

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE
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Anne T. Kent California Room**

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INTERVIEW WITH BETTY TIMES

by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent
March 28, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: Betty Times (BT)

INTERVIEWERS: Carla Ehat (CE) and Anne Kent (AK)

DATE OF INTERVIEW: March 28, 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Marjorie Hoffman

CE: Today is Friday, March 28, 1980. Continuing the Oral History Program of the California Room at Marin County Library, this is Carla Ehat. Joining me today is Mrs. Thomas Kent and we are going to have the privilege shortly of talking with our dear friend Betty Times. We are at the residence of Mrs. Thomas Kent at 131 Goodhill Road in Kentfield, California. We first became acquainted with Betty in 1974 when she was the office manager, as we like to think of it, of the whole Marin County Library system. At the time she worked under Bruce Bajema, who was the County Librarian. She had reached this position of responsibility, of dedicated service, after many years with the library. Her first job with the library was in 1964. She continued and grew in her area of responsibility and finally on the 15th of January, 1978, Betty Times was appointed Affirmative Action Officer for Marin County. Presently, she is Director of Citizens Service Office, which from my understanding is an umbrella and combining several departments under her jurisdiction. We have Human Relations, Affirmative Action, Veterans Services, Conservatorship, Investigation, Public Guardian, Staff of Human Rights, and the Commission on the Status of Women. There are probably others but we will find out more about this when we talk with Betty. Betty was born in Louisiana, January 16, 1939, and has lived in Marin County since she was five years old and Marin has been her home ever since. She is a dynamic, vital woman. She is a graduate of Tamalpais High School in 1956. She was married the same year to John Times and she is the mother of five children, Anthony, John, Brian, Ida, and David. To learn more about this active, alive and intelligent

woman and her years of public service brings us together today. It is indeed a pleasure to interview her.

CE: Good afternoon, Betty.

BT: Good afternoon.

CE: In looking over your brief biography, it's interesting. You've lived in Marin City since you were five, and I think Marin City is just about as old as you are.

BT: I think so. It is my understanding that Marin City was started around '42, '43. When we arrived it was almost completed, in terms of buildings at that point, but there was still some building going on when we arrived there.

CE: What brought you to Marin County? Your father decide he wanted to work in this area?

BT: Yes. I was born in a small town called Grambling, Louisiana, and my father was a farmer. Unfortunately, my mother didn't like farming.

CE: Did she know that when she married him?

BT: Well, she knew that she wouldn't do it when she was a small child and she wouldn't do it through her years for her father because she felt she just didn't like doing that type of work and so she did other kinds of things and the other kids I guess did the farming. Well, after she married my father, he had quite a large piece of property that he had to farm, and as you know farmers only made their money like once a year, I guess, because they had to get the crop out before they could get their money. My mother wasn't very interested in helping very much. My father had to do this all himself and he grew cotton. And, as he tells it, I don't really know myself, it's very hard and tedious kind of work and that he would pick so much a day. Like he could pick a bale of cotton a day but it got to where it was overtaxing. He couldn't do it by himself.

CE: Gosh, a bale of cotton must weigh --

BT: It's a lot of cotton, yes.

CE: Close to 500 pounds, isn't it?

BT: I don't know, something like that, it's a lot. Apparently there were government recruiters going all over the country, especially in the south, to talk to people about coming to the west coast and the east coast to help out in the war effort, because as you know we were right into World War II. My father talked to someone about doing this and some other relatives had already talked to some people about doing this and some had already come north to work in the shipyards. We had, I guess, about six relatives who had already made the move when my father decided to leave. He came to Marin County in the beginning.

CE: He came directly to Marin?

BT: Yes he did.

CE: Rather than to San Francisco or Oakland?

BT: Rather than San Francisco or the east coast. I mean, we could have ended up on the east coast; other relatives had gone that way. Fortunately, they came this way and they were in Sausalito.

CE: Marinship had been built then, I presume, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Yes.

BT: Marinship had been built. The dormitories were where most of the early workers were living. The dormitories are now in the area where the Bayside School and the Sausalito School District is located.

CE: That's right below that little hill there.

BT: That's right. In those days he came north; he left us.

CE: He came alone?

BT: He came alone. He took a train from Louisiana to San Francisco and lived with an uncle, of which we lived with also after we arrived. We lived with an uncle and aunt for about three months before we had our own place. But because he did have relatives here he was able to come to this area of the country, and in a few months my mother and my sister and I followed.

CE: Was this a big adventure for you Betty, or did you have mixed feelings? You were a baby of course; you were five.

BT: I don't remember much about living in the south because we did come when I was very young. I do remember the day we arrived. My grandmother came with my mother because she didn't trust -- You know, my mother had never been any place and my grandmother didn't trust that she would know how to take care of herself in a big city. San Francisco was a big city, right? My grandmother didn't know anything either!

CE: But she knew more than her daughter.

BT: She knew more. The day that we arrived we caught the bus from San Francisco to Marin County and they were telling us that that was the Golden Gate Bridge we were crossing and I thought it was the most fantastic thing I'd ever seen in my life.

CE: You did you see that? First impression, of course.

BT: Yes. We came over on the bus and we got to Sausalito, to Marinship itself, and my grandmother said, "This is where we get off," because she thought that was Marin City because Marin City was around the corner at the time and we got off about where 3030 Bridgeway is located now. Then we didn't know where to go, we had all these suitcases. So this neighbor came up and he saw that we were looking perplexed, I guess, and he thought he'd better see if he could help them, so he asked if we needed help and we said yes and we told him we wanted to go to the Hills home in Marin City and he says, "Well, I live right next door to the Hills. I'll be very glad to take you over." So he bundled us up in his car and drove us around to the house.

CE: What a break.

BT: But it was interesting. The town itself, from what I remember, was very interesting for me as a little kid. I remember very shortly thereafter I had started school. I never attended kindergarten because apparently I did that when I was in the south. I started school in the first grade here and I never liked it because we had split sessions in those days, some of us went in the morning and some of us went in the afternoon in Marin City.

CE: In Marin City. Well, when you talk of the town, when you say "the town," are you talking about Marin City?

BT: Yes, Marin City was a town.

CE: It was? You mean the usual, general store --

BT: Yes. It had a grocery store, it had a supermarket, it had a barber shop, two beauty shops, it had a drugstore, a department store, two liquor stores, a candy store, cafeteria, post office, and a medical center. The bus station was Greyhound bus and it had a cafe adjoining it.

CE: What was your housing like? Were you terribly disappointed or was it satisfactory?

BT: We loved it. I mean as a kid, you don't know, what do you know? It was duplex housing.

CE: Is it still there or have they replaced it?

BT: No, they've replaced it. They started the development in Marin City in 1950s, I guess it was. They started tearing places down and moving people and rebuilding. It was war housing, and the apartments were either studios, one or two bedrooms.

CE: How was the school situation for you, the Sausalito School District School? What was it called?

BT: It was called Marin City School. I guess it was part of the Sausalito School District, but I just don't remember. I haven't gone back in the history of the Sausalito District. But, the children in Marin City went to school in Marin City, black and white; it was totally integrated at that time.

CE: Actually was ahead of its time, wasn't it?

BT: Yes it was.

CE: Were there many of you who -- Quite a few who went to this school?

BT: Yes, Marin City had a population of around 5,000 people and there were about, I would say of 5,000, 2,000 were children.

CE: Five thousand was the population of Marin City?

BT: Yes.

CE: Then?

BT: Yes.

CE: That's twice the size of Ross.

BT: Yes, there were a lot of kids there. We had split sessions, some of us went to school in the morning and some had to go in the afternoon. They had so many kids they couldn't all go to school all day.

CE: Well, as you grew up and roamed around, did you do a little exploring around the area?

BT: We used to have the best time. My mother couldn't stand living with someone else so she stayed on my father's back until we got our own place to stay. It was very hard in those days to get a place to stay because there were so many people here and if someone moved out --

CE: Living space was at premium.

BT: That's right. If someone moved out, you grabbed the person right away and he took you down to the Housing Authority to get your name on the lease because there just wasn't any place --

CE: Well, Betty, did your dad get a job with the shipyard then?

BT: My father was working for the shipyard. He worked two shifts for the shipyard and at some point he got a little job with the Housing Authority and he worked a part shift, I don't know when he slept, I guess he didn't.

CE: You got some of your drive from him, I gather?

BT: I guess. He was a welder in the shipyard.
CE: How many brothers and sisters came with you?
BT: One.
CE: Just one? What?
BT: Sister.
CE: There were two children?
BT: Two children. My sister, Corrine, is a year and a half younger than I am.
CE: Is she in the county?
BT: She lives in the east bay now. Then my mother had Yvonne in 1945 and Mary in 1947 and Robert and Barbara in 1950 and George in 1952 and Elaine in 1953 and Annette in 1956.
CE: If I've added correctly, that's how many? Nine.
BT: Nine.
CE: They're all well and happy?
BT: They're all well and happy.
CE: Are your parents still alive?
BT: Yes, they are. My mother and father currently reside in Marin City.
CE: Good. What attributes would you say that your mother had that you inherited from her?
BT: Stick-to-itiveness, stamina and drive.
CE: How about your dad?
BT: I would say with my father, integrity, hard work, loyalty.
CE: Wonderful. Well, now when you were going through these formative years, you got out of Sausalito occasionally, Marin City, your horizons broadened. Was there a junior high school experience?
BT: Yes.
CE: Where did you go to junior high school?
BT: When we left Marin City School we went to junior high at what is now called Martin Luther King in Sausalito. It was called Richardson Bay in those days. They built Richardson Bay in 1949, I think it was or '50. The first year I went, we went to school in one of the old dormitory buildings. We were right next to a creek and instead of doing our class work, we'd end up out at the creek catching tadpoles. That was the favorite thing of the day, to catch all these tadpoles. But the teacher was okay, she didn't mind that. Then the next year we went up to what was then a brand new building, Martin Luther King school, which was then Richardson Bay, and I was there, I think, 6th, 7th and 8th. I'm almost sure it was 6th, 7th and 8th. We had the graduation itself was at Central School in Sausalito. That school was sold by the School District to the City of Sausalito and they are now using it for the city offices.
CE: I think they have the Sausalito Museum down there.
BT: And from there I went to Tam.
CE: How did you like Tam?
BT: I loved Tam.
CE: Were you a Tam girl all the way through?
BT: Yes. The last two years I was at Tam I was involved in a lot of school activities. In the last year, I mean, you look through the school year book you'd think that

was all I did was stay in clubs and stuff. I didn't realize I did that much until I looked at it many years after and just about every school club and all those kind of things, I was involved in those. So, maybe that's where I really started.

CE: Well, you're really a Marin and California gal, aren't you?

BT: Yes, I've seen Marin County grow and develop. I've seen it when there wasn't anything along 101 and now it's covered with dwellings and homes.

CE: I guess you -- What's your reaction, then, to you family bringing you here and relocating?

BT: I love it. I tell my father all the time, even today, it's the best thing he ever did. Because I've been back. I've been back to --

CE: See your family and friends?

BT: My grandmother, my mother's mother, still lives in Louisiana and all my mother's sisters. Well, not all of them, it's about half and half, half out here and half there. But they all live close together and my father's family is still there. My father has a brother that he hasn't seen since his brother was a teenager and he has a sister he hadn't seen since she was 12 years old until this very last year and she came out to see him because he hadn't been back to see her. But I've been back and it's nice but I'm sure glad I'm not living there. I like Marin County, I like living here.

CE: Your father then - the war was over, of course, and your dad had to do something else. Did he work -- How many years did he work for -- he hasn't been retired too long has he?

BT: He's been retired seven, eight years.

CE: Well, that isn't as long a time as I've been retired. He had something to do with the Kentfield property, I think. Mrs. Kent seems very sure about that.

AK: Yes, I think so.

BT: Right after the shipyard -- He realized the shipyard was letting people go at that time, they were phasing out, and he came here to Kent Woodlands, met Mr. James Ord who was then working for the Kents.

CE: Oh, yes, they were starting to sub-divide this property.

BT: And he started working for the Kent Woodland Properties and he worked for the Kent's for 25 years.

AK: Just as long a time as it has been going.

BT: My father is instrumental, probably, in helping to build every road in Kent Woodlands, every road that's here. They cut all the trees, they cleared all the property, they built all the roads.

CE: I should think that makes you very proud, I think anybody who builds roads or trails like -- Remember Dolly's grandfather who built the first wagon road up Mount Tam? You know, it's there and it stays there, and it's an integral part of the community

BT: He worked five days a week for the Kents and on Saturday he would work for the Farnys or the Keeklers or whomever.

CE: He was a working devil wasn't he?

BT: He worked Saturday and Sunday for as many years as I can remember and finally he decided he could take Sunday off and so in the later years he would be home on Sunday but he worked six days a week.

CE: Otherwise he was working. What drive he had!

BT: He would take the holidays off, some of them.

CE: How did your mother respond to that?

BT: Oh, I don't think she minded it. She says he's always been like that even when he was a little kid, he worked. His family didn't have very much and so everybody in the family had to work and he's always done that.

CE: All right, you're in high school and busy as a bee in all these activities, were you thinking then what you were going to do with your life when you were a - sort of a junior in high school and thinking, "Well, what am I going to do with my life?"

BT: Well, yes I sure did. I was going to go to college and I was going to leave home and have my own apartment.

CE: Oh, you went through that phase, too.

BT: And my mother sort of kiboshed that quick along with -- You know, I had a group of friends, there was five of us, and we were just thick as thieves, right? We all were going to do the same thing. I was going to go to USF and --

CE: Why USF? Are you Catholic?

BT: No. I've always felt that USF was a real good school and it was a school that I would be able to gain a lot from and so that's what I was going to do. I put that in the school year book, I think I put San Francisco State but I said no, I'm going to USF and as you can see I ended up getting married, you know, right out of school.

CE: Did you meet John in school?

BT: No. John was not in school; he's six years older than I am, but I knew him for quite a while. He had come out as a young man. His mother had sent him out to live with his sister so he could go to school and finish his education here, but it didn't work, he went to work.

CE: Was he in Marin also?

BT: He was in Marin, he was in Marin City. I got married --

CE: What, did you get married right out of school?

BT: Yes. And I had five kids in five years.

CE: So you had your children and then after that you started thinking about maybe going to work?

BT: Well, I had to. It got to the point that we couldn't afford to make it on just his salary.

CE: Well, did you live, continue living in Marin City, Betty?

BT: Yes. When we first got married we lived in one of the duplexes but then when they started the re-development project, we moved over to the public housing area and lived in one of those tall buildings.

CE: High rises. First high rises in Marin.

BT: Yes, we lived there and in those days when my children were small we used to do the morning coffee with the neighbors, visiting, and taking the kids to the park. You know, we all had the same type of family, all little kids. We had a club, a YWCA Club that the women all got involved in because they couldn't stand staying with all those little kids all day and night and never having anything to do for ourselves, so we started our own group. We use to have meetings where we'd have speakers talk to us and we'd do things that were fun. Then we all decided we'd better try and find work and --

CE: Well, you were getting kind of restless, too.

BT: Yes.

CE: You wanted to do something more fulfilling?

BT: That's right.

CE: Well, how did you approach your first job idea then?

BT: Well, a group of us were accepted at Hansell's Business College in 1963

CE: Where is that?

BT: It was in San Rafael. We went to Business College and graduated in August of '64. I went to the county the same -- Yeah, graduated first, went to the county, interviewed one day, the next week I got a call from Mrs. Virginia Keating and she wanted me to come to work and I started to work the 17th of August, 1964.

CE: Do you know that Virginia Keating? You probably know this but I think it would be interesting to put it in this tape for the record again, and Mrs. Thomas Kent, they were instrumental in founding the Marin County Library in 1926, these two ladies.

BT: I remember that, she told me that.

CE: So, you started with Virginia Keating.

BT: That's right, and I started as a library clerk in the Acquisitions Department but because I was a good typist and I had good skills at that time, I got a promotion the very next month to intermediate typist. I worked in the Acquisition Department under Avalon Paylan who was the Assistant Cataloger at the time.

CE: And this is in the new building, new headquarters.

BT: This was in the new building, headquarters.

CE: Well, that must have pleased you; I mean you were getting off to a good start

BT: It was so funny, the first month I was on the job in the Acquisition Department we had to type the library cards, you know, I mean now you can get them pre-printed or whatever, but in those days you had to type each and every set of cards and that was my job to type the library cards and process the books. You know, make sure the labels are on, the pockets, the whole bit. The first week I was so pleased with myself, I was doing so many, I was doing so many library cards, I was doing so many books. Then I would put them in this area for Mrs. Paylan to check to make sure they were okay before we put them out on the shelves and she brought every single one back to me!

CE: You mean there were some discrepancy or --

BT: Well, in library cards, you have to space just right. You start from the left-hand corner of the card just so many spaces and then you put in the author's name and then three spaces under the author's name you start the title, that's standard procedure.

CE: You can see, looking back now, why that was necessary. They were in the drawers, they had to be visually --

BT: And to be able to file them, you had to do that. Then the subject headers must be in capital letters.

CE: Well, hadn't anybody briefed you on that?

BT: Well, they had briefly, in a way, but in those days you were just given a job and you do it and learn by mistakes and I learned quickly; I didn't do that again. But I stayed with that job for a number of years. I was promoted, Mrs. Paylan went to Mrs. Keating one day and said, "Betty is a good worker, and not only is she a

good worker, she's very competent and I think she needs a promotion." And Mrs. Keating, who never gave anyone a promotion, said, "I think you're right," and she did it.

CE: Is that when you became Supervisor of Acquisitions?

BT: That was Supervisor of Acquisition.

CE: Would you mind explaining to the layman what that term means - Acquisition?

BT: Acquisitions is the purchase and processing of books and other materials for the library system.

CE: That's entered into your inventory.

BT: That's right.

CE: All right, then what happened?

BT: I stayed on the job until 1968. Mrs. Keating retired from the library system and Bruce Bajema came on as County Librarian and Mrs. Goodrick, who was the Secretary Administrative Assistant, also retired and I was then promoted to Executive Secretary to County Librarian. I stayed there a couple of years, I guess, and received another promotion as Head of Technical Services, there was an office manager for library assistant, and at the time we were considering going into the computerized processing. We weren't in it yet, we were just thinking about that. But we did have the old system. Remember the system we had where you had this card to put into the pocket and it would go through a machine, like a charge card machine, you'd get half and we'd keep one half?

CE: Yes.

BT: Well, we had that system when I first took over that and so in the Technical Services Department we had the circulation control, acquisitions, interlibrary loan and the branch service, where we delivered books to the branches and other requests.

CE: When did the computer come in?

BT: The computer came in in 1973, I guess it was, or 4.

CE: There was a great resistance to that?

BT: Absolutely.

CW: Computer installation? I've heard this from Virginia Borland, who was Marin County Branch, I've heard it from a lot of people who are old time librarians who couldn't see the practicality of it and were afraid the services would go out of the window and all these things.

BT: Yes.

CE: Do you think, after, what are we, eight years later, that it has evolved into a smooth operation?

BT: Let's see. I guess we've had it for about six years. I'm hearing now from the staff of the library and from people who currently use the library that it is a lot better. They don't find the same types of problems today that they had when we first put it in. I mean, we used to have massive problems, computer would go down and stay down for weeks.

CE: We had that in my years with the Navy, Betty, it took ten years to get that system going, service went out the window and when the computer was down everything had to stop until we did some creative thinking about how we could circumvent that.

BT: And people were not used to that kind of service and coupled with the fact that they did not like it so it just didn't help to have the system not operational.. But now it is operational and I've always believed in the system. I believe it is a quick, fair, positive way of handling the multitude of data that we have to.

CE: Well, don't you think the public has gradually in the six year period gotten used to putting the little microfiche, whatever you call them, those little things into the reader and have kind of divorced themselves from the old card catalog?

BT: Yes.

CE: Certainly the young people have.

BT: Yes. But even older people have, also. With microfiche, if you have a microfiche reader printer you can print a copy of what you need. A lot of people use the library now for research, I mean, it is very vital that they have this information. I was just reading not too long ago a young lady had six years of research in a tote bag in her car and it was stolen from the car. It was a doctoral dissertation. It took her six years to compile all the information, going to the library, getting material, copying material and just think the new microfiche is a way of being able to give you information without having to copy everything.

CE: You mean get it in a print out?

BT: Get it in a print out, yes.

CE: Well, we have to keep up with the technology of the times and I think that is what more people are doing.

End of Side A

CE: Betty, you've seen a lot of changes in the 15 years with the Marin County Library system, its services, dramatic changes and evolutionary things. What did the library do for you, all those years of experience?

BT: Well, as you can see from my resume, I moved from a very low level position, a clerical position, to head of the division of Technical Services. But I also saw at that point that I wasn't going to be able to do anything farther than that. To further my career I was going to have to do something else, which meant I was going to have to go back to school because, as you know from my background, I hadn't attended college at that point. I had gone to business college, but I hadn't gone to an academic college.

CE: How did you handle that?

BT: Well, I decided in 1975 that I was going to go back to school and went to school at night. I went to College of Marin and took 12 units per semester; I took a full load, because I knew that if I didn't do it I wasn't ever going to do it.

CE: So you put some hard demand on yourself purposely?

BT: That's right, that's right. And I started spending very little time sleeping because I had to study at night and I had all my kids. In fact, I was going to school at one point with one of my children, because he was also going to college. But that was a problem with him; I was coming out with As and he was flunking, and I said, "Either you get good grades or you quit because we can't afford both of us doing this." So, I went to College of Marin and got a AS in Business Management, because people throughout the years have said to me, "Why don't you go back to

school and get your degree and get your library degree because if you ever want to be the librarian you have to have your Master of Library Science.”

CE: So at that time your focus was just that short and you thought, “Well, maybe I will be a librarian.”

BT: That's right. So I did that at College of Marin, got my AS in Business. Management and then I went on to USF, I finally got to USF, I got my Bachelor of Science from the University of San Francisco last May, May 1979.

CE: Well, congratulations, Betty, that is something.

BT: Thank you. And that is what the library did for me, it showed me that --

CE: It gave you the confidence.

BT: Gave me the confidence, and Mrs. Keating put a lot of confidence in me and she was a catalyst.

CE: Was she really?

BT: Yes she was, she was very supportive.

CE: Anybody else there in that group?

BT: Avalon Paylan was very supportive, she was my immediate supervisor.

CE: Is she still there, by the way?

BT: She is now the County Librarian for Tulare County. They were both supportive. I have five little kids and you know, one of the things that people really didn't want to do in those days was hire someone with “stair steps.” You know, with a bunch of little kids, they didn't know whether you were going to be on the job or you'd have to take care of your kids, and luckily for us --

CE: How did you handle that?

BT: Well, my mother helped and my sisters. I still had sisters at home that were still in school. Once I remember the kids, my daughter, I was combing her hair to go to school that morning and she passed out on me, she fainted, and I called the doctor and said, “I don't know what's wrong with her, she just passed out.” So the doctor said she would be right there and she came over. This is when they still came to your house. And she came over and she had scarlet fever, but not only did she have scarlet fever, all of them had scarlet fever and they had gotten it from the babysitter's kids. So they were in the house, I was working, my husband was working, so I got my mother, you know, let my sisters one at a time come up, come and stay, so they wouldn't miss too many days. They only missed one day of school, but each one did that, did that for five days, to help along, My mother helped a lot, my whole family did.

CE: You know, in many ways you were ahead of your time in so many things, Betty, The working mother concept is later on in Marin County and you did it earlier and it didn't interfere with your job, did it?

BT: No. I can honestly say that I have never had to take a lot of unnecessary time off of my job for my children. They were very healthy. I'm not a good cook but what I cook is okay. I have this one, Brian, I call him the human garbage disposal; he eats everything. And they did, I mean, I didn't have picky kids; they didn't say, “I don't like this.” There are certain kinds of things they don't like but it wasn't all the things, I mean they weren't picky as little kids, they would eat what you gave them and they were healthy.

CE: Somewhere along this time I've got to ask you how your husband related to this motivation and ambition of yours; how did he take that? Was he supportive?

BT: Yes, he is supportive, but at first he couldn't understand it.

CE: "What do you want to do that for?"

CE: Yes, yes, he couldn't understand it because, well, he was very supportive of my going back to school and I tried to get him to go back and finish his high school education. He said, "Oh, I'm too old." And I said, "You're no older than I am." And he said, "You go, and maybe I'll do it," but no, he is supportive. A lot of people have asked me that over the years. They say, "You keep moving and doing things, does it bother him?"

CE: It doesn't bother him at all

AK: I wonder something: how about the five girls, all of you together? Did any of those other five do anything as well as you've been doing?

BT: They all did. My father was and my mother also. My mother finished high school and - it was a college town that they lived in. She didn't go to college but she finished her -- My father didn't. My father wanted all his kids to finish high school. I mean, that was a major -- He didn't care whether you wanted or not, you were going to do it, that was --

CE: That was an order from topside!

BT: That's right. And he was always very supportive, both my parents were very supportive of their kids and because there were so many of us I still, to this day, don't know how they took care of all of us. Because I was the oldest and I'm in high school and I'm asking my father for cashmere sweaters and skirts that he couldn't afford. You know, you don't think of that until you grow up.

CE: You never do until you are older.

BT: And he did it, he did those things. He took care of his family and he wanted us to do that - you know, he wanted us to know that we could do what we wanted to do and if we wanted to do more we could do that, it was up to us. He was very pleased because I am the only member of my family that has a college education, a full college education. I have a sister that has an AS education, but he was very please with that. My sister Yvonne is in -- She was in banking and she was the commercial loan officer at Redwood Bank at one point, she is now in insurance at Fireman's Fund. My sister Mary and my sister Elaine are with the Bank of America, one is Supervisor and the other is Utility Officer. And I have my sister Babs is a Head Start teacher and my sister Corrine is -- She calls herself a household technician!

CE: Let me get back to your children. What's their reaction to what mother's done? Are they pleased?

BT: Yes, they are. At first they say, "God, Betty, what else are you going to do?" And I'd say, "Well, not very much more." But they were supportive, you know. They grew up knowing they had to help do things, help take care of the house, learn how to cook.

CE: Well, you seem to me to a very happy, well-balanced, person and feet on the ground and you know what you're doing and I've heard all of these things about working mothers, you know, it's a bunch of nonsense isn't it? It is really. Can I do it?

BT: Yes. At first I thought that and I said, "Oh, what's going to happen with -- "

CE: Will the children suffer? And all this stuff --

BT: And will they become juvenile delinquents - they haven't.

CE: I imagine when you're with them, you're full of love and understanding and time for whatever their problems are. They feel they can come to you with anything.

BT: Yes, and they're all adults now.

CE: Well, what are their ages?

BT: David, the youngest, is 18 and he graduated from high school this June, and the oldest is Anthony and Anthony is 23. But they're all still at home. They haven't left yet.

CE: Well, we've got to get you out of the County Library now and get you into Affirmative Action. How did that come about, Betty? I knew there was no more future for you particularly in that library field, but how did that come about?

BT: Well, for about four years prior to my appointment as a County Affirmative Action Officer, I was instrumental in helping the Commission on the Status of Women. I was a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, I was appointed in 1975. We worked on trying to get the county to implement an affirmative action program.

CE: Would you explain to the lay person just briefly what Affirmative Action means?

BT: Affirmative Action is the process by which one implements equal employment opportunity. It is simply a process. It says that you will not discriminate against a person because of their race, sex, physical attributes, etc. Religion, those kinds of things. I had also worked with a number of organizations in the area of women's rights. That was a period of time when we were starting to move on the women's issues as well as human rights and NAACP and I had done a few things in the Marin County Community, because we were having some problems then; we were moving from the old Marinship Housing to the new development and things were happening without the residents fully understanding what was going on.

CE: Well, you were sort of at the right place at the right time in your age group.

BT: I think so. I still think that's more true than anything else.

CE: Well, I mean, it's an opportunity you took advantage of, but fortunately for us, and later on when we talk about your political involvement -- But I was interested in this Affirmative Action job and how did it change. I mean what happened that it became -- Could you explain briefly how they changed the department, or consolidated it?

BT: Proposition 13 happened. Prop 13 changed it. I had just gotten a job as Affirmative Action Officer in January, 1978.

CE: And June was the cutoff date.

BT: And in July 1, 1978 I was the Director of the Citizens Service Office. Now that happened June 30, 1978. The Board of Supervisors consolidated the Human Relations Department, the County Services Office and the Affirmative Action Office in one office because we had to cut back on spending.

CE: On staff, too.

BT: Prop 13 had passed and they cut back on staff and service level. They consolidated those three departments and the Director of the Human Relations resigned, the Director of the County Service Office and myself were still there

and they had to make one of us Director, and so they appointed me Director of that department and the County Service Officer was then the Public Guardian and the Veterans Service Office. So that's where we are today.

CE: Are you out a lot on your job?

BT: Not very much. As Administrator most of my time is spent on administrative duties and detail, the telephone, staff problems, and staff this and staff that. The Public Guardian is out a lot because that person needs to --

CE: What does Public Guardian mean?

BT: Well, Public Guardian is the public person that takes care of people who cannot take care of themselves, pays their bills and makes sure their finances are in order and tries to, if there is any money, invest their money so that they can receive full benefits.

CE: Do they come to you or do you go to them? How do you hear about these people?

BT: They come to us, usually. Family will ask if that could happen or a doctor or an attorney. Conservatorship program that's all mostly out of the office because that person must interview and talk to people. See if a person should be placed under conservatorship.

CE: Is this on increase, these social problems, since you've been in the office?

BT: Yes.

CE: They are in the increase?

BT: They're on the increase during certain period of the year only because of the social problems in our country, the social problems in our county. When people are unemployed, when they don't have a place to stay, when they don't have --

CE: Then you get the problems

BT: Then we get the problems. And they compound themselves particularly if the person has some mental incapacity. We've had a lot of young people that we've had to investigate for conservatorship that have gotten involved in drugs.

CE: What qualifies a person for your services in whatever of the six or seven services that come under the umbrella of your title here, a resident of Marin.

BT: A resident of Marin.

CE: Any time requirement?

BT: No time requirement.

CE: You're here, you call up.

BT: That's right; we're a public service for all residents. But now, you know I was telling you I was on the Commission of Status of Women and now I'm staffed to that commission. When I became County Affirmative Action Officer I resigned from the Commission because I felt I was a conflict of interest. So, when they consolidated those three departments, the Commission was part of the Human Relations Department. The Human Relations Department, prior to 1978, handled consumer problems, they had a Consumer Affairs Division. If you had a problem, say you purchased a wine glass and it was broken and you wanted to take it back and they wouldn't take it back, well, they handled those kinds of things. Landlord tenants problems. Landlord has an apartment unit and has a tenant that won't pay the rent, can't get the tenant out, we'll help him. Other way around, tenant has a problem --

CE: You must have a lot of problems right now with --

BT: Yes. Well, we have a mediation unit which works --

CE: With the inability of people to purchase homes with mortgage money being so high and rental property not available. Your phone must be ringing off the hook.

BT: It is. It's always ringing. Because people who have problems need help and they need someone -- If they can only get advice, that's help.

CE: Well, you must feel kind of nice about it? Don't you think it's much more fulfilling than the library job for you?

BT: Yes.

CE: You're a "people person."

BT: I miss my friends at the library.

CE: They're still there.

BT: They're still there.

CE: Now, I want to get to your political career and your political interests in the conclusion of this because it fascinates me. I remember - Mrs. Kent, do you remember when we were going to the library and we bumped into Betty Times one day and she said, "By gosh, I'm going to the International Women's Year Conference in Houston, Texas." Do you remember that? And you had a button, I forget, what did it say?

BT: "Get Betty out of town."

CE: Yes, "Get Betty out of town". Was that your first political jaunt?

BT: No.

CE: Tell us a little bit about your political interests. You've always been a democrat?

BT: I've always been a democrat.

CE: Roger Kent should know her.

BT: In 1970 I got involved in the PTA in our school because all my kids were in school and I was -- We founded the Marin City or what we called the Manzanita PTA because we had the Marin City School still. I guess this was the end of '69 when this first happened. We were going through turmoil. Now when I went to school, if you remember what I said, it was a mixed group, we went all to school together, whites and blacks went to school together. Well, something happened. What happened was Marin City ended up predominately a black community, because the white families all moved out. They moved throughout the county or moved elsewhere in Marin City, the blacks did not. They couldn't move, for one thing, throughout the county.

CE: What do you mean, they couldn't move?

BT: Because it was very hard for blacks in those days to get homes, to buy homes.

CE: But there were no other --

BT: Yes, there were restrictions.

CE: Social?

BT: Yes, social restrictions outside of that area. And so, if they didn't want to move to the east bay or to San Francisco they just stayed there and that's what happened. Okay, so then we ended up at that point like that and then the Marin City School didn't have the full mix that it had and so Marin City kids went to school in Marin City and the Sausalito kids in Sausalito and they would all meet up at Richardson Bay or Martin Luther King as it was called later. Well, anyway the school board wanted to integrate and they did, they integrated the school district. And I'm

thinking, "Gee, now we were always integrated and now they are going to integrate the school district," which was a big thing because we were not integrated at that time. What they did was they moved the lower grades to Central School in Sausalito and the upper grades to Martin Luther King in Sausalito and they closed the Marin City School. Well, they had a lot of problems. The School Board was being bombarded on both sides, the left and the right, and the School Board members finally decided that they couldn't continue to handle those kind of problems so they started resigning. We had two people resign because they recalled -- They were talking about recall --

CE: Yes, I remember.

BT: I mean, it was a big thing. It got written up in every paper in the world, and magazines were saying, "Look what's happening in Sausalito; they can't get their act together." I had four kids in that school and I just couldn't stand it, I just couldn't stand the fact that we were going - that either I was going to have to move - you know, move so that my kids could go to school somewhere else or do something myself. So I decided to stay here. The Pastor of the St. Andrew Church came to see me one day at the library and said, "Can I take you on a coffee break?" and I said, "Yeah, what do you want?" and he said, "I want you to run for the school board".

CE: I see. That's how it began, Betty?

BT: I told him, "I can't do that." He said, "Yes, you can, you've been having personal problems with what's happening; you know the situation. I would think that you're level headed, you're a good person and we think you can do it." So they talked me into it. We got together a campaign; I'd never done anything like that in my life. Well, you know in high school you do a little bit of that, but you know there's nothing big - right. So we got together a campaign, a campaign manager, and we did it. I ran in a field of five people for two seats and I won, and Barbara Harris of Sausalito won, and I've been on the School Board ever since and that's what really got me started.

CE: That gave you the confidence. I remember once that you went back, wasn't it in '76, you went to New York when Carter --

BT: That's right.

AK: When was that?

BT: '76.

CE: '76, she went to New York, remember, big party in Manhattan and you went.

BT: That's right. I've been involved in partisan politics in 1972 when John Burton appointed me to the State Democratic Central Committee and that was very exciting.

CE: Oh, I didn't know that.

BT: That was very exciting. From that point on I started learning about partisan politics. Very interesting, it was something I had never seen before in my life. The way partisan politics operate, it was the old boys' network. You know the big people in politics and those that support that club and the group. I had ever seen that before. That was very different for me.

CE: Exciting.

BT: Very exciting. In 1976, I ran for a seat as a delegate and I won it with the help of John Burton. He got a whole bunch of people to vote for me, but I ended up the tenth person on the list, which meant that I wasn't going to be able to go, because I was going as a Brown delegate and each person has so many delegates. But I went to Los Angeles - someone called from Sacramento one day and said, "Can you be in Los Angeles on Saturday?" "I guess so." "We're having this meeting and you are going to be confirmed this Saturday; you'll be there." And so I hopped a plane and went to Los Angeles, you know, like I was a big shot. I didn't know anything about catching planes! I was confirmed and one of my problems was that I didn't have the money to do it, so Jerry Brown's organization paid for the plane fare and other people gave me the money to help defray the cost of going to New York for a week and that was exciting and we did have -- Carter gave this big party on the water.

CE: It was a pier, wasn't it, as I remember?

BT: Yes, yes he did. Thousands of people, thousands of people were there.

CE: I remember your eyes were big as saucers when you came back.

BT: We didn't get very much sleep, it was exciting, it was absolutely exciting. And when it was absolutely apparent that Governor Brown was out, that it wasn't going to happen for him, he came and asked the California delegation if they would support Governor Carter and Governor Carter came over and spoke to us. It was exciting.

CE: You were in on history.

BT: Yes, yes.

CE: Well, I don't mean to rush us on here but we want to finalize some of this in this first tape. That brings us to the present in that with your experience and success in understanding and solving the local problems in Marin City and your exposure to the democratic operation, you have decided to run for Supervisor of the third district. Dennis Rice, I understand, had chosen not to run. Why do you want to do it, Betty, and briefly, what are your goals? I know what your qualifications are. Just as a lay person, Mrs. Kent and I have great admiration for you, we have seen you at budget hearings, we know you relate well to the Supervisors, you can verbalize and do your homework and present to the Supervisors, we've seen it, the information necessary to all their hearings. I think you have established good rapport with them. But, why do you want to be Supervisor for the third district and what are you going to give it when you're elected?

BT: Well, a couple of things, and I've been thinking about this for a number of years and that is, when you feel that you have something to give you should give it while you can. And I feel that as a supervisor I would be able to help a great many more people than I am now and that's part of me. I like doing things that will help and be beneficial for people. The '80s will bring a great challenge, I just know that. Inflation is running rampant. We are currently looking at a good many of our residents and citizens leaving; they're having to leave this county because they can't effort it, and I don't want to see Marin County become a county of one kind of people.

CE: Just the affluent and so-called, or transitory self-indulgent that has been here.

BT: Yes, and not only that, because I think Marin County has been built by the blood, sweat and tears of all of us, you know, by people who really care about this county and I want to see the people who really care about this county stay here because I think we are Marin County. That's why I'm running for Supervisor and I'm going to win.

CE: The third district embraces Sausalito, Mill Valley, Tiburon. That's about it, isn't it?

BT: Marin City.

CE: Marin City, of course. And you have roughly, what, 48,000 people? Or closer to 50, I guess. We're going to have a census this year so thank heavens we'll get updated on it.

BT: I have a figure of 31,000. The district's largest -- Some a little larger than others but I think we're one of the largest districts because we are heavy populated in southern Marin.

CE: Yes, Southern Marin is larger than -- We're in district two, Mrs. Kent, and this is a 1979 Marin County brochure put out by the League of Women Voters and at that time the total figure for Marin County was 220,920 almost 221,000 and district two, our district, Anne, was 40,900 where Southern Marin showed 48,000. 22% of the vote. What's your competition?

BT: The competition consists of a man from Tiburon by the name of Al Arambaru. Mr. Arambaru was formerly on the Tiburon city council.

CE: What's he do?

BT: He's a businessman and works for PG&E. There is another man from Mill Valley or Strawberry, as we call it, by the name of Oetinger and he is also a businessman.

CE: Is that your competition?

BT: That's my competition.

CE: Tell us in conclusion here, your campaign manager is who?

BT: My campaign manager is Corry Susser.

CE: What's your budget?

BT: The budget is \$26,000.

CE: And how are you going to handle the campaign thing between now and June?

BT: Well, I plan on taking a leave of absence in May to campaign full time because it's getting to be a little difficult to do that, and work.

CE: Well, Mrs. Kent and I have no doubt that you are going to be successful in your campaign and we will do everything we can to spread the word. I want to thank you for coming this afternoon and sharing this with us. Your biography, you brought your profile here and it's been most helpful. I think those listening to this tape should know that Betty also has been chosen for publication in *Personalities of the West and Mid-West* and *Who's Who in American Politics* and is published in *I am a Black Woman Who* edited by Enid Blaycock and we wish you every success, Betty.

BT: Thank you.