

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 2, Side 1

October 25, 1995

M.O'R.: This is a continuation of the interview with Althea Pratt at her home on October the 25th, 1995.

Okay. You'd better back up a little bit. So your grandfather used to build ships in bottles?

A.P-B.: Yes, in Boston. He and his brother and his father when they came from Canada, then they were working on ships, building ships.

He was a very deeply religious person. I remember going to the church - that's another one of my memories, when I was two, that my grandfather, even though it was a church where the congregation didn't kneel, he would kneel and pray. He and my grandmother and a few others were the ones who started the First Baptist Church there in Oakland, California.

So because I was always singing when I was a little girl and memorizing all of these songs, everything my mother sang all the time, and so I sang all the time and I learned all the songs that she knew, and I would sing all of these hymns - she would sing hymns. She sang everything. It would run in a string. It would be a hymn, and then a popular song, and then something from an operetta - I mean, she just strung everything together. She wasn't really conscious of what she was singing. She just sang all the time.

So my grandfather's favorite hymn was "Rock of Ages," and so I could sing this thing, and somebody told the minister in the

church that I could sing all of these hymns, and he said, "A two-year-old can't sing hymns. Can't even sing." And they took me to sing for him. So I sang the hymns for him, and they decided that I should stand up in church service and sing for the congregation.

Well, later I would have been scared to death, but at age two it didn't bother me a bit. So I sang - stood up and sang the "Rock of Ages" for my grandfather.

M.O'R.: Obviously you can remember this, too?

A.P-B.: Yes. That was another two-year-old memory. Standing up in front of all of these people and singing, and I didn't know that it had actually happened, because I was always having dreams about music and everything. So as far as I was concerned that was just part of that.

M.O'R.: So both your grandmother and your grandfather on your mother's side were very much part of your life, too, when you were growing up?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Yes. We were very close. And I loved to go over there because it was their house that was on the hillside above Lake Merit, and it was their property that ran down to the lake. And their back field was full of poppies and lupin, and it was so beautiful.

I would run down there as a little girl, and there was always a balloon man down at the lake, and then they would have all of the children from the schools come for the May festival that was at the lake. They would have other occasions, too, but I particularly remember the May festivals because I was May Queen one time when I was six. I have this picture of me with this crown on my head, you know.

But I loved their house.

M.O'R.: And their house was - was it near your parents' house, then?

A.P-B.: No, because we lived over by Mills College.

M.O'R.: Okay.

A.P-B.: And they lived above Lake Merit, and the two were some distance apart. I couldn't walk there.

M.O'R.: So it would be when your parents were visiting that you would ...

A.P-B.: Yes. Yes. Or when my grandparents were visiting us. My grandfather, because he was a carpenter, then he would do any carpentry work on our house, and my mother liked to change things, and my father liked to change things, so we would be in flux half the time, with something new being built.

I remember when they added to the bedrooms, and I got a bedroom all my own, and it was just like Heaven. I wanted to be by myself, where I could read and think and do things. And it was on the front of the house, and there was this big willow tree in the front yard, and this was a colonial house, so that outside my bedroom window there was that slant roof, you know, just that short slant roof, and the branches of the willow tree came down to it, and I could go out my bedroom window, slide down the porch, grab that branch and climb into the tree.

So it was the perfect bedroom. I got to choose which one I was going to have, and it was the smallest bedroom because it was above the stairway, and the closet was - I had to go up a step because of the stairway. But because it had a window that looked out on the neighbors' garden that I loved and the front window

looked out on the willow tree, I wanted that bedroom. And I got to pick out my wallpaper, and I wanted birds and flowers. So it had bluebirds and flowers on it.

M.O'R.: Great. Now, you mentioned - so you had two sisters, then?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: An older sister and a younger sister?

A.P-B.: And a younger one.

M.O'R.: What were they like at that time? What was your relationship like with them?

A.P-B.: We always had a good relationship. I didn't learn until years and years later that my sister had resented my being born because I was four years later, and she had been an only child for four years, and they adored her. And as I said, she was my mother's ideal little girl. I didn't learn until, oh, maybe 20 years ago when my sister said, "You know those mean things that I did to you, it was because I was resentful and jealous, and I want you to know it."

And I was - and she said, "You need to talk to me about all the things I did."

I said, "Great heavens, no." They weren't that bad.

M.O'R.: So she used to torment you a little bit?

A.P-B.: Well, she would tell things that were not true. She would tell my parents that I had done something or that I was jealous of her, and she would tell boys that. She was very popular with the boys, very. And my mother always had this sort of romance going on between my sister and some - even when they were 13, you know, that this was maybe the boy she would marry someday, and

things like this. I used to think it was awfully silly, and so I would say, you know, that I didn't want to have to have any part of that kind of thing because then they'd try to match me up with somebody, and I didn't want that. So it was little resentful things that came up.

I remember sometimes she would get into a big argument with me or if I were reading Shakespeare or something and she would again repeat this kind of thing of well, I just thought I was better than other people. You know, it was just little things like that mostly, but I remember mostly the nice things that we did together, the companionable things: going for walks, and I used to love to go up and sit on the roof of the house. And so I would talk her into going up on the roof of the house with me, and we would sit up there and talk. So I remember lots of nice things that we did together. And parties we had, and parties with - she would do some mean things when we'd go to parties together, too, or if we were at school.

I remember once when I was nine, and this was when we had moved out to Mt. Tabor where my grandfather had another place, and we were living there, and so we were going to the Mt. Tabor School, and I fell down on the playground and really messed up my knee. And I guess I just wanted some sympathy, and I remember going to her, and she had her girlfriends around her, and she just wouldn't have anything to do with me. She just shooed me off. I remember having very hurt feelings about that because I was hurt and she should take care of me.

M.O'R.: You wanted some support.

A.P-B.: Yes. And - but there were a lot of times when she just simply didn't want me around. She was older, and I would usually take it for granted that that was okay. But it bothered me sometimes, too. I was little sister.

M.O'R.: When you would sit up on the roof with her, what kind of things did you talk about?

A.P-B.: Oh, like what we were going to be when we grew up, and she would say that she wanted to be sophisticated. And I would say, "Well, you really want to just be a party person?"

And she'd say, "Well, what do you want to be?"

And I would say, "Well, I want to teach," because I knew from the time I was five that this was what God intended me to do, I was going to be a teacher. And so I would say, "Well, I have to go to school and go to college, and I really want to go to Mills College."

Well, of course that went out the window because my father didn't like me, and he would say, "Women don't need to go to college. They're only going to get married and have children, so they don't need to go to college." So my brother got to go to Columbia, and what did I get to do? Earn my way, which I did.

M.O'R.: Although eventually you did go to Portland State, right?

A.P-B.: Yes, but I was working at the medical school while I was doing it, and Lewis & Clark for my music, and then of course I was taking private vocal lessons and things, but I was paying for all that myself. I didn't get to have anybody help me with it.

M.O'R.: Maybe now would be a good time to talk a little bit about these visions that would come to you where you would, you know ...

A.P-B.: Yes. The intuitive kind of things.

M.O'R.: The intuitive things, yes, like when you say you knew you would be a teacher at five, and when you say that you mean you really knew that you would be a teacher at five.

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. I did. Yes.

M.O'R.: How did that come to you? Was that first experience of that that you had?

A.P-B.: I - as far as I can remember, but I do remember knowing things about people when no one had told me, and I remember shocking my father's mother when I told her one time that she was married when she was 19, and she said, "How do you know that?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. How old were you?" And she said, "I was 19."

M.O'R.: Would this have been the first marriage, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. But I didn't know about the first marriage then. This was when I was ...

M.O'R.: Your father didn't even know about the first marriage then?

A.P-B.: No, my father didn't. Nobody did. Only my grandfather and she knew about that, and of course her brothers, but they never talked about it.

Anyway, there were a lot of different things that just seemed kind of commonplace to me that I would know about people.

But later it - when I could think about what I was feeling about people, then it was very strong.

M.O'R.: So you came to appreciate or realize exactly ...

A.P-B.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: ... how you came by these things, then?

A.P-B.: Then I knew that it was a thing called intuition. Before that I had no notion of what it was called or why I had it or anything. I'm sure everybody has it; it's just that most people somehow are not aware because of all the other activities they're in, and maybe because I was always thinking about things and always exploring and always questioning, maybe this is why I was more aware of the fact that this thing was there.

M.O'R.: More tuned in to your intuitive side, then?

A.P-B.: Listening to it.

M.O'R.: And so when you came to know that you'd be a teacher, you were fairly certain of that knowledge right from ...

A.P-B.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: ... from the beginning?

A.P-B.: Yes. I knew that's what I was going to do, and even though I was interested in ten million other things, I was always headed in that direction. There were times when it was hard to give up some of these other things knowing what I was supposed to do, and one of them was when I had the opportunity to sing in the Chicago Opera, and I loved opera, and I loved singing, and I'd love to have done it, but it would have taken total concentration, exclusive to everything else, because it's not only all the vocal work that you're doing, and it's all the music that you have to do, it's all of the languages, it's the acting, it's everything. I was having a lot of fun in Portland doing it as a hobby, singing at operettas and singing in Gilbert & Sullivan, and doing theater and

singing in opera at Reed College, summer opera, and all of these things.

But to think of it as a profession and to spend all of that time - because all of these other things I was doing while I was going to school and while I was working headed towards being a teacher. But when I had that opportunity, it was kind of hard to give it up. I knew where I was going.

M.O'R.: We're a little ahead chronologically speaking of our story here, but how did that opportunity come to you?

A.P-B.: Through another vocal teacher that I had who sang in the Chicago Opera and was going to take me back there to start in the chorus, and that I had this opportunity to do that.

M.O'R.: How old were you at that time, then?

A.P-B.: Twenty-two. Twenty-one or twenty-two, something like that. So I had plenty of time to do it and make it before you hit your 40's and start going down the other side. The voice is still thoroughly developing by that time.

M.O'R.: So that would have been just about the time that you bought this place, then?

A.P-B.: About the time that I started looking at this place, mm-hmm, knowing that ...

M.O'R.: Oh, that's right. Excuse me, I'm ten years ahead of myself here.

A.P-B.: Yeah, I was passing by here at that time.

M.O'R.: Right. Well, we'll get to that story when we come to it.

A.P-B.: Right.

M.O'R.: But let me back up and ask you a little bit about your younger sister and what your relationship was like with her in this same period?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. I adored my little sister. She was a very cute little girl. Everybody said she was the cutest little thing they had ever seen. They called her "Cupie doll," because you know those - Rose O'Neill made those little cupies, and they had the cupie dolls, and they always had this little smile on them, thin lips, little smile. I'll have to show you an adorable picture I have of my little sister when she was a little tiny thing. She was sitting in a great big rocking chair on the ranch, my aunt and uncle's ranch, and this rocking chair was outside under one of the trees, and this adorable little girl, curly hair, and she's sitting in this big rocking chair. I used to dress her up and play with her like she was a doll. I did this with my little brother, too. My little brother was born two years after that, so he was four years after me. And I would dress him ...

M.O'R.: So there were four of you altogether in the family?

A.P-B.: And then later another one.

M.O'R.: Oh, and later another one?

A.P-B.: Yes. But I was a lot older then. I was 14, almost 15, when David was born. And David I just took as my own child, then. I just - I took him everywhere with me. I even took him on dates. I would say, "My little brother is coming to the picnic," or "My little brother is going with us when we go swimming," or whatever I was doing. He was the sweetest little thing, and I would take him walking in the fall along the city streets there where the Lloyd Center is now, and the leaves would all be on the -

and we would push leaves around with our feet, and I would tell him stories, and we'd look under the leaves for fairies and elves and goblins. I took him all over with me, read him stories, told him stories, had his friends come, you know.

M.O'R.: That sounds like you had a great relationship with him, too, even though he was so many years younger than you.

A.P-B.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: One other question I might ask you is you've made a couple references to it already, to the church service where you sang in front of it, and to the fact that your grandfather was a religious man. So what role did religion play in your family when you were growing up?

A.P-B.: My mother was always deeply religious as her family was, in a quiet, unobtrusive kind of way, not a demanding kind of thing or a preachy kind of thing. She would tell us stories, but when we moved up here she lost her connection to everything. She left her big family down there, and it was heartbreaking for her, and it was for all of us, except my father because he really didn't have a family. He had his mother, who came along with us, and he had his uncle's wife, my aunt, and her daughter because his uncle had died by then, and so both of them came up here. So she was my second cousin. Katherine was a family name on both sides, and so Katherine lived - and Adrien lived with us. And so he had his family with him. But my mother left everything behind.

M.O'R.: The parts of the family that were out here, anyway, on the West Coast?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: I assume you had family back in Ohio, still, too?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. But all of - this big family on my mother's side, because there had been eight children, and as I said, the first baby died, so there were seven of them. And my mother by that time had four children, and her sister Kate had four children, and her youngest sisters had a couple of children, and her brother had a couple of children, and her two youngest sisters were still children, young - well, one was a teenager. But it was a big family, and we would have Christmas over at my grandfather and grandmother's big house, and this huge Christmas tree that went to the ceiling in what was the children's playroom, and all the family would gather in this big room with this big Christmas tree, and we'd sing Christmas carols, and the tree would be lighted with candles, little candles all over. Lucky we didn't have fires. But everybody was very careful.

M.O'R.: This was the Lake Merit house, then?

A.P-B.: Lake Merit house, yes.

M.O'R.: Well, now you mentioned that your mother kind of lost connection with ...

A.P-B.: And she didn't go to church up here.

M.O'R.: But now when the family moved up here you mentioned to me earlier that you were members of the Grace Episcopalian Church over there in the Lloyd Center area?

A.P-B.: That's where I became a member.

M.O'R.: Oh, it's where you became a member?

A.P-B.: I was the only one.

M.O'R.: Oh, you were the only one. Okay.

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: So your family was not necessarily Episcopalian?

A.P-B.: Oh, absolutely not. No. In fact, my mother felt very badly about it because I started taking my little brother David down there.

M.O'R.: Actually when you were talking about David earlier I was wondering whether your parents - how they felt about you taking this role as his second mother?

A.P-B.: Oh, they didn't mind at all. They understood.

M.O'R.: Except for the church part of it?

A.P-B.: Yes, that my mother was very upset about, although she didn't say much to me. As I said, she wasn't a criticizing person. So she didn't criticize me for it. She just wished that I would go to the Baptist church. But the Baptist church, I had - well, by the time I was 14 and 15 there were all of these different denominations of the Protestant religion, and there were all of those other churches, and there were all of these other religions - why? Why were they all different when they supposedly were all headed to the same place? What was the difference?

My father's father, his family had all been Catholic. My father's mother - and I don't know exactly how this worked. It must have been, because my great-grandfather, the Dungamins, the ones from Northern Ireland, they were Methodist. And my grandmother on my mother's side, their family was from Southern Ireland, but they were Baptists. Now, how does that happen, when Irish are usually Catholic? But my grandfather on my father's side, Meier, German, they were Catholic, very strong Catholic, because as I told you my great-grandfather made my grandmother marry my grandfather, but then he told us that his family had them married in the Catholic church after. I also wonder if there wasn't Catholic on my

grandmother's - my father's mother's side also because my grandmother's brothers all went to Notre Dame, and my grandmother was raised in a Catholic school, but they were not Catholic. But she was taught by the nuns. It was the only school, apparently, that was not a public school, and that - because of their family that's where they went. But why did the boys all go to Notre Dame? And I think that on her mother's side, because they had some French in there, too, and I think they must have been Catholic, but I don't know that. But why else would the boys all go to Notre Dame? It was a good Irish Catholic college. But my Irish people were not Catholic. Now, what happened? Why did my grandmother - did they become Methodists later? I don't know. I wish I did.

M.O'R.: It does sound kind of mysterious.

A.P-B.: Yeah, they are. I still have my grandfather's cross on the chain ...

M.O'R.: The rosary, uh-huh.

A.P-B.: ... and I have my grandfather's prayer book, and I read it. It's very similar to my Episcopal one, but there are differences between the low Episcopal, or any Episcopal, and the Roman Catholic, and even the early Irish Catholics were not Roman Catholic. They - in fact, it was a long time before they reconciled and became Roman Catholic.

And on my mother's side, back in the 1600's I know that the - that there were priests, because the Annals of the Four Masters were done by three O'Clary's - one of them was a Michael, by the way.

[end of side one]

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 2, Side 2

October 25, 1995

A.P-B.: ... because, as I said, I started going around and examining all of these different religions.

M.O'R.: And wondering why there were so many of them?

A.P-B.: And wondering why. So I practically lived in the library downtown there all the time anyway, and so one of the things I studied a lot of philosophy when I was in high school - not at school, but in the library. As I told you, my mother knew when the library closed at 9 o'clock I'd come home. So I studied history, all kinds of different countries, and I started studying all the different religions. I read about Confucianism and Hinduism, Buddhism, and I started going around to all the different churches, gathering their material, attending their services, finding out what they believed in.

The Grace Memorial Episcopal Church was right there in my neighborhood. And because of all the trouble my father and I had together, and I was going through a tremendous amount of unhappiness and depression during my teen years because of this, and as I told you, then he tried to kill me when I was 16, and trying to sort out all this thing that was happening to me. I would go down, and this church was just a few blocks from home. At that time church's doors were still open at any time. I would go in and kneel and pray.

Religion had - God had always been very close to me. I can remember as a little girl at age five talking to him, and when I

was seven I started reading the Bible for myself. I wanted to find out what was in it, what it really said. So I continued that to this day; I still do every night. And I - until I got arthritis badly, I would say my prayers at night kneeling by my bed. Now I lie down. Don't do that anymore; my knees hurt too much.

But when I'm at church, of course, I kneel, but not through the whole service, of course.

M.O'R.: So you still attend the Episcopal Church out here somewhere or ...

A.P-B.: Up until - well, now my minister comes out here and gives me communion here. I was there this last Sunday, because someone came and picked me up. But I don't do all the driving that I used to do because one of the things I've had since I was a child was an inner ear thing - you know, you have car sickness, you have plane sickness, any motion sickness. And when you're younger, you can compensate; your muscles are stronger and everything. But when you get older and your muscles are not as strong, then the dizziness hits you and you can't control it as much, so that when I am in a crowd, the dizziness is greater. I lose track. I have to touch something.

When I'm working around the house, I have to make sure I don't move too quickly and that I touch something, otherwise I'm apt to fall. So I don't do a lot of driving now, and even in the grocery store I keep the basket and I touch the basket, because there's a crowd in there and I'm moving - and another thing is big space, you move in big space.

A few years ago at church - because I would go to the early service - and then eight years ago I got meningitis, and the dizzi-

ness has been increased since the meningitis, and so I started going to a later service, and then a year-and-a-half ago I stopped driving over there entirely. And now if someone picks me up, I go, but otherwise I do my service here by myself. And then, oh, maybe once a month he'll come and do communion with me.

M.O'R.: I see. But in your teen years, then, the Episcopal church, among other things, offered kind of a refuge to you?

A.P-B.: Yes, it did. And then I joined, and am still a member. But as I told you, when the girls' father and I got married, he also right at that time became Minister of Music of the First Christian Church, downtown Portland.

M.O'R.: Right. Yes, you told me that.

A.P-B.: And then ...

M.O'R.: We'll get to that, too. Actually, let's back the story up a little bit here. I want to hear a little bit more about the changes in your father's career that brought you up here and a little bit about the move to Oregon from California. But before we do that, let me ask you - even though we've spent quite a bit of time, I think it's all been totally worthwhile, wonderful stories here - but you've given in bits and pieces sort of a picture of Oakland in those days ...

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: ... but maybe just take a few minutes to describe it in general terms; what kind of place was Oakland in those days?

A.P-B.: A very - a small city with a suburban - what people would call now a sort of a suburban kind of feeling to it. It was quiet and very old fashioned. The neighborhoods were closely integrated; everybody knew everybody. Everybody was supportive of one

another, almost like every neighborhood was kind of a small town of its own, like that around Mills College was one neighborhood, and around Lake Merit was another neighborhood. And everywhere aunts and uncles lived. It was the same kind of thing, where this was kind of the close feeling.

Somewhere within walking distance, because theaters have begun, and so there would be a movie theater, and they would have a matinee for the children to go to on Saturday afternoon, and the matinees would be cowboy pictures with Gary Cooper and - oh - well, he was the hero, usually, in those days. Who else? And there would be Charlie Chaplin films, and then there were the comics.

M.O'R.: Would these be silent films, still, or was this after the ...

A.P-B.: Some were silent films still, and you read the captions. Because I was a good reader, I could read them to the other kids.

And then there was a grocery store down a few blocks from you, and everyone went to that grocery store. And then further on - that was - well, that was sort of the small grocery store. Farther on, some of the chains had begun: Piggly Wiggly - I always adored that name, and they had a pig on their sign, of course - that was a good deal farther, but that I would go to in part of my exploring days. I would go down there and see what they had.

And then - let's see; where else?

M.O'R.: How would you get around?

A.P-B.: Walk. On my two feet.

M.O'R.: On your two feet. No bicycle, then?

A.P-B.: No, no, no, no. No. Very few children had bicycles then. The little ones had tricycles, and I'd had a tricycle that I could run up and down our street with. Skating, a lot of us roller skated, and we would roller skate around the neighborhood. That's one of the things we used to talk my mother into doing with us.

M.O'R.: Oh, really?

A.P-B.: But only at night. She would go roller skating with us at night. [laughing]

M.O'R.: Because she couldn't be seen?

A.P-B.: That's right. And because she was not supposed to be that unladylike, you know.

M.O'R.: Did she enjoy it?

A.P-B.: Oh, she loved playing anything with us. She'd play games with us, you know. She was always a child at heart. My children, her grandchildren, and all the other grandchildren, absolutely adored her. She always had stories to tell, always had games to play with them. But she just had this warm and loving open kind of playfulness to her that every child everywhere always adored her. So my children, her grandchildren, have very fond memories.

One of the things she had never been able to do as a young person, because she got married when she was 19, she didn't get to travel. And one of the Victorian-type books for girls in her day was the Little Colonel series, and the Little Colonel was her hero, and that is what my sister was to her, was the Little Colonel, her Little Colonel.

My mother loved those books and had read them all, and she had always wanted to go to Kentucky, where the stories took place. So when my children were little I took them all over the country, and I took my mother to Kentucky.

M.O'R.: Was that her first trip, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. I took her twice, and we went to the valley, which in the Little Colonel stories is called Lloyd's Valley but in true fact was called Peewee Valley because of the little peewee birds that sang there in the trees. And much of these stories, you see, were true, and most of the people in the stories were real people and the places were real. So I was able to take my mother to the houses where these stories had taken place, and the long lanes that were just narrow little roads when we went there, but they were just dirt lanes in the stories. So this was something I was able to do for my mother.

M.O'R.: So your mother had not traveled much before then; is that right?

A.P-B.: Never. Just from here to California and back again.

M.O'R.: So your family wasn't one to take off on vacations around the country?

A.P-B.: No. We had a beach place down at Rockaway, and we went down there and we spent most of our summers down there, and then she had gone to Washington, of course, Vancouver.

M.O'R.: But not too far afield, eh?

A.P-B.: Not too far afield. Eastern Oregon. And that was about it.

M.O'R.: I imagine she enjoyed the trips at least down to California?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. They went to my grandfather's down in San Diego, and of course Oakland to see the family and down to the ranch, and that was about the extent of it. So I took her all over. I took her to Williamsburg, and I took her to Boston, all over New England and took her down to the South and took her to everywhere across the Midwest, Lincoln's Springfield, every place - every place I took the girls.

M.O'R.: That's great. You were telling me a little bit about Oakland ...

A.P-B.: Yes, and we got off.

M.O'R.: No, that's fine. So you left there when you were eight-and-a-half?

A.P-B.: Eight-and-a-half.

M.O'R.: Right. So I guess most of your wanderings would have been confined to on foot or ...

A.P-B.: To the neighborhood, yes, the hillside and things like that.

M.O'R.: Right. Now, you were telling me about your father and about how he owned and operated this chain of restaurants.

A.P-B.: With this other fellow.

M.O'R.: Yes. But then apparently later on he started managing property for your grandfather. Was that right at the time that you moved to Portland, then?

A.P-B.: Yes. That was when he started doing that.

M.O'R.: And up till that time had he had business dealings with your grandfather?

A.P-B.: No. As I said, we - no. He bought this dairy farm, so that lasted not even a year. He was a total flop at that kind of a thing.

M.O'R.: Was it sort of an investment? Did he have others operate it for him, then, the dairy farm, or ...

A.P-B.: No. He wanted to do it himself.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: Just like I wanted to have a farm out here myself.

M.O'R.: And that's when you all moved to the farm, then?

A.P-B.: That was when we moved there.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: On my aunt and uncle's ranch, he loved that, and that was where he would work and do this kind of thing that he really wanted to do. He wanted to be a farmer, too. I suppose that's why I picked it up. The ranch did it to him, and the ranch did it to me. I mean, that place was just absolutely incredible. You felt such freedom there. And I think that was part of why he probably thought that maybe he could be successful at running one, too.

M.O'R.: But it didn't work out?

A.P-B.: No. He was not a businessman. And my grandfather finally realized that before he died, and he was not too feeling secure, I think, about leaving everything, but this was his only child, and - but he did leave one apartment to my mother, so that she would have an income.

M.O'R.: Independent from your father's?

A.P-B.: Yeah. And he realized also that she was a better manager as far as things than my father was. And so then my father just sort of went through everything.

M.O'R.: Now, when the dairy farm failed - well, let's see. He had the restaurants - did he still have those when he was doing the dairy farm, as well?

A.P-B.: No, no.

M.O'R.: Okay. So he got out of that?

A.P-B.: No, he had given that up.

M.O'R.: Okay. Did he sell out or something of the restaurants or ...

A.P-B.: I don't really know. I was too young to know whether he still kept part of that or what he did. I just know he was over there in San Francisco all the time and that he was home on weekends.

M.O'R.: Oh, he'd stay in San Francisco, then?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: Of course in those days it wasn't quite so easy ...

A.P-B.: Oh, yeah. You had to take the ferry across there. It took a long time. You took the streetcar down to the ferry, or you drove, but he left the car at home here. I don't know what he did over there, but he took the ferry.

M.O'R.: So when you were growing up, then, in those early years obviously you had a lot more time to interact with your mother than your father, it sounds like, because he was gone?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. I didn't interact with him too much except on weekends, and I know that got pretty hairy sometimes.

M.O'R.: Well, let me ...

A.P-B.: Probably because I wandered and explored too much.

M.O'R.: Oh, your father didn't like that?

A.P-B.: Oh, no.

M.O'R.: So after the dairy farm, then, was that the point at which you came up here?

A.P-B.: Shortly after that.

M.O'R.: Shortly after that? Okay.

A.P-B.: Yeah. We went back to Oakland, and he went back to San Francisco, I know that, because the whole time until we moved up here he was still over in San Francisco, so he must have kept connections there, because the only times I remember in Oakland he was always gone except on weekends. It wasn't until we came up here that he was with us all the time. So he must have been doing that then, too, but I don't know.

M.O'R.: What's your memory of the transition, leaving Oakland and coming up here? What do you remember about that time?

A.P-B.: I remember that we had to leave everything, all our personal things, behind, not even our toys came with us. He said we can have all those things up there. And I can remember a bonfire to burn all of these papers and stories and things that I had written, all these personal things that any of us had.

M.O'R.: That you weren't allowed to bring?

A.P-B.: We were not allowed to bring it.

M.O'R.: Why was that?

A.P-B.: He didn't see any reason to bring these things. We were starting over. But not only that, but - you know what those big touring Fords were in those days? Well, that's what we had.

M.O'R.: And that was it, huh?

A.P-B.: And whatever could go in it, that's what we took. And the touring Fords, not only were they bigger inside, but they also had this camp thing on the back. It was - I guess it's the

closest thing to having a trunk to a car, but it had whatever that thing was called on the back. We used to go camping a lot in the summertime down there in Oakland. We'd go up into the hills, and my father loved to fish, as I told you. That's how I got to Oregon.

M.O'R.: That's right. Better fishing than Texas.

A.P-B.: So we would go camping and for him to go fishing. I have pictures of when we were little, and we were out there up in the woods, and I loved it when we did that.

So this car, anything that it could carry, that's what we brought up here with us, nothing more.

M.O'R.: And it would also cart things out to the woods for these fishing trips, then, too?

A.P-B.: Yes. He brought his fishing rods and things with him, but that was it. So even our Christmas ornaments, these beautiful little birds with the spun glass tails and the little bells, all these beautiful things that we had just loved at Christmas time, putting on our Christmas tree, but we always had our big celebrations at my grandmother's with her big tree, but we had to leave all those behind. And my dolls, I remember being - bringing only two dolls with me. I had to carry them. One was a little doll, a little china doll in a little bassinet that I could carry with me, and the other one was a baby doll about this big, and I carried that. That's all I brought with me.

M.O'R.: Were you excited about the move to Oregon?

A.P-B.: No.

M.O'R.: It was just ...

A.P-B.: It was a disaster. I had to leave all my friends. I had no idea what Oregon was like and didn't care at that point. I was so happy where I was. And I remember when my father would come home on weekends my mother would fix big pots of popcorn, and we'd all sit around and eat popcorn and sing. My father loved to sing. Had a beautiful voice. Beautiful Irish high tenor, and I'm sure that's where I got my coloratura. My mother was a lyric soprano. They both had sung in the San Francisco Opera when they were - before they got married, and maybe even after; I don't know. Sang in the chorus. They had beautiful voices. So we would sit and we would sing and eat popcorn. Those are nice memories.

When we came up here, there was none of that anymore. He was there all the time and was cranky all the time, and nothing seemed to go right. And it rained all the time. We drove into Portland; it had been pouring down rain that whole day coming through Oregon, and it rained, it was pouring, and I remember looking out at the streets of Portland through these rainy, rainy car windows and feeling horribly sick to my stomach. I was sick all the way up here because of motion sickness.

M.O'R.: Motion sickness in the car. How long did the trip take?

A.P-B.: Well, we stopped along the way. We went through the redwoods, and of course we had fun doing that because we could drive the car right through the trunk of one of those redwoods, and we could go into the little house in one of them. So we stopped and we did fun things along the way.

M.O'R.: Did you come up the coast?

A.P-B.: Mm-hmm. That was the only highway.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: That's all there was. So you came up the coast, and it was all these crooked, crooked highways. That's the only way they built them in those days. So it was motion sickness all the way. I just kept the whoopee cup going. It was miserable.

M.O'R.: So you must have taken a few days to do it, then?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And the motels in those days were pretty rustic. We stopped in those, and some of them it was fun, because they would be like camping places, you know, and they were just these little cabins. I was always fascinated by anything that was a building, anything that was a house, whether it was a cabin house or a big house, so I was always having fun being in these little cabins, and besides it wasn't moving anymore.

M.O'R.: Right. You were out of the car, at least.

A.P-B.: I was out of the car.

M.O'R.: Now, you also mentioned that you had trouble with your father. It sounds like that was maybe more up here than down there?

A.P-B.: Oh, much more. It increased drastically.

M.O'R.: I'd like to talk to you about that, but maybe first let me just ask you what do you think - what was the relationship like between your mother and your father?

A.P-B.: No romance whatsoever.

M.O'R.: That was behind them by that time?

A.P-B.: Well, he was very much a man's man. He liked to hunt and fish and go places with the men, you know, travel and do things that were men things. We would call them macho things now. And your wife was the mother, the home provider, the comforter ...

M.O'R.: Wasn't even allowed to be part of this man's world?

A.P-B.: Oh, never. Huh-uh.

M.O'R.: And in the case of your mother it doesn't sound like she would have wanted to, anyway?

A.P-B.: Well, she would loved to have done things with him, because she was very much in love with her husband, and he was in love with her, and their sexual life was great but - I mean, I didn't learn that until a long time later, when people could talk about things like that, but she was very innocent, also. This was the only man she ever knew, and she didn't know about any of the bad part of sexual things. She knew nothing about those. She had no idea what a homosexual was. She didn't learn that until she was probably in her 40's or early 50's. She didn't know about anything like that. And the only reason she found out when she did was simply because one of my sister's friends was a very mannish girl, and my father would never let my sister go anywhere with this girl, and we didn't understand it. We thought he was just doing his usual strict, mean kind of thing, you know, and finally he had to have a long talk with my mother, because this girl wanted my sister to come and stay for the weekend with her and her family, and my father was absolutely livid. He wouldn't think of it. And he was just raging. So later when my mother had him somewhat calmed down, he said, "Don't you know what this girl is?" And my mother had no idea what he was talking about. So he taught her a few facts of life, and she sat down and taught them to us, and that's when we first learned.

M.O'R.: About homosexual lifestyles?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: And do you think your father was right about this girl?

A.P-B.: Oh, I'm sure he was. She wanted to kiss my sister on the lips. She wanted to have her arm around her all the time. She wanted to stroke her hair. I mean, my father, if he came home and saw this girl there, he immediately shipped her out.

He had no qualms about telling people to leave, and when we would go - when we were living in Sylvan, and we would have bonfires up the hill at somebody's place, my father would quiz everybody who was going to be at that bonfire, and he would say, "You will be home at 9 o'clock. No later." And he'd be at the door, and if you were one minute past 9 o'clock that door flew open and you were grabbed by the shirttail and pulled in. You weren't saying good-bye to anybody out there. That was it. And that's the way it was with any dates, later. Nine o'clock.

M.O'R.: It sounds pretty early.

A.P-B.: It was very early. You could hardly go to a show, a theater thing, and get home by then. A little bit later you could relax it maybe to 10:00, but he was at the door.

M.O'R.: Kept close tabs on it, then?

A.P-B.: Absolutely. Surprised we didn't have chaperons. [laughing] If he'd had his way, we would have.

[end of tape]