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INTERVIEW WITH WALTER BROWN

by Carla Ehat & Anne Kent
September 30, 1976

INTERVIEWEE: Walter Brown (WB)

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

DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 30, 1976

TRANSCRIBER: Marjorie Hoffman

CE: Today is Thursday, September 30, 1976. Joining me today is Mrs. Thomas Kent and we have the privilege of visiting Walter Brown. Now, Walter lives about a hundred miles from Kentfield. His address is Box 77, Highway 16, in Brooks California, which is in Yolo County. Mrs. Kent and I are up to visit with Walter today for many reasons. He was born in 1888 on the Albert E. Kent property in Kentfield and Mrs. Kent has been dying to meet him ever since she found out he lived up here. Good morning, Walter.

WB: Good morning.

CE: Tell us now, what brought your father -- Well first of all, he was in the Chicago area when he met Mr. Kent. Where was your father born?

WB: Well my father was born in Canada.

CE: How did that come about?

WB: He must have -- His parents must have come up there on the old underground during those slavery days and he was born --

CE: He escaped to Canada? His family escaped to Canada and he was born there?

WB: Yes, yes. Then when he grew up to be a young man he came down to Chicago, and there he was employed by Mr. A.E. Kent. And how long he worked there in Canada I don't know, but he came out to California with Mrs. Kent in, as close as I know, about 1871. And they first had a place in the northern part of San Rafael and then later on they acquired the property down in Kentfield, which at that time was Tamalpais.

CE: Well your father was very fond of the Kents, I understand.

WB: Oh yes. Father, he just felt like he was part of the Kent family and Mrs. Kent was very nice to him and used to allow him to take his family, after he married. He married my mother in Petaluma.

CE: Oh, he married a local girl when he came out here?

WB: My mother was born in Santa Rosa, in Windsor just out of Santa Rosa.

CE: What was her maiden name?

WB: Her maiden name was Grace Johnson. And her mother had come out here in the old covered wagon days. So they married, as I say, in Petaluma and then for a while my mother worked in the household, in the Kent household, and when the family came along, well, then the Kents provided a home.

CE: On the property?

WB: Provided a house, right on the property, right about, well, I'd say about what would be about two city blocks from the stable where my father had his, was in charge of the horses.

CE: Was that your father's main responsibility, Walter? He was the coachman?

WB: He was the coachman. He was known as the coachman, and he had charge of Mrs. Kent's private horse and then Yankee and Dandy, which were the family horses, the team of jet-black.

CE: Well Kit was Mrs. Kent's private horse; it was a chestnut.

WB: Yes. And she used to drive her to Mrs. Kent's phaeton. That's when Mrs. Kent used to -- She went alone, then, and she drove and she used to go on. Sometimes she'd go to, go up to, oh, think they call it the Chapel, up there at Ross. And she would drive alone then. But they had their family carriage and at that time my father did the driving.

CE: We have photographs of that, Mrs. Kent.

WB: You have photographs of the --

AK: Just of the carriage.

CE: Of Mrs. Kent out riding with your father and a couple of her lady friends.

AK: This one is someone else, but you went in the same place. I don't think you ever drove before.

CE: Mrs. Kent is showing a photograph of the Dipsea Inn, over at Stinson Beach area.

WB: No, that must have been in later years, because I never went to -- I remember one time, Jim Barr, Jim Dollar, and Arthur Barr and Billy McGetty and I went over to Stinson Beach. We called it McKinnan's.

AK: That was around the corner.

WB: Yeah. But this must have been --

AK: There they are.

CE: There's a photograph of Yankee and Dandy.

WB: Yes that's the one. This is the kind that shows up. My father took a lot of pride in those horses. He kept them --

CE: Were they black?

WB: Jet black.

CE: Jet black. Beauties, huh?

WB: Oh yes they were beautiful. I'll tell you, they were one of the attractions there and they used to have a carriage dog, one of these Dalmatians, you know. You've seen those black and white --

CE: Yes.

WB: Carriage dogs. And he used to run right between them. And my father used to go into -- Well he did the shopping, you know. There's no stores; there's no stores out there at, well, short of San Rafael. And when he'd go in, the little dog would -- Sport was his name. He'd go in between them and you'd see these two big black horses and they were just beautiful and this little Dalmatian, old Sport, just going in between them. And it used to be children, you know, that we'd pass going on the way to San Rafael. Why, they'd come out and look and just wait to see those two beautiful black horses. And Sport, he was a smart dog. You know how dogs are. He'd run out. He'd just fall back and if he saw a dog, he'd go out there and run up and smack right into them and then run back. He'd just go on. It was really a sight worth seeing.

CE: That is something. Tell me Walter, now, you were born on the Kent property.

WB: Yes.

CE: Tell us about the other members, your brothers and sisters, other members of the family. Are you the first born?

WB: No, no, no. I'm down the line.

CE: You're down the line.

WB: Yes.

CE: Okay.

WB: The first one was Edna. She was the oldest. And then Fred, and then Julia, and then Grace, and then Walter, and then Ethel, and then Daniel.

CE: Daniel was the baby?

WB: Daniel.

CE: Named for your father.

WB: And then, that was all that was born in Kentfield. And there was one, Harvey, was born in San Rafael.

CE: Oh, I see. There was a time then when you left the Kent property and re-located in San Rafael?

WB: Yes, we left the Kent -- I don't know exactly. I know it must have been about 1896 because I know we were in San Rafael when the Spanish-American War broke out and we'd been in San Rafael. I knew well enough to know all, most of, the members of the Company D National Guard when they went off to war.

CE: Certainly.

WB: And so it must have been about 1896 that we came into San Rafael. I always understood that I was about eight years old.

CE: What are some of your earliest reminiscences of the Kent Family and the Kent property, Walter?

WB: The things that impressed me mostly was -- Well, of course I was very much interested in the stable where my father worked and then the vineyards. They had some wonderful table grapes out there and this home, the house that we lived in, was right across from this vineyard. I understood it was a four-acre vineyard. Mr. Ross, he was the head gardener, and he used to, in the grape season, he used to bring those table grapes into Martin's Store there at Fourth and D Street and we used to get -- He always gave us, when he picked, he always gave us one of these regular grape baskets of these table grapes. They had so many varieties we don't see now. They were muscats and sweet water and those grapes seem to have disappeared.

CE: But you enjoyed going out with Mr. Ross and --

WB: No. I -- Of course he was the gardener. No, I used to be around my father all the time. Then of course they had the cabin there for the Chinese farmhands. They used to keep two and three.

CE: Do you know any of their names?

WB: Lang was the one that I knew the best of the farmhands. And then of course I knew the -- There was two Chinese that -- On, he was the Chinese -- He was the cook. He was tall.

CE: Onn?

WB: On. O-n. I think that's the way, On.

CE: And he was the Chinese cook?

WB: He was, oh, he was with them for quite a few years. And then Fong was the laundryman. And then of course I remember Margaret, Margaret Stover well.

CE: Who was Margaret Stover?

AK: Housekeeper.

WB: She was, she was just the --

AK: Major Domo.

WB: Yeah. You might say my father was the right hand bower and Margaret was the left hand bower.

AK: That's right.

CE: Very good.

WB: Do you remember Margaret?

AK: Oh, indeed!

WB: Yes, she was quite the lady.

AK: Wonderful person

WB: Yes.

CE: Did your father teach you how to ride?

WB: What's that?

CE: Did your father teach you how to ride, Walter, horse?

WB: No. Yankee and Dandy were not saddle horses.

CE: Did you have any saddle horses?

WB: Yes, there was Mr. Kent's saddle horse and then there was a long, tall black horse, Prince was his name, and we always called him Mr. Savage's hose because Mr. Savage use to ride him most of the time.

CE: Who was Mr. Savage?

WB: Will Savage.

AK: Will Savage was one of the many cousins, along with Aunt Elizabeth, Mary Elizabeth Parsons, and Mary Sterns. All those cousins were brought up together with Mr. Kent like sisters and brothers.

WB: Yes, yes.

CE: Well, was Prince Mr. Kent's horse or Mr. Savage's?

WB: Well I guess they were all Mr. Kent's, but Mr. Savage used to ride. I think Mr. Savage came out on account of his health. He was a young fellow when he came out.

AK: He was the pet, I guess.

WB: He and I were quite friendly because I had a little velocipede and he used to chase me on that.

CE: A velocipede?

WB: Yeah, a little three wheeled --
CE: And he chased you on it.
WB: Yes.
AK: Yes, that was good.
CE: Well did you ever ride saddle horse yourself?
WB: They had a little pony.
CE: Oh, a little pony?
AK: Mary Belle.
WB: They had a little pony that Tommy used to ride. I was a little older than Tommy, I was about, well a few years older than he.
AK: Mary Belle was the pony, wasn't it? Mary Belle
WB: I don't remember the name of the little black pony. I guess they got it from the Fosters because the Fosters had a herd of ponies, you know.
CE: Yes.
WB: Well anyway, I used to ride that bareback and Tommy used to get on behind me. And Albert, he didn't ride too -- He didn't care too much for it but Tommy, he liked it. Then there was the old Pickles. I remember Pickles pretty well because Pickles was the one -- My father had to go back there in the hills one time and she shied at something and threw him and he had kind of a lame hip afterwards.
CE: And Pickles was another saddle horse?
WB: She was a saddle horse but she was an out horse, you know, for the farm, you know. Because you see, they always had some cattle on the place and -- Well Baptise or Jim Reynolds, whoever was there at the time, why, they used that for kind of a utility horse. And of course as I say, I told you that Mr. Kent's private horse was there.
CE: And that was Prince?
WB: No, no, Prince was the one that Mr. Savage rode, that Will Savage rode.
CE: Oh, well, what was Mr. Kent's horse?
WB: I know it was a little bay horse but I don't remember his name. I don't remember. We used to call it Mr. Kent's horse. And then Mr. Kent, I guess -- You remember Endo?
AK: He was gone before I came. I came in --
WB: Endo was Mr. Kent's nurse.
AK: Yes, he was Korean.
WB: Was he a Korean? We always thought he was a Japanese?
CE: His responsibility was taking care of Mr. Kent?
WB: Yes, he was just a valet or nurse, whatever you want to call him, and he was great on -- You must have some pictures that was taken by him because he always had that tripod and those -- Because at that time they used to have the tripod and the --
CE: He must have been Japanese if he's taking pictures.
AK: Excuse me. That's why these fancy -- The fanciest pictures in our album are all the Oriental's.
WB: Yeah?
AK: Yes. He took them, I'm sure.
WB: Yes, because I can't picture Endo without his camera and tripod. And --
AK: He took a picture of Jack the cook all dressed up. He took a picture of Ah Waw and Ah Ju; they're very dressy.
WB: Let's see, I guess that's --

CE: Where did you go to school when you came of age?

WB: Oh, I went to the --

CE: Did you go to the Ross Landing School?

WB: Well yes. You're pretty familiar with the country. Do you remember it was a one-room school house? It sat up there on that slope and I remember when I firsts went there Miss Gallager was the teacher. And then I think she left about the first or second year and Miss Kern was the next teacher. And then, at the time we left, they had started constructing a new school which was -- I don't know. It had more than one room.

CE: Oh, the second Ross Landing School was two stories, was quite elaborate.

WB: Well they were just starting the framework when we left and went to San Rafael. And I went to San Rafael and started at the B Street School, the old B Street School, and then when I got to the fifth grade, why, we came up to grammar school, which was on, right there, by the high school, right on Fourth Street between Shaffer and E. You see the old grammar school was here and the high school was right here on E Street. And so I never see the second school that was built. But we used to walk from there. I remember coming up that old dusty road. Dusty in summer and muddy in winter. But it was supposed to be a mile distance from --

CE: Tell me Walter, do you have any memories of holiday time at the Kents? Christmas?

WB: Well I remember Mr. Kent used to have, I don't say every year, but I do remember going over and being in that room. It would be about the southeast corner, and she'd have all of us children over and gave us -- The Kents were great on books and they had so many books that that was the present they used to give us besides, you know, the other smaller things, like candy and like that. But I remember so many books for the younger children.

CE: It seems to be traditional in the Kent family. Mrs. Thomas Kent who is here with us today does that to all her friends. Books are treasures aren't they Anne?

AK: They are indeed. And do you know, may I say, the Murray children have written a little essays when they were in that little one room school at Kentfield and in each one of them they mentioned our library has so many books. A long time ago --

WB: Yes, the library as I remember it was, in the old house, was on the south -- I think that was the office and the library. I know we used to think of it mostly as the office. I remember Mrs. Kent used to come down there and call to my father, out to the barn, "Daniel!" And she had a parrot. It was a parrot that could talk almost just like Mrs. Kent and many times that parrot hollered, "Daniel!" and my father would leave the barn and he'd come up there.

CE: What's the name of the parrot, Mrs. Kent?

AK: Her parrot was called Joe Boy, and you know he kept doing that down through the years. I dint come into the family until the first World War time you know, and the parrot was there. It belonged to Margaret; it was there, and a new chauffeur had come. And do you know, he learned that name and he called that man just the way Margaret called him.

WB: Was that the same parrot?

AK: Same parrot.

WB: Oh I remember that old parrot. "Daniel!"

AK: He made everybody so mad.

CE: Well when you went to school, Walter, and came home did you have to do chores, as most of us did? Or were you --

WB: Well I did --

CE: Probably helped your mother didn't you?

WB: Why, oh did a little. My mother -- When I was a little older, my mother wasn't one of these that thought a boy shouldn't do housework and my brother and I used to have our little duties on Saturdays: mopping and clothes-washing. At that time didn't have the washing machines, you know; it was the old washboard, and mother did the white clothes and I used to have to do the colored clothes and the flannels. And of course, different chores around the house, and so it has helped me out in my later years. You see, I take care of this place myself here now.

CE: Well eventually we want to get to how you acquired this property, but let's stay with the Kent family for just a little bit longer. What are your memories of Mr. Kent?

WB: Mr. A.E. Kent?

CE: Mr. A.E. Kent. Would you describe him?

WB: As I remember he was tall to me, because I was small, and he used to have, he used to wear these little felt hats, flat, and he wore that kind of hat all the time. He used to buy them by the box. They were just nice, soft felt hats. And he had gold-capped teeth, gold-capped teeth. I can remember those so well and he had gray white, gray or white, beard, you know. Of course Mr. Kent, when I know him, he was an invalid, you know, best part of the time and that's why he had Endo right with him all of the time. And in later years, the house that we lived in, when we moved out and went to San Rafael, why they remodeled that house and fixed it up for a retreat for Mr. Kent. Do you know where the house is on the property, Anne Kent?

AK: I wish we did know it. You don't -- Somebody --

CE: Was it near the barn or the other direction? Near the vineyard, you said.

AK: Well it was moved, wherever it was, I guess. And then we have one old house that was called the Dairy House, where the dairymen lived, and we always have heard from somebody, different people, that it was moved from one part of the place to another. It might have been that house. It's the oldest house on the place.

WB: Yes, well that must have been the same house. Excuse me. That must have been the same place because that house was on the road and as I understood that, that road went at one time, years back, had gone through, on over, right on through on over and hit the old Liberty, which was an old toll house way back over in there. And it went on over, I think, and hit the Bolinas Grade and went on over.

AK: The Eldridge Grade.

WB: But that house must have been the house that they speak of there, because here was the way it was laid out. Here was the Kent residence and here's the barn. I was going to make a little map.

CE: There's the barn, Mrs. Kent's barn that she remodeled,

WB: Here was that house, the home, and then about, oh, about a block or so from that was kind of a shack. Well, it wasn't much of a place where the Chinese laborers stayed.

AK: Well you know something? That house, your house, stayed there in that place for years and years and now, some people that Carla knows bought it, bought it at a terrible price, and made a new house but they incorporated some of your old house into their library, in the same place.

CE: Are you talking about the Scotts?

WB: Now, wait a minute.

CE: Oh so it's very close to the barn.

AK: And you know what else? The vineyard that was near it; the vineyard was near it, above it, and beside it, the big vineyard; Tom always said that was the oldest vineyard. That's where one of my girls has a house now.

WB: Oh, yeah?

CE: What's the name of that road, Anne?

AK: Well they call it Laurel now, but it had no name then; you see, it was all private. It was just a private road to the dairy and to the barn and --

WB: I can't see this. Now here is the old Kent house.

CE: Right.

WB: And over here, back over in here, was the house that the Superintendent, Mr. Richardson, lived in. And later on, later on, I think, Mr. Wolf Kent had that all changed over and they used to -- And the Will Kents had that place.

AK: Oh. It's the best house on the place now. The McCoys live there now.

WB: Well that was all after we left. But my sister Julia used to come out there, when she grew up, and she used to come over there and sew for Mrs. Will Kent.

AK: That's the McCoy house. That's pretty close to where I live now.

WB: Oh yeah?

AK: Yes, and it was -- The last addition was made to that house in 1906 when Roger was born. Roger was born in Chicago, you know, and it was the earthquake time and that year they put the big living room onto that house and it's the best house on the place.

CE: What's the name again, Mr. Richards?

WB: Richardson.

CE: He was the superintendent.

AK: He was in charge of all the buildings.

WB: Yes. He was the superintendent, Mr. Richardson. And I knew his whole family. Mrs. Richardson, always reminded me so much of Mrs. A. E. Kent.

AK: That's right. And there was Belle.

WB: Belle and Nellie and George and Charlie.

AK: George and Charlie are dead. And Lime was the other boy, Lime and Charlie and George.

WB: Those were the grandsons.

AK: They're all dead now.

WB: They're dead?

AK: Yes, it's too bad. But Richardson, he was responsible for the whole thing; that's right. Our children and grandchildren. In fact I think one great-grandchild lives in the place now, the new Kentfield place.

WB: Yes, I just wish I could see, could picture --

CE: We've got to get you down there Walter; we've just got to get you down there. Roger Kent came over this morning to see Mrs. Kent and brought some photographs he wanted you to see. Do you remember Roger?

WB: Roger wasn't born

AK: No.

WB: And my sister Grace, you know, went up to Tahoe to take care of Roger and Sherman.

AK: That's right. Now we brought those along and this one.

WB: Oh, gee.

End, Tape 1, Side A

CE: Now we've got some old pictures out there, and Mrs. Kent got these this morning from Roger. Oh, look at these.

WB: Freddie was down; that's my nephew. He was -- I guess Roger told you that he was --

AK: Well, yes, Roger said, "Oh, I met him," and I said, "No you didn't." This is a much older man. That must be Walter, that must be Walter in the picture.

CE: There is a picture of two youngsters.

AK: Maybe it's Freddie. Maybe it's Freddie.

WB: Who took this picture?

AK: I don't know.

CE: And it isn't identified unfortunately.

AK: Maybe Endo took it. They were in Alice's book.

CE: This is a handsome one of the front porch and there is a big dog. Do you remember that dog? It's not a Dalmatian but it's big -- Looks like a Labrador, a black Labrador.

WB: I don't remember them having a large dog.

AK: It might have belonged to Will Savage.

CE: And also there are a couple of little pups there, furry, small, a pair of --

AK: Aunt Elizabeth's dogs.

CE: Oh okay. Let's go back to your father for a moment. What were you going to say, Anne? Here's a photograph of him and he's fine looking man.

AK: And then we have some information from the Academy of Sciences and some pictures. And the Academy of Sciences has its magazine, *Pacific Discovery*, and back in '66 they were having, talking about the grizzly bear, and they found all kinds of information about the grizzly bear and among other things they found that Mr. A.E. Kent had one for a pet in Chicago. And they have pictures here, and turns out to be your father with Bob, the bear. And it's in this magazine, so we brought along a piece for you to keep. Now did you know Bob, too?

WB: Oh no, no, no.

CE: But did you hear your dad talk about Bob?

WB: No. When you're talking about Bob you're going way back, before 18-- around 1880s at least.

AK: So you said, tell what it was, how it was, that your father happened to have his picture taken with Bob.

WB: Well of course, I don't know any --

CE: Do you remember your father telling you about Bob?

WB: I'll tell you one thing I can remember my father telling me, was after they had come out here, they gave -- Bob, of course, had grown up. They got him as a cub, and so when they came out here they gave Bob to the Chicago Zoo. And so, about sometime

after they were out here, I don't know just how long, maybe a couple of years, my father went back to see his folks. We had relatives around Evanstone and Chicago. So he went back to visit and so one Sunday afternoon they went to the zoo to see old Bob because he was just like a pet dog with the --

CE: Sure.

WB: So away he went down there and of course it was Sunday and quite a few people were there. and so my father said he eased up to the edge of the cage and Bob was lying there. Of course, the people -- He was the center of attraction, you know that big grizzly, and the people were standing there looking and Bob was just laying there asleep. And so my father said he called him, he said, "Bob, Bob" and he said he just reared up like that and the people it just made an afternoon for them. And he came over and he pushed his paw through and put his paw out there on my father. You can imagine what it -- Of course the people couldn't imagine what was going on, you know. So that's one thing he told me about him. And then I had that tin type picture of him and he's got a little round cap on and Bob is standing up, over him.

CE: And he came from Mendocino County, I hear.

WB: Oh, he did?

CE: Yes. 1869.

WB: Sure, must have been because later on -- The picture I had - I don't know what happened to that picture, it got lost, and I thought more of that picture and I used to show it to people and I guess somebody liked it better than I did.

CE: Tell me, Walter, how long was your father with the Kent family?

WB: Thirty-one years. My father was with the family thirty-one years counting the time when he came into the employ of Mr. Kent back in Chicago and then until about 1896 when he left the Kents and went to San Rafael.

CE: Where was your home then? Would you tell us the address again, Walter?

WB: 19 Lathan Street.

CE: Worked for the Kents for thirty-odd years and then went -- worked for himself?

WB: Yes.

CE: What did you say, Anne?

AK: I said I'm just wondering about my father-in-law, William Kent, had married and gone off to live on his own in Chicago then, by that time, and his mother and some of the others, including Mary Elizabeth Parsons and Mary Sterns and Will Savage were on and off. They were in the old house as a family, weren't they?

WB: Yes, they were. That group was always in the old house.

AK: And I think after the grandfather was gone there certainly was no place for Endo. He must have been a thorn in everybody's side all the time. Don't you think of him that way? Endo? Was he?

WB: I'll tell you I couldn't give you any information on Endo because all I can remember of Endo is his camera and his being with Mr. Kent. You see at that time I knew Endo, I was only seven or eight years old, around in there, you see. But I can picture him with those tripods and cameras and Mr. Kent.

AK: The children didn't like him and I think Mrs. Kent must have had a hard time with him.

WB: With Endo? See, I didn't know that side of it.

AK: I'm not sure, but I only hear little things like that.

CE: When the Kents would go back to Chicago periodically, would your father accompany them or would he stay in the property?

WB: No he would -- The only time I knew of him going to Chicago was when he went back on a visit, to visit his folks, and he went alone because I can remember my mother baking up a basket of food, you know, so as to last him on the trip back, you know, so many days. And yes, he went alone just to visit his folks, you might say a vacation that Mrs. Kent was giving him.

CE: Did your father live to a good age?

WB: My father lived to be 81. Yes. Why, you probably picture my father as a large man. My brother and I, Fred and I, were both hit around six feet; my father was five-feet two, but my mother was about five-feet eight. My father, I don't think he ever, what he told me, that he never weighed more than 135 pounds. He was physically fit, though, he was. And he could work hard and even up to the time, just a year or two before he died he was sawing wood, you know for himself, doing things like that.

AK: May I ask something about your sisters and brothers? I know that Grace is older than you and I found out she is still living in Oakland. I didn't know that.

WB: Yes.

AK: Now would you be the only two in the family?

WB: The only two left.

AK: And then you have children, and you have niece and nephews, all doing interesting things, I think.

CE: Tell us, Walter, what brought you up to this beautiful valley?

WB: Well, I came up here. My first trip up here was in 1913 and I had a friend of mine that was about five miles up the road at Rumsey and he was doing a little trapping and doing outdoor life and I always liked that.

CE: Well you had some of that in your youth at the Kents, then, hadn't you?

WB: Oh yes.

CE: You were outdoors fishing, hunting, doing everything?

WB: Yes that's true, you might say outside and it's always in my blood. I just, I worked in San Francisco for the Board of Fire Underwriters. I went to work for them in 1911 and retired in 1964. I was with them just a couple of month short of 53 years.

CE: Talk about loyalty. Well anyway, 1913 you made your first trip.

WB: I made my first visit. On my second vacation I had from the Board of Fire Underwriters, I came up here and we went hunting way up the, at what they call Knob's Cabin up there. Well it's close to lower Lake County. And so there was very good hunting up here and so I came back and I just learned to like it so I just -- I used to come up here and quail hunt and deer hunt. And so in 1938, why, an old gentleman who used to be a Justice of the Peace up here, Mr. Dutton, he died at 96 years and his wife had died not long before and she was 94. Well anyway, it happened one of the weekends I came up here, why, they had this place up for sale. So I said "Gee here's my chance to --" By that time I was married, and see I didn't marry until I was 39. I was 39 when I first got married. And so we got this place in '38 and of course those were depression days and the price was very low.

CE: So were our salaries.

WB: Everything was low. And so I got this eleven and a half acres and then in '45 I bought an additional twenty acres and so now the place is thirty-one and a half acres I have here.

AK: Just wonderful.

CE: Where were you living when you were working for the Board of Fire Underwriters in San Francisco?

WB: Well when I went to work for them I was living in San Rafael. I commuted for seven years from San Rafael and then we moved to Oakland and the rest of the time I commuted from Oakland.

CE: Well then you've seen a lot of changes in the Bay Area yourself, Walter.

WB: Have I? I should say I have.

CE: What you've seen in transportation alone. The ferries and the bridges and --

WB: Of course I came from the old ferries. Well all the time I commuted from San Rafael, of course -- You see the bridges weren't built until, didn't go into operation until close to '38.

CE: Well tell me Walter, what do you raise here on your little farm or ranch?

BB: Well almonds was what I had, almonds and some grain. Of course I have had oats and had wheat, but the grain and almonds. But this dry, dry spell, this terrible drought that hit us has about, you might say, wrecked my orchard, you know.

AK: Walter where does the water come from? I noticed so many green places, where does the water come from?

CE: There's some orchards that have got green grass underneath them coming down here.

WB: Well they irrigate; they have wells. And of course Cash Creek out of Clear Lake comes through here and some of them, those that have the rights, they use the water out of Cash Creek when it's available, but right now it isn't available because the water is shut off up at Lake County and they're not getting any water. The green that you see is from wells.

CE: Well we're having a terrible problem in Marin County, as you know.

WB: Yes, I've been listening to it, I've been listening to it.

CE: Mrs. Kent is very water conservation minded, and -- Go ahead, Anne.

AK: Well, you remember that Mr. Kent was always interested in that and I don't know whether, how they did when you were in Kentfield, but the water system was worked out eventually so that it was just wonderful. The springs up the top, the pipe to catch it a little lower, so by the time I came into the family they had been using their own water supply and it was very, very good. But that was just for the three houses that belonged to the family, you know. Now all of that is called Kent Woodlands and of course they have to have the city water, the Marin Municipal water. Now Mr. Kent, as I understand it, Mr. Kent was one of the people who was responsible for getting that new Marin Municipal water for the County and it's really quite an interesting story because having all the water they needed on their own place, they didn't realize water was beginning to be a shortage around the County. Then came the day when Redwood Canyon, which you would have known, Redwood Canyon, was almost made into a reservoir for water for Belvedere and Mill Valley. And the story says that they were told that they would have this wonderful water system practically free because there was enough board feet in that valley to pay

for the whole thing. That meant what is now known as Muir Woods, and that got Mr. Kent interested and you know the story of Muir Woods.

WB: Oh, yes.

AK: But it also meant that if they do a thing as terrible as that then water must be in great need. So then, he -- I understood that they got Mr. O'Shaughnessy to come and look over the whole County to see how they could have a good water system, and that's what we have now.

WB: Yes I remember when they got the old original Lake Lagunitas. But since that time they've put in several others.

AK: Five, I guess. Even with all of it, though, Walter, we have thousands and thousands of people who either come to stay and build houses or to go through as travelers using water and now we're in a terrible spot. We really are in a dreadful spot.

WB: Yes I've been hearing it on the air, yes.

AK: Terrible.

CE: Walter to go back to you again, you said you got married when you were thirty nine?

WB: Thirty nine, yes.

CE: What was your wife's name?

WB: Eloise Watkins.

CE: Was she from around this area, too?

WB: Well that was one of the attractions up here. I was married right up, right about a mile from here.

CE: Oh, she lived up here?

WB: Well she was born -- Her family, her father, her family came from north Carolina and they came out to the East Bay and she was born out at Point Richmond, not Richmond, Point Richmond.

CE: I know where that is.

WB: And then they came up here about 1910, I think it was 1910 if I'm not mistaken. About 1910 they came up here, and her father had a homestead over there at Sand Creek; that's over there toward Arbutus, about nineteen miles from here over that direction. And then they came down and got a place at Runsey, and then she used to do work in Woodland and the whole family was --

CE: So you married her up here. What year was that?

WB: 1927.

CE: 1927. And you have children?

WB: I have a son and a daughter.

CE: What's his name? What are their names?

WB: Walter, Walter Harvey and Roweena.

CE: And where do they live?

WB: Well Roweena, she lives in Walnut Creek. Mrs. Kent has talked to her.

CE: Oh yes. And Walter, where does Walter live?

WB: He's up at Upper Lake; he's with the Forest Service up in Upper Lake.

CE: Good. If we stayed on this road, Walter, Highway 16, and went over to Clear Lake, is that a fairly decent road?

WB: Oh yes, it's a very good road.

CE: Okay, we might go back that way.

WB: Oh yes, it's a very good road. I should say, it's a kind of a scenic trip. Sacramento, come right on up and on up through Clear Lake and on back around. Oh, yes it's a wonderful highway.

CE: And now, if I remember correctly, you say you retired in about 1968 or 9 something like that?

WB: '64.

CE: '64, excuse me. And you've been up here then most of the time?

WB: I came up -- First I was kind of shuffling back and forth between here and Oakland but I found out -- I said, "Now, what's the sense in me going back to Oakland when my heart and everything's up here?" You see, this isn't the original house that was on the place.

CE: You've built this, then?

WB: Yes practically, well, with help you know.

CE: Well it's beautiful and it's so restful under these ancient pepper trees and your little brick terrace, and it's so inviting.

WB: The original house sat right out there where the lawn is, right across there, and I tore it down. And part of this house is moved up. I used, I salvaged what I could and used it in this place.

CE: You should feel real proud, Walter, of your foresight and everything, to get this property when you did and to hang on to it.

WB: Yes. You know, there's one thing I -- Years ago I used to see, when I was in Oakland there was a man who was retired from the General Electric. He lived right up on Hayes Street just above me and there was another fellow, he was retired from a wholesale butcher firm and there was another one that was retired. He was connected with electricity. Anyway, those three fellows in the morning they'd get up and just roam around, nothing to do and just try to find somebody to talk to. One of them had a pretty good position with the General Electric and he was just lost for something to do and he got a job down at General Electric plant out there on East Fourteenth Street, go down there selling sandwiches, just something to do. And I used to feel sorry for them and I'd say I hope I have some place to retire to and so this just worked into it. Of course, I didn't see this but that's just the way it worked out.

CE: Well have you been widowed long?

WB: 1953. Yes, my wife had a stroke and she passed away down here at the Woodland Hospital .

CE Well she would be happy knowing you're here. This is your home.

WB: Yes. We call this Rancho Roweena. Named after --You see the sign?

CE: Yes I see the sign.

WB: Rancho Reena, that's named after Roweena.

CE: That's your daughter's name - Rancho Roweena. Well it seems your beginnings in Kentfield all those years ago instilled something in you, that desire to maintain outdoor gracious lifestyle, and you certainly achieved it, Walter. Wouldn't you say, Anne?

AK: Indeed I do think so. You didn't tell about gathering things for Mary Elizabeth Parsons.

WB: Well I -- Just when we were standing up there I talk about them. I'd get those seeds for that little wild iris. I don't know what she did with those seeds but she -- Because I was just a little -- I was about six or seven years old, but I remember going

down there and just below the barn, your home, there's a little kind of knoll. Of course I couldn't picture it to you now because all those homes and everything else. And I used to go scratch around there and get these seeds for that iris and I guess she probably mentioned in that book on California Wild Flowers that she wrote.

AK: I wouldn't be surprised. It's still some opened but all of the place built up and called Kent Woodlands now, so there are streets and there are houses, but some pretty gardens and some open place, and all of it backs on to the water district. You know, as it did, Kentfield and all the string of towns still backs up onto the water district and that's all land just as it was when you knew it and Aunt Elizabeth used to walk with Alice Eastwood and all those people.

WB: There was quite a little stream that come down through there and there used to be trout in it, you know, a few.

CE: Is that the stream that goes through your place Mrs. Kent?

AK: Yes that's the stream.

WB: Oh I know that stream well.

CE: Oh, wonderful.

AK: Yes, it's been a fun place for three or four generations now, and that's good.

WB: And Mr. Will Kent, I remember him. He used to be quite a shot. I saw him one time, Pat Ross, throw a rock up. Of course he used to make -- But this particular time just took a rock and threw it up and Will Kent "bang" with a high powered rifle and hit that thing in the air. He was quite a shot.

AK: Yes, he was. He was very proud of that. We didn't get around to mention the center because I guess you had moved by that time.

WB: Oh yes. When I was there the stores I suppose out there now.

AK: Didn't you ever come to the May Day from San Rafael?

WB: No, no.

CE: Maybe you can remember some of the stores that were around there?

WB: Stores? There were no stores.

CE: Oh, come on, there must have been some. At Ross Landing wasn't there a blacksmith shop or a store or something?

WB: I'll tell you. I'll show you. We come down from the house and come down to the - - Say here we're passing by the old Kent house and we come down there and there used to be a little summer house out there and down and cross the bridge, cross that creek we're speaking about, and the old railroad's running through there then and there was a foot bridge and there was one of these gates that you'd run over, you know .

AK: You know I will send you a picture of the very bridge and the very gate. I'll send you those pictures.

WB: Oh yes. Well anyway, and then we come down and cross this footbridge and be right on the railroad track and the station was there. When we were first there it was a narrow gauge that ran up to and went on up to Cazadero, I believe.

CE: Yes.

WB: Well anyway, we'd get to the station and we'd hit the County Road and go up and there was that Pat Ross. He lived on this left-hand side, and across the road was McCormicks. McCormick had quite a family. And then you'd go up and hit the -- You know the bridge, I guess they called Ross Landing, that creek came up there --

AK: Next to the Murrays?

WB: No, no, Murrays is down.

CE: He's talking of the direction of the Ross Landing School.

WB: Alright then, we'd hit that road and here was Kendals and Escalles and then the Mulherns and no stores, just residences. Now these were the working people, people just a little old. And then of course the County Road ran on up into, going on up toward Ross And then the school house sat up there right on the side there. And then going up the road there was the Pauls and the Butler place was on the left; it set back. They were wealthy people.

CE: Yes where the College of Marin is today.

WB: Yeah - well they were wealthy people. That was the first of the estates that we'd hit going up there. And then we --

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CE: Butler place that's set back off the road, then what do you recall?

WB: Then there was a small place there with an Italian family, the Soldaninis, and then we went up the road there was a Chinese laundry, on the left side going up, and then a little further up there was, I think it was the Episcopal Chapel they called it.

CE: Yes, yes.

WB: Mrs. Kent used to go to church up there sometimes you know, because my father used to drive her up sometimes on Sunday. Then you - just after you pass that you turn over and go toward the railroad track. But then, now we're going on up the road now and came to Budemore's place, he was a teamster and he used to have teaming work and like that around there.

AK: I think that's where the Fire House in Ross is now.

WB: Is that so? Then if you turn off because there was the Griffiths and the Jenkins - The Jenkins and the Griffiths were they related in any way?

AK: Yes, they were. Jim was brought up by the Griffiths.

WB: Because I think they used to go to Hitchcock Military Academy together, the boys, and I used to see them all the time. Because they used to come in, they would always be together.

AK: They were cousins. Only Jim lived there like a brother

WB: Yes. He was quite a football player.

AK: Oh yes, that's Dolly's husband.

WB: Yea, I know, I heard, because I always speak of her as Dolly Cushing because that's how I always knew her. She was quite a popular girl.

CE: She's great, we've seen a lot of her lately, Walter.

WB: Of course I was just a sixteen year old kid at that time but I can remember how well liked she was by all the rest of the students. And of course I remember her mother Mrs. Cushing and her father Mr. Cushing. He was --

CE: Sidney -

AK: He made the railroad.

WB: Yes, up there at the mountain. I can remember we used to go up there that mountain road, the train would come granding up that hill there you know, sometimes we could go out and see it where it made that turn there up at the top.

CE: That's an old picture of the Gravity Train that Mrs. Kent gave you, did you ever ride on that?

WB: No, but I've gone over to Mill Valley to see it but I never did ride up it. You know I was over there, born and raised over there, and I never did go up that mountain until after I moved to Oakland. I came over one time and walked up.

CE: That's not an unusual story, Walter.

AK: There is a lot of people like that

CE: Lots of people. What else do you want to ask Walter Mrs. Kent? She's got more pictures and maps here --

AK: Well we brought some - there are some school people, two men, that you wouldn't know that have made this little book out of all the early schools in Marin County. They call it Pictorial history of Marin County Schools.

CE: is his school in there ?'

AK: Yes, it is. And they have the map in the center of it and they have the schools before and after and they have - -

CE: Did you like school , Walter?

WB: Oh I guess I was average. I'll tell you I never dislike it enough to play hooky but I graduated from San Rafael High.

CE: How did you get along with your classmates? Did you have some lifelong friendships Walter? I understand that Warren Landon is a good friend of yours?

WB: Oh , Warren , yes. I can remember Warren. I'll tell you how closely I connected with the family, with Warren's family. You didn't know any of his family of course - -

AK: I knew some of them.

CE: I just know Warren Landon.

WB: The father, he was president of the Theological Seminary at San Anselmo and then he was the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in San Rafael. Well when we came to San Rafael my oldest sister worked for the Landon family, they were on Fifth Street in San Rafael. Then through the years every - Julia, Grace and Ethel all worked there. And it wasn't like working, Mrs. Landon and they just treat you just fine. I can remember one time Mrs. Landon took all three children, Mary and Warren and Helen, they took us all down to the park and spent the day. They were just very fine people. I knew Warren, used to go up and play with him. And they used to have a little pony and Warren didn't like the pony, so I had the privilege of riding old "Reno" anytime I wanted. Warren's about two or three years younger than I am. Then after I left San Rafael Warren went to work for the Fire Underwriters which was just a block away so I had contact, then later on Warren went to work for the Northern Insurance Company and when he retired he was supervisor there. He used to go over - I was right there at that time on Clay and Sansome in the John Henry Nash building and we had the sixth and fifth floor there. I had contact with warren from the time he was a little boy.

CE: He's been up to see you, he and his wife, haven't they recently?

WB: Oh definitely. I new Mabel, her sister - -

CE: What was her maiden name, do you remember?

WB: Mabel Bouick.

CE: Bouick, that's right. You knew all that family too.

WB: Well I knew Mabel and Ethel but Frank, the son, the brother, I didn't know him very well. He didn't go to San Rafael High at the time I was there. He might have come there later, I don't know whether Frank ever went there.

AK: They're Seminary people too.

WB: Did you know the Day family? Mr. Day, I think he was the pastor out at the Presbyterian Church in Ross - in San Anselmo rather..

AK: I met a daughter one time and that's I think - -

WB: Yes there was a daughter, there was Ned and Clarence and - I forget the daughter name.

CE: You know we mentioned earlier, Walter, we have a photograph of Dolly's house which is on Fourth Street, where Macy's is today. Now next door to her lived her Uncle Lee and then next door I think was the Evans family and then Dr. Dufficy. Do you remember?

WB: Dr. Dufficy, I sure enough played football against him, and his sister, Veronica Dufficy, was my Latin teacher. I took four years of Latin with her.

CE: Isn't that wonderful.

AK: Who was the principal, Gilogli?

WB: No, Gilogli she was an English teacher.

AK: She's a great one, she lives in San Rafael still.

WB: She's still in San Rafael !

CE: You should have seen, Walter, last June Mrs. Kent had a party for everybody we interviewed at her home, outside in the terrace, similar to yours, brick terrace, and Helen Gilogli Murray was invited, we had interviewed her, - -And who was it that we invited - was it Mary Palmer?

AK: Well Mary Palmer - -

CE: Mary Armsby -

AK: Mary Armsby was sitting in the living room because she didn't like to go in the bright sun and when Eleanor came in the door we were going across the living room and Mary looked up, they looked at each other and Mary said, "Eleanor Gilogli" and she said, "yes the same", so they went at it. Hadn't seen each other for forty years. And that went on many times that day, people meeting people.

WB: Well Eleanor Gilogli was teaching English, I think it was the last year -Miss McKinney - -

CE: Yes - now you had Miss McKinney?

WB: Yes.

CE: And that woman later became the Head Mistress at the Sarah Dix Hamlin School in San Francisco.

WB: Is that so? And John S. Drew was the principal there when I was there and he opened his own school in San Francisco.

CE: Oh, he was the principal.

WB: Yes. He was the last principal there when I was there.

CE: Now would you have known, speaking of Eleanor Gilogli, she told us she had taught Jordan Martinelli. Did you know Jordan or was he a little younger than you? He later became Superior Court Judge and District Attorney.

WB: Well his father was City Attorney out there.

AK: That's right.

CE: And we interviewed Mrs. Martinelli, who was Genevieve Cochrane, did you know any of the Cochranes?

WB: Oh I knew all of them. Jim Cochrane, James Cochrane, Mike Cochrane. Mike used to have the independent taxi and he was a big, tall fellow. There's Mike and Jim and then she had Clara. I think Clara married that baseball pitcher Hollis.

CE: Right, that's right. You used to have a lot of fun in those days didn't you? In early San Rafael?

WB: Well you know, things are so different, you didn't have the automobiles, you didn't have the radio, and they didn't have - - You got so much out of the natural pleasures. I used to caddy out at the golf links, the old golf links not the new one.

CE: Where?

AK: It's out there where the Yacht Club is.

CE: You mean out San Pedro Road?

WB: I'll tell you, the golf club that I was caddying at was - you where that Civic Center is out there?

AK: Yes.

WB: Well the Civic Center like this and it was just across and all that stretch right down there. That was the old original golf links.

CE: Did you know any of the Freitas boys?

WB: Well the Freitas, there were so many of the Freitas.

CE: Carlos is still with us, Carlos and Manuel and - -

AK: Four of them.

CE: Four of them are still alive, the sons of Manuel.

WB: I didn't - I never was very well acquainted with them, Did you know anything about the Barrs up there?

AK: Oh, yes, Judge Barr. One of them was a judge, one of them is a lawyer, one of them is a dentist.

WB: Tom?

AK: Yes.

WB: Tom Barr was a dentist and Arthur Barr was a dentist.

CE: Arthur?

WB: Yes. Gee whiz, I used to have a picture of Arthur on - - little pony and I was on the Landon pony and we went up there "Anche Vista", do you know where that is, just below Tompkins, and these ponies ran in there and they took a picture of Arthur. Arthur was six and I was nine. That picture got lost. Yes, Arthur Barr, he died of that tick fly it said

AK: I guess he did. Now one of those Barr children married one of the Dollar children I think.

WB: Yes that was Harold. Harold Dollar married Agnes Barr

AK: That's right.

WB: Yes Harold Dollar, we used to play on the same football team. Of course Harold Dollar he was, he - money and I was just- But the Dollars lived very plain you know.

AK: That poor fellow, he wasn't well all his life, though , really

WB: No He wasn't. He died at 47.

AK: Yes, he had that - what do you call that disease, blood disease-

CE: Hemophilia?

AK: Yes, hemophilia. His wife had to be so careful of him all the time.

CE: Speaking of doctors, you were mentioning the name you wanted to ask Walter.

AK: Oh yes. Doctor Howitt

WB: Doctor Howitt, yes, I've caddied for Doctor Howitt and Doctor - - Doctor Howitt used to come out there to Kentfield to treat us when we got sick.

CE: Oh really.

WB: And then later on when we moved to San Rafael, I went out there to caddy and I used to caddy for Doctor Howitt.

AK: That's right.

CE: Well his daughter is coming up to the Bay area. Tell him about -

AK: Beatrice -

CE: Do you know his daughter Beatrice?

WB: No I didn't know them.

AK: Well she turned out to be a very famous woman and she's a great botanist for one thing and worked with Tom Howell over at the Academy and she also learned to help her father. And helping her father made her get into medicine, research medicine, for vaccines and things like that.

CE: She's a bacteriologist.

AK: Yes. Oh, she really is well-known. And we're going to do just what you're doing. We're going to have her on the seventh of October, in the city. She's going to tell us all she can about her father.

WB: Doctor Howitt.

AK: Yes.

CE: Well, he took care of Mr. Kent, didn't he? Was he the Kent doctor?

AK: Yes.

WB: I didn't know that.

AK: He was their only doctor.

WB: But last time I saw Dr. Howitt, I had an aunt that was - She worked for 00 Do you remember Mrs. Innis?

AK: Yes, I do.

WB: My Aunt Maddie, she worked for them. She had an operation and Dr. Howitt was her doctor and so he went over to see Aunt Maddie while she was ill and Dr. Howitt came there that Sunday to check on her.

AK: I went to see her, too.

WB: Did you know her?

AK: I didn't really know her, but Aunt Elizabeth took me to see her when she was in the hospital.

WB: Is that so?

AK: Yes, and she was your aunt.

WB: And she worked for Mrs. Innis. And of course - Let me see. First she was with Mrs. Innis and Mr. Innis died and she married Paul Jones, I think it was.

AK: That's right. So she became Clint's aunt. Paul was a funny guy.

WB: Of course, I didn't know him. His brother was an insurance broker.

AK: That's Clinton. Clint.

WB: Clint, yes. There was Clinton and then there was another one; another brother, too.

CE: The winds come up. Walter, these things aren't walnuts, are they?

WB: Black walnuts.

CE: Where are they coming from. This tree?

WB: Coming from this tree

CE: Is this a black walnut?

WB: This is a black walbut.

CE: How about that! Oh, these are peppers over there.

AK: The shells get awful black. That's where the black walnut stain comes from.

CE: It's beautiful.

WB: Remember those black walnuts? It was down there in the lower part of the Kent place there. WE used to go down there and get them. We used to get them by the sacks and bring them up and we kids used to have a ball picking up those black walnuts.

AK: They're awfully hard to do, though.

CE: Did you ever go down to the Corte Madera Creek and go in the water?

WB: Well, I never went down to Corte Madera, but we used to go right down to Escalles.

CE: Well, tell us about Escalle. What was it, like a little bath house?

WB: Well, the slough, the slough used to run up there, the saltwater slough. And it connected with the fresh water right there by the County Road; water would back up there. And we used to go down there fishing all the time. We used to catch these shiners and split-tail. They were mullets and they had a lot of bones and we used to eat them when – And they used to be trout come up in there. I didn't know until – I was thinking trout was strictly freshwater but they come up from the saltwater and they used to come on up and connect with the at creek that run up in that place there.

CE: Well, you know, in the early days – We have a photograph – Of course, this is before your time, but there used to be some shallow drafted kind of schooners that used to come up the slough. Do you remember seeing any boats coming up the slough, Walter?

WB: No, I don't remember any, but I understand that at Ross Landing the boats came up a certain distance up in there.

CE: Sure. And oxen used to bring lumber down and they used to offload bricks. But what was Escalle like?

WB: Well, Escalle was just another – Do you remember a family named Hasbrook?

AK: Yes.

WB: Well, they were right there, just – Well, I guess they were in Escalle and there was nothing much there.

CE: Was it a bath house? Was it a garden? Did you drink beer there or what?

WB: No, nothing.

AK: The big house was a winery, though.

WB: It had been.

CE: It had been.

WB: Yes, that's right. That's right.

AK: With the grapes all over the hills.

CE: And wasn't that where the Lymerick Inn was located, Mrs. Kent?

AK: I guess that same name, same place. They called it Lymerick Inn, yes. And we have heard, Walter, that people came on the train and went into Escalle's and hand their

lunch and then came out and crossed the road and the railroad and there was a little arm of the slough that came all the way in and they got in a rowboat and went out to the deeper water to a little island out there. I guess it was privately owned so you probably wouldn't have known about this, right in the middle of the marsh.

CE: Well, they had little bath houses out there, didn't they?

AK: Well, the Dibbles had a bathhouse and the Kittles had a bathhouse.

WB: I've been down there many a time.

CE: Well, describe that. Describe that, Walter. You go down on a little boardwalk, or what?

WB: I remember we used to come down and follow the railroad tracks down and then swing over and right over to that dock there.

AK: It must have been a boardwalk.

CE: And what would you do, just change your clothes in there and go for a swim?

WB: Yes. That slough came in there, and, yeah.

AK: Well, the hotel that you didn't know would have been right across the slough and now it's Marin General hospital. But at that time, it says in the Little School Book here that in 1909, in May, they opened this Bon Aire Hotel. And people tell us that they used to sit on the porch and look right down on you swimming down there in the Escalle slough. No big trees between; they could look right down and see the boats coming through and everything.

WB: There used to be a lot of, well, we used to call them houseboats. Of course they call them arks now. And there used to be quite a few of them.

AK: There's still some.

CE: Most of those were floating in Belvedere Cove, just before the turnoff the century. And when Belvedere became rather fashionable, they said, "We've got to get rid of these little things," and they were towed to various tributaries, we understand from Mrs. Allen in Belvedere, and some of them found their way along the Corte Madera slough. I owned one for twenty years, myself.

WB: You did?

CE: Lots of fun. We had a canoe, sailboat, and it's lots of fun to be on that water. Of course, over the years the creek has silted in and it's shallower. They've had Army Engineers dredging it, and Mrs. Kent can tell you about that.

WB: Now that water used to come right up to Kentfield, does it still back up in there?

CE: It still – It comes to where you described the County Road, the bridge at Ross Landing. Then the Army Engineers from there to Ross have cemented the creek.

AK:E Even more than that, Walter. They cemented it in so it's just a cement box.

CE: Just a box like that; a u-shaped concrete with a cyclone fence up above it.

AK: And the school is near it, and then it goes out until it reaches almost the place you were talking about and then it's ice and wide and scooped up so people are enjoying it with boating and everything.

CE: You wouldn't know the north side of the creek because it's all been built up, beautiful apartments and condominiums all terraced down to Greenbrae. We've got to get you down there, Walter.

AK: Yes, that's why we want to show you these things.

CE: Well, Dolly, you know we talked to Dolly. We wanted to take her to Bolinas and she said, "I don't want to see it the way it is. I'd rather remember it." But you would love to see it, I think.

AK: I think so, too.

CE: We'll get you down there.

AK: I thought maybe your nephew Fred maybe would be a good one to come and bring you down and then you could see –

WB: Oh, I could get down. I could manage, but I – You know, my eyes, and I had a stroke not too long ago.

AK: We'd be very gentle. We wouldn't run you too bad.

WB: My son, I pays him to take me over to Sacramento. He has something – Ride over there --

CE: You're tired.

WB: Don't want to press my luck.

AK: You know, you're spoiled. This is too nice to leave. I know exactly how you feel.

CE: I don't think I'd ever leave here. This delightful breeze – I notice you have a thermometer there and it's 80, 82, and it's so pleasant.

AK: You never would believe it's 80.

WB: Well I'll tell you, I have got so much, I feel, to be grateful for, to retire to this place.

CE: What is your philosophy of life? Can you articulate it? I think we understand it, but what has life taught you, Walter?

WB: Well, life – One thing it has taught me, one of the most valuable things, friends, and trying to be a friend to people. That brings plenty of friends to you, if you are friend to other people. Since I have been up here – You know, so many people think, "Well, you know, Walters way up there, lonesome and everything," but I have more friends come up here! The last week, Mr. Bost, Harry Boost, he was the cashier with the Board of Fire Underwriters, Pacific Fire Rating Bureaus. He and another retired man came up here from Burlingame and spent the day with me. Just a short time back there were five – Five of them got together and I think friends and being a friend is wonderful.

AK: I think you've got it.

CE: I think you have a wonderful answer.

AK: Yes. And such a place to pick! Oh, I love it!

CE: Well, Mrs. Kent, I think we're going to have to conclude our taped interview with Walter. First, I noticed you have some photographs there and you want to ask Walter about the Murrays. Did you know William Murray?

WB: They used to see the old gentlemen; he used to go into town, into San Rafael, and --

CE: How would he go, horse and wagon?

WB: Yeah, little old wagon and little bay horse and they used to come by and the old gent used to go in and have his refreshments; then he would be coming back. The horse brought him home. And these Murrays that you speak about, the sons that I can remember, one of them was quite used to fish; used to come right there, the front of the place. They used to fish for trout, right there at the railroad tracks.

AK: Yes, the little fellows were still doing it when I came.

CE: The front of the Kent place?

WB: Yes. Then, of course, I understand that they opened up a Murray Tract there, didn't they?

CE: Yes. We interviewed his granddaughter, Mary, and she told us much of the story.

AK: But I used to know them, too, because when we had the Old Settlers Day, which Mr. Kent ran every year hoping to get all the old people together, John Murray would come and his two sisters wouldn't. Now they were pretty old. And I said to Rose one time, "Why don't you come, Rose? You know so much." She said, "They don't want to know. They don't want to hear. They just want to be entertained. Let John do it." And John certainly did it; he'd entertain them. They were really three wonderful people. All of them lived to be over ninety, I think.

CE: You know, Mrs. Kent carries on this tradition in the Kent family of trying to preserve history. Mr. Kent wanted to know what brought people to Marin, why Marin, and now Mrs. Kent, for the last two or three years, has been so involved in this project of interviewing some of the descendants of the families, Walter. And it has been very gratifying to her. And to meet her old friends –

WB: It's a nice field. She got a big field to work in.

AK: I couldn't have done a bit of it without Carla. She does all the interviewing and, you know, we find out that a great many people are nervous about it. They admit it after -

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CE: You weren't nervous, were you, Walter?

WB: Oh, I wasn't nervous, but I didn't know what you were going to do to me.

CE: Well, with that I think we'll sign off and thank you, Walter, for allowing us to come and have this wonderful visit with you today.