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REMEMBRANCES  
OF  
INEZ SOLLOW MILLS PURSER  
Great Granddaughter of John Reed  
An Interview Conducted by  
Jonathan Jacobs on June 25, 1993

NOTE: Mrs. Purser died in 1997 without reviewing this Remembrance.  
Edited by Ron Olson, who added information in parenthesis to  
explain what she was referring to.

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ORAL INTERVIEW WITH INEZ PURSER by JONATHAN JACOBS, June 25, 1993 at her home.

INEZ: Imogene Purser, my first cousin in England, died the other day and she was going to be 100 on my birthday, August 22. She was 10 years older than I and she was hoping to live to be 100 because she would receive a letter from the Queen, of congratulations, but I will be 90.

JONATHAN: Well, you have got 10 years to get a letter from the Queen..

I: The Queen won't acknowledge my birthday, I don't think. Maybe Clinton would. Do you want to look at anything?

J: Sure, I want to look at everything. You were telling me about the family house. Why don't you do that. (90 Locust Ave., Mill Valley)

I: Oh, the living room and bay window were all redwood paneling and still are, untreated; and going thru the Butler's pantry into the kitchen there was a solid piece of redwood for the door. I should have kept it. It would have made a beautiful table or something, but when I had it remodeled, I asked Gus to - or maybe he suggested - lighten the redwood - coat or paint - you know how they do to make it - but it was still very beautiful.

J: When was that?

I: When I had it remodeled; it was - the date? (c 1958) My aunt (Maria Deffebach 1878 - 1958) lived there alone at the time. I inherited the house with the provision that my father (Cuthbert Sollom) and aunt live there until they died, rent free. My mother left it to me and so when my aunt did die, I asked Costigan (Gus Costigan, Mill Valley designer and builder) - he was a very good friend of mine - what he thought - should I repair or rebuild or tear it down. He suggested that I remodel and it was funny because the kitchen had been on the west side and Gus took and put the kitchen on the east side, which made so much sense because the sun would beat down on the kitchen in the afternoon. I remember my mother being so hot some days in Mill Valley. You live in a different part of Mill Valley than I lived in - entirely different. It's much cooler, no trees at that time. Anyway, Gus Costigan remodeled and he did a fabulous job. It's a very interesting house, still because he had very original ideas. He did the El Paseo (building & walkway, #15 Throckmorton). He did that and he had the trees planted in downtown Mill Valley.

J: You were telling me that the house (at 90 Locust Ave., M.V.) was back-to-front built.

I: We had a driveway. We owned the property so we had a barn for the horses - two stall and a pasture. Otherwise it was enclosed which made the pasture safe to put the horses and pony there. There were no houses around (the house was built in 1903 before Tamalpais Park was developed). That was the only house and we had the driveway going around the house and then over to the barn and my father, as I told you, was always talking about turning the house around, but then we began to like it because it was so private. When people came to visit, we had complete privacy because it wasn't facing the street and I sold it, oh, I don't know how many years back - 15 years ago (in 1973). Bill and Barbara Harrison bought it. I wish I could remember dates. I could do it - dates. I'd do a little research. But anyway, the man who bought it, changed it now. I built a guest house because when I was a widow, the first time, I had a little daughter (Helen Reed Mills) and my aunt thought I should build a little guest house on the same piece of property (the little guest house was on what is now 92 Locust Ave., MV).

J: Is that the house that faces Locust? And, the original house is farther back from Locust?

I: The driveway was around like that (circled around the house and went back to the street), divided the piece of property so there is a long driveway up to 92 (Locust Ave.) and there is no driveway around the main house anymore and there was always a flower bed by the front door. In the beginning they planted palms - must have been the thing to do. There were two - they all had

dates, but not the commercial date kind. They had about six or eight of those too. The house (the Sollom house at 90 Locust, MV) was built in 1903 just in time for me to be born in it. In 1903 it was finished. And, my brother (Oliver Sollom was born there too in 1904) Those date palms - the kind with the topiary at the top and there was a palm by the front door in front of the house and one day it just keeled over. The gophers had eaten all the roots of the palm tree. It just went dead. It was the only big one. Isn't that a big one?

J: Yes. I think they must have been big gophers to eat the roots in that tree.

I: I think so. I think you should look at something here.

J: OK. You said your mother sub-divided the property (Tamalpais Park).

I: My mother owned it. My mother inherited it as part of the Reed estate - quite a good amount of acreage and she owned it. You know where the Reed land ends (the Reed land was east of Corte Madera Creek as determined by later Court decisions). He didn't build the Old Mill on his own property.

J: No, no.

I: But in those days, they had no survey, surveyors or anything. They didn't have the land surveyed. They went by a rock, or a tree or other kinds of ways to delineate the line. Must have been interesting. And he (John T. Reed) owned the grasslands on the Tiburon Peninsula - all of Belvedere, all of Paradise - up to the foot of the hills in Mill Valley. And my mother inherited that area around Mill Valley. You know where Safeway is across from the High School - that was all flooded over - marshland; and she paid taxes on that and after that 10 years of paying, she found out that she was paying double on that adjoining property. That was something - double the amount of the other. She went to the courthouse and asked them why and they said they were trying to break up the big landowners. She still didn't get any money back, but they did. You know the history of Mill Valley.

J: Sorta.

I: Why are you so interested - are you interested in history?

J: OH, yes very much. I've always liked history.

I: You write very well.

J: Thank you.

I: Are you gonna write a book?

J: Well, it seems like a big project.

I: It is, I imagine. I'm trying to write a family history just for my offspring, my family.

J: Are you making progress with it?

I: I was for awhile, but I don't know where - I should have all the time in the world, but I don't; every day there is not enough time.

J: Well, when we try to get things done we juggle our time.

I: That's right and everything on the family, I seem to have the left-overs from my uncle, my father, my two husbands. They had an awful lot of things you know. I don't think they were pack rats and it's hard to go through all that especially if you become interested - you just sit there and read and look, that's what I've been doing - looking for you. This is Lyfords. You know where Lyfords Cove is (on Strawberry Point, Tiburon), well these are all pictures of Lyfords and that little house that they moved across the water (on a barge) that was my great aunt Lita's (Hilarita Reed Lyford) house and I donated some of the original furniture. I found a thank you letter..

J: The relocated and restored Lyford house looks very good. I've been in there and they are very proud of it. (The Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary at 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon.)

I: You are?

J: The people at Audubon Ranch and the people that maintain that house.

I: When I donated the furniture, it was Mrs. Caroline Livermore, with the Marin Conservation League. Oh, they are. And Rosie (Rose Verral) who lived next door, little lady, well, someone in my family was very fond of Rosie. It was my Uncle John's son, John Joseph Reed and he wanted to marry Rosie when they were both very young, but Rosie kept turning him down. Anyway, she was alive when John Joseph Reed died and he gave her that property because they had been tenants and her parents had rented it and farmed it (now Richardson Bay Audubon Center,) Rosie became quite famous because (of the goats she raised and for helping to save her property as a wild life sanctuary) She was pretty (when she was young). Did you ever see a picture of her?

J: No. No, I don't remember seeing pictures of her.

I: She was very pretty - (see photos on pages 20-25 of Saving Marin Sonoma Coast by Dr. Martin Griffin) but she wouldn't marry Johnny, so he left her the house. I thought that was nice.

J: Very nice.

I: I've got to stop talking or I won't be able to talk anymore. Did I finish on 90 Locust. I didn't did I? These are interesting (looking at old family photographs and letters) What is that letterhead?

J: Dr. E.F. Lyford's from the 1890's.

I: Dr. Lyford was written up in the Smithsonian Magazine - Dr. Lyford and another doctor during the Civil War operated on the wounded in a tent on the battlefield. This was early in his life and there was an article in the Smithsonian about the two doctors. And Lyford was also an inventor. He was always in that little building by the railroad that was his laboratory. And, he was the first person to successfully embalm a body so that it could be shipped to Europe. Up to that point they couldn't ship a body but he invented something so that they could preserve it longer. He was an eccentric and he married my great aunt; he was an opportunist, of course. Most people who came to California were opportunists, weren't they?

J: Well, it was a great frontier - a great land of opportunity.

I: Even my great grandfather Reed must have been an opportunist. He left home when he was 16 years old. He was born in Dublin, Ireland. I always figured they had so many children, they were glad to get rid of one or two. You know, it was tough to raise a bunch . . .

J: Do you know anything about the family in Ireland?

I: Nobody does. He sailed from Dublin with an uncle who owned a sloop - a ship and the next thing, he landed in Acapulco in Mexico and he decided he liked it there and he stayed there and I imagine making a living at fishing which was profitable. One time two young men, his age, from San Francisco landed in Acapulco and the three of them became good friends and they persuaded John Reed to sail back to San Francisco with them. He'd been in Acapulco for 4 or 6 years and had learned to speak fluent Spanish and these two fellows were the sons of the Commandante of the Presidio - Sanchez - Don Jose Sanchez . . . and Diaz, his daughter, married Reed. You know that story.

J: Yes, I know that story.

I: In my writing, I could put in a lot of intimate more personal things. My mother was extremely interested in history and she kept everything and she told me many interesting things about the family and she was very proud of her heritage. I have a lot of information if I could just get it down.

J: I think you will - yes..

I: Anyway, I thought you'd be looking at all these . . .

J: OK. I'll look at some of these things. Here's the goat lady Rose Verrall at almost 90 or 91.

I: Oh yes. She lived to a good old age didn't she?

J: Do you have a picture of your house on Locust? (90 Locust, MV)

I: I do somewhere but I've been looking and I haven't found it. I'll make a note of that and then I'll find one for you. You didn't see the kitchen because it was so hot, I closed it down. It had a corner fire place. Is that unusual?

J: Oh yes, I think so, yes.

I: And the mantel was a piece of redwood and it was rounded and a plate went over it above the paneling all the way around. The living room was quite a good size with the bay window. You know, we ate in the kitchen most of the time because it was more convenient. We had to go through this swinging door into the pantry - a big pantry.

J: A butler's pantry . . .

I: Into a big kitchen. Yes, it was a butler's pantry.

J: The houses they built in that period - almost always had a butler's pantry.

I: Oh really . . .

J: Our house does. Most of the houses of that period do. A good idea but the houses were designed as though there were servants in the house and very often there weren't servants in the house.

I: No. We didn't have a servant. We had what we called a "girl". Mary, the "girl", helped out with the washing and I guess she took care of us; stayed with us when our folks went out. In those days, they had a club they called "The Merrymakers" and they'd get together - different couples - maybe 8 or more couples and they would walk to wherever the gathering was gonna be. I remember Captain Robinson and his wife lived on the way to Stinson Beach 'way up on the hill.

and they would start out with the lanterns to go with the party - and they'd hike and - you know, going down was alright, but coming back must have been a rough go.

J: Well, I think people walked a lot more then.

I: Yes. I walk almost every day. I try to because it's good for me.

J: Did people have horses in the neighborhood?

I: We did. We had them but I don't know anyone else who had horses. We were very fortunate, my brother and I, because we had a pony and, you see, my mother rode - a great rider. My father was an Englishman and crazy about horses and races and he used to call the Ups and Downs he went to. Later, as I was a little older, . . . - we were very good friends with the Ward family and they were the landowners of Billings - George Billings (the Billings lived at Redwood Lodge at 160 Corte Madera Ave. in Mill Valley). We had the most wonderful times up there at the Billings Place. Marian and Jean - five of us. Our own sports club and they had steps where the salmon went up to spawn and there were ponds where we went swimming, beautiful tennis courts; a swing and slides; and then a creek - a walled creek - went along the Billings place and down to where the Wards lived in those days (Tillicom Cottage at 9 Eldridge Ave.)

J: Yes, I know the property.

I: Harry Bieman was the chauffeur for the Billings and he took care of the tennis courts and I just loved him because he was so good to all of us and he would drive the big Cunningham that they had and take us all up to Johannasburg Ranch in Napa - Mr. Billings owned. But in this creek thing they had a rowboat they called it the Billy Goat because we'd get in it and we'd bump the wall. Can you imagine having such a wonderful childhood? And then we'd get hot and go into the house for sarsaparilla.

J: Jean Ward Keiler is still living in the house? (as of 1993)

I: Yes, she and Eva - they're still good friends. Marian, I call Marian every once in awhile. The sports club members were Marian and Jean and Margaret Walter and myself and Barbara Nordon and my brother and George Flynn - seven of us and they'd pile us in that big car and take us up for 2 or 3 weeks vacation. We had a wonderful time. I should write a book - growing up in Mill Valley.

J: Now that's a good idea. How can we encourage you to do that?

I: I think I should. If you'll come and see me again, I'll get out the notes I've written so far and you can tell me what you think of it.

J: OK

I: My niece - one of my nieces said "I think you should just send it in sections". Because the way I have it now, I'd think of something and take off and write and no connection to the next thought I might have a few days later. Is that the way it happens?

J: Sure, and then you keep all those pieces and later on you need to write an article for the magazine or you want to write a book, you take all those pieces and spread all the pieces out and just sort of fill in the places in between.

I: And they can be connected. Well, the reason I haven't done anything is because I've gotten

side tracked. You stop writing and you get away from it - you go back and have to start over right from the beginning

J: Well, it doesn't have to go from the beginning. If you do it in pieces, you can put the pieces back to . . .

I: I'm telling stories like I'm telling you here and my daughter says, "now Mother write that down. write that down. keep track of it." She was so right because as you get older, you begin to forget.

J: I mean this was a great story you started telling me about the group at Billings.

I: Oh, I was telling you about the Billings Estate (at 160 Corte Madera Ave.). that's right up where you are.

J: That's right. Well, she took me all through the house.

I: Jean? (Jean Ward Keiler)

J: She showed me all the parts of the house - the original parts; the things that were added. She told me the stories about how the family came to live there after the earthquake and fire and decided they wanted to stay there so, they added to the house.

I: She's very bright; many, many families did that. They'd start a summer residence and end up

J: Not wanting to go anywhere else, it was such a great place to be.

I: It used to be the most heavenly, ideal place for youngsters to grow up. We had fields and fields - you could roam all over. It was a time of safety, nobody worried about being kidnapped or violence or horrible things that happen today. We had no worries at all. It's a wonder we weren't stupid when we got grown up. We never had to think much, you know. It was a different age entirely. But a wonderful age and we appreciated little things like if I'd get a new hair ribbon, I'd be thrilled to pieces. When my daughter was growing up her grandmother'd give her 6 hair ribbons all at once. That's just an example and I'd say "did you thank her?" because she had so much - (ringing sound) . . . I'll have to put my shoes on. Excuse me. . . . books on the World's Fair and I imagine they are valuable. I was just crazy about the Palace of Fine Arts and these little bronzes that they had in all the alcoves and my mother bought that for me. Oh, it was the most beautiful . . . I've been to lots of World's Fairs. Have you been to Alaska?

J: No, not to Alaska.

I: Well, you have got to go to Alaska. It's so wonderful. My second husband was a civil engineer and spent 16 years in Alaska, which was nothing to do with me. I wasn't with him, but since then I've gone twice. The second time, I took my daughter and son-in-law and we went the inside passage and then by the Aleutians and over to Tokyo.

The other day I took a bus tour. It was called the National Park Tour - Yosemite and Sequoia. This bus tour was absolutely fabulous. I don't know how they can make any money. I went to Yosemite many times. I was 17 the first time I drove up there over the old control roads. I drove the family Studebaker. Nobody else in the car could drive. Oh, it was wonderful. Anyway, this trip was 32 passengers and we were gone, I think, 5 days. They treated us - it was beautiful. And the Falls - I've never seen them so full - Bridal Veil - - -

J: This year was a marvelous year for the Falls.

I: Bridal Veil was all over the place - it was . . . the wind would blow it, you know and Yosemite

was just a torrent coming down; I used to swim in the Merced River - 'cause one time we camped at Yosemite and I'd go swimming in the river. My golly the river was raging. But it was a beautiful trip and I thought - oh bus - who wants to go on a bus - it was wonderful. Nice people. Interesting people; 32 people and the bus was elegant and we stayed at a nice place and we had dinner at the Ahwahnee. And then there is the Tenaya Lodge. Do you know Tenaya?

J: Oh yes.

I: Well Marriott - the hotel man - has built Tenaya Lodge and it's comparable to the Awahnee only a little more modernized, but a very nice - a beautiful dining - excellent food. All kinds of people. In fact, it was the first day and it was full and we couldn't have gotten in had they not had reservations for all of us. It was a wonderful experience. I would do it again. But you know, I can't really go on long trips in my car anymore.

J: Well, I should hope not.

I: Why?

J: Too many people out on the road.

I: I could drive in Marin.

J: Yes.

I: But I wouldn't do it if I thought I was a menace. If I didn't feel I had control over . . . and I don't think I'll be doing it much more. I think they are waiting for my car anyway.

J: Well, times are different and there is so much more traffic.

I: When my daughter was 3 years old, I lived here in Sonoma on account of it was war time. They started a cannery where the winery is now and we lived right next door to the Sebastianis. I was thinking about what they canned for the armed forces. They canned turkey for the Thanksgiving Dinner, and I said to my husband, 'I want to taste that turkey that they are gonna have, and he brought home a can for me to taste. I would prefer tuna. During the war we and everybody else had a victory garden. The first World War and even when we'd go up to Napa to the ranch with the Wards, old man Billings would come up once in awhile and make all the boys, Dave and Clem do all the victory garden work. George Billings was a retired sea captain; he's the grandfather of Jean (Ward Keilor) and Marian Ward. Oh, I've got to tell you about the tennis matches.

J: Yes, tell me about the tennis matches.

I: Well, we saw all the great players play on that court and Harry would roll it for hours. It was surfaced with broken shells, you know. Did you know that?

J: Yes.

I: And it was marvelous to play tennis. I used to love tennis because it was springy not like a hard concrete surface. I never have played on a grass court, so I wouldn't know but you could play for hours. Mr. Billings would let us go to the matches if we didn't make one sound - any one of us - and we were scared to death of him. The girls called him The Chief. Their father was the boss and Mr. Billings must have been The Chief of the boss, their father. And they had bleachers, a place where you could sit to watch the matches. Believe me we were quiet. I saw Tilden play there and I can't remember some of the other great players. We were playing tennis ourselves. I guess Mr. Billings thought to teach us a little bit, besides he liked to boss us around. And once in

awhile he'd come to the court when we were playing - fellas and girls - and - I'd walk up all the way from 90 Locust to play tennis and play tennis all day and then walk home. Mr. Billings thought we were all spoiled, I guess. We would stand and he'd say, "now you play at the net Bob", and Bob would go up to the net scared to death and Mr. Billings had been a tennis player himself and he'd wham one right in his face. If he didn't get the racquet up in time - too bad. But he was that kind. He wanted them to be tougher 'cause he was used to life being that way, you know - as a sea captain. We never saw much of him, but Mrs. Billings, she was about my size - little bitty thing and she was awfully good to us all. They'd invite us to a party and it would be the most wonderful thing. They'd have box lunches for everybody prepared by their Chinese servant. The Chinese servant would go in the Cunningham (automobile) when we went up (to Napa). Mrs. Billings and the Chinese servant and Harry and 7 of us in the back. Harry smoked cigars or something. He would expectorate and I was always thinking the worst was getting sprayed. And invariably, I'd land right in back of Harry. The car was a great long thing with jump seats.

J: Where was the property up here?

I: At Johannesburg. There was a lake there - not a natural lake and they had canoes, and we had 2 canoes and we'd race to Johannesburg.

J: Do you think the house is still there?

I: I don't know. It was a very nice house. We didn't have to do anything - just have fun. The Chinese servant would cook and wait on the table but Mr. Billings didn't come because he had a mistress and she wasn't welcome and we all hated her by name. We didn't even know her. But we thought she was horrible for no reason except that they didn't like her so none of us liked her. I don't know where it was - Johannesburg was the name of it. It was no town or anything - is there?

J: I don't recognize it, no.

I: I used to be - I used to dance - tap toe dancing - aesthetic, that's what I called it and ballroom - that's what the grownups called it and one time I was in a recital. Many times because they all went up to the ranch in the Cunningham and I wasn't gonna be able to go so my mother took me by ferry to Vallejo and Harry came and met me and took me to the ranch all by myself. They were so hospitable - wonderful people.

J: Where did the ferry go that took you to Vallejo? Did it go from Sausalito?

I: Yes, from Sausalito. Yes, because we musta gone by the train to Sausalito. But I don't recall any ferry to Vallejo. But it must have been something that went there - by ship (?) because I went by boat.

J: Did your family keep a car at a later date?

I: My family? Yes. Well, the first one was a model T. Then my brother (Oliver Sollom) was a Ford dealer (Tamalpais Motors) in Mill Valley for 37 years.

J: Oh yes, but that was later.

I: Yes.

J: I'm not sure what the year was - maybe 1908?

I: I don't know but in those days, we used to go for Sunday rides. The whole family would get in the car and in the Fall, we'd go around Paradise and my aunt owned property there and so did my

uncle - part of their inheritance and my mother owned in Tiburon too 'cause one time she was gonna sell a piece of that big block in Tiburon - she owned that - next to the Kyle place and she owned a sandy basin in front of Kyles. Pretty soon we were all planning on going to Europe using the money from the sale of the Tiburon block. My brother and I went running to Park School and said we were going to Europe and then the sale fell through and we didn't go. But I know a funny one about the model T too. Someone attached our car for some debt - you know, it musta been bought on time and this little old policeman from San Rafael came to the house. I thought it was terrible and he put this great thing on the wheel - the rear wheel of the Ford and when he left, my father went out and just took the wheel off and put the spare on. We went to San Rafael for a ride and the little guy who put the thing on was directing traffic; he almost dropped dead when he saw us. My father was an old timer in San Rafael; everybody knew him and he knew everybody I guess - there weren't that many people and here we come along big as life and . . . I thought it was a good one. Now those are the things I should put into my story.

J: Yes. Certainly.

I: And yes we had a wonderful rich childhood. I never did learn to ride because I was kind of fearful and my mother would come out and say "Now give your sister a turn - let your sister get on." Our first pony was a shetland. Tiddlewinks and I'd get on and my brother and his friend would poke the pony and the pony would start to trot and I'd say "let me off" but my brother was a wonderful rider, but I was never very good.

J: But you drove a car.

I: Oh, I drove when I was 15. I knew how to drive but we didn't have a car when I was 15. My uncle Tom taught me when I was 15. One time I was working and my brother was going to go out that evening and I wanted to go home and wash my hair or do something - I forgot what - and I said "can I have the car?" 'course he had to worry about insurance on his car you know. He said "no, why don't you take that model A". Did that have 3 pedals?

J: I don't know.

I: Anyway - It was so old a car and I couldn't remember where the clutch was. I was afraid to drive it so I didn't get to go home. they had 3 pedals - those cars. Anyway, then the car I remember the best is the Big Studebaker touring car and you could put the top down and it had disk wheels; it had a lot of power and the first time I drove to Yosemite when I was 17, over the control road, and that was something you know. You had to wait because there was no room to pass. Anyway, my mother and a friend and the friend had a daughter younger than me and my chum all went. None of them could drive but me and was written up in the MILL VALLEY RECORD that I had taken them all the way up to Yosemite and back - driven, and I remember driving up to Glacier Point - did you ever drive up there? They had big Pierce Arrow stages in those days - huge things - and I used to drive with two pillows in back of me so that I could reach the pedals and I must have looked awful little. I saw this big vehicle coming and I went up the bank to get out of the way and the fella - the driver - says "Hold 'er Newt!" We got there fine, no problem. But I didn't think of it as a feat, you know, until they wrote it up in the paper and then I thought well, I guess not many people do that, but that car could climb a house in second gear definitely - terrific power. Absolutely marvelous.

J: So you were an automobile fan?

I: Well, I wrote to my son-in-law for Father's Day and sent him a card and he has an English antique car that he bought and refurbished and rebuilt and everything and I found this card with an old Duesenberg on it - Happy Father's Day - and I have.. ridden in the Duesenberg - up to Petaluma from Mill Valley and it was quite a car and I'd gone to school with this girl who lived in

Petaluma and it was New Year's Eve and this chap who had the car was related to Sylvia some way and he'd been a racing driver, or still was, and there were about two fellas and two girls and the driver and we were so thrilled - no top - the top was down and he'd take those turns - right angle turns - at 40 miles an hour. We thought oh, this was so exciting - so I told the story to my son-in-law with the card that I'd ridden in a Duesenberg. But then I rode in a lot of fancy cars because my - well, he was a cousin of sorts - but John Reed's widow married - after John Reed died - married again and that was a strain on the family - not descended from John Reed - but anyway this cousin's name was Boyle. You know Boyle park?

J: Sure. Yes, the Boyle Family.

I: And Hugh Boyle had 3 daughters and we were friends. We were cousins. All Spanish people are cousins, they say - anyway ....

J: Makes a good story.

I: Yes. But he used - Hugh Boyle - to go with quite a fast crowd; racing driver, horse racing and they'd go to different places and have these fabulous parties. One party way down in the East Bay some place - that my mother and father went to and I remember them talking about it. The party was given in the horse barn. I guess something different. Anyway, Hugh Boyle went from raising race horses and collecting them to cars. He used to take his 3 daughters and invite me; we'd sit in the back seat and one time I thought we were going to the end of the world. We went over to Richmond and stayed over night. Went on a ferry boat. We were in a Cord - Cord car. You know automobiles?

J: Yes. Cord with a "C" - not very well but that's a famous one.

I: I had an interesting life, didn't I?

J: Yes, very.

I: I have to write my book. Might be able to sell it. But, I haven't been writing lately. Oh, I had this good friend from high school days. We've been friends for 73 years. She came over from Lowell in San Francisco and she was a little thing. In fact, they called her for Tiny Two in high school. All the fellas fell for her like a ton of bricks 'cause she was a newcomer, you know, from the Big City and she and I became chums then in high school. She died the other day and I figured out that I'd known her for 73 years. I've been widowed twice. And, I love to go - travel - and when I had my daughter, I'd take her along wherever we'd go. I'd get itchy feet on New Year's Day and Coralie always came along - she had a pretty name - and her last name was Sigamee (?). She went everywhere - everyplace I ever lived, she came to visit and after I lost my second husband, I said "how would you like to drive east with me?" I said I want to go to maple leaf and she'd never been to Glacier. I told her I'd take her to those places and so we started out. We were both over 70 and my second husband was 6'4" and so had a big car. He never bought a new one but had bought used Cadillacs 'cause it was great for him - big - and I could move the seatup and he could move it back and when he died I had a Sedan De Ville - gold colored - and that's what we went in. We had a marvelous trip and she didn't want to spend much and I didn't either so we would eat our lunch out of an ice chest. We did Yellowstone first and then up to Glacier National Park. Oh, it was a wonderful trip and it was a two-laner all the way except they'd have the United Nations meeting in Ottawa and about ten miles before we got to Ottawa, there's a 4-lane highway and a 4-lane highway about 10 miles on the other side, other than that it was a 2 laner, which I was so used to because I used to get in my car and they'd think now she'll probably drive on 2 cow paths to get off the main road, but really who wants to be on the main road, you know? The interesting things are off the main drag. Anyway, I thought she'd do part of the driving, but I let her drive once and the 2 laner had a drop of about 3" or more and she kept going off. She had a cataract, or

two cataracts and I couldn't let her drive any more, so I did all the driving. I said look in the book and see where we should stop - no reservations or anything and she said here's a place - Sturgeon Falls - and that sounds nice. I said that sounds lovely, we'll go there. Sturgeon Falls was - not a sign of water or a waterfall or a creek or anything. Three motels and by that time, I'd gotten smart so I tried to hide the car behind some kind of a bush or something and I said you go in that one and I'll go in this one. So, I went in this one and it smelled like a hospital. I saw it was a terrible place and she came out of the one she was in and she said he wanted too much money. I can't remember if this was in 1976. Anyway, I said we don't want to pay that much and she said no she didn't want to either. So, I said well I'll go in and see if I can talk to him and tell him that we just want a bed for overnight, couldn't you give us a better rate. He said, you're driving a big old Cadillac. I don't know what you're kicking about the price for. I said thank you very much, we'll go on. He said, you're gonna pay more and we did. But we didn't stay there - but see, he figured that was . . . but, it didn't cost us much for that trip, I'll tell you, because I was very careful. It was fun. Beautiful trip.

J: Well, where are you gonna go next?

I: I don't know. Since I've had two cataract operations and I've gotten deaf, I don't know where to go next. I have no burning desire to go anywhere. I'd like to go to Spain because my antecedents came from there and I'd like to go to Ireland. Those are two I've missed. Well, I've always said California has always been the most generous state in the Union. People do come here and get welfare right away. They get help. We've always given and given and given.

J: Well, we're not being so generous now. We've got an awful lot of homeless people that are getting nothing.

I: Yes, well where were the homeless when I was growing up? We never had homeless people. If they were homeless, they'd sit on the sidewalk and sell pencils or hold a cup or they were porters in San Francisco. Did you know T.P. Marsh?

J: He had an estate right up the canyon from us.

I: Did you know his son Lucien?

J: I met them in the store in San Francisco. The store was still there on Water St.

I: The jewelry section was Lucien's baby. T.P. had no use for it and he was used to Oriental help you know. He couldn't stand us because he thought we didn't work hard enough. We weren't pulling our rickshaws. Anyway, we didn't like him, naturally. Lucien was a very amiable fellow and he would tell me what he wanted. He'd bring a maybe a Jade stone - emerald jade - and he'd say now design a brooch for Mrs. so and so. Some movie actress or something. Lucien and T.P. discovered the idea from the old Japanese sword guard - of using iron metal to go with the fine jewelry - the diamonds and jade and all the rest of it. I used to work with a magnifying glass because I'd do an actual size of the stone in the facsimile for \$65 a month - and commute. Anyway then finally it came along to '29 and the Depression and no one could afford to buy fine jewelry. There was a friend of mine who did lamps, designed the shades and sewed them - silk - she'd have to buy thread and I'd have to buy a paint brush or something - and we'd go out and we'd meet and have tea at the Maiden Lane or someplace. You know, that was wrong, but we were paid so little, we didn't feel a bit dishonest. The hours were long and if you had a customer or any thing, you stayed - missed a couple of ferry boats and got home, God knows when. We were let go anyway. GG got mad at the whole thing. They weren't making money because of the luxurious things they sold and so he fired the whole group of girls. And, I got a job up at Gumps doing - in the Oriental section - the same thing only selling too. There was very little in the jewelry design thing. But I was there when Gloria Swanson married that young Irishman - Terrance somebody. Gumps had a big Buddha - with a fountain and old Gloria Swanson came in and we all stood around and

watched her. She was about my size. She made a big to-do about making a wish and throwing her money in the fountain and stopped the whole store for a half-hour or so. But it was an interesting place to work - Gumps - beautiful things in there, and it was all these things that - wherever one lives or goes or works or does work, adds to their knowledge. I learned to love Oriental things, but I'm not an expert. They're beautiful aren't they?

Transcribed by Grace Lary.  
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