

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE MARIN COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

Anne T. Kent California Room

Original recording available at the Anne T. Kent California Room

© All materials copyright Marin County Free Library. Transcript made available for research purposes only. All rights are reserved to the Marin County Free Library. Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the:

Anne T. Kent California Room
Marin County Free Library
3501 Civic Center Dr. #427
San Rafael, California, 94903

INTERVIEW WITH MARIUS CORDONE

by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent
September 10, 1979

INTERVIEWEE: Marius Cordone (MC)

INTERVIEWERS: Carla Ehat (C.E.) and Anne Kent (A.K.)

DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 10, 1979

TRANSCRIBER: Marjorie Hoffman

CE: Today is Monday, September 10, 1979. This morning we're going to have the pleasure of talking with Marius Cordone, 70 Greenfield Ave., San Anselmo. Mr. Cordone is the son of Joseph Josephi Cordone who came to California in 1890, age 23, and Marius Cordone is going to share a little bit of his history with us and tell us about his father's Cordone Gardens where Sir Francis Drake High School is today and the story of Sleepy Hollow. He was born and raised in San Anselmo. Good morning, Mr. Cordone.

MC: Good morning, how are you?

CE: Fine, thank you. Your father came here in 1890, from where?

MC: Savoy, France.

CE: Now what was he ---

MC: Born December 21, 1867.

CE: Was he an agricultural man, then? Did he have a farm?

MC: Well, I wouldn't think so. His father bought a six hundred acre ranch in Piedmont.

CE: I see, so he immigrated from Piedmont.

MC: Which is in about the same area.

CE: I understand he came across the Atlantic, steerage, arrived in New York and then came across the continent by railroad?

MC: I suppose so, yes.

CE: What did he do first in San Francisco?

MC: Well, he was hired as a vintage man, you know in the vintage business, for Amelia Vacca.

CE: Amelia Vacca - that was in Napa?

MC: That was in Napa.

CE: And he was in that for a few years?

MC: For a few years and then he went into the hotel business for about five years and then about 1897 he went into the truck farming business in San Anselmo.

CE: Now he bought a large piece of property where Sir Francis Drake High School is today?

MC: That's right.

CE: And raised fruits, vegetables - vineyards, too?

MC: Yes, yes.

CE: How much land was that?

MC: Well, altogether I imagine about thirty-five acres.

CE: Thirty-five acres. And I understand he delivered by horse and wagon to many hotels in this area and all of the prominent families in San Rafael?

MC: That's right. Do you want me to mention some?

CE: Yes, would you?

MC: Mrs. Babcock, A.W. Foster, Tamalpais School for Boys ---

CE: Dollars?

MC: Dollars, Sheehys ---

CE: I understand at that time the Academy cook was Fong Tong Jue --

MC: Right, right.

CE: And Mrs. Kent and I had the pleasure of interviewing his two sons, who are in their eighties, I think.

MC: Yes, he was an actor, Arthur was an actor.

CE: Oh, really!

MC: Yes. Didn't you know that?

AK: No.

MM: Oh, yeah!

CE: He told us that he was the only Chinese that ever went to the Military Academy. You know he went through the school he said, is that true?

MC: Arthur? I imagine he did, yes.

CE: Where did he act, over in the Chinese Theater over in the city?

MC: No, no. He acted in ---

CE: In local plays?

MC: No, no. Golda Meir and all those people, as a Chinese impersonator. Yeah, didn't you know that?

CE: No. I wonder why he was so shy about telling us that.

MC: Well, he should have told you that.

CE: Then I understand - Well, your father married whom? What was your mother's name?

MC: Rose - Rose DeMartini.

CE: And after their marriage, he bought more property, didn't he, across ---

MC: Across the street - on Sir Francis Drake.

CE: And he built a big house there, didn't he?

MC: Yes, fourteen-room house, yes. There were seven children in the family, you know.

CE: Yes. Now, are these names correct? You're the eldest, Marius, and then there were Tillius, Elmo, Lily, Emma, Genevieve and Edith.

MC: Right.

CE: And they're all gone now but yourself and Emma and Edith?

MC: That's right.

CE: Do any of the girls live in the old big house?

MC: Edith lives there, she has a life estate, she has a life interest.

CE: And where is the house located?

MC: 1310 Sir Francis Drake.

CE: Now, at that time there wasn't much around, was there, in the way of homes?

MC: No.

CE: Describe a little bit, if you would, Sleepy Hollow and that area.

MC: I could count from the Hub in San Anselmo to Fairfax, I could count them on my fingers.

CE: Really!

MC: That's right.

CE: Well, there was the Carrigan house -

MC: That's one of them.

CE: You mean where all that Redhill Shopping Center, that was all blank, blank – just a few places..

MC: There was the Short Ranch, this was a dairy.

CE: And where was that?

MC: That was where the Redhill Shopping Center is - well beyond that, beyond that, to our property - on Sir Francis Drake to our property - on the same side, on the north side of Sir Francis Drake. The dairy buildings were way in the back, they were about a half a mile back, back inside.

CE: Well, did your property on the north side of Sir Francis Drake go as far as Butterfield Road?

MC: No, no, no. There was our property and then there was Salvadore Pacheco's property which is Morningside Court and on the left hand side there were these gardens there, you know. There were the gardens there on the south side, the truck farm was on the south side, and then there was Coppa's. Well, this is kind of recent, Coppa's Restaurant. Remember Coppa's Restaurant, Mrs. Kent?

AK: No, I don't. I thought there was one but I didn't remember.

MC: Where Adams has his buildings there now, you know where Adams ---

AK: About where, yes, I do.

MC: And then there was nothing on the left hand side, just vacant land.

CE: All the way to Fairfax?

MC: Practically all the way to Fairfax. Then there was the Traxell Ranch which the buildings were on Butterfield Road.

CE: Is that the beginning of the Traxell Ranch, Butterfield Road?

MC: On the corner, Sir Francis Drake and Butterfield. Then beyond that there was Grosjean, C. Grosjean. He had a vineyard. Remember the vineyards, Grosjean's?

AK: I remember him but I didn't know he had a vineyard.

CE: And that was right next to Traxler?

MC: Yes, adjoining Traxler. He had, I don't know how many acres of -- must have been forty, fifty acres of vineyard.

CE: Tell me, Marius, was that on Sir Francis Drake or Butterfield?

MC: On Sir Francis Drake.

CE: Now, then, going up Butterfield there was nothing much until you ---

MC: Well, on Butterfield there was the school which is ---

CE: Where you went to school?

MC: Yes. On the corner of Willow Avenue now and Sir Francis Drake. On the corner of Willow and Sir Francis Drake. Then there was Gheffoli's, Power's, and Goddard's, and then there was the Short Ranch. There was nothing there, just cow pasture. Of course, the

Traxler buildings, the Traxler Home Ranch, and then the Sleepy Hollow Ranch, Sleepy Hollow.

CE: Now tell us, going up Butterfield Road, tell us a little bit about that --

MC: Well, you came to the entrance of Sleepy Hollow -- Sleepy Hollow Certified Dairy.

CE: Oh, it had a regular entrance gate?

MC: Well, there was an entrance there, you know, designating there was a certified dairy and I remember during the hoof and mouth disease they had to put troughs -- they built troughs so that the wagon wheels of the automobiles in a solution so they wouldn't be contaminated. Do you see what I mean?

CE: My goodness.

MC: Yes, that hoof and mouth disease was terrible, you know.

CE: You mentioned earlier that it was an immaculate operation.

MC: It was an immaculate operation I'll tell you. There were three separate milking barns.

CE: How large a ranch was this?

MC: Sixteen hundred and thirty, forty, acres, something like that. The milk sheds, like I say, were immaculate, they were washed down ---

CE: The men wore white?

MC: The men wore white jackets, white pants, rubber boots and they washed the udders before the cows were milked and the bacteria count was down to almost nothing. You know what I mean. And all this milk was brought into San Francisco to the hospitals.

CE: Didn't you say it was one of the first certified ---

MC: First certified dairys in the State of California. It was remarkable.

CE: And that was in the twenties?

MC: Oh no, no, no, before that. I don't remember. It must have been in 1890 or something or 1900, something like that, because Mr. Herzog purchased it. I remember it was during the earthquake and fire and you couldn't get any money, so Herzog asked my dad to borrow some money. So my dad, at that time, loaned him five or six thousand dollars in gold.

CE: And he bought the business from him?

MC: And he bought the business from Richard Hotaling.

CE: What was Richard Hotaling's business?

MC: They were in the whiskey business.

CE: Any particular brand?

MC: Kirk Whiskey.

CE: Sound like it's Scotch.

MC: Kirk - well, it must have been. I don't know whether it was Scotch or what.

CE: Well, you went to school as you told us, in this little school house ---

MC: Oh, yes, on Butterfield Road and my mother went to school there, too, before I did, of course.

CE: And they rebuilt it?

MC: It burned down in 1905 and was rebuilt - it was a one-classroom building and it took all the grades from the first to the eighth and then they built a two-classroom building with a loft upstairs. In the winter time you could play upstairs - a great big loft upstairs, and we had a great big potbelly stove. I can tell you a story --

CE: Okay, go ahead.

MC: Mrs. Bain - I don't know if you remember Bain's. Do you remember the Bain's?

AK: No - I wasn't here.

MC: Oh, you weren't here - you were just a little girl.

AK: No, I was in New York. I wasn't in California then.

CE: She came to California when she married Mr. Thomas Kent.

MC: Yeah, I know that. She had a big potbelly stove and she liked spaghetti. The teacher, she liked spaghetti, so she had this pot on the stove and she asked Pastori -- Do you remember Pastori?

AK: Yes, I do.

MC: Richard Pastori and I had to go down and wash the starch at the pump. You know, we only had a pump to pump the water, drinking water, you know. We didn't have any

flush toilets in those days, you know. So we go down and I was holding the pot under the water and he was pumping hard, you know, and half of the spaghetti fell out of the pot onto the platform of sand and grit. So I said, "We'll have to wash it again." So we washed it as much as we can but I think she had a lot of sand in the spaghetti.

CE: Do you mean she'd be cooking this spaghetti while school was going on?

MC: Sure.

CE: Then you went to Tam High School.

MC: Yes, after that. I went to -- from there I went to Thomas School, Wade Thomas School and then from there I went to high school.

CE: Was Valerie Ansel ---

MC: Oh, yes, she was there. Do you know Valerie?

CE: She told us her story.

MC: Oh, did she?

CE: Well, she was a teacher then.

MC: Oh, yes, sure, sure, sure.

CE: Later she had charge of the school.

MC: Yes, that's right. She's quite a gal.

CE: Was she a strict teacher?

MC: I suppose she was. She wasn't my teacher. I had a Miss Eastman; she was my teacher.

CE: Then after Wade Thomas School you went to Tam on the train?

MC: That's right - electric train.

CE: Did you enjoy school?

MC: Oh, yes, sure, sure.

CE: What made you decide to go to the University of California at Davis?

MC: Well -- I don't know what motivated me but I had some friends ---

CE: Your parents, probably?

MC: No - I had some friends - I can't recall his name now -- His father was a sea captain and he - you know how kids are ---

CE: Was he one of your classmates?

MC: Yes, one of the classmates. His name was Ryan and so he and I and I've forgotten who the other party was, the three of us went up to Davis to look it over.

CE: To look it over -- Gee, that was a long way from home.

MC: Yes. In those days though the road was like this, like a snake you know.

CE: How did you get up there.

MC: By train -

CE: Not that first time, did you?

MC: Oh, no - we went up in a car. Somebody had a car, I think Ryan had a car.

CE: And did you study agriculture then?

MC: Yes, well, we studied everything; irrigation, takes in civil engineering and animal husbandry, viticulture, comology [?] entomology, ---

CE: It's a fine school, isn't it?

MC: Oh, yes.

CE: And look how it's grown.

MC: Oh, my God, it's all over the place now. And at that time they had sixteen hundred acres. I don't know how many acres they've got now. Sixteen hundred. Of course, they had a dairy operation, I don't know, I suppose they do now. I don't know if they do or not but they had a dairy operation, sheep, horses, hogs, agronomy.

CE: Did this please your father?

MC: Oh, yes, yes. It pleased him. He was going to buy this ranch for me.

CE: What ranch? Now tell us about the ranch again?

MC: Well, he had this ranch picked out for me.

CE: You were going to take over? Where was it?

MC: I was going to take over. It was in the northern part of Napa County.

CE: Near Calistoga, maybe, or St. Helena?

MC: No, no, no, down further. It was south of the lake - you know what I mean. And it had six hundred acres of tillable land, grain land, and it had 125 acres of grapes and 90 acres of apples. It had three houses on it, packing shed --

CE: Were you enthused about the whole project?

MC: Oh, was I!

CE: You were all ready to go.

MC: Then about that time the city fathers decided to pave the streets of San Anselmo.

CE: And you have a good piece, your father, along Sir Francis Drake.

MC: So they decided to build a six inch concrete base with a three inch asphalt on top.

CE: Whatever for?

MC: I don't know. The pavement is thicker than it is on Market Street/ On Market Street it's eight inches and here it's nine inches.

AK: Somebody wanted to sell cement.

CE: Well, that would have been a terrible assessment to your father, wouldn't it?

MC: My father's assessment was thirty-five thousand dollars. So in order to go and have a lien against the property --- You see if there's a lien against the property you couldn't sell it and they'd probably sell it for you.

CE: That cut out the ranch for you?

MC: Yes, that's right.

CE: What did you do then instead of going into ranching in Napa Valley.

MC: Then I convalesced for a number of years, you know, my injury, you know. In 1925 I had this opportunity of taking on the Lincoln and Ford Agency in San Anselmo and San Rafael.

CE: Now, where was the one in San Rafael? Did you build the building there?

MC: We didn't build the building but we had it built for us on the corner of Fourth and E Street.

CE: It's still there.

MC: Still there. Where the Honda place is now.

CE: Well, there had never been an automobile dealership in San Anselmo before, had there?

MC: No, no.

CE: Where did you locate the showroom here?

MC: On the south side of the Tamalpais Theater, the building on the south side of Tamalpais Theater on Sir Francis Drake.

CE: And you had a real showroom?

MC: Oh, showroom and repair shop, everything.

CE: Well, how was business? Aren't we sort of in the depression years?

MC: Very good. First few years wasn't so lucrative, we got by, you know, but in 1929 we made a lot of money. We made about thirty thousand dollars. I was only a kid, you know, and I thought to myself, "Gee, five years of that and I'm going to retire."

CE: And then came October '29?

MC: Yes.

CE: Aren't you glad you're not in the Lincoln dealership today?

MC: You know, if we ever have one - that was a drop in the bucket, but this is going to be a drop in the ocean.

CE: I heard a man say the other day that we're going to look back with nostalgia on fifteen percent inflation. Okay, then, what did you do to get into real estate? What changed your course in your career? Did you try to help your father sell some property?

MC: Well, my father had sub-divided this acreage on Sir Francis Drake and I -- He said, "Well, why don't you sell some property? Why don't you go into business?"

CE: You studied and got your license?

MC: I got my Broker's License and here I am.

CE: And where was your office?

MC: My office was in the Barr Building in San Anselmo on Sir Francis Drake. 214 Sir Francis Drake.

CE: Very near the creek.

MC: That's right.

CE: And you listed and sold property all over?

MC: All over, all over; San Rafael, San Anselmo, Ross, Kentfield, Corte Madera, Fairfax, Lagunitas, Woodacre - you name it.

CE: I wonder if you mind repeating for us again the name of some of your competitors all in a row along there? You were all in a row there.

MC: All in a row, that's right.

CE: And tell us again why that was good? I'm surprised.

MC: It was good because the people in those days - there weren't too many automobiles in those days and most people came by train, electric train.

CE: They stop there?

MC: They stop there and get off the train and come into the offices there.

CE: And did you and your competitors advertise in the San Francisco newspapers?

MC: San Francisco newspapers; San Francisco Examiner, Chronicle.

CE: And it was a good idea to be all together?

MC: Oh, I think it was a good idea. All got together, all got friendly, knew each other and so forth, got along fine.

CE: Tell us some of their names, would you?

MC: Columbus Pierce was on the corner of Bank and Sir Francis Drake and Allen was on the other corner of Sir Francis Drake and Bank ---

CE: Was that where the bank was?

MC: That was the first bank, first bank of San Anselmo was at the corner of Bank and Sir Francis Drake. It was put up by Mr. Raas, Lyon and Raas, Lyon and Raas, glazed fruit

people. I don't know if they're still in business, but Mr. Raas owned a home on Crescent Road, big house on Crescent Road.

CE: Yes - and his daughter married Allen.

MC: Married Allen and I suppose that's how he got into the real estate business, you see what I mean, and he occupied the building ---

CE: So it was a bank first?

MC: It was a bank first, that's right. The bank vault is still there.

CE: And who else was along that road?

MC: Then there was Croker, young Croker was there for a while, Ralph Croker and Parmalee and H. F. Mann. H.F. Mann was in there, too, remember him?

CE: Was Mrs. Kent's husband in that area, too?

MC: And then I was there and then Kent and Minto ---

CE: Yes, that was Thomas Kent.

MC: Mrs. Hood Burnett, she was in there, too, at times, until she married Burnett.

CE: How about Jim Leach?

MC: Oh, yes, Jim Leach - Jim and Dave Leach.

CE: They built my home in Ross. I found out later.

MC: They did? No kidding -

CE: He came over to see it. We interviewed him also, wonderful gentleman.

MC: Who, Jim?

CE: Yes. He's been playing golf until recently, I believe. Still plays up at the Meadow Club.

MC: Yes, I know, he belongs up there. He's one of the first members up there.

CE: Well, there's been a lot of business, I imagine, transacted through your office.

MC: Really.

CE: What is different about real estate today than when you first practiced it in Marin County?

MC: One thing, the rate of interest is so high.

CE: Mortgage money, you mean?

MC: Mortgage money, yes. You have to pay what? Eleven, twelve percent now and you have to have a substantial down payment, you have to have twenty percent and you have to have good financial backing in order to get a loan, you know. You have to qualify.

CE: Were there any differences in the brokerage commissions between when you started and today?

MC: Well, in those days we used to get five percent and nowadays you get six percent, isn't much difference.

CE: I understand there is a company in San Francisco that is charging less brokerage fee. Have you heard of him?

MC: No, I haven't.

CE: He doesn't see why there has to be this arbitrary figure of six percent. But there are certainly more brokers operating today. There must be a couple of hundred of them, aren't there?

MC: Couple of hundred! Oh, there's more than that.

CE: Well, you know you spoke earlier off the record about your father was civic minded and had donated a piece of his property to the city of San Anselmo. Tell us about that again, if you would.

MC: Well, in 1940 or something like that Brookside butted into our property here but there was no extension of it to extend into Cordone Drive, you see ---

CE: And Cordone Drive really followed Brookside.

MC: Cordone Drive stopped here, but what we wanted to do was give this lot to the City of San Anselmo.

CE: So you could really pass through that area?

MC: If you were in Cordone Tract you could go into Morningside Court without going out to the highway and coming in again. You see what I mean? Which made it nice for the Fire Department or Police Department, very convenient now. I see a lot of people go up Cordone Drive and go across into -- In fact, they go there to get to avoid the signals going to Sleepy Hollow.

CE: People find shortcuts, don't they?

MC: They sure do. We just sold a portion of our property on Cordone and Brookside for a quarter of a million.

CE: For another sub-division or ---

MC: I don't care what they do with it.

CE: How large?

MC: Seven acres.

CE: When you look back historically, what you have bought and sold property for, can you believe it?

MC: Really -- I've got another property now -- We have that portion of it that is on Sir Francis Drake and I'm asking a half a million dollars for it and the guy said he is willing to buy it. In fact all roads in San Anselmo and in particularly the old San Rafael-Olema Road, it wasn't Sir Francis Drake then, San Rafael-Olema Road. Opposite our property they had a well, there was a well there and they used to pump water in a sprinkling tank, you know it had a sprinkler on it, and they'd sprinkle the roads because it was so darn dusty.

CE: Well, you said earlier there were only about five or six houses between the hub and Fairfax?

MC: Oh, yes, I'd say there were about ten houses at the most between the San Anselmo Hub and Fairfax, ten houses. And they consisted of -- What in the heck were those people's names?

CE: Well, we know the Carrigan house.

MC: Oh, yes, the Carrigan house, but before that --- This man was a General Passenger Agent for the Northwestern Pacific and the house is still there. I can't think of his name -- It'll come to me.

CE: San Francisco man?

MC: I don't know -- But, anyway, there was that house and my father had built a building on 715 Sir Francis Drake, plus a cottage. There was a cottage on this property, and he thought the town was going out that way you know what I mean, instead it went the other way. But, nevertheless, we still own it. He built it in 1907 right after the earthquake and fire and we still own the house, we still own the building, we got a couple of stores there, women's apparel and ---

CE: I know we're digressing in time here from one point to another, but we haven't talked about the earthquake and fire and its impact on Marin County. What do you remember about the fire and earthquake? What happened to people coming over? You were only eight years old, but -

MC: Well, there was an influx of people.

CE: Immediately after that?

MC: Oh, yes, right about that time, right after that, while it was happening I suppose .I remember my Dad happened to be in San Francisco that particular day.

CE: Oh, he was?!

MC: Yes, in San Francisco on May 18[sic], 1906. He'd go to San Francisco during the week to buy produce, to buy oranges, bananas ---

CE: Things he didn't grow.

MC: That's right. Things he didn't grow. He told me that he was in the hotel and things started to shake. Usually, he said, he took the change and put it on the bureau and he said he didn't stop to put the change on the bureau he just went out. Of course, the ferry boats were still running and ---

CE: Did he high tail it right home?

MC: I suppose he did, I couldn't tell you but I'm of the opinion that he did, because everything was shut down.

CE: Your mother must have been worried out of her mind until she saw him come home.

MC: I remember I was at the ranch at the time and I remember the trees bobbing up and down like this, like the waves in the ocean. Just like that. I still remember it.

CE: When you say you were at the ranch where do you mean?

MC: I happened to be down at the ranch at that particular time.

CE: What ranch?

MC: At the property.

CE: Oh, the property.

MC: Yes, at that time. Well, I was eight years old, you see.

CE: Would you describe your father to us? Are you a lot like him?

MC: Something like him.

CE: What did he give you that you most remember in life? I'm not talking about material things but what teaching did he pass to you that stood with you all your life?

MC: Most of all to be honest.

CE: To be honest. And your word was something?

MC: Yes, your word was your bond. His word was his bond. I remember when he'd negotiate car loads of potatoes, apples, and all he did was shake hands.

CE: Is that way of doing business disappearing?

MC: Oh yes, I should say.

CE: Will we ever see it again?

MC: I remember when I was a little boy I was told to go down to the drugstore here in San Anselmo on a bicycle, of course, in those days a bicycle, and I found a purse with money in it. And I said, "Well, it must be somebody that bought drugs or something in the drugstore and dropped it." So I went into Mrs. Shapira. She had the drugstore there. Do you remember Mrs. Shapira?

CE: Is she the same woman who used to put up the toothpaste?

MC: Yeah, that's right.

CE: She actually put it up - toothpaste?

MC: Yeah, we bought it, we used it. It was very good.

CE: Is that right on the corner or near the ---

MC: Well, before that, where I found this purse was where - there was a service station on the corner there. Where they put in these stereo things now in the automobiles - it was there. There were three stores along there.

CE: So it was on that side of the road?

MC: It was on the north side of Sir Francis Drake. There was a plumbing shop and a --- Slosser's Coal and Wood Place and Mrs. Shapira's. And so I brought this purse, I opened it and saw this money and said that I'd better give it to Mrs. Shapira, she probably knows them. I don't know if she ever gave it to anybody but ---

CE: At least you turned it in.

MC: Maybe she did, I hope she did.

CE: But that's one memorable thing that your father taught you. Did he live to a good age?

MC: Eighty-six.

CE: Very good.

MC: I hope I can make it.

CE: You certainly will.

MC: And have all my faculties.

CE: Well, look at Mrs. Kent.

MC: Well, I'm not going to ask you how old she is, it's none of my business.

AK: Eighty-seven.

MC: Are you? Gee, you don't look it!

CE: She still drives her own Packard car. Mr. Cordone, we are looking at a map from the Assessor's, a map of part of San Anselmo which Mr. Cordone has and Mrs. Kent made the statement that other than this, there's no property left that has been undeveloped since-

MC: Close by -

CE: Do you think we'll ever see a change, a reversal of this?

MC: The only way we'll ever see a change is that we have a depression or something like that, you know. I hope not.

CE: Mortgage money costs more, of course, but it doesn't seem to deter people from buying, does it?

MC: It doesn't, it doesn't.

CE: And with the new laws about women getting credit easier, many divorced and single women are buying property, aren't they?

MC: Yeah, yeah. Even if you shack up with somebody you get a loan.

CE: You can?

MC: Yeah-

CE: What do you get, tenancy in common? You certainly don't have joint tenancy in a relationship like that?

MC: Well, they must, they must put joint tenancy, it must be some kind of a joint tenancy of some kind or maybe it's separate.

CE: Well, they must have a pretty good contract written up before. Well, you started in business here and you're still in business. How long? How many years has it been?

MC: Well, since 1935.

AK: Tell us what is going to happen at the big celebration.

CE: Oh, yes, I understand on September 16th at the Log Cabin ---

MC: Oh, they've got San Anselmo Days.

CE: Well, now you were in the army, weren't you?

MC: Oh, yes. World War I and World War II.

CE: Tell us a little bit about that. You've been a member, an honorary member or you've been an active member in the American Legion?

MC: Oh, yeah - I'm a charter member. A charter member of the San Anselmo Post, Log Cabin.

CE: Tell us a little bit. How did that Log Cabin ever get started? You fellows build it?

MC: Well, we first met in - on the upper -- there's a dance hall there now, upstairs from the theater, theater building, in the San Anselmo theater building.

CE: Oh, I see. Where Arthur Murray is today?

MC: Yes, that's right. That's where we used to meet - where Arthur Murray used to be. And then we decided we ought to have our own shack, you know.

CE: Tell us where it is again; at the end of what street? Is it the end of San Francisco Street?

MC: No, no, no. It's about two blocks on the south side - on the east side of San Francisco Boulevard.

CE: When did you build this?

MC: In 1934 - either 1932 or '34. It was 1934. And we got the logs out of the Nicasio redwoods.

CE: Local product.

MC: Local product and I helped to hew them. You know with an axe.

AK: Did old man Roy give them to you?

MC: No, no, not Roy. Did you know Roy? Oh, boy, would he give you nothing!

CE: Now Roy had the ranch out at San Geronimo Valley next to Mailliard's place?

MC: On the opposite side.

CE: West side of it?

MC: No, on the north side. Mailliards had twelve thousand acres out there and Fred Dickson was the manager. Do you remember Fred Dickson?

CE: Yes.

MC: In fact, my dad used to buy butter in boxes. They had the workers, you know, and they bought big boxes of butter, you know, sweet butter.

CE: Speaking of the Mailliard family, did you know the Thompkins in San Anselmo?

MC: On, Ethel --

CE: Ethel Thompkins - In Sequoia Park, their home ---

MC: My dad for many years used to deliver vegetables there.

CE: That was supposed to have been a very lovely home.

MC: Oh, yes. The fact of the matter is she took the second story down ---

AK: The next people who bought it took that off. That was after Ethel was gone.

MC: No, no, dear, no, she took it down when she was still alive.

AK: Oh - I'm surprised at that.

MC: Yes, yes.

CE: What'd she do that for?

MC: Oh, because it was too much for her, I suppose, going up and down stairs. Now, the party that bought it is adding a second story to it.

AK: George Lucas, isn't it?

MC: Yes, Lucas, yes.

CE: And he's the man who created Star Wars.

MC: Yes, that's right.

CE: Nothing but money.

MC: Nothing but money. Thirty-six million. He made thirty-six million.

CE: Off of that film. Is he a local boy? Is that why he came back to San Anselmo?

MC: I don't know where he's from.

CE: I heard he was, didn't you?

AK: I was hoping to find out that he was a local boy.

MC: I don't know, I don't think so. And he bought Dan Deedee's house.

CE: Yes.

AK: That's good, those are two historical ----

CE: And your friend, Kinky Shoan, lives there.

AK: Yes.

CE: The girl who writes the column "Around Ross" for the Ross Valley Reporter, she lives in the Deedee house.

MC: She lives there now? She does.

AK: Yes. That's two historical houses, that's nice.

MC: That's the Winship house.

AK: That's right.

MC: The Winships live there. And then there are two daughters ---

CE: Two Winship daughters?

MC: Yes, two Winship daughters. Let's see now -- one married Poor.

CE: Yes, because I met him. He's now in Amador County.

MC: Yea - George ---

CE: Yes, George. And he used to say, "I live in the Poor house". He loves to tell that story. He's now Curator of the museum up in Calaveras County.

MC: Oh, is he? I'd like to go up there.

CE: You went to school with him?

MC: Yes, went to high school.

CE: Did you know Mr. Winship?

MC: No, I didn't.

CE: Did you know any of the Barber's?

MC: But I knew Mrs. Denicke. You know Dr. Denicke?

AK: Yes.

MC: He married, he married the other daughter and then they went to the Crown's Mines in South Africa. They went to the Crown's Mines and they were down there for years, down in the gold mines in South Africa.

CE: Did they make it?

MC: Oh, yes -- Make it! -- They're making it now, too.

CE: Are they?

MC: Well, you know, the price of gold - \$335.00, a --- Why didn't I buy some gold?

CE: Well, I thought maybe you might have bought some gold, Marius, with your wisdom.

MC: I've got this, my wife gave me this.

CE: Speaking of that, we've got to get you married. When did you get married? And whom did you marry?

MC: Oh, Mrs. Kent, I'm not going to tell my life history here now!?

CE: Well, just a little bit. Who did you marry?

MC: I married a school teacher by the name of Anna Ryan, Anna Marie Ryan.

CE: Ryan.

MC: Yes, Irish.

CE: What year were you married, when were you married?

MC: Oh God. December 4, 1943. I'm just a young kid.

CE: Do you have a family?

MC: Two boys.

CE: Two boys. What are their names?

MC: John Kevin and the other is Richard Patrick.

CE: What are the boys doing? Are they interested in your business?

MC: No. Well, one fellow, Richard, has a master's degree in recreation. This is a good one.

CE: A master's degree?

MC: A master's degree in recreation. Has teachers' credentials.

AK: Real smart.

MC: So he can't get a job. Proposition 13, that fixed him pretty.

AK: That's the important thing these days, you can't laugh it off, you know.

CE: How about John?

MC: John, he went to high school and then he went to Mechanical School and now he's a - he does mechanical maintenance for the high school in San Rafael. Mechanical maintenance, plumbing, everything that has to be done that is mechanical.

AK: Gee, I'd like to know somebody like that.

CE: Maybe he could fix your Packard.

MC: Mrs. Kent, are you still living in the white house on Goodhill?

AK: Yes, that's the house Mrs. Kent built ---

MC: That's a lovely house.

AK: Well, it's just like every other old thing. It needs something done every place you know.

CE: Where do you live, may I ask, Marius?

MC: I live in San Rafael.

CE: Could I have your address for our file?

MC: 518 Fifth Avenue, San Rafael. I live right downtown. We were offered a quarter of a million dollars for it but we don't want to sell it. Nothing but money.

CE: What's your phone number there?

MC: It's only money. My wife is a school teacher. She taught her first school out in Lucas Valley.

CE: Is she a Marin girl also?

MC: Oh, yes, she was born on Petaluma Avenue.

CE: Now, looking back on your career, forty-five years in real estate, I guess at times you must look back and have said "Why didn't I do this or why --"

MC: Right -- "Why didn't I buy this" or "Why didn't I buy that."

CE: Are there a couple of things that you could have that you would like to tell us about? You could tell us daily, I guess.

MC: There's fifty-six acres which is now the center part of Novato. I could have bought that for twenty-five thousand dollars. Fifty-seven acres for twenty-five thousand dollars. Think of that -- flat as a pancake.

CE: Did you ever think that Novato would grow the way it has? Or did you have any feeling about where the growth of this county was going to be?

MC: I sold property up there in Novato, you know there's a lot of places that had five acres and Bob Trumbull was the manager for the DeLong estate and they had twelve thousand acres, twelve thousand acres. They had F Ranch, the C Ranch, oh, they had A,B,C, you know.

CE: Just like out at Point Reyes, they had them by alphabet?

MC: That's right, alphabet. I know some of the ranchers out there now. A and B, I know A and B, going by Mendoza, Joe Mendoza.

CE: We're going out Thursday to interview Mr. Kehoe. Do you know him?

MC: Mrs. Kehoe?

CE: Mr. Kehoe - Jim, is that his name?

AK: His son.

MC: Yes, his son. Oh, yeah, sure. The fact of the matter is, I was hunting deer when he was Supervisor, Jim Kehoe was Supervisor. I was hunting deer in Elko, Nevada, and so Eddie Meyer - You know Eddie Meyer, the Coca Cola Bottling Works' man and Judge Butler, Joe Rossi, the garage man - Oh, a number of people, Rutherford from Mill Valley. Well, anyway, so, they said to me, it would be a nice gesture if you went up and got hold of Jim and came down to our party tonight. We were staying at a place called Jiggs. We rented a great big house there, in Jiggs. There were only about five houses in the whole town of Jiggs.

CE: You mean at Elko?

MC: No, no, Jiggs. We used to stay in Elko years ago and then we decided to rent -- We'd have to travel thirty or forty miles in order to get to our hunting grounds, you know, and so we hired this - we rented this house for the season and then we invited this -- He was hunting in another part of the area, so I went up there and picked him up and came down and on our way down he said to me, he said, "Mac, why don't you get busy, the county is going to have a county fairgrounds." And I said, "Where do you want this?" "Well," he said, "how about Corte Madera?" "Well," I said, "what are you going to have there? Tell me all about it and I'll tell you about the weather, you know what I mean?" He said, "Well, we'd like to have a swimming pool." I said, "Corte Madera swimming pool?! My God, the wind blows fifty thousand miles an hour and all you have to do is look at the trees, they're all blowing east." You know what I mean. I said, "I don't think that will be --" But, anyway, he said, "Go ahead." So I went to San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Rosa, Marin County. I traveled all over and I got all these people except one piece of property and then they changed their minds.

CE: You mean they decided on that present site?

MC: Yes, they changed their minds and he says, "I think we probably have a warmer site and closer in to San Rafael." It has to be - I don't know how true this is, but it has to be within the confines of San Rafael, county seat, or something to that effect.

CE: That makes sense.

MC: So I had sold his ranch to the father ---

CE: What ranch, Kehoe's?

MC: No.

CE: I'm mixed up.

MC: Civic Center, the Civic Center. I had sold it to this rancher and you see there was no underpass. There was no underpass onto the highway and so I said that it was not good because you had to have traffic. In Sacramento they were figuring on having a racetrack in there, you know, a racetrack. Well, you see they get their money from parimutuels, Mrs. Kent, they get their money from parimutuels and the Ross place down here, the Marin Art and Garden Center, that's where they got their money for years. They got sixty, sixty-five, seventy thousand dollars out of parimutuels because they sanctioned, the supervisors sanctioned as a temporary situation. You see what I mean? So they got that money. So, anyway, I said when they put the underpass under the highway I went to the supervisors and I said, "I have the most beautiful site. It was just ideal for what you want to use it for." So, Mrs. Livermore, Mr. Murphy from out the ranch out there, and - I've forgotten, there were five or six on the Citizens' Committee to pick this thing out. Murphy said to me, "Mac, I've seen a lot of places, a lot of places have been offered," he said, you know what I mean, to the Supervisor. "This is the best one yet. This is it," he says. "I recommend it." And so did Mrs. Livermore and all the rest of them and I said, "You've got something." So, anyway ---

CE: So you did it!

MC: I did it, yes. In this way, they finally - I got a contract for \$237,000. He wanted \$237,000. I sold it to them for \$37,500. Now that's way back. So, what happened? The Supervisors got a committee to appraise it. Like a hooligan I told them what I got it for. I had a contract, see? So what in the heck do they do, they were both in the real estate business and I'd like to cut their necks off (they're both dead), so they took the five percent off and they submitted the price to the Supervisors. So they couldn't buy it, you see, they were appraised five percent less than my commission, so I didn't get one red cent.

CE: And they got the land?

MC: The Supervisors finally bought it and paid \$455,000 for the same thing I had for \$237,000.

CE: How much time had gone by? A year? As much as a year?

MC: Oh, three or four years. But they're business people.

CE: Yes, but they don't have your integrity.

MC: Well, I know but I'm just saying that's what happened. That's the story.

CE: Yes, but in spite of these isolated events, you've done all right, haven't you, as a business?

MC: Oh, yes, fine, fine. But - then Vera Schulz got the bright idea, you know, she got the bright idea that the Civic Center shouldn't be in San Rafael and so they were pondering how in the world they could put a civic center that would have to be in the city of San Rafael - in the city of San Rafael. I said, "That's no problem, all you have to do is take the highway and then take in the fifty acres you want and it's part of San Rafael. There's nothing to it." So that's what they did. So that's my story on the Civic Center.

CE: Fascinating.

AK: And it's not true, anyway, so far as their farming, their real fair is concerned. It is not a true fair. I mean they really should not accept all that parimutuel money unless they have sheep and cows and all of the agricultural things there; it's not truly a fair.

MC: No, you're right, right.

AK: They get by that by sharing with Sonoma a little bit, that's what they do, and that's not fair.

MC: Yes - Marin-Sonoma, Marin-Sonoma, yes.

CE: Well, I tell you, Mr. Cordone, this has been a pleasurable experience talking with you today and I think we'll have to continue it some other time but I'm sure stories will unfold, don't you think so?

AK: I think so, I think he will think of many things.

CE: Well, thank you so much for sharing what you have with us today. It's been a pleasure to meet you.

MC: I hope you got enough information or something.

CE: Yes.