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Anne T. Kent California Room

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INTERVIEW WITH DR. GRACE DOLLAR DICKSON KLEISER
by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent
April 3, 1979

INTERVIEWEE: Dr. Grace Dollar Dickson Kleiser (GK)
INTERVIEWERS: Carla Ehat (CE) and Anne Kent (AK)
DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 3, 1979
TRANSCRIBER: Marjorie Hoffman

CE: Today is Tuesday, April the 3rd, 1979, and continuing the Oral History Program of the California Room, this is Carla Ehat. And once again we are at the residence of Mrs. Thomas Kent at 131 Goodhill Road in Kentfield. Today we are going to have the pleasure of talking with Dr. Grace Dollar Dickson Kleiser, and she is going to share with us today her reminiscences of her family. She is the granddaughter of Dr. Robert Dollar who was known as Captain Robert Dollar, founder of the Dollar Steamship Company and who is considered the Dean of American Shipping and a great philanthropist, a devout Presbyterian and -- The San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo and also the Presbyterian Orphanage were two of the recipients of his many benevolence. There are more, I am certain, Dr. Kleiser. But when you mentioned the name Captain Robert Dollar today to people in Marin they immediately think of Falkirk, which is known as the Robert Dollar home, and it's situated on Mission Street in San Rafael. And today perhaps, Dr. Kleiser, you can tell us a little more about that. You were born there, I understand?

GK: Yes I was.

CE: On the property?

GK: All the Dickson children were born in the old home in San Rafael.

CE: And your birth date was?

GK: March the 1st, 1915. I was the fourth?

CE: Child? Well let's see. We have your family tree sketch. Margaret Dollar was first; Frederick William Jr., second; Jane Elizabeth, third; Grace Dollar fourth.

GK: Fourth, yes, I was the fourth child.

CE: And you have two other brothers.

GK: Yes. Robert and Melville, younger brothers. The occasion of my mother's death, sudden death, caused an abrupt change in my young life. I had been born in the house in San Rafael but lived in San Geronimo Valley in what is now a rest home, or rather a home now for schizophrenic children in the valley.

CE: On the Dickson Ranch there?

GK: Yes, the Dickson Ranch. That home, having been built by my mother to provide a large home for a large family which she wanted. And when I was a little child we lived out there with a chauffeur and his wife, who lived in an adjacent house, and a Swedish cook and a upstairs and downstairs girl, and two orphanage children that the family raised. The house had been built there in 1917 and we were living there. Suddenly, after my mother's death --

CE: How old were you at the time?

GK: I was five. I was five. Yes. The family was shocked and split up very badly, splintered, I would say, because of her sudden death. She died of a -- apparently had an accident, was pregnant with her seventh child, had a sudden puerpal sepsis and was dead within a week. And it was a very shocking experience for our family and my Grandmother Dollar took us girls into the house in San Rafael. We didn't call it Falkirk; I never heard it called Falkirk. It was the Dollar House. And we were taken to live with her. My one oldest brother, Fred, was moved in with Mrs. Alma Newhall who was a very good friend, and the two younger children were left with a housekeeper at home. There being such an abrupt change -- This was January 1920, and there being such an abrupt change, I remember considerable features. From that time on more than I remember before -- I remember very little before. I remember my mother selling. I remember my mother taking us on picnics to Bolinas and down at Paper Mill Creek. I remember occasions with the family in San Rafael, such as Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving. But after that time being transported there I remember more about the house and surroundings and that sort of thing.

CE: Well backing up just a moment, your mother was the only daughter of Captain Robert Dollar and his Mrs. Dollar. Is that correct?

GK: Yes, yes, she was the only daughter.

CE: She was the only girl in the family.

GK: Yes, she was the only girl. I remember my grandfather's reaction when, at the time he heard of her death. We were told that mother was sick and that's why we were moved into the big house. And I slid down the banister in the back stairs and came into the library and my grandfather was sitting with a ponchy handkerchief over his eyes and he had been crying. He had been weeping, and I realized then that something was different, terribly wrong and Mother was gone. And I remember the funeral. They took all the children, oddly enough, to the funeral. We all appeared.

CE: Was that just the funeral at the church?

GK: The funeral was in the old church, yes.

CE: Just a block away?

GK: Yes, just down the hill.

CE: Just down the hill.

GK: And Dr. White had been a dear friend of my mother's. I remember the Christmas before she died, we had a Christmas party in San Geronimo Valley and he played Santa Claus. And after this episode I ran upstairs and peeked in the door and found Santa Claus taking off his boots and I knew it was nobody but Dr. White. But anyway, I remember there being a nurse hired for the children and then Miss Branson told me I was her youngest boarder, that I was five when I was boarding at Branson's. Now this is an odd thing because --

CE: This was the school in San Rafael, the little white, gray school?

GK: Yes the little school. I remember going to the little school down on what later on was Dr. Stanley's property.

CE: Yes.

GK: And I thought it was called Miss Stewart's School, but I'm not quite sure because I was a little child. I just remember the sandboxes and that sort of thing, playing in the winter.

CE: We have some photographs of some of the children in that, people older than you, but like Eleanor Cushing Jenkins went to that school and showed a photograph of it and it was on Dr. Stanley's property.

GK: I think it was.

CE: And Miss Branson's School was a block farther down, wasn't it?

GK: I don't think she is talking about that school. I think she's talking about the new school. And I think I was taken there when my grandparents traveled.

CE: Well she moved to the new school in Ross in 1926, so it must have been the old school.

GK: The old school. I don't remember this at all.

CE: You don't remember?

GK: No, I don't remember that.

CE: Did you later go to Miss Branson's, a jump ahead?

GK: Yes, yes, I went when I was a first grader I guess. I don't remember there being such a thing as a kindergarten then. But I went with Harry Johnson and Ned Griffith and Lloyd Brooks. Notice that I remember the boys? And these boys and Doris Newhall and Betty Schmidt and -- I don't remember.

CE: You know we wanted to interview Miss Branson but she's not up to par, as you know and we got Helen Hind Fortune. Did you know her, Helen Hind? And she told us the story as best as she could about the beginnings of the Katherine Branson School because she was in their first graduating class, the high school. Did you continue on with the Branson School?

GK: No. The three girls were put in Branson's: Jane and Margaret and I. And Margaret was, let's see, she was 14 or 15. And we were in Branson's for three years at that time. But I remember, I thought I was down at the other buildings for some reason or other. When did she start that school?

CE: I believe -- School in about 1921, '2 or '3.

GK: I think so, I think so, yes.

CE: Well what changed your schooling from -- What happened then?

GK: Well, why did we stop living at my grandmother's and move back to San Geronimo?

CE: Alright, before we move you back to San Geronimo, are you at that -- Could you make a description of your grandmother and your grandfather?

GK: Oh yes, very much, I think so. They were very religious people and --

CE: I gather that and rather stern.

GK: And fair. And at six in the morning we got up and I just usually -- Well we'd run into grandmother's room and Jane would get one side and I'd get the other and we all raced for Grandmother because she was soft and warm and Grandfather was a little --

CE: Was she an affectionate woman?

GK: Yes. And we all ran in, the two of us ran in, My sister Margaret was in boarding school at the time, at Miss Branson's, and so just Jane and I were together and we'd trot in there and get into bed with them and, and then get up and have our bath and have our temperature taken because Miss Branson insisted that nobody came to school without having their temperature taken. And we had an early morning breakfast and grandfather would be driven down to the Union Depot, which was this main railroad station by --

CE: Would there be a car at that time in 1920?

GK: Oh, there was a car before I was born. In 1915 my mother ran over the Fire Chief in San Rafael and broke his leg.

CE: Oh, that's interesting.

GK: She had a car herself in 1915. And so -- I have a letter she wrote when she was pregnant with me in 1915 and Mr. Schroeder was the Fire Chief and he had his leg broken. She wrote a very disturbed letter to grandmother who was in China at the time and grandmother saved that letter.

CE: So you have that amongst your memorabilia.

GK: Yes. But anyway they had a car and --

CE: He was driven to the station.

GK: He was driven to the station. And we were driven to school at Katherine Branson's. Now that might have been the second grade. I'm not sure about my first grade.

CE: And the chauffeur took care of this action?

GK: The chauffeur took us down and --

CE: Do you remember the name?

GK: Dick Spellman.

CE: Dick Spellman.

GK: I do very well. He was a wonderful man. Then we were picked up at noon. I don't think school was longer than noon, and they picked us up and Grandmother always went for a drive, Indian Valley or Mrs. McNear's, or Belvedere. We had a sort of a -- And sometimes out to San Geronimo to see the rest of the family, depending. Usually on Thursday we went out to, it seems to me, to Woodacre. It wasn't called Woodacre; we called it San Geronimo Valley at that point.

CE: When we went out and interviewed your two brothers at the ranch there, I think they said that including the daughters and the new baby there were five generations of Dicksons had lived on that property.

GK: Yes.

CE: And that is rather intriguing to us.

GK: See, my grandfather Dickson came out and worked for Mr. Maillard. Well, he also worked in the gold mines up in China Camp up in the foothills and worked --

CE: Chinese Camp.

GK: Yes, Chinese Camp, that's where he worked and he eventually ended up I think not mining but working at the mill there. I think it was a flour mill; I'm not sure.

CE: Some of this is coming back to me from your brothers reminiscences, too.

GK: I'm not sure about that, but at any rate, he went back in 1869. This was in '52 or thereabouts, or '50 he was out first. He came out twice. The first time he came out across the Isthmus and then in '59, clear later, he went back to Vermont where he came from.

CE: It's interesting, interrupting you just a moment, how many people came from Vermont that wound up in Marin County.

GK: Well the Roys, Ralph Roy, was next door and he came from Vermont, too.

CE: Some of those ranchos out farther.

GK: Yes. And they all knew each other. They came from Ryegate, Ryegate, Vermont.

CE: Why Ryegate? Ryegate had a bad summer one year? The crops didn't materialize?

GK: I don't know but the Dickson scattered, they --

CE: Well I have a friend who is a captain in the Navy, retired, and he left Vermont. He said he couldn't make a living there because things were so bad sometimes. I don't know.

GK: But he went back in sixty nine and married Jean Barr, not the same Barr, not the same family.

CE: Not the San Rafael Barrs.

GK: No, Jane Riggs Barr, the name was. And they came out the first year the train was running, you see, and they came out in '69. And my father was born in September 1870 on the rancho in Geronimo Valley in 1870.

CE: Are either of your brothers we met, Mel or Fred, like their father?

GK: Like my dad physically?

CE: Yes.

GK: We all look alike, I think, somewhat. Not very closely, though. I think the Dollar strain carried through more because my father was short faced. Well I'm short faced. But --

CE: What do you mean by short-faced?

GK: Short features, not a long chin, a very short chin and firm, strong nose, shall we say, and they were all blue-eyed people and fair.

CE: Tell me, did your Grandfather Dollar -- Did he always have the beard?

GK: The beard, yes.

CE: Was that part of your recollection as a child?

GK: Yes. He had very deep brown eyes and that carried through in some of my brothers and sisters. Very dark eyes and auburn haired, red hair. My grandfather was red haired.

CE: Tell us about his physique. Was he of medium stature?

GK: Tall. Of course remember that I was little and everybody looked tall, but he was up to six feet. He wasn't six-foot-three or something like that but he was about six feet tall. When I remember him quite light; he was a walker. He liked to walk.

CE: Well you were at least eighteen weren't you by the time he died?

GK: Oh yes, yes, but he had shrunken down a bit by the time he died.

CE: What did you learned from him that has stayed with you all of your life, would you say? Is there anything you learned from -- Take your grandfather first and then grandmother.

GK: Grandfather Dollar was, well, "Work, for the night is coming." I mean work meant everything to him. He couldn't understand why anyone would retire or why anyone would want a vacation. Work was his pleasure. He liked to work and worked very hard.

CE: Was he a man of routine and habit?

GK: Yes, very strongly. He got up at six; he went to bed at nine. He read before dinner and read after dinner. He always read after dinner. He came home from the office and put on his slippers and went through his papers before dinner and then in the evening he read, usually something from China. He was fascinated with the Far East.

CE: Did your mother, as a product of that age -- Did -- Was she rather retiring as most women were?

GK: Oh no, I don't think so.

CE: I mean did she defer to your grandfather, your grandmother?

GK: Oh everybody did to my grandfather.

CE: Because of his manner? Because of who he was or was he a demanding gentleman?

GK: Well he expected your behavior to be proper and good and for you to --

CE: And he was the head of the household.

GK: And he was definitely the head of the household, yes. But Grandmother had her phrase of "Well now, Father dear." You know, she was the peacemaker in the family and she said never, when you get married never let your husband know he can get along without you. She went everywhere with him; she never -- He never traveled alone. And she always traveled with him. And she always took care of him, saw that his clothes were brushed and he was well dressed, you know, and so --

CE: Sounds like they had a good relationship.

GK: Well she had her position and he had his. And then as soon as she was on her own she did what she wanted to do. She liked women's groups and she liked lectures and she liked parties and she liked to see other women and she did this. And just because she had this handful of extra children I don't think it altered her life too much. I think she continued to do what she had done before. I mean, she include us in her drives and this sort of thing. She didn't stop going to see her friends because she had small children. But they were very honest and sincere, you know, people.

CE: Did he predecease her?

GK: Yes.

CE: Did she survive?

GK: She not only survived but she didn't think that she would. Nobody thought that grandmother would live a year after grandfather died, and he died in 1932, May 5th, 1932, and she lived and traveled, I traveled with her afterwards. She went to the Orient three times after he died. And she enjoyed meeting people who came up to her on the ships and she -- She was blind. Grandma was blind.

CE: Towards the end you mean?

GK: She's always been blind in one eye. Her brother had thrown a stick and put out one eye; the vision was gone in one eye. You didn't noticed it too much. But then she -- One of the big things when I was little was going to see Dr. Sweet in San Francisco who was an eye doctor and they were going to do a cataract operation on her and then she came back home one day very disappointed because she couldn't have the cataract operation. Because she had only vision in one eye and they were afraid that if they did the cataract operation and it failed she would be completely and totally blind. She could see light and dark and get around, you know. I don't think people realized that she was as blind as she was. I didn't. When, in 1935, I traveled with her to the Orient and I went and got her deposited in her room after dinner and said I was going up to see the movie, she didn't want to see it. And I forgot to take a sweater and I went running back to the suite to get my sweater and opened the door quietly and I was horribly embarrassed to find that she was feeling the furniture to get an idea as to where it was located. And that was when I realized that she was blind and I didn't realized it before and I quietly closed the door and left. And she -- When somebody came to see her she preferred seeing people in the suite and she could move around without anyone knowing she couldn't see, you see, in her own surroundings.

CE: She had her pride.

GK: She had her pride, yes. But she familiarized herself, you see. Oh, how long did she live after grandfather died? 1941 I think she died, didn't she? 1941 I believe.

CE: Well there is a short article that said he died in 1932 and he was 88 and his wife died nine years later at 89.

GK: Yes, she died in '41.

CE: Tell me Dr. Kleiser, let's get back to you and get you sort of grown up here. You went to the Katherine Branson School and then what happened for three years? What happened then? You went out to the San Geronimo property?

GK: Well my father remarried Katherine Rogers, who was the niece of the founder of the Academy, San Rafael Military Academy. And she was a teacher at the San Rafael High School. She taught math and science and biology, Miss Rogers. She was thirty and my father was fifty and she took on six children.

CE: Well that was something.

GK: And subsequently had two of her own born, in 1924 and 1928, my half-sisters. And I remember a conference in the living room at Woodacre, in the house, with my grandfather, my father and my grandmother. They had a conference and everybody was together and it was about getting -- It was time to -- Aunt Katherine, my stepmother, time to get the children back together again. It was just a business conference.

CE: Well how long was this since 1920, this remarriage?

GK: This was three-and-a-half years, in September of 1924. He remarried.

CE: Well where were the children scattered? You said one was at boarding school, and two were at the grandparents' home.

GK: Yes. We were back and forth I guess because Fred didn't stay at Mrs. Newhall very long, I don't think, before he was back. Margaret was in boarding school and in the summers, I believe, probably, we were all together. I sort of suspect.

CE: But you remember this.

GK: I remember the conference and I remember the moving back home to Woodacre.

CE: Well was that house built by your parents?

GK: Yes, yes.

CE: That now is a sanitarium.

GK: And then in 1926, Grandfather took my sister Margaret around the world.

CE: Now comes the opening of the door, some travel. She was the number one daughter.

GK: Pauline Sharp. Do you remember the Sharps who taught music in San Rafael?

CE: I certainly do. I interviewed them all in Carmel one day.

GK: Yes, well, Pauline Sharp and Margaret and Grandmother and Grandfather went around the world that time and they went to Java. I didn't get a chance to go to Java. But they went to Java, I remember. Grandfather had been to Australia and didn't like it because of the labor problems; didn't like it from the point of view of establishing a business. But I remember when I stayed at the house in San Rafael, I remember people visiting Australia. So apparently they were considering extending the shipping line down to Australia and decided against it. And when she went in 1926, she -- She also went up into India and I don't know whether they were considering more shipping into India or not. Anyway, it ended up that there was stopping the ships in India after that.

CE: Alright, you're back on the San Geronimo Valley property.

GK: I'm back there and I went to school with, under Miss Isobel Cook. She was my teacher, Isobel Cook. We had eight grades in one classroom.

CE: Was the school there?

GK: In Lagunitas. Lagunitas on the hill. And we had the hilliest schoolyard in the county. It was just like -- It took a goat to run the bases.

CE: You probably loved it didn't you?

GK: I loved it. And we used to come down here to Kentfield for the May Day. Remember that Mrs. Kent?

AK: I sure do.

GK: And we used to come down on May Day and of course we were the tough, rough kids from San Geronimo Valley and we could run like goats. And we use to play half the day on May Day and play baseball over here at the Kent School, on the playground there. That was a big occasion for us; we enjoyed that a great deal. And we danced in the May Pole dances and things and Miss Cook saw to it that we behave properly. I think we were a little big exuberant at the time. The road in from that time, from San Geronimo Valley, was just two ruts, two ruts and in winter, you'd be up to your hub caps in mud. And it was in 1928 that road was built, I think.

CE: Well the ranch today -- My first impression everybody gets a ride. There are horses everywhere.

CE: It wasn't like that, we didn't have any horses to speak of. Weren't raised around that kind of a -- We had -- It was run as a dairy ranch. And my father never milked a cow, I mean, he hired Portuguese from the Azores and they ran the ranch. And I mean they were the workmen of the ranch. We didn't -- I had a horse. I had my own horse but it was for pleasure. In the early twenties I remember my father running -- He rented also water district property and ran beef cattle up there. And at that time we would have a big roundup and get the beef cattle off the water district. The nine hundred and fifty acres of the original ranch in Woodacre was a dairy ranch.

CE: That figure seems to stick in my mind.

GK: And we had approximately five riding horses and a team.

CE: Where would you ride, way up in the water district property?

GK: I always rode up in either the ranch itself or I worked in Nicasio. Mr. Farley lived over in Nicasio and they were friends and I use to go over to Nicasio. It wasn't paved then; and it was a nice ride, and I rode every day after school.

CE: Why did they get the name Woodacre? Developers or --

GK: I think Mr. Steve McKee's family and Maud Gardner probably. Steve McKee's family, the water district owned it, San Geronimo Water Company and he was Mr. Gardner's boss.

End, Side A

CE: Would you repeat that?

GK: Yes, Mr. Ed Gardner ran the Water District. He was the large brother of my father's, and Mr. McKee was his boss.

CE: There are still some Gardners out there aren't there, in Woodacre.

GK: Betty is, Betty.

CE: Betty Gardner. She's the Marin County Historical Society.

GK: But she was from Cloverdale; she was from my husband's town.

CE: Alright, so you were at Isobel Cook School until when?

GK: Well she was the principal at the Lagunitas School and I graduated in 1928 and went to San Rafael High School and graduated in 1932 and went to College of Marin.

CE: Who were some of your classmates at San Rafael that --

GK: Oh, Rusty Ghilotti and there were two groups of people in school.

CE: What do you mean?

GK: Well there were the old-timers and the second generation of Italians and the old-timers kind of clung together in a way, somehow, looking askance at the Italian population because their mothers and fathers spoke with an accent, or didn't speak English, and so they were, you know --

CE: Well, we interviewed a teacher who had taught there, Elinore Gihogley. Is that her name, Mrs. Kent? Did you ever had her? She taught Latin.

GK: No, I guess she was after -- Oh, Miss Dufficy taught Latin when I was there.

CE: Dufficy.

GK: Yes, she was my Latin teacher

CE: Were you a good student?

GK: Oh, yes.

CE: Were you interested in --

GK: Well, you see, we were inspired in a way by our stepmother and my father too. My father didn't go to college.

CE: Tell us a little bit about your family.

GK: My father didn't go to college and he was pretty much -- I mean, he went to high school of course but he didn't go in Marin County. He went to high school in Oakland. Now I'm not sure there was a high school in 1890 in Marin County. I cannot understand my Scotch grandparents sending my father, in 18-- Well, he would be sixteen, wouldn't he? 1876. I cannot understand them sending him to a couple of spinster ladies in Oakland and boarding this child to get an education if there was a local high school.

AK: There probably wasn't.

GK: And he would have been, what, well, it would have been even earlier than that. If he was born in 1870 and he was what, fifteen when he went to high school? Fifteen, 1885. He went to Oakland High School and became a close friend of Alexander Baldwin's. I mean Rollis Alexander. Rollis Alexander. And worked for a while for the early firm, Alexander Baldwin, and made many trips to the Hawaiian Islands and took his honeymoon to the Hawaiian Islands with my mother. I mean, his friends were connected with the --

CE: How did your parents meet? Did you ever know?

GK: Oh sure. Church.

CE: Isn't that a wonderful institution.

GK: Yes, church. The church in San Rafael.

CE: Presbyterian. Describe -- Are you like your mother?

GK: I don't know. I don't know who I'm like.

CE: Well you've just seen a photographs of her.

GK: Oh, physically I am. Physically she was five feet eight. She was well set up, shall we say?

CE: Sturdy.

GK: She was pregnant every two years; she had children every two years. She wanted a big family and liked children. And she was pretty well set, pretty impressive figure.

AK: I should remember, I met her too, you see. I should remember but I was brand new, just here.

CE: Oh, Mrs. Kent knew her?

AK: Well I new her as Elizabeth Arnold. I went out to San Geronimo; you were a tiny girl, and visited with your mother.

GK: My grandfather Dickson was nice to my mother. He gave her separate property for that house and it was all fenced in and we didn't, weren't expected to spend much time at the ranch buildings, yes, unless you had business there. If you were going horseback riding, fine, but we were not suppose to go over and interfere with the work of the ranch, of course. And I don't think my mother ever went over there. I don't remember that she did. She lived, until she bought this house, on the old house on the property out there. That old New England cottage was built by, by my grandfather built a house for my grandmother and she said, "I won't live there." So, well, it was a small bunkhouse. And then my grandmother Dickson insisted on a proper house such as she'd been use to. She was a teacher and she

had lived in a nice home in Rochester, New York, and she didn't -- She thought she was coming to San Francisco to live and she was moved out to that Godforsaken valley where there wasn't anything but, she said, some Indians, just a few Indians and Mrs. Roy and Mr. Roy who were a mile away, and her cousins who, my grandfather's cousins, who bought the next ranch. You see we owned both ranches in the family. Calvin.

CE: Did your grandfather buy from Mr. Maillard?

GK: Yes, the deed is in the family, yes. He paid quite a bit of money for that place, when you think about it.

CE: Do you remember?

GK: On the deed it says twenty thousand dollars.

CE: For five hundred acres?

GK: Yes. And he had --

CE: That is a lot of money.

GK: It seems a lot of money for those times, but it's written right in the deed, "For the sum of."

CE: What year was that roughly?

GK: The deed -- I haven't looked at it recently. Oh, what year did he buy it?

CE: Yes, roughly.

GK: Well, I always thought that he bought the place in '53, but I'm not sure that it was that early.

CE: We, in doing our research -- The reason I mentioned this, Doctor, is that we found out that James Ross, who bought this Rancho Punta San Quentin, which is the whole rancho that runs from Punta San Quentin to Redhill and up through the Water District property, 1857, he spent fifty thousand dollars. But look what he got: 8,800 acres. But that seems to me an extraordinary amount of money.

GK: It seems to me -- I know the name was Adolph, Adolph Maillard. But I'm sure -- Now I could be mistaken on the figure because it's been a long time since I've seen the deed. My sister Dorothy has the deed.

CE: Would she amenable to have a Xerox copy of that go into the archives?

GK: Oh sure, yes.

CE: Or any photographs she might have that --

GK: She wouldn't have photographs but she would be very -- She has good memory.

CE: Well, we did interview Ernest Maillard, who is 89, I presume, now, and got a great deal of the story of that property originally.

GK: Oh, Joseph Maillard lived there when I was a little girl. I'd forgotten that. I remember him. Joseph Maillard lived there; he was -- I had forgotten the name. He was a bird watcher. And I remember, he lived up there next to the Woodacre Lodge in a little small building off to the side.

CE: Was the main house there, of course, then?

GK: The main house was there, but not occupied for years, not occupied for many years. We played tennis on the courts, court, I should say.

CE: All that's left of that property are those two little stone carons, aren't they? That sort of go into where the fire station is?

GK: I don't know; I haven't been out.

CE: Had you -- Children living there-- Had you heard the story of the Maillards, the legends and the story of the family, etc.?

GK: Some. My father always said he was married into the Bonapartes.

CE: He was, yeah. And it's with great pride now they talk of it. Well, he was a natural heir of Joseph Bonaparte, who was of course Napoleon's brother. And Napoleon made him King of Spain.

GK: Yes.

CE: It's an interesting property when you think when you think at one time a grandson of our great patriot Paul Revere owned the same rancho prior to the Maillards, Joseph Warren Revere. Kind of interesting.

GK: Yes.

CE: And then the Maillards, that royalty influence and how land changes.

GK: I think my grandfather Dickson and his brother Calvin managed that property for some years before they bought it.

CE: Similar to Whites' Hill. Wasn't White -- Didn't we find out, Anne, that Whites was the superintendent of part of that property at one time and the hills got his name?

AK: And it should be White, no "s" on it.

CE: White. Well I put an apostrophe.

GK: We always called it Whites' Hill.

AK: That's right, but now they call it White Hill.

GK: I know they do.

AK: They're wrong; they're wrong.

CE: All right, now all of the family, after the conference of your grandparents, the family are now together with your stepmother, Katherine Rogers, and the six children. Was that a difficult time for you initially?

GK: Not for me. I was young enough. It was a difficult time for my oldest sister. She was jealous.

CE: Margaret?

GK: Margaret. And unhappy.

CE: Couldn't understand.

GK: Very fond of mother, missed her very much, never could adjust properly to the situation.

CE: What is the difference in ages between you and Margaret? Two?

GK: Four years. No, wait, seven years.

CE: That's quite a bit. So she was --

GK: She was a good, big girl by the time Mother died.

CE: She had many more years with your mother.

GK: Yes. But it wasn't so hard for us because Katherine was a very wise stepmother.

CE: Did she survive your father?

GK: Yes. Yes, just she died here a few years ago. My dad died in '54; he was 84. Wait. He died in '80. I'm trying to think of the year of his car because he had a new car. I've forgotten when he died. '56 maybe.

CE: All right, now I want to find out how you became interested in medicine. Was this something --

GK: Well I was a good student in biology.

CE: You liked biology.

GK: I liked biology and my stepmother, remember, was a teacher of biology. Mr. Beebee was the teacher in San Rafael High School and was a very inspiring -- Mr. Beebee, excuse me, was not the teacher in biology.

CE: Was he a teacher there though?

GK: He was a teacher, yes.

CE: He evidently impressed you.

GK: Miss Binsacca. Miss Binsacca is now, is still alive. I see her once in a while.

CE: Really?

GK: She was the teacher. I have to think of her name. She married Binsacca. Mr. Oliver Hartzell was the principal and he was a very -- had a young, inspiring attitude toward high school and he developed a great deal of school spirit and everybody wanted to do well. We had a Miss Newcomer who was the math teacher and she was sure that everybody could do well, so she inspired everyone. And we liked the school; it was a great school at that time. And there were five hundred and fifty students; big school.

CE: Five hundred and fifty students.

GK: And I found myself doing well, you know, and encouraged to do well.

CE: And what did you decide to do about it?

GK: Oh, well, I was going to teach. I was going to teach until the time I graduated from college. And I had so much math and --

CE: Where did you go to the university?

GK: I graduated from the University of California. And then I was up at Lake Tahoe visiting my cousins at what is called Dollar Point now, which was just -- We used to call it Tahoe City then. I mean, we were up at the Dollar place.

CE: Did you have property there?

GK: No, my cousins did, and they always invited me up for ten days, two weeks in the summer. And I fell off a new bicycle that my cousin had brought back from France and I ended up in the hospital and I was too late to go back to Cal. I couldn't get up on my feet on time, so I went to Stanford. And when I was down at Stanford I roomed with a girl who I had known in Manila, in one of our trips, Dorothy Harmond, and she was a Lab Technician at the Palo Alto Hospital at that time with her first job, a magnificent job. She made \$130 a month; a terrific fortune, we thought. And I talked it over with her then because I said, you know, I don't like this teaching. I was practice teaching.

CE: What were you going to teach, biology?

GK: Well I wanted to teach science and instead of putting me in a science class of any sort, they put me in second year algebra and I had had no college mathematics except trig, and I had had it as a freshman. And I went to the Department of Education and I said, "I am only one step ahead of the students. I really don't think it's fair having me teaching a second year algebra class." So I dropped everything and finished what I wanted to do, which was medicine, pre-medical.

CE: Where did you practice teaching?

GK: Palo Alto High School.

CE: Palo Alto High School?

GK: Yes.

CE: I was wondering, then, if you had done it at the University High School in Oakland which was --

GK: Oh I was there too. In my senior year we went there.

CE: Well that's where my sister and I went to high school, at University High School. Great School.

GK: Yes. Well they had us observing there, but --

CE: Well, we're about the same age.

GK: Oh, I'm older than you are, considerably.

CE: Not by much. No. Three years. But that was a fine school. And my sister did her practice teaching in French there.

GK: I think had I had a better supervisor of sorts I probably would have continued to teach.

CE: Okay, so you make the decision, you're going --

GK: There's another thing. I met a man that summer. I have to be honest.

CE: Oh, here comes Dr. Kleiser.

GK: I had met a man that summer on a trip to the Orient. He was coming back to be married. He was coming back to be married to some -- not -- I wasn't romantically interested in him.

CE: Is this the man you married?

GK: I can't think of his name now. He was a doctor and he had a lot of slides of his practice in China and I was interested in them and he said, "Do you know something? You would make a good doctor." And no one in our family had ever practiced medicine and it planted the seed in my mind. I had never even considered going into medicine.

CE: Isn't that something?

GK: But he saw in me something that he thought would make me a good doctor. And I now can't even think of his name. I knew him very casually and appreciated the slides he showed.

CE: Was he a man who had practiced medicine in China?

GK: He had practiced twenty years in medicine, in neurology, in China, in Shanghai. Parsons, Dr. Parsons. And he had graduated from McGill. And I said, "Oh I don't think I can get in to any medical school." And he said, "Well they take women in McGill." He knew why I didn't think I could get in, because I was a woman. And he said, "But I know they take women in McGill, so consider it."

CE: Now what -- Had you graduated from UC Berkeley at that time?

GK: Yes.

CE: You were in Stanford.

GK: I was in Stanford

CE: This is a trip in between?

GK: Yes. I was a fifth-year student at Stanford. And I had this thought in my head, you see, and I was away from home enough to not be going home every weekend, so the influence of home was lessened. Of course, they always just knew I was going to be a teacher. Then, when I really thought about it, I thought I would rather go into medicine. So I dropped all the education courses on the last day that you could drop them. I was carrying twenty two units; it was too much anyway. And then finished the physics and chemistry that I needed.

CE: Now you're still at Stanford?
GK: Still at Stanford, yes.
CE: And then?
GK: Then I applied -- I applied for medical school to two schools.
CE: Which ones?
GK: Stanford and Cal. To two schools; I must have been insane.
CE: Only two, you mean?
GK: I only applied to two schools.
CE: Did they both accept you?
GK: They both accepted me. And I was just amazed later when I found out that people usually applied to many medical schools.
CE: Today, for example, a young boy I know, a neighbor, went to Cornell. He'd give anything to get in any medical school at all. His father's a doctor; he wants to be a doctor; can't get in. Good student. I don't understand it.
GK: They're all A students. They are all A students now, going into medicine. It's just terrible.
CE: Well then, I don't recall, what school did you decide on?
GK: I graduated from Stanford.
CE: You did go to medical school.
GK: I graduated from Stanford, yes, all the way through from Stanford.
CE: How long did that take?
GK: Eight years. Well no, I graduated -- It took four years, you know, and then a fifth year of internship and then my specialty training in pediatrics.
CE: Is that your field, pediatrics?
GK: Yes. I was interested in children as soon as I found, as soon as I was in the ward. Dr. Harold Faber, who is ninety-something and still living and in Stanford Hospital right now, said to me, "You'd be a good pediatrician." I seem to be influenced by what people said to me.
CE: Outside of the family.
GK: Outside of the family.
CE: Whose opinion you regarded. You must have had some regard for --
GK: My father wouldn't talk to me for months. He was furious about my going off. He said, "You'll never get out of school. You just can't break yourself loose and get going."
CE: Well when did you get your degree, then? Where are we talking about the beginning now to medical school at Stanford?
GK: Oh I got out in '42. We got our M.D. after our year of internship. See, we interned from '41 to '42 and --
CE: Now here would you intern, up in San Francisco, in --
GK: I interned at Stanford under Dr. Bloomfield. Dr. Bloomfield, in medicine, in internal medicine.
CE: Did you ever know Dr. Leo Stanley, by the way?
GK: Oh, yes. You know my family didn't approve of him because --
CE: I know why. I bet, because of monkey injections, or what?
GK: Not because of that.
CE: Why?

GK: Well, my sister rented an apartment from him and he was living with somebody without the benefit of marriage and my family were appalled at this, years before he was married, you know.

CE: Well he talks about his schooling down at Stanford and he went to Cooper Medical.

GK: Oh I know he did. I went with him to a reunion one time. I took him there.

CE: He gets so hilarious about it. He says, "There's another fellow in my class and myself and he said the head of the medical school, loved to tell the story. One of the students, my two prize students, one wound up in Agnew and the other in San Quentin." See, one was the head of the medical unit at Agnew Insane Asylum and the other at the prison. Well, then you served your internship and you get your degree and have you any idea where you're going to practice? San Francisco? Marin? What did you do?

GK: Oh I knew I was coming back to Marin County.

CE: Coming to Marin.

GK: Yes, naturally.

CE: So you came to Marin.

GK: I got awfully tired of school about this point, just before I finished my training.

CE: All right, the war's on now.

GK: Yes, they're cutting down the nine months internships. And I talked to Scottie Polland and said, "I'm sick and tired of the whole thing, I want to get going." He said, "Don't. Wait until you finish your specialty training," Scottie did. So then I went to Colorado and took residency in internal medicine there because I couldn't practice without a license in Colorado without taking the boards and they weren't going to be given for nine months. So I took a residency at Pueblo, at a hospital. Well this is getting aside from the point.

CE: But you did as he suggested and finished?

GK: Yes, I finished my specialty there. Then when I came back I went in with the San Rafael Medical Group as their pediatrician.

CE: San Rafael Medical Group. And where are they, on --

GK: Well there was Scotty, Mat Hazeltine, Scotty Polland and Arnold and I, and Howard Hammond, who was a year ahead of me in school.

CE: We've had several interviews with dear Scotty Polland, and he shared his vast collection of Marin memorabilia.

GK: Have you talked with Jean?

CE: Yes.

GK: She was an early --

CE: Moore. We've got to tape her but we had -- I thought it was so entertaining when he was talking about, "Boy, the doctors today." He said, "When I started we got out, we got three dollars when you made a house call." Of course, he's an older gentleman, of course, and two dollars when they came to the office. And it's charming how he tells the story of how he bought out this practice of somebody in the Albert Building for something like fifteen hundred dollars and they dickered with the rent; seventy five dollars they got this suite of rooms. Life was simpler then.

GK: Yeah.

CE: Have you had your practice -- Are you still practicing?
GK: No.
CE: When did you give up your practice?
GK: Well, I stopped practicing full time when I had a late child arrive and I couldn't get help to take care of him. Then I worked in San Francisco for the Health Department for a while, with regular hours and no night work.
CE: Well you enjoyed your practice very much?
CE: Oh I worked for -- I was pediatrician twenty years for the San Rafael Medical Group.
CE: Well I understand you're married to a doctor, as well.
GK: He's a dentist, yes.
CE: How did that come about? How'd you meet him?
GK: Meet him? He and my brother were building airplanes at the same time, gliders, as a matter of fact. The same pattern of glider, and my brother --
CE: Mel?
GK: No, my brother Fred and Jim Kleiser were building duplicate gliders. And my brother had built an airplane that flew out here over Stinson Beach. I don't know if he ever told you that. At any rate, my -- They were building gliders and they had been friends for a number of years apparently, two or three anyway, and I didn't know Jim. I was going to Sally Foster's wedding party up in Hopland and Fred and I went to Hopland and he said he wanted to stop and see a man I know. Jim's father was very interesting. And so we stopped in and saw Mr. Kleiser and then went on up to Hopland to a big party they had, a great big party; it was a lovely party celebrating Sally Foster Atkins' engagement. And everybody I knew was there. We had a wonderful day and I met Jim Kleiser. We was playing kind of a volleyball of a thing and then he --
CE: What year was this?
GK: Oh, this was '37 I guess, 1937. And he was quite taken with me and he invited us back to his house for dinner. And I had nothing but shorts and my tan legs sticking out from my shorts. We got into the home in Cloverdale. We did stop, and it's a funny thing, if you sit at a formal dinner party with nothing but shorts on your legs, how embarrassed you are about your nakedness. But they were very nice people, and that was Saturday, and Sunday night he was down at our house.
CE: What year were you married, then?
GK: We were married two years later in 1939. I was married while I was in medical school.
CE: Was your husband supportive of your effort too?
GK: Oh, yes, he was very anxious for me to finish. I mean to complete my work. And he was working very hard. He'd have two patients a day, you know. I mean, he was trying to build up a practice, so lots of times his patients would be at night, anyway, when I was studying or at the hospital. So we lived a kind of a erratic life, but --
CE: When did you have children?
GK: My first one was born when I was 29 years old.
CE: What's his name?
GK: His name is James, James Dickson Kleiser. And goodness he's 34 years old now.

CE: And the other children?
GK: The second one was Harry Armstrong, Armstrong being for Mrs. Keiser's maiden name. And then the last one was William Marshall, and that's also -- Mrs. Kleiser was a Marshall.
CE: From West Marin?
GK: Well she lived in Santa Rosa with her Uncle James and Uncle Sam Marshall. But her father was Alex Marshall.
CE: Well we did interview a Jim Marshall who was the --
GK: Oh yes, a cousin of hers.
CE: Older than you.
GK: Yes.
CE: A wonderful gentleman who had been a supervisor during the fifties. In fact it --
GK: Yes, I know him very well. He owns a ranch near -- See, we own --
CE: Do you own the property next to Synanon, or near there?
GK: Yes, yes. And we own the original Home Ranch, the Marshall's Home Ranch.
CE: Oh, you do?
GK: Well it's called the Canyon Ranch.
CE: What do you raise on that, cattle?
GK: Sheep.
CE: Sheep? Do you go there often?
GK: Yes. The sheep -- You see, we bought the ranch. Jim and I bought the adjoining ranch to the original Canyon Ranch when it came up for sale after World War II.
CE: I see.
GK: We bought the ranch, we bought a house, and we were investigated by the IRS all in the same year, 1950. What a year. The poor IRS couldn't find much. We didn't have much.
CE: You have three sons. You have James, Harry and William. Do you have any girls?
GK: No. I almost had a girl; it was almost like a girl.
CE: Almost like a girl?
GK: I mean almost like a family. The Fred Dickson Family and our family joined after Jane Maggard was shot and that was Fred's first wife, and they had two children, and I had them with me for three and a half years. So they were little people with me for quite a while.
CE: Are your sons in the area?
GK: Yes, yes.
CE: Are they married?
GK: No, not exactly. Well, my oldest son lives with a very attractive girl up in Novato and they're buying a house together.
CE: What does he do? Is he following --
GK: He works in Napa in switchboard; he works for a switchboard company, the Golden Gate Switchboard Company.
CE: And Harry?
GK: Harry is a teacher, a history teacher.
CE: That's interesting.
GK: And he teaches in Vallejo.

CE: And William?

GK: William is a sophomore, excuse me, a junior at the University of California.

CE: What is his major?

GK: He's a mechanical engineer, coming up.

CE: Wow. Dr. Kleiser, it's been a pleasure talking with you today. We're running out of time. I'm sorry.

GK Well, thank you.

CE: Now the experience hasn't been too difficult has it?

GK: No.

CE: But we'd like very much to have any entree to any memorabilia you might have in your family photographs or anything. Think about it and we can put it in the archives. Would you do that? Thank you.