

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 3, Side 1

October 25, 1995

M.O'R.: This Michael O'Rourke with the Washington County Historical Society interviewing Althea Pratt-Broome at her home on October the 25th.

Okay.

A.P-B.: 1995.

M.O'R.: 1995. That's right.

A.P-B.: You left off something.

Well, we couldn't have fun when he was around. As I said, my mother used to do things with us. I mean, if he had ever known that she went skating down there in Oakland at night with us, he'd have been horrified. He would never have allowed her to do that. And so when we were alone with her all the time, we played games and things, but when he was there we couldn't do that.

M.O'R.: You'd have the popcorn and the songs, but not ...

A.P-B.: Yes, but only because he loved to sing. But when we were up here we didn't have popcorn and songs anymore, either. We didn't have anything like that. It was just grump. There were - I should take that back, because there were occasional times when he was feeling in good spirits and he wasn't grumpy with us, when he would sing with us. And then of course later when he was an older man - and as I told you, when my mother was ill with Alzheimer's, why, I would go over there and help him, and sometimes he would say, "Well, I don't want you to do any work today. I just want you to sing with me." And so we would sing together.

M.O'R.: But you in particular had a tough time with your father?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: And did this start in the Oakland days?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes, but it wasn't as pronounced because he was only there on the weekends. But I knew that we didn't have the freedom on the weekends that we had when my mother was there alone with us. And I knew that I had to be careful, but of course I was - as I told you, I was always inventing things, and I would read, in the *Book of Knowledge*, for instance, these scientific experiments for children, and then I'd want to do them. And I would do them, and it would mess things up, and I would use things that were his to do these experiments.

M.O'R.: Can you remember any examples of experiments?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. [laughs] Well, there were experiments you had to do in the dark, down in the basement, and you used some common chemicals that you had around the house. And they were pretty safe, but sometimes they didn't do quite what you were supposed to have them do, you know. And I can remember one of them catching fire, down in the basement, which it wasn't supposed to do, but it did because I didn't do it quite right, apparently. Okay.

Another ...

M.O'R.: So that must have been pretty exciting?

A.P-B.: Yes, it was.

M.O'R.: Did your mother have to come down and help you put out the fire or something?

A.P-B.: No, my father was home.

M.O'R.: Oh, your father.

A.P-B.: So I got my bottom tanned.

M.O'R.: Oh, boy. This was in the Oakland home?

A.P-B.: No.

M.O'R.: This was up here?

A.P-B.: This was up here.

M.O'R.: Okay.

A.P-B.: Out at Sylvan. And another thing I did out there because it was sort of country out there and he had a vegetable garden, and he had these tomatoes that were a new breed of tomato, and they were supposed to be, you know, like the beefsteak tomatoes that they have? I don't know what those were; they might have been the beginning of those. Anyway, he was watching these tomatoes carefully.

Well, I didn't know this, and I read in the encyclopedia that you could make a little dark place in a corner - well, I wasn't about to use the basement again - and if you took fruit or vegetables of certain kinds that if you put them in a dark place they would ripen. So I picked two of these big tomatoes and put them in this little corner that I had made outside along a side of the house with gunny sacks and stakes and all this, and I made this nice dark place and put these tomatoes in there. And I was watching them every day.

Well, unbeknownst to me he was also watching the other tomatoes on the vines still, and one night he came in from the garden, and he said, "Where is she?"

M.O'R.: So he knew who'd taken the tomatoes?

A.P-B.: Yes. And so I had to take him out and show him my experiment. And of course I got it again.

M.O'R.: So he didn't necessarily appreciate the experiment?

A.P-B.: No, he didn't, and he wasn't about to wait to see whether it would happen. He just chucked them into the garbage.

M.O'R.: Oh, really?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: So he interrupted the experiment right then and there.

A.P-B.: That was the end of that experiment.

And another one was - and this one I made up on my own, didn't read about it - but I had read about gravity, so I - out in the woods I decided to see if gravity worked. Well, I thought I was safe in the woods, except to make this work I had to use some of his rope because what I did was take a box and decided to make a slide in the air like going to the - oh, Jantzen Beach where they had all the fun things that you could do, and they had these - all these kinds of things you could ride on. Well, I decided to do that out in the woods, fix up something the kids could all ride on.

So I climbed the tree, one of the big high firs, and I fastened the rope around above a branch, and then threw the rope down, and I did this where there was a hillside, and then I picked out a tree down below, and I ran this long wonderful rope down to that tree. And I got a crate, and I put the crate on it, on the rope, and a rope on the crate, so that I could pull the crate up to the tree that was at the top and then see if gravity would pull it down and how fast would it go if you put somebody in it?

M.O'R.: Namely you?

A.P-B.: Yes. [laughs] And would it go faster? And then when you got to the bottom you had to make sure that you didn't crash and put your feet out or something to stop yourself.

M.O'R.: From crashing into a tree?

A.P-B.: Because I didn't have a brake. And so then I got all the kids out there, and we tried it with different sized people, you know, to see if it went faster.

So I was clocking all this stuff, you know, to see and writing it down like a scientist. And so my father got home, and it was a few days before he realized that this very fine rope he had was no longer. In fact, I think I ended up with a couple of them, because I think I had to make tracks - I'm pretty sure I did that. Or maybe I did that in Oakland.

That was one of the things I did in Oakland, and I got in trouble, too. Only this time, in Oakland I was making a fair, and so I - in the willow tree in the front. I decided to have a fair that everybody in the neighborhood could come to. So I got all the kids together and we planned this fair.

My brother had a little pedal automobile, and we were going to use that as one of the things at the fair that people could take rides on. And everybody was supposed to bring a pin. I had quite a collection of pins by the time I was through, because you had pay one pin to ride and two pins to ride.

So one of the things that I invented was similar to this thing, only I was seven then, and I had it hanging in the tree and then a long rope hanging from it that you could swing the person back and forth when sitting in this box. Okay, that's the one I

got in trouble for, and then the one out there was the same, only this was testing gravity, besides giving everybody a good time.

M.O'R.: Well, so far what you're describing sounds like something that maybe wouldn't be all that atypical in a relationship between a daughter and her father, particularly a hard-to-control daughter such as you were.

A.P-B.: That's right, and you see, I was supposed to be very obedient like my two sisters, and I was not supposed to be ...

Oh, another thing, out there at Sylvan he had bees. He decided to have bee hives, so he had three of them in a row. And so I read in the encyclopedia all about bees and all about bee hives, and I went out there to find out was it really true when you put it all in a box? Well, I was bitten from head to foot by these bees because I opened up the box and took a piece of honeycomb.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. They didn't like that?

A.P-B.: No. Neither did he. I ruined his honeycomb. But I wanted to see what the honeycomb really looked like, and I wanted to get it out where I could really see it. Oh well, so much for that.

And then one time I went - it was his corn, and I don't remember exactly what I was doing with the corn. That was another experiment.

M.O'R.: Well, you said that you'd also built forts ...

A.P-B.: Forts out of his lumber.

M.O'R.: ... out of his lumber. Was that when you were remodeling the house in Oakland or ...

A.P-B.: That was up here.

M.O'R.: Oh, that was up here.

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: Okay.

A.P-B.: Yes, that was when he was remodeling one of the houses out at Sylvan.

M.O'R.: Well, as I say, though, all of this sounds like it maybe is not that atypical in a way, but in fact things got even worse, I guess, between you and your father. You mentioned that he tried to strangle you at one point?

A.P-B.: Yeah. This happened because not only had this been building up for years and years, and after one of - and I guess I have blocked out which experiment it was out there at Sylvan, because he had planned to take all of us to the movies in Portland, and we'd all gotten ready to go, and he discovered something else I had done before we were ready to go. And I can remember his not only spanking me, but yelling and screaming, which he always did at me, but this continued all the way to Portland, and he finally reached the point where he just screamed at me, "You aren't even fit to be a white man's child. You should have been a nigger's kid. I should get rid of you." And it just - you know, it really hit me. And I don't even remember what movie we saw or anything because all I could do was think about I wasn't even fit to be a white man's child.

So anyway, finally when I was a teenager - you know, I really tried to be a good child. I really was. I was never a bad child. I just wanted to do things.

M.O'R.: You just had a nature that ...

A.P-B.: I wanted to explore and experiment.

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: It wanted to create things, and I'm still doing it. And Jack is saying to me now, every time I start a new garden he says, "Ye gods, you can't take care of the gardens you have. What are you making another one for?" Because I like to make things. And the arts program - I mean, it's so wonderful once you get with people who understand about the arts. So I was always painting things, too, and that was another thing - I used to use his paint, and I'd paint things that weren't supposed to be painted.

So with the arts program, I can create. I can write plays, I can do all these things I want to do. And I can have kids do them, and nobody gets in trouble, you know. If you make something out of clay, and it's the wrong clay because it's out of somebody's garden, which was his garden - because making clay is another thing I used to do. So anyway, even as a teenager I was trying to be a good girl all the time.

And so one night sitting at the dinner table he had been reading about some of the troubles that teenagers get into, the bad things they do, sex and everything else. And he began raving about bad children, and were any of us doing these things? And the fact that I was in the library, you know, till 9 o'clock, was that really where I was? Was I really doing these things, or was I like these other teenagers? You know, I'd been bad all my life; I was probably being bad.

And unfortunately I talked back, which you never did, or else. And I used to get in trouble for this. So that time I just said, "We are good teenagers. We have never done any of these things. You have no right to talk to us like this." He leaped up, and he got the butcher knife and he came at me, and he said, "You just -,"

you know, and started at me. I can't even remember everything he said, but my mother was crying, the kids - the other kids were screaming, and she finally calmed him down and took the knife away from him. But he had had it.

So that was the kind of thing that was going on then. And then when my grandfather left his apartment building to my mother, and one of the things he used to say to my mother when he would be angry with her - because he could be just as angry with her as he was with me if she didn't do everything like she was supposed to - and because I was independent and he would tell her she had to do something, well, one thing, he used to tell her what she could wear and what she could not wear. He bought her clothes for her. He told her how to wear her hair, and she had to do it.

So this one time a friend of hers had given her this beautiful little black velvet hat, and he told - he didn't like that friend, so she couldn't wear that hat, because he didn't approve of that woman. So she could not have that hat.

Well, she loved that little hat, and it looked beautiful on her. And I said, "Wear it anyway." And she said, "Oh, I couldn't." And I said, "Why not? It's about time that you started asserting yourself." Well, I should never have said that.

So again we were going to a movie. He was taking us. And so she put this hat on, but she waited till we were all in the car, and then she came out last. And he took one look - he didn't say anything, but you could just see his face. And we got a few blocks from the house and we came to a stoplight. He rolled down the window. He reached over, he grabbed the hat off of his head, he

ripped it in pieces and threw it out the window. He said, "Now, you won't do that again."

And he knew, he found out from her, that I was the one who talked her into it. So from then on out, anything that she defied him on, I told her. And so finally, because one of the things he used to say to her was, "You love me too damn much," and the only time I knew him to use any swear words whatsoever. He was a very moral person, very straight in his ways, and nobody swore in my household, ever.

So she told me that he had said this to her, and he would say it to her every once in a while, if she would be unhappy because he'd hurt her feelings or something, or if he was not at home, he was off gambling or something. In that way he was not moral. He gambled, and that's where he lost almost everything, finally everything.

So she finally - and this is something that most people never, ever knew, but the other children and I knew it because she confided in us - she fell in love with someone else. And she finally told my father when he told her just once too many times - because if she didn't do exactly what he told her he used to say, "Well, I'll divorce you, then." Well, finally when he said that one time she said, "No, I'm going to divorce you." Well, it was a total shock to him, and he said, "You're just saying that." She said, "No. I'm not in love with you anymore. I am in love with someone else."

He went absolutely berserk, totally out of his mind. He grabbed his gun; he was going to kill everybody, and he said, "It's two things: I'm going to burn the apartment down, because if you

didn't have that money you couldn't even pay for a divorce, and the person who has influenced you to be this independent -" was me. So he said, "I will burn down the apartment house, and I will kill her, and then you will come back to me." Well, of course that couldn't happen. So that's how all that happened.

Well, fortunately, even though maybe unfortunately, fortunately I was the first one he attacked, not the apartment house. If he had started a fire there, why, then he could have been put in jail or something.

M.O'R.: Was this when he tried to strangle you, then?

A.P-B.: Yeah. So at night, in the middle of the night, he came in. That was the only time I ever ran away from home. I kept fighting him off, and my mother heard the commotion because my bedroom was next to theirs, and she came in and she was crying and talking to him, trying to get him to stop, and finally got him away. And so I left and went to a friend's house out in Sylvan. By that time of course we were back here in Portland in the Lloyd Center. And so I stayed there for three days, and he came to me finally, and he broke down and cried and said, you know, he would never do that again, and please come home.

And I - you know, I knew that it would be really hard for my mother to have me gone because of our closeness and the fact that I'd always been very supportive of her when she had troubles, and she had always worried about what he might do to me. So we had a long talk, my father and I did, and I said, "You know, if I come back I'm taking my chances that you'll do this again." And he said, "I promise you I never will." Well, but I knew that he went

into these horrible violent spells, too, so I never knew, but I came back.

And then he continued to have these periods when this would happen, but he never - other than holding the gun on me, he never physically attacked me again. And finally one time I guess I was 24, and I was living in an apartment that had a front and back door to it, and it was on the main floor, and my mother came to see me, and we were sitting in the living room, and I saw my father's car drive up, and I saw him get out of the car, and he took his fist and he rammed it through the window of the car and smashed it, and I knew that he was in one of those far-out spells again.

So I grabbed my mother, and I pushed her out the front door, and I said, "You go home."

And she said, "I'm not leaving you."

And I said, "Yes, you are. I'm locking this door, and I'm going to my back door because that's where he's headed, and I'm locking that door, and I'm going to talk to him. And I don't want you there. You have to leave." And I said, "I'm going to be all right."

So she finally left, and I went to the back door, and he was there. I had locked the screen door as well, and I opened the door, and by that time I was up at the medical school, and I was doing a lot of research. I was also in school, and I was taking a lot of psychology, and I was attending all the round tables where they had psychiatrists from all over the country come to the medical school there. I was attending those, I was reading all the material I could find so maybe I could figure out what was wrong with him and how I could help him.

And one of the things was that they're almost childlike when they get into these periods and that you can approach it like that. So when I opened the door I said, "The door is locked, and you're not coming in. And I will talk to you, but you sit on those steps, and I will come out there and I will talk to you, but you are not coming into my house. And you are never going to do this to me again, and you are never ever going to do it to anybody. Sit down."

And he just was stunned, like he didn't know what to do. And he turned around, and he sat down, and I came out, and I put my arms around him, and we started talking. Things began to change then, because I told him I wanted to help him, that I loved him, and of course he didn't think I could possibly.

So we spent time talking with one another from then on, and that's when the change came. And then he had a heart attack, and my mother took care of him, and she told him she loved him.

M.O'R.: So she ...

A.P-B.: Between the two of us, we worked through it.

M.O'R.: So she never left him, then?

A.P-B.: Never left him, no. No, he would have killed her. You see it happen every day, and he would have done it. So we just all lived through it. But it sure messed up my high school life.

M.O'R.: It sounds like it.

A.P-B.: It was pretty bad.

M.O'R.: Sounds like quite an ordeal.

A.P-B.: Yeah, and it was not normal. I almost in fact flunked my last English course before I graduated because the last big assignment, like a term paper, you were to write your life

story. No way I could write it. I thought, "Well, I can write only the good parts," only the teen years were - there never seemed to be anything good about them. And finally I just knew that if I wrote a fabricated story about my life it would be a lie, and I just couldn't lie like that. So I finally decided, "I'm just not going to do it."

So the teacher called me in when everybody had turned theirs in, and I just said, "There are things in my life I can't write about, and I can't write this." I couldn't tell anybody. I was well into my 40's before I could ever talk about it. I could never have told you. But now I can talk about it very freely. If I talk too long, why, it gets pretty hard.

M.O'R.: Well, it sounds like a very hard time.

A.P-B.: It was. I sat on that roof of the house many times and cried my heart out. I finally started - talked myself into keeping a journal, but not a journal of what was happening but a journal of everything beautiful that I could find in each day. So it started out very slim ...

[end of side one]

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 3, Side 2

October 25, 1995

A.P-B.: My father began, little by little, to change back, and not only back but to be rid of the temper, to be a gentle person. My children, his grandchildren, only know him as a loving, gentle, great wonderful grandfather. So - which is the way it should be.

M.O'R.: Do you think his transformation came as a result of dealing with these things face-to-face with you and other people, or was it ...

A.P-B.: Sure.

M.O'R.: That's where it came from?

A.P-B.: The two of us, my mother and me. And the fact that he had several more heart attacks.

M.O'R.: Well, I was going to say, advancing age probably ...

A.P-B.: Right.

M.O'R.: ... changed his perspective a little bit, too.

A.P-B.: Life and your family can become very important to you when you don't know how much life you have left.

And he finally had the final heart attack when he was 83. He was in the hospital. When they called me, I was - it was right at the end of the day of teaching, and I went to the hospital. The rest of the family was sitting outside. My mother, of course, wasn't there because of Alzheimer's. But I said, "I'm going in and staying with him through the whole thing until he dies." And they

said, "Why would you do that?" you know. And I said, "Because he needs somebody."

So it was nine hours. And when I went in he was in a coma, and I said, "Well, he doesn't know I'm here."

And the doctor said, "Yes, he does."

And I said, "How do you know that?"

And he said, "Well, we have all these instruments on him," and he said, "the moment you walked in, everything came up almost to normal." And he said, "He knows your here."

So I thought, "Okay. I'm staying." So I stayed through the whole thing and held him, talked to him. And you know, you read about these things that when people are in the last stages of death that their spirit hovers above them, so I thought, "Well, maybe his spirit is hovering up there. Surely, because the doctor says he knows I'm here, surely he does." So ...

M.O'R.: What a remarkable story that is. How old was he, roughly, when you had this pivotal conversation on the back porch?

A.P-B.: Oh, on the back porch? When I was about 24. He was 24 when I was born.

M.O'R.: Okay.

A.P-B.: So that would make him 48.

M.O'R.: Okay. Still a fairly young man, then, at that point?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Yes, he wasn't old. But he had a lot of years of going through more of that stuff. But I wasn't the victim anymore. Not anymore. That brought it to an end.

M.O'R.: Well, you had remarkable strength to carry you through that period.

A.P-B.: Well, you know, when I was ten, because I used to ask God all the time, "Why me? Why out of the four kids, why me?" And the answer was, "You will be more understanding." I was a very prudish little girl. Even though I did all these crazy things, I was a very prudish little girl. The truth was the truth. There was only black and white, never any gray. You always were morally good. You never did anything bad like other kids did. You know, none of the sex play, none of that. You never used bad language. You never swore, at home or anywhere else. You didn't lose your temper. I had had enough of watching temper.

I was born with a temper. I could have been like my father, but because I watched and knew how I felt, I didn't want anybody else to ever feel that way, and it took me a long time to conquer that temper. It was the kind of tempter that when I got angry, whatever was close to me, I threw it, and I had to get control of that so that I never threw anything anymore. And I did get control of it, because things said, "You don't have to be that way, and you could be more understanding. You're not very understanding of other people." And it was true. But I was also truthful with myself. I knew what my faults were. Still do. Not very pleasant sometimes to have to know everything bad about yourself, but it's very helpful because then you know what to work on.

And just the fact that God was always with me, that's where I got the strength, and the fact that God would never have let me continue on the earth here - because I used to ask Him to let me die - and when I was a little girl, I used to wish many times that I could, and I'd ask Him. And then when I was older I actually

would kneel by my bed at night, and I did this for a whole year, praying that He would let me die.

And then finally, it was - you know, sometimes you just open up the Bible, and you say, "Give me a lesson." And there was Samuel, and Samuel was hearing the voice of God, and then finally he listened, and there was this thing of doing something - don't remember quite what. And he said, "Send me." So one of these times when I was going to pray about, "Please let me die, God," and this thing said, "You'd better read Samuel." So then I did, and then I knelt again and said, "Okay. Here I am. Send me."

So then I started doing volunteer work over at the - oh, one of the children's homes. I can't think of the name right now. Not Waverly, the other one. But anyway, I started doing that. I was working at the library at that time in the music room. I was an assistant librarian there just before I went up to the medical school, and I - the Albertina Kerr Home, that's where I went.

And I had - because the library was open till 9:00, we were on from noon till 9:00 some days and from - then other afternoons, you know, we were free. So then I would go over there and do volunteer work. So that's where I got the courage. Otherwise, I wouldn't have had any courage. I don't know; maybe it was built in. But so was my relationship with God built in.

M.O'R.: Well, thank you very much for sharing that story with me. It's obviously still a painful story.

A.P-B.: Yes, it is. Yeah, if I talk too long about it, I start shaking, because I was in my mid-40's before I stopped having nightmares and waking up screaming in the middle of the night. But

that was the end of that. The last time was here, and then it was over. Thank heavens!

M.O'R.: Was there any significance of the point in time when it was over other - or did it - was it just time, you just worked through it?

A.P-B.: I guess so. It would happen just without my knowing it was going to happen. If there was a particular noise, or someone opening the door when I was asleep, and that's what happened here, the door opened, someone coming into my bedroom, and I just - I had been sound asleep, and I just shot up and started screaming and holding my head, and I mean the kids were scared, everything, you know. I guess it's because I never wanted that to happen to anybody else, you know. You don't want your children to go through that. So I think that's probably what it was, that I had to somehow psychologically get control of this thing so that in my sleep it wouldn't happen. You don't wake up in the middle of the night screaming at people.

M.O'R.: Maybe just a couple footnotes to this story. You've mentioned to me, of course, already that your father lost, you know, the part of the fortune that he inherited from your grandfather gambling. Was that gambling he did locally here?

A.P-B.: In Portland.

M.O'R.: In Portland?

A.P-B.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: What type of gambling, card games or something, or do you know?

A.P-B.: I don't. I just know my mother said that it all went. And it would go like \$500 a night and things like this. And

then he would sell another piece of property, and then they went to Denver to look at the ranch there, to sell it, and it was sold, and my grandfather had left three pieces of Coronado Beach property to the three girls, and because we were still under age, why, my father sold them.

M.O'R.: He had control of those?

A.P-B.: Yeah, he had control of them. And all the diamond collection, that all went, and the oil wells all went, and the ranch in Fresno was sold, and property everywhere just gone, and that was it. Everybody was poor again. That suited me just fine.

So the last piece of property my mother never let him sell ...

M.O'R.: That was the apartment ...

A.P-B.: ... and that was the house they lived in.

M.O'R.: Oh, okay.

A.P-B.: No, he talked her into selling the apartment.

M.O'R.: Oh, he did?

A.P-B.: But this was a long time later when they were very much in need, and he talked her into doing that.

My sister has one piece of property still left, a duplex, not a four-plex. There was a four-plex, too, but the one they live in is a duplex. It's a small duplex. It's up on Melrose.

M.O'R.: And did that come from your grandfather's estate, then?

A.P-B.: That was part of it.

M.O'R.: That was part of it, okay.

A.P-B.: Yeah, he just owned bits and pieces all over the place.

So my father gave that to my sister, my youngest sister. She was always his favorite. She was, she was always sweet, she was always obedient, always easy to get along with. She was everybody's favorite because she just was a sweet girl. You couldn't be mad at her, you just couldn't. She was just too nice.

M.O'R.: Well, a second footnote, and another one which undoubtedly was also a painful experience was that your mother contracted Alzheimer's?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. That was really hard because she was sick, and they just called it a nervous - like a nervous breakdown that she had had; because of all the stuff with my father, they called it a nervous breakdown. Now I know that it was probably the early stages of Alzheimer's.

But at any rate it just sort of gradually increased, and she just became a little more disabled, and I would go and read stories - I read the Little Colonel stories to her again, and just sharing those things. And one day after I'd finished reading to her she turned to me and she said, "And do you have any children, dear?" And it just hit me, you know, I just almost burst into tears, and I just patted her hand and said, "Yes, I do. I have three little girls."

"And do you read these stories to them?"

And I said, "Yes, I do." And so from then on out I knew she didn't know me. But she was always sweet and kind, and - but then later the personality change that comes with Alzheimer's came, and then she would get angry about things. She'd never been an angry person. And also because my father then just - he would do everything for her. He bathed her. He combed her hair. He fed her.

He took care of her. She was all he had then. And he would - she just became totally dependent on him, and when she didn't know anyone else, she knew him.

When my sister, the young one, Rosalie, when she would come, and my sister would give my father a kiss, and one day my mother glared at her, and she said, "You [unintelligible], you get out of here. You leave my man alone." And this was so totally atypical of my mother, you know, but by that time -. And she would spit, and she would kick, and she would kick and things that were just so totally not my mother.

Then when my father died, I brought her home here with me, and then when I was teaching during the day I had a girl taking care of her for me because she was totally bedridden by then, had an indwelling catheter and the bag and the whole bit, and would - she had to be fed, she had to be turned and bathed and all of this, so I would take care of her, and then I would go to work, and then Sarah would take care of her during the day, and then I'd come home.

And when I would feed her sometimes she didn't like it. I would have to grind all the food, make baby food out of it for her, so I would cook the food and then she would decide she didn't like it and like babies when you feed babies they spit it out, she'd spit it out. And I'd say, "Now, now, now. When I was a baby, you used to feed me, and you didn't like it when I spit. So now you're going to eat this like a good girl, because now you're my baby, and I'm taking care of you and I'm feeding you, and you have to be a good girl and eat it." She would eat it.

M.O'R.: So she understood?

A.P-B.: She would understand certain things, but she couldn't communicate with you. She couldn't talk anymore. She was my baby, and I held her when she was dying, too. By that time I knew that it was coming, and she was slipping more and more. And not only that - I don't know whether you have - what your feelings are about God, but I know that when it's time people do know, and not only did I feel it, but also she would be lying in her bed, and I'd be talking to her, and all of a sudden she would brighten up and she would look off this way, and her mouth moved like she was talking to somebody. This happened for a few days before, and I realized that she was going. And so I had my brother and others move her bed down to the back room off the kitchen. I had fixed it all up for a bedroom, and I had them move her down there so that when I was cooking dinner or anything that I'd be right there, I could hear and have the door open.

And so when it started happening, then I just went in and closed the door and then just held her. And that was it. You don't break down till it's all over, and then it just hits you.

M.O'R.: When did she die?

A.P-B.: That was a year after my father died. In fact, a little more than that, because he died in March, and she died in September. So it was almost a year-and-a-half afterwards.

M.O'R.: Okay. In September of what year, then?

A.P-B.: 1981.

M.O'R.: 1981, okay.

M.O'R.: Because I was - now, wait a minute - yeah, 1981. He died in 1980. Because I was still going every summer down there,

and Jack was living here then because we were married in 1980, and so he was here during all of that.

M.O'R.: Okay. Well, this is a good day's interviewing.

A.P-B.: You've been very patient.

M.O'R.: Oh, it's been a fascinating story, and thank you very much.

Just for the sake of - I mean, this is strictly bookkeeping now, but I think we've been talking about all these figures without my actually getting everybody's name.

So your father's full name was -?

A.P-B.: Joseph Theodore Meier, M-e-i-e-r.

M.O'R.: And your mother?

A.P-B.: My mother was Lillian Victoria Graves, G-r-a-v-e-s.

M.O'R.: And then your siblings, their names - your older sister?

A.P-B.: My older sister was also Lillian, but later she changed it legally to Lynn when she was in her 20's. She didn't want to be Lillian, and Lynn was a popular name, and so it sort of fit. But she was Lillian Katherine Meier, and I was Flora Althea, and Rosalie Ruth, and Joseph Theodore, and then David Gordon. And my grandfather on my father's side was Joseph Anthony Meier, and my grandmother was Flora Katherine, and her mother was Sarah Katherine.

M.O'R.: Do you know their maiden names?

A.P-B.: Yes. Her maiden name - they - it was Dunganin.

M.O'R.: Oh, that's right.

A.P-B.: But it had been shorted to Dugin. Because the O'Neill's headquarters was the Castle of Dunganin in what is now

Dunganin, and when they were high kings they met at Tara once a year, but when they met anytime between it was at Dunganin. And my grandmother used to tell me about the castle and the family, and that during the time of Queen Elizabeth I that since Henry VIII and the others had never been able to subdue the O'Neills or Northern Ireland, which is where they were, that Queen Elizabeth tried to be diplomatic and win them that way. So if they would come under her rule that they could keep their land and that she would make them Earls and Barons of Dunganin. And unfortunately the part of the family that I came from - apparently the ones who became the Earls and Barons of Dunganin, and they could continue to live on their land while the rest of the O'Neill family, Shane O'Neill and Hugh O'Neill and the rest of them, they never gave in. They never capitulated. And in the end those who decided to be - to go with her, they ended up fighting her in the end anyway, but they remained Earls and Barons of Dunganin. So that's what my side of the family continued to be until - and I don't know when they came over here. I haven't been able to find out yet. Unfortunately I didn't ask. I don't know that my grandmother knew, but at any rate I didn't think to ask about it, so I'm still trying to find out.

M.O'R.: Now, did we cover your grandfather ...

A.P-B.: My mother's mother was Katherine, and I'm not sure of her middle name, but she was called Kitty O'Clary, and they dropped the O and so it became Kitty Clary.

And then my grandfather was Williams Graves, and I'm not sure what his middle name - I think I have it - I know I have it written down, but I can't think what it is.

M.O'R.:

A.P-B.: You're very welcome.

M.O'R.: We'll pick up the story next time.

[end of tape]