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INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY SHARP, EVELYN SHARP, & MARGARET SHARP
DEGRAF

by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent
May 14, 1978

INTERVIEWEE: Margaret Sharp DeGraf (MD), Dorothy Sharp (DS), and Evelyn Sharp (ES)

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: May 14, 1978

TRANSCRIBER: Marjorie Hoffman

CE: Today is Sunday May 18, 1978. Continuing the Oral History program of the Marin County Library at the Civic Center, this is Carla Ehat. Today I have the pleasure of being in Carmel-by-the-Sea and I am at the residence of Miss Evelyn Sharp, a retired teacher, who lives at Seventh Avenue and Seventh Place. Joining us today are two of Evelyn's sisters. We have Margaret Sharp DeGraf who lives at Carmel Valley Manor, Box 6087, Carmel, the eldest of the four sisters. And we have Dorothy Sharp, who lives in Rossmore at Walnut Creek, California, down for the weekend, number three daughter. And missing today from our little group is Pauline Sharp Covey who lives at number 218 Castenada, San Francisco. That's out in Forest Hills, the second daughter. Now, what is interesting to us today is that there is a wonderful old house in San Rafael, still standing, located at 333 G Street and it's a handsome house and it's known to most local residents as the Bradford House. And I think to begin the story today we will ask Margaret, number one daughter, to tell us why they call it the Bradford House and what, a little bit of the history of the house, her family and what brought them to California. Good afternoon, Margaret.

MD: Well, the house was built in 1884 by my grandfather, William Bushnell Bradford. He was a business man in San Francisco. He was one of the founders of the Alaska Packers Association and followed, worked for that firm as treasurer until about 1912. They lived in San Francisco, where my mother was born, and they

had -- He had an attack of asthma and went over to San Rafael. And as I remember my mother telling the story, or my grandmother, she sent a telegram to them in San Francisco, "Slept all night. Pack up and come over." And they lived in several places in San Rafael before this house was built. To me, a couple of the backgrounds of the house are rather interesting. My grandparents were both only children and they had one daughter, and that house was built for three generations to live in. My great-grandparents, Daniel Flint Bradford and his wife and the other parents, the Harrison Obstents who lived there also and my mother, I believe was eight years old when the house was finished and they moved in and mother lived there for 63 years.

CE: What was your mother's name?

MD: Grace Bradford. In 1897 my father and mother were married in that house and for a brief time, they lived in San Francisco and within a year they moved back to live there until they moved to San Francisco in 1946. I was born in that house. My sister, Mrs. Colby, was born at an aunt's in San Francisco, but Dorothy and Evelyn were also born in that house.

CE: Margaret, would you be kind enough to give us your birth date?

MD: Third of January, 1899.

CE: Thank you.

MD: Then my mother and father were married in the bay window of the living room there, and my husband and I stood in the same bay window and were married a generation later. It was as I said here, a very gracious home. My grandparents entertained, as I remember as a child, in the old fashioned way. I can see my grandmother with the high combs in her hair and the silk dresses. As a little child, I would hang over the banister and watch.

ES: That's what I remember, when my family were having entertainment and we hung over the banister. That was such fun. Upstairs we were sent to bed, of course, we never were part of it but we were allowed to sort of sneak around upstairs and peak at what was going on. I remember that for Mom and Dad but I don't remember it from Pudda and --

MD: Well, I remember one thing that used to interest me, we had in the old kitchen stove what they call a water back. It heated water for the boiler. And there was no such thing as a pop-off valve then and I can remember after the Chinese cooks -- there were always two Chinese help there -- had been working all day, the boiler would suddenly come to a boiling head and word would come upstairs, "Open the bathroom faucets!" Out came a regular steam bath. That was great fun.

CE: Well, so many of those early residences were on large property. You had a couple of acres, at least, didn't you?

ES: Just about one full acre.

MD: On the back of the property was a large barn that, where the man who worked on the place lived and that place was later turned around on the property and moved forward and Mr. and Mrs. Colby built a colonial house out of the old barn.

ES: It wasn't turned around, honey.

MD: No, it was moved forward on the lot.

CE: Is it there now?

MD: It's there. It's 232 H Street.

CE: I see. It goes through on the other side of the block

MD: Beside the house there was a very, very large elm tree and beyond that we had a greenhouse that was something we always enjoyed as a child.

CE: Well, you had horses and ponies then as children?

MD: No, we never did. I think. Did they have horses, Dot?

DS: They had horses before we were youngsters, but the thing that I remember, the first car that we had was in 1906.

MD: I think my mother was the first person, woman, to drive a car in Marin County.

DS: In San Rafael, at least.

MD: Well, in San Rafael.

CE: It's continually referred to as the Bradford House but when your mother, Grace Bradford, married Dr. Sharp, they stayed there after their marriage, is that correct?

MD: After a very brief time in San Francisco, and my father said he did object to be known as Grace Bradford's husband as he was for a while. My grandfather was one of the early mayors of San Rafael.

CE: Do you know what brought them other than -- Well, they came for their health. But what brought them to California, did you ever find out?

MD: No, I really don't know.

CE: Evelyn, do you?

ES: Well, wasn't it the story of Jim Fisk and that he was ruined financially. He had been quite comfortable. Well, you tell it.

MD: Well, I think I have it written up a little more here in this --

CE: All right do you want to find it?

MD: No, I think I can tell it. He and his father and his father-in-law were all members of the notorious Jim Fisk firm on Wall Street. In fact, I have an old chest that has F. B. and Company and I forget the date, which they used for informal filing papers, and they lost everything. My mother had a sister who lived only a short time and mother's story was when her sister May was born they lived on Long Island Sound in a home with seven children and she was born about two years later in a little house on Filmore Street, with no help.

ES: It wasn't seven children; it was seven in help.

MD: I said seven children; it was seven in help.

CE: I see. Well, you're talking about the panic of the 1871, or 2, in there?

MD: Yes. So then Mother was born in San Francisco in '74.

CE: Well, what is this line of descent from William Bradford?

MD: Well, we have his family tree.

CE: That is the line.

MD: Yes.

CE: You go back about --

ES: To the second governor of Plymouth Colony.

MD: Well, I think we are about ninth in line

CE: Ninth in line, ninth generation

MD: We feel we are rather unique in a way.

CE: In what way?

MD: Our parents, both my father and my mother were born in California. My father was born in Sacramento. Dr. Sharp, he became a dentist in San Francisco, and I'm

going to boast just a little bit further. My husband's parents were both native Californians and my two sons were born in San Francisco.

CE: The room is full of them this afternoon and it's a rarity. Barbara Curley also and my sister and I were fourth generation.

MD: Another interesting thing about the building of that house, all the finished woodwork inside that house and good amount of the furniture there was made at San Quentin Prison. It had these large wooden fireplace mantles, you know, and in the dining room was a beautiful sideboard that matched the mantle in the room. And among my grandfather's things, some years ago, I found the bill of sale for the three major fireplaces in the — And the back parlor, the dining room, the smaller ones in the bedrooms, a bedroom set and this buffet and the whole bill came to something like \$1,085.

ES: Well, I think it's very interesting, isn't it, that the house cost \$18,000 to build.

CE: I'm glad you mentioned that because that is so important. Now do you have any bills on anything of that nature?

MD: My son has the original bill for all the work that was done at San Quentin Prison; my son in Alexandria.

CE: In Alexandria, Virginia. Would he be willing to Xerox that for the file on this?

MD: Well, I guess. He pasted it; we had it put inside of a plastisized and he has it on the door.

CE: Oh, I see. They call this sort of material "ephemera," and it's very interesting to archivists. Anything like a check written out a hundred years ago, anything covering the transaction is very interesting for researchers because this house particularly, it was very large, 4,000 square foot at least and was it three stories?

ES: Three and a half, really.

CE: Three and a half.

MD: There was an open basement.

ES: On the first floor there was an open basement for part of it; it's about four feet, and then as it gets to the back the lot slanted off so there were the servants' rooms down there. There were two servants' rooms. My dad's wine cellar was down there at it was a honey with all the little bottle holders, the whole works. So it was four and a half.

MD: Then on the main floor there were the front and the back parlor.

CE: Well, as you entered you came up the front staircase. Was it the traditional Victorian layout with the central hall and the front parlor on either side?

MD: Back parlor.

MD: No, they were on the same side. You entered the front door; the front parlor was on the left with a crystal chandelier. The dining room was on the opposite side. In back of that was what we called the butler's pantry and various other cabinets back there and then a tremendous kitchen. Then a door at the end of that hall, opened to a back hall, and a second staircase and a servants' dining room which was also used as children's dining room when we were small.

ES: You've left out the library.

MD: Then back where what we called the second parlor was --

CE: The second parlor on the left behind the first parlor was the library?

MD: Was called a library.

ES: We called it that because that's where the books were. It wasn't really a library.

CE: Now were you living there any time when your grandparents were still alive?

MD: Oh, yes. In fact my great-grandmother, Mrs. Bradford, lived there until after my sister Pauline was born.

__ : I was four when she died.

MD: But she was living in Hood River at that time. She became rather senile and that scared Pauline and me and they decided she could go live with a distant relative in Hood River. My grandfather Bradford died in 1916 in San Francisco and my grandmother then came to live with us all the time and she died in 1921. So my life with my grandparents was very, very happy.

CE: Well, as a youngster, going back to the turn of the century, do you personally recall the lifestyle that might have been enjoyed in the late nineteenth century by your grandparents? For example, I remember your neighbor Harry Rennebaum, who we spoke to recently, was talking about you could get a good girl to cook and live in for \$35 a month from Sweden or some such place. Do you remember any data like that? You mentioned earlier you had Chinese?

MD: Yes, we had Chinese help.

CE: What kind of help are you talking about?

MD: A nursemaid, cook and a second boy, then we had a nursemaid for us girls

CE: Would that be Chinese?

MD: No, a white woman.

CE: That would be Irish, perhaps?

MD: Well, Bea Nichols was the name of the woman we had for many years.

CE: What about the garden?

MD: And we had a German gardener, Fritz Ely, who had a nursery in San Rafael, after he left.

CE: Did all these people board with you?

MD: Yes.

CE: Where could the Chinese live?

MD: In the basement.

ES: The Chinese lived in the basement, Fritz lived in the barn. They had five rooms. He had two upstairs rooms in the barn.

CE: By that time, as children, were there any carriages left? Were there any horses left?

MD: No.

CE: So you might have had an early motor car in there and that was it.

MD: Yes.

CE: There were hitching posts, I presume, still left on the property?

ES: The mounting or dismounting block is still there.

MD: You can see it in the picture.

ES: It has sort of gotten pushed a little bit aside.

CE: I see it. We have this photograph; the house was remodeled and converted into seven apartments after World War II.

Right here in the --

MD: That's the block.

CE: Explain what that is for those who don't know.

ES: The block, well it was for -- The carriages would drive up to it and as you'd step down so that you didn't step in the mud and so forth, you'd step on the block. Or for horse mounting, saddle horses, you'd bring the horse up to the block and stand on the block and get into the saddle.

MD: And we as little children used to sit on that block to wait for father to come home from the 5:15.

CE: Well, now father was commuting to San Francisco, is that where his practice was?

MD: He was a dentist in San Francisco

CE: Where was his office located?

MD: 350 Post Street.

MD: Union Square Building.

ES: After the earthquake it was 350 Post.

MD: At the time of the earthquake, he had a front parlor of a brownstone house. I think it was at the corner of Sutter and either on Powell or --

CE: That's where his office was?

MD: That's where his office was.

ES: Margaret, tell the story of Pudda and Dad at the time of the earthquake.

CE: What happened? Who is Pudda?

ES: Pudda is mother's father.

MD: My grandfather Bradford.

CE: Was he alive? He was still alive in 1906?

MD: Yes, he died in 1916. I nicknamed him when I was a child. Pudda and Mina were the names I gave my grandparents.

CE: Well, where was Pudda living at that time?

MD: Well, he was living with us in San Rafael.

__ : We were living with him!

CE: Oh, we're back at the Manor House, okay.

MD: Well, when she makes that remark, I'm going to -- I have a daughter-in-law who is very, very, wrapped up in genealogy. She goes one night a week in the archives building in Washington and is looking up family, tracing them now, and she tried to find my father listed in the 1900 census. And she said, "Margaret, I found you. You were a year old." But my father was listed as a dependent, or a resident, in the Bradford household, he was not listed in his own name.

CE: I see. Poor Dad. Is that the story you were going to tell?

MD: No, no. But the story I was going to tell showing the difference of two generations. They tried to get to San Francisco the morning after the earthquake and were turned back at Sausalito, Tiburon, I guess it was at that time.

CE: It depends what railroad you took. Did you take A.W. Foster at Tiburon or did you take --

ES: Oh that's another story too about the --

MD: Well, anyway, my grandfather looked up and said, "That is the end of San Francisco," and my father, as a younger man, he said, "That is the beginning of a new San Francisco."

CE: Bravo, bravo.

ES: But now, tell them about A. W. Foster and the wedding, the car. When Mother and Dad were married, they were given a private car to go anywhere on the A. W. Foster line.

CE: That was the Northwest Pacific.

ES: I think they went to Palo Alto or somewhere like that.

CE: Well, Harry Rennebaum, your childhood neighbor across the road from you, talks about Mr. Foster riding often with Mr. Robert Dollar and he 'd have to go down to the station where the NWP would meet down at Tiburon and take the ferry. Mr. Dollar would get on the other one --

MD: Well, I can remember as a child at 6:30 in the morning, the rising bell rang. The Chinaman at the foot of the stairs --

CE: What kind of bell are you talking about?

MD: It was a beautiful silver bell that he rang at that time.

CE: It wasn't a triangle.

MD: No, it was a beautiful silver bell.

ES: Sterling silver.

MD: Mrs. Colby has it. And then at seven o' clock it rang again and that meant breakfast and then, up to the house would come an old carry all to pick up my father and my grandfather and they rode from 333 G Street down to what we called the Main Station.

CE: Was that the West End?

MD: No, no they went to the Main Station.

CE: Oh, the C Street station?

MD: Down Fourth Street, the Main Station.

CE: Then he went to the NWP, not the North Shore one that went to Sausalito?

MD: That wasn't built until -- West End Station wasn't built until -- At the time I was a very --

ES: I don't know what she's talking about except, I mean Northwestern Pacific is the only one I ever knew.

CE: Well, Harry talked about the North Shore that went down through San Anselmo and wound up in Sausalito.

ES: That was the Northwestern Pacific. But one was a short cut and one was the longer way. And one was sort of a milk stop and the other, you know, was the quick one.

MD: One went down to the Main Station, as we called it, which was down between Fourth and Third Street.

ES: It's still there.

MD: Tamalpais Avenue. Was the main station and you took?

CE: Is that the building in which houses the Whistlestop today?

ES: Probably. It is right at the end of the Tamalpais Avenue; it's past Lincoln Avenue. You keep going down Fourth Street --

CE: Where all those railroad tracks are.

ES: Yes, right, where those railroad tracks are.

CE: Where the road used to initiate to the NWP to Eureka until the discontinued the line.

MD: Yes. Well, that was the Main Station; you took a direct train.

CE: Well, now, when your father sent, it was electrified, I presume. It wasn't -- Was it still steam?

MD: I remember the old -- But I don't think it was electrified. It wasn't electrified until after I came along because there was not much electricity. I remember when they put the electricity in the house. I remember sitting with my grandmother, watching them putting in the chandelier in the dining room.

CE: Well now, would you describe, because you are the eldest now Margaret, describe the day as a youngster in this atmosphere. You talk about the Chinese rising you, at what hour? First call?

MD: Six-thirty.

CE: Now, that meant you get up and get dressed. Now there's no electricity then, you have what, kerosene, do you have gas?

MD: Well, gas, wood and coal stoves entirely.

CE: Wood stove. Was there a stove in every room?

MD: Oh, no, fireplaces, fireplaces in every room.

CE: All right, now who would see to that -- Like Harry was telling me, one of his chores as a young man in a household would be, he said, "I didn't do much but I had to have all those wood boxes full of wood for each of those fireplace and/or coal stoves for every room in the house."

MD: Fritz Ely, the man on the place, the gardener, brought the wood for the fireplaces and then there was a chute for the ashes to the basement.

CE: A chute for the ashes. Okay. Now you got the word and then you had to get up. What would you -- Would you dress yourself?

MD: Well, I don't remember. Of course, we had a nursemaid at first. After mother had the girls, such a large family of girls, she gave -- They changed from Chinese help to the average Irish type so she could leave us alone with a girl, leave us alone with the women. And then we had to dress ourselves and I remember we had to make our own beds before we went to school.

CE: Did you have a pleasant room?

MD: Well, we three girls had one room. Evelyn arrived much later in the family, you see.

ES: I don't even remember being with you.

MD: At the time of the earthquake, the morning of the San Francisco earthquake --

CE: Okay, what do you remember about that?

MD: Well, I can remember the house beginning to shake.

CE: You're seven years old.

MD: Yes. I remember father coming in and grabbing the blanket off my bed. "Wrap this around you and head for the front door." Our front hall and staircase was lighted by a skylight above and that was shaking but didn't break, it was a double skylight.

CE: That was an advance in its day.

MD: Over the second floor and over the third floor. And then he picked up a blanket the same way and put it around Pauline and he picked you up.

DS: I was carried.

CE: And how old were you, may I ask?

DS: I was three. And I was carried. And he didn't pick up a blanket, he picked up an overcoat in the hallway going down and wrapped me up in that and put me in a chair on the lawn away from the chimney.

CE: Do you remember this?

DS: I remember that.

CE: Or are you telling me what they told you?

DS: No, I remember it and I pulled out the newspaper that was in my father's pocket and I can remember to this day the scolding I got for taking something out of a pocket of somebody else's coat.

CE: Even though it was your father's?

DS: Oh, we were brought up very strictly. To open up a pocket or a drawer that belonged to somebody else, open my mother's purse, wouldn't have been thought of. Yes, when I see the kids today, you know, pouring through their mother's purses, it just shocks me to death.

ES: Yes, I wouldn't think of opening anybody's purse. Well, we were brought up very strictly.

CE: Was the house damaged at all? Any damage? Nothing to speak of? In San Rafael?

MD: I believe one little vase fell. They did replace the chimney tops.

ES: I think a very interesting thing is the glass cabinet. It shows how the house was built. Dot still has the cabinet. It's, I would say, six feet high, it has a rounded front with rounded glass and it's one of the old fashioned cabinets, and in it all the cut glass was kept in the family. And here stood the six foot or more cabinet, with steins on the top of the cabinet, and it was narrow, because I don't think it's more than two feet at the widest and that stood during the earthquake.

CE: And nothing in it was disturbed?

ES: Nothing in it was hurt. The cabinet stood. The house was built to last and that's why it's lasted.

CE: Do you have any idea who: number one, who designed it? Number two, who built it?

ES: No.

CE: Margaret, do you know?

MD: No, I haven't any idea.

CE: You know, this information gets lost somehow. We recently found out who the architect was for Dominican Convent, Thomas Welsh. They didn't know it until last week when we interviewed a woman, Alice Costello Nason, and it was her grandfather who was the architect and she had a photograph and the whole story of it. But you don't know who built the house?

DS: I remember the blueprints in San Rafael, but they were probably burned --

MD: Well, my grandfather kept a daily diary. I can see the red leather diaries that he kept and the first thing he did every morning was to go out and read the barometer and the thermometer and after his death mother burned them.

CE: Why, I wonder?

ES: Well, speaking of burning I think - Of course, I think I must be thinking of money or something, but we had on the inside of the house, instead of shades and curtains and things, they had shutters. And they were all oak shutters and they all

had all the hardware on it was carved brass or whatever you call it; the brass that's all --

CE: Yes, probably hand wrought brass.

ES: And when the house was modernized, they were taken off and they were all put in the barn. And in 1932, when my sister was married and was to take the barn and make it into her home, those were all taken out and put into a pile and burned.

CE: You mean when Pauline --

ES: When Pauline was married in '32.

CE: What did they do that for?

ES: Well, they were in the barn; they were in the way.

MD: They had to make a house out of it.

CE: It's a little sad and like we're all guilty of destroying some of our heritage. Do you have any other recollections about the 1906 earthquake and fire, Evelyn?

ES: Well, I remember Dad's cabinet in his office on Post Street, that he had a big blob of glass that had dental instruments melted into it. In other words the instruments weren't melted; the glass was melted around the instruments. It always fascinated me. I always wondered what happened to it. Any idea?

MD: Following the earthquake, father opened an office in San Rafael for a matter of six, or eight or ten months. I don't remember how long.

CE: I was wondering, these businesses and professional people had to relocate, so they came to Marin?

MD: He came to San Rafael. The San Rafael home was often rented for the summer. I believe it was one of the Dinkelspiel family had rented it for that summer and they had already signed the lease.

CE: You are talking about 333 G Street?

MD: Yes.

CE: Well, where would you live the rest of the year?

MD: Well, we rented it for three months in the summer and moved to San Francisco or went away.

CE: I see.

MD: Well, we had a place in Bolinas, not until after that though. It was built around 1906 or '07.

ES: I don't remember the earthquake very well.

MD: So, no, you weren't born until 1911.

CE: Babe, over there, is excused for a minute.

MD: So anyway, they had signed the lease and they wanted to get out of San Francisco, so they allowed us to keep the back half of the property. There was a little stream that ran through it and we kept the property back of that and we built a platform, tent house, out there in the backyard and we lived out there for the three months of the summer. They built a shower in connection with the barn. The only person who slept inside was the gardener because he had his place in the barn. That's where we spent that summer.

CE: Dorothy, you don't remember that, do you?

DS: I remember very little of it. I remember being there.

MD: The Dinkelspiel children were about my age; they were very nice to us.

CE: Well, now we talked earlier, you talked about the Alaska Commercial Company.

MD: Alaska Packers.

CE: Oh, Alaska Packers. Now what was the other name in that company, Armsby?

MD: Well, no, but he was a business associate. It was a large firm.

DS: It was absorbed by Del Monte.

MD: Del Monte bought Alaska Packers out. It was a stock company. The Alaska Packers fleet was very well known, the sailing ships in the museum in San Francisco.

CE: Yes, now we have the *Balclutha* as one of the prototypes.

MD: That was one of the ships my --

CE: And the majority of them used to anchor out in Oakland Estuary, didn't they?

MD: Yes. My grandmother told us, I remember, that he had a bad attack of flu or cold, as they called it then, and he was supposed to stay home. According to my grandmother, he said, "I can't, I'm the only one who knows what the inventory going to the ships for Alaska" for that summer. Carrying it in his own head, can you imagine that nowadays? And he went several summers to Alaska with the fleet.

CE: Do you have any diaries or any memorabilia of these years, Margaret?

MD: No. Dorothy has some knowledge of things.

DS: Who has the book of our great grandfather, the log that he had going around the Horn?

MD: Well, that's in the Maritime Museum in San Francisco.

CE: Oh, Karl Kortum, San Francisco Maritime Museum.

MD: Yes.

CE: Well, that's where something like that should be.

MD: Daniel Flint Bradford, but we had it in --

CE: Daniel Flint Bradford.

MD: Was my great-grandfather.

CE: Was your great-grandfather, and he was involved in this?

MD: He came around the Horn.

CE: And he was involved in this initially, this enterprise?

MD: I don't know. My grandfather first went up on the Sacramento River and that's where -- Cannery -- I don't know a group of men, one of them was one of the Tubb's family from San Francisco, and there was a man by the name of Thorpman, a San Francisco businessman. I remember those names very vaguely.

ES: Well, Marshall Madison was interested in the Alaska Packers.

CE: His name sounds so familiar.

MD: Well, the Madison's lived in San Rafael.

CE: Margaret, and Evelyn, et al., I'm kind of curious about the early schooling you received in San Rafael. I know there was a Miss Stewart's School. Possibly in the early '20s there might have been the beginnings of the Katharine Branson School. Do you want to tell us a little bit, Margaret?

MD: Well, Miss Stewart's School was started in the barn of Georgia Winteringham's home on Mission Street and my mother was one of the early students there, Georgia Winteringham who also lived at the Manor and passed away there was very proud of the fact that that was the first place and then later --

CE: Where was it physically located? Could you tell us the site today, identify it with some other building.

MD: Yes, it was on Mission Street on the corner of Nye. I think there is still a Nye Street.

CE: Mission and Nye.

MD: Yes.

CE: And that's where Miss Stewart's School was?

MD: That was where it started. I was the first of her grandchildren to come back to the school, and I entered there in 19 --

CE: Whose grandchildren?

MD: Well, Miss Stewart called me first of her grandchildren.

LS: Oh, because she was --

MD: Because they had been mother's teacher. And I entered -- It was then it had two teachers.

CE: How do you spell Miss Stewart?

MD: Stewart.

CE: And where did she hail from?

MD: I have no idea.

CE: We don't know anything about that, except we have some photographs of the school and the complete student body.

MD: Well, my first teacher was Edwina Down and she married --

ES: No, her sister married -- She was a Coffin -- No --

CE: Well, maybe it will come to you later.

MD: Well, maybe the next time. I thought she was a real old lady; she must have been all of 19 or 20 at the time. Of course, there is no preparation --

CE: The cruelty of youth.

MD: This little country school -- But she gave me a good background. After three years there I entered the fifth grade of the public school. My favorite day of the week was the first Friday of the month when we had to recite a poem and I could spout them by the page. Pauline entered the school and Mother tried for two weeks to get her to learn four lines and she ended up by getting up and saying, "Little things on little wings bear little souls to heaven," and sat down.

CE: Great achievement. Just two of you girls went to Miss Stewart's?

MD: We went there briefly.

CE: Well, what can you tell us about the creation of the Katharine Branson School?

ES: Well, wait a minute. That's not Margaret's.

MD: That was beyond my day. By that time I had graduated from the public school and on to Mills College.

CE: You went to Mills?

MD: Yes, I graduated from Mills.

CE: What year did you graduate?

MD: 1921.

CE: 1921. Was Dr. Reinhardt there?

MD: Dr. Reinhardt came to Mills in 1916 and I entered Mills in the fall of '17, one of the first classes to move into Olney Hall. And you came later.

CE: Now we're referring to Barbara Curley, her friend.

ES: I went to the Little Red School House. Now who was doing that, I don't know. I just know I went to school.

CE: Well, that was Katharine Branson.

ES: No, this was way before Katharine Branson. She didn't come until --

CE: Oh, I think she was sent for and they had to start somewhere, because I heard that --

ES: Oh, they picked up the Little Red School House because I stayed in the same school when she came.

CE: All right, where was this Little Red School House? Because this is the beginnings of KBS. Was it on Fifth?

ES: It was on Fifth and --

DS: It was just in back of Dr. Stanley's house.

MD: Well, that was the Stewart's School.

DS: Yes.

CE: Oh, they took over the Stewart's School.

ES: Well, my first teacher was Miss Hewitt; she was a kindergarten teacher.

DS: Whistler. Whistler was the name of the man who had it and he was connected with the Seminary at San Anselmo.

CE: Little -- He had a baby, yes. Well, to keep the two schools distinct, Miss Stewart's School was Miss Winteringham's property up on Mission near Nye and what became the Katharine Branson School, Dorothy, was located a block lower and further --

DS: Well, Miss Stewart's School moved from Miss Winteringham's. It moved to the property that was bounded by Louise Boyd and the Dollar home and the library

CE: Well, that's where the City Hall is today.

DS: Yes, that property was there --

CE: Is it within the realm of possibility that what became Katharine Branson School was the frame work of the original Stewart's School?

DS: I don't know whether it had anything --

CE: Evelyn, do you?

ES: Well, I know that I was going to a school and all of a sudden it became Katharine Branson School.

CE: Well, that might be --

ES: I know that when I was in the fifth grade it was Katharine Branson School but I don't know at what point it became Katharine Branson School, but the reason I know it is because they made me stay two years in the fifth grade and I've never forgiven them.

CE: Well, is it in the realm of possibility to say that this building could have evolved from Miss Stewart's to the Katharine Branson School on Fifth Street? Dorothy, do you think so?

DS: One of the same buildings was used for Katharine Branson School that Miss Stewart had had.

CE: Well, that's good to know.

DS: That was used.

CE: No doubt in your mind there?

DS: I'm sure of that.

MD: Well, that's completely beyond my day; I was out --

CE: The reason we're interested in this is because the school has reached its fiftieth year and they are very anxious to get some of this history and nobody is left around to tell it to them. There is nothing written down. And there was a question as to what the outside was painted as to what it was known as The Little Grey School or the Little Red School. They told me at one time they only had one student, Helen Hind mentioned. And they would talk in the halls and the parents came --

MD: The first class was Lewis Martin, Carol Rulefson. These were the boarders. And I was there.

CE: You were there?

MD: I was there the year that it started in San Rafael.

CE: What year would that be?

MD: I think it was 1921.

CE: Well, you were there a little before Helen Hind Fortune?

MD: Well, I'm older than Helen, of course.

CE: Well, did you continue with the school when it was relocated to Ross?

MD: One year.

CE: One year.

MD: But they bought a home between the public library and Miss Stewart's School and that's where they put the boarders. That's where we had our classes. I can't remember whose home it was.

CE: Well, you mentioned Dr. Stanley. Are you talking about Leo Stanley family?

MD: It was in the back of the property that the Stewart's School was when I went there. And they, at one time, looked at our big home and Mary Menzies' grandparents' home which was next door as a possibility of using that as a basis for the Branson School.

CE: The Menzie's home is a parking lot for Falkirk. Dorothy I want your judgment on something. There has always been a Carnegie Library at the corner of E and Fifth. In the early 1900s it was there. Now that abutted against what property, do you remember?

DS: It was a very large and beautiful home.

CE: Was that Parker Wood's?

DS: I thought it was Parker Wood's parents' home.

CE: Which was on Fifth?

DS: On Fifth and ran through to Mission.

CE: Oh, I see.

DS: And the Dollar home was across the street, and Louise Boyd's home was across the street. Maple Lawn. So I'm not sure, but that is my recollection.

CE: Now where did that put what we call the beginnings of the Katharine Branson School?

DS: That was the beginning. The Katharine Branson School, under Miss Branson, started in that building, that big home next to the library.

CE: Which you think is the Parker Wood residence?

DS: I think it was, but I'm not sure.

CE: Does anyone know where we might get a photograph of that?

DS: I haven't the faintest idea, except through the Marin Historical Society because Parker Wood was --

CE: A director, he was a director for some time.
Dorothy, what happened? How did you complete your education from there?

DS: I didn't complete my education.

ES: She went around the world.

DS: I went around the world.

CE: Oh, you started to tell us earlier.

DS: Margaret Dickson, Captain Dollar's granddaughter was going on a trip with the Dollars and it was the time that her father was being married. He married Catherine Rogers, and they thought it would be easier for the bride to make her home and not have the oldest daughter there, so they were taking her on this trip and they thought it would be nice for another young person to go along.

CE: For her to have a companion of her age.

DS: So Mr. Dickson asked my father if he could send me, if Catherine Dollar was willing to take me, so I launched off on an eight month trip

CE: Now what year would this be?

DS: 1923.

CE: And you sailed from San Francisco to the Far East?

DS: No, it was when Captain Dollar was starting the round-the-world service. The ships to go round the world, and we left from Seattle and went to Japan.

ES: What, did you go by train?

DS: To Seattle yes. And we didn't pick up the first Dollar ship until we were in Singapore.

CE: And how old were you, may I ask?

DS: I was 19. I had my nineteenth birthday on that trip.

CE: What an adventure.

MD: You were in Shanghai with the Harold Dollars for Thanksgiving.

DS: Thanksgiving and Christmas I was in Shanghai.

CE: Now is Harold Dollar the father of Alice Dollar Hayden?

DS: Yes.

CE: And he was in charge of the Far East.

DS: Have you come across Virginia Dollar yet?

CE: Not as yet, not as yet.

MD: McCormick, Virginia Dollar McCormick.

CE: And after eight months' tour you came home and then what did you do? Did you go to work?

DS: I just came home. I lived with my family in San Rafael and I, oh years after that worked at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

CE: Well, your family were always Episcopalians as I recall, you were deeply involved in St. Paul's and I had the pleasure of meeting you a few weeks ago when St. Paul's was celebrating its 110th anniversary. And what did you do at Grace Cathedral?

DS: Anything that anyone else didn't want to do.

CE: Was Bishop Block there?

DS: Oh, Bishop Block was there.

CE: Did you work for Bishop Block then?
DS: Oh, I loved him dearly. I was working there when my mother passed away and then he'd just gotten back to work after having a heart attack and it was sort of two needs were met. I didn't have anything to do and he wanted somebody to do things for him and I drove him all over the diocese.
CE: And how large is the diocese?
DS: From San Rafael, Novato, I think, to San Luis Obispo.
CE: Inland to the San Joaquin Valley.
DS: No. I don't know.
ES: Along the coast.
CE: Up and down the coast, mainly.
ES: For instance, my present minister down here in Carmel is Jerome Holister and Dot reminded him that she was at his ordination when Bishop Block --
DS: I used to drive Bishop Block to ordinations and all sorts of things and it was a wonderful experience. I thought that I'd gotten someplace when he'd break out in song and sing when I was driving. I thought that if he had that much confidence in my driving, I'd arrived.
ES: We have an interesting story. I don't know if you want it --
CE: Yes.
ES: Bishop Block was, undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable men I've ever known. You know, he had a home here in Carmel.
CE: Didn't know that.
ES: Well, he did, and he was down here very often, and I had him here at the home several times and I --
CE: You've lived here, tell us how long, Evelyn. Twenty-five years?
ES: Well, I have been here 25 years, yes. It was shortly after I had lived here, that he would come up for dinner and I had cuckoo clock over here on the wall and it seemed it never happened that Bishop Block didn't make some profound statement or say grace or something that it didn't go coo, coo, coo. So I got so, whenever I invited him, I turned the darn thing off, because it got to be a thing.
CE: Who succeeded him?
ES: Bishop Pike.
CE: Bishop Pike. Did you work with him at all?
DS: No.
CE: You say that with some firmness. By your own choice?
DS: Yes.
CE: I see. And then, who succeeded Pike? Meyer?
ES: Meyer.
CE: Is he still here?
ES: Yes.
ES: I don't know if you want this, but I'm a member of St. John's Chapel, which was the chapel built by the Crocker family for Del Monte.
CE: Now, wait a minute, are you talking about down here?
ES: Yes.
CE: And where is it located?

ES: Over in Monterey, right across the street from the old Hotel Del Monte. And when the Crocker's used to come down -- this goes back to my grandparents time, when they used to come down for the summers or was it winters -- they spent winters at Del Monte for long periods of time -- and the Crocker's did not like to come down here and not have their own church, so they built a chapel that became Del Monte Chapel and it still is so called. And that's where I go now and we are one of the continuing Episcopal Church. We have withdrawn from the diocese and we are one of the groups that will not accept the fact that we will give up our prayer books.

CE: Do I read correctly from your statement that there are certain things, as a result of the ecumenical movement, that you do not agree with?

ES: No, it's not the ecumenical movement, it's the whole Church which has been infiltrated seriously by people who are trying to upset the whole -- Not only Episcopal religion but all Churches, so --

CE: And you're a traditionalist.

ES: I'm a traditional Episcopal member of the church and 100% for the prayer book and its uses, because the new book they're putting in has actual heretical statements in it.

CE: Well, I would like to discuss this further to this point. You mentioned earlier, there was a period in your life where you left BKS and you were at Dominican, prior to going to Mills. Now that was a strain to your parents who were Episcopalians but --

ES: I was a better Episcopalian in those days than I ever was in my life and some of these days right now.

CE: As a Episcopalian going to a Roman Catholic School, in retrospect, were you pleased with the education you received there?

ES: Oh, yes, yes.

CE: And did those sisters make it difficult for you, in any way, to ameliorate these differences in your religious faith?

ES: No. In fact I had a very interesting situation. After I graduated from Mills, I did not have anything that I could do. I was a zoologist and there was nothing, no work for me.

CE: Well, Evelyn, what was your major?

ES: Zoology.

CE: Zoology at Mills?

ES: Yes. And I wrote to Dominican, I asked if I could go there and be a teacher, in the high school in biology and get my teacher's credentials at Dominican. And Mother Raymond was there, and she was somebody, and she said, "Yes, by all means." So I came, I took my course in college, and taught in the high school at the same time.

CE: At Dominican?

ES: Yes. And then I taught for four years more.

CE: Well, you must know all of those great ladies; do you know the Barry sisters, Sister Martin and Sister Justin Barry?

ES: Yes, I have pictures of her in my book here.

CE: We had the pleasure of talking and interviewing them just this year and they're wonderful archivist now. They're in charge of the archives of the Dominican congregation.

ES: They're great people. Sister Isobel was principal of the high school at the time. She and I did not see eye to eye. I was a biologist, I liked things like -- I taught heredity, you'd be interested to know, in Dominican Convent.

CE: You did?

ES: Yes, and I got by with it. And I had a little difficulty, because my kids got a little impatient and I wanted to get some rats in the lab, things like this, and I had to work at it very slowly and finally one the youngsters went to Sister Isobel and said, we want to have some rats in the lab, and she said, "You don't want to have a barnyard in your lab." We had a little trouble but I did finally get them. But the thing that was interesting was that one day I was called out of class. I don't know whether you want this on tape or --

CE: Yes.

ES: But I was called out of class by Sister Isobel and, in the hall, she said, "We won't need your services next year." And I went back, and faced my class after being told I'd been summarily dismissed, and I managed and got through the hour, and then, the next day, with just as much courtesy as the day before, she called me out of class again, and stood in the hall and said, "Mother Raymond says you're doing such a good job that she wants you to stay on," and, like a fool, I did. So I stayed on for another year. But she and I really didn't get along. And speaking of Alice Dollar, Alice Dollar was in my class. I had known her very well for years, and there was a little problem And that kid worked her tail off. I've never seen a child work harder in a class than she did and she got an A, but Sister Isobel changed the grade, and I've never forgiven her. Because you don't change the grades the teachers give.

CE: No. Well, here we have three members of an old family in Marin since the 1870's

MD: 1884.

CE: 1884, I beg your pardon.

DS: Well, that when the house was built.

CE: But they were summering over there and curing asthma etc., which, by the way, was not a unique thing. The Lilienthals had a place and Gerstle's had it over there.

DS: By the way, something we haven't said is that Dad was Park Commissioner for years.

CE: Park Commissioner?

DS: Gerstle Park. He was there for the formation of Gerstle Park.

MD: He was the one that got the Gerstle's to give the park to the city.

CE: The thought has occurred to me, ladies, that of all the 150 people Mrs. Kent and I have interviewed in the last years, with great modesty each of you has told from your vantage point a history of the Bradford Sharp family. And I see repeatedly the same selfless contribution that so many families made to Marin and their contribution was in San Rafael. I want to thank you, Margaret, for sharing with us your reminiscences that you have written about the history of your family, the Bradfords of Massachusetts, and I want to thank you, Dorothy, for sharing with us your recollections of your early days there and your association with the Dollar's,

- and Evelyn I thank you for your outspokenness and your reminiscences of the Katharine Branson School, the Little Gray School or whatever. You've --
- ES: I'd like to say, just for a second, I'm sure that my sister Pauline is just sick not to be with us.
- CE: Well, we can contact her up in San Francisco, in Forest Hills. Do know that you have made a contribution and have added to the richness of Marin's heritage and for this we thank you very much. It has been a great pleasure to be with you this afternoon and not only share your stories but your warm conviviality, thank you.
- ES: Well, we enjoyed it too.