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**Mary & Tony Brabo**

An interview conducted by

David Grossman and Chuck Oldenburg

on November 16, 2010

## **Oral History of Tony and Mary Brabo**

**Interview Date: November 16, 2010**

SUMMARY: Tony and Mary Brabo were married for 82 years, reportedly the longest marriage in Marin County history. They died in 2011, at ages 99 and 100, respectively. Tony was born February 14, 1912 and Mary November 15, 1911, both in the Homestead Valley neighborhood of Mill Valley. Mary was the daughter of Manuel and Marie Brazil Bettencourt. Both families came from the Azores region of Portugal; Mary recalls speaking only Portuguese as a child. Tony and his seven brothers were orphaned when very young and worked at various dairy farms in an around Mill Valley. They married in July, 1929, having eloped to Alameda and recall watching the Great Mount Tam Fire ablaze as they returned to Marin. Tony bought a concrete mixer in the late '30s and after coming back from WWII in '45, he started what was to become a highly successful contracting business.

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**TONY AND MARY BRABO**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**NOVEMBER 16, 2010**

Chuck: Today is November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010. My name is Chuck Oldenburg. I am visiting Tony and Mary Brabo in their home at 208 Reed Street. David Grossman is with us to interview them about their lives here in Homestead Valley. Mary was born on a three acre farm in the house visible below at 204 Reed Street on November 15, 1910. She is 100 years old. Tony will be 99 years old next year on Valentine's Day. They were married in July 1929 in Alameda. It was an unforgettable day. They could see Mt. Tamalpais and Mill Valley's middle ridge ablaze in the distance. They have been married for over 81 years. It has been my observation since I have known them that they dearly love one another. I have consulted them frequently during the past decade in conjunction with research on the history of Homestead Valley. Mary has lived here her entire life, initially in the small house below, then in the house next door at 303 La Verne Avenue during the 30s and 40s, and in this house since the 50s. Well, enough background. David Grossman, a Mill Valley Public Library employee who manages the History Room and is a journalist by profession, will now undertake what I am certain will be an interesting oral history in which both Mary and Tony will tell us about their lives throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

David: Thank you Chuck for that introduction, and thank you Mary and Tony for giving us the privilege to record your oral history. I plan to interview Mary first to talk about her life before she met Tony and then bring Tony in to talk about your life and your lives together. So, Mary, let's start with you first. Tell me about your family and your life before you met Tony.

Mary: Well, my parents, they both came from Portugal, the Azores. Anyway, I was born down here in Homestead. I don't know. I was born here in the little house at 204 Reed St. The doctor came by horse and wagon to deliver me. I went to Homestead School and I also went to Mill Valley School.

David: What were your parents' names?

Mary: Manuel Bettencourt and Maria Bettencourt.

David: Do you know when they came here to America from Portugal?

Mary: I was born here. I don't know when they came.

David: Did they initially settle in Mill Valley when they first came to America?

Mary: Yeah, they first came to John Fostine's house in Mill Valley. He had bought this place and had a little farm here. Then he sold the place to my father. That is what we had for a living.

Chuck: They bought the property and then they built the house?

David: Do you know why they came to Mill Valley, specifically? Do you know why they picked Mill Valley?

Mary: Well, they had friends here that came from Portugal and they landed down in Mill Valley and then from here, my dad had this, he had bought this place. I was born there and lived with my parents and four other boys (my step-brothers).

David: You mentioned Fostine. Did they contact Manuel Fostine when they arrived? Why did they do that?

Mary: Yeah. Well, he is Portuguese and he was getting people from Portugal to come over, so we were one of them.

David: Was he getting the original house, involved in that process? Was Fostine involved?

Mary: No, he wasn't involved at all. My father had a brother here in Mill Valley, so we came to his brother, and then my father bought this piece of property and I don't know too much about that.

David: That was your father's brother you are talking about?

Mary: Yeah, Joe Santos was my father's brother.

David: He was already here?

Mary: He was already here, yeah.

David: Was Portuguese spoken at home? Did you learn Portuguese?

Mary: Nobody could speak English, so we had to speak Portuguese.

David: So you speak Portuguese now, I assume?

Mary: Oh, yeah.

David: Did your parents speak English at all once they had lived here for a while? Did they learn English?

Mary: Well, my dad learned a little bit, but my mother, she would laugh and make fun of us, so we couldn't teach her nothing.

David: I am told that you had four older half-brothers and you had two grandparents living with you in the same house with your parents. Is that correct?

Mary: Yeah, that's right.

Tony: We were living with them when we were first married. We had nothing and we moved in with them. So that's what happened there.

David: So originally, how many people all together lived in your house when you were born?

Mary: Four boys, my mother and my father. Before my dad and his first wife separated, they lived in that house with the four boys. They were all babies. Then, his first wife left and went to Oakland or someplace.

Tony: Half brothers.

Mary: Yeah, half brothers, yeah.

David: Tell me about the members of your family. Tell me about your parents, your father's first wife, and your brothers. What were they like?

Mary: I didn't know too much about his first wife. I was a baby when they separated, so I couldn't. I just would be making it up. I wouldn't know.

David: What about your father? What did he like to do when he was home?

Mary: Well, he had this place and he would plow it up.

Tony: A big garden.

Mary: He didn't work too much. He worked at home. He had a big garden and he worked in Ross for a while, Ross Valley.

Tony: He worked as a gardener for a while.

Mary: Yeah, that's right, he was a gardener.

Tony: He worked up at Ross as a gardener.

Mary: A gardener, but he was a carpenter.

Tony: Yes, he was a carpenter also.

David: He was a carpenter and a gardener, correct?

Mary: Yeah.

David: When he came home in the evening, did you spend time with him? Did you talk to him and spend time with your father a lot?

Mary: I lived there, I had to.

David: Do you have any interesting stories about being home with your father at all, anything that sticks out in your mind about him?

Mary: Well, I had pneumonia and almost died and he stayed night and day for I don't know how many days. He told me but I forgot. I think eight days. He sat by my bed and never left the room. He didn't even take his clothes off to go to bed.

David: How old were you then when you had pneumonia?

Mary: I was about 12, I think, yeah.

David: That's a very nice story. How about your mother, what did she do?

Mary: She just was a housewife. She couldn't speak English, so we had to learn Portuguese and she didn't do too much. When they came from Portugal, you know, she didn't learn too fast. We would try to teach her and she would laugh and make fun of us.

Chuck: She must have done a lot of cooking.

Mary: Yeah, we had the wood stove and my father would go to the beach and bring firewood from the beach and that was the only heat we had.

Tony: They would go from here to the beach, used to like to go fishing at Muir Woods and the coast. They would spend the whole day. They would start out here at four o'clock in the morning, have to go out and feed the horse, and then after breakfast and everything, they would take off and spend all day fishing and then on the way back at Muir Beach, they would come back and pick up a lot of driftwood because they had no wood in those days. We didn't have all of these trees and they would bring the load of wood back with them.

Mary: He planted all these gum trees around here.

Tony: Eucalyptus, yes.

David: Did the whole family go fishing together? Did you all go to Muir Beach together?

Tony: Her and her mother and her father, the boys had already left home.



David: Oh, the boys had already left home.

Tony: Wait a minute, did they?

Mary: Yes.

David: What were your brothers' names?

Mary: Joseph and Tony and Fred and Manuel. Manuel was the oldest; then Joe and then Tony and Fred. Fred was the baby. He was about ten or 12 years older than me.

David: When did they leave home? How old were they when they left home, your brothers?

Tony: They all left at different times. Going back a step there, her mother helped take care of the boys, so that is what she did mostly, take care of the family.

Mary: She raised the boys. His first wife left him with four boys.

Tony: Her mother lived next door. Their family lived next door, so her dad got her to help him take care of the boys, and then later on, they got married and then Mary came along.

Chuck: What was your mother's maiden name?

Mary: Brazil, Mary Brazil. [Editor's Note: No relation to the Mary Brazil who gave Mary Brabo the Reed daughter's diary and trunk which are now at the Landmarks Society History Collection in Tiburon.]

David: When your brothers left home, what did they do? Did they go to work someplace?

Mary: Well, when they were about 15, my father made them go to the ranch and work and take care of themselves, because he wasn't doing anything. He couldn't keep the kids and they were the first wife's boys. When he married my mother, the boys were still home but they weren't home too long. They decided to leave.

Tony: Well, he gave them a choice. They either go to school or they had to go out on their own, and they decided to go out on their own.

David: Did they all work on the same ranch or different ranches?

Tony: Different.

David: Which ranches did they work at? Were they all close-by?

Tony: Well, one at Frank's Valley, I don't know where Tony worked.

Mary: Oh, Tony worked in Mill Valley.

Tony: He worked for Dowd's Moving & Storage. He was always talking about it when they were kids yet, after they grew up.

Mary: Tony was working for Dowd.

Tony: Yeah, later after he grew up, but we are talking about when they left home.

Mary: Oh, when they left home, my father put them on the ranch, different ranches, when they were big enough to work, to help people. He put them there.

David: What ranches were those? Did they have names?

Mary: Muir Beach.

Tony: Frank's Valley, they called the one by Muir Woods. That is where your brother Joe worked, but I don't know about the others.

Mary: Yeah. Tony worked for Dowd in Mill Valley.

David: What did he do for Dowd?

Tony: Opened stores, he worked for the stores, but that was after he grew up, not just when he left home.

David: So did he work for a ranch first and then go to Dowd?

Mary: He worked for Dowd first.

David: First, and then went to a ranch?

Mary: Yeah. And then Fred, he was my youngest brother, he, what did Fred do?

Tony: I knew him after he grew up and had a family, but we are talking about when he left home.

Mary: Oh, when he left home.

Tony: He was just a boy yet.

Mary: Yeah. Fred stayed home with me, with my mother and us. Fred was just a baby, too. He was young.

David: He was your youngest brother?

Mary: Yes.

David: How much older was he than you? How many years?

Mary: Not too many years. About 12 years older than me, I think. I can't say for sure.

David: Were all of your brothers born in the United States? Were they all born in America?

Mary: Yeah.

David: They were?

Mary: Yeah, some were born across the Bay. I don't know where. Fred was born, I think down here in this house.

Tony: Yeah, probably was.

David: So did your father settle across the bay first?

Mary: No, he came right straight to Fostine's house, from Portugal, and then he had a brother living over here, so he went and lived with, wait a minute, I am getting confused.

Tony: We are going way back.

Mary: Yeah.

David: Did your father come over with his first wife or with your mother?

Mary: He married here. He came over single, and he came over to Fostine's place.

Tony: He came in as a stowaway on a ship.

David: A stowaway on a ship?

Mary: Yeah.

David: Did he ever talk about stories about being a stowaway, what it was like?

Tony: I don't remember. He talked about the way he got over here aboard a ship, had to get onto the farm.

Mary: I don't know how he got on the ship.

Tony: Anyway, that's what he told me.

David: I just want to ask one more question on that. So your father came over single and then he met his first wife here? Is that what happened?

Mary: Yes, his first wife here, and then they divorced and he met my mother and we lived here.

David: Did your mother come over from Portugal by herself?

Mary: No, her father, my grandfather, and my grandmother came at the same time. Yeah, the three of them came together.

Tony: What about your aunts? Did they come over, mother and sisters?

Mary: No, they came over at different times. After they were here, then they sent for the other girls.

David: Turning to your life more again, did you grow up on a farm?

Mary: This little farm here.

David: Did it have animals? Did you have animals on the farm?

Mary: Oh yeah, we had goats and we had chickens and we had a cow.

Tony: The cow produced milk and butter.

David: One cow?

Tony: One cow.

Mary: And a horse to plow the ground.

David: Did you have chores to perform on the farm? Did you work on the farm, Mary?

Mary: No, I was too little, but the boys did. They worked here some. They wanted money and he couldn't pay them so when they were old enough to work, he told them to go to work.

David: So who milked the cow? Who was the person who milked the cow?

Tony: Her dad.

Mary: Yeah.

David: Was there a stock tank with water for the cow?

Mary: No, we had a well.

Tony: A well up above and then they piped their own water down. That is how they got the water for the house.

David: What was life like living on the farm like that?

Mary: I didn't know any better. I thought it was wonderful.

David: You liked it a lot.

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: Most of the Portuguese people around had little. They lived off the land. The cow, the limit was ten in those days, although he fell short a little bit because he only had one cow, but in those days it seemed like everyone had ten kids. They all figured that when they got old, the kids would take care of them, but they got fooled.

David: Did your family grow crops as well? Did you grow different crops on the farm, vegetables or grain or anything?

Mary: Yeah, potatoes, kale, fava beans and other vegetables.

Tony: My daughter Loretta, she used to go around selling some of the groceries and the eggs.

David: So you did sell some?

Mary: Yeah, just to the neighbors.

David: Milk, I would assume, did you sell milk?

Tony: You didn't sell milk, did you?

Mary: Yeah, we sold. We had a little milk route when I was young. We would go up by your place at Madrone Park and deliver.

David: Did you deliver milk to people?

Mary: No, I was too young. The boys all did the delivery.

David: Did they deliver milk to the Ezekiel family?

Mary: Yeah.

David: Did you know any of the Ezekiel children?

Mary: Yeah, I knew one of them, Patricia, I think, the youngest one, but she was quite a bit older than me, yeah.

Tony: They had a boy too, didn't they?

Mary: No, they didn't have a boy.

Tony: He lived over here.

Mary: No, there were two Ezekiels. The brother lived here. They had a boy, yeah. It was, his brother lived down by your place.

Chuck: Yeah, the Ezekiel family had two sons and then one of those sons, Doc Ezekiel, got married and lived on Evergreen and he had sons. But the two sons, that is, the older brothers of the youngest girl you knew, were a lot older. You wouldn't know them.

Mary: No, I wouldn't know.

David: Did you sell just milk or did you sell other things like butter or cheese?

Mary: No, just milk.

Tony: Eggs from the chickens.

David: Did you sell to many families?

Mary: No, just a couple of neighbors that wanted to buy a little milk.

Tony: In those days, they all had their own. Just a few that could afford to buy things like that.

David: Did you ever make butter? Did you ever churn butter?

Mary: Yeah, we made a lot of butter. We made butter and cheese. We made our own cheese and butter. We would put the cheese in a basket-like thing so all the water would drain off. Then, we took the form off after it was drained and had a round cheese.

Tony: Remember that churner you used to have?

Mary: Yeah.

David: What was that like making butter?

Mary: That was kind of fun.

David: Did your family have a horse and wagon or buggy in those days? How did you get around?

Mary: We had a horse and wagon.

Tony: It was like having a truck with a workhorse.

David: A horse and a truck?

Tony: It was the same as what we have today, but today we have a truck and in those days, they had just the horse and rider to get around.

David: Your father, did he do other things besides work on the farm? You mentioned he was a carpenter.

Mary: He was a carpenter's helper. His brother, Joe Santos, was a carpenter and my father helped him. He also worked in Ross for about a year. A gardener.

David: As a gardener in Ross?

Mary: Yeah, Ross Valley.

David: This was in addition to having the farm? He had the farm and still worked in Ross as a gardener?

Mary: Yeah.

David: He just did that for one year?

Mary: Oh, yes, I think for just one year. That was our income for awhile, working in Ross, yeah.

David: Did he have other jobs, too, over the years?

Mary: No. Oh, yes, he worked in the distillery and also as a laborer for the county public works department.

David: You mentioned he was a carpenter. I thought I heard you mention he was a carpenter at some point?

Mary: Yeah, him and his brother built the house here.

Tony: His brother, Joe Santos, was the carpenter, but her father worked with him.

Mary: Yeah.

David: So your uncle was the carpenter? What was his name?

Mary: Joe Santos, yeah. He lived over on Blithedale at Alto.

David: Did your father ever tell you stories about work, about being a gardener or building houses?

Mary: No. No.

Tony: His father and my father worked together gardening.

Mary: He also worked at a distillery, my father.

Tony: The American Distillery.

David: Your father worked in the distillery?

Mary: In the distillery, yeah.

David: Where was that?

Mary: Sausalito.

David: What did they make in the distillery in Sausalito?

Mary: Whiskey.

David: Your father had a lot of different jobs over the years.

Mary: Yeah.

David: Did your father ever tell you stories about working in the distillery? Were there any interesting stories of the distillery?

Mary: He would tell us all of the people who took a bottle of whiskey on the way home. Every night, they would put a bottle under their arm and take off.

David: Stuck under their arm? You said your mother raised the boys. That was pretty much what she did.

Mary: Yeah, that's all she did.

David: So she didn't really work on the farm then?

Mary: She worked here in the garden a lot, yeah.

David: Did your mother work for Mrs. Bone?



Mary: Yeah, she used to go down to wash clothes, and she washed clothes for different people around.

David: So she washed clothes in addition to her gardening and her raising the boys? What was that like? How did they wash clothes back then?

Mary: They had a big tub and then they had a washboard and you scrubbed it this way.

David: Did your mother work because your family needed money or did she work for other reasons?

Mary: No, we needed all that we could get. Things were tough.

Tony: We were a poor family. We had to have an imagination.

Mary: Tony's father and mine used to go fishing together. One time they went fishing and came back with a tub full of fish.

Tony: Her father was telling me about later years. They were talking and my dad told her dad it would be nice if one of her boys would marry his daughter. Yeah, absolutely, that worked.

David: How did your two fathers meet?

Tony: I don't know.

David: When they went fishing, where did they fish? Was it in Muir Beach or other places?

Tony: It was just along Muir Beach, mostly. Just down Muir Beach, a little place they called Slide Ranch.

David: What kind of fish did they catch?

Tony: We had all kinds of different fish. Most of them are gone, but you know, they...

David: Were there fish in the creeks here, too?

Tony: Actually, there were salmon in the creeks in those days, but, they didn't fish in the creeks. They liked the salt-water fish better. If you got the salmon when they first came in, they were OK, but after they spawned, they weren't any good.

Mary: Yes, the meat was too soft and it wasn't good.

David: Just in the ocean, not in the bay at all?

Tony: Well...no. It was mostly at Muir Beach and Slide Ranch.

Mary: My father, no.

David: So Mary, tell me about school. What schools did you attend?

Mary: I went to Homestead School and then from there I went to Mill Valley School and that was it.

David: “Mill Valley”, was that the name of the school?

Mary: I went to Summit School and then I went to the other school, Old Mill.

David: How did you get to school?

Mary: I walked.

David: So all those schools, you walked to?

Mary: Yeah. There was no bus; there was nothing.

Tony: Yeah, that’s right.

David: How long did it take you to walk to school? Was it a long walk?

Mary: Oh yeah, it was about a mile.

David: Did you enjoy school?

Mary: No, no.

David: Didn’t enjoy school.

Mary: No.

David: Did you partake in any extracurricular activities? Did you do any extracurricular activities?

Mary: No, the only thing, I worked at Mason’s for a while. I worked there for a while, that was it.

David: What was Mason’s?

Mary: In Sausalito. The distillery.

David: Did you work at the distillery when you were going to school?

Mary: No, after. I quit school when I was 16, I think. I got a job down in the distillery and then I worked down there.

David: When you were 16?

Mary: Yeah.

David: When you were in school, did you do any sports? Were you involved in any kind of sports?

Mary: Oh, baseball.

David: Baseball was your sport, you liked baseball?

Mary: Oh, yeah.

David: What position did you play?

Mary: I was a pitcher.

David: How often did you play baseball?

Mary: Every day, we played baseball, and in Mill Valley School, too.

Tony: They didn't have leagues in those days. It was just neighborhood kids playing baseball.

Mary: Yeah.

David: So when you left school at 16, what grade was that that you were in? Were you in high school at that point?

Mary: No, I didn't go to high school. I think I was 16 when I quit school.

Tony: You didn't have nobody to teach you anything at home.

Mary: No. They both came from Portugal and wanted to speak Portuguese.

David: Where, how did you learn to speak English?

Mary: My brothers. Yeah. Then I went to start at Homestead School and I started to learn more there.

David: At Homestead School?

Mary: Yeah.

David: You were the star pitcher, though. Why did you decide to stop going to school? What was the reason?

Mary: Oh, it was Ms. Coford, and she was always itching at me and I felt, well, as soon as I get old enough, I am going to quit.

David: She was the teacher?

Mary: She was the teacher, Ms. Coford.

David: Sounds like she was very tough.

Mary: Oh, she was a toughie. That was up at Summit School.

David: Did she discipline people? Did she punish people? What did she do? How did she punish people? What did they do and what were the punishments back then?

Mary: She would take a ruler and hit your hands with it.

David: Was this at Homestead School?

Mary: No, it was at Summit.

David: So, tell me about Homestead Hall. Did you go to Homestead Hall and spend time there?

Mary: That was a theater. But I was too small to go to the theater, but after I grew up, the theater was gone. We used to go down there and play around.

David: In Homestead Hall?

Mary: In Homestead Hall.

David: So you would play there?

Mary: Yeah. But other than that, it wasn't too much. Finally, they tore it down and built a house there.

David: Were there any classes or anything that you took there at all?

Mary: No, I was too young then.

David: What about catechism? Did you do that, catechism?

Mary: Yeah.

Mary: That's where catechism was, in that hall.

Chuck: You said you had catechism lessons there. You said it was the theater. Did you go to some of the silent movies they had?

Mary: No, I was too young.

Chuck: Too young?

David: How much did it cost to go to the movies?

Tony: Five cents.

Mary: Yeah. I wanted to go to the movies and my father said it's too much money, you can't go.

David: Did your other family members go to Homestead Hall? Did they spend time at Homestead Hall?

Mary: No. I don't know what the hall was before. I don't know what the hall was. Oh, it was a theater. That was our theater down there.

David: What was life like growing up at that time? Was your family impacted by World War I? Were you affected by that?

Mary: No, the boys were all too small to go.

David: Do you remember World War I?

Mary: Yeah, I remember them saying that they had to go to war, but they were too young to go.

David: What about prohibition? How did prohibition affect your family?

Mary: My dad used to make wine in the basement.

David: During prohibition?

Mary: Yeah.

David: Did he like to drink beer or wine?

Mary: Yeah, they all liked it. The Portuguese liked it.

David: Portuguese wine?

Mary: Nobody bought liquor, but you see, he would buy the grapes, squeeze them, make the wine.

Tony: Barrels.

David: Did he do that before prohibition as well? Was he doing that already, or did he just do it during prohibition?

Tony: During prohibition, he just made his own wine during prohibition.

David: So did you grow grapes here on the farm?

Mary: No.

David: Where did he get his grapes, he bought them?

Mary: Yeah.

David: Tell me about the Portuguese community. What was that like? Was it part of your life living in the Portuguese community?

Mary: Well, in Sausalito, every year they had a IDESST,<sup>(1)</sup> I think. We used to go down there once a year. They used to call it the Holy Ghost.

Tony: People brought that over with them from Portugal. They had that same year. Farmers here would donate some cattle and they had a slaughterhouse in Sausalito where they would slaughter the cattle and then they would take them out and give them to the poor people.

Mary: And then the rest of the meat, they would feed to people. You go down there and all you could eat, and some to bring home too.

Tony: They had a big hall there.

David: That was once a year, you said?

Mary: Yeah.

David: What time of year was that? Was it associated with a holiday?

Tony: Around August.

Mary: I don't remember, maybe.

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(1) The IDESST is a Portuguese Social Hall established in Sausalito, California in 1888 as a focal point for Portuguese and Azorean culture and traditions in Marin County. First and foremost is the Azorean tradition of the "*Festa do Espírito Santo*" (Festival of the Holy Ghost).

David: What else went on at the Portuguese hall? Were there other events, things that happened? Did your father go there?

Tony: They did other things. They still have the hall, but now so much is changing. Now, they rent it out to different people for different events. The old timers are all gone and the younger generation, they are not into that thing too much, so it is shrinking down. The old timers are all gone.

David: During the festival, the time they were delivering the beef, was it a march or a walk or a parade or something?

Mary: Oh, you walked from the hall to the church and back and then they fed all the people that were there, all you could eat.

Tony: The meat, they would deliver to your home.

Mary: Yeah, the meat that was left, they would deliver to your home.

Tony: Even before that, they used to deliver to the people.

Mary: Yeah, they did.

Tony: What was left, they would deliver fresh meat that they had just slaughtered.

Mary: It was all fresh meat that they would deliver, to every Portuguese house. Then they would bring a loaf of sweet bread with it.

Tony: Yeah. They were taking care of a lot of people.

David: Did you like the meals? Did you enjoy the Portuguese meals?

Mary: Oh, yeah. They still have them once a year.

David: Tell me, did you go to church? Did your family go to church?

Mary: No, my family didn't go to church, no. I sometimes went to church at a place down on Linden Lane about a block away from here, but, they tore that down. Other times I would have to walk to Mill Valley, but it was too far, so I didn't go much.

Tony: Yeah.

David: Tell me about your house, the house you grew up in. How large was it? How many rooms did you have?

Tony: About 800 square feet. The house had five rooms. It had, oh, a large kitchen and four

bedrooms, small bedrooms, no heat, no electricity, no water, no plumbing. The outhouse was out there in the middle of the property. You had to carry a lantern with you.

David: When was the house built? What year did they build it?

Tony: I don't know.

Mary: I don't know. It was there when I came along.

David: When you were born? And your father built it with his brother?

Mary: With his brother, they built it together, yeah.

David: Did you have your own bedroom?

Mary: Yeah, I had my own bedroom, yeah. All it was, was bedrooms, there was no front room. You ate in the kitchen. We had a little farm.

Tony: The stove heated the whole house. There was no heat in the rooms.

David: What kind, was it a wood stove?

Mary: Yeah.

David: Did you cook using the wood stove?

Mary: Oh, yeah.

Tony: Take a bath in the big tub, a galvanized tank thing. You had to heat the water on the stove to wash up with. Yeah.

David: Where did your father get the wood? Where did the wood come from for the stove?

Mary: Every time we would go to the beach, we would bring a load of wood back.

David: You had to bring it all from the beach?

Mary: And we had a few gum (eucalyptus) trees here.

Tony: Eucalyptus trees, they climbed, those went really fast, the wood.

David: What kind of tree was that?

Tony: Eucalyptus.



David: You mentioned you had a well. Is that where the water came from?

Mary: Yeah. Well, behind the place there. That was our drinking water, piped to the house.

David: Did your father dig the well originally? Do you know about the well?

Tony: He probably did, but it was destroyed in the '06 earthquake. It shifted and went dry.

David: Which earthquake was that?

Tony: I don't understand.

David: You said the well shifted during the earthquake. What year was that? What earthquake was that?

Tony: It was '06.

David: The big one in '06?

Mary: Yeah, yeah.

Tony: There wasn't water, and then they had a couple little springs up there that they used to get the water from. You never needed an awful lot of water, except in the summertime to water the garden.

David: So after 1906, you got the water from the springs, not from the well, is that right?

Tony: Yeah.

David: And, you mentioned you had a horse and a wagon. When did your family get their first automobile? When was that?

Mary: One of my brothers was the first one, Fred.

David: When was that? Do you remember what year?

Mary: I don't remember the year.

David: Or how old were you?

Mary: I was about 12 years old, maybe.

Tony: You weren't driving yet.

Mary: They taught me how to drive after. Mostly, it was Fred who taught me.

Tony: Her dad didn't drive.

Mary: Ben Hartwell, who worked for the state of California (motor vehicle department, I guess), gave me my first driver's license down in Sausalito.

Tony: They wanted her dad to learn to drive, but he was used to the reins with the horse and wagon. So the first time they tried to get him to drive he pulled into the garage and hollered "Whoa!" and it wouldn't stop. And he hit the throttle and went right through the wall and pushed it into the roadside!!! He didn't want to drive after that.

David: That's a great story. Mary, did you have chores around the house? Were you assigned to do chores?

Mary: Just to feed the chickens.

David: Did you enjoy it? Did you like feeding them?

Mary: Yes, it was fun feeding the animals. I enjoyed life. It was happy. I had a happy life. I knew that we were poor but it was good.

David: So, did you ever ride the horse?

Mary: No, I liked to, but I was always afraid of the horse.

David: You were afraid of the horse?

Mary: They were big farm horses, you know. They weren't riding horses.

Tony: When they used to go to the beach fishing, the road going over there was just kind of a trail and if you met another wagon coming the other way, you had to pull off the road. And the horses had the right of way in those days. When the cars started coming, horses had the right of way.

Chuck: Did anyone in the family have a bicycle?

Mary: No, that was a luxury.

David: Tell me about your friends in school. Who were your friends? Did you have a best friend when you were going to school?

Mary: Mary McCurdy. She was my best friend.

Tony: And Hilda Brown.

Mary: Hilda Brown. I can't think of their names now.

David: Tell me about Mary. What was she like, your friend Mary?

Mary: She was a great friend. They were really nice friends to have.

David: Did she play baseball too?

Mary: Oh yeah, we all played. That was our big sport.

David: What else did you do together besides play baseball?

Mary: Well, she lived in, over by the market. Hilda lived by the market there.

Tony: Hilda Brown.

Mary: He wouldn't know where she lived.

Tony: Hilda Brown. She was in Alto.

David: Hilda was in Alto?

Mary: Yeah.

David: And where did Mary live?

Mary: Mary McCurdy lived up in Homestead.

Tony: She lived in Hill Ranch over here in Homestead. Her father, William McCurdy, was a Mill Valley cop. He was a chief of police to Mill Valley.

Chuck: And Mary McCurdy, of course, became a teacher at Tam.

Mary: Yeah, she was really smart.

Chuck: And the boys?

Mary: Yeah, Bill.

Chuck: Did you know Bill?

Mary: Yeah.

Chuck: He was a great athlete.

Mary: Also, one day a boy was walking home from school came over here and the yellow jackets got him and Tony caught him. The poor kid was really eaten up with yellow jackets. It was really something. I never forgot that. I can still see him screaming, trying to get them.

Tony: Yeah, the kid must have been nine years old or something. I took him home. He was screaming. You know, chasing them, he must have gotten into a bee hive or something along the road.

David: What else did you do with your friends besides baseball? How else did you play with your friends? What did you do when you got together with your friends?

Mary: Well, they didn't live close, so just school. I played with them.

Tony: There wasn't much to do, just the ranch. The kids were just on their own.

Mary: Each kid would go home and be with their family until school. So I didn't have too many friends around here.

David: What did you do in the summertime when school was out? Did you keep playing baseball? Did you do other things?

Mary: No, my father would take us back to Muir Beach and put up a tent and we stayed there camping. Was it Muir Beach?

Tony: Stinson Beach.

Mary: Stinson Beach.

Tony: They had the hot springs, and people would go camp around there and dig a hole in the sand and get in the hole to soak.

Mary: It was hot, came out of the ground boiling hot.

David: These are hot springs in Stinson Beach?

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: They don't have them any more. The state, when they widened the road, they pushed a lot of dirt over them and buried them.

Mary: Every Portuguese family would go back there for that time of the year and we would all get in and dig a big hole and we would all get in the hot water. It was healthy for you.

David: When you went camping, how long did you go for? How long did you camp? How many days?

Mary: Oh, we slept out there. We camped. We stayed about three or four weeks. Yeah. Then my father would come out with the horse and wagon and bring us food.

David: So your father would stay home?

Mary: He would go home. He didn't stay there.

David: Was he taking care of the farm?

Mary: He was taking care of the place here.

David: How long did it take to get from here to Muir Beach or Stinson Beach when you would go there for camping by horse?

Tony: I would say a couple hours.

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: I would spend all day with them, when they would go for the day, spend the whole day, like I told you before.

David: What else would you do when you were there besides going in the springs? Did you do other things when you were on the beach?

Tony: You would go down and play on the beach.

Mary: No, you just stay in the tent, camp there.

David: Did you like camping? Did you enjoy it?

Mary: Yeah, we did.

Mary: We would always look forward to summertime to go back.

David: Did you have any pets when you were growing up, dogs or cats or anything?

Mary: Oh, yeah.

Tony: A chicken.

Mary: I had a pet chicken and I put her on the porch and she would stay there. She would lay an egg and I would get the egg and bring it in and then I would let her go, but I could do anything with that chicken.

David: Did she have a name?

Mary: No, I didn't name her.

David: Any other pets, or just the chicken?

Mary: I had a dog. We always had dogs and I had a cat, too. I liked cats. They kept the rats away from the basement.

David: What were the names of the pets, the dogs and the cats?

Mary: I don't know. I don't remember the names. I had pet names for them.

David: What kind of dogs were they?

Mary: Fox terriers.

David: Now, after your brothers left home, they went to work at the dairy ranches. Did you stay in contact with them? Did you still see your brothers?

Mary: Not too often, but they would come home once in a while and I would visit with them. But Joe was my favorite brother, and Fred. Fred was home with us, so after he grew up, he left and got married.

Tony: You were the only one left at home.

Mary: Yeah, I was the only one left.

David: They came home just to visit?

Mary: They came home to bring their clothes to be washed. Once a week, they would come home and bring their clothes to be washed.

David: Would they just stay most of the day, then, or would they stay for a couple of days?

Mary: No, they didn't stay at all. They had to go back. They had cows to milk.

David: Tell me about your grandparents, Mary. How long did they live with you?

Mary: Well, they came from Portugal and they stayed with us. Then, my grandmother died and then my grandfather went to Mt. Diablo. He went and moved to Mt. Diablo. He had friends there, I think. Oh, he had a son there at Mt. Diablo, so he went over there to stay with him for a while and then he came back and lived with us.

David: What did he do when he was in Mt. Diablo?

Mary: I don't know, but he worked for a long time at the Sausalito machine shop.

Tony: That was the trains that used to run here throughout the county.

Mary: He used to clean up the trains.

David: He worked for the railroad?

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: Later years.

David: So he lived with you? How long did your grandfather live with you? When did he leave? How old were you when he left to go to Mt. Diablo?

Mary: I was ten when he moved to Mt. Diablo. Then, when he came back, he lived with us 'til he passed away. He passed away down there, yeah. Oh yeah, the job in Sausalito, so he would go there.

David: He would commute every day to Sausalito from here?

Mary: Yeah.

David: How would he get to Sausalito? Was there a train at that time?

Mary: Yeah.

David: When did the train first come here? How old were you when the train came? Do you remember?

Mary: It was already here when I was born.

David: Did you take the train different places? Did your family take the train different places?

Mary: Yeah, it was the only way to Sausalito or wherever you wanted to go.

David: Did you go other places besides Sausalito or just go to Sausalito on the train?

Mary: Yeah, I went to Kentfield and took the train. They had the party. What is it called?

Tony: It was called the May Day Parade. They had a big thing for the kids and they would go from here, the train.

David: That was to Kentfield?

Tony: Larkspur.

David: Did you enjoy going to that? Did you enjoy the May Day festival?

Mary: Oh, yeah!

David: What did they do at that?

Mary: Oh, they had entertainment for everybody up there. They had a big lot and all kinds of entertainment for people. They sold ice cream and stuff.

David: Did you like riding the train? Did you enjoy it?

Mary: Oh, yeah.

David: Did you ever take the train up Mt. Tam? Did you go there?

Mary: No, I didn't.

Tony: You know, neither one of us went to the top of Mt. Tam. One time.

David: Only one time to the top of Mt. Tam?

Tony: People come from all over the world to Mt. Tam.

Mary: I haven't been up there.

Tony: To me, it's just another mountain.

Mary: I just took the road from Muir Beach around the mountain.

David: Mary, did your parents ever tell you stories about the Azores, about being in the Azores?

Mary: Not too many stories. They didn't enjoy it too much. That's why they wanted to get over here to this country.

David: Tell me a little bit more about working in the distillery. You worked in the distillery. You went there when you were 16, you said, right? What did you do in the distillery? What kind of work did you do?

Mary: Yeah. I capped all the whiskey bottles. There were about five, six women. Fostine, she was a big shot down there. We put the lids on the whiskey bottles. That was our job.

David: Did you enjoy it? Did you like doing that?

Mary: It was a little bit of money that I could spend on my own, you know.

David: How many days a week did you work there?

Mary: Seven days a week.



Mary: Yeah.

David: What hours did you work? When did you start and when did you finish each day?

Mary: Oh, eight o'clock in the morning until five at night, eight to five.

David: What did you do for lunch when you were working?

Mary: We took a sandwich from home.

David: You would bring a sandwich everyday?

Mary: Yeah.

David: When did your father pass away? How old were you when your father passed away?

Mary: 1987; '87, I think.

David: Your father passed away in '87?

Mary: Yeah.

David: How about your mother? Did you care for your mother in her old age?

Mary: She died here.

Tony: Mary took care of her mother 'til the day she died.

Chuck: I think we should have a pause. This is Cathy. (A neighbor stops by.)

Cathy: Hi, nice to meet you.

Chuck: I'm Chuck. They told us about you.

Cathy: I brought you a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday cake. You know, you can never have too many birthday cakes.

Chuck: Look at that, 100!

Cathy: When these guys are done, we can all have some tea and birthday cake. I'll put it in the kitchen now.

David: Let's maybe shift now and talk about your lives together and talk about, Tony, your life growing up. First tell me more about how you met, together. How did you meet? Where did you meet each other?

Tony: Well, my life, I was born in Mill Valley. There were ten in our family. I was the third from the youngest. Then Santa Rosa. I was there for quite a few years and that is where my mother and dad passed away, in Santa Rosa. They both passed away in the same year. Me and my younger brother became orphans.

David: How old were you when your parents passed away?

Tony: 12.

David: You were 12? You were with, did you say your younger brother?

Tony: My younger brother and I. What happened was different. We became orphans, of course, and they turned us over to the county. They took care of us from then on and got a place for us and so on. They found a couple on a ranch up at Ignacio that took us in for about a year. I don't know if I should tell you this. We were having breakfast one morning. After breakfast, I come up and my raincoat was gone, so I looked out and a ranch hand was wearing my rain coat. So I went out and told him, I said, "Hey, that is my raincoat." He said, "Get the hell out of here, kid." So I went over to the barn. I got a pitchfork and I took out after him.

David: You were how old? You were 12?

Tony: Yeah, 12. Then, he disappeared. He jumped in his car and he left. After that, I never saw him.

David: Did you get your raincoat back?

Tony: I don't remember that. Anyway, that guy went over to San Francisco. There was a doctor there that owned this ranch, but he had some people living on it. Anyway, he went over and told the story. Immediately, we were fired. I don't know if they can fire me for that. But then the county found us some place to work down in Tennessee Valley. Nobody would work for this guy, the rancher, Cunha, kids once in a while would. So after about, oh, six months or so, I got on the dairy and I had started running the milking machines and all that stuff. I was responsible for all of 75 cows a day. I milked them twice a day with the milking machines.

David: With the machines?

Tony: I would get up at three o'clock in the morning, bring the cows in, and milk them. We would do that milking in the morning and work till seven and then have breakfast, and then go back to get ready for the next milking. I would start again at three o'clock, and we would get done about seven for dinner. My brother, the people we were working for, they had two boys that were about my brother's age. So he got to go to school. I had to quit when I was in the sixth grade when I left Mill Valley to go to the ranch in Ignacio, but he went to school,

from both ranches, in Ignacio and in Tennessee Valley. I never went back to school once I started working on ranches.

David: This is while you were working at the ranch?

Tony: Yeah, she had the two boys she would take to school, so she would take him. He lived in the house with them. I lived, I had a shed out in the back, that was my headquarters, that is where I slept, no heat, no lights, no plumbing. I had an outhouse across the corral and during the night if you had to use it. You had to put on your boots and your raincoat.

David: To go to the outhouse?

Tony: Anyway, yeah, let me think back.

David: Did you work every day, seven days a week?

Tony: Every day for three years straight, never left the ranch. I might have left a couple dozen times. I got \$40 a month. I drove my check maybe every six months over to the bank. Other than that, I spent all the time on the ranch. I had no friends outside, just had the cows every day, didn't see nobody. One day one of the other ranchers, he offered me a job. He asked if I wanted to go work for him and said he would give me \$90 a month. I took the job and spent a year there.

David: Did your brother stay?

Tony: Yes, my brother, George, stayed there. See, he had finished grammar school by then and had taken over my jobs on Cunha's ranch. So, yeah, I didn't say anything to anyone, but, I told my brother. I didn't say anything to anyone else. I had what few clothes I owned. I stuck them in a gunnysack and I hiked down the road to the other rancher. I spent about a year there.

David: Were these ranches all in Mill Valley or in the area here?

Tony: Tennessee Valley, about a mile apart.

David: Did the ranches have names?

Tony: Um, no. But, the doctor that owned the ranch in Ignacio was Dr. Botkin. The last ranch. The second rancher, his name was Pimental. Let's see now, you have any questions?

David: How did the ranchers treat you? What was it like? (Tony shakes his head.) Not good?

Tony: We had no place to go. What could you do?

David: Even the second one you went to who paid you better?

Tony: The second one was fine, but the first one where I spent the three years. It was no good.

David: And at the second ranch, you were there for a year.

Tony: A year.

David: Then why did you leave? Where did you go and why did you leave?

Tony: I met her (indicating Mary). I must have been about, oh, 17. I left this ranch. I met Mary, and then I knew!! I lived with my sister for about a year until I tried to make it. My first job was over at Angel Island. I was a laborer. I didn't know anything about the outside world. They paid me \$3 a day and we had to pay 25 cents a day to take the ferry over there. I would pick up jobs here and there, labor jobs, whatever I could get. Then, I worked for a fellow. He had a little concrete business, just a one horse deal. I worked for him for a while. Then a couple of union guys came out and got on me and him too, because I didn't belong to a union. There were two of them. I picked up a shovel and got rid of the two of them fast. So I was out of work. The concrete fellow said, "Why don't you buy this stuff?" With what? I had a couple of dollars. Anyway, we made a deal and I bought a concrete mixer, two wheelbarrows, and four shovels. That is the way I started.

David: That was your business?

Tony: Yes, Brabo Construction. I started trying to get a business going. For a few years, I went along OK. It was just getting pretty good. Then, I was drafted for World War II, so I spent two years there. When I got out, I kept trying to get my business going. That was in 1945. There was a lot of money around, and I barely had money, but I built the business up and I retired in 1960, after 15 years. So ask me some more.

David: Let me go back to Mary. Tell me when you met Mary? How did you meet?

Tony: I met her at the dance hall in Sausalito. We had these fiestas, and I met her there.

David: Was this the annual event or did you go there more often?

Tony: We would go there once in a while, you know, not too often. It didn't take long, and then we got married.

David: Tell me about when you first saw each other. What was that like when you first saw Mary?

Tony: She was the gal for me!!

David: You knew that right away?

Tony: Yes. Oh, she was 19, and yeah, we stuck it out for a zillion years.

David: Did you go on dates together when you were courting Mary?

Tony: No.

Mary: No, my father, he was strict. He talked to him, and that's it.

Tony: I came out there one day. I was visiting her, and we were sitting down in the car around there, and I saw her dad coming down the road and he had a shotgun with him. But he was headed up to a neighbor's house. A dog up there was sick. He was going up there to shoot the dog. When I saw him come down there, I just, you know...ha! ha! Yeah, he was a good guy. We got along well. We lived with him for a lot of years. He was alright. Her mother and I, we didn't click too much.

David: When you first met, how long did it take before you decided to get married?

Tony: I don't remember.

David: Was it a short time?

Tony: Yes, a short time.

David: How did you propose to Mary? Where did you propose and how did you propose?

Mary: He said "Lets go over to Oakland. Your brother is there. We can get married there. Then, when we come back, we'll just be married. So, we eloped.

David: So you didn't tell your father that you were getting married?

Mary: No, we didn't tell nobody.

Tony: She had a brother over across the bay, and one day we went over there to have the wedding.

David: Was this in Alameda that you got married?

Tony: Yeah.

David: And this was at your brother's?

Tony: It was Fred, her brother. He was living over there.

Mary: That was the time of the mountain fire.

David: You got married during the mountain fire?

Mary: Yeah, the mountain fire.

David: You got married during the fire?

Tony: It was during the fire, the mountain fire a long time ago. When we came back, we could see the whole mountain on fire.

David: What happened when you came back? How did your father react, Mary?

Tony: He was OK. He was alright.

Mary: He was happy to see me back.

Tony: The part of this, too, we lived with him like I told you before, when we were first married, and then after we were married, I don't remember how long. But see, now I thought, "These people are old timers, they are antique." So we moved. We rented a little house down the road here for 20 bucks a month.

Mary: The Silva house.

Tony: The Silva house, yeah. So we moved in there. Then they wanted another 20 bucks, so we moved back.

David: Let's go back to when you were working after you became an orphan. You said you would take your money and go to the bank. Did you save your money? Did you spend your money at all?

Tony: No, the people taking care of us, he insisted that I have a bank account and when I would take my money to go to the bank, he had my bank book, and he would see that I could take money out if I needed it but I didn't. I never had no money. But he got me started, and then after we got married, I had that money that I had saved over the years, four years. Then, let's see, also, we got in a car accident before we were married, and we both got a little money from that, not a whole lot. So, after we had lived with Mary's folks for several years, we used the money we had saved and built the little house down below here on LaVerne. Her father gave us that lot, and the money we had between us, we built the house and furnished it. We were broke, but we had a nice house, so we lived for a long time there.

David: When did you build the house? What year was that?

Tony: Let's see...

Mary: 1928, I think.

Tony: It was in the 30s. Right after, no...

Mary: No, we were living there when you were called in the service.

Tony: Yeah, we built it before.

Chuck: If I may help, I think you told me once Joe Hornsby built it and I think it was in 1932, and then after that he bought the Brown Jug. So around '32 or '33, I think, is when they built that house.

Tony: Yeah, I think so, yeah. That's correct.

David: I am going to go back again a little bit further before you began working. Did you go to school?

Tony: I got as far as sixth grade and then I had to work.

David: Where were you going to school up till sixth grade?

Tony: Old Mill School.

David: Did you like going to school? Did you enjoy school?

Tony: Yeah, I enjoyed it, but I didn't really get far enough to realize what was going on in the world. But yeah, I got along in it.

David: Did you have friends at Old Mill School? Did you have good friends there that you would hang around with?

Tony: Somewhat, I had a couple. We were good friends. We didn't spend much time together because I was living with my sister on the hill then and she was strict. You go to school; you come home.

David: So this is after your parents passed away, or before? You were living with your sister, you said.

Tony: This was after they passed away. I lived with her for not quite a year, and then she decided she had other plans, so she told us one morning before we went to school, she says, "When you get out of school, don't come home because I won't be here." So that is what happened. So we got hold of one of my brothers that was working there in town, and then he took us up to another one of my sisters who was working up on a ranch. Her husband didn't want nothing to do with kids, so that is when the county took us over.

David: I want to ask you a couple more questions about your wedding. What was your wedding like?

Tony: We didn't have a big wedding.

David: What day did you get married? What day was that?

Chuck: It was either July 2 or July 3, when the big fire was going on.

Mary: Yeah, the fire.

Tony: It was during the fire.

Chuck: I would like to go back, if I may, to when you were milking the cows seven days a week, three in the morning and three in the afternoon, but then you also, would you tell us again about what you did with the milk?

Tony: Well, during the milking, we had to put the milk into a deal where it came down a little cooler to cool it off. We put it in those ten gallon cans and then after breakfast, we would take those cans down by the Fireside. There was a truck there they provide from the city. It would pick up those cans.

Chuck: At Manzanita?

Tony: Yeah, right that area there.

Chuck: Did you use a horse and wagon to take them down there?

Tony: No, the rancher, he had a truck. But most of them out there were horse and wagon, but he had a truck, used to drive the truck down there.

Chuck: This is interesting. You were only 14 or 15 years old?

Tony: I was 14 years old and I was doing a man's work.

Chuck: And you had to drive the truck down there?

Tony: I was taking care of 75 cows twice a day with the machines. Then the machines, they had the milk, and then you had to empty the machine into two five-gallon cans, and then pick up those and haul them across to a large tank and dump them in where it ran through a cooler. There is another thing I wanted to tell you about. We didn't have any hot water. I used to want to clean up and take a bath, you know, they had an ice tub. I would take the ice tub and put it in what we called the milk house where we had all the equipment and stuff, and we had a boiler that had steam to sterilize the equipment, and that is what I used to heat my water up with, use the steam in there to heat it up. That is what we did. Also, I used to wash my own clothes.

I've been through the mill.



David: At the second ranch, you said you left after a year, right? The second place that you worked at, the ranch you liked working at, is that when you went to Angel Island to a job there?

Tony: After I left the ranch and we got married, then I started to travel about the outside world because I had been stuck down there. The three years I was there on the Cunha ranch, it was like being in prison. I had no friends. I had nobody to talk to. It was just the same thing every day. He had a couple of older people working there. He paid them, before I was. I was about 14. From then on, I worked like a bull.

Chuck: Is that Pimental's Ranch?

Tony: No, that was the last one.

Chuck: Do you remember the name of the rancher in the first one?

Tony: The first one in Tennessee Valley. Yeah, Cunha.

Chuck: Was he Portuguese?

Tony: Yeah. One good thing about it, as much as I didn't enjoy being there, his wife was a good cook. We always had plenty of food.

David: So after you were married and decided you wanted to see more of the world, you found a job at Angel Island.

Tony: Yeah, I had to get out and see what was going on the other side.

David: What did you do at Angel Island?

Tony: Labor, shoveling gravel, concrete mixer, stuff like that. It didn't last very long. I got into a beef with the foreman there and I left. I worked two or three days and I left, and I started working around these other towns. In those days too, if you worked an hour, you got paid for an hour. You didn't get half a day.

David: When did you get your own business then? How long was that after, when you had your concrete business?

Tony: Well, that was up until 1944. It was just getting good.

David: When did you start?

Tony: '37.

David: '37 to '44?

Tony: Yeah. It was just getting good and then I was drafted like I told you before in the service, spent two years there. While I was in the service, I had shore duty. I was in the Navy, but shore duty opened up in North Africa. We worked on the pavement for the main part of the base. I learned all the equipment that we used to have for fixing the road and fixing all that sort of stuff. I used that knowledge when I got out. Then I got my concrete business kind of built up and I went into excavating. I bought a tractor and then from there, I kept building that up and then I really got into big stuff, several subdivisions in Mill Valley.

Then I went into the paving business. I used to pave, but it was good. Then, in 1960, I retired. It was great for about a year. My friends, we would go fishing, hunting, something to do. But pretty soon, you know, they would take the wife someplace or the kids were sick, so it was just me. So then I went down to the harbor in Sausalito there and met quite a few of those party boat skippers. I used to go down and work on their boats just for something to do. There was a young fellow, he was just out of college. He wanted to start a little business of repairing boats, so I helped him, got him going. Then he was well enough along without me.

Then I started buying boats, fixing them up, and selling them. I did very well. I did the work and that kept me by myself with nobody working with me. And then, at that time, Mary was stuck, she had to take care of her mother. Her mother was bed-ridden for many years, so for ten years, we couldn't really do anything together. Her mother needed taking care of. It was Mary because she lived with her mother all her life, so I was out trying to, you know, do things on my own. Then when her mother passed away, then we started doing things together. I bought a 30 foot travel trailer and we traveled around. We used to go north a lot, fish around the lakes, we liked it up there. We would go up and maybe stay up there a month or something, come home for a couple days in between. We were free. We could do anything we wanted to. We did a little traveling. We went over to Lisbon and spent a couple of weeks over there with a friend. We never traveled much. Then as we got older, you know, when I was pushing 80, I was still dragging this trailer around all over the country. In fact, Cathy drove us up there one time, pulled the trailer up, and then she got on a plane and came home. Then she came up to drive it home, and that was one of the last trips we made up there.

Cathy: That is when I was pregnant with Marie.

Tony: That's right.

Cathy: I didn't tell you until we got there because I thought you wouldn't want me to drive the trailer if I was pregnant.

Tony: They lived in the old house there for a lot of years and had the two girls. You know, they were, Sunday, they were up here, and I look at those girls and I still remember. They learned to walk around that table there (indicating the low, round coffee table in the living room). Yeah.

Chuck: I would like to go back to life in Homestead Valley in the 1930s when you said things were really tough and you lived off the land and living was hard. You were newly married then, and I guess one of the most important things that happened early in the 1930s was the birth of Loretta. You haven't said anything about her. That is a very important part of your life.

Mary: Yes, there was a baby in between there.

Chuck: She was born in 1932, I believe.

Cathy: 30 or 32? I thought she was 80 this year. Did Loretta just turn 80?

Tony: No.

Cathy: No, 78?

Tony: I'm 98, and she's...

Mary: She was born in 1931.

Tony: I'm 20 years older. 1931.

Chuck: I think we wondered, was she named after someone?

Mary: No. I had a friend that lived near here and her name was Loretta and I liked the name, so I named her Loretta.

Chuck: But then, if we could get more information about that time.

David: What was life like during that time, when Loretta was a baby and was young? What was life like here in Homestead Valley?

Tony: A lot different than it is today. We didn't have the house here we have today. This street, it was just footpaths, and this was all open land up above.

Chuck: But for food?

Tony: For food, we didn't have to buy much food, some of the things we had. But, Mary's dad used to go over to the city in the fall and they would buy the supplies, you know, a sack of beans a sack of flour, sacks, that sort of thing, to carry us through the winter. But they didn't go to the store everyday; there were no stores to go to.

Chuck: And you went hunting, I understand.

Tony: Oh, I used to hunt a lot. That is what we done for our meat.

Mary: We didn't waste any meat, anything that he hunted for.

David: What did you hunt for?

Tony: Deer mostly, because they were here. This friend of mine, he was in about the same condition, went through the depression together. We used to hunt at this old game refuge back here and we weren't allowed to hunt there. So, what we would do, he would come down here, and we would leave here about four o'clock in the morning. We would hike over to Pan Toll, and on the way over kill a deer. We would hang it up and clean it all out. We had a sack we would put over it to keep the flies off. Then we would hike on down to Stinson Beach and go swimming, spend the day down there, because we couldn't come home before dark because we had been hunting in the game refuge, see? We had to have dark before we could come home. At this one place there was a ranch and we used to have to come up this steep hill through the ranch. Every time I would come up that mountain, I would think, "Never again!" But the next time, we would do the same thing again. And we used to go to Bolinas, get clams on the lagoon back there. But since they have done some logging there, all the stuff come down now and you can't clam there.

David: What was life like during the depression? Was it difficult here? Did things change? What was it like?

Mary: It wasn't too bad for us because my dad had vegetables and stuff.

Tony: We lived with him.

Mary: Yes, it wasn't really bad for us, but his sisters came over from Alameda. They lived over here. They didn't live with us.

Tony: What are you talking about?

Mary: Dietz and Rose.

Tony: Oh, yeah.

Mary: That was during the depression.

Tony: That had nothing to do with us. But we had, what was that, you know I can tell you about it, but I don't really like it.

Mary: They lived in Mill Valley. They moved to Mill Valley. Tony would go hunting and fishing and we would have them out for dinner because we had enough to eat and they didn't. They had just come back from Chicago.

Tony: Yeah, he worked for a phone company and they laid him off.

Mary: So they were in trouble too, so we tried to help as much as we could.

Tony: Yeah, most everybody was in trouble. It was hard. This friend of mine used to work for this lady, working in a garden a little bit and she used to pay him 25 cents an hour. This one time, he went over, he worked a half hour over, he had worked maybe an hour and a half, so she paid him 25 cents for the first hour and then she split the 25 cents for the second hour, giving him 13 cents.

Chuck: Also, I'd like to hear Tony tell us some of the tales I have heard you tell me about prohibition with the stills that were in the area and also the bootleggers who were bringing in the liquor up there Tennessee Valley. Tell us a few of those stories. I think everyone would be interested in that.

Tony: Well, Tennessee Valley, I think I told you, they used to bring the liquor in and it was in the wintertime and you couldn't. The ranchers had a sled and they used to have the horses harnessed up to the sled and they had to drag all those cases of liquor up. That is when I told you they stored it in the barn. But they came out there one day and I heard they got a bunch of liquor. I don't remember if they had a little pickup or something, but it was a truck of some kind, and they had it loaded up with liquor, and when they were coming out, they learned that the prohibes (prohibition police) were in the area. So when the guy was on his way out with this liquor, he drove it out to the cemetery on the way out. He drove it up and walked away from them with all the liquor. But then my older brother, he had a problem when he was a young guy. He had nothing to do. He had spent what little savings he had with an attorney and that turned him against the laws. So from then on there, he was outside of the law and was happy with that. So he had a still in Larkspur, only two blocks out of the city of Larkspur. He was running that. He turned out 12 gallons of liquor an hour. Making this liquor, a lot of the overripe stuff that he had to get rid of. It went down the sewer. It was hot, you know. People going by to get the train in the morning, the train station there, didn't know what was going on. The steam, somebody should have known. But there was a little old lady who lived down the street, across the street in the barge. So she called my brother one day and said, "You know, I think you are doing something illegal up there." He said, "Suppose we are. You wouldn't turn me in, would you?" "No, just for a little compensation, my lips are sealed." Every week he had to give her ten bucks or something. Then they were coming down from fishing one time, out from Lagunitas Creek. It was at night, and a big car come up behind them and start bumping, and finally they came to a grade and they couldn't outrun the car that was chasing them, so they pulled off the road, and these guys jumped out and they came running over there, and opened up the doors of the car. They thought he had liquor aboard. They were hijackers.

Chuck: You also had a story about sugar.

Tony: We used 20 sacks of sugar a night.

David: To make the alcohol?

Tony: For the still, and the other stuff that went in. There was a fellow down here who had a grocery store, and my brother made a deal with him to furnish us with the sugar, so we would

pick it up at night and take it and use it. You know at that time, the store had something going over there, giving tickets for something. They were giving away a car. So my brother had all these tickets, 20 sacks of sugar every day. We had a box of tickets. We knew we were going to get the car. When they had that drawing, the guy behind us had one ticket and he won.

Cathy: Wow, what are the odds?

Tony: Then they had another still down where Blackie's Pasture is now. But getting back to the first still, there were three houses on this property. They were all vacant. He didn't rent at all. The gas line didn't come into the house. He used to tap into it to run the still. Then later on he had to run on the line of someone that lived in one of the other houses. He forgot to unhook it once, so PG&E came in. They turned him in and sent a crew down and cut it off at the road. Then things were getting tougher all the time as far as setting a price. It was getting cheaper, so he finally gave up. But I thought about Blackie's Pasture. They used to steal gas there, too. They had a main going through from here into Tiburon and they used to plug into the main somehow. You plugged in there and fed on it somehow. Then you had a long haul on the way over to this harbor, and that is what they used for power. Most of those stills, later, they made them out of old copper, but at first, they just had one big container, metal, maybe iron or whatever it was. They used to have to put the fire under it and wait until it boiled, then catch the steam and get the liquor. But the prohibes come in one night. No one was there, but they went in. "Oh boy, look what we found." The first thing they would do is get an ax and cut the stuff down. Well, this guy took a pass at this one. It was a steel tank and his ax glanced off and hit one of the prohibes.

Chuck: Thanks very much for that, getting back to the '30s and '40s.

David: I want to ask a couple more questions. When did you get electricity? When did that happen?

Tony: That is when we were living down the hill with the old folks. We had a big lantern, so I told her dad that I was hoping for electricity. "Oh, no, that's too expensive." So I had it done anyway. I think it cost me \$35 to wire that house and then we got a little radio and stuff. I told him one time, "I think we are going to stop the electricity." "Oh no!" and we went on from there, had our lives.

David: What year was that that you put the electricity in?

Tony: It was before I went in the service, must have been in the early '40s, yeah.

David: I want to ask you a little bit more about Loretta. What was Loretta like as a child? What did she do?

Mary: She worked.

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: She graduated from high school. But even then, before she grew up, when she was in grammar school, she used to sell vegetables and stuff on weekends. But then she worked for a car dealer for a lot of years, even when she was going to high school. After work, she would help the bookkeeper.

David: Here in Mill Valley?

Tony: Yes, on the way home from school.

David: What car dealer was that, do you remember?

Tony: It was Herb's Chevrolet dealer. Yeah, she has been a good daughter.

David: What schools did she go to growing up?

Tony: Well, she went to Park School until she started at Tamalpais High School down the road here.

Chuck: Didn't she go to Homestead School?

Mary: Yes, she started at Homestead.

Tony: Wait, yes, she did go to Homestead School when she was little.

Chuck: And then went to Park, Tamalpais High and College of Marin.

Tony: I remember one time that she didn't want to go to school. I said, "You got to go to school. I walked her over to Scott Street. "OK, you don't want to go to school?" I brought her home, put her in her bedroom. She stayed there all day. Next morning, boy, she was wide awake and ready to go to school. I was pretty strict with her.

Mary: He was too strict with her.

Tony: No, I wasn't too strict. You know, when she was growing up, we had our rules. I said, "I don't care where you go, but you have to be home at ten o'clock." That was a must. She thought I was rough on her too, but now that she has grown up, she appreciated that.

Mary: She went to bed hungry. She wouldn't eat.

Tony: She wouldn't eat?

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: Anyway, she looks back at it and says that she appreciates it now. You know, young

kids today get to bed 12 o'clock, one o'clock, what are they doing out there, looking for trouble?

David: So was she always home at ten o'clock? Did she always come home at ten?

Tony: Yes, sir. When she turned 18, then, I said, "Now you do what you want," and she did. She never stayed out too late. Then she met her husband at one of the dances some boys were going to, and then they got married. She was 26 years old. You know, I was kind of shocked. I said, "You wait one more year and I'll buy you a brand new Cadillac." That didn't work. She didn't want her Cadillac.

Yeah.

David: And she got married then?

Tony: Yeah, she is married.

David: What kind of wedding did she have?

Mary: She had a nice wedding.

David: A nice wedding?

Mary: Down at Brown's Hall. Yeah, she had a lovely wedding.

David: What is the name of her husband?

Mary: Albert George.

Tony: Him and I never did get along. I haven't seen him in five, six years. He is so envious. He resents her for coming over here. She comes out about three times a week to go shopping and takes us to where we have to go. I don't know, but he didn't want her to come around to us.

David: You didn't like him very much, it sounds like.

Tony: You would tell him it was black and he would say no, it's white.

Chuck: You told us, Tony, that you didn't go to your daughter's wedding.

Tony: No, I couldn't.

Mary: He wouldn't.

Tony: I took a trip to Nevada, went hunting, and I didn't go to her wedding. I feel kind of bad about it, but I just couldn't do it. I couldn't give my daughter to nobody.



Chuck: That is what I heard you say. You just couldn't give your daughter away.

Tony: I couldn't.

Mary: So I was stuck with everything.

David: You had to handle everything?

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: It was in Brown's Hall.

Mary: Yeah, they got married in Mill Valley and then came down to Brown's Hall and we all met there.

Chuck: The reception was in Brown's Hall.

Mary: Yeah, it was real nice.

Chuck: Was she married in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church?

Mary: Yes.

Tony: You know, that church, I tore it down when I was in business. They were going to build a new church. I took that old building down. You know it was kind of a two story deal. They have the church part of it and then part with the priest and all that, the other part. When we were taking this building down, I put a cable around the building, excluding the part they lived in, and pulled it over, and it kept pulling back. But you pull it over; it was bouncing over the part they were living in. Pretty soon, the preacher come flying out the door and this gal right behind him, scared to hell. Yeah.

David: Did Loretta ever talk about her job at the car dealership? Did she enjoy it? Did she tell any stories about it?

Tony: The people she worked for, Herb Shapiro, well, she worked for them while she was going to high school. Then after she was married, they moved across the Bay and she went to work for another car dealer. After she was there a while, the car dealer told somebody how their collections had been getting better since Loretta had taken them over, but he didn't tell her. See, they didn't have anybody collecting bills like she did. They had no way of collecting them, until she got a hold of them. Even when I was in business, sometimes people were slow on paying their bills. She has helped us on it over the years, a lot of what we are doing now. I had a fellow that I used to do some work for and he used to work for me sometimes, too, but he was slow paying his bills to me. So, when he had a bill for the work I'd done for him, he would come in with his bill and want me to pay right away. Loretta would look up our bill for him and say to him, "Well, let's see. You took five months to pay

us. So, now you come back here in five months and we will give you a check for your bill to us.” And, that’s exactly what happened.

Mary: There’s a picture up there.

David: Mary, did you work at all after you got married?

Mary: No, he wouldn’t let me work.

David: He wouldn’t let you work?

Tony: I figured if I couldn’t support her, I shouldn’t have her.

David: Tell me more about your friends and neighbors in Homestead Valley after you got married, maybe about Joaquin and Mary Silva, for example.

Mary: Oh, that was.

Tony: Mary Silva.

Chuck: Joaquin’s daughters were Simiana and Mary.

Mary: Simiana, yeah.

Tony: Mary’s sister.

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: Well, they were friends.

Mary: They were my first cousins, I think. Joaquin Silva was my uncle. Related somehow...

Mary: We moved into their house after we were married for a while. We didn’t stay there too long because I packed up my stuff and I’d come home.

David: You didn’t like living there?

Mary: I don’t know what happened, something happened.

Tony: Yeah, well I don’t know. We had a few friends around.

David: Who were some of your other friends at that time?

Tony: Well, we had this friend that I went through the depression with, and then we worked on this program. It was during the Roosevelt presidency. They had the WPA, they called it.

Then we had jobs, but we were doing something like tractors and things do now like widening the road and things like that, just to keep us busy. I think we got about 18 bucks a month, maybe a week. What they had was a program where the government was giving a lot of canned goods and things to people that really needed it, but we didn't use it too much.

David: What was his name? What was your friends name?

Tony: Frank Sutcliffe.

David: Frank Sutcliffe?

Tony: Yeah, we were good friends.

David: Do they live close by here?

Tony: Yeah, well, the depression hit them. They moved in with her sister over in the city, and finally they moved over here with a good friend of hers, and then finally they had a little house up on the hill. But I used to hunt a lot with him too. I had friends that used to hunt a lot and people around me were big hunters. My goal after the depression was to make money. I wasn't too concerned about a lot of it. I didn't have time for that. It was more during the depression.

Mary: He used to buy old cars and wreck them and sell them, take it over to...

Tony: Yeah, one time, it was before the war, they were shipping a lot of scrap iron stuff over to Japan.

Tony: I had a car and I turned it into a truck. Then I went around these ranches to pick up scrap iron, and I had done real well with that. I bought a car, an old car. It was called a Marmon, a big, beautiful car made by Duesenberg. I bought it for \$25 just for the scrap iron and the aluminum inside.

Mary: No mark on it at all.

Tony: Anyway, I bought it and pulled it up in the yard there and put some gasoline in the back, lit it on fire, and just watched it burn. Just to get the metal off it. I used to haul it off. We used to go to the ferry that goes across to Richmond. Sometimes, I would get to the other end, the tide was low coming off of the ferry, the front side, and I would have a hell of a time getting the loaded truck off the ferry.

Chuck: David, I have a list here of Homestead neighbors and I am wondering if Tony knew them in the '30s or '40s. For example, did you know Albert Von der Werth?

Tony: Oh yeah, yeah. He was a great guy, hard worker and contractor, yeah.

Chuck: Did you know Bill Brown?

Tony: I remember Bill, yeah. He used to take me fishing up in China Camp, bring a boat. Yeah, I knew Bill well.

Chuck: You told us you knew Jim Dias.

Mary: Jim Dias.

Tony: Yeah, yeah, he was one of the ones who got ruined during the depression.

Chuck: Oh, really.

Tony: The market was good. He was making money, and with the mortgage and everything, they put their money into stocks, and they woke up one morning and all they had was a piece of paper.

Chuck: But he was running the Dias ranch for his father.

Tony: Yeah. I think there were five boys, and four of them took hold of the dairies when the old folks passed away, and they lost them all. You know, the father, he built this up over the years. He put his kids through school and everything. When he passed away, they lost it all. You know. That happened up at San Rafael, Terra Linda, that was the Freitas Ranch. He started the same way, with nothing, and yet he had all that area up there.

Chuck: Did you know the William Santos family?

Tony: Yeah, knew them really well.

Mary: Oh yeah.

Tony: We used to hunt a lot together.

Chuck: You did.

Mary: Yeah, we knew them all.

Chuck: I've read about them. They lived off the land too.

Tony: Yeah, the father, he was allergic to work. They had, I don't know, five or six kids, or whatever it was. They turned out OK. It was only one of them that worked, though, the older one, I think.

Mary: Manuel, yeah, he was the oldest.

Tony: He worked, and he supported them all.

Chuck: Do you remember if they had a windmill up there on their farm?

Tony: No, they had a well below the road.

Chuck: Below the road, OK.

Tony: Yeah, Mrs. Santos, Manuel's mother, used to go down there and wash her clothes, pump the water out of the well. Yeah, she was quite a gal.

Chuck: Did you know John Cooper who ran the Homestead Grocery?

Mary: Yeah, we knew him well.

Chuck: You knew him. What about, I don't know if I can pronounce it properly, but Jacintio Azavedo, who owned the property next door, he owned six acres, Jacintio Azavedo?

Mary: Azavedo?

Chuck: Yeah. On the map I showed you once. You see the three acres that your father had right here and then next door there are six acres. It says it was owned by Jacintio Azavedo.

Mary: Yeah, yeah. Jacinct used to live right where Rosie lived on that piece of property there.

Chuck: Jacinct?

Mary: Jacinct, yeah.

Chuck: I guess you did know who he was.

Mary: Yeah.

Chuck: I'm sorry to interrupt, David, but I thought I would just go over some of these people that I read about and see if they knew them, and they knew all of them.

David: There was another one, I think, Louis Ferrera, did you know him?

Tony: Yeah, Louis Ferrera, that's the guy who had the grocery store we were buying the sugar from.

Chuck: And then he also put the Quonsets down here.

Tony: Yeah, that area used to be all wells, farming and a pond full of frogs. All you could hear at night was crickets.

David: What were the road and street conditions like in Mill Valley back in the 1930s? What were the roads like in Mill Valley?

Tony: I remember coming into Mill Valley was all dirt roads, gravel. These roads down here (Reed, Evergreen, Hawthorne, etc.), you couldn't drive a car up in the wintertime. They were all mud and the wagons keep cutting the ruts down. The ruts were deep. On this street over here where you live, Hawthorne, when I was courting Mary, I used to have to start about your place, there's a little grade there. I would start way back there, and go as fast as possible, and just barely make it.

Mary: The Ezekiels used to live across the road from the place there. The old folks lived up on the hill and some other Ezekiels lived down on Hawthorne.

Tony: Yes, right.

Chuck: One other family we wanted to ask you about is, during the war, did you know the Okubara family, the people that had the chicken ranch?

Mary: Yeah, we used to buy eggs from them.

Chuck: But you were here when they were taken off to a concentration camp for the Japanese?

Mary: Yeah.

Chuck: You went to school with one of his daughters.

Mary: Yeah. Her name was Mirika.

Tony: Yeah, they were nice people.

Mary: Yeah, they were good Japanese people.

Tony: Chinese.

Mary: Japanese.

Chuck: No, they were Japanese, taken away to the detention camps. You knew her, Mirika?

Mary: Yeah, I went to Homestead School with her. They had just come over from Japan and they couldn't speak too well and I would try to help them a little bit. I didn't know too much myself. What little I knew, I tried to help.

Tony: Yeah, it was a different world. Everyone knew everybody in the neighborhood. If anyone needed help, they were right there helping them. If you tried to pay somebody money, it was an insult. They wanted to help. But today, no money, no soap.

Mary: It is different today. Some people who live here a long time, you don't even know them.

David: I want to ask you a couple more questions about life in the 1930s. Were there sidewalks in Mill Valley in the 1930s?

Tony: No. I remember up in Mill Valley, it was a gravel road up in the square. Miller Avenue was gravel all the way up to town. I don't remember if they had Blithedale those days or not, but most of the roads were dirt roads and gravel.

David: And no sidewalks at all?

Tony: No. In fact, they had some sidewalks down here on Montford going down to the 2 AM Club. Some of the people who worked down here, they got together, built board sidewalks down so they could walk to work there, but other than that, there was none.

David: Those were wooden sidewalks?

Tony: Yeah. You make kind of a sidewalk, yeah.

David: Did you used to take the train from Locust Station at all? In the 1930s, did you ever take the train places?

Mary: Oh, yeah.

David: Where did you go by train?

Mary: I used to go by train to work in Sausalito.

Tony: That was before we were married.

David: After you were married in the 1930s, did you go by train anyplace?

Tony: No.

David: Not at all?

Mary: Not that I can remember.

David: Were you involved in the Portuguese community at all in the 1930s after you got married? Did you still do things with the Portuguese community?

Tony: Well, except for the thing we told you about before in Sausalito, but like I said before, too, I wasn't interested in that kind of thing. I was shooting for one goal, and that was for getting money. I had known those other people for such a long time. I wanted to get out, get

away from them, start my own thing, put some money away for when you get older, and that is what happened. We were very fortunate, made a lot of money in my time, put a lot of time in, but I have had a lot of luck too. Some of the things just happened, it wasn't me being so smart or anything, they just happened. So we have done really well.

We help people as much as we can. These kids down here, a young couple there. They came up from Los Angeles. They had a job for insulation, solar, or something, and the company wanted to expand up into here. They had bought a condominium down there and they had messed up somehow, so they lost it. Anyway, they moved up here and when they got up here, the company started to go down, so he worked for about six months, then he had no job. They were getting ready to live in their car when I rented the place to them. It got down to where he came up one day and said, I have to pay you half the rent, so I went along with it for a long time. In the last two years, we haven't charged them any rent. We lived in the old house and it sheltered us when we needed it, so let's just turn it around and help them. They appreciate that. They come up here a lot. They are really nice. For younger couples, they are more like the old timers, you know, they are not out half the night, stuff like that. They are different. But we enjoy them, and if we need something, they are right there. We enjoy that.

David: I want to ask you a little bit about your time in the service. You said you were drafted, is that correct?

Tony: Yes.

David: You were drafted into the Navy. Tell me about what it was like serving in the Navy, what rank did you achieve and...?

Tony: Well, I didn't get up too far. I was just getting ready, the war was just about over when I had another rank coming, but I didn't really care about that. But it is kind of, in a way, you know, the draft board up in Mill Valley called me one day and told me I had to show up on a certain date to go to the service. Well, I was just beginning to get my business going, but well, you have to go, you have to go. So, we were just about getting used to it and they called again and said you don't have to go. Then about, a few weeks later, he calls and says, oh, we made a mistake, you got to go. So I was POed. So, I went over to the city, the big building (that's where they were doing that Selective Service thing), and we all went from there. They gave us a form to fill out and I was, you know, I didn't even want nothing to do with it. So then, they said, everybody except Brabo and Joe and these guys don't go. There were five of us that didn't even fill it out, and they thought we couldn't even read or write, but we didn't let them know whether we could or not. So they shipped us up to Virginia for boot camp, and then they had these classes starting to teach us to read and write. But, I already knew how. Finally, they said, what are you doing here? That's how I happened to get there, and the bunch that were drafted at the same time, most of them went to the South Pacific and a lot of them didn't come back. I was in the Navy.

Chuck: You were in the Navy, but these other draftees?



Tony: You picked what you wanted. I was the last one for Navy, then it was all Army. But I think about that. Most of them died. It wasn't my turn.

David: In the Navy, is that where you learned the construction? You were doing construction in North Africa?

Tony: Yeah.

David: Is that where you learned?

Tony: Yeah, they had a base there and repairs and things to do. I got in on that and took care of the whole thing, and had prisoners working under me and stuff like that. I kept my nose clean and didn't get in trouble. They had a Marine who was taking care of the brigs and taking them out every Saturday on 30 mile hikes or whatever it was. I would see them coming in at night. They had all kind of uphill to get there and just dragged in. I would go by where they kept these fellows all fenced in. It wasn't too big an area, and when they first went into the brig, they would give them an old rusty bucket and a sand pit out there and they had to polish that bucket until there was no more rust on it. And then there was this one poor colored fellow. I felt sorry for him. They had him locked up in a hold separately. Anyway, he broke out somehow. And they called this Marine in. He grabbed this man by the arm, you know, twisted it around and the guy looked fearful. Then he held him up by his heels. He picked him up threw him back in the shed and locked the door. Boy, that made a believer out of him, so that stopped. So I was OK. I was only there for two years. I learned a lot, because I went into the place, you know, but it worked out for me.

David: Tell me about the tragic slide in Tam Canyon in 1942. What happened there? In Tam Canyon, there was a slide, a tragic slide in 1942.

Tony: Oh, that was up here, yeah.

David: Tell me about that. What happened?

Tony: Well, we had a real bad winter, a real wet one, and there was quite a few hours up in there. Then the slide happened.

Mary: Joe King and Tony's sister, Beatrice, lived up there a little ways away from where the slide happened.

Tony: There was an older fellow living alone up there. Anyway, one of the Mill Valley cops comes up to help and his house was starting to slide. The older fellow had come to the window and the cop grabbed him and tried to pull him out of the window and pretty soon the whole thing went down the hill. Both men were OK. Then we spent a lot of time washing it over, the fire hoses, washing it all down to retrieve the bodies. There were quite a few people killed. It was a sad thing, yeah.

David: It sounds like it had a major impact on the community? Did it change the community at all? Was there an impact on the community?

Tony: Uh, not really. Yeah, we were just living.

David: Then there was a slide at Waldo Tunnel. Tell me about that.

Chuck: It is where you managed to get the rock and put it in front of the city hall.

Tony: Yeah, that was later.

Chuck: That wasn't in '42?

Tony: That was later, that was in the '50s that I put that rock up. Yeah. It didn't really affect us.

David: You constructed a duplex at 212 Reed after the war. Tell me about that. Tell me about how that came about.

Tony: Yeah. Well, when I got out of the service, we had this little house down here, the first one we built that had a full basement in it, so I decided I wanted to put a little apartment in there, get a little rent from it. So I didn't get a permit or anything. I told the guy working for me, I said, "Do it all inside and don't break the front door out until the last thing." But he did. He opened it up for the door and the next day there was a building inspector, and he started reading the law out to me, one thing and another. I got a letter from the district attorney. I met with him one day in San Rafael and he told me, he says, "You broke the law. You are not going to rent it, and we'll put a lock on it."

I said, "Where were you when I was in the service for two years, besides sitting on your ass and doing nothing? You come to put a lock on that door," I says, "Come prepared. I'll shoot the first person that tries to put a lock on it." "You mean that?" I said, "You better damn well believe that." So then at the time, I had been doing work, some work for the state senator, I don't remember what his name now, but I mentioned it to him one day. The next day, a big headline comes in the paper, "Veteran just back from overseas" and they were abusing me and I am doing that and everything. Then, instead of zoning just that little piece for double units, they zoned the whole three acres. So then that is when I built the duplex, and it went on from there and I built seven more houses and sold them. Yeah.

David: Do you want to tell us more? Is there something more on that story?

Tony: Um, not really. I went along through business. A friend of mine had a building up in Mill Valley and he was involved with his brother on some apartments that they were building. They ran out of money, so he offered me the building. So I bought it from him. I actually traded the first house we built. I told him, "I'll give you that and 20,000 bucks for the downtown building." So we made a deal. That is how I got the store up town. We have had it for 50 years, and we just sold it the other day, fixed it up.

Chuck: The fellow you bought it from was Manny Gomez. He was a famous Mill Valley resident.

Tony: Yeah, he was a jeweler. Then I bought another piece of property, a piece of marshland. The state was doing a job down by the Richmond Bridge and they had a lot of fill, so I had them bring all that in and fill it in for me. Then as we went along, we would keep filling the marsh to build a market. Through a realtor I knew, I met Jim Blood. He had the money to build the market. He had made a deal to expand a San Rafael store. I gave him a long lease on the land and he built the market and leased it out. You know, in those days, it was big money, but it isn't anymore. They are still on the lease. He took his own money and built the building and everything, and it didn't cost me a nickel. We would get revenue every month for 40 years, little by little, you know. Some markets that were there are the Red Cart, then Long's, and now CVS.

David: Where was this located?

Tony: Over in Mill Valley.

Chuck: It's in Alto, isn't it, where the Red Cart market used to be? It is now the CVS pharmacy.

Tony: Yeah.

Chuck: Then you bought some property down near Tam Junction also.

Tony: Yeah, I bought about 14 acres down there at the marsh. I used to buy stuff here and there, you know. There were a lot of empty lots around in those days. Some of them were all brushed over and stuff. We had to get in there, clean them up, and then sell them. I was always doing that on the side. So it all worked out fine.

David: What did you do when you bought the building from Manny Gomez? What did you do with that building?

Tony: I just sold it recently.

David: I mean, when you first bought it, what did you do with it for the years that you had it?

Tony: Well, it has six offices upstairs, and then it had a jewelry shop and a dress shop downstairs. It was all rented out. When I sold it, actually, I only had about \$30,000 in it when I bought it, but I had it appraised just before we sold it, and it was appraised at \$1,600,000. So it all piled up and we don't need it. I helped my friends some, feel good about it. But I've always been an independent sort of guy, I think that comes with the way I was raised. I didn't take no guff from nobody. I don't care if it was the President of the United States. If I had something to tell them, I would tell them. She used to get on me about that. Oh, she shouldn't. If I don't like you, I'll tell you about it. I don't want to see

you anymore, or whatever. I'm not going to tell you what a nice guy you are when you're not.

David: Tell me about the Quonsets that were built on Miller Avenue, the shopping center, in 1947. How was it built and what happened there? What is the story behind that?

Tony: Well, this Louis Ferrera, he filled that marsh in and built the Quonsets and he had a grocery store there for a long time. Then he expanded and he built another building down there. Anyway, he built another market. He built a market there, and then from there, he built a bigger one in San Rafael. That is where he started with those. Yeah, that's been there a long time.

Mary: That was the United Markets.

Tony: Yes, that's what it was.

David: I want to ask you a little bit more about Brown's Hall. I know Loretta got married in Brown's Hall, but did you go to Brown's Hall for other things as well? From the '30s all the way up to 1972, it was a community center. Did you go to Brown's Hall for any activities?

Tony: It was a community center in those days. All they had was a 2am Club. That used to be a grocery store back in the old days.

Chuck: I think what David is asking is Brown's Hall, between '33 and '72. They had dances. They had parties. They had concerts. Did you ever go to any of those?

Tony: Where?

Chuck: In Brown's Hall.

Mary: No, never went to those.

Chuck: Where Loretta had her reception?

Mary: Loretta had her reception there.

Chuck: Yeah, and there were other weddings there, and now it is the Buddhist church.

Tony: Yeah, but that all came in later years.

Chuck: Yeah. I used to go there in the '60s for concerts.

Mary: Loretta had her reception at Brown's Hall.

Chuck: Yes. The question was, did you go to Brown's Hall for other things?

Mary: No, no.

Chuck: That answers the question.

Tony: We weren't into that sort of stuff, you know, people get together.

David: I want to ask you about the sidewalks in Mill Valley. There are sidewalks that have your name on them. How did that come about?

Tony: I made most of the sidewalks in Mill Valley. I did them when I got out of the service and started getting into that. I did a lot of work for the city. Down where the 2 AM Club is on Montford, coming off of Miller and going on to Montford, that pavement. Used to be all the trucks coming down there would loosen it up, so I got a job from the city. They had an engineer. He was good, but he was overdoing the whole thing. They can't take a chance. They have to do the best. Sometimes they go overboard. That is what they were doing there. So I talked with the city manager and they told me, "We can't afford that kind of money. What do you think we can do with it?"

I told them. OK, they made a deal, and I went ahead and done it. I took the old pavement out, put in concrete, reinforced it all the way. Look at it, just like the way I did it. It cost them half the money it would cost giving it to the engineer. Yeah, most of my work was around here, Tiburon, Mill Valley, some in Sausalito, some in Stinson Beach. I would get a job over there once in a while. Then I had two big jobs at Angel Island. I got a job from the Federal government for fire protection. The roads that went all the way around the island, I had to clear the shrubbery and stuff to give them a 40 foot clearance for fire. That was a good job. Then later I got a job for the State Park Service, and I went in and I tore down around 40 buildings that the Army had. So I tore them all down and cleaned up the place. While I did the job, having been through what I just told you about, being in the scrap iron business, I could see all the scrap iron that was in there, so my bid was low but I came out great. I rented a barge, a big barge, and they pulled it in and set it up alongside the dock and threw the scrap iron in there and then when the job was finished, we had them tow it. \$150 they did it for. They pulled the barge, left it there for a couple of weeks, then took it over to the city and back. So I had a lot of scrap iron, and a lot of metal, which was very good. I used to go over to the scrap metal dealers, you know, those guys over there. You have to keep your eyes open.

David: Tell me, when you had all these different jobs that you were doing, how many people did you have working for you? Did you have a large company?

Tony: No, I just had nine people was the most I had. I had chances to go big, but I didn't want to do it. I wanted just what I could take care of. I didn't want to hire somebody to do my job, you know. But Ghilotti Brothers over in San Rafael, the father, he came out from the old country years ago and raised those kids and they took over the business about the time that I started, and they do great. They do state work and all this stuff all over and I didn't

want that. It all worked out good for me. I did my books and I had my finger on everything. I didn't send somebody out to watch the men do something. I would watch them working around here. This driveway across the street that goes up the hill, I tarred that the day before I went in the service by myself. It is about 100 feet up to there, maybe more. Since then, they put in a driveway on the side of that for some houses they were building up there. They had five or six guys up there for two weeks!

David: I understand that you had a gas pump on your property. Tell me about that.

Tony: Well, in the first place, what saved me, having all my equipment there, this was all agriculture at the time and the city had nothing to do with it. I'm trying to think of what you just asked.

David: About the gas pump, the tank.

Tony: I had my trucks there, I needed to fill them, so I put in a couple tanks out there. The neighbors start talking about it. They start complaining about the gas pumps. So finally I was getting ready to retire anyway, so I pulled the tanks out of there. I had to do it on the sly when nobody was watching me. I left the pump. In fact, this one neighbor up the hill, he moved. He went to the county, complaining and everything. He got pissed off and he moved. That was OK.

David: I want to ask you about this house. How and when did you decide to build this house? What is the story behind that?

Tony: I built this house in the '50s. Yeah, in the '50s. I wanted a house and we got a guy to build it for us. I had a friend and he was a good builder, but he wasn't a businessman. So I made a deal. He built it. Yeah, we built it and paid cash for it. You know that stone wall that runs all the way up there and around the house? We had a friend that had a ranch over in Tiburon. They had a lot of rocks on top of the hill, the stone. I used to send my guys over there to get all this rock. Then I had a fellow, I'll never forget it, his name was Juliani, and he built the stone wall for me. That was just before I built the house. I think I had \$2,500, something. Yeah, I had Fred Rynders [the same guy from the five-month-check story] build the house and he did a nice job. Here we are. We have a nice location with a beautiful view out there. We can see the mountains. We sit here sometimes, look it over. We really didn't appreciate it too much till these kids moved up here, originally from Texas, and they couldn't believe it, that there was a place in the world like this. I guess in Texas, they have so much flat ground. Then we began to think about it and we appreciated it.

David: Tony, tell me about a scary experience that you had while you were excavating gravel on the Diaz ranch. Tell me about that story.

Tony: Well, I used to handle a lot of topsoil in those days too. So I made a deal with Diaz that I could go back there on his ranch and there was a lot of good topsoil out there. But this one place, there was kind of a gully there, and there was a lot of wild berries and stuff over it, and I went out there one Saturday with a dozer and wanted to clear all this brush off. I was

going along good. I was starting to get on the side hill a little bit, but I got a lot of that stuff in front of the dozer. I couldn't see where I was going. The big pile of brush I had in front of the dozer, it started to move down towards the middle of the slope, and when I backed up, if I had gone another 20 feet, there was a dead bluff right off there. I've had quite a few of those.

David: I want to ask you just a couple more questions here. Tell me about Sonia Johnson and her horse Rusty, the story there.

Mary: Yeah, the people that lived on LaVerne. They lived in that little garage there on the corner. I only knew that she had a horse.

Tony: Oh, yeah. Well, we didn't talk too much about it. She had a horse. Johnson, I used to talk to him about it, but as far as their home life, stuff I didn't know. When they had a fire, the house burned down and they had a volunteer fire department they got together, some of the neighbors tried to help. But yeah, I really don't remember much.

David: You mentioned you paid for this house with cash. Did you always pay cash when you financed your equipment for your business and the houses?

Tony: When I got started, when I got my first tractor. I bought one. As I got my concrete business, there was a fellow who had one. He had a little bit of business but he wasn't making it, so I bought it from him. I got started with that. Then I decided I wanted a new one so I went to talk to the people at Peterson tractor over there, and I didn't have the money to buy one. So this guy that was taking care of the finances said, "Well, you can buy it over time." It was the first thing I did on time. So I did that one and I started getting bigger jobs and as I needed equipment, when I thought I needed one, I thought my work was getting ahead of me, I just called all over and told him to send me a D8 or send me whatever I wanted. The next day, the truck would come in with the equipment on it. It took money, but I paid them off, every month, so I build up a reputation. I would pay it off.

David: Chuck, are there any questions you want to ask? I know you have one final question, but was there anything else besides that question that I missed?

Chuck: I think we have covered most everything. I guess I just have one more question. You have both lived a long time and you have been together for over 81 years, so you have probably been asked this question before. To what do you attribute your longevity? I am wondering if it was the healthy living off the land, if that was part of the answer, but I wonder if living in Homestead Valley is part of the answer too.

Tony: Well, I don't, I think it is the way we lived, the way we ate. We lived a normal life. We got our rest.

Chuck: Well, that's a very good answer, I think.

David: Were there any things that we left out, anything else, stories that you want to tell that are part of your lives that we didn't ask about, anything else that you want to add or do you think we covered pretty much it?

Tony: Yeah, we covered it.

David: Well, thank you so much, I greatly appreciate all of your time and wonderful stories, it has been really nice.

Mary: Yeah, I enjoyed it too.

Tony: When you put this thing together, I would like to have several copies of it.

David: Absolutely. What we are going to do is get it transcribed.