After our lunch, I went with Mrs. Burbank and saw the nursery and the three men went off to have their deep conversations, whatever they were. I'm not so sure. Whatever they were, I think poor Mr. Kent was kind of shocked. I think it was rather far-out thinking, and I think it was some kinds of law that he had not thought about because

Judge Lindsey's work was with the delinquent and troubled young people in the East, and so --

CE: I wonder why he wanted to see Burbank.

AK: Well, that's what I don't know, I don't know. But there must have been some very, very deep conversations and deep thoughts there. I've always been so glad to think I was taken along. Of course the other reason that I went, and I didn't always go with Mr. Kent. I would more than likely go on an errand for him or I would go on these safaris to find old settlers and ask about their early, early days. Because in this Tamalpais Center that I told you about, one of the things that Mr. Kent had inaugurated, and it became an annual affair as long as the club lasted, and that was to have an annual Old Settlers' Day. That was his way of gathering them from all parts of the county. They would invite old settlers to come; they tried to broadcast it. I remember one time we tried to invite people, and that was a mistake, because to give an invitation to somebody because you were told he was 92 years old and have him come maybe hurt the feelings of some people within a few miles of his home because they also were just as old and nobody even knew they were there. So, the best way we found was to broadcast the invitation.

CE: I see.

AK: Then there would be on that particular day, and I think it was in October every year, an annual Old Settlers Day when they came to the Tamalpais Center and they were invited for lunch or tea, according to whichever way we had planned it, and they were invited to come up on the stage or stand where they were and tell what they remembered of the old days. I remember the grandmother of -- Elou Gunn was her name then.

CE: Elou Denicke.

AK: Yes, Elou Denicke's grandmother was one of those people who stepped up. The dearest, frail little lady, she stepped up and told us the story about their trip across the Isthmus. And in those days, they had several ways to cross the Isthmus, some on horseback, some by foot, different ways.

CE: Mules.

AK: Yes. They came down in a boat to one side and crossed over to the Balboa side and hoped for a ship to take them up the other side. And, as I understand it, there was a path through the jungle and many people walking along and in many places single file and the natives helped. They carried bundles and they carried little people. And suddenly, on this particular day, one little girl was missing, so everybody stopped and they tried to find out where to begin, how to look, retrace their steps as quickly as they could. And then one of the little carriers remembered that his friend had been carrying a little girl and he thought that maybe that was the one that was missing. So, he took them to that particular boy's house and, sure enough, there she was, a tiny little mite, sitting on the dirt floor playing with the other children, having a lovely time. And then the boy himself was there; he was sick and tired of carrying any kind of a load so he just went home. So, that was it.

CE: Oh, what a story!

AK: Yes, isn't that something? Well, she lived in Sausalito for many long years.

CE: Well, this is what Mr. Kent was reaching for, these old stories. These old stories. And also, what was the paramount question he asked everybody, Anne? Wasn't it, "What brought you to Marin?"

AK: Yes. He liked to know what brought them. Of course, some of them came for the brick, some came for brick making, some because of sheep, some came for cattle, some came just because their friends lived here. Many of the Irish people came because their friends had come over and were on the very west coast, right where we have been today. They wrote home and said it was just like Ireland; they'd better come.

CE: Remember the Portuguese man we interviewed? He said it looks just like Portugal.

AK: That's right, and I do believe they were right. Well, it was almost every time because there was some turbulence in their own country, either famine or something that made the people want to go.

CE: It made it necessary to emigrate.

AK: So, they came. Well, out of all this business it seems to me that Florence Donnelly was the only person who really did what Mr. Kent hoped people would do. That was, he hoped, when the day was over, the people would have been so impressed with what they'd heard of their own families that they would sit down and write what they heard and more. But very few of them did except Florence. Florence Donnelly, I think, has been our greatest help in all of this.

CE: No doubt. You know, Anne, driving through this beautiful countryside of Marin, now we're heading east in the late afternoon; it's four o'clock, beautiful shadows on the road, and we're approaching Camp Taylor. There's so many stories, that I wish you would tell us. We all know that William Kent was an avid conservationist, and I don't think a great many people know to the degree that he pursued this. We know somewhat the story of Muir Woods. We know somewhat the story of the Marin Municipal Water District. Now, looking on our right is this beautiful creek. We had such a lean winter with little rainfall in it. We're all conscious of water. Can you tell us what you know about the beginnings of the Marin Water District?

AK: Well, Tom was the son of William Kent who was so interested not only in conserving water but in conserving everything around here, that he sort of followed in his father's footsteps. He loved Marin just as much as his father did, I think. And to go back further, you say we know about Muir Woods. I had an awful time finding out all the things that I know and you realize that a great deal of what I know is second- and third-hand.

CE: Tell us about Muir Woods.

AK: Well, I will tell a little bit that I have learned that I think other people don't know, and that is --

CE: Well, that's what we want to know.

AK: Well, everybody says that he saved Muir Woods. Some people say he owned everything around anyway that wasn't much of anything to do, but he didn't own that piece of land at all, and he didn't know about it and it's a very interesting place for people to know because you could be up on the outside, the top edges of Muir Woods on either side, and never realize that the big, big, deep canyon between was filled with redwoods. Well, that's unnatural for water. It's a very narrow, narrow canyon. It was called Redwood Canyon; it has a stream right down through the middle of it. The point that I think about is, the story goes that that very canyon was under litigation because there were some smart people, and I have never found out who they were, had decided they could make a dam out of that Redwood Canyon and it wouldn't cost the people a

single cent because “the board feet in that canyon would pay for the entire dam.” And the dam itself would have taken care of Belvedere and I think part of Mill Valley, maybe forever I guess, for the amount of water they figured would fill it. Well, then when -- The story goes that you have all heard, that he really was told about it and really did buy it and then had such a terrible time to save it because that same litigation would carry on if the owner was trying to save trees instead of give water to people who needed water. And that would continue if the county owned it, it would continue if the state owned it, and he was at his wits’ end then to know what to do about it. And then one of his friends in Washington remembered that there had been such a statute on the books in our United States history that said the United States could accept a piece of property too small to be the acreage required for a park if it could be proven to be of that special value. So that was the way the thing started. And Teddy Roosevelt was the President. Gifford Pinchot was working on it at the same time. Steve Mather was most specially working on it, and between them they found out that it could be done. So it was done. He saved the property; it was given to the United States Government as a monument. I believe now more and more acreage has been added so that now it probably has enough acreage to be called a park, but it wasn’t at that time.

CE: I see.

AK: And these people knew -- They were very smart, foxy people who were trying to make it into a dam, and they made life very, very hard for him.

CE: But he persevered.

AK: Oh, he did. You know, you couldn’t send a message easily. He had this chasing back and forth between Washington and Marin County, but it won and I tell you I don’t believe there was more than a week between the time of the actual date that it would have been lost.

CE: It was that close to --

AK: It was that close. But the thing, to me, that is most wonderful is that it was so like him to think what was it or what should have been done if he spoiled that plan for them. If anyone was that desperate for water that they were willing to do such a terrible thing as that, that there really must be a great need for water. So, he set about to find out what the situation was in Marin. Now his own place had a very fine water system, just the same as almost every large holding in Marin had --

CE: Did he have a spring or a well?

AK: Oh, well, they were all springs. And the springs had to be tapped. It was a very, very intricate system, but that’s the way it was.

CE: Well, I remember the Dibblees. Remember when we talked to Harrison?

AK: Yes, they still have it, they still have theirs.

CE: That’s how they’re able to have such beautiful gardens.

AK: Yes. The Branson School still --

CE: Still uses it.

AK: Way up on Baldy. Anyway, it’s a very complicated thing but almost everybody in Marin had to have it and the actual lakes in Marin at that time, before there was a Marin Municipal, Lagunitas was the main thing. And it was a great thing that they had it. They were very, very pleased. They didn’t realize it wasn’t enough.

CE: Was this a natural --

AK: Well, it was natural to begin with; then the former water district had dammed it and made it into a real dam.

CE: But that was the only resource for water?

AK: That and Phoenix. Now, Phoenix was a little standby. It has a wonderful watershed and has good supply, did have good supply, and could be pumped up to Lagunitas, but it wasn't a natural flow down. But the thing about it was, he realized that that wasn't going to last too long, so he was instrumental, probably with some other people like Ralston White, was one of them, I guess, in having Mr. O'Shaughnessy come in and look over the county to see where there could possibly be a dam.

CE: Is this the same O'Shaughnessy who worked on Hetch Hetchy?

AK: That's right. In the meantime, there was so much that had to be done because there was already a water district, you see. There was one that was not adequate and those people hadn't realized it any more than lots of other people had. So, it was not only a case of finding it...that is the gate right now.

CE: We are now at Lagunitas.

AK: Yes, that is the gate to the Kent Lake and Peters Dam, and it was named for Mr. Peters. Anyway, they had to buy out the old, they had to make a new water district, and that is a very complicated thing. It meant that the certain area in Marin, you know the water district doesn't cover all of Marin, only part of Marin, is in the water district.

CE: What areas are out of it, do you know?

AK: Oh, yes. Novato is out of it. That's all the area where we have just come from.

CE: Point Reyes Station, Marshall, Tomales --

AK: All of those places are out of it. It reaches from the bay and from Sausalito over the hill up to Hamilton Field and across that way and not too far out. Anyway, it is an area which agreed to bond themselves to make a dam. And Mr. O'Shaughnessy, in the meantime, had chosen a place to make it. He said the place where Alpine Dam is would be his best choice.

CE: And wasn't this site where the old road used to go over, the wagon road and the stage road used to go down?

AK: Oh, of course. Right down in it, yes. When you make a dam, you know, in the first place when you're going to do it you have to go long before and get a great many, many acres, not only the acres you're going to have in the lake but all that's supposed to be in your watershed, which is thousands of acres. It was a long, long process.

CE: And this property, of course, belongs to somebody.

AK: Well, it belonged to many people, and that took a long time. But putting through the thing first, was one of --

CE: What years are we talking about, do you have any ideas? In the '20s?

AK: No, no, it has to be long before that. They had to start long before that because the first dam was filled in 1918, so it had to start, we'll say, 1915, let's say.

CE: All right.

AK: Anyway, Alpine -- If you know Alpine, you find out that it flows the wrong way.

CE: Why is that, I've often wondered.

AK: Well, that's the way the land lay, and so most people would never have dreamed -  
- Only a great, far-seeing engineer would ever dream that water for here was going to come from something that faced over there. So, the way he did it was to make Pine Mountain Tunnel, which means that below the dam a pipe starts down and curves around

and retraces the steps, really runs parallel with the lake itself and the road we now know as we go up to Alpine Dam parallels a big, big pipe that comes down this way, comes down to Fairfax from there.

CE: So does it empty into --

AK: Everybody's home, every place around here. So that was the first one. Then, in later years, let's say in the early '20s, it wasn't big enough, so they raised the dam. Now lots of people talk about raising a dam thinking all it means is you just raise the dam and that's it, but if you raise the dam --

CE: You're going to store more water; you're increasing your acreage, acre feet.

AK: You're also increasing the lake so that it's going to flow back over roads that you have already, or into houses that you have already, and all that has to be changed. Well, that dam had to be raised, so a new road had to be made, and in the raising it backed up onto what we all knew as Bon Tempe Meadows. Bon Tempe Meadows is just below Lagunitas, Lagunitas being the old lake; the first lake. So then you have Bon Tempe Meadows in between. It's a beautiful, beautiful place and it had a stream and the stream also ran out of Lagunitas across Bon Tempe and down into Alpine. So, then the next thing that happened when they needed more water, and all this has gone on since 1920, the next thing was to make a dam out of Bon Tempe Meadows. So now you have three steps. You have Lagunitas, the top step, and it flows down into -- Every drop that runs out of it flows down into Bon Tempe, which is now a dam instead of meadows; and whatever overflows from Bon Tempe overflows into Alpine. And then after that, I think in this order, came Kent Lake and Mr. Peter's, they called the dam Mr. Peter's Dam, and it's in the old Carson Valley and it is the next step down from Alpine.

CE: And the entry to that dam is back there at Lagunitas, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Well, Lagunitas, Bon Tempe.

CE: We went through Lagunitas, remember, and there was a gate.

AK: Oh, no, no. It's a different Lagunitas. The Lagunitas is just above Phoenix, above your house.

CE: Yes, I know where Lagunitas is, but isn't that the road to the Kent Lake?

AK: No, no. Because Kent Lake is in Carson Valley.

CE: I see.

AK: And Carson Valley is the outflow of that Lake, the first lake that I told you was facing the wrong way. Now facing the wrong way some of the water, or most of the water, runs into that pipeline that I told you, Pine Mountain Tunnel. But if anything is wasted or overflows, anything that overflows from Alpine goes down the Carson Valley and flows into another great big lake, a big deep lake down in there which is called Kent Lake. That makes another one. They are all in steps. They are all overflow steps.

CE: I see.

AK: Then in later years the need was more.

CE: Population growth?

AK: Yes. Nicasio, then, was the one they had chosen. A good board of directors will always plan twenty years ahead, you see, at least. So, they had chosen to go out to Nicasio. And at Nicasio they didn't get anywhere near the help from the Supervisors that they should have gotten, and also the news should never have leaked out the way people demand it now. As soon as it was known that that's where the next lake was going to be, people rushed out there and bought land all the way around. So, Nicasio is a lovely big

lake, but they do not own like this. Everything you're looking at would be a watershed; that's what you call it. All the water that would be coming down into the lake is called the watershed and that's what you should have and that's what we have in almost all of our water districts. That's why it's a place where people don't live and you know it's for hikers and all that kind of thing. Well, Nicasio isn't like that. Nicasio is a fine big dam, biggest of all, but they do not own all the watershed and it cost a terrible heap of money to do it. But it was a very fine thing that they had it because we would be in the soup right now if we didn't have it. So that's the kind of a thing that has grown year after year.

CE: Is it the last step in the chain of descending lakes?

AK: Right now it is, right now. There was supposed to have been another one; I always forget the name of it. There was supposed to have been another one which some of these people are talking about now, which is away up on the corner, well, out of Tomales where we were. If we had gone along that Tomales Lake, there is a stream that comes down sort of towards Synanon, I don't know what its name is now, but there was a big piece of property way up toward the Sonoma line which would have been a natural -- which would have been a thing that they should have bought and have it to avert this catastrophe that we're in just now. But the whole thing was something that was just the making of the water district itself, and I'll have to give you some of those things one of these days so that you see what it is.

CE: Am I correct, has someone written a history of the water district? Has it not been?

AK: Well, I know a couple of people.

CE: Did Dr. Stanley work on it?

AK: Dr. Stanley worked on one and it's now in the History Room of the County.

CE: The California Room.

AK: The California Room of the County Library.

CE: Oh, that's good.

AK: And I think some other people have done it and Bob Brusatori is on my list. He was the secretary for the board for years and years and I have practically got a promise that he will do a tape for us telling us what he knows of the water district.

CE: Well, I think that would be invaluable.

AK: It would be wonderful.

CE: Well, someday we can go down to their headquarters in Corte Madera and maybe have a visit with them.

AK: Oh, you can. They want people to come, and right now it makes me so mad to think that people should be asking the water people to tell us how to save water and how to do these things when it's their job to furnish water as best they can and it should be our job to really be as careful as we can be and it should be our job to educate people who really have come into the county and have no idea whatever of this marvelous thing that we have.

CE: Well, I really believe a lot of people who live in Marin County don't know that the water they drink and use in their gardens comes from these lakes.

AK: No, they don't know it.

CE: They think, perhaps, erroneously, that it's all piped in, similar to the Hetch Hetchy supply to San Francisco County.

AK: Oh, they say the craziest things, they really do. The man who said they ought not only to be giving us lots of water, they ought to be giving us power because of all those

waterfalls. There's only one waterfall, to my knowledge, and I have not seen it, but my children go there when it's the rainiest, rainiest winter and there up in Bill Williams' Gulch there is something that is so marvelous; it's a nice waterfall which really finds its way down to Phoenix Lake. Well, Phoenix I forgot to tell you about. Phoenix has been there since about 1907. That was the second lake and it was very useful for emergency. They had a system where they could pump up into the pipes from it.

CE: You mean back up into Lagunitas?

AK: Back up. Now that's the same thing that happens to Nicasio. Nicasio is not in the chain. But Nicasio had to have a very elaborate amount of pipes and pumping so that the water can be pumped back to this very thing that we have just passed, you know that is a big filtering treatment plant. It's a great system. It's one of the numerous things that people could really thank William Kent for, but I'm sure they'd never know it.

CE: Well, that's why it's wonderful that you are telling the story. I notice driving home, Anne, and I think it would be a time to mention that we passed some of that broom. Would you explain what happened with the prolific spreading of this plant which we -- I don't know the botanical name, do you?

AK: One of them is Genista, and I think that's the one people are buying. Today we passed some beautiful, beautiful --

CE: But the seed pods explode and it propagates. What's the danger of it? Why is it such a bad thing to have happened to Marin?

AK: Well, the thing that's the worst about it is that it grows so quickly and so easily that it's choking out the native growth all over Marin and Sonoma and many other places, too. And the other terrible thing about it is that it is a great fire hazard in the time when it's bare; it's just like tinder. And when the seeds -- The seeds are little peas, you know, have a natural dispersal system to them. They screw themselves just like a little corkscrew and you can hear them pop and the seeds fly.

CE: Like a little jet.

AK: Yes. We're passing them now.

CE: We're in Fairfax and all along this stream there's -- Look at them.

AK: Yes. It's a terrible, terrible thing.

CE: And people think they are beautiful; they don't know.

AK: They are beautiful and the nurseries should know better. The nurseries are selling it and that and my other terrible thing, which is the pampas grass, have both been beautiful, beautiful imports. And they are not only in Marin but all over California. They are taking over. Because they're beautiful people plant them in their gardens.

CE: Is that why you see less and less wildflowers?

AK: That's why.

CE: And more and more of this?

AK: Well, it used to be that when you left Corte Madera to go over the old Corte Madera grade, that it was as good a botanical walk as anywhere. There were flowers and bushes native to California that were simply gorgeous. Now there's nothing but broom, nothing. It chokes right down to the road. It's a terrible menace.

CE: Well, tell me, what are some of the botanical groups you're involved with doing to fight this problem?

AK: Well, the one I belong to that you hardly ever would hear of is the Tamalpais Conservation Club and they really concentrate on the mountain. And it's been brought

home to them so strongly that they have taken, their last article that came out went to the trouble of using two of their pages to tell about how terrible the broom is and how people ought to help to stamp it out. That article was talking particularly about the mountain, but just the same about other places. Now there's another: the Botanical Club of the

Academy of Sciences hasn't taken any active stand yet, and the Native --

CE: These are people who are botanists, who should be aware of it.

AK: They should.

CE: The average lay person has no knowledge of this.

AK: I know it. I know it. It needs educating and it needs it fast.

CE: You think the press could disseminate this?

AK: Oh, I guess they could. There's a whole committee from the Marin Garden Club that's working on it at the moment and the Native Plant Society is one of the ones that we hope for the most. They are very, very active people. But it does take educating and people are going to say no. I've noticed in the last month some people have planted a complete hedge at their homes. And oh, the worst is Greenbrae where the beautiful big expensive apartments are, maybe more than one, but one in particular has a grand planting, a hedge planting, actually, of full grown big pampas grass, big feathers. It could cover Greenbrae in a couple of years; it really could choke out all the good things.

CE: Well, tell me, Anne, from your perspective of sixty years of Marin County, have you noticed a decline in the wildflowers on your trips out to West Marin and out to your home in Stinson Beach?

AK: Oh, yes, yes, I've noticed.

CE: Really?

AK: And almost always I would think that it's because of something, sometimes you can't even see them, but something that grows as easily as the dandelion does, that we know, has taken over our hills. Anything will grow in Marin, you know, anything, so it's been a bad thing the way we've brought wrong things in. It's bad enough to lose all the flowers because we put in roads and houses and all that kind of thing, but really, there aren't as many on the hills. When I remember Stinson Beach hills, for instance, there would be sheets of gold and sheets of blue right next to it, just a blue and gold, acres and acres and it was that way all the way down the coast. So, I don't know exactly; I don't know enough about it to know why, but we don't see it that way.

CE: Well, talking about Stinson will bring us around the lower peninsula of Marin. Did Mr. Kent acquire Steep Ravine separate from the area which is known as Muir Woods, or was that part of it?

AK: Oh, no, that's very different. He owned Steep Ravine long, long before. Yes, I have a map and I must follow these things. For many, many long years they owned what we called the ranches. One set were the coast ranches; they went all the way down Stinson Beach and included Steep Ravine and way up on the mountain. The part that is the Mountain Theater used to belong in it and all the --

CE: Didn't Mr. Kent deed that over to the Mountain Play Association in 1913?

AK: Yes, he did. And it was just land then, you know. It was just a beautiful, beautiful big bowl. We used to go to the plays long before there were any seats to sit on, you know. We used to sit on the edge of the hill.

CE: Remember Marian Hayes Cain and her story of the theater? Wasn't it the CCC boys who --

AK: Yes, then the CCC boys who came in and made a beautiful, beautiful amphitheater out of it. It's just beautiful; the whole thing is just lovely.

CE: Well, getting back to the Bolinas-Stinson area, what interest did Mr. Kent have in Stinson Beach or what later became known as Kent Island?

AK: Oh, he never owned Kent Island; that was mine. Well, I wouldn't say he never owned it, he owned it for one night. That was quite interesting, too.

CE: Well, would you tell us where Kent Island is?

AK: Yes, I'll tell you. That's a little island; its real name is Pepper Island, and it's in --

CE: Named for the Pepper family?

AK: Yes, it was named for the Pepper family and it's just too bad, it wasn't our doing that somebody named it Kent Island. We had nothing to do with it. Anyway, that little island was in the bay --

CE: What bay?

AK: Bolinas Bay, and in 1915 thousands of people came to Marin County and they didn't want to go home. They decided they'd find some place to live.

CE: It's the story today!

AK: Yes. And then there were some real estate people in San Francisco that thought they would hurry up and have a lot of property for that purpose; they'd run around and sell it to these people and even if they were going to sell it to them to have arks on it, or whatever. They were the ones who bought the Mesa at Bolinas and sold little tiny lots for next door to nothing. They also bought the island, and Tom's aunt, Mary Elizabeth Parsons, lived down there in a house that had been her uncle's; that was the original Albert Kent.

CE: Who was Mary Elizabeth Parsons again?

AK: She was the one who wrote the wildflower book of California, Mary Elizabeth Parsons.

CE: We'll talk about her a little later.

AK: She owned the house down there facing this little island and she just loved the birds that were on it. She just felt that this was her outlook and suddenly this thing was happening. So, she called Mr. Kent and told him that she wanted to buy a piece of it and she had thought that it would be a good idea if maybe he'd buy a piece of it for Tom because it was the year Tom graduated and he would have a birthday and he would have a graduation and he knew all about those birds.

CE: You mean graduating from Yale?

AK: Yeah. And he knew all about those birds because she had always taught him all these things. So, she would buy one piece and he would buy the other piece and we'd give it to Tom for his birthday and that's what happened. He did, and that was in December 25, 1915. And there was another owner there, too, on that island who maybe still owns a piece of it. At any rate, those people had it all in mind they were going to sell these little tiny chunks and have them, the houseboats, all brought up there. They were going to have a whole colony of houseboats.

CE: Well, how much acreage is Kent Island?

AK: Well, my piece of it was 109 acres and Aunt Elizabeth's was 10, 119, then there's 20 acres more that belongs to another lady. And so that's out of the family altogether and the family never thought anything of it. His brothers thought it was a crazy thing, called it his swamp or some other thing like that, but he loved that little island. At any rate, you

know, there's another long story that came after it and again it was nearly ruined, everybody knows about that, I guess.

CE: Well, not really; you could tell us a little bit

AK: Well, it's an awful story, really.

CE: I know, but it would be --

AK: All right, then. After Tom had gone and it belonged to me and the -- Billy in the meantime had taken over the sandspit which is another story entirely. I should go back. The sandspit did belong to Mr. Kent, always belonged to him.

CE: The sandspit where Seadrift is today?

AK: The sandspit is where Seadrift is today. And last night -- I wish I -- I didn't know you were going to ask me, because I would have the dates and everything. Anyway, he always hoped it was going to be a park. He had either given or sold almost all, everything that didn't belong to the Stinsons, on that whole coast along there. He had gone to the State Parks or -- I don't think any of them are federal and they should have been, maybe. Anyway, this sandspit he always thought was going to be -- He had made a hotel on it once, a long, long time before which some people know about and that was too early in the game because that was a time when you had to go over by horse and buggy and it was not a going concern. But anyway he did love that beach.

CE: You're not talking about the Dipsea Inn?

AK: Yes, I am, that's it; that was a few houses up from where my house is. But at any rate, he had it all fixed up. The appraisers from the state and the appraisers from the Kent family had worked and worked for a long, long time. Had appraised it foot by foot, a certain price for the footage along the ocean and a certain price for the feet along the bay and the entire thing was very well worked out and right up to the last minute. Then it was to come up before the State Board, or Park Commission, or whoever you call them. In the meantime, some people, and there were a great many misled people, got to that board and said, "Now you can get this beach any old time. This belongs to the Kents. You can get this any old time, but this piece out at Tomales Bay has got to be today or you'll lose it." So, those people on that board voted that particular day to turn down this thing that had been so worked up. I think it would have cost them \$150,000 for the entire three miles of

--

CE: Sandspit.

AK: By that time his father had died; he never knew that had happened. He had died and Billie was so mad because there wasn't any work left to do. I mean, it was a complete thing, it was agreed on all sides. And the reason it happened was because Mr. Drury, who was the man on the Park Commission who wanted it so very badly, had been sent to Washington, had been really borrowed in Washington for some other thing, and a man who didn't know what he was talking about was given the place. The man is dead now, but anyway, he didn't know. And these misled people really did put through one of those little beaches that's on Tomales Bay instead of that one. So, Billy said right then --

CE: Well, that's the public's loss.

AK: That's right.

CE: Now a few families enjoy private homes there.

AK: Oh, there are a lot of families there.

CE: Well, bring us back to Kent Island.

AK: Well, Kent Island, I don't know.

CE: Well, there was a desire to commercialize it.

AK: Oh, that other, that second one, that terrible one, yes.

CE: And you fought it.

AK: Well, I -- A man came to see me and had the whole sale all made out, going to give me the value that it says, you know, what it says on your -- He came, he had all the news, he knew what he was talking about, he had it all. He said, "We want to buy this and we know that you think it's wonderful, something wonderful," and --

CE: You mean the proposed development was wonderful?

AK: Well, he didn't tell me what it was, you see.

CE: But he thought you thought it was wonderful.

AK: I said, "Why? I don't want to sell it. What's the idea? What's going on?" "Oh," he said, "it's secret and it's so wonderful you'll just love it." And there was a friend of mine, too, and they sent this friend of mine over and he had everything ready for me to sign and --

CE: All cut and dried, just sign here.

AK: I said, no, I wouldn't sign. So, then we were alerted, you see, so much had gone on. So we had to hurry up and see what to do. He said, when he went out and I wouldn't do it, "It doesn't make any difference. Well, it makes some difference to you, I guess, but if you don't sign, we're going to condemn it anyway." So, I, then, had to hurry around, on the quiet, we had to hurry around and see if we could find how the Audubon could buy it, or how the conservation people could buy it. And the silly conservation people almost let the cat out of the bag, went to a public meeting in the courthouse, announced that this little island in Bolinas Bay was for sale and the Kent family wanted the conservationists to buy it, and boy, that really almost upset the apple cart. But at any rate the Nature Conservancy stepped up and bought it and just saved it, just saved it like that. And then I wish they could have given it to the Audubon, but the Audubon didn't seem to have the money at the time so the County people who were -- I don't know who was on the Board of Supervisors then, but anyway they thought that maybe they would be the best people to take over for the County and so they did. They took it from the Nature Conservancy and I guess people from all over the country chipped in. But that really was a scary thing. Here they were, they were going to put a hotel and every kind of bathing affair, they were going to put a bridge over, they were going to do all kinds of things.

CE: Well, it worked out just in time. It seems so many things the Kent family have tried to do in a conservation way have been just in the nick of time.

AK: Now this is wonderful.

CE: We are driving up through Kent Woodlands at Woodland Avenue.

AK: When my great-grandfather came he just saw this amphitheater kind of a thing here and that's the way he bought it. Then after a long time he bought ranch after ranch, piece after piece.

CE: Now we've just passed the entrance into Roger Kent's house.

AK: And you're just passing my barn, you are just passing the old carriage house from the original house, and that was mine. That was given to me and we remodeled it, restored it, not remodeled it, to be a beautiful home, a lovely, lovely home. It's a very, very nice thing. There was no road where we are now. This was leading up to the first pasture and the second pasture, all this was just cows.

CE: Well, getting back to Kentfield, what is now Kentfield -- We're in Kent Woodlands. I think it would be a good time for you to tell that wonderful story about Mrs. Albert Kent in the early 1870s and her view of this valley. Could you tell us that story, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Well, Grandma Kent came out to California. That was the original Adeline Kent. Her husband was Albert Emmett Kent and he was not well. He had been to California before, and since he wasn't very well he thought that California would be a better place than Chicago for him to live. So, they came to California and they came to Petaluma first, so I've been told, and they came down to San Rafael. While she was in San Rafael she went out in a horse and carriage to look around the land. She must have come up D Street to the top of Wolfe Grade and set down there to look around and looked down on what is now Ross Valley, and Kentfield, all of this, and she fell in love with it. She went back --

CE: Didn't she make a statement?

AK: Yes. She went back and told her husband that she had seen paradise and she wondered if maybe he could come and help her to find the owner to see if she might buy a piece of it. So, he said that he didn't know very much about real estate in California so he would like to go and find his friend, Mr. Stevens, who turns out to be Elliot Stevens' grandfather, and how they were friends, we never have found out. But anyway, Mr. Stevens knew all about real estate and had lived here a long time and so he came with them and the story goes that by five o'clock that night she did own a piece of paradise. And that was bought from the Murrays.

CE: Yes, remember we interviewed Estelle Murray Peterson and she -- Do you remember her showing us that transaction from the estate of George Worn, son-in-law of James Ross, where William Murray and Patrick King bought those 1,200-plus acres from the Worn/Ross estate for \$4,200 in gold coin, remember that?

AK: Yes, I do. See what we're passing right here? Passing the most terrible lot of broom in this -- Oh, boy, and that Grandfather was so careful about -- Of course, he would not have known anything and there never was a piece of broom here at that time.

CE: Of course not.

AK: But you see, this was sort of bowl-shaped, football field, kind of, and he kept on buying. He kept on buying pieces as they came.

CE: Well, that first piece the Murrays sold was around 400 acres, I think.

AK: I suppose; 435 I think, something like that. I have all of that, I have all the different transactions and we could go into the Courthouse and pull out each separate piece. His idea was to buy to the skyline of this whole thing.

CE: And did he, subsequently?

AK: He did. He bought it right over the skyline, every single bit and there was nothing but green.

CE: To the north was the Bosqui tract, wasn't it?

AK: Well, not then. It was Ross. It went right to the Ross line. Then Mr. Bosqui bought a piece of that and Mr. Kent went over the line; that's the next Mr. Kent; with Mr. Bosqui and another man whom I do not know and the three of them owned what is known as the Bosqui Tract. That was outside of Kentfield and a long time after the original grandfather. And some kind of something went wrong there; I don't know what it was. One of the three sold out without telling the others and the subdivision went all flooey, very bad.

CE: That's too bad, because if Mr. Kent, had he known that, he could have saved that.

AK: Yes, either of the other men, Mr. Bosqui or Grandpa, would have bought the other man out, but he didn't tell them what he was doing and something went wrong.

AK: It's too bad.

CE: This is not unusual. Well, I think it's wonderful that we've had this day today. Just think, we've gone out and interviewed a wonderful lady and I think you have a dinner date. It's five o'clock and you have to go somewhere at six, so I think we'll sign off this first installment.

AK: We go to the Legion of Honor which is a nice ending for such a lovely day.

CE: Thank you, dear Anne. We'll stop for this afternoon.