

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 5, Side 1

November 1, 1995

M.O'R.: This is a continuation of an interview with Althea Pratt-Broome on November 1st, 1995.

A.P-B.: So the other incident was a night when my parents went to a movie, and because my sister was 14 she was there to babysit us. And my grandmother lived downstairs, and so we had my grandmother there and we had my sister.

So they went to a movie, and we were upstairs in the bedroom, our bedrooms, and the - we heard a noise. We had been singing. We were supposed to be sleeping, but we were singing. We had all gathered in one bedroom, and we were just raising the dickens. We were singing every song we knew.

And so we stopped singing and got ready to sing another song, and we heard this noise in the living room. So I sneaked out and I watched, and these men were going through all of the papers and things that were on the desk. And so we all came and watched through the keyhole and ...

M.O'R.: These are strangers, then?

A.P-B.: So we didn't know what to do, but we locked the doors between where we were and where they were, but they made no attempt to do anything in that respect.

M.O'R.: Were they aware that you were in the house, then?

A.P-B.: I don't know whether they were aware that we were in the - well, they must have been. They must have heard us singing -

four of us, singing at the top of our lungs. No, they must have known we were there, but they made no attempt.

But then two other attempts were made, one when I was coming home from school, and there was this big estate below where we lived, and one of the houses that had been in the World's Fair, a big colonial house, the 1905 World's Fair, had been moved out to this place. I don't know how many acres were in this one stretch, but it was a beautiful house and they had tennis courts and gardens and lots of trees, and the entrance to it from the street was a wooden entrance with a bench on each side and a gate.

And as I came past that, this man stepped out, and he said - he started to talk to me - where do I live, you know. And we were told not to talk to them, and he said, "Well, I want you to look at this word in here." And so I looked at it. He said, "Do you know what that means?"

I said, "No, I've never seen that word before, but I have to go home." So I left, and I told my mother. I spelled the word for her. It was the "F word."

And she said, "Don't you ever go anywhere with anybody who either says the word or shows the word to you."

And then another time my sister and I were coming home from school, my little sister, and this man started to follow us, so I was running. It was a very icy day, so I grabbed her by the hand and started racing with her, and she started falling down, and I grabbed her and pulled her along with me.

We found out afterwards that my grandfather was going through some kind of litigation in California and that he had been threatened, and that they had threatened our family. So we didn't

know whether these occasions had to do with trying to get one of us and kidnap us or what, because a few years later when my little - the other little brother was born - that was four years later, and then when my mother had him in a downtown store in Portland, she let go of his hand - I think he was a year, year-and-a-half, to pick up something on the counter. And when she reached down to take his hand again he was gone. And a woman was just walking out the door of the store, and my mother started screaming, "Stop that woman! She has my baby!" And so the woman ran and let go of my little brother's hand.

So we never knew whether these things had anything to do with my grandfather or just what.

M.O'R.: But they were clustered in this period of time, then?

A.P-B.: That's right. It was a very spooky time.

So then at the end of the year we moved out to Sylvan, and we didn't have any more of that.

M.O'R.: One question I was going to ask you about the time when you saw men actually in your house.

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: Did you tell your parents about it, then, when they got back?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We were still wide awake.

M.O'R.: I'll bet you were.

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. So when they came home we told them, and things were scattered all over. They'd gone through everything. My father just said that apparently they were looking for something from my grandfather to be used in the - whatever it was going on.

We didn't understand all that was going on, but somebody was trying to get property or money or something like this.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: So that's what they figured that was.

M.O'R.: And so they didn't detect anything stolen or anything like that?

A.P-B.: Well, apparently some papers were missing.

M.O'R.: I see.

A.P-B.: Because they had certainly gone through everything, and my father then I guess informed my grandfather. You know, I was never in on any of the business end of anything. I just knew what I occasionally heard, or if they had to explain something like this to me. But other than that, I didn't know. But we never went back to Mt. Tabor again. It was too wooded and too kind of away from things.

M.O'R.: So it was - were you actually up on Mt. Tabor itself then?

A.P-B.: Yes. Yeah.

M.O'R.: And it was fairly wooded at that time?

A.P-B.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: Of course it still is to some extent.

A.P-B.: Yeah. I was - I had fun there, but only because there was a big back yard, and again I'd get in trouble. I built ships, pirate ships out of crates from the grocery store that I would take all the neighborhood kids and we'd go down to the grocery store and we would haul back these crates and cardboard boxes, and we'd build a ship, and I think one time I attached it to

the back steps, to stabilize it. Used the steps, and got in trouble over that.

M.O'R.: Right. Used the steps as the foundation for your project, eh?

A.P-B.: Yes. So then education was a lot more fun at Sylvan because it was smaller. There were things that weren't happy there, but at the same time the teacher, even though she had this little group of girls that she had had from first grade there at Sylvan, and every year she would have this little thing where she would take them aside and they would celebrate this time together, and of course I was always left out of all of these things, but because I learned quickly, why, that made her happy with me, apparently, because she would bring things to me. She would bring books from the Portland library to me, things that she knew that I was interested in, historic things and stories that had to do with history, and she brought me Shakespeare and all kinds of different things that I could read and that I loved.

I was allowed to take two grades at the same time, so that that's how I got ahead of Gene. But he was mad because he was in the one grade and I was doing both of them, so that we would compete on all the tests in that grade. But I think it made a stronger bond because we had this in common that we were both excited about learning.

M.O'R.: And this is when you met Gene, then, was at Sylvan?

A.P-B.: Yes. When I was ten.

And so not only that, but my father was bringing all these encyclopedias home, too. As I told you, he loved to gamble. Well, one of the ways that he loved to gamble was to go to these auc-

tions. We had beautiful furniture and rugs and things because he went to these auctions. But always they have these big surprise boxes, and nobody knew what was in them.

M.O'R.: And so he would buy those?

A.P-B.: He would bid on those, and of course he'd end up getting them. Well, they - some of them had encyclopedias in them, and so I took over the encyclopedias.

I also was allowed to take piano lessons out there, which was very exciting for me because I had been picking out things on my own, but I wanted lessons. And that was when I also started listening to the Saturday opera. Texaco still has the Saturday opera, the Metropolitan, and it's still broadcast on Saturdays. Did you know that?

M.O'R.: No, I didn't know that.

A.P-B.: It is. They almost stopped a few years ago and about broke my heart, because when I was 12 I started listening to those, and so that was all part of my self education.

I did so much more of it there than I had anyplace else that that made it even more exciting for me, not only because of being able to be out in nature where I could do that kind of - call it research - but whatever I found out there I could look in the encyclopedias, or I could talk to Miss Day, the teacher, and she would get some books for me on it.

And then after a while they began to bring a mobile library one day a month, I think it was, to us, and then I got to pick out books also that I wanted to know things about. And there was a newspaper at that time called *The News-Telegram*, and we got that newspaper along with *The Oregonian*. So when I was reading it one

day I found that they had coupons in there; if you had 25 cents you could buy a classic if you had so many of these coupons. So I would diligently cut them all out, and then as I told you I would babysit, I would babysit the neighbors' little girl, and so I gradually began to save enough money that I could buy six books, and I saved enough of these coupons.

So I didn't have bus fare, because if I spent it on the bus fare I wouldn't have had it for the books. So I walked the three miles down Canyon Road, and I went to *The News-Telegram* office, which was somewhere down on Second or Third or First; I don't even remember, but I - they had the address in the newspaper. So I went down there, and I came home with my six books.

M.O'R.: What were they?

A.P-B.: One was Shakespeare. One was Hawthorne's - oh - *Scarlet Letter*. One was Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. And what were the other three? I'll have to think about it, but there were three more, and I think I still have a couple of them.

M.O'R.: And these were six from a longer list that were available?

A.P-B.: Yes. Yes.

M.O'R.: I wonder during these elementary school years - you had mentioned to me I think last time that you knew at the age of five that you would be a teacher ...

A.P-B.: Right. So I was watching all the teachers.

M.O'R.: Well, I was going to ask you if you were self-conscious about that, or conscious of it?

A.P-B.: I was very conscious of it. I was very conscious of people.

M.O'R.: Did you actually think of it in terms of teaching methods or approach that teachers would have to classes?

A.P-B.: No. I watched the way they taught, and the ones that seemed to work the best for children.

M.O'R.: The ones that worked the best for you, too, probably?

A.P-B.: Yes, absolutely. The way they were with children as human beings, how they treated children as human beings. Did they talk down to us? Did they treat us like maybe we had a brain up there? Did they teach only by rote? Did they let you explore?

And Miss Day, the one out at Sylvan, though there were things that I was not - that I didn't think were fair about her, still I realized that she was a wonderful teacher, that she really was concerned about children and learning, and she could be a very strict disciplinarian.

I liked the other teacher better who taught the first through fourth grade. She came in and taught us art. She was Irish as Paddy's pig. She was a beautiful blonde with the fair skin that Irish have and the blue eyes, and she was always laughing and happy and cheerful. She also taught us music. She sang with us. She had a lovely voice, and I loved music, and I loved art. I was always drawing from the time I can remember, and so having her come in and do things - so the teachers would trade rooms, so we got the best of both. I got the best of the academic from the one and the best of the arts and the bubbly kind of happiness that I always felt comfortable with. My mother was like that, and this - let's see; her name was Helen, and what was her - it was a good Irish name. What was it? Not O'Connelly, but something like that.



The first time she took a look at the four of us all lined up there when my mother brought us, I can remember so clearly she said, "And your name is Meier?" And she said, "Those are Irish children if I have ever seen Irish children." [laughs]

M.O'R.: So she was a little confused by the name, too, eh?

A.P-B.: And my mother said, "Well, yes, they're more Irish than anything else since they get it from both sides." So she said, "Yes, they're very Irish."

So at any rate it was that kind of opportunity that I think even strengthened the idea that I was going to be a teacher. And then when I got in high school I was always observing the way they taught, too, and most of them I didn't particularly approve of. I thought they needed to be more liberal and more aware of what children were really like.

One of the things that really bothered me in school a lot was the fact that they put children who were slower, they put them down. I hated that. I thought that was very, very unfair because people learn in different ways.

M.O'R.: Put them down just in class, you mean?

A.P-B.: Yeah. They were always treated like they were at the bottom of the heap, and they were good kids, most of them. I didn't think they should be treated that way, and it really bothered me. I always was trying to take the part of the underdog and always trying to help them, and I think that that's primarily why I wanted to take - when I started the alternative school is take some of those children who were the slow ones, some of those they called retarded, some of those who were emotionally disturbed,

because having gone through a lot myself I figured that I had gained the kind of understanding.

That was one of the awarenesses that I think I mentioned, the fact that when we lived out there when I was ten that I was questioning why out of the children I had to be the one that my father didn't like, and the answer was always, "You'll be more understanding." I think that I had to go through a lot of different things. We create ourselves, I think, through our own understanding and trying to learn about ourselves and question what we are also.

I think that if I hadn't had some of those experiences I might not have done the things that I did, because I wouldn't have been as understanding. I'd have been more like some of those teachers who only looked at kids as a mass and not as individuals. I was never able to line kids up and say, "You should all do that same book; you should all do this the same." They were all God's kids in front of me. Our genetic system is such that there is no way any one of us, even identical twins, can be identical. And so if we're not, then we cannot all be treated exactly the same, and we'd better find out what those kids are like.

I remember when I was teaching graduate classes down there at University of Southern California, one of these teachers really hit me with this thing. She said, "I already have my master's," but she said, "I wanted to take this class anyway." But she said, "I don't believe in the kinds of things you're talking about, the way to treat children."

And I said, "Do you line children up all in rows in desks?"

"Yes," she said, "I've been teaching for 25 years."

And I said, "Do you look at them in that way? Do you ever think of them as individuals?"

"No, why should I?"

I said, "Well, maybe by the time we get through with this class maybe you'll know why."

And at the end she said, "I know why."

So if I hadn't gone through a lot, I don't think I could have done that. I think all things happen to us - that happen to us we can learn from. For me that's the way it's been all my life, and thank heavens the good lord gave me a mind that could figure out things like that. Otherwise I'd have been sunk. I'd probably be in a mental institution.

M.O'R.: You mentioned that you didn't have a lot of teachers at Lincoln that inspired you.

A.P-B.: No.

M.O'R.: High school itself must have been a bit of a different experience for you?

A.P-B.: It was a horror for me.

M.O'R.: Was it?

A.P-B.: Yes. There were some good experiences, but I was going through so much at home, and I just - I didn't feel I was worth anything, even though I knew perfectly well that I had to be worth something or God would never have created me in the way that He did. Obviously I was supposed to do something for humanity, but other than that I didn't think I was worth a great deal.

I knew I had a mind, and I knew I had a spirit, but in high school there was too much going on for me to ever really enjoy it, and it was big, I was barely 13, and I just felt totally lost in

this thing. I had come from this two-room schoolhouse which was almost like heaven to me, and this intimate kind of thing.

The girls used to make fun of me out there at Sylvan, and they could be mean as could be, but I could walk through that, so I could still be happy out there because when they weren't being mean they were best of friends with me, and girls are like that sometimes. But we could share things, talk about things, and be close, and then the next minute they'd be mean as sin, you know. But you just sort of took it, "Okay, that's the way it is." It's still that way with a lot of women, and others are just so wonderful that you just love them to pieces, you know, and you're best of friends.

But in high school I had a couple of close friends, but mostly you just didn't have close friends.

M.O'R.: And who were the close friends in high school?

A.P-B.: One was a girl who lived in - what is that little town? - Multnomah. She came from a very poor family, and we had - we didn't have a lot of things in common, but we became very good friends. I look back now and I think it must have been because her family was Irish, also. She had that fun kind of spirit to her. She wasn't a great student, so I really honestly don't know what we had in common, and yet our spirits had something in common, and I liked her very much. Joyce Moore.

And the other one was a Jewish girl, Lillian Zeidel.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. The Zeidel family.

A.P-B.: Yes. And again I was lumped into the Jewish kids mostly.

And another girl, Lillian Oppenheimer, and another one - Ashford - what was her first name? She was a beautiful girl, very

gentle and quiet, a Jewish girl. We were friends for the first couple of years, and then they moved, but she was best of friends that first year, and just a very sweet person.

Lillian, she was more full of fun, full of tricks and things. She was always making jokes about things, not only about things but about people. But they weren't mean jokes. She'd make them about the Jewish people and about the Gentiles, and it was sort of more like listening to Jack Benny or something like that; I mean, she was full of fun. And we always ate lunch together. There was a whole group of the Jewish kids, and we'd all eat lunch together. And then Joyce got in it with us, so we had this mixture then.

M.O'R.: Well, if you were part of the group it started out as a mixture?

A.P-B.: Yes. Yes.

M.O'R.: Now, high school of course is also a time when - usually when people start forming closer friendships with the opposite sex.

A.P-B.: Yeah. I didn't do that.

M.O'R.: You didn't do that?

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

M.O'R.: But he was with you, though, in high school, right?

A.P-B.: Yes, but he was a year behind me, so we weren't really in classes together, and it was just when all of us would go places together, all the kids from Sylvan and others, and then we'd get together. I didn't do anything socially with any of the others.

Joyce was the only one we would occasionally spend some time at each other's house in the summertime. She would come to my

house and stay for a few days, and I would go to her house and stay for a few days, but other than that - and that was just in the summertime.

No, I didn't participate in the social things. There was just too much going on at home. I just couldn't. Because at that time my father was going through the worst period as far as his own - what you might as well call insanity was concerned, and you never knew when it was going to take off, and so you didn't bring people home with you most of the time because you never knew when he was going to just suddenly go berserk. And so I didn't enter into the social life of things at all, and I spent most of my time in the library, the downtown library.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. Multnomah County, main branch?

A.P-B.: Yes. So I was there usually till they closed.

M.O'R.: And were you at Lincoln, then, for the full four years?

A.P-B.: Four years, mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: So would that span the period between the time you were out in Sylvan and the time you moved back into town?

A.P-B.: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[end of side one]

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 5, Side 2

November 1, 1995

A.P-B.: ... asking little things about his childhood, getting him to tell me a few things, but mostly my mother telling me things. I would ask her all kinds of questions.

It turned out that during part of that time when my grandmother had come to Oakland to be with her father and her brothers that when she found out that my grandfather was nearby that she would leave and go someplace else, and at one point she went to a town, and because as I told you she really didn't know how to do much of anything and had to learn how to do it, she went to work for an orphanage, and I don't know what all she did there, but she brought my father with her. She was running away from my grandfather again.

So he told me some of his experiences in this orphanage, because he was treated just like one of the other kids. And he told me that they didn't have much food in this orphanage; it was a very poor orphanage, and they would go into the farmer's fields and their orchards and they would take vegetables and fruit, and sometimes they got caught and they were punished severely for it. And he told me a little about the countryside around there and what it was like.

And then another time - then they'd go back to Oakland again, and then everything would be fine, you know. He'd live with my great-grandfather again, his grandfather.

Another time when he was a boy, and I think he said he was about ten or eleven at the time, maybe twelve, she joined the Salvation Army. She had become very religious in the meantime, so she joined the Salvation Army, and she worked over in San Francisco with the Japanese immigrants.

I remember as a child living in Sylvan that I talked her into going into town with me one time because she told me about the Japanese people, and I knew that there were some Japanese shops because I had also explored around in Portland. And so I took her down there with me; we walked all the way in. For her that was a very long walk. And I remember going down the Barnes Road, the back way, because there were shops where Henry Thiele's and all that was, because I had seen it when we'd been - when I'd been with my parents and gone to the restaurant, and that there were some Japanese shops there. And since she spoke Japanese, I took her down there with me and we bought some Japanese things, and she was chattering away with all of them - because she told me about the time when she had been doing this in San Francisco.

Well, my father told me that when she would go out with the Salvation Army band at night that he would go with some of the boys in the neighborhood there in San Francisco, and they would run the back alleys, and he saw plenty of what went on in life. They would pick up beer bottles that the drunks had thrown out, and they would haul them around to the backs of these night spots and sell them to them. And he was running around doing this kind of thing at night, but he always knew when to get back home and be in bed so she wouldn't know he had been out.



So he learned a lot about life at the same time that she was teaching him all of the Christian principles and everything. And as I said, he really was a very moral person. How he survived and came out of it morally, I don't know, but he was. So we had to grow up with that part of things.

M.O'R.: When you first went to high school at Lincoln here, it must have been - what? - it would have been in the mid-30's?

A.P-B.: '35.

M.O'R.: '35, yeah.

A.P-B.: Mm-hmm. And I finished in '39.

M.O'R.: '39, right.

A.P-B.: I was there four years.

M.O'R.: So that was also the middle of the Depression.

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. Yes, we would sit in class and we would watch the people come by after we had had lunch out in the park blocks on nice days, and I would sit in class and watch the people come and take all of the food that the kids had thrown into the garbage cans and take it out. It was a regular run. And I would feel very sad about it. And my mother was feeding the people who came to our back door.

M.O'R.: So there were real visible signs of economic distress at that time?

A.P-B.: It was very visible. I didn't know what it was called. I just knew there were a lot of poor people.

Out at Mt. Tabor I can remember the very poor people, too, who went to school there, and the kinds of lunches that they would bring with them and things like that. And I would tell my mother about it, and I know that there were some - some of the poor kids

I went to school with down farther over on the other side there, down towards Rose City, and I remember going to their house one day, because we had become friends, and I couldn't believe the kind of poverty that they had there. And - but they were clean and neat, but they were just terribly poor and didn't have much to eat or anything.

Then when we came to Sylvan a lot of those people were very poor and were having a terrible time of it, and I know my mother used to give them food. I remember one family had nothing but bread crusts one time when I went to their house. Their father came home from the bakeries in Portland with day-old bread in a big gunny sack, and that's all they had to eat. And they were growing a garden out back and waiting for the vegetables to come on.

Even then I didn't - wasn't totally aware because we still had a lot of food and a lot of everything. I remember some of the kids out there at Sylvan saying, "Well, how come your father drives a Buick?" And I didn't know the difference between a Buick and a Ford or anything else, and I would just say, "Well, I guess that's the kind of car he likes to drive." And later on I could look back and I could see what this was like.

M.O'R.: That your lifestyle, then was ...

A.P-B.: ... very different.

M.O'R.: ... very different from a lot of the people that you were associating with?

A.P-B.: But you see, my mother never pointed any of this out to us, and my father never did, and everybody was treated the same as everybody else, and I was never aware, never.

M.O'R.: Was yours a very political family? I mean ...

A.P-B.: Not at all.

M.O'R.: Your parents didn't get excited about politics?

A.P-B.: No. That was one of the things that I got excited about in high school. That was one of my favorite subjects, was politics, and I took every class that I could get.

I remember in this one class, it was all boys, and I would - we had to get up and talk about what we were reading, and we had to give these oral reports on political situations and things. And I was filling out at that time, and we all wore sweaters, and apparently I had a nice figure, and the boys would all - and it was a male teacher we had - and the boys when I would have to stand up to give a report, they would all start this wolf-whistle business, and they would make remarks, so I stopped wearing sweaters, and I would wear loose blouses and things, and then I didn't get it so bad.

But another thing that I notice, because when I was there at Lincoln, when we came back to the Lloyd Center, then I would often walk because as I told you I hated to ask my father for money, even bus fare, which was streetcar fare then. And so I would walk. And in order to walk home, you had to walk down through Burnside, and I was never afraid of it, because believe it or not there was very little ever in the way of rapes or murders or things like this. I read the papers all the time, and I would have been aware of it. I knew that that was not the good part of town. I did know that.

I don't think my father was ever aware of the fact that I walked through that district to come home. I would walk across the Burnside Bridge, and I would see these very poor people down there, people living under the bridge and people gathering up bottles,

like he had told me he did, only he didn't do it because he had to, but I was aware that these people did.

And I remember in an English class, I had this very stuffy teacher, very nice lady. I shouldn't complain; she was a very nice lady. But very, very correct. And sometimes we had to write - well, we wrote essays all the time, but sometimes we had to write them on the spur of the moment. And I would sit in class and look out the window - we were on the second floor - and I can remember looking at the church tower on First Congregational and thinking of we were supposed to be Christian nation, and yet look at all the poor we had. What were we doing for them? So I would write essays about the way people lived on Burnside. First time I wrote one she was absolutely horrified. She stood up in front of the class and read this thing to them, and she said, "A nice girl from a nice home writing about things like this - how do you even know about things like this?"

And I said, "You can see it around you all over. How can you miss it? There are these people out there."

"Well," she said, "I never want you to write about that again." And I wrote about it anyway, and I would be down-graded for it because I did.

M.O'R.: That's a strange attitude, I would think.

A.P-B.: Yes, it was. But I got that in my Social Studies class, also.

M.O'R.: People just didn't want to confront the reality of what was out there?

A.P-B.: No, they did not. No. I remember one time in a later - my senior year in a Social Studies class that they were

becoming aware, or at least this teacher was, and it was a male teacher, and he took us down to the state institution for the mentally retarded. And I remember I had a new dress on. I never wore that dress again because it was such a sad occasion. When I saw those people and the way they were treated and the smells in that place, that dress just soaked up every bit of that, and I never could wear it again. I just put it away. I don't know what I finally did with it, but I could never bring myself to wear it.

M.O'R.: Because that experience was just so powerful?

A.P-B.: Yeah, it was so powerful for me. And then I always wanted to do something, and that's probably one reason that I would take retarded kids in my alternative school, because I saw how they had been treated. I also saw in the schools how they were treated and always shuffled off to one side, and I just couldn't stand that. So I did get some experiences there in high school that were very helpful.

There were also the poor kids who came up from Chinatown, who were always looked down on. I don't know whether I told you, but one of them, Mary Li - and I was president of the girls' glee club at that time, and she was in the glee club. And nobody would play with her; nobody would do anything with her. And so I took her and became a good friend.

And we had the 50th reunion a few years ago - '89 - and Mary called me up and asked - she was on the committee to get this thing going - she called me up and asked me if I remembered her. And of course I did. And when we got together there at the reunion and then at the picnic afterwards, we were talking about where I lived out here in Tualatin, and she said, "I was born in Tualatin, but I

don't know where." And so she started telling me some of her experiences. And at the picnic, Jack was there, and he said something about Hing, and Mary started chattering something in Chinese, and I said, "What did that mean?" And she said, "That was 'Old Hing who stinks.'"

I said, "Why did you call him that?" Because Hing was the caretaker here at this place for 60 years. He came from San Francisco with the railroad crew building railroad along - in front here - and fell in love with this family and moved in and became their houseboy and caretaker and lived here in the caretaker's house for 60 years and became part of this family and is buried up there where they are.

At any rate, so when Mary said, "Hing," and then started telling about why she called him that, because he would come into Portland on his day off - oh, maybe once every few months - and get drunk as could be. He'd end up at their house and sit in front of their fire, and she said, "And he always smelled awful."

And I said, "Well, tell me about where you were born. You said Hing was there."

And she said, "Yes. Hing was living on that farm, working on that farm when my parents came from China as immigrants and couldn't speak English, and they would come out and work on that farm, and they were picking hops when my mother started having labor pains, and the woman there brought her in and put her on the kitchen table, and she delivered me on the kitchen table."

M.O'R.: Oh, my gosh. So she was born in your kitchen?

A.P-B.: In my kitchen, on my kitchen table because that is the pioneer kitchen table out there.

I said, "Mary, would you like to come out to my house and see where you were born?"

She said, "You mean I was born in the house you have?"

And I said, "That is the only place that Hing was ever. He was there for 60 years."

M.O'R.: That must have been quite remarkable to learn that after so many years.

A.P-B.: I know it. I had to tell you that story because it came out of our relationship at high school.

M.O'R.: That's amazing.

A.P-B.: And because I took Mary under my wing. She said, "I'll never forget you because," she said, "you were the only one who understood."

So you see, having pain yourself helps you to understand someone else's pain.

M.O'R.: Listening to you talk about your experiences in the 30's during the Depression almost gives me this eerie feeling that we've come full circle now, because you can see people out in the park blocks now looking through the garbage cans.

A.P-B.: That's right. Absolutely. I see it all the time, everywhere you go.

M.O'R.: Even some of the denial, I suppose, is out there as well.

A.P-B.: Yes. Everybody says, "Oh, there's no depression." Tell Jack there's a depression, "Oh," he says, "no." He says, "It's a recession."

I said, "Oh, no, it isn't." When Reagan came in and the trickle-down policy started, we headed into another depression. We

have more poverty than almost anyplace other than India now, or Russia. It's very bad.

M.O'R.: I think maybe the difference is that this time it's heading towards becoming a permanent feature of our class structure here ...

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

M.O'R.: ... rather than just a passing phenomenon.

A.P-B.: Yeah. And I keep saying one day those people will rise up and there will be a revolution. You can't put people down like that all the time. You have to care for them. I mean we have marches to Washington. We had them in the 30's, too. We have so many things that are similar that it almost haunts me. Even though I was a child then and didn't realize fully what was going on, I'm not a child anymore, and I can sure see it. And I can look back, because politically I was interested.

We talked about things in those political classes, about the war and about Europe.

M.O'R.: So you were aware of ...

A.P-B.: Absolutely.

M.O'R.: You had some international awareness, then, too.

A.P-B.: Knew that it was coming. Read everything I could get my hands on, *Time*, *Newsweek*, all these magazines that were going then. *Atlantic Monthly*. I don't know that *Newsweek* was, but something similar to it. And - but we had *Saturday Review*, we had *Atlantic Monthly*. And what else did we have? A magazine called *National Politics*. And down at the library they had them all, and I read them all.



M.O'R.: So you were keeping up to date on the progress of events in Europe, then, too?

A.P-B.: Yes. I read all the editorials.

M.O'R.: Hitler's rise to power and all of that?

A.P-B.: Yes. Yes. I was fascinated by it because it was going to affect all of us, and it certainly ended up doing that.

M.O'R.: Yes, that's right. It did. And of course we were in the middle of kind of - at least for this country, revolutionary times then ourselves with the Roosevelt Administration and the ...

A.P-B.: Oh, absolutely.

M.O'R.: ... really ground-breaking kinds of steps he took.

A.P-B.: Oh, yes. I was fascinated by him. I read everything I could find about him. And Eleanor, all the things that she did later, too. She was one of the greatest people to my mind. Roosevelt had his faults morally, but he was a very brilliant man and a very - how could he have come from the kind of wealth that he came from and understand the plight of those people? The man was a genius, and he was compassionate.

M.O'R.: And of course he had Eleanor to help him out in this.

A.P-B.: Absolutely he did. That lady was something else again. She had gone through life with an alcoholic father and everything else. She had suffered plenty. But she had that compassionate nature.

M.O'R.: So this must have been very interesting times for you to be becoming aware of these things.

A.P-B.: It was a fascinating time.

M.O'R.: Were you able to share any of your ideas about things that were happening, then, with your family?

A.P-B.: Never.

M.O'R.: So it just wasn't something that they had an interest in?

A.P-B.: No.

M.O'R.: Not even your mother?

A.P-B.: No, not politics. It wasn't a woman's place. No.

M.O'R.: So again you were kind of stepping out of your gender role by being interested in those things?

A.P-B.: Oh, absolutely I was. That's why I was in a class of all boys. I wasn't supposed to be that involved. So I didn't dare talk about these things at home. Never. And shanty town was right below us. You know where the gulch is down in there?

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. Sullivan's Gulch.

A.P-B.: Sullivan's Gulch, yeah. There was a whole shanty town of these poor men out of work.

M.O'R.: Living down there in the gulch?

A.P-B.: That's right. And I went down there. I was never supposed to be down there.

M.O'R.: Roughly how many people do you think were living in the shanty town then?

A.P-B.: Oh, my.

M.O'R.: Dozens? Hundreds?

A.P-B.: Oh, there must have been anywhere from 50 to 100 or more sometimes. And those shanties were built out of anything and everything. I wanted to know what these people were going through. My father would have ...

M.O'R.: Can you describe what these places looked like?

A.P-B.: Yes, I can. Yes. They were made of pieces of wood that they got from anywhere.

M.O'R.: Just salvaged materials?

A.P-B.: Salvaged materials, boxes, old pieces of metal on the roof to keep the rain out. And they had - they built little stove-like things out of tin cans, this kind of thing. But they had a kind of camaraderie that was incredible, and they had empathy, not only for one another but for anybody else. They knew where I lived. They came to our back door asking for work. They didn't ask just for food, ever. They had pride. They wanted work. My mother understood this. She knew a few times when I went down there, and she was really worried about me. But I said, "Those men are not mean men. They're kind men."

M.O'R.: Was it mostly men, then?

A.P-B.: It was all men.

M.O'R.: So no ...

A.P-B.: There wasn't anything else.

M.O'R.: No families or anything living down there?

A.P-B.: No families. Not in that shanty town. I'm sure there must have been other places. But they told me about traveling on boxcars and being kicked out of places and the way they were treated and how hungry they got and a lot of things.

And then - oh, how many years ago? - maybe 13 years ago I met Ralph Freidman, and Ralph would tell me stories about how he rode the boxcars and how he came out of the slums of Chicago, and the kinds of things that they went through and how he'd live in these shanty towns, and he would tell me about some of his experiences.

M.O'R.: I didn't know that about his background.

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: I didn't really know him very well, but I knew his wife, Phoebe.

A.P-B.: Oh, did you? Yes. I never knew Phoebe. She had died. But Ralph became a good friend. I had to hold him off a lot of the time, though. He drove me crazy. I mean, he'd have his hands all over you, you know, and I would have to say, "Stay over there," and make sure that people were around when he was there. The first time he came in here he said, "Will you marry me?" I mean, he was a real character. You never could take anything seriously. If you did, you were in trouble. Gosh. [laughs] He was a real character.

I was having a big fundraiser here for Les AuCoin, and I was having a Southern dinner. So I was going down to Woodburn to get a couple of big hams, because they have wonderful hams down there, and here came Ralph. And he said, "Well, I'll go down there with you."

So I said, "All right, but you have to behave."

We got down there, and I was not only buying the hams, but I was buying some sausages and bacon for us. And I turned around, and here he was back of the counter teaching this clerk back there the Heimlich maneuver. [laughs] He was hilarious. You never knew what he was going to do. He was a character.

One time Jack said, "Well, you know" - because he likes to have somebody go with him when he's traveling around and learning about all these things, and he said - because he kept asking me to go, and I kept saying, "Oh, no." And so I told Jack, you know, that he was looking for somebody to go on some of these trips with

him, and he said, "Oh, I think that would be fascinating to go with him."

Well, knowing Jack and knowing Ralph, I said, "I don't think you'd enjoy it." I said, "He does some really crazy things, and I think that you would end up having a temper tantrum over something, and I don't think you'd make it." So he ended up not doing it, but it wouldn't have worked.

But anyway, Ralph had experiences like that. But it was when I was telling him some about what I had seen during the Depression when he said he had gone through the Depression. So then I started telling him about what I just told you, and then he said, "Yeah, I lived in some of those," and he began to tell me about it.

[end of tape]