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INTERVIEW WITH MARION HAYES CAIN

by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent
October 17, 1975

INTERVIEWEE: Marion Hayes Cain (MC)
INTERVIEWERS: Carla Ehat (CE) and Anne Kent (AK)
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CE: Today is Friday October 17, 1975. We are at the residence of Marion Hayes Cain located at 70 Monterey in San Anselmo, California. Continuing the Oral History Program of the Marin County Library at Civic Center, we are here this morning to interview Marion Cain regarding her many years' involvement and generous contribution to the theater in Marin County. With me today is Mrs. Thomas Kent of Kentfield, California, who has known Mrs. Cain for many years.

Marion Hayes Cain has been involved in so many things in Marin but to name a few, she is involved in the Junior Theater in Marin, she has been associated with the Mountain Play Association, for years she has been involved with the Ross Valley Players in the Marin Art and Garden Center, and has been, in her professional life, a teacher in both public and private schools, and has been responsible for the Creative Children's Theater. This morning Marion has agreed to tell us of her many years' association with the Mountain Play. And it's a pleasure to be here this morning, Marion, - Good morning.

MC: Good morning.

CE: OK, now, most people know there is an amphitheater on Mount Tamalpais located in the park. Could you tell us how it all came about, Marion?

MC: Yes, I can give you a sketch of the early beginning in 1913. The beautiful sloping area there, which was actually a natural for a theater situation, was just always there. There happened to be a beautiful, straight area sort of giving the effect of a stage below the sloping hillside, and the hikers, I'm sure, for many years had noticed this and thought about it as seeming to be a natural amphitheater. So it just came about that Daddy O'Rourke who was a very much-beloved hiker and leader of the hiking clubs of Marin County walked there one day with two other people, John Catlin, a lawyer who was very dedicated to the mountain trails, and a very outstanding and gifted man by the name of Garnet Holme who was a producer and director and writer of beautiful pageants. They looked over the area together and conceived the idea at last that a play should really be presented there and they should promote it and begin the idea of bringing people to theater on the side of the mountain. Now Garnet was at that time directing the Drama Department at U. C. He had a long background in the English theater and had come here, to the United States, to continue his work in theater, but he had become particularly involved in lot of outdoor theater and he was a most outstanding person with feeling, for the use of the out-of-doors, with the wide scope of a big outdoor stage. So with that background Garnet began to assemble players from U. C., and I imagine they rehearsed at the college and came over to the theater toward the end of the time to proceed to get adjusted to the big outdoor stage. He did a production of an old morality play "Abraham and Isaac" and scenes from "Twelfth Night".

CE: This was the first performance?

MC: This was the very first performance on Sunday, May 4, 1913.

CE: All right.

MC: It was estimated later that 1,200 hikers climbed the mountain to view it, and were very excited by the breath-taking scenery of the backdrop behind the stage where sometimes the fog rests. When it lifts, one has a panoramic view of the Bay area, which is absolutely breathtaking. And it was so enthusiastically received by the hikers and theater lovers that almost immediately an organization was formulated to be called the Mountain Play Association.

CE: All right - Did these gentlemen get together and form an association?

MC: Well, John Catlin became the first president. Daddy O'Rourke, as we always called him, became first vice-president. Garnet himself was not a member of the Board, he was the director and planner of the pageants and the plays in the years that followed and continued to be so for many years. Of course at the time, the audience was almost entirely made up of hikers. Hiking was a very great and exciting - a loving adventure for people who lived in the San Francisco area - to get out into the natural environment of Marin. I remember when I was in my teen years in San Francisco, the Mountain Play was, to me, one of the very great thing of the time.

CE: Were you born in San Francisco, Marion?

MC: Yes, I was born there. And in the teen years, we always got together groups of our young friends and we rode the ferryboats over playing ukuleles. We all sat on the deck of the boat and it was a beautiful, companionable teenage youth time. And we'd hike the mountain, we'd walk down from the old station and start up the stairs and the pipeline to the Mountain Home and then hit the trails. And sometimes after the play we'd run all the way back, it was always down hill, to see who could get there. But we had beautiful days. Of course, I did not know anything about the organization or too much of the history in those days. I just thought it was a wonderful thing. It always played just one day a year, in May, and I saw a number of those plays in my youth. But it was not until 1925 that I become actively involved. I was then in college. I was studying dance and drama and - as a personal note here, a dance teacher whom I admired very much, Virginia Whitehead, was in Garnet Holme's cast this year. They were going to play his original pageant of Drake, a historical pageant of the history of Drake arriving here from England. And Garnet had a very informal way of working with his actors so he had asked some of them to bring some new talent. They were looking for an ingénue, and so Virginia had invited me to come to the rehearsal and that was the day I began my great friendship with Garnet Holme, because he said, "take her".

CE: Well, drama, then was an interest for you in college?

MC: I was always interested in drama, as a child even. I was a child who was forever making up shows at home, and trying to be part of something dramatic in my youth, you know, early youth.

CE: So 1925 was your introductory year to the Mountain Play?

MC: That was my introductory year. I remember that we rehearsed the play in the Columbia Park Boys' Club, which I don't think exists any longer - does it? It was out in the - near Church and Dolores Streets somewhere, and Garnet Holme was a great friend of the Director. I believe his name was Pascinto [?] Does that name recall anything?

AK: No.

MC: So that was where we rehearsed that play. And Guy Kibbe, who later became quite active in motion pictures, played Drake, admirably, and I then became acquainted with Guy Kibbe through the work. Virginia Whitehead played Queen Elizabeth and it was a most beautiful pageant because it started at Plymouth with Queen Elizabeth giving her blessings to Drake and to the expedition. And the part I played was a Plymouth lass who was in love with the mapmaker of the trip, and so there was that romantic background to the scene. And strolling players came and played before the Queen and it was just beautiful.

CE: You know, Mrs. Kent, this would be a wonderful play to re-present - I suppose they plan to do it for the quadri-centennial of Drake's arrival --.

MC: The script is totally lost.

CE: It's lost!

MC: You know, the trouble with Garnet was he was so very informal about his work. He'd write little papers and add little lines and hand them to you in pencil and he never had a secretary that typed all the manuscripts and bound them. We worked from all sorts of hit and miss little things. And he had a big old trunk, I recall, with all of this material, which totally disappeared after his death. We never did know what happened to all of his original work. It was just gone.

CE: Well, tell me, Marion, I notice on your refectory table over there you've got a tremendous five-volume collection of press...

MC: Yes, yes.

CE: How did that come into your possession?

MC: Well, all right...

CE: You have at least saved something from this endeavor.

MC: Yes, but there's nothing - you see Garnet Holme's scripts were the things that were really lost, when we talk about repeating some of his original pageants.

CE: Yes.

MC: But what I would like to say, maybe, while I'm talking about Garnet I should go on and say a few more things about him because I was a very close friend and I don't think too many people knew too much about Garnet. He was a man who I had heard disliked women particularly.

CE: Well, when you met him in 1925 what was his age approximately then?

MC: I would say probably early 50's - but I always thought of him as my theater father because I related to him. I had beautiful memories after those years where he would ask me to sit on the hill with him. He used to call me "the kid." And he would like me to come up and sit on the hill with him when he had his megaphone and he was directing and he would tell me why he did this and why I'm doing that. "Now look at that," you see, and I learned so much -

CE: It's almost like he was taking you as a protégé.

MC: It was just beautiful and of course I thought so much of him. And then he would depart and he would go down to southern California because at approximately the same time he also wrote and founded the Ramona Pageant of Hemet which has continued every year since and is a very great production down there annually at Easter time. And I noticed when I was -

CE: How about those plays down there, had they been retrieved?

MC: Well, the Ramona Pageant just does the same play every year, one script.

CE: Oh, I see.

MC: And they've done the same pageant every single year - where up here we have had another play every year. But when I visited down there I noticed at the entrance to the theater is a very beautiful and very large plaque inscribed to Garnet Holme, mentioning his great gifts and talents as a pageant master and it is a very strange, unusual circumstance that up here we actually have his remains on the rock, on Pohli Rock, just by the theater. And for the first time this year, I decided since this was kind of a historical year that I would try to make contact with the Ramona people, so I wrote them this year. They didn't know his remains are here, I don't believe - the people in the project down there, so I suggested the idea of bringing his Ramona Pageant up here for this historical year and playing it in our theater. At this time, though, I still don't know if that's going to be physically possible to do it, but I do feel there's a tie between these two permanent connections of Garnet's.

CE: Well, I understand he had a fall while climbing a mountain...

MC: Yes. I'll follow through to what happened with him.

CE: All right.

MC: In 1926 - he would go to southern California and he'd come back in the spring, like February, and he'd get in touch with people when he wanted in the play and so he would call us again. He didn't do much auditioning. He would just gather his players together. And so then we came together again and we did "Rip Van Winkle" in '26. And in '27 he was planning to do Dunsany's play, "The Gods of the Mountain," and there were no women in the cast. And so I was invited to come up and be part of the gathering at the time they had the play and they had the party and all that they had. And so, on the mountain that day, in 1926, I met my future husband, 1927 rather, Sam Hayes. He was playing the lead and there was an interesting history there because the year before this, Garnet had written and produced a tremendous pageant in Yosemite Valley, which was a historical pageant on the Yosemite Indians. Sam was at Stanford and had a summer job in the Valley as a ranger on horseback. And he observed this man in a ranger -- Let's see I guess Garnet used to wear outdoor clothes and he was wandering all over the area and Sam observed this and wondered what he was up to. So he followed him and discovered that he was at work on the plans for this tremendous pageant, so they became acquainted and he played the lead. He played the young Indian lead. And so through that connection Garnet asked him to come to the mountain and play the lead up here. So here were two people, both of whom Garnet had been really close and friendly with, and so he was sort of a pucker anyway, and he thought it would be just delightful if we would - you know, really come to know one another better. So he invited us to play leads together in another pageant he was going to do. So this was how we fell in love and romantically played

these romantic roles in this pageant called "Ersa of the Red Trees." We played the pageant in Bolling Grove near Eureka in a Redwood grove, out-of-doors. That was backed by the Chamber of Commerce of Eureka, and we played it in a giant forest. They were beautiful experiences, really delightful, and of course we were so in love and playing the romantic roles together...

CE: What casting!

MC: So it was just beautiful. And we were, of course, very close to Garnet. Now the next year we both went back to the mountain to play together and they produced "Flamenca," a Spanish story, and Sam and I played in that together.

CE: Who wrote that?

MC: I think that that was from Dan Totheroh. That's another whole story. We want to talk about Dan Totheroh. I have a picture here of the two of us on the mountain in 1928 there at the back of the history book.

CE: This is interesting, would you tell - this book that you have in your hand, what it is, Marion?

MC: Yes, we are looking together at a booklet entitled The Mountain Play, which was put together during the years that I was the president of the Association. It was published in 1970.

CE: What years were you president, Marion?

MC: I was president for eight years, from '63 to '69 or '62 to '69.

CE: Thank you.

MC: And before and after that period both, I was also involved as production manager of the play. All right. We played the Spanish play and we were married at about the same time and we lived in San Francisco. We came back.-The Mountain Play, of course, was very close to us and besides that we used to go to visit Garnet when he came here. He had a cottage in Larkspur on the lower slopes of the mountain. And in 1929 he wanted to do "Peer Gynt," so Sam went again to play "Peer Gynt." At that time I was pregnant with my first child, Ronald Hayes, and I was unable to play because he was born in February. But Sam and I, I can remember, had such wonderful times rehearsing his lengthy script. I would play all the women's roles at home and we would do all the action and rehearse it all at home and have a wonderful time doing it. But a great tragedy befell that spring because before the play came into being, Garnet had an accident in February. He was - the slopes of his little house were rather steep and in leading guests from his home down to the lower road he slipped and he grabbed for a little tree for support and it wouldn't hold his weight and he fell down a rather steep bluff and had a concussion and so he died in the Ross Hospital. We were shocked by this tragedy. There were very few people -

even ourselves - who knew too much about Garnet's personal life in England or his family. We knew he had never been married and a decision had to be made about his remains, and so my husband, Sam, and Carol Aronovici, who is still part of the Mountain Play, and some others made the decision to inter his ashes on Pohli Rock and Carol has told me since, he remembers putting this plaque in himself on the rock.

CE: What does the plaque say?

MC: It says, "I lingered on the hill where we had played". It is a quote from one of his plays. So I see he was 56 when he died which was really quite young but I guess I thought of him as being quite elderly which is funny now that you think about it. We are all passed that age ourselves now. But at any rate it was a short time that I had to enjoy his friendship. He was officially the Pageant Master of the National Parks System. He had a title. He had ranger's clothes and puttees and the ranger's hat and he traveled all over the west and wrote original pageants for the parks. And another of his beautiful things was done at Palm Springs - there was a pageant produced there every year that had to do with the natural, the history of the area, the Indians of the Palm Springs area. And I remember hearing it said that it was so beautiful. He always had this pageant timed so that as the sun set these words were spoken about the setting sun and it was always timed exactly together. He was an absolute master of pageantry and of people and of knowing how to move large groups of people in exciting ways. And in training people, for instance, the Mountain Theater is such a large stage that to play an intimate love scene you must stand about six feet apart or five and play it in an intimate way in order for it to look right from a big distance.

CE: Now the amphitheater can hold how many people?

MC: We always said 4,000.

CE: 4,000.

MC: And, of course, we didn't have any mikes, we didn't have any sound system, so we all had to know how to project and throw our voices, and I guess we all did it, you know.

CE: How vast was the stage in relationship to this amphitheater?

MC: Well, it's a very, very large stage. I just can't give you the dimensions but...

CE: Fifty-by-a-hundred easily?

MC: Easily, oh yes.

CE: Well, when he was producing these tremendous pageants, is it possible that a couple hundred people could be on the stage?

MC: Yes, yes. You see what happened in the early days - going back I want to say, Garnet directed these plays through all those early years, '13, '14, '15, '16 right on through here, almost up to the time I first met him. I believe Garnet came up here and did these plays annually and planned them. And he - There are some other important names that come through into these early days, one of them I think we should talk about would be Dan Tothoroh. Dan Tothoroh grew up in Marin. I believe he was not born here but he lived here in his youth. He went to San Rafael High School and he was always interested in writing and in the drama form and he was involved in acting in his youth. He played, as a very young actor, he played in the early acting troupes that were in San Francisco. There was a group who played all the time in stock in San Francisco in those early twenties and late teens. He was a member of that company. He went to New York and became actually a very prominent playwright there. There's a great deal to be said about Dan Tothoroh and his history because he did write some very outstanding things. As the years went by he was asked - he was asked by Garnet, as a matter of fact, if he could dramatize a special story for the Mountain Theater. So in 1921 he did write "Tamalpa" and...

CE: I imagine that play has been repeated because of its subject.

MC: It's been repeated - it was our particular show of the Mountain and was repeated many times and Dan was always very entertained by the fact that people thought his legend was the real legend of the mountains, the Indians had, you know, that it came from Indian legends, but he conceived it, you know, from his own imagination and it's quite a story and we've done it a number of times there and Dan was always very happy to see it presented. He wrote among other plays that were done there, he had another we all enjoyed that was one of the favorites and that was "Rough and Ready." And that was a western story of California, very well adapted to the mountain. He wrote the "Flamenca," Spanish play we mentioned, those three in particular, and in the latter years when I worked closely with him, he adapted most every play we presented there to the Mountain Theater. We did "Alice in Wonderland," "Alice Through the Looking Glass," we did "Kismet," "Rip of the Mountain" was his own adaptation again, "Robin Hood," "The Pied Piper," and so on. So he was our great playwright.

CE: Is he still alive, Marion?

MC: Yes, Dan is now in San Francisco and I understand he has just given all of his marvelous historical memorabilia to U.C. Berkeley's historical collection. His total file of pictures, scripts and letters.

CE: You mean, to Bancroft?

MC: Yes, to Bancroft. And a great deal, I'm sure, must be said there. In fact, I have been asked to add to the notes at Bancroft.

CE: Marion, could you tell us a little bit about that?

MC: I certainly would be delighted to tell you about my more personal contacts with Dan. I go back to these early days of '25 again when I mentioned Virginia Whitehead. Virginia was a very close personal friend of Dan Totheroh as well. Although I never met him at that time, I heard about him all the time. But he had gone to New York by that time and Virginia herself went to New York with her sister and established a special study group for children in creative drama at Carnegie Hall, and they saw Dan Totheroh all the time in the New York experience and I would hear about him from other mutual friends. That same 1925 group - I met another couple, Paul and Elsa Hyman. Elsa was a very gifted actress who played - she was a very sensitive poetic woman. I was very impressed in those impressionable years by the performance of Elsa and Paul Hyman in the strolling players which enacted a scene in pantomime for the queen and I thought they were sensational and gifted people. So I then, through keeping up an association with Elsa over many years of my life, would hear more about Dan's great successes in New York in the theater. His plays were being presented in major theaters. Later he came and adapted and wrote an original play for motion pictures, in fact. He was involved in the motion picture business. His brother was Charlie Chaplin's photographer and he went everywhere with Charlie Chaplin and Charlie always had to have this brother of his to do his photography. Now, following that, Dan was in the Carmel Peninsula - Monterey, Carmel. He was directing the Wharf Players in Monterey. He had property there also and that was a period of time when the Mountain Play was going through some rather desperate changes. I can remember we were having a very hard time continuing with the play. I believe Al Pinther was trying to hold it all together, and I believe it was through Al Pinther's efforts that we got Dan Totheroh to come up here in residence to take over the direction and adaptation and writing of the plays.

CE: What year would we be talking about?

MC: This would be 1957. Dan made his residence, then, in Mill Valley for a number of years and following that he directed the play each year from '57 right through to 1968, every year. Now I had the privilege of working very closely with Dan in those days and it was a very sentimental, close association because I think we, and Carol Aronavici, were really the only ones working on the shows who had been part of the early days, so we had always so much to reminisce because he also thought so much of Garnet Holme. And he had been an actor in Garnet's shows on the mountain in his very youthful days. He played the Pied Piper, for example, in 1922, you see, and there are stories and pictures of him playing lead roles on the mountain so that was how he first became acquainted with Garnet Holme. So we still keep up an association. I try to see Dan when I can. He's very, very sentimental about the Mountain Play. It's probably the part of his life that he loves the most and he loves to talk about it and I often sit and talk with him about it. I think it was a very interesting background, too, on my husband Sam Hayes, who later became very active in the radio field as a reporter of the news and as a sportscaster. He had a very public life and he traveled a great deal in the west and was very active as a speaker for many events. But he said in his later days that the great loving thing that he looked back on through his whole life including all of that wide experience, was the Mountain Play. We all seem to have this sort of devotion to the beautiful outdoor experiences we had there and how great it was to play on that mammoth stage to all these people.

CE: There was no room in that environment for any smallness of nature; it just seemed to evoke the best.

MC: Well, there really isn't - those of us who are still around still maintain this great sentiment. We like to just go up there sometimes and just sit in the theater and see it peopled with all those plays and all those times, you know, still, and it's a lovely part of life to look back on; beautiful.

CE: What a rich experience. Well, Marion, you mentioned earlier a name, Pohli.

MC: Emile Pohli, yes.

CE: Austin Ramon Pohli.

MC: Yes, I think we should go into that--

CE: Who was he?

MC: Emile Pohli was Garnet's stage manager on the very first production in 1913. He was a very capable young man. He worked with Garnet in his U.C. group and he helped Garnet manage the show and the actors and so on, the way stage managers do. So what happened in the next year - let me see here - the very next year, Emile [Austin] Pohli had an accident. He was a climber. He was in Yosemite Valley climbing and he fell and he lost his life there and everybody was very shocked by it. And a decision was made then to inter his ashes on this huge rock, which overlooked the theater, and it became known as Pohli Rock. Now there's a plaque right on that rock now to these two men. Emile Pohli - The plaque to Emile [Austin] is toward the front right by the path but to find Garnet's one has to circle the rock, it's sort of hidden, you don't know where it is. And so that is how the rock came to be known Pohli Rock and I've had an old tradition of going up there and putting wildflowers on that plaque the day of the play - but I always feel like Garnet's hanging around.

CE: Tell me, there's another name, Mrs. D.E.F. Easton. Who is she?

MC: Mrs. D.E.F. Easton. She was undoubtedly one of the people responsible for the early success of this big project. She was a very capable lady; she was very gifted in drama--

CE: Did you replace Mr. Pohli?

MC: She was - No, not actually. She was really the secretary-manager of the play itself.

CE: I see.

MC: She was the manager of the show and she was very well known in San Francisco as a clubwoman. She was an actress who enjoyed amateur theatricals and she was married to Dr. Easton who was the house physician at the Whitcomb Hotel. Dr. Easton was very

proud of her. And when she began to take hold here with the management of the play, he began to work in the press books and paste up the clippings and started the marvelous history books that we now have kept through all these years.

CE: These are the ones you have in your possession?

MC: Yes, they're the ones we have right here today. Effie managed the play and worked closely with Garnet Holme through many long years. I knew her very well in '25, '26 and even later in 1930. I played again in the "Sunken Bell," and we did all the rehearsing at the Whitcomb Hotel on the roof because of the Eastons being there. And I remember going down to their room looking through the press books and being so thrilled by it, never guessing that the day would come that I would be in the management, too. I was at that time simply an actress.

CE: Well, then these books are the property of the Association?

MC: Yes, well, now what has happened - I should mention, too, that we have another name that must be mentioned very strongly and that is Mr. Al Pinther. Mr. Pinther had a beautiful residence at the doors of Kent Woodlands for many years up until the time of his death and he was a great lover of the out-of-doors, a great hiker, a great outdoorsman. He was a member of these early hiking clubs that backed up the first Mountain Play and he has told me that he took tickets at the very first performance in 1913. After that he served in every possible capacity, finding workers, finding helpers, helping to manage. He was not theatrical at all but he served on the management side. He always told me he and Effie worked together with Garnet and the three of them practically ran the whole thing and he was the president for some fifteen years after old Dad O'Rourke died. Dad was the president for a long time and Al took over after him. And up until his death, after he had retired, Al always wanted to know every last detail about the Mountain Play. I used to go to visit him when he was no longer getting about too well and recount to him everything that was going on at the Mountain Plays. But again, you see, there's another dedicated person to sentiment and it seems that we all have been. Perhaps it's the passing time, I don't know. The history books went from the hands of Dr. Easton into Al Pinther's hands. He had them in his office in San Francisco for many long years, right there. When he retired from his work, he took them to his home and he had them in the house and eventually he was willing to pass them over to me so they would be more accessible to the work and I've had them now for I guess maybe six or seven years.

CE: What is your intent to do with them?

MC: Well, the Association has decided now that it would be wise to put them where they can be permanently kept as historical memorabilia of this wonderful project so it was decided now to give them to the Marin County Library California Room.

CE: And they will be in the California Room, I presume -

MC: So I intend to check them over and get them - to see if there's any pictures that need to be replaced in there and then I will be turning them over there.

CE: Wonderful. Well, you know there's, in our judgment, in Marin no finer depository for this type of thing than the California Room at Civic Center because it is a grade A building, it is under security, it can be locked, and you have to think objectively of what is the best depository for this kind of material.

MC: Yes, this is true. Well, I favored Marin County because it's so close to the culture of this County, it seems that this is where it should be.

CE: Well, that's why we are doing this Oral History Program, for its archives.

MC: Right, certainly.

CE: Now looking over the years of production from 1913 until the present, I see there was just one interruption and that was during the years of World War II, from 1941-1942 through 1945.

MC: There were actually two - 1924 there was an epidemic of hoof and mouth disease and the area was closed that year. During the war years I believe they must have had camps or something -

CE: Well, the Federal Government took over the area for security reasons, I understand.

MC: Oh, I see. So then from '42 to '45 there was no production there. What happened to me was Al Pinther and I had continued an old association although we had not seen one another for some long years. Occasionally I would get up to see the Mountain Play if I happened to be in San Francisco (because I was living in Southern California). But he asked me if I would come and work on the Mountain Play Board of Directors. I had come back to live in Marin in 1958; 1958 was the year I returned to Marin after being away for quite a long time, so he asked me to serve on the Board and I did that for several years here also working as production manager and then I became president of the organization and continued my work as production manager up until 1969 and 1970 and '71 I still worked as production manager for the show. Since that time I've sort of passed the work on to those who are now functioning. They tell me what's going on and I always am invited to come to meetings but it's been very difficult the last few years. We have run into certain very difficult problems. I would say even when I was president there was a great discussion every year as to the type of play we should have. What will appeal to the general public the most? I was always for doing the classics as we used to do. Not everybody favored that, some people wanted more contemporary material; some people wanted the plays to appeal to families with children, like doing "Alice in Wonderland" and plays of that nature. Others of us felt we should do plays of dignity that were more classic. So we had a hard time sometimes making decisions about what we would play. The audience was not following to the degree they used to. There were so many other things going on in May. We were having a hard time meeting our budget. Now the Board

never favored an expensive admission so we were always trying to keep the price very low and we did not always meet our budget costs and we had now established a very expensive sound system with sound engineers and expenses were mounting and we were not really - we were beginning to fall back in our financial situation. Then of course at the same time I felt it was important to record the history so we spent a good deal of money printing up this history in 1970.

CE: The one we are holding today?

MC: Yes. We printed several thousand of them on a very nice quality paper and very beautifully laid out - we never spared any expense on it so that was, of course, an amount we did not replace with the sale of the books. I was going all through the school system. Fortunately, having been working in many of the schools, they welcomed me in the Superintendents' offices in the various districts, and I went around with thousands and thousands of little brochures to promote the Mountain Play that were handed out to children in every school in this County. And it was quite a trying thing to do. We had to count out - To make it easier for the school, we had to count out and bundle, in little bundles, exactly the number for each teacher's class. You can imagine the amount of work that was. So we would bring that whole thing to each school district and they would send them out to the individual schools and I think that probably helped a lot to add to our attendance. It was a lot of work. We had a hard time also getting strong talent. You know, we had auditions and then we would always try to find strong amateur talent because we never had a professional.

CE: Did you draw upon any of the local resources like the College of Marin?

MC: Well, you see that department was just beginning to be active during these years and what we did in '69, I actually went to the Drama Department and I interviewed them because I found they were going to produce "The World We Live In" as a theater production under the direction of Robin Jackson. And "The World We Live In" had been one of our fantastic shows. We used to call it "The Bug Play" - It has to do with - It's a total cast of insects and it has one man, a vagrant, who observes the insect life as analogous to the traits of human beings. Fantastic play. I played in it myself. My son, Ron Hayes, played the lead in it when we did it in 1955 and that was another sentimental thing, my own son grew up to play the lead on the Mountain, which was delightful for me. And so Robin Jackson repeated his play on the Mountain at my invitation and we added quite a number of other players from our group, and so 1969 was really a College of Marin show. Now they brought a new dimension to the theater because it was coming into a time in the '60s when all these new ideas of theater were beginning to break and some of the older members of the Mountain Play Association felt that play was - had sort of a modern touch to it that they didn't too much like. It was a little bit contemporary with all the youth who were acting in it and we returned the next year to our traditional "Tamalpa" under the direction of Dan Tothoroh. But I was forever searching here and there and inviting people to audition and looking for new members on the Board who would work with us and for us. And it seems to me that there has come to be now a kind of a general feeling amount Board members that maybe it's time for this beautiful

tradition to pass. I feel this quite strongly. Last year, for instance, there was a musical event and there was no admission charged and various talented musical groups from around the County were asked to come together to perform and they had a very pleasing day there, but it wasn't theater; it was a music day. So I don't know whether it's possible with great effort to muster up some of the great energy it takes to put this back together as a play or whether we even could staff it. It takes a very big staff back stage and it's all-volunteer.

CE: I understand so fully what you're saying, Marion. The thing that saddens me and, of course, you've had the personal involvement, is when you look back at those years of 1913, '14, '15 and reading from your pamphlet when your first Board, and your, with Catlin and O'Rourke and then the second vice-president, William Kent, who was the honorable Congressman from this County who has given so much and the dreams that they had.

MC: Right.

CE: Now, I wonder if you would get into the record here something about the start here when Congressman Kent made his contribution. He owned the land, I understand?

MC: Oh, yes, oh, my. Oh, my. Well, Congressman Kent - Of course, we never would have had this wonderful thing at all without the efforts and interest of Congressman Kent.

CE: He owned the land, which included the amphitheater -

MC: Yes. He had great holdings on the land that sloped up into the mountain and it included this particular area where the theater became established and he was extremely interested in the project from the very beginning and so he actually became the second vice-president in 1914 when it was organized, you see. Now also he had not only donated to the funds to establish it, but he also named the theater after his great friend, Mr. Cushing.

CE: Sydney B Cushing?

MC: Sydney B. Cushing. He wanted the theater to be named the Sydney B. Cushing Memorial Theater. And Mr. Cushing was the president of the railway, which went up the mountain, that wonderful Mount Tamalpais Railroad with the gravity cars - I guess, were they gravity cars? What were they? I remember the little engine, puff, puff, puffing and -

CE: Well, I understand that he deeded the site to the Mountain Play Association with the understanding that a play be given each year for twenty-five years.

MC: Yes, that's right and that's what happened.

CE: Then what happened in 1928? Mr. Kent died in 1928 and then the Park System enters the picture and --

MC: Right. Could I turn back to something here?

CE: Yes, certainly.

MC: Mr. Kent deeded this land to the Mountain Play Association in trust and the Mountain Play Board appointed three trustees from its ranks, John Catlin, Daddy O'Rourke, and L. C. Dam. Now there was no state park at this time; there was no state park plan until '27, and there is something notable here which was drawn up as a resolution in 1915 which I'd like to read from and I think it is very nice to record it. "Whereas the Mountain Play at Rock Springs, Mount Tamalpais, Marin County, has become permanently established as one of the great annual outdoor dramatic events of California, and whereas the Mountain Theater, the scene of this annual performance, is unrivaled in beauty and scenic grandeur and peculiarly adapted for a mountain play, it should therefore be preserved for all times as a public park for the diversion and inspiration of all the people of California and especially the bay cities." So that is what happened. Now in 1927 the State Park System was established and it was in 1926 that Mr. Kent passed on. I would say that probably from its inception until his death he was very closely interested in the work of the Mountain Theater, I know. It probably is a good time to bring up again what happened in those first early days because when they organized the group in 1914, their first meetings were held in the offices of the Tamalpais Conservation Club in the Phelan Building in San Francisco. Now the Mountain Play offices remained there, I believe, for some lengthy period of time but one of the reasons that this took fire with such enthusiasm was it was totally backed by the people who were members of the Tamalpais Conservation Club, who were members of the Alpine clubs, who were the hikers who loved the out-of-doors, and these people came out in droves to fill the cast with group players. Now they were not actors but they had unbounded enthusiasm and they loved to be in the costumes and this is what we're missing again today. You see, we're missing the back-up of this really large group of dedicated people. Now during the years I was the president I used to just really love to come forward before the play began. And I used to think of Effie Easton because when I was young, she always came out in a white dress, a white hat and white shoes, I can still see her, and greeted the audience, and I tried to carry on that tradition. So I would always greet the audience before the show.

CE: Well, Marion, I think the Association was indeed fortunate to have you in the position as their president for those eight years and we want to thank you very much today for sharing with us the story of this remarkable organization. And I have a feeling somehow it will not die and you will contribute in some way to see that it carries on.

MC: That's a good thought and I think you're inspiring me.

CE: Thank you very much.

MARION HAYES CAIN - Part 2

CE: Tell us, Marion, how this remarkable theater evolved from its natural setting way back in 1913 to the beautiful amphitheater it is today. What was it like in the early days when you first became acquainted with it?

MC: Well, I think as I mentioned earlier it was a natural landscape, sloping down toward the stage and so people just hiked in on the trails and sat themselves somewhere on the hillside and eventually thousands came together. We all just sat close together solidly on the hillside to watch the plays. And your seating was not too comfortable and very often you'd find yourself sliding slightly down the hill, and it was a source of amusement to all of us. But we always enjoyed it just the same. It became evident I think as time went by that there should be something more permanent established there. And - Some of the nature lovers and the hikers began to put some natural growth around the theater and plantings. They also began the beginning of the scenic theater which it now is in around 1931. There was a local landscape artist by the name of Emerson Knight. He had been engaged to work out a master plan for a more permanent theater and I see from our histories that some of the native rock was obtained from road excavations and some money had also been set aside to begin the first rock terrace. So that there was a sharp cut made down toward the stage and that was all planted by Mr. Pinther and others in natural wild iris and other natural plantings and there was a trail established then slightly above the theater and the first rock structure was put in. Now it was not until 1936 that this was completed and it was in the process, as you see, for about five years. What happened now was that the Mountain Play Association became aware that a permanent, better theater was going to be needed and so in order to obtain the help of the CCC group, which was established in that time, we deeded the land over to the State Park System in return for which we received the aid of the federal groups that came in and were employed to do the natural work of digging out all the stone from the environment. Every bit of that stone that's seated there has come from this natural environment and they had tremendous winches that were employed because those boulders were tremendous, some of them, and they were all set into place. The work went on for some years and I think the whole theater is a tribute to the combined efforts of Emerson Knight, plus the Board members, plus the CCC and the government agencies who worked so hard to give what now is considered a million dollar theater. I think it would be very good to say that how we got into the conservation work from the CCC was through the efforts of Stanleigh Arnold, who was a member of the Kent family. And together with Emerson Knight, they secured a friendly interest in Washington to obtain the work of the CCC groups and that work was going on for some years. When we had the plays, things were put aside and the winches and all were there but you see it was some years before it was finally completed. I think lately now we're beginning to notice some of these stones are becoming unseated and when the heavy rains pour down in the winter, we've been looking over the environment and beginning to feel that some repair work probably is going to need to be done before too long there. But it is an absolutely fantastic amphitheater. I have always said and I do feel it's one of the world's most outstanding theaters. I don't believe it could be - I don't think, really, that there is another theater that is like it or as beautiful. I hear about outdoor theaters in different parts of the world but even at Hemet, which I have gone to visit which is considered an outstanding production, it has nowhere near the beauty of this theater.

CE: I suppose even in Greece --

MC: Really, it's just something.

CE: Tell me, Mrs. Kent, have you been up there? Do you have any particular reminiscences you'd like to share with us?

AK: Well, just as Marion says, it can't be beat; it is a wonderful, natural theater. I have been there when the fog was low, like a backdrop to the show and then burned off as the show went on so that San Francisco and the Bay Area came on as a natural backdrop. It was a beautiful, beautiful, sight to remember.

CE: You mentioned earlier something about Alice Eastwood.

AK: Well, that's where I met Alice Eastwood. I went with Mr. and Mrs. Kent and Mary Elizabeth Parsons and another woman whom I did not know. I was new to California at the time. And then I found out that it was my dear friend Alice Eastwood who became my dear friend forever after that. She knew every plant on the mountain, of course. She was the Curator of Botany at the Academy of Sciences and she had been with this mountain, and everything they do on the mountain she has been a part of it all her days in Marin, I guess. She had a little home in Mill Valley. We walked down the trail and I didn't know until afterward what a wonderful thing it was for us to have Alice Eastwood walking that trail with us on that partly rainy day coming down from the mountain. Never, never, forget her.

MC: There was a little slogan we always used to put on the programs, "Early morning fog means sun on the mountain." And you would be driving up and the fog would just be lying like a blanket of white and you come up there and park and then walked over the little hill, down to the amphitheater and lo and behold, the sun was shining on that spot. Really remarkable.

AK: Yes, it is just a beauty.

MC: I can remember times when the audience sat through a light rain, even, and stayed there. It was a lot of fun, yes. But certainly - one of my other reminiscences I think it's fun to recall was that when they were quite elderly, Virginia Whitehead and her sister at Dan Tothoroh's invitation, came up to the mountain to be part of the audience and I introduced them from the stage and they stood and they were just so happy to be there. They had come back to California. They were both quite elderly, and before too long both of them had passed on. But also I used to ask the audience, "Is there anybody here who had hiked the mountain in 1913?" And there'd always be a few who stood up enthusiastically and said, "I was there," you know. And some of these sturdy old hikers, we still have a few of them, and they go up on the mountain and they come to the rehearsals and they like to come down and tell us - you know, what year they were there, what year they were part of the outdoor hiking groups that performed. They have that great sentiment for the mountain just as we do, really. They feel it's their mountain.

CE: You know, Marion, I'd like to quote from a book I have here, it's called Tamalpais, the Enchanted Mountain and it was published, 200 copies were published, in 1946. And it's a collection of impressions of Tamalpais gathered one night at West Point around a fire.

MC: Oh, yes.

CE: And you talk about hikers climbing the mountain. In the 1860's for a period of four years there was a man named William H. Brewer who has written the book Up and Down California. Now this man was a member of the United States Geological Survey Party and he climbed Mount Tamalpais on March 28, 1862 with an associate, Charles F. Hoffman, and I'd like to quote his impression: "Along the crest of the ridge," wrote Brewer, "the wind was high and cold fog closed in and the snow enveloped everything. When the highest crag was reached the fog cleared and the beautiful landscape opened through the fog. It was grand. More like some views in the Alps than anything I have seen before, those glimpses of the landscape through those foggy curtains." And greatly impressed, he and his friend remained two hours on the summit and then started for Sausalito ten miles in a direct line south. Now, that's written by a scientist.

AK: Many plants have been named for him.

CE: For William Brewer?

AK: Brewer.

CE: Oh, yes. His book is fascinating and it's now in paperback. Have you read it Marion?

MC: No. I haven't. I must do that. That sounds really very wonderful. Well, there's a lot of wonderful theater and wonderful sentiment and love of nature, which has really fallen on all of us through that beautiful association with the Mountain Play. I always feel that those of us who were part of the early experiences should continue to inspire people to have more of these fine performances there. I know there are many problems to be worked out. Now, for instance, the early days, the hiking was so prevalent but we are returning now to a great love for the out-of-doors and to the activities involved in hiking, backpacking, we see our young people everywhere. I think the youth of today would again pick up the torch and see the necessity of continuing some beautiful function such as the Mountain Play and the out-of-doors. They would hike to it. Part of our problem has been the parking. Of course, as the years went by the roads were improved. Now most of the people who attend the plays drive there.

CE: Well, that is true, more and more people drive. Do you think if there were some other means of getting there - we no longer have the railroad, we don't have the stage lines, and we don't have (maybe) the number of hikers but people want to get up there.

MC: I think we are talking about one of the major problems of today. For many years now after the roads were improved and people were driving, it was a custom for the cars

to all park in the very large Rock Springs Meadow, which lies just before you come to the gates of the Mountain Theater across the road and over is the Big Rock Springs area. So we were always allowed to park all the cars there. We had a big staff that would manage the parking and park part of the people in a smaller parking lot around the turn of the road, which is on the other side of the theater at the back. But now in recent years the conservation groups have been really anxious to talk us into not having parking in that meadow. I know while I was still president that a number of people from this group would talk to me about it and they felt we should be better conservationists and not park all these cars in that gorgeous meadow. So we were thinking about it but finally they brought enough pressure to the Water Company so that a decision was made that we could no longer park cars in the meadow. Now that posed a tremendous problem a few years back and we've been trying to cope with that problem ever since. You can park cars along the roads providing they are sort of off the road, but you see you would have to park so far from the theater, it would be a very long walk over to the theater which some people just don't want to be involved in. I believe they have also tried a system of picking up people in various places and bus-shuttling up there.

CE: You know, Marion, I just thought - the buses, Greyhound, runs during the summer. Isn't it true, Mrs. Kent, an arrangement where you can get a bus in San Francisco and go out to the new Point Reyes National Seashore at a very nominal rate? Now this runs through the summer.

AK: Yes.

CE: I was wondering, if the Greyhound people were approached, if possibly special buses could be run for those days - that day of the Mountain Theater play. Is the bus close to the theater?

MC: Well, let me tell you. We've had a very good connection with the Greyhound people for years. They have always run special buses to the Mountain Play. People could board them in San Francisco or in Sausalito or Marin City or somewhere and would be delivered right up to the theater - to the gates of the theater and then the buses would park all day and we used to feed the drivers lunch along with our players and then the buses would depart at a certain hour. However, there were only a few buses that made that trip each time. You see, if you are talking about a large audience of some thousands this is getting to be quite an involved procedure.

CE: So it really means working out the logistics now in the 1970s and the rest of this century. Working out the logistics of getting the people there.

MC: That's true, that is true. That is really one of our major problems. And, of course, it's a matter, too, of continuing to have the close cooperation of the Park System and the rangers and the people who have charge of the National park - of the State Park because it is a State Park since we deeded it to the State and we no longer have the control of it. We must obtain permission from the State Park people to play there. We write an official letter every year requesting permission and they have always given us preference on

dates. But I sometimes have a feeling that it represents such a problem and involves so much activity that they would just as soon we discontinue it - I have a feeling.

CE: Unless we can re-create this desire of hikers to come and have it an all day outing by hikers, and bring the picnic.

MC: Of course, again you would bar a great many of these families that have come for years with children. They come with whole families to the play, and elderly people, or people who no longer can hike that distance. It's a lot of uphill work, you know. So that continues to be - and the financial problems that have arisen. Our budgets today compared to the first early budge of \$1,000, it's just amazing how the budget rises.

CE: It would probably be \$10,000 today.

MC: And I think we would have to raise our prices and so the present Board is of course faced with some very major problems to work out.

CE: Do you feel in your judgment that if the State Park Service would co-operate with the logistics, it could be worked out? If people could somehow arrive there - that for one day's interruption this could continue if the Park would co-operate - whoever could come up with the idea of how to get the people there. Don't you thing they would co-operate?

MC: Well, I think it's one of the major problems. I'm conversant with the fact that there are many other problems and that it becomes necessary for us to continue to look for gifted people who are willing to staff all these committees as well as act in the productions without any salaries. So I don't know, it's a difficult time. People who spend this much time at something today feel that they would like to be reimbursed for their efforts.

CE: Well, that brings up another question, Marion. I don't think you've discussed the amount of rehearsal necessary to put on such a production. Now it's given one day in May, how many months prior to that -?

MC: We usually begin in February and we have auditions and then the rehearsals were held in various places through Marin through the co-operation of the school systems often in the public schools, in large rooms. The school system has been very good to us.

CE: Well, is there a dress rehearsal per se in the amphitheater before the production?

MC: Oh, yes. Well, you see April sometimes is very rainy but usually the groups would go up in April and work every Sunday on the Mountain for some weeks on end, up until the time of the show. It was traditional that it always be the third Sunday in May but in latter years we have played it twice. We played Saturday and Sunday and I believe two years ago they even had two weekends, two Sundays.

CE: Well, Marion, I can't help but think, wouldn't you agree, Mrs. Kent, that somehow Marion with all her years of association so directly with this marvelous Mountain Play, that we will find some solution to these many problems. Don't you agree?

AK: Oh, I hope so.

CE: Now, meanwhile, I think this marvelous collection of scrapbooks that Marion has in her possession in her home - I believe I understood you correctly that the Board has agreed that this marvelous collection will go and become part of the archives of the California Room at the Marin County Library at Civic Center. Is that correct?

MC: That is correct and I plan to bring them over there now very soon.

CE: Well, I think this will be a marvelous depository for this extraordinary memorabilia that has been collected over the years. Just think, we are talking about the efforts of some sixty plus years, aren't we?

MC: Yes.

CE: And that is one thing we know that will occur, and we can save this tremendously rich experience, which has given so much to the heritage of Marin County. Marion, we want to thank you so much for allowing us to come into your home today and share with not only Mrs. Kent and I but with future scholars and historians of Marin County, this wonderful story which you have given us.

MC: It's been my great pleasure to recount some of these experiences to you.

CE: Thank you so much.