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SHIRLEY (MRS. FREDERICK B.) LARKINS

An Interview Conducted by

Carol Staiger

Mrs. Frederick B. (Skip) Larkins (nee Shirley Claire Dias)

Born November 8, 1931 in San Rafael, California

Interviewed at her home, September 18, 2001

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## Shirley Larkins

Carol Staiger: I'm Carol Staiger from the Mill Valley Historical Society and today is September 18, 2001. I'm across the street from my own house at the home of Shirley Larkins, at 79 Shell Road, Mill Valley. Shirley is seated in a recliner with her left leg elevated in a cast. I understand this is to be for eight weeks. Hello Shirley, tell us about your accident.

Shirley Larkins: After my retirement seven years ago, I began hiking every Tuesday with an easy paced Sierra Club group. We were on Bolinas Ridge hiking down to Highway 1 on the McCurdy Trail, which is about two miles long with about a half mile of steep, loosely pebbled rutted trail. I found myself slipping with my right foot and put my left foot back to break the fall, turning my ankle under my body as I fell, breaking the bones on each side of the ankle. Fortunately I didn't go into shock and was not in a lot of pain. I had excellent assistance from my hiking friends, some who tried calling for help on my cell phone (it's difficult to get through in that area) and others who continued down the trail to contact anyone on Highway 1. The ranger at the Point Reyes Bear Valley Visitor Center heard our call and arranged for the paramedics from that area. They and the ranger arrived within the hour, after having to climb about a mile and just under a thousand feet elevation. They were a great team, giving encouragement as well as medical first aid. They strapped me on a flat gurney, attached one large wheel in front and rolled me down the hill as if I was in a wheel barrow. It was a very smooth ride. Two of the paramedics took me by ambulance to Kaiser Hospital in Terra Linda. The break required surgery to set the bones properly with the aid of a steel plate, screws, and pins to get me back together again. Recovery will take several months but should be successful, with just a touch of arthritis as a result of the break.

CS: Well, I hope you will be walking around soon and go hiking again. Now let's get to your life. Where were you born?

SL: I was born in Cottage Hospital in San Rafael. My parents at that time were living near Rodeo Beach in the Marin Headlands on a ranch that my father was managing for Sam Silva from Sausalito. I say I'm a native of Mill Valley because both of my parents were born here and we've mainly lived here, but of course, legally I'm a native of San Rafael.

CS: Is the house that your family was living in at the Headlands still in existence?

SL: No. When the Golden Gate National Recreation Area came into existence, the house was torn down along with all the ranch buildings, which is usually done with Government park acquisition. There are no buildings there now. The house was located near a stand of gum trees at the start of the Bob Cat Trail, about a half mile from Rodeo Lagoon. Prior to the purchase of the property by the Government, the land had become a private hunting club

during the 1950's and in the 1960's was slated to become a large self-contained development called Marincello with 3,000 homes, theater, stores, etc. It would have encompassed the whole bowl of Gerbode Valley up to and over the ridge into Tennessee Valley, with entrances from both valleys. After much public objection, that project, along with the four-lane freeway through Tam Valley into west Marin, was rejected.

CS: Do you have any pictures of that house?

SL: I might have. I will look for them.

CS: Now, before we get into your life, let's talk about your parents.

SL: My father was Louis Joaquin Dias and my mother was Amelia Josephine Silveira.

CS: Tell me about your mother. I did know her. I would see her here at your house and I remembered that she was the beginning of four generations of your family to attend Tamalpais High School. I think that's pretty remarkable. Tell us about her.

SL: She was born on a ranch in Strawberry Point in 1903, which was known as the Eagle Dairy. It was owned by Dr. Benjamin Lyford, who had married Hilarita Reed, daughter of John Reed, Mill Valley's early settler. Hilarita had inherited all the property on the Strawberry and Tiburon peninsulas, a part of Reed's large Mexican land grant. The dairy was managed by my grandfather. He came there in the 1890's with his bride and that's where their six children were born. My mother was the fourth child born. The dairy ranch consisted of one large and several smaller barns, the ranch house where my grandparents lived and Dr. Lyford's Victorian House. The house was designed from a model that he and Hilarita had seen when they attended the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. Dr. Lyford also had several ship's cabins situated on the property. One was his medical laboratory, others were for guests and his own use.

The first train into Marin County, the North Pacific Coast, went from Marin City on a trestle across Richardson Bay to the tip of Strawberry Point, around the ranch and along what is now Strawberry Drive, then over (or through Collins Cut Tunnel) Alto Hill crossing into Corte Madera (above the current Corte Madera Library) and proceeding north. The front door of Lyford's Victorian house faced the railroad, with its back door facing the Bay.

The Lyford's died in the early 1900s - Benjamin in 1906 and Hilarita in 1910. After their deaths, my family continued leasing the land and operating the dairy. The four older children slept in Lyford's Victorian when they were in their teens, each in one of the four upstairs bedrooms. Prior to that Mrs. Lyford had invited my grandmother to have her "lying in" in the house when her children were born. My great grandmother, in her later years, lived on the ranch and her wake was held in the living room of the Victorian. The Lyford House was a

part of my family's life.

The Victorian was going to be torn down in the late 1950's for the Harbor Cove development. In 1959 Carolyn Livermore, then president of the Marin Conservation League, gathered support from agencies, local environmentalists and the Audubon Society to have the house barged across the Bay and placed on the knoll where it now stands, under ownership of the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary. The land was donated to Audubon by Rosie Rodriguez Verrall, who had been a servant in the Reed family and who was very fond of the house. It is now sometimes referred to as the Dickey House, after Mrs. Donald Dickey, who donated the funds to restore the house in memory of her husband, the renowned ornithologist.

CS: Oh, that's very historical. Tell me about your maternal grandparents and the six children.

SL: My grandfather continued operating the dairy and at one time was a partner in the Costa and Silveira Creamery in Mill Valley; he supplied the milk products. The Creamery also provided coal and ice. It was located at the corner of East Blithedale and Sunnyside, where the West America Bank is now located.

There is a small book in the History Room naming the many glass milk bottles in existence at the turn of the century, and that creamery was listed. I've collected some local milk bottles but have not been successful in finding one of those. My grandfather was a progressive thinker and wanted his daughters to go to college. At one time he could have bought Strawberry Point from the Lyford estate for \$46,000, as the family story is told, but his sons thought it wouldn't be a good investment because it was just a cow pasture! He died in 1922 at age 64 from a heart attack, while attending my mother's graduation from Tamalpais Union High School.

CS: How very sad.

SL: My grandmother continued operating the Dairy until 1929 when she had an English Tudor style home built at 205 Miller Avenue, between Millwood and Park Avenues. I have the contract for its construction by a Mr. Anderson for \$6,000. She died at age 77 in 1946, also from a heart attack. The home was sold at that time for \$18,000. During her years there, she planted a lawn in the front, bordered with extensive shrubbery. There was a two-car garage in the back, and beyond that she had fruit trees and a vegetable garden that she irrigated from water pumped from the Corte Madera del Presidio Creek, as many homeowners did who lived along the creek. She never learned to drive but did purchase a 1939 Plymouth for her children to use. The boys lived at home as adults until married.

In 1932 my grandmother had a small replica of the home built on the adjoining parcel for her second son, Armand, and his bride. It was later sold to James McGowan and his wife, Mabel. They had a son, Jimmy, who I would play with as a child when visiting, although he was four or five years younger. Mr. McGowan later became the town's Chief of police.

CS: Now tell us about the six children.

SL: First was Albert, born in 1898. He operated Al's Taxi most of his adult years and lived in an upstairs apartment on Miller Avenue at the foot of Sunnyside. I think it may have been #36-B, but I've really forgotten. It was between the Locksmith and old Brown's Store; maybe the building has been torn down to make room for the driveway to the parking lot. His wife answered the phone for him when he was on duty at the stand at the corner of the Depot. He had a yellow electric light bulb hanging from his front window, and whenever a call would come in she'd turn on the light. That was communication before cell phones and pagers. He was very proud to be able to join the army in 1944 during World War II. By that time he was in his mid forties with a bad leg, unable to march with a full pack, and had to be discharged, much to his dismay. He died at age 67 in 1965 from an aortic aneurysm.

Armand was born in 1900 and lived his adult years in Hayward, except for the few years in Mill Valley with his bride, Virginia. She was unhappy and lonely away from her family, which is why they returned to her birthplace. He worked for the Golden State Creamery in San Francisco, commuting from Hayward to San Francisco on one of his Indian motorcycles. He rode a motorcycle until his late years and had only one accident, when he was broad sided at an intersection, fortunately without serious injury.

Angeline, born in 1902, was the only child to attend college, graduating from San Francisco Normal School as an elementary school teacher. Its name was later changed to San Francisco State University. She never married but continued her education and travels during her 40 years of teaching in the East Bay, mostly in Hayward where she had bought a small home. She died most recently in January 1991. She had sold her home in 1985 and taken up residence at The Redwoods to be nearer her nieces and nephews. She had said she wanted to outlive her "granny," who died at age 95 at Strawberry Point, and she almost did.

CS: I remember her at The Redwoods while my mother was a resident there.

SL: Yes, Angeline was a very interesting and respected lady. Amelia, my mother, was born in 1903 and lived on the ranch until she married in 1927. After she was graduated from Tam High in 1922 and until her marriage, she was secretary for the Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railroad. Alex was born two years after my mother. He worked for the Mill Valley School District and was a volunteer fireman. He lived on Walnut Avenue near Locust Street with his wife, Marie (Brazil), and later moved to a small farm in West Petaluma, where he died in 1971 from a heart attack. Peter was born later, and last, in 1914 and was cute and fun loving as a baby and all his life. He worked in the restaurant business in San Francisco and was a Master of the Mill Valley Masonic Lodge in 1958. He lived at 312 Molino Avenue at the corner of Molino and Edgewood. When he retired he and his wife, Lillian, moved to Sonoma, where he died in the late 1980s.

All the children were musical. The boys had a band because that was how people entertained themselves in those years, and as some children still do so today. The four older children started school in the original Reed School building, originated in 1874 and located where

West Belveron Gardens is now; that school building was vacated around 1921. Around 1910, my grandfather believed the children were not being well educated and registered them at Summit School in Mill Valley. He gave them a small surrey and a horse, and they would travel the dirt road from the ranch and along Blithedale Avenue to the Creamery at Sunnyside, where the horse and buggy were stabled for the day. They would then walk through town and take the stairs up to the school, returning to the Creamery for their horse and buggy after school. On days when there was a high tide they'd have to miss school or arrive late. At that time the road was along the shoreline and not on the hillside as it is now. Of the six children only my mother and Alex had children, three and two respectively.

CS: Your mother was from a most interesting family. Now what about your father?

SL: My father, Louis Dias, was born in 1896 on a small ranch in Tennessee Valley. He was born either the last or next to the last of the children and a few years after his older siblings. He was generally quiet spoken and didn't talk much about his family; his parents were deceased before I was born. They were buried in Fernwood Cemetery, on the hill above the entrance to Tennessee Valley. I did know of three brothers, Joseph, Willie and George, and a sister who died as a young adult. George operated a creamery in Sausalito, and later lived in Oregon where he died. Joseph was a bachelor and worked on ranches in West Marin. The house where they were born is still there and hasn't been much altered, although a large deck has been added and the kitchen remodeled; a studio was built behind the house by one of the owners. The property is on the left side as you drive on the road to the beach, the third house in, after the new 13-megahome development at the beginning of the road.

CS: I went through one huge house there.

SL: My paternal grandfather's ranch property consisted of a small dairy and the usual outbuildings and animals to make it self-contained. My grandmother made cottage cheese and cheesecakes to sell to hotels in San Francisco. My father would cart milk into Sausalito to sell door to door. He also built a new barn on the property at age 13 that was still there when he visited the property in the 1970's. Maybe it was converted to the present studio. He told about climbing the ridge above their property to view the 1906 earthquake and fire and remembered seeing the water drain completely away from Richardson Bay during the quake.

My father attended school through the eighth grade in Sausalito. At that time, Mill Valley was a very small town but Sausalito, because of the railroad terminal, was more populated and prosperous. To this day, families living on the east side of Tennessee Valley Road are within the Sausalito School District.

As a young adult my father would ride horseback to Point Reyes, where he worked as a farm hand and milker at various dairies. He and a friend, Manuel Leal, who later owned Slide Ranch, used to capture and tame wild horses in Pt. Reyes. They then herded them into San Rafael and sold them to Miller McNear, who resold them to ranchers in Petaluma. On arriving home after one of his trips he was greeted by an Army recruiter, who, upon seeing

him on a horse, immediately inducted him into the Army Cavalry. World War I was almost over by that time, so he was discharged after serving only one year, without having to go abroad. I remember him telling how the men would use their shovels to dig a small indentation in the ground where they would place their hip when sleeping on the ground.

From all the horseback riding that he did in that area, he had a remarkable knowledge of the land. I remember taking him for a drive out to the Point Reyes Lighthouse one day about two years before his death and he said, "Around this next bend will be the Stewart Ranch," and it was there. When I drove him to near the top of Mt. Vision, he said, "See those two large gum trees over there, that's where the farm house was located." I thought it was amazing how a person of his age, around 80, could remember the landmark details so well. All of that area was covered with ranches that would probably no longer be profitable, and most have been torn down as part of the Point Reyes Seashore or Golden Gate National Recreational Areas.

CS: Were your grandparents born in this country?

SL: Only my maternal grandmother. She was born in Walnut Creek in the East Bay. The other three were born on the island of St. Jorge in the Azore Island chain off the coast of Portugal. They were farmers and fishermen, with the men immigrating to the United States as whalers, settling on the East Coast in New Bedford. They must have sailed around South America to get to the West Coast because I don't remember any stories of them coming overland.

My paternal grandfather was a relative of Jim Dias who owned much of the land and the ridge in and above Homestead Valley. One of his sons, Jim Dias, Jr., expanded the dairy over the ridge and along Panoramic Highway where it intersects with Highway 1. In the 1930's he and his wife, Julia, built a modern stucco ranch house that sat at the intersection above Highway 1. In 1968 my mother was visiting there when she died of a heart attack at age 65. That home and the ranch buildings were torn down when the property was sold to become part of the GGNRA. The home of Jim Dias, Sr. is still in existence as a private residence in Homestead. I believe it may be at the end of North Fernwood and sits at the entrance to open space in the Homestead Valley Land Trust.

On the maps the ridge is identified as Diaz Ridge. I've been told that spelling the name with a "Z" indicates Spanish ancestry and an "S" indicates Portuguese. If that fact is correct, the maps are in error.

CS: You have such a rich background of family heritage in this area. How did your parents meet?

SL: I don't really know for certain but I assume it would have been through mutual friends at one of the Portuguese celebrations. Most of Southern and West Marin were populated by dairies, many of which were either owned or tenanted by people of Portuguese ancestry. There were several Portuguese social organizations and the big one in Sausalito was the IDESST (Brotherhood of the Holy Ghost and Blessed Trinity), which still hosts the annual



parade, sopas meal, and dancing each summer. The food for the events is donated by local ranchers. These festivals are also held locally in Novato and Petaluma and throughout the Central Valley, wherever there is a large Portuguese population. Each chapter has smaller activities during the year, all having Catholic religious significance.

CS: When and where were they married?

SL: They were married on December 4, 1927, in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church in Mill Valley. The reception was held at the ranch at Strawberry Point. They moved into a home that my father built for my mother in Tamalpais Valley located at 336 Laurel, between Marin Avenue and Shoreline Highway. The house is still there, with internal renovations, and it looks as though an addition was made at the rear of the house, but the roof line and foundation lines are the same. He continued working as a carpenter after they married, but then the depression hit, and he couldn't get work. He was offered the job of ranch manager for the dairy at Rodeo Beach that I mentioned earlier. They actually lived quite well during the depression because he got the use of a new house rent free, \$150 a month in wages, plus all the dairy products, meat and vegetables they wanted. There was a big vegetable farm across from the house that was rented out to Italian families, who raised artichokes and other vegetables. Every once in a while my mother would tire of the constant fog, and she would put my brother and I in a little old car and drive the dirt road through the tunnel into Mill Valley and sunshine for a visit with my grandmother on Miller Avenue.

My older brother, Robert, was born two years before me while they were living at the Headlands. He began school at the Coast Guard Station on the hill across the valley. I was allowed to visit once in a while. Some of those buildings are still there, although many of what we now see were built during World War II.

CS: Where else have you lived?

SL: In 1936, when I was five years old, my father bought a dairy herd in West Petaluma, in Two Rock, from funds he was able to save and borrow, leasing the land. He started a large dairy farm with all the different animals and equipment and crops that made it self-contained. The barns were located some distance from the large two story Victorian House, that had a separate entrance and quarters in a portion of the second floor for hired hands. My mother cooked three large meals each day on a wood stove to feed us and the hired men. She had a large vegetable garden and fruit trees and canned home grown foods all year long. My father raised all the crops needed to feed the animals: pumpkins and corn for fodder that was chopped into the silo and alfalfa for hay that was baled and stored in the top floor of the milk barn each summer.

In 1940 my mother became unwell due to a late in life pregnancy and was not expected to live. My father sold the dairy to pay off his debts and care for her. This was a very sad time for them because she was so ill, and he really enjoyed ranching and had worked so hard to make his farm profitable. Happily in early 1941 my younger brother, Gilbert, was born

and my mother recovered fully. Gilbert was a living plaything for me, a 10-year old girl. The family moved closer to Petaluma and my father again earned his living as a carpenter. We lived there about a year before returning to Mill Valley in the spring of 1942.

CS: Where did your parents live after returning to Mill Valley?

SL: On a small dairy off of Sequoia Valley Road at the foot of Bayview Drive, which my father managed. The land was owned by Mrs. John Bernard, and the dairy herd was owned by a man who started it as a business venture because of the Government subsidies to dairymen during the war. The business was not too profitable because all the hay and grain had to be purchased as there was no suitable land to grow crops for feed.

The house on the property was a two-story, four-room wood home that had a full basement, very similar to the house at the Headlands. My father added a room to the rear of the house as a bedroom for my older brother. There was a large covered front porch off of the living room, and when the weather was clear we could sit and view the Campanile on the Berkeley University campus. There was no smog in those days, but we did have a lot of fog when it rolled in from the ocean beyond Muir Beach.

There was an open reservoir located above and to the side of the ranch that held an additional supply of drinking water for Mill Valley. There was a guard on duty at the reservoir at all times, because of World War II, and my brother and I would visit him some afternoons. The reservoir has now been converted to one of the large tanks put up by the Marin Municipal Water District.

During this time I raised rabbits to sell as meat to a local meat market. I think it was to a Mr. McLeod at the Evergreen Market on Locust Street. Meat was scarce because of the war, and he was glad to have more to sell. He gave me 50 cents a pound for the dressed rabbits. My business was profitable until I had to pay my brother to butcher the rabbits, because after a few litters, it was something I could no longer do.

CS: How long did the ranch stay in operation?

SL: The dairy herd was sold after the War, but my parents stayed on the property while my father worked as a fireman at Fort Baker. During his days off from his fireman's job, he designed and built a home, to sell for profit, on a lot off of Edgewood Avenue above the reservoir. In 1950 the ranch property was bought and became the Circle Y Horse Ranch for many years. It was demolished a few years ago and several large homes have been built there. The lower part of the road was paved and renamed Walsh Drive. Beyond the property line for the houses, the dirt road that used to continue through to Panoramic Highway is now a trail for a few hundred yards before picking up the now paved remainder of Bayview Drive to Panoramic. This is a segment of the route of the annual Dipsea Race.

When the ranch property sold, my parents purchased a home at 14 Evergreen Lane in

Homestead at the foot of Holly Street off of Montford. It was a lovely piece of property with beautiful blue rock stonework paths, terraces, and barbecue, leading to the creek at the back. The house was small but did have a large stone fireplace in the living room. My father remodeled the interior and added a two-story addition to the back of the house. There was a detached garage on the property, to which he added a full size carpentry workshop in the rear for his woodworking projects and tools. My mother had a lovely garden including flowers, fruit trees, berry vines and vegetables.

After moving to Homestead my father again worked as a carpenter, doing only interior finish work, until his retirement at age 70. From ages 65 to 70 he was the maintenance supervisor at St. Vincent's School for Boys. He was always building something and was very clever at improvising repairs from whatever he had available; nothing was thrown away. I'm still using a wooden hand truck (upright dolly) that he made from some heavy duty exterior plywood for the base, a child's wagon wheels and axle to make it roll, hardwood 2 x 2s for the frame, with curved handles at the top cut from a bent wood chair. It has to be at least 60 years old.

After my mother died in 1968, my father stayed in the Homestead house for a few years and then sold it and moved to an apartment on Miller Avenue. He used to joke that his next home would be at Russell & Gooch Funeral Home across the street, which is what happened. He died in 1977 at age 81.

While my parents were in the Homestead house, my mother gave me the piano her mother had given her for her wedding in 1927. It was an upright Schiemer (or Scribner) & Sons player piano and had been a used piano when my grandmother bought it. Many of the old player rolls were still intact and I had spent hours, when growing up, pumping the pedals on that piano, listening to 1920's popular music. Antiquing was in vogue for old furniture in the 60's so I painted it an antique white over the dark varnish. Our two children started piano lessons on the piano as I had as a child. My younger brother later took the piano for his children and had the player mechanism restored and the exterior refinished to its original walnut stain. I also inherited my great grandmother's rocking chair and refinished it myself; it is the chair you're sitting on.

In 1955 my parents had bought a new Chevrolet sedan, green on the bottom with a white roof, which was the style then. My father was still driving that car when he passed away. My older brother restored the car and several years ago gave it to his younger daughter, who has great fun driving it around her neighborhood near Seattle.

CS: Let's get back to your childhood now. Where did you start school?

SL: I started the first grade while living in Two Rock. It was the typical one-room school house with a large playground and game field. The building is now a private residence. There was one teacher, Miss Martin, who taught first through sixth grade to around 25 students. I was the only one in first grade. There was a wood stove for heat. The school was located about eight miles from our farm, so my mother usually drove us to school. Our farm was only about two miles directly across open hay fields from the school, so sometimes my brother

and I would walk home after school. I remember one time there was an unexpected thunder and lightning storm when we were half way home. There was no cover and we were too frightened to try to hide in the growing hay, so we ran as fast as we could and got home safely, but did get soaking wet.

CS: How many years did you attend the one-room school?

SL: It was in early 1941 after my younger brother was born that we moved closer into town. I was in the fourth grade at that time. My older brother and I attended Wilson School which was located on Bodega Road at King's Corner. I remember that my classroom held two grades, 3rd and 4th, with one teacher and an assistant. The one summer we lived there, my brother got a part time job picking fruit for a Japanese farmer in the area, who grew and sold fruit and vegetables. I wanted to pick fruit too and begged my mother to let me get a job. She finally let me accompany my brother one Saturday morning, and I was hired on a trial basis to pick raspberries. I was so proud; I was almost ten years old and it was my first job. At noon when we stopped to go home for lunch, I was told not to return -- I was fired from my first job! I didn't want to get my fingers stained with raspberry juice and was picking them too green.

It was while living in King's Corner that my older brother and I began piano and dance lessons. My piano teacher was a strict German lady and I remember having to exercise my fingers and hands for several weeks before being allowed to touch the piano keys. The dance teacher was also strict. I arrived at class one day chewing gum and proceeded to work my jaw in time with the music. The teacher made me remove the gum with such scathing words that I've never again chewed gum.

During the five years we were in Petaluma (Two Rock and King's Corner), my brother and I would each spend two weeks during the summer with my grandmother in Mill Valley. She would take me to the Park Street electric train station; her house was just a few feet away, and we would catch the train to go up town for groceries. But we had to walk home to save the nickel or whatever it cost. There is a very slight elevation gain as one goes from the Bay to the center of town and she found it tiring to walk up to town, but she could walk home just fine. I can remember lying in bed at night and hearing the night noises of the city: the trains and cars going by the house. I wasn't used to those sounds, having always lived in the quiet country.

CS: Where did you attend school when you returned to Mill Valley?

SL: I think it must have been in the Spring of 1942 that we entered Old Mill School and lived up on the hill on Bay View Drive. I was in the 5th grade. Classmates sometimes called me "teacher's pet" because Mrs. Van Loon, teacher/principal, would ask me to sit at her desk when she had to leave the room for a few minutes. As principal she was responsible for discipline. Her office was right next to our classroom, and corporal punishment was allowed then. Whenever she would leave the room, we would all sit quietly and listen to find out if

someone was being punished, because we could hear a ruler slap across an open palm, the punishment at that time.

In the mornings we were picked up at the bottom of Bay View Drive by a yellow school bus driven by Vic Avilla, who worked for the Mill Valley School District and was still employed there when I went to work for the District some 25 years later. The bus went up Molino Avenue from the school; it was a medium sized bus, and his route went along the ridge on Panoramic Highway as far as the Mountain Home, and then back to Four corners, and I believe it then continued along the ridge to pick up Shoreline Highway into Tam Valley, dropping off students at Tamalpais High and at Park School for 7th and 8th grade.

I worked in the cafeteria at lunchtime because we got a free lunch for our help. I used to really like a prune whip they made for dessert. The cafeteria was located in the basement of the main building, which I believe might be a classroom or art room now; the annex hadn't been built then.

I learned to roller skate during this time, using the concrete walkway between the cow stalls in the milking barn as a level flat area, which was probably less treacherous than on a sidewalk. I did get a bicycle but kept it at my grandmother's home for a few years before riding it on the hill roads.

CS: What year did you graduate from 8th grade?

SL: I was graduated from the 8th grade at Park School in 1945; Ferd Kessel was principal, Miss Gates I remember fondly as my favorite teacher. There was also Miss Ricconomi, who taught 7th or 8th grade. She wore a lot of bangle and charm bracelets, which were the style then, and they would jingle as she wrote on the blackboard. I also remember being taught by Miss Belle Abraham, which makes me wonder if our class might have been moved to Park School earlier because of crowding during the war. For our graduation ceremony the class put on a comedy play as part of the evening's program. After the play we changed into our new Tamalpais High uniform for the presentation of diplomas. Tam High's uniform had been a black pleated wool skirt and a white cotton middy blouse with large sailor collar over a black sateen tie, the same uniform my mother wore in 1922 except for the bloomers. Because of the war, there was a shortage of wool, so the uniform was changed to become any dark colored skirt, any white blouse and any pastel colored sweater. The boys still wore dark pants and white shirts.

There was no orientation into high school as there is now for incoming freshmen. I can remember worrying all summer long about trying to find the entrance to the gymnasium. At that time the main street into town went through the school property. The classroom buildings were located on the hill with a cross walk to the gym and playing fields on the flat ground. The indoor swimming pool and showers were in a building where the new gymnasium is now. High tides would seep into the pool, which is why it was demolished and the outdoor pool built.

CS: What year did that highway get moved out?

SL: Oh, I really don't remember. It must have been in the 1950's. The train into town stopped in 1941 and Greyhound became the mode of travel. I just remembered as we're talking that I entered Tam on crutches. I had sprained my ankle badly, can't remember which one, when I stepped in a gopher hole. Dr. Tom Goddard treated my sprain, he was the brother of Dr. Wilson Goddard. Both doctors moved their practices to Mill Valley after the War and were here for many years. Fortunately I haven't had any mishaps or serious illnesses until this broken ankle six weeks ago.

It was while I was a freshman in high school that I began working as a waitress at the Mountain Home Inn on weekends. At that time it was a hikers' retreat serving breakfast and lunch, with good hearty home cooking. The menu featured meatloaf and ham sandwiches with potato salad and split pea soup as well as the usual bacon and eggs. It was owned by a German couple, Fritz and Katie Todd who had owned it for many years before selling the property and business to a Scottish Couple, Jim and Millie Drummond. All of them were lovely, hard working people and well respected by all the regular customers and neighbors. I earned 50 cents an hour in wages and on a really busy Sunday could bring home five dollars in tips. I would walk the 2-mile long Pipeline Trail to and from work and sometimes I'd ride/walk my bike along the trail in the morning and then ride it home via the paved Panoramic Highway, racing down the long grade from Four Corners.

CS: How did you get to and from high school?

SL: I can't remember exactly what bus I took to get to high school but I think it must have been Vic Avilla's elementary bus, unless the high school also had a bus. I do know that the school employed a lady, I believe her name was Mary Silveira, who worked in the office by day, and after school she would drive a school bus along Route 1 to Muir Beach and Stinson Beach to Bolinas, where she lived. She'd park the bus at her home and then drive the students to school the next morning.

In my junior and senior years as I got more active in after school activities, I'd walk to Locust and catch a ride with neighbors who were coming home from work. Other times I'd ride the school bus into town with friends to go to their home in town or to Esposti's Ice Cream parlor. I'd then walk the Dipsea stairs home to the ranch on Bayview Drive.

The Tam High graduations at that time were beautiful lovely events with the graduates in their caps and gowns and very serious and well behaved. As a junior I was one of the many girls chosen to hold the flower arches across the stairs in Mead Theater, and as a senior I was thrilled to walk through them down to the stage. I do think the grand alcohol-free parties the parents sponsor now are better and more fun than the proms we had in large hotels in the city to celebrate our graduation. I remember going to a Junior Prom at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Belvedere that ended in the wee hours after a full breakfast. That was sponsored by parents and was a lot of fun, and we all felt so grown up.

CS: Did you go on to college after high school?

SL: Not to a four-year university, but I was graduated from the College of Marin, majoring in business and secretarial training. I liked being a secretary and I still do some secretarial work. I was very active there in social clubs and student government. At the time I was graduated in 1951, the name had been changed from Marin Junior College to College of Marin; it's now Marin Community College. At our graduation ceremony the trustees were celebrating the 25th educational year since the school's founding. I remember feeling it was a little unfair that the ceremony centered on that rather than on the graduates. This year, I might add, the college is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

CS: What did you do after graduation from Marin?

SL: I went to work full time in the main branch of the American Trust Company at 464 California Street in San Francisco; it's now the Wells Fargo Bank. I commuted by bus to the Ferry Building and walked up Market to California and Montgomery Streets. After graduating from Tam, I had stopped working at the Mountain Home Inn and had gotten a part time job with the Mill Valley Branch of the American Trust Company, formerly the Mill Valley Bank, working Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. It was located where the Wells Fargo Bank is now, but it was only half that size. I remember that during my first day on that job, everyone kept tossing unsealed envelopes into a box on the corner of my desk. I wondered why but kept busy doing what I was told to do. When everyone was ready to lock up and leave for the day, they asked, "Where's the mail?" That's how I learned another one of my job duties. I transferred to the Main Office in the city after graduation from College of Marin.

The Korean War was in progress when I started work in the city. While my older brother, Bob, was serving in the Army Engineering Corp in Korea he gave me the use of his 1941 Mercury sedan. One morning I was driving down Molino Avenue toward Montford when the main brake cylinder went out. Fortunately I had shifted down to low gear at the top of the hill, but nevertheless I went flying down the hill, whipped around two left turns on Montford, and kept going across Miller at the 2 AM Club before gradually coming to a halt almost in my usual parking space, where I got out and caught the bus into the city. Thankfully there were fewer cars on the streets in those days.

CS: Tell us about your husband, Skip, and how you met and married.

SL: His full name was Blaine Frederick Larkins, but he was always called Skip. As a toddler he skipped rather than walked so his mother nicknamed him Skipper, and he became Skip to his friends and kept that nickname all his life. As he got older, he asked his folks to legally change his name to Frederick Blaine, which they did, because he didn't like the name of Blaine as his official first name.

I met him after he had graduated from Tam; he was two years older than I, and I was a junior. At that time I used to do a lot of folk dancing at the Tourist Club, at Little Switzerland in Boyes Springs, at places in San Francisco and at the Swiss Club Tell on the Pipe Line Trail. One Saturday night I was at the Swiss Club Tell when Skip and a group of his friends, one of whom was the boyfriend of my best friend, arrived at the dance knowing I would be there, but also because they unsuccessfully thought they could buy beer. After that evening he called me, and we started double dating with our mutual friends. We'd go to movies, play tennis, linger over one coke or a cup of coffee for hours at local drive-in restaurants -- all things that didn't cost a lot of money. Skip never did folk dance. We dated for about two years and then went our separate ways while I was in college and he was in the service. We started dating again after his discharge from the Army.

CS: What did he do in the Army?

SL: Skip had been drafted into the Army and served his required two years in the Military Police. He was stationed at Camp Desert Rock in Nevada, during the extensive atom bomb testing during the Korean War. In his older years he suffered from many skin cancers, and we often wondered if it could have been caused from radiation from his Army duty. One of his Military Police duties was to be closest to the bomb site to keep people away and let them know when to reenter the area to gather fact finding materials. The local Veterans Administration encouraged Skip to file a claim with the Army for medical assistance for his cancers. His claims were never approved but we were still impressed with the record keeping of the military. They were able to respond with the dates and times of each blast he attended, with the distance he stood from the site and facts for why it hadn't affected him physically. His several claims over a period of years, with the encouragement of the VA, were never successful except for generating a very thick file.

CS: This is really a history about you but Skip, who passed away suddenly early this year, was also a long-time Mill Valley resident so tell us a little more about his family and growing up years.

SL: Skip was born in San Francisco in 1930. His parents were living on Hartford Street.

CS: What location is that in the City?

SL: Oh, dear! I don't know San Francisco that well but I believe it is on the outer Mission. His parents met while they were attending Mission High School. Fred, Skip's father, was a second generation San Franciscan, but his mother was born in Hollywood and moved to San Francisco in her teens. Her name was Vivian Crosby. Fred and Vivian were a lovely couple.

In 1935, Vivian wanted to get out of the city. She found a small three-room cottage at 38 Amicita on the outskirts of Mill Valley that they purchased for \$1,500. At that time Amicita



Avenue was the last street in town. Skip was five years old and he was their only child. His mother tells stories about the hobos that until World War II camped under the bridge spanning the railroad trestle at the end of Blithedale and would knock on her door for food.

CS: Is this the house that is still in your family?

SL: Yes. It was a very small house but it has been enlarged and improved several times through the years, although even with the additions it has only 1,000 sq. ft. of living space.

Skip mentioned that as a boy growing up he would play ball games on Blithedale Avenue and could play for ten or more minutes without having to stop to let a car pass. With his friends he participated in all the adventurous and mischievous pastimes that boys have. He broke a leg in several places when he fell from the bridge crossing the creek in Boyle Park. One week he and friends even had to spend an hour a day in jail after school, at the age of seven, for breaking into a vacant house. He also mentioned, which I don't recall, that there were two hills -- Kite Hill that is now Open Space and across from it, Poppy Hill, almost the same height as Kite Hill. It was cut down to make fill for the tract of houses that were built between Blithedale and Sycamore in the 40's. Part of Poppy Hill still remains at the start of Ryan Avenue.

CS: Yes, I have read about that.

SL: Skip was graduated from Tam High in 1948. Actually he entered Kindergarten in a January class, which could be done then, so he completed high school in January 1948. He attended College of Marin for a while but left to work in automobile parts in San Francisco for Oldsmobile dealerships for almost 25 years. When in high school he played most of the sports and earned letters in basketball, baseball and football, with a preference for baseball. A baseball scout invited him to join a professional league, I forget which team -- the Red Sox comes to mind -- but he decided against doing that. He did play semi-pro baseball for Mill Valley teams for many years. He really enjoyed going to Tam High Reunions, and every five years we would attend reunions for several classes, the last celebrating the 50th Reunion.

CS: Warren and I moved into a brand new Sutton Manor house in February 1954. Every weekend we noticed a young couple inspecting the house across the street and we wondered why they didn't move in. Well, the answer was simple for 1954 -- they were not yet married, which is different from current practice. They finally moved in a month later and we've been neighbors for 47 years. Tell us about your wedding.

CS: We had dated off and on for four years and were engaged for about a year before marrying. Skip's parents wanted him to have a home before he married, but there were not a lot of houses available. In 1953 no new houses had been built except for Crest Marin in

Tam Valley the year previously. Bel Aire and the Cove Shopping Center was under construction and this Sutton Manor Tract was just beginning to be built. We chose Sutton Manor over Bel Aire because of the two-car garage and slightly bigger rooms, although our house has only 1100 sq. ft. of living space. Skip put \$1,000 down on this lot but then discovered it was designated as the storage site for the project, so we had to wait almost a year before the home was completed. We chose this lot for two reasons -- we couldn't afford the monthly mortgage for the larger homes, \$15,000 two-bath vs. \$12,000 one-bath, and this lot was on solid ground and not built on fill as were the homes on the other streets. Our mortgage was \$60 a month. The contractor had to make the three homes along Lomita Drive smaller because of the PG&E emergency power line that parallels the street. I have an album of pictures that Skip's father collected of the construction as it took place.

We were married on March 14, 1954, at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church in Mill Valley. It was the old church that was located on what is now the parking lot. We had a modest but formal wedding with a reception afterward at my parents' home on Evergreen Lane. I wore an ankle length white lace and satin gown with long sleeves. Skip's friend, Raymond Oliveira, was best man, and my high school friend, Victoria Davis, was maid of honor; there were no other attendants. In those days, newspapers made a fuss about marriages, so there were pictures and a writeup in the Independent Journal and Mill Valley Record, even though the wedding took place during Lent and we were not supposed to have any grand celebration.

We had planned a two-week honeymoon along the coast on Highway 1 as far south as San Diego. But after a couple of days Skip wasn't feeling well and was suffering from severe abdominal pain. We checked him into the hospital in Santa Barbara, where he had immediate surgery for a ruptured appendix. Because of subsequent peritonitis, we still had a two-week honeymoon but he was in the hospital and I was in a rented room in a home across the street! Skip recovered well but slowly, and we finally moved into our home on the corner of Lomita Drive and Shell Road. It was supposed to be our starter home, and we considered moving into a larger home several times over the years but never did. Our little house has now become a perfect ending home.

CS: From the outside it doesn't appear that you have altered the house in any way, but I recall seeing a construction crew here once or twice.

SL: We did enlarge the kitchen and added a half bath in 1970. More recently we changed the living room window into a sliding exterior door to the side patio, and created a small entry foyer by extending the front door into the long roof-covered walk to it from the driveway. At the same time we also replaced the old steel-framed crank windows, that continually rusted from condensation, with double-paned sliding vinyl windows. Except for landscaping, the house looks as it did when it was built. It is a good example of the homes that were built at that time.

CS: About 95% of the Sutton Manor houses have been altered, some beyond recognition, which is too bad. Didn't you also have a summer home in the Russian River area?

SL: We didn't but Skip's folks did, and we enjoyed it for many years. The Russian River was a favorite vacation destination for San Franciscans from the 1920's until around the mid 60's, when it began to decline and people preferred traveling to the Tahoe area. The Larkins vacationed there each summer, renting a tent cabin in Rio Nido. It was a full scale resort with a rustic hotel, swimming pool, dance hall where big bands played, bowling alley, game arcade, tunneled path under River Road to a bridge and sandy beach along the river, and, of course, the large camp fire each night with marshmallows to roast. It's still there, but with few of the attractions and no passage to the beach.

In 1950 Skip's parents bought a sunny lot on a slight knoll between Rio Nido and Guerneville, above the flood plain but only a block from the river. Redwoods, fir and laurel trees covered the back hillside. They had the outer shell of a 650 sq. ft. cabin constructed and Fred completed the interior in knotty pine. It contained one large living room/kitchen, small bedroom, shower bath, and a large covered front porch. They went there every weekend and we vacationed there for years. Our children loved the sandy beach and water. As Skip's folks became older and his mother more disabled from emphysema, we gradually took over the maintenance of the cabin. I especially enjoyed going there on weekends after a busy week in the school district. After our retirement, we no longer felt the need to get away and the area had become more residential, rather than recreational, so we sold the cabin in 1996. It was a pleasurable retreat for many years for our family.

CS: Let's talk about your children.

SL: We have two children -- Diane born in 1958 and Jim, 1959. Diane is now living with her husband, Craig Griffeath, and teenage son, Gregory, in the house at 38 Amicita Avenue that we already mentioned. Jim and his wife, Laura, live in Northern Colorado with their two daughters, Amanda and Emily, both in elementary school.

When the children were growing up this was, and still is, a wonderful area for raising a family, with the enclosed yards, wide flat streets and schools nearby. Everyone was about the same age when the tract was first inhabited; Skip and I were a few years younger but it seemed as though every household had a growing family. There were children the same ages as our two children, in the adjacent homes on our corner, and they went back and forth between the houses. We participated in all the usual activities of Girl and Boy Scouts, Little League, and PTA, and our social life centered around them. It was a very active community. Each of the residential areas surrounding Mill Valley's seven elementary schools had similar activities and parent participation.

In 1964 on our son Jim's 5th birthday, Skip came home with a brand new white Oldsmobile convertible. For all the fifteen years I had known him, he had advocated owning only good used cars and not wasting money on a new car because of its rapid depreciation in value. I was aghast and couldn't believe he had bought a new car until he showed me the purchase slip and our empty savings account. But he proved to be a shrewd shopper because he paid \$2,800 for the car and he sold it for \$3,000 thirty one years later, in 1995, when it had just under 200,000 miles on the odometer and had had no major engine repairs. That car

was recognized all over the area as Skip's car.

CS: You were always active in the schools and were president of the Alto PTA if I remember correctly.

SL: Yes. I actually started participating at the K-6 (Kindergarten through 6th grade) Alto School before the children had even been enrolled. As I mentioned, the neighbors were a few years older, and they were always looking for a new face to help out so we attended the PTA activities, like the annual fund-raising fair and Halloween costume parade at the school. I started working at the school as a yard supervisor when Diane was in Kindergarten. I'd walk the one block to school with Jim and leave him with Diane and her Kindergarten class to play in the sandbox while I did yard supervision during the lunch period. Then I'd walk them both home and they would take a short afternoon nap. I was PTA president for two years in 1966 and 1967. It was during that time that the drug scene started; marijuana was the drug that concerned everyone. Stronger drugs had not entered the social scene at that time. The PTA sponsored a panel discussion for the community in the multi-purpose room at Edna Maguire School because Alto School didn't have a room big enough to seat everyone. There was quite a bit of controversy between strong law enforcement and juvenile detention vs. passive resistance through education.

In 1967 I was asked to be the vice chair of a 3.5 million dollar bond issue to build a new middle school that would house sixth, seventh and eighth graders; \$3 million toward a new school and \$500,000 toward upgrading the elementary schools. At that time there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the two-year 7th-8th grade junior high that was housed at Edna Maguire School. Parents felt that two years wasn't a long enough span of time for children to become attached and proud of their school, which could have been causing the acting out among them. I'm sure that hormones and the social upheavals going on in our society must have also played a part in their unrest. John Cutler was chairman of the Bond Campaign and I asked Joyce Lazar, another parent, to help me as vice chair. There was considerable divisiveness in the community because some people were uncertain about the success of housing sixth graders with the older adolescent seventh and eighth graders. Even two of the school board trustees voted against having the bond issue, although they didn't openly campaign against it. In fact, at the time of the election it was unknown whether, if successful, a new school would be built by the Bay where it is now or whether the existing Edna Maguire site would be remodeled and expanded.

CS: The Middle School was built so the campaign was successful.

SL: Yes, but only by 34 votes above the 2/3 majority required, although that is still a large majority of the voting public. The School Board traded land with the City of Mill Valley (what is now Hauke Park for what was Project 17) and plans were begun for a new building that would house all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students in Mill Valley. I had worked so hard on the election that I decided to return to work part time to have an excuse to refuse any further volunteer requests, although I never did give up volunteering entirely and I'm still

doing it.

CS: Is that when you began working for the Mill Valley School District?

SL: Yes. I applied at the District Office and became Summer School secretary in 1968. It was the first year that integration between Mill Valley and Sausalito School Districts was implemented. All Sausalito children that wanted to attend Summer School were bused into Mill Valley. For the academic year there was a voluntary program for Mill Valley students to be bused to school in Sausalito.

That Fall, the sixth graders from Alto, Park and Homestead attended the renamed Edna Maguire Middle School which was divided into three smaller sub-schools -- North, Central and South -- each housing the three grade levels, with one overall administrative staff. I was hired to work in the office as the receptionist and attendance secretary just on school days and during school hours, which was perfect for a mother with two school-aged children. Jim was in the 5th grade at Alto School and Diane entered the new school in 6th grade. After three years I was transferred to the Counseling and Special Education Office, still working part time.

It wasn't until the new Mill Valley Middle School opened in September 1972. that all the sixth, seventh and eighth graders were together in one building. The same sub-school concept was continued, but with four schools -- Sea, Sun, Wind and Wood -- each housed in two stories in each of the four corners, held together with a central core serving as a library and spaces for special needs and administration. That first year was difficult for everyone -- a new facility, a new educational concept for many students and parents, many new teachers in an expanded faculty, and a rainy season that started in September! The building was designed for 1200 students, and we opened with 1187. The original plans that had begun during the enrollment boom were for 1600, but that figure was reduced and other building features eliminated or altered, including the roof line, to reduce costs.

Nevertheless, the building drew a lot of attention nationwide because of its redwood exterior and open interior design and educational concept. Roberta Keiler was PTA president the first year and spent a lot of time organizing tours for visiting educators and parents. She later became a School Board member and its president.

When the school opened, I was upgraded to Administrative Secretary for the Middle School and worked full time, with six weeks off during the summer. Diane was in Tam High and Jim was in the 8th grade in the new school. There was never a problem working in the same school that the children attended because we had a mutual understanding that we wouldn't interfere with each other's school day activities and would discuss any problems only at home.

After the new school opened, enrollment slowly declined until the early 1990's. In the 1980's one of the sub-schools was closed completely and the space was used to house the District Administrative Office and central Instructional Materials Library, used by all the teachers in the District. Around 1990 the multi-graded concept was dropped, and now each

of the three remaining sub-schools holds a separate grade level and much of the open design has been walled off into individual classrooms. Enrollment is increasing again.

CS: We think of your middle name as "school" because you were affiliated with the District for so long. Weren't you also secretary to the Superintendent and Board of Trustees?

SL: Yes. In 1983, James McDonough was appointed Superintendent. I had worked for him when he was a teacher and then principal at Middle School. When the Superintendent's Secretary, Patsy White, was promoted to Business Manager, I applied for her position as Executive Secretary. I had been involved with the daily needs and emergencies of the large Middle School office, staff and student body for fifteen years and desired a change. In my new position, the long hours and busy work were still there, but the disruptions were less, although I did miss knowing the children. Through my work at the Middle School, I became acquainted with every public school child in Mill Valley.

I stayed in the Administrative office for 12 years and officially retired in February, 1994, but continued helping out on call for about a year. Including my work as a yard supervisor, I was with the District for 30 years. The staff was like a big family and it was good working with such nice people. Because of the declining enrollment in every school district, teachers and staff didn't move from one district to another as can be done when jobs are plentiful. As a result we got to know each other by working together for many years, and I got a lot of enjoyment from them.

I had several retirement parties and one very large community reception in the Middle School Library, sponsored by the PTA. My family and friends and many of the staff and parents were there, as were representatives from other districts and agencies. It was very rewarding for me and I went away feeling that my efforts had been appreciated.

CS: Tell us about Skip's line of work.

SL: Skip worked mainly as a manger in the Oldsmobile auto parts industry in San Francisco, which is a rather hectic position. After we married we would often commute together. His car pool would leave me off at the Golden Gate Bridge where I would catch a bus to the Financial District, and he continued out 19th Avenue to Geary Boulevard. He always commuted by car pool and never had an accident. It took him only 20 minutes from our house then. He worked in San Francisco until he had his first mild heart attack at age 42. I should mention that he was a heavy smoker. He decided to look for other work and took a job with the City of Mill Valley in its Public Works Department as a crew member. He took a considerable salary cut but he didn't want any more managerial work and refused offers for advancement positions.

He was with the City for over 12 years when he suffered a serious heart attack. He eventually had to have open heart bypass surgery and retired at that time. He did stop smoking but always thought longingly of his cigarettes.

He always played golf, but after retirement he played twice during the week rather than on weekends. He took up walking and used to walk daily with a friend, Ernie Souza, who had worked for the City. They walked all over Mill Valley and even into Sausalito or Corte Madera or Larkspur, always on level sidewalks. After Ernie passed away Skip continued walking, always on a route away from any wind. He also rode the Golden Gate Transit buses a lot and became quite adept at reading the schedules. He'd take the bus to locations in Marin County or San Francisco and walk the neighborhoods there.

Each morning that he wasn't playing golf, he would walk the three blocks from our house to the local deli in the Alto Shopping Center. He'd spend an hour or two over a cup of coffee, reading the daily paper and chatting with friends that dropped in. There is a regular group that meets there each morning and they call themselves the Cafe Oggi Club after the name of the deli. After a late breakfast Skip would watch television until around 11 a.m. when he'd start out on his walk, arriving home around 3 or 4 p.m.

CS: How did you occupy yourself after retirement?

SL: I soon found that Skip had his regular weekly routine and activities, so I occupied myself with home improvement projects. After about a year I joined the Marin YMCA to participate in its rather extensive senior activities. I now serve on its Seniors' Advisory Council and its Board of Managers. I began hiking with a group of local people, who were Sierra Club members preferring easier hikes on Mt. Tam, the Headlands and Pt. Reyes trails.

Even while I was still working, I began ushering for the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet and the Marin Theater Company, so I continued with that. I also continued my volunteering for the Audubon Sanctuary, serving as a docent for the Lyford House although I'm doing that less often now. And, I am a guide for the Historical Society's annual Walk into History. I became a member of its Board of Directors in its second or third year when Babs Dreyfus was leaving the presidency and John Barnard became president. I served as the Board's Secretary for a few years and then became its Walk Leader for almost ten years. Now I'm just a Walk Guide once a year.

I also keep in contact with several school people and even with my friends from high school and College of Marin. In fact, a few weeks ago, five of my high school friends came here for lunch to have a group celebration of our 70th birthdays that will take place this year.

CS: I understand that only one of them knew that you were incapacitated.

SL: Yes. I had already issued the invitations before I broke my ankle and when I called the first person to cancel the luncheon, she said that she'd provide the lunch and we would surprise the others as they arrived. It was a surprise for them, and we had a nice afternoon reminiscing. We try to get together once every year.

CS: You haven't mentioned more about your brothers. Are they still living in the area?

SL: Bob and his wife, Elaine, retired to Mt. Shasta a few years ago and we get together once or twice a year. After the Korean war he was graduated from the University of San Francisco with a degree in Business Administration and managed Marin Masonry and later McNears Brick Works in San Rafael. They raised three children, a son and two daughters around the same ages as our two, while living in Novato. We saw each other oftener then and the cousins are still close. Gilbert and his wife, Doreen, both received teaching credentials from Sonoma State University, where they met, and have always lived and worked in Petaluma, so I see them more often. Gilbert just retired this year. They have two grown children.

CS: Skip passed away unexpectedly this year. Would you like to tell us what happened.

SL: It was in 1999 that colon cancer was detected when he went in for his annual medical checkup. Skip recovered successfully from that surgery and was doing well although it did slow him down a bit -- he walked only two miles a day instead of his usual five. He did have to reenter the hospital again early this year for surgery to correct a bowel obstruction caused by radiation after the cancer surgery. He was recovering from that at home -- in fact he was dressed and ready to go to the Cafe Oggi for coffee for the first time in a couple of months -- when he was stricken and died instantly from cardiac dysrhythmia.

My family and I received many, many cards of sympathy from people who expressed their appreciation for having known him. He liked to stop and talk with people he met on his walks or when he was working for the City of Mill Valley. He was always friendly and warm and never said a harsh word to anybody. He enjoyed his life and his family and friends.

CS: This has been a great interview, Shirley, and I want to thank you on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society.

SL: Well, I'm honored to have been asked and I want to thank the Historical Society for providing this opportunity to preserve bits of Skip's and my families' history. I regret that this wasn't done while he was living because he could have related many anecdotes about growing up in what was then a small home town.

CS: Thank you again, Shirley.



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