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Society of California Pioneers Series

Margaret Barbree Rosenberg

SAN BERNARDO RANCHO AND THE SOUTHERN SALINAS VALLEY, 1871-1981

With an Introduction by
Reuben Albaugh

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser
in 1980

MARGARET BARBREE ROSENBERG

ca. 1956

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PREFACE

The purpose of The Society of California Pioneers is the collection, preservation, and proper maintenance of historical material of all kinds relating to the early days of San Francisco and California. We have since our founding in 1850 taken upon ourselves the responsibility of preserving the records and relics that are indispensible as ties binding the past to the present and future generations. Further contributing to this ambition, The Society in 1977 initiated an Oral History Series. The intent of the Series is to preserve the recollections of men and women prominent in their respective fields whose achievements, knowledge, and expertise form a significant contribution to the history and progress of California. They record in permanent form the continuation of the traditions of California's founders.

These memoirs have been created by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. James Irvine, 1868-1947, was the son of a forty-niner, a native of California, and Director and Vice President of The Society of California Pioneers from 1928 until his death. Through the James Irvine Foundation he left an enduring legacy to the people of California.

This third Oral History in the Series, related by Margaret Barbree Rosenberg, is the story of an early Mexican land-grant holding. This original rancho, for more than a century, has been in the possession of the Brandenstein-Rosenberg family.

December 1982

J. Roger Jobson
Executive Director
The Society of California Pioneers
San Francisco, California

SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA PIONEERS SERIES

McLaren, Norman Loyall, Jr., *Business and Club Life in San Francisco, Reflections of a Pioneer Scion,* 1978.

Shumate, Albert, M.D., *San Francisco Physician, Historian, and Catholic Layman,* 1981.

Rosenberg, Margaret Barbree, *San Bernardo Rancho and the Southern Salinas Valley, 1871-1981,* 1982.

Cunningham, Sister Catharine Julie, in progress.

Dullea, Charles W., S.J., in progress.

Rowell, Margaret Avery, in progress.

INTRODUCTION

Reuben Albaugh
Extension Animal Scientist, Emeritus
University of California, Davis

It is a great honor and pleasure to write an introduction for Margaret (Pat) Rosenberg's memoirs. To orally record the life history of two families of such diverse faiths and cultures was indeed a difficult but a worthwhile assignment. Anyone who peruses this historical document cannot help but be impressed with the honesty and accuracy with which Pat answers the numerous questions about the lifestyle of these two important Southern Monterey County families--the Rosenbergs and the Barbrees. Throughout the pages of these memoirs, Pat's image of integrity shines forth; her choice of words is beyond reproach.

I formally met Pat in her San Ardo home in 1947 after she had married Walter Rosenberg. She was a splendid hostess. Later, when viewing the horse show and rodeo at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, her daughter joined in extending their fine hospitality to my wife and me.

Growing up on a cattle ranch during the "bare handed" days was not always an easy life. However, from this rural living (close to the soil) Pat acquired important traits such as patience, tolerance, and a concern for the poor, the weak, and the lonely. These characteristics are emphasized in her discussion of the Steinbeck books, particularly the Grapes of Wrath.

Of the Barbree family, I was best acquainted with Pat's brother, Jim, who was one of my best friends. At cattle branding parties, we were often roping partners. He was a top hand, not only with cattle, but with horses, too. When we were on the Rosenberg Ranch conducting research work with cattle, Jim was always on hand to assist with the sorting and weighing.

In 1927, shortly after arriving in Monterey County as a livestock farm advisor, I was informed that the Rosenberg family of San Ardo had established

an endowment scholarship fund at the University of California. I was instructed to visit the Rosenbergs to determine if Cooperative Extension could be of assistance to them in their ranching operations. After visiting with Joe Rosenberg, the owner, I invited him to enroll in a beef cattle cost-accounting project. He accepted the invitation and kept excellent records until he passed away in 1935. At that time his son, Walter, became manager of the ranch and continued the recordingkeeping program. Walter also participated in other UC Extension research projects and in this regard he relied heavily on his cattle foreman, Paul Strohn, who was an excellent cattleman and cooperator. Walter said many times, "Anything you and Paul want to do with the cattle herd is all right with me."

In 1941, strain 19 vaccine became available on an experimental basis to control brucellosis (contagious abortion) in beef cattle. The Rosenberg herd was enrolled in this program, along with the Ansberry, Trescony, and Etchenique herds.

During the early 40's, Professor H. R. Guilbert of UC Davis initiated a loan bull program to establish heritability estimates on rate and economy of gain in beef cattle. Three high-performing, University Hereford bulls were allotted to the Rosenberg Ranch. Each bull was bred to 30 cows. The steer offspring were purchased by the University and fed out at Davis as part of Guilbert's research studies. The heifer calves were kept by the owner and used for replacements in the herd. Walter Markham of Salinas and Harry Hunt of the El Sur Ranch were also cooperators in this program.

Walter Rosenberg was a humorous and generous man. At educational beef cattle meetings held on his ranch, he always furnished the barbecue, which was prepared by John Layous and Louis Etchenique.

For more than 50 years the Rosenbergs and Barbrees have been excellent friends of UC Davis, especially the College of Agriculture. Their financial support of important applied research projects in the fields of animal science,

agronomy, engineering, vegetable crops, and Cooperative Extension stands out as the epitome of University donors.

Pat, your deep interest and generous donations to UC Davis are certainly going to make life on the land more abundant. Thank you for being so kind and generous, and as our mutual friend, Julius Trescony, used to say, "You made us look good!"

December 1982 Rueben Albaugh

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The interviewers' first meeting with Margaret Barbree Rosenberg took place on April 1, 1980, when she invited them to her home for lunch and then drove them around the San Bernardo Ranch and the nearby Oasis district where she was born, commenting upon the area as she drove. The interviews themselves, on June 23, 25 and 26, and September 30 of that same year, were all held at her residence, a gracious home among the fields outlying San Ardo. The town of San Ardo is the population center of Rancho San Bernardo. The ranch is one of the few Mexican California land grants to remain almost intact to this day. It is furthermore remarkable for having remained under the ownership and operation of the same family since the nineteenth century. Bought by Meyer Brandenstein and a partner, Lazard Godchaux, in 1871, it has been entirely owned by the family and descendants of Meyer Brandenstein since 1898.

Meyer Brandenstein died in 1906. This notice appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, March 26, 1906.

> Brandenstein--In this city, March 25, Meyer, beloved husband of Fanny Brandenstein, and father of Mrs. Joseph Rosenberg and Flora Brandenstein, a native of Germany, aged 72 years, 10 months and 5 days.
>
> Funeral services will be held Tuesday, March 27, at 10:15 o'clock at his late residence, 1305 Van Ness Avenue. Internment strictly private, Home of Peace Cemetery. Please omit flowers.

As Margaret B. Rosenberg outlined the subsequent history of the ranch: "Following Meyer Brandenstein's death, the property passed to his widow, Fanny Brandenstein. (Their home on Van Ness Avenue was dynamited during the fire following the earthquake in April.) In 1907, Joseph Rosenberg began managing the ranch for his mother-in-law. On her death in 1934, the ownership of the land passed to her daughters Linda Brandenstein Rosenberg and Flora Brandenstein. After Joseph Rosenberg's death in 1937, they formed a partnership with Linda Rosenberg's son Walter, who continued to operate the ranch. Mrs. Joseph Rosenberg died in 1957, Walter Rosenberg in 1968, and Flora Brandenstein in 1972. The San Bernardo Ranch, through various wills and trusts, is descending to the children of Walter Rosenberg: Janet R. Lynch, Gordon W. Rosenberg, Ruth Ann Rosenberg, and Margaret R. Duflock, who are operating it as a partnership."

In this interview, Margaret B. Rosenberg, Walter Rosenberg's widow, has recounted the history of the Brandenstein and Rosenberg families, and her own Salinas Valley and San Francisco family as well. The result is a valuable addition to our knowledge of an under-recorded section of Monterey

County and the men and women who have developed it.

Mrs. Rosenberg spoke straightforwardly, often with a dry humor that may not easily be perceived in the typescript. Following the interviews themselves there were several discussions of the transcript and the photographs that were copied and taken to illustrate it. A number of specific details, dates and names, were added to the transcript.

In February 1981 Mrs. Rosenberg presented to The Bancroft Library in the name of the Rosenberg family a collection of San Bernardo Rancho papers: letterbooks, letters, deeds, rain records, account books, livestock records, and miscellaneous papers that will be of value to historians.

The interview transcript was edited slightly by the interviewers to eliminate repetitions and improve continuity, but it remains essentially as given. Mrs. Rosenberg, in reading over it, made some additions and clarifications. Although most of the direct questioning was done by Ruth Teiser, Catherine Harroun participated in the discussion and interview sessions as well as in the research, editing, and photographing.

Ruth Teiser
Catherine Harroun
Interviewers

15 November 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

The Barbree and Quinn Families

[Interview 1: June 23, 1980]##

Teiser: May we begin with your grandfather, Joseph M. Barbree? I gave you earlier a copy of a short biography of him from Guinn's 1903 History of the State of California* that has a section on Monterey County. Was it correct?

Rosenberg: It was correct. There was very little in it; it was evidently written to be non-controversial.

Teiser: Is the fact that that was the only place we could find your grandfather in print an indication that he cherished a sense of privacy?

Rosenberg: Well, you know, I never saw him; I know that that was written by some member of his family after he died. I believe it said he was born in Kentucky, I'm not sure. But that is a matter of record. (I think I showed you that book that had the voters' registration.**) But to my knowledge, he talked quite a bit.

The problem was that by the time we came along, none of his descendants could agree on what he said about his early life. He was born in Covington, Kentucky, and he grew up along the Ohio River; and at some time I believe his father had a store in Cairo, Illinois.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 92.

*See Appendix I.

**In the 1896 Monterey County Precinct Register, Joseph M. Barbree was listed as a farmer, aged 59, height 5 feet 7 inches, of light complexion with blue eyes and gray hair, a native of Kentucky, residing in the San Lucas district, able to read and construe in the English language.

Rosenberg: Also, at some time in his young life, he was in New Orleans for a while, with an uncle who, so one story goes, was a doctor. He taught my grandfather the rudiments of pharmacy. But as for finding out too much about his early life, it's been very difficult to trace it.

He came to California as a single man, and a hunter, with a wagon-train, I presume to provide meat to one of the families that would give him food. I think that was the usual thing, so I suppose that's what he did.

And he came before the Civil War, but I don't know the year. And brought with him a freed slave, whom he, naturally, freed as soon as he got to California. He had been freed, but in the southern states they weren't very free. A Negro, I will say.

But that is just a story, I have no way of verifying it. He, naturally, did a little panning for gold, and then the Civil War started. I assume they had a national guard or militia, or something like that, which I understood he joined. But he didn't fight in the Civil War.

And somehow or other he settled around what was then known as Mission San Jose, now part of Fremont. He married; his wife's name was Jane Kell.

Teiser: Did he marry in California?

Rosenberg: Yes, in the Mission San Jose. Those records are available. She was of Canadian descent; her father was an English Canadian, her mother French Canadian. They had, I believe, eight children. By the time I was born, only four were living, but those four lived to complete maturity.

Teiser: What were their names, can you recall?

Rosenberg: Those who lived? Oh, very well, My oldest aunt was Mrs. Joseph [Rose] Veach, and her sister, who was ten years younger, was Mrs. Luke [Belle] Norton; she lived in the state of Washington. And my father, William Robert Barbree; and his brother, Joseph Barbree.

Teiser: It was near San Lucas that your father finally settled, was it?

Rosenberg: Yes. He was a boy working on the King ranch. King City is named after the man that owned the San Lorenzo grant, and his name was Charles King. My father was seventeen years old and working on the King ranch when the railroad came through. And because he was working there, he helped burn off--I think it was a stubble field. It was burned off for the site of the town, about 1886.

Rosenberg: Their family was living in the district called Santa Rita, near Salinas; they had originally lived in Blanco. After the mother died, they moved to Santa Rita, which is north of Salinas.

He was so impressed with the area he went back and tried to persuade his father to move down. Well, he and his older sister moved down and farmed on the Trescony ranch for a couple of years.* Then his father came down. I think I would have a copy of the deed that might tell me what year he bought the place off the Oasis road where my sister still lives.**

Teiser: Where is that?

Rosenberg: Five miles out of San Lucas, and ten miles from King City. West of King City. It's on the west side of the river.

Teiser: You showed us when you drove us around earlier a place where you grew up; is that this same ranch?

Rosenberg: Yes; it's been added to. I grew up in the Oasis area. I took you through there but I didn't take you by the ranch.

Teiser: About how many acres did your grandfather buy all together, do you know?

Rosenberg: Actually, I don't know how much he acquired himself. He continued to buy land in that area. When he died, he left parts. He had these four living children, you see, and it was divided amongst them. He must have had quite an acreage. At the time my father died, his property amounted to 2,300 acres, but he had added quite a bit to the original. I would imagine my grandfather must have had around 3,000 or more acres, I would assume. I have lots of copies of old deeds. I could add it up, I guess.

Teiser: What did he use it for.

Rosenberg: I wasn't even born when he was alive. But I remember my father farmed wheat and barley, and had cattle and pigs. It was a working ranch, I guess you'd call it, by California standards.

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*Rancho San Lucas, purchased by Alberto Trescony in 1872.

**The deed, dated November 8, 1889, records the conveyance of 160 acres from William H. Bullock and his wife to Joseph M. Barbree for the sum of $3,000.

Rosenberg: There was no irrigation. Well, yes, he did have irrigation; he had alfalfa once, for the dairy cattle.

Teiser: You had a dairy?

Rosenberg: My father did. But not what you'd consider a dairy in the present sense of the term, you know. Twenty or thirty cows. Nothing like the 300 that is considered a commercial dairy, and 300 is small now.

Teiser: But he sold his milk and--

Rosenberg: They sold cream.

Teiser: What kind of irrigation was it?

Rosenberg: There were six small wells, and one big engine pumped the water up the hill. Wooden pipes were used, wrapped with some kind of copper wire I believe.

Teiser: Your grandfather's other children, then, farmed there?

Rosenberg: Two of them, one brother and one sister. One sister moved to Washington.* She sold her interest to her brothers and moved to the state of Washington and, I think, invested in an apple orchard. I still have a first cousin living in Yakima, on the land that I believe her mother put her money into, and her life. My background on my father's side was definitely, I think, an agricultural family.

Now I have no idea, but I think my father's Canadian grandparents were also agricultural people.

You may be familiar with the name Kell, around San Jose? There was a Margaret Kell who helped the Sisters of Notre Dame establish the first Notre Dame boarding school in San Jose, who was an aunt of my grandmother's. She came along about the time of the Donner party.** Because I know my grandmother, my Canadian grandmother, went to the Sisters of Notre Dame to school, because her aunt either had the school in her house or--after all, I'm

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*See p. 2.

**For an account of the Kell family, see Horace S. Foote, ed., Pen Pictures from the Garden of the World, Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1888, pp. 435-6.

Rosenberg: talking about 1850 something, and only stories. She was instrumental, I know, in bringing, I'm sure it was the Sisters of Notre Dame to San Jose.

Teiser: So you had lots of relatives?

Rosenbert: I suppose, to some people, I had. Growing up I had nine first cousins; two on my mother's side. I had seven on my father's side.

Teiser: And you had sisters and a brother of your own.

Rosenberg: Growing up there were four of us; I had two brothers. One brother, William R., Jr., died when he was twenty, and the other, James J. about two years ago.

When you think of childhood, four of us grew up in one house, with cousins that visited, I guess; but it didn't seem a big family in terms of present-day families, which are quite large.

These connections of my father's in San Jose I really didn't know; and my mother was descended from a long line of spinsters! [laughter] She was one of six children, three girls and three boys. The youngest girl and her youngest brother both married, but the others didn't.

Teiser: What was your mother's name?

Rosenberg: Margaret Quinn. She was a teacher, and she was a native of San Francisco.

Teiser: You told us earlier about that San Francisco family--

Rosenberg: Yes, it was very interesting. That grandfather, William Quinn, somehow helped build the railroad, but we have very little information as to how he got to California. My mother could hardly remember him; he was killed in a quarry accident when she was quite young. In fact, her youngest brother was a posthumous child. So that she really remembered very little of her own father, but her mother we all remembered, because I was nine when she died. And we know that she came on a sailing vessel to Boston during the Civil War; and he was already here, her future husband. But they weren't married until she arrived.

They were both from the Aran Isles. And this, to me, was most interesting, and I wasn't old enough to inquire as to how it happened. But she came to Boston on a sailing vessel some time during the Civil War, and had a sister who lived in Boston; an older sister, who wanted her to stay there 'til the war was over. But she didn't. I think she stayed about a year, maybe, and then

Rosenberg: took a boat that ran the southern blockade, during the Civil War, and walked across the Isthmus of Panama, with either one or two other sisters. I think there were three that came to California.

She used to tell the story to us so much when we were little, along with stories about Irish fairies; and you couldn't crush your eggshells because they were fairy-boats. And the first time I went on a real ferry boat, I felt very disappointed not to see any fairies. [laughter]

And this Irishman that had been working on the--he was a bridge-builder for Crocker, on the railroads. He was there on the dock to meet her, and I didn't know how he found out when she was getting there after two or three years, or four years, or however long a time that elapsed. But I've always wondered.

I don't think they had a telegraph to San Francisco then, did they? This would have been 1864, maybe. It might well have been the railroad.

Teiser: The telegraph was completed in 1861.

Rosenberg: Since then, I've really delved into it, and wondered how he knew when she would arrive. And wonder if he was really there, or if she sent word after she got there.

I remember a little French woman who had come on the same boat with her. They remained friends all their lives, her name was Pegillion. [Peguillan?] They would talk about their time on the boat, and my strong impression is that he was there on the dock, and that he took her to Mrs. Strobridge--the wife of one of the railroad contractors.* (Used to have her picture around for years.) Anyway, they were married at this lady's house, who gave her a chest of silver, which my sister still has. The silver's so old that it's pre-sterling; it's what you call 'mint-silver,' which is a little softer. That was an interesting thing.

Then they built this very nice, Victorian-type house, which I think I've told you is a historic landmark in San Francisco.** 1542 McKinnon Avenue; off Third Street, but it's a very poor district now. I wouldn't go back there.

Teiser: You said as a child you went there, and you described it for us; would you describe it on the tape, what kind of a house it was?

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*James Harvey Strobridge, superintendent of construction for the Central Pacific.

**See Appendix I and photograph page 10.

Rosenberg: It was a two-story, redwood house; and it had four marble fireplaces, those I particularly remember. And two marble washstands in two of the bedrooms. Two fireplaces, upstairs, and two downstairs.

It had three chimneys, but the third chimney, I think, was only for the kitchen stove and flue; I remember the three chimneys.

Tieser: Did it have a big kitchen?

Rosenberg: It was changed off and on over my lifetime; it was a big kitchen. And a pantry off--what you would call a butler's pantry between the kitchen and the dining room. The dining room and the living room each had a fireplace. And the dining room had a bay window; or the living room had a bay window, but there was sort of a bay window in the dining room, too. It had four bedrooms upstairs, and either a bedroom or sewing room, whichever it happened to be used for, downstairs.

They were large-sized rooms, and of course, the high ceilings, sixteen feet--

Teiser: Was it a big family who went on living there?

Rosenberg: Well, it always seemed full of people. Two aunts and an uncle were there regularly, and my grandmother. They had visitors. Part of the time they had us. People came and went, I guess.

Teiser: Was there a lot of difference from your home here in the valley?

Rosenberg: Well, it didn't seem different; to a child, it was just another house. It was dark compared to my house at home; I remember that, that it seemed dark to me. Though I know now it really wasn't very dark, but they could have kept the shutters closed, or the shades down, or something.

I remember there was a very sunny porch off the kitchen, with a lemon tree in front of it. The lemons were too sour to eat, but it was a lemon tree. And there was a lawn in front of it with a palm tree.*

I remember those things, and that my grandmother, when I was very young, had chickens in the back yard. So it probably didn't seem as different to us as it might have to somebody else, because we were so young.

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*See also page 28.

Rosenberg: When I think back, I think it was quite different; but after all, my mother was a member of the same family, and if you mean, did it seem formal, comparatively, it didn't, to me. But then, it might have to other people. I think they might have lived more formally, but from the stories my mother told, I don't think they ever lived very formally.

Teiser: The 1914 San Francisco city director lists these Quinns living at 1542 McKinnon Ave.:

"Miss Elizabeth, tchr.
"John, stonectr
"Mary (widow Wm)
"May, tchr, Pub School"

Was William the grandfather, and was John an uncle of yours?

Rosenberg: Elizabeth was the oldest in that generation, my aunt. John, my uncle, was the oldest brother. Mary, the widow of William, was my grandmother, and May was the second child in the family and also my aunt. There were two other brothers. Peter lived in Washington, D.C., and William was a doctor whose home was on the corner of Third Street and Newcomb. Peter was in the Spanish-American war. He received a medal, and he is buried at Arlington. He didn't marry and we rarely saw him.

Teiser: You said your mother had come down here to reach school?

Rosenberg: Actually, she first taught in a--by now you realize they were Irish Catholics--she taught in a sisters' convent in San Bernardino for several years, which I think she liked very much. This must've been around 1900. And one of her life-long friends was another teacher there, who had taught music. I suppose she taught elementary grades.

Teiser: Had she been to a Catholic school herself?

Rosenberg: No, she hadn't. Her older sister had, but she hadn't.

Teiser: Where did she receive her teacher's training?

Rosenberg: In San Francisco Normal, where everybody did. She graduated from Girls' High School, and went to the San Francisco Normal. I'm sure you're familiar with that, if you've lived in San Francisco.

Teiser: You had to be both bright and determined to go to those schools.

Rosenberg: Oh, yes; I'm sure it wasn't easy. And neither have I ever known why she decided to go to San Bernardino. Possibly they had some connections in the area. She had an uncle named Pat Quinn, and I believe that at some point in time he was down around Borrego Springs.

##

Rosenberg: I think there must have been some mining or something down there. And they had been quarrymen, the Quinns and knew many S.P. railroad people. Which might have had something to do with her going to San Bernardino, I don't really know, but I know that's where she taught for several years.

But in those days, even as now, the convents did not pay very well; so she later taught in this public-run school out of San Lucas, known as the Oasis School. And that's where she was teaching when she got married.

Teiser: Where does the place name come from?

Rosenberg: Oasis? If you had seen this area before irrigation, you would know why it was called Oasis by the early settlers. And it still is sort of an oasis, it's a quiet spot. It's not exactly a little valley, it's just the Oasis district; and that's what the early settlers called it.

Teiser: There was natural water there?

Rosenberg: No. An occasional spring, but all the water that I know of was from wells. There wasn't enough water as a rule. They were all dug wells. It was away from the railroad, at least five miles. I have no idea why they called it the Oasis. I wasn't there.

There is an old Oasis road. And now when you address a letter out there, you say, "Oasis Rd., King City." My father said it was also known as Hardscrabble.

When my mother was married most of her friends just said, because of the area the railroad went through, "Why are you moving to that desert?" In my old geography book it was referred to as semi-arid, and it is, a lot of it, reclaimed desert, almost. Any place that ordinarily doesn't have over ten inches of rain a year, as an average.

Teiser: When your mother went there to teach what was at Oasis?

Rosenberg: Nothing, it was just a district area. There was a hall, where they had dances, but that was by the school. I think they used it for church meetings sometimes.

Teiser: As I have read that the schoolteachers were the people who were bringing culture--

Rosenberg: --the only culture, sometimes--

Teiser: --and knowledge to the valley.

The home of Mrs. Mary Quinn and her family in San Francisco about 1915. Margaret Barbree (later Mrs. Walter Rosenberg) is at extreme right, her sister Geraldine Barbree, second from left.

Jane Kell (Mrs. Joseph) Barbree and her daughter Emily.

Joseph M. Barbree

William R. Barbree, aged about twelve

Margaret Quinn, later Mrs. William R. Barbree. The photograph was taken when she was a young teacher.

Rosenberg: I had a friend who said, had it not been for the teachers--they taught them their manners, they taught them hygiene, they taught them many things that would insult today's teacher to teach.

Teiser: Did your mother continue teaching after she married?

Rosenberg: No.

Teiser: That wasn't done, I suppose.

Rosenberg: Well, I guess it was no longer necessary. It would have been very difficult to teach and raise a family under those circumstances. And it still is, I think, though I know some who do. Usually, even now, the women I know who teach who have children, wait 'til their last child is in school. There's hardly any other way to do it.

Childhood Recollections

Teiser: What was the household like then?

Rosenberg: I don't remember all this. When my father and mother were first married I know they lived on a dairy out of King City, and I know that's where I was born. My father's brother, I think, was living in the family house; his younger sister had married. I really am not sure of any of this.

By the time my sister was born, who's fifteen months younger than I, they moved to the original ranch house that his father had had, and my uncle moved to another one. That's all I know.

Teiser: You grew up in the house your grandfather had had?

Rosenberg: No, when I was about seven or eight then they built another two-story house up on the hill. The house my grandfather, Joseph Barbree had bought, I'm really the only member of the family that can remember it very well. I know it had (it's very strange, but fireplaces seem to stick in my mind) it had two fireplaces [laughter] and it had one in the bedroom, and one in the dining room.

But the house that they built up on the hill, the two-story, it really had only one fireplace, and it had four or five bedrooms.

Teiser: And did your family live alone after that, or did you have aunts and uncles and so forth about?

Rosenberg: No, only to visit. No relatives lived with us. My mother grew up in a house where there was Uncle Hugh and Cousin Somebody. But then, her mother was a widow.

Teiser: Is this two-story house on the hill still standing?

Rosenberg: Yes; it's not up on a hill, it's just above--it's on the level, and the other house was down in a little valley, I guess. A very small canyon. My sister lives there.

Teiser: We should put on the record your sister's name.

Rosenberg: Geraldine Barbree.

Teiser: And your brother, who you said died about two years ago?

Rosenberg: James Barbree. [Mrs. Rosenberg's granddaughter enters and is introduced]

Teiser: You went to school at the same school where your mother had taught?

Rosenberg: Actually, I graduated from grammar school in the Oasis district.

Teiser: I think you told us that you had gone to school in San Francisco, briefly.

Rosenberg: I was visiting my grandmother; and I had my sixth birthday, and they, being a family of teachers, automatically sent me to school.

Now, I started there; and I had a teacher, she must have been a married teacher, or a widow. Her name was Mrs. Curtis; and I started in the first grade there at the Bernal School. It must have been the school closest to the district, but I didn't go more than a few months. I was glad to come home; I was a homesick child.

I was the oldest of the four, and I was often at my grandmother's alone, and then later, Gerry and I would go together, and maybe the two boys would go together.

But the boys were the youngest, and my mother usually didn't send them for long. Because I was the oldest, I was the logical one to send but not big enough to be any help.

But I was always homesick the first night I was at my grandmother's; and I was always very glad to get home. Home was home, you know; if you've never been homesick, it's difficult to explain.

Rosenberg: I have had a homesick daughter,* and she has one homesick child. But she is homesick for mommy. (That's the one that just called.) And, "I go where mommy goes." She's seven; but she's the baby.

Teiser: When you were home, how did you children amuse yourselves?

Rosenberg: As soon as we could read, all of us had the same vice, and the house was full of books. I mean, some people think this house is full of books, but that house was, too. My father was a reader, and my mother had lots of books.

We read anything, western story magazines--my uncle subscribed to Western Stories, so we read that. We read the Ladies' Home Journal, we fought over the Saturday Evening Post.**

By the time I was ten I'd read most of Dickens; that explains it to you. We were early readers; however, we also had a lot of chores to do. We all rode horseback. We rode horseback to school when we first started. And there were chickens to feed, you know, and eggs to gather. Are you at all familiar with that kind of a life? Utterly foreign, I'm sure. Those are the things you do. At this point in time, I really find it difficult to remember. I'm sure we all did different things at different times.

Until I was ten or so, my mother always had a cook. It was a ranch kitchen; you fed the men. There were six in our family, but when I learned to cook, I learned how to cook for eight; and there were often nine or ten. During harvest you had harvest crews. But usually there were two men. And then another thing I remember, there was always a chores man. He usually had a family, and they lived in what was known as the bunkhouse. So he ate with his family. Maybe at noon he ate with us.

A chores man was the one that drove in the horses and milked the cows, cleaned out the stables, and I suppose many more things that I can't think of. Those are the things I remember.

The other men would be in the fields, including my father. But the chores man would usually be out around the barn, and if you needed something, you ran out and got him, whoever he was, which might be Charlie, it might be Pete or Manuel--and you always knew who it was. And he would saddle your horse for you

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*Margaret Rosenberg, now Mrs. William G. Duflock.

**See also pages 29-30.

Rosenberg: if you needed a horse, and I suppose he did many things, and maybe he did things in the garden for my mother, I really don't know.

Teiser: Did you have a kitchen garden?

Rosenberg: Oh, yes. My sister still does.

For years--this is another thing that happened in small communities--somebody had to board the teacher. Or otherwise there was nobody to teach your children.

My aunt had boarded the teacher for many years. But when her last child got out of school, there was no one else, and my mother had to take the teacher, which was always interesting, and I know she did it gracefully, but I often wonder whether she really liked doing it. However, she'd been in the same position herself.

Teiser: She'd been boarded, too?

Rosenberg: Yes. So for maybe three or four years, the teacher lived in the house. Only during school-time, of course.

I would think that my mother might have breathed a sigh of relief when it was vacation [chuckling]. But I know that she was very friendly with all of them, and seemed to enjoy them; it was somebody that she had quite a bit in common with, usually. And so she must have enjoyed them, to a point.

Teiser: You said your father was a great reader; had he been fairly much educated?

Rosenberg: Not in the sense of today's education; he had two years of high school. But he was educated in his own way; and most of it through reading. But really, you think we sat around with our noses in books, we really didn't have all that much time. Reading was a joy; that was recreation, I think, when you had time to read. I know it was to my mother, when she had time to sit down and read.

John Steinbeck and the Salinas Valley

Teiser: You said that your father was very much interested in John Steinbeck's books; I'm almost through reading East of Eden, which I think is a marvelous book.

Rosenberg: I'd hate to tell you how many years it's been since I read it, probably the year it was published, and I haven't really read it since.

Teiser: Do you remember the characters in it?

Rosenberg: Oh, yes. I know the Trasks were the fictional family, and the Hamiltons were the real family. The thing is that I don't know anything about, but knew many people that did, the stories about Salinas.

That was not the first book Steinbeck wrote; he wrote Of Mice and Men before that, and The Long Valley, Tortilla Flat, I believe. Because those were the books that my father, who died long before 1952-- He had never read East of Eden, if that's when it was published.

The other book that was very famous before that, have you never read Grapes of Wrath? That's what made his name, you know.

[looking at East of Eden] Copyright 1952, first published 1952. I know he never read this.

Teiser: Your father must have been a very broad-minded man to have admired Grapes of Wrath, and Of Mice and Men too; weren't they shocking to agricultural people, and people who lived in this valley?

Rosenberg: Oh, you're just talking about some people in Salinas. I don't know what that story is about Steinbeck. We read him from the day he published. And we were normal moral people. The only book that I really didn't care for was The Wayward Bus, and I didn't see too much point to that one.

Teiser: The Wayward Bus was later, too, wasn't it. [pause for a perusal of Mrs. Rosenberg's Steinbeck collection]

I wasn't thinking so much of the morals but the social point of view, particularly in Grapes of Wrath--

Rosenberg: I was working for the PG&E in King City at the period about which that book was written. The manager of the PG&E at that time had a very small revolving fund of $300 which, through the efforts of the local Rotary and Chamber of Commerce and maybe the churches, was to help these migrants.

You can't imagine; there's no exaggeration in that book about the pitiful condition of those people. And King City was a very small town, and it couldn't accommodate them. They were just migrants.

Rosenberg: I saw men and women that looked--and a child that couldn't walk, but it was two years old, because it probably had never had enough to eat. The nearest I have seen of starving people were those migrants that were going through California that particular year.

It must have been worse than the Central Valley, which is where that book is located, as I recall.

But the people would have an old model T Ford, or a model A, maybe; usually with very poor tires. And they would come in there [to the PG&E office], and he was very careful with this fund, but he was very sympathetic toward the individuals. You couldn't help but be, if you were human.

And he had the ability. There was a boarding house, that would take them in for overnight, and you knew that at least they had a meal. And he could give them five gallons of gas, and get them a spare tire, and get them on to the next town, which we hoped would be bigger, and able to take care of them.

I never felt that [book] was exaggerated.

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Teiser: You said your father recognized some of the characters in the Steinbeck books; do you remember what books or what characters?

Rosenberg: No, because I didn't know them, and you know how uninterested you are, especially at that age. He would sort of say, "Oh, that's So-and-So," and many of the areas he was very familiar with, because he'd grown up around Salinas. But we weren't.

Teiser: He felt they were accurate portraits, did he; he didn't complain about them?

Rosenberg: No, he just waited for the next book to come out. He thought Of Mice and Men was awfully good and awfully true. I never heard him criticize them, but of recent years--I think it's said that in your own country, you're not a hero. I knew a man quite well, he's long dead, but he was the editor and the publisher of the Daily Californian at that time, the Salinas daily paper. He had known John Steinbeck as a boy. He was a printer's devil for him, and he said the most useless one he ever had, and he never thought he'd amount to anything. He was on a trip one time, and came back--he'd been to France, I believe, with his wife--and they came back to New York, and the bookshops were plastered with copies of Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck.

Rosenberg: He couldn't believe it. He'd been gone almost a year. You know, in those days they went on a boat, and they'd gone to visit the country where his wife's relatives had come from, they'd been to the Basque country, and had been gone quite a length of time, some months. And meanwhile, this book had come out.

And he really hadn't known what had happened to Steinbeck since he'd been his printer's devil. And he said, "This says, 'John Steinbeck' on it." He immediately went in and bought a copy; because it must be another John Steinbeck.

But he was the one that recognized all the characters around Salinas; particularly those of ill repute.

Teiser: I'm sure I've heard that the general idea in Salinas was that they'd rather disown Steinbeck than not, for some years.

Rosenberg: No, I've only heard that recently, and I've always lived here, and to me, it is recently that I've heard that. I've never lived in Salinas; and maybe I didn't talk to the people that didn't like him.

I think some of his descriptions are beautiful; and some could have been left undescribed, but that's true of everything. When he described the Gabilans and all this valley, he had no equal.

Teiser: The opening chapter of East of Eden is a marvelous description of this valley; I think it's a gem, myself.

Rosenberg: But he was talking about after it was no longer a desert.

Teiser: It seemed to me that he wrote well of the yearly round of events, and of nature.

Rosenberg: He evidently loved nature, and his descriptions of scenes, they're so vivid to me. And that could have been what my father enjoyed about the books. His earlier books were concentrated around Salinas, because that was what he knew.

I always felt that his books were not as good when he went too far afield. The Winter of Our Discontent was not very--it wasn't as good.

Teiser: You yourself then did not feel that he was unjust to this valley and its people?

Rosenberg: Well, in our family, we thought he was a good writer, and we enjoyed him, and enjoyed the fact that we knew the area he was writing about. But we were not critics. I have known very few people that didn't like Steinbeck. I have known a few, but then I could see why.

Teiser: His mother taught at the Peach Tree School; where was that?

Rosenberg: You know they've just been making East of Eden over again; they've been filming it here. I mean, they used San Juan. And I believe I pointed out Wild Horse Canyon to you, which is only three miles south of King City. Well, the Hamilton ranch was up that canyon, in a side canyon, known as Hamilton's Canyon. But, to my knowledge there was no road through there then to Peach Tree. To me, as the crow files, Peach Tree might have been ten miles from where Steinbeck's grandfather lived.

Teiser: Did you know any of the Hamiltons?

Rosenberg: Yes, I did, as a child. His uncle, Will Hamilton, had the Ford agency in King City. It was Hamilton and Gauze. Then I knew a cousin of his at one time, named George Hamilton. A nice looking man who was a good dancer is all I particularly remember about him; and I really don't know whatever happened to him. He may still live in Paso Robles.

But as far as knowing any of the Steinbecks, no. I saw his father once; I never knew him. His father was the county treasurer, tax collector or something. I remember seeing him, but I never, to my knowledge, saw Steinbeck.

School Years

Teiser: When you were growing up, where did you go if you needed something simple, right away?

Rosenberg: Very simple, you went to San Lucas; a little more complicated, you went to King City. You had to go to King City to the doctor, the dentist, to the music teachers.

There's no point in saying we didn't do pretty much as I've been doing for years; you go to San Francisco to shop.

Teiser: Did many others in the area do so?

Rosenberg: No. It was unusual then. But we also went to Salinas occasionally; but that was not easy, to go there and shop.

Rosenberg: We spent our summers in Monterey, and I believe my mother used to outfit us for school a great deal at Holman's, the old department store there, which she liked. It's still there, and it's still a good store.

Teiser: Did many people from this end of the county go to Monterey in the summers?

Rosenberg: Not many; my mother liked to go. My aunt liked Pismo; she was more inclined to take her children to Pismo. My mother inclined to the Monterey Bay area.

For instance, my mother used to send the children with my aunt sometimes. Her sister from San Francisco would come and stay with us, if she could get away. But then my mother would come for part of it. We could never get my father there very often.

But it was a women's and children's beach. There were some people--Mrs. Hamilton from King City used to take her children over there. Mrs. Mathews, I remember, would be there occasionally, and sometimes there'd be a family visit. You rented a house for the month or the two months, however it was.

Teiser: Did you enjoy that?

Rosenberg: Yes, children take things for granted, you know. Yes, we did; we went to the beach, and played in the sand, and took swimming lessons; usually got sunburned.

And at other times we went to visit my grandmother in the city during the summer. I suppose it depended on the arrangements that my mother could make. However, as my grandmother got older, we didn't go up there so much because she'd been sick, and it was too much to send us up there. So then we only went rarely unless my mother could go with us and went to see her mother. But we didn't just go and stay ourselves, for any length of time, after my grandmother got sick.

Teiser: You had closer ties with San Francisco than most people in the valley?

Rosenberg: Much; we had more reason to go. After my grandmother died, my aunts and one uncle continued to live in the same house. So the house was always there.

My first two years in high school I spent in boarding school, in Watsonville.

Teiser: What was the school?

Rosenberg: Again we go back to the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Teiser: Did you enjoy that, or were you homesick.

Rosenberg: Well, it was one of those things; I was very homesick at first, but I probably cried when I left. I enjoyed it very much; it was a very good foundation that you would not have found in many public schools. I think it still is.

Teiser: I imagine a well-read child must have gone to high school very well equipped, too.

Rosenberg: Not necessarily, because we weren't the least bit discriminatory about what we were reading. Nobody put textbooks in our hands. I would say we read western stories and we read mysteries, and we read whatever was available. Uncle Remus I remember reading when I was well along in years, and still enjoying it.

You know, we read children's books, like Rebecca, The Little Colonel, all those books. But not necessarily intellectual books; unless Dickens was considered intellectual. He gave me a very warped opinion of English history that it took me a long time to recover from. [laughter] Did you ever read A Child's History of England by Dickens? Well, it takes years to eradicate the false impressions.

Teiser: It wasn't just from your ancestors?

Rosenberg: My Irish ancestors? Oh, well, they were 100 percent Irish and very argumentive, and one was a Sinn Fein sympathizer, and the other thought the Germans were the most wonderful cultured people of the world; and the other one thought that there was nobody like Queen Victoria, she was so wonderful.

We didn't grow up with that idea that the English were tyrants or anything. My grandmother had seen Queen Victoria, when she was a little girl. That's the only time I think Queen Victoria went to Ireland, but I don't think she was very nice to the Irish.

My grandmother used to tell us that when we got older she'd take us to London to visit the Queen. So we believed her!

I've been to London, but I have never been invited to tea at the palace.

Teiser: Then you came back to the valley to finish high school?

Rosenberg: I didn't go very far, I only went to Watsonville, you know. Yes, I finished high school in King City.

Teiser: Was your schooling as good there as in Watsonville?

Rosenberg: I assume it was, I was not a very receptive age.

Teiser: Probably had a good time, or--

Rosenberg: No, I really didn't; I was never one of the people that wanted to repeat my high-school years. I didn't have a bad time, I don't mean that; but it's--I have a niece, and she and her husband (and they're in their thirties now) date everything from their class in high school. I've had none of that feeling. I mean I know who was in my class. There weren't very many; but if you ask them if they know somebody, they'll say, "He wasn't in my class." Meaning a year behind, or a year ahead.

School was so small when I went, you knew everybody; it didn't really matter if they were in your class. They didn't have to be a senior when you were a senior for you to speak to them.

I don't regret it, and it was interesting; I learned a lot there.

King City and Its Environs

Teiser: How has King City changed in these years since?

Rosenberg: Very little.

Teiser: You pointed out to us buildings, two I think, that were hotels, railroad hotels, for when there was a passenger train.

Rosenberg: It really doesn't have a great deal more business than it did when I was growing up. (This could be disputed.) But it has a very nice residential section, and a large residential section. The fact that all of California is on wheels now has made it more of a motel and restaurant and service station town. Nearly all other new businesses are connected with agriculture. For instance, crop dusting. Out toward the airport, and on that side, there's this Basic Vegetables, dehydrated, and it employs many people. Another smaller place, called Cal Spice, and still another, but this is all out east of town by the airport. And the Maggios' carrot shed. [Carl Joseph Maggio, Inc.] These are places that employ a lot of seasonal people. And the grape vineyards.

Rosenberg: Anything that has added to the income of King City, to my knowledge, is agricultural, or very tied in to agriculture. There isn't a Ford garage any more. At the minute, they've closed. Right now, things are closing right and left, you know.

Teiser: Did it have a social life of its own, that people from the area took part in?

Rosenberg: Oh, it's hard to describe. It's a pleasant town to live in, everybody tells me.

I haven't lived in it very much. It isn't the center of the social life as it was when I was young.

Teiser: It was then, was it?

Rosenberg: Well, it was a state of mind. It was to some people, and wasn't at all to others.

Teiser: Did it have a newspaper that covered the news of the whole area?

Rosenberg: Oh, yes. It still does. But it's a weekly. When I was growing up, there were two weeklies, which made it more interesting. They were always at odds. But now it's just the one paper, The Rustler. However, the same man owns the Greenfield News and the Soledad Bee, and the Gonzales Tribune, I think. I'm not positive about Gonzales. And they do have a good printing press, and the paper has better pictures in it than most newspapers, I can say that. But it's only a weekly.

Well, I'm sure you read the [San Francisco] Chronicle, don't you? I say the Chronicle is just a blown-up version of the King City Rustler. I read it every day, but it's a terribly insular newspaper. It tells you who had lunch with who, and who went to dinner, and who danced at the debutantes' ball.

As addicted as I am to the Chronicle, which I think is an addiction and the only show in town--when you get out of California and see a newspaper, you're surprised.

I think the Canadian newspapers are good; very interesting to me, because they're written in English.

Teiser: The Los Angeles Times isn't bad.

Rosenberg: I don't care for it because I can't find anything in it. It's supposed to be a better newspaper; is there a good newspaper in Sacramento?

Teiser: The Bee.

Teiser: After you finished high school, then what?

Rosenberg: I didn't go on to school after that. I worked in an insurance and real estate office for a while in King City; and then I worked in San Francisco for a year, an insurance company, Scottish Union and National Insurance Company.

Then I worked for the Associated Oil Company for about three years; two years in San Jose and one year in King City. That was before it was, what is it, it's Getty now, I guess. At the time I worked for it, it was the Associated, then it became the Associated Tidewater.

Then I worked the longest for the Pacific Gas and Electric in King City; and that's where I was working, at that time, when I saw the remnants of the Grapes of Wrath. I didn't see how they were living, but I saw how they looked. You can't believe the impression it made on me at that age; and of course, many of those same people have prospered, and are among our respected and reliable citizens. But I must say--my mother was sick; my sister had a girl helping her in the house, and I believe she was from Arkansas, and my brothers always referred to her as 'the foreigner.' They were young.

But those people weren't easily accepted in California, particularly in this valley at first. But this valley has always had Hispanic people. Now some local people won't accept the fact of the Mexicans. And they're here. They were here before we were. Yes, it's not the same one, I must admit; but my father and uncle did both talk what is now known as field Spanish, because this county was full of Spanish people. If you read Tortilla Flat you'll realize that the whole county was full of their descendants, frankly the people that owned these grounds.

But there is a divisiveness in the valley that I don't like between what they refer to as the 'gringos' and the Mexicans.

Teiser: Who worked, for instance, around your father's ranch?

Rosenberg: Garcias. They were usually named Garcia, but sometimes they were named Soberanes; and once in a while, Boronda, and usually, or quite often, the women that helped my mother in the house were the same families.

Teiser: Then these were old Hispanic valley families, is that right?

Rosenberg: Yes, they'd lost their land to the gringos, as I'm sure you've read. And often they were the people that worked for us. Also there were people from neighboring ranches. Plasketts worked for us.

Rosenberg: But when I tell you you often had beans for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, that was usually because you had quite a few Spanish people working for you.

Teiser: Did the older Spanish settlers resent the new Mexican arrivals?

Rosenberg: I don't know; I suppose it would depend on who you talked to. I would think, having the same tongue, they would be more sympatico.

Teiser: But the "gringos"--

Rosenberg: Well, that's just my expression--

Teiser: Yes, it's an old expression--did they object to the new "wetbacks?"

Rosenberg: Not all of them, not all of them. But this area of California grew up, and I think all California probably grew up on imported labor, or a form of slave labor, no matter what you called it.

When I was a child, there was a Chinese store in King City, run by somebody named Lon Sing, and my mother and father both traded there. That was a very nice store, and you always had firecrackers on the fourth of July.

My first recollection of people working on the railroads were the Hindus with the turbans. There were many Hindus; and Spreckels Sugar Company has a big ranch, it's out of King City, and they had Hindus working on the beets. And you don't forget them, because they had turbans. And then I remember the Filipinos around Salinas, working in the strawberry fields and the lettuce fields. And the Japanese.

Of course, this is where I am confused. I usually know Chinese people, but other Orientals I'm not so sure of; and probably they're not sure of what we are, either.

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Rosenberg: The Hindus that I saw were at Spreckels, and on the railroad too. And then, probably, there was some act that didn't allow them to come in any more.

Teiser: Where did the Hindus who were here go?

Rosenberg: Some went to the Imperial Valley. I know a man that's half Hindu and half Mexican, from the Imperial Valley. Very bright man. His last name is Mohammed. His father was one of the Hindus that came here. And there are several of them in the Imperial Valley. His mother was a Mexican from Mexico. I never can remember his first name. I always can remember his last name; but his first name is odd, and then they have contracted it to a nickname.

Teiser: Was there Chinese labor too?

Rosenberg: I don't recall them very well; but everybody had a Chinese cook. I've heard people talk about it. But the only one I really remember was a Chinese cook that went around with a cook wagon for a threshing machine crew for Bill Casey. But I've heard that they were quite common, and I heard my father talk about the Chinese cook he had just before he was married. And about their queues. And of course, I was in San Francisco, and I was very familiar with Chinese people. That's why I say I usually know Chinese and I recognize their voices.

Then I remember the bracero program very well, when I was first married, and the prisoners-of-war were here, in the fields.

Teiser: From Italy?

Rosenberg: Germany, these were Germans. I think we had both, but those that were here I particularly remember as being Germans. There were Italians, too, but we didn't have any contact with them. But I saw them in the fields.

And now we have the "wetbacks." So which do you think is the better? People have to live. I don't happen to have any animosity towards the Mexicans. I've been to Mexico; I haven't known any that I haven't liked. But I may not have had any bad experiences with any, and I grew up with cooks in the house that made tortillas. I have a feeling of sympathy towards them.

Teiser: Mr. Trescony said in his interview that he thought the bracero program was good; he liked it.*

Rosenberg: Most of us did. To my knowledge, they didn't cause much trouble. Mr. Trescony and I are both members of the same church group, but I think the Catholic church was very opposed to the bracero program, and I don't know who else was.

Teiser: He said that, at one time, I guess they were picketing at his ranch, he went out and told them in Spanish--

Rosenberg: He is a linguist, you know.

Teiser: I gather so; because what he told them was fairly complex. You'd have to know pretty good Spanish to say something about--

Rosenberg: That's his mother tongue.

Teiser: --that, rather than spending their time picketing at his ranch, they should go back and develop their own country; that they had a country full of natural resources, and they should put that same amount of energy into that.

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*Julius Trescony, An Heir to a Land Grant, University of California, Davis, Oral History Center, 1978.

Teiser: I don't think he meant that they shouldn't be here; but that they shouldn't do mischief.

Rosenberg: Well, they shouldn't be picketing. Everybody in agriculture, if you see those red flags, you literally see red yourself. They are very inciting, because that's a year's work waiting to be harvested. And they could negotiate all they please; but to not get a crop out that's ready, that is unspeakable for a farmer. It is to me. And I haven't put my own physical effort into it like these men have that get worked up. But to think you've put a year's work into that, and your crop is ready, and if they're picketing you and not somebody else, the price is high. It's no wonder violent things happen, because there's a great deal of money at stake in these vegetable crops. It's your livelihood.

Teiser: I guess nature gives you one set of problems, and--

Rosenberg: But you can overcome that; then to have somebody strike your fields--it's infuriating. And as I say, it affects me the same way.

Teiser: What's the answer?

Rosenberg: Brighter people than I haven't found it. Many people are, presumably, devoting their minds to it.

Teiser: Recently at the University of California someone was saying that, now that Mexico's oil and other resources seem to be developing, probably we won't, in time, have access to inexpensive labor, even if we want inexpensive Mexican labor. Have you heard anything of that?

Rosenberg: I've seen the oil fields on fire in the state of Tabasco, where they're losing so much energy it was unbelievable. But I think once they conquer the technology of it--

We should be asking favors of Mexico, really; but we don't seem to be bright enough as a nation to understand that. I'm sure you remember when whoever was our Secretary of State turned down the natural gas offer from Mexico; very few people have forgotten that. The mistake of the century.

Teiser: You said that your brother was particularly good at dry farming; do I remember that correctly?

Rosenberg: He was a good farmer, and he was a good cattleman. He, I think, may have liked cattle better.

Teiser: When you're a dry farmer here, what are your crops?

Rosenberg: You have very little choice: it's usually barley. You could plant wheat or oats. The safflower, now, you can do in dry farming. You could do beans, but I don't think they'd be very profitable; you wouldn't get enough to justify it. There's very little variety in dry farming.

Teiser: Beans has been a crop here?

Rosenberg: Not dry farmed in my lifetime. Irrigated. On this ranch, the dry farming is barley.

Teiser: What's the difference between a good dry farmer and a poor dry farmer?

Rosenberg: That's sort of a foolish question. Too much depends on the weather. That is the most peculiar question I ever heard. Maybe he had good land.

No, there's a great deal of science to it, to know when to put it in, and what kind. After all, you have a great choice of barley, there're many varieties. There's feed barley, and then malting barley and milling barley. And some do better than others; I think the difference is knowing your soil and getting your crop in. If you don't put it in, you're not a very good farmer. It's pretty elementary, is what I mean. There's a certain amount of guesswork to it all. I couldn't explain dry farming to anybody.

Teiser: Let me ask you another foolish question, then. When you said dry farming, do you really mean absolutely no irrigation?

Rosenberg: Yes, you depend on nature. There are other things. You know, only California and the Southwest need irrigation. They do dry farming all through the Midwest. The wheat fields of Kansas, that's dry farming. Cereal crops are often dry farming. Irrigation is only what they have in deserts. [laughter]

In the state of Washington, they put in tiles to drain off the excess water so they can farm. The dry farming means you're dependent on the rainfall, that's all.

Teiser: Here in this valley, in this area, has land gone out of dry farming and into irrigated? Has there been a big shift over the years that you've seen?

Rosenberg: There's usually been irrigation along this river, between the dairies and the alfalfa. But when you get too far away from the river you just have difficulty finding water.

Teiser: There are no major government irrigation projects, are there, through here?

Rosenberg: We're not like the San Joaquin or the Imperial Valleys. We do have two dams; but the first one was built by the county, and the second one, I think, has state funds. It may have some federal in the actual building of the dam. But they're none of these big projects. That is canal irrigation, when they have that. We have well irrigation. There's a very great difference, and I didn't realize how much difference there was 'til I used to go to the Imperial Valley so much. Many similarities, and many differences. But it's all irrigated farming.

Now, you couldn't dry farm in the Imperial Valley; you can dry farm in the San Joaquin.

Teiser: I think we've asked you enough foolish questions for today; it'll get worse tomorrow.

Further Recollections of Childhood, and the 1930s

[Interview 2: June 25, 1980]##

Rosenberg: This is a picture of my grandmother's house in San Francisco. I believe that's my sister and I, I'm the largest, and two neighboring children. The bay window was in front, but there was a bay window on the dining room side that doesn't show. You can see that's a good example of Victorian.

Teiser: The Landmark Preservation Advisory Board Report [Appendix I] says there was no basement.

Rosenberg: There was. It must have been a partial basement. Otherwise, the description given there is correct.

My grandmother had six twenty-five foot lots, and the house occupied approximately half of them.

There was a driveway to the side; which I vaguely remember, but I've thought about it recently. It went back to a basement opening, where I can just remember they would haul the coal for the winter, and they poured it in that basement window.

I always thought of the house as pure Victorian. Actually, you know, I think it's more Georgian than Victorian. I have been in Dublin, and there's this area of Georgian houses. Have

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*See page 10.

Rosenberg: you been in Dublin? There's a beautiful area of what I refer to as Georgian houses; and of course the Victorian was a combination of anything that anybody liked at that day. There was a great deal of Italian influence.

It was built by Irish people, that's what makes me think that. Sybil Connelly's store in the Victorian house on a certain Dublin square (if I said the name you'd recognize it)--all the fashion houses are on this square, which happens to be a very beautiful square in Dublin, and they refer to the houses as Georgian. Which was after Queen Anne. Queen Anne was more peaked in my recollection. Were there some other questions you wanted to ask?

Teiser: One of the questions that occurred to me was, where did your family buy books?

Rosenberg: I feel like Queen Mary. We had books. My mother came as a teacher. We have many teachers' books; my aunt was a teacher.

Many of the books I have in this house--I have a set of Dickens that was my mother's. It's in another room. That's another set of Dickens; one of Walter's aunts had a set. George Elliot came from Walter's brother, James.

In those days people bought books. They didn't have access to public libraries. In San Francisco, as far as I know, the only library that I ever heard of, as a child growing up, (and I was never in it but my mother remembered when Kathleen Norris worked in it) was the old Mechanics' [Institute] library. So she must have gone there to get books.

And I think teachers bought their books, and I'm sure the children bought their books. Some of my father's books have his name in them as a student. You know, they were bought when he was going to school.

And you remember that we went to San Francisco a great deal. Now the school that I went to, this was a one-room school that maybe had twelve students most of the time, had a library that was part of the county library. And that was where we read the Five Little Peppers and the Little Colonel stories, and things like that.

Some of the teachers bought books for the school library, some of the books were circulating from the county library.

Rosenberg: Then, we subscribed to magazines, the family subscribed to magazines. In those days you read many stories, continued stories, in the magazines. I don't know whether it was the Woman's Home Companion or what magazine that used to publish Kathleen Norris' novels; you must know that.

Teiser: Wasn't it the Saturday Evening Post?

Rosenberg: No. They published Clarence Buddington Kelland. This was a woman's magazine, and every time that next installment came, that was the day family members sat down and read it. My mother was never a great admirer of Kathleen Norris; she thought her husband was a far better writer, but I think she made the money, with her novels. She had a very interesting life. And I think Mary Roberts Reinhardt wrote for the Saturday Evening Post.

And then we had many books as gifts. We were nearly always given books. And because we were in San Francisco, there was Paul Elder's and there was Newbegin's. We always knew where to go to get a book if we wanted it. I know I knew where to go when I was old enough to buy them, so I must have been taken there. I know my aunt was still teaching as we grew up, and gave us many beautiful books. Some of them I've passed on to my daughter, children's books, you know in the days when they were illustrated. Like Squirrel Nutkins.

Teiser: Another thing I think we didn't ask you is what San Lucas was like in earlier days. It's shrunk considerably, I gather--

Rosenberg: But I really don't remember. I remember when there were two stores; and I remember when there was what was called a bandstand in the center of town, where they had music, and where they also played baseball. And I remember when there was an ice cream parlor. But I was very young; I don't think there were two stores after I was ten years old. But at one time, well, it was comparable to King City, I guess. There are pictures of it.

And what happened to San Lucas, the story is that before Prohibition they had something in California known as "local option." And San Lucas voted to be dry and King City voted to be wet, and San Lucas immediately went down, so I've heard. Ten miles difference, but many people were like we were, five miles from San Lucas and ten from King City. Which shows that Prohibition doesn't pay.

And then I also remembered hearing this, again when I was very young, that there was a blind pig in King City, which was the name for a bootlegger in those days. This is before the Volstead act. I took it very literally and expected to see one, I remember.

Teiser: It occured to me that, in East of Eden, there are descriptions of brothels in Salinas, but the implication was that there was no brothel in King City. Is that right?

Rosenberg: Well, when I was growing up there were several. Probably Steinbeck didn't know about them. I can't say how old I was, maybe fifteen. I know of two. There was the Apple Orchard, and the one by the Shell Oil Company which was always referred to by the lady's name whatever that was, Stella or something.

I know there were those two; there may have been others. After all, I wasn't really patronizing them. And I don't think Steinbeck ever was around King City very much. As a young boy he may have been out at his grandfather's ranch; but I never heard of his living around King City. He could describe the area.

But I guess Salinas was very infamous. This Paul Parker I mentioned, who said he was so astounded to find Grapes of Wrath in every bookstore in New York, said that that was very accurate reporting on that area in Salinas. I'm sure he knew, because he was a newspaper man.

Teiser: Then the other thing that perhaps I should ask you a little about was--part of your youth was during those Depression years. You mentioned the situation of migrant workers. But I'm sure the Depression affected you as it did everyone else. Was your family farm affected by it?

Rosenberg: Of course, everybody was affected by it. I lived in the area. Prices were very depressed. It was in that period that I was working for the PG&E in King City; and that's when I saw these people about whom the Grapes of Wrath was written, about an era about five years previous to its publishing. I think it took a long time to write it. And I did not see the Central Valley; but I did see the trickle, and it probably was a great deal more than a trickle, that came through this area.

Teiser: But as for the people who lived here, did they--

Rosenberg: There was a Depression, of course there was, and nobody had very much money. Some people would think of us as all having been land-poor; but we didn't think of ourselves as being poor.

We had local dances with what I think the young now call "country music," but we had little orchestras. Some of the people from Arkansas came and played.

Rosenberg: One man I remember, a neighbor of ours, used to think, "Why that girl's on the radio, she sounds just like the voice on my radio!" When he heard one of those hillbilly song singers in one of these little orchestras, he thought it was the same girl he had been hearing on the radio. We were very sociable with our neighbors in those days.

Teiser: You didn't feel oppressed, as some people did.

Rosenberg: No, we were happy; we had a very happy childhood. And if we were suffering, we didn't realize it.

Teiser: And your family didn't have to change its ways, or modify living arrangements because of the Depression?

Rosenberg: I don't like that question: I will say no.

Teiser: Why?

Rosenberg: I'm appalled at people that dwell on it, and I suppose--my daughter has a friend that mentions it every other day, as if it happened day before yesterday. It was a period we lived through. It wasn't that bad. We didn't have very much money, but neither did anybody else that we knew.

Teiser: That brings us back to where we left off yesterday, chronologically I think we must have come up to '39.

The Brandenstein Family

Teiser: Do you call the name Brandenstein "Brandensteen or "Brandenstine"?

Rosenberg: I call it "Brandensteen." I don't know which is correct. I really don't know very much German. However, they, at times, avoided German expressions, and I think we have preferred the Anglicized.

Teiser: They were not in the branch of the family that changed the name to Bransten, though.

Rosenberg: It was the same family, but a different branch. Those were the MJB Coffee people who were relatives. It's a difficult relationship for me to describe, but I think M.J. Brandenstein was a cousin of my husband's grandfather, Meyer Brandenstein. I believe they were cousins, but Jewish people are different; it might have

Rosenberg: been his first, second or third, I don't know. I assumed it was first, because when I say cousin, I mean first; and if it's anything else I say distant.

Teiser: Who is the student at Santa Clara University who wrote the history of this San Bernardo rancho?*

Rosenberg: Susan Rosenberg (now Herzog). That's my husband's granddaughter. She lives in Portola Valley.

Teiser: Does Meyer Brandenstein come down in your husband's family's tradition as a man of invention, or cleverness, or how did he seem to be characterized?

Rosenberg: As a dreamer. I would say a man of vision, but they considered him a dreamer. He, I think, for his day, did remarkable things with this ranch.

It was originally Godchaux and Brandenstein** and they were--do you know this story?--they were wholesale butchers in San Francisco.

In fact, when I was first married, the family still owned some corrals out on Potrero Hill, that they sold later; and they always pointed out that was where the corrals were. However, I don't remember it; but you could see it from the Potrero. I think they put temporary housing in during the Second World War.

But they were wholesale butchers, and they wanted places to pasture their cattle until they were ready for slaughter. And of course they acquired this ranch when they knew the railroad was going through. You wonder why I don't dislike the railroad, but I never disliked it. I had no great reason to dislike it, because they had bought this ranch in the expectation of the railroad going through. And they also acquired a ranch in Nevada, these two men. I believe the Nevada ranch was in the Ruby Mountain area, but there again, I'm not sure of that.

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*It is included in Portrait of a Town.

**The partner was Lazard Godchaux. The 1872 San Francisco directory lists the firm as M. Brandenstein & Co., wholesale butchers at "First Av., South S.F." with offices at 529 Clay Street. The two men acquired Rancho San Bernardo in 1871, and in 1898 Brandenstein took over his partner's interest. The transfer is recorded in the Monterey County Recorder's office, Deeds Book 57, page 140.

Rosenberg: When they decided to dissolve the partnership, Meyer Brandenstein got this ranch, and the Godchauxs took the ranch in Nevada. They were both for holding cattle for slaughter, or for fattening cattle; it was long before anybody thought of these feedyards that you see all the time now.

That's why I say, I never saw the man, but he must have been a man of some vision. It's a story in this area about his having tried to dam the Salinas River, and the family referred to it as 'Grandpa's ditch.' There's still some indication of it about eight or nine miles south of the ranch house. That is pretty much under irrigation now. He apparently spent quite a bit of money to dam the river, which has been very difficult to do. To this day, you can't foretell which way that river's going if it comes up, though it has been dammed back in the hills. That was one of his things.

He had an orchard planted, and I think he had Chinese that ran the orchard. And I know they had a Chinese cook, because there used to be a room back of the kitchen that was always referred to as "the Chinaman's room." There hadn't been a Chinaman in it for at least fifty years, I'm sure, but that was where the Chinese cook had lived.

Then around the time of the early 1900s, I believe, he became sick, and I think he died in 19-- I always connected his death with the 1906 earthquake. And that, evidently, changed their lives a great deal, because Walter's mother and aunt, who lived here from the '30s on, always referred to the Fire as if there had never been a fire before or since; and it had been 30-odd years since that fire.

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Rosenberg: Meyer Brandenstein's widow [born Fanny Schweitzer] lived for many years after his death, possibly thirty years. Meanwhile, Walter's father, Joe Rosenberg, took over the management of the ranch. I believe he had also been in the wholesale buying of grain previous to that.

I heard it was 1907 that he took over the active management of the ranch for his mother-in-law, who owned it. While grandfather lived, he spent quite alot of time here; but his wife never did.

Somewhere I have a copy of the fact that the ranch has been operated by this same family for over a hundred years, which is a long time.

Teiser: Was Joseph Rosenberg "Joe"?

THIS GROUP OF PHOTOGRAPHS AT SAN BERNARDO RANCH WAS TAKEN IN 1889.

On the Brandenstein porch, left to right: John Martin, Bernhard Schweitzer, Meyer Brandenstein (in hammock), Mrs. Bernhard Schweitzer, Emma Patek, John Garrissere, Leon Guggenheim (in hammock), Lazard Godchaux (?)(seated in chair), and Linda Brandenstein.

Georgia Schweitzer in front of the porch of the Brandenstein home, with an unidentified individual in a hammock just behind.

Walking in the grape arbor with strong sun behind them were Flora Brandenstein, left, and her sister Linda, later Mrs. Joseph Rosenberg.

below:

The Meyer Brandenstein home, with John Martin at the left of the large tree trunk and Meyer Brandenstein at the right. Inside the shrubs in the center was a fountain; its spout of water is visible here. It was still functioning in 1982. At the left is a grape arbor which also still existed in 1982.

On the croquet ground in the Brandenstein garden, Jesse Koshland and Linda Brandenstein.

On the Brandenstein porch, left to right: Georgia Schweitzer, John Garrissere, Emma Patek, Linda Brandenstein, Lazard Godchaux, and Myron Goldsmith.

At the ranch picnic grounds, Georgia Schweitzer (left) and Emma Patek.

The irrigation canal built under Meyer Brandenstein's direction came to be known to later generations as "Grandpa's ditch."

[For a discussion of these photographs, see pages 90-91.]

Rosenberg: It was always written as Joe; his name was Joseph, but it was always written as Joe. I never met him, though I'm old enough to have met him, but he had died before I was married.*

Teiser: Had he married Meyer Brandenstein's daughter before he came to the ranch?

Rosenberg: Oh, yes, long before.

Tieser: Was he from San Francisco, too? I was looking for his name in the voters' records here--

Rosenberg: They all lived in San Francisco. But he died in the '30s. I would have thought you might have found him in the late '30s, I'm sure they voted here, they all voted here after 1935. But they maintained a home in San Francisco until their mother's death.

Teiser: I did find him in 1924, in the voters' list.

Rosenberg: Oh, well, that's earlier than I would have thought, because he was here a lot. But his wife and sister-in-law, and his mother-in-law lived in San Francisco. 1924 would have been the time you found Walter Rosenberg.

Teiser: Both, I think.

Rosenberg: That was my husband; because that's about the time he would have been voting here.

Rancho San Bernardo and San Ardo

Teiser: What is the story about Meyer Brandenstein and the Southern Pacific railroad? Would you tell that?

Rosenberg: I wish I knew it completely. We are negotiating with the railroad right now to do something about ending that 99-year lease, which dates from 1886. This is to clear the title.

Nearly everybody else gave the right-of-ways outright, or sold them outright, and there's a big difference. And, I don't know whether it was he or Godchaux, because both names are on it, but I think Godchaux may have negotiated it.

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*Joseph Rosenberg died in 1937.

Rosenberg: But we inherited it; it's supposed to be a 99-year lease, and they were supposed to keep up the rail fences for the length of the right-of-way, which I think was twevle miles or something. It ran along the edge of the San Bernardo grant. The fences have very much fallen into disrepair.

The trains, at that time, I suppose were coal-burning, and they had to stop in San Ardo for water. Water is very important in this country. They found good water that they had to bring across the river to the depot. And the engines had to be watered in San Ardo before they went on to Santa Margarita, which I believe, was the next stop. There they had to stop, as you know, to take on extra engines to go through the tunnels.

The other provision was that every train had to stop here. Well, of course that's been allowed to die long ago. You couldn't stop every train here in San Ardo, and just in recent years the depot was torn down. There's no longer a stationmaster. There's no longer a telegraph operator.

When I was first married, there was a stationmaster and a telegraph operator, and the local trains stopped. During the Second World War, as you may recall, there was an energy shortage. When I went to San Francisco at that time, there was a troop train that ran from Camp Roberts to San Francisco. And if I went to San Francisco alone, I'd go up in that troop train. But Walter would make arrangements with some passenger agent in San Francisco for the train to stop here, for me to get on and to get off. It was only about a four-hour trip.

When I got off, it was usually at midnight; and as you can see, the railroad's right over there. When I got home, he'd come over and pick me up. One train I got on (I remember these incidents because they were so funny) one conductor was very concerned at letting a woman off in the middle of nowhere, with no street lights or anything else, and I said, "No, my husband is expecting me and he'll pick me up."

They'd stop in such strange places down the track, you know, that they'd have to put the steps out for you. And another conductor came by and said, "Are you the lady that's getting off in San Ardo?" because I was usually the only lady on the train; they were all troops. He looked at me, and he said, "Well, I know you're not Eleanor Roosevelt, but who the hell are you?" I shouldn't have been riding a troop train.

(And it was the dirtiest train I ever rode on, bar none, and I've been on trains in Mexico and many other places, but that was the dirtiest train. I don't think they washed it from the beginning of the war 'til the end.)

Rosenberg: I remember that; it made quite an impression on me. At first I was a little insulted, being much younger then. Then this neighbor of ours, who was much older than I, always felt that he had the right to stop the train; and he would make arrangements occasionally for it to stop and pick them up on some tour to the races at Santa Anita, or something like that.

That would be the Daylight. I've never heard of his trying to stop Amtrak. But one time we heard the Brinan family was all going to get on the train and go to the races at Santa Anita. It had been quite a while since the passenger train had stopped at San Ardo, so we all went over to see them off and wave. I think that's about ten years ago, I don't know.

Eight years ago, I know my daughter was here, and a couple of her children; the oldest is now fourteen. It might have been eight or ten years ago. It stopped then, and it's stopped a few times since then; and I suppose, with great effort, we could stop it now if we wanted to.

Teiser: Are you going to write that into your new lease?

Rosenberg: I don't know. As I say, you know the Southern Pacific is being sold to Santa Fe.*

Teiser: Well, they need this right-of-way, no matter who--

Rosenberg: They need this right-of-way because it's the greatest freight line between the north and south of California. There is Amtrak. But it's passenger. But we have no contract with Amtrak. [laughter]

Teiser: You told us a story that Meyer Brandenstein had also brought trees for the ranch down on the train, was that it?

Rosenberg: Yes. All these trees you see, not around the house, but the original three lanes. This is the only lane that's kept up.**

Teiser: It's about a half-mile lane, is it--

Rosenberg: A little longer. There were three lanes north and south, all parallel with the river; and three lanes across. Of the lanes across, there's practically nothing left--an occasional tree.

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*The plan was abandoned several months later.

**The lane leading to Mrs. Rosenberg's house. See photograph page 64.

Rosenberg: But all this was referred to as the park, because he had hoped to make a park of it. I tell you, he was a man of vision, more than a dreamer to me; but I didn't meet him. I guess maybe he was difficult to live with.

Teiser: Maybe his wife was difficult to live with.

Rosenberg: She sounded like it. I didn't meet her either, but--

Teiser: Someone was saying that it's unusual for Jews to be agriculturalists, here anyway. It certainly doesn't look like it in Israel today. But at that time, and in California, there were few Jewish farmers, I think.

Rosenberg: Well, there's a ranch, you know where Camp Roberts is? That was owned by a Jewish family in San Francisco, the Hellmans, until they sold it for Camp Roberts.

Teiser: I didn't mean own land, I meant operate--

Rosenberg: Well, they operated that. Let's face it; I think they possibly are more inclined to be absentee landlords. Well, there are other places over in the valley. I think there are quite a few Jewish families from San Francisco that own land.

We used to have race horses many years ago, I used to hear my father talk about it; well, it was either an Arab or a Jewish family. The name was strictly semitic: Ali something. They had famous race horses around the turn of the century. Whenever I see the name I remember my father mentioning it, and I think he was somewhere in the area.

And the people that owned the hardware store in San Francisco had great holdings over in the other valley. A Jewish family. It was one of the good stores in San Francisco. Walter Newman. They had vast land holdings.

Now there's somebody else that's had some holdings, not so vast, maybe, the Schwabachers. I know a Jack Schwabacher who's always been interested in farming, and whose family had a ranch in Wyoming. And as far as I know, he's been in the cattle business. Now he may have been more in the feed lot business.

When I was growing up, there were always, always Jewish cattle buyers. Somebody named Jake Wallz [?], I remember him well. They'd come through the country. And maybe it was because of their father's business, but I used to hear Walter's mother and Aunt Flora talk a great deal about different people in the wholesale butcher business, which is connected with agriculture. In fact that's how this ranch was acquired.

Rosenberg: Now I actually don't know many of these people, but I'd hear them talk about it a lot. So I would never say they weren't interested in agriculture. Of course, we think of them as retail merchants. Of course, they did many other things, I guess, like everyone else.

Teiser: Did this ranch work well in conjunction with the wholesale butcher business?

Rosenberg: I really don't know; I assume it did. Apparently.

I think there was a large Godchaux family of daughters, but no sons. And the Brandensteins had no sons. So it fell to a son-in-law to manage it after Mayer Brandenstein's death. Sometimes that makes a difference in families, you know. And maybe when they just dissolved the wholesale butcher business--maybe both the men were elderly. I really don't know that.

Teiser: I read that they actually bought the ranch in 1871. You said it was in anticipation of the railroad--

Rosenberg: That's correct, because I think that's what Susan wrote; she really researched it.

Teiser: And in 1886 they subdivided the town--

Rosenberg: That's the railroad did that; that was when the railroad came through, 1886. And somehow, I have 1886 in my mind because it's in 1985 that the 99-year lease will expire. We've been approached about every ten years as to what we should do with it; and right now we are negotiating. We have to do something. My neighbor suggested, have them sign another 99-year lease and make them keep up those fences. [laughter]

I don't think they have any control over Amtrak. As a matter of fact, I doubt who <u>does</u> have much control over it. But it's a very pleasant train to ride. It doesn't seem to run on time very well, but it's a nice clean train, and when I took some children on it a few years ago, it had white table cloths on the table, and a rose bud; and the colored porters; and the food wasn't bad at all. Much better than some you've come across in this day and age.

Teiser: From here, where can you catch it?

Rosenberg: It runs right by here, but we get it (I've only done it a couple of times) from Salinas to San Luis [Obispo]; and they're about equidistant.

Rosenberg: The trouble is, it becomes quite a logistics experiment when you take several children. You have to have two people with cars to transport you to San Luis, and then they go home and somebody else meets you in Salinas. It's all right just for fun, I guess. It's a good way for children to see a train, because you go through tunnels, and you go over trestles, and you eat lunch. And their dressing rooms interest children very much. They're a far cry from the old train dressing rooms, nice and clean.

The nice things about trains and children is, they can walk around; there's no other mode of transportation, unless a boat, where children can walk around, and back and forth, and they don't get so restless. We made all our trips to San Francisco as children on the train, and I think it's the greatest way in the world to take the children.

Teiser: You went to King City to catch it?

Rosenberg: San Lucas. San Lucas was really a very large town in its day, even though I can't remember much of that. The store that is still operating there was originally Goldwater's. Talk about a Jewish family; that was a cousin of Barry Goldwater's father. There were two brothers: Simon Goldwater and Marcus. Now Julius Trescony can remember them, but I can't.

Teiser: Would you tell the story about the naming of the town?

Rosenberg: I'd much rather let you read it out of the place names book. Margaret doesn't think the book is correct, but I think it is.* It's the way I heard it.

Teiser: In the state library, there's a card in the reference file that says the first mention of the name, San Ardo, was found in 1886.

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*"The town was laid out in 1886 when the Southern Pacific reached the place and was named San Bernardo by M.J. Brandenstein [correctly Meyer Brandenstein, with no middle initial], who had bought the San Bernardo Rancho, originally granted June 16, 1841. When the Post Office Department objected to the name because of possible confusion with San Bernardino, Brandenstein created a new saint name by lopping off 'Bern.'"

Erwin G. Gudde, California Place Names. University of California Press, 1962.

Rosenberg: The reason was the confusion with San Bernardino, in the mails; and that book of California place names would have all I'd tell you.

Teiser: Dr. James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library, said that they used to tell the story, that it was the only saint who had ever been created by a Jewish family.

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Rosenberg: That's the story I'd tell you; they credited a Jewish cattle buyer with creating a new saint for the Catholic church.

Teiser: Were there other innovations of his?

Rosenberg: He was a very generous man. He gave the land for the cemetery, and the land for the school, which is now the recreation club (they bought more land later). And a generous amount of land to the Catholic church.

And in more recent years (I'm not sure whether Walter's mother was still living or not) the family donated land for the Episcopal church here in San Ardo. If those are things you mean.

One story is that Meyer Brandenstein built this very steep and rather dreadful road from Paris Valley to Lockwood, known as the San Ardo-Lockwood grade (I think he hired Chinese laborers to build it) so that the people from Lockwood could get their grain to the railroad. But that is a legend. These are things so long before my time that I really don't remember.

And also, he really must have been what was known as a character. If he were sitting on his front porch and the train didn't stop, I understand he would get in his buggy and get the next train to San Francisco [to the railroad offices], and then they all stopped for a while. Occasionally they would try to run one past him.

He could see from his front porch if they stopped or not, and whether anybody got on or off. You know, they were supposed to stop. But that again is a story.

Teiser: Do you think that the town, as it was laid out originally, (and there's a map in the San Ardo book, Portrait of a Town) was his doing?

Rosenberg: Actually, the railroad did it; they laid out these three towns that I know of, and I'm sure, many more. These were his specifications of 25-foot lots, however, in the town of San Ardo. In San Lucas, the lots were bigger, and in King City the lots

Rosenberg: were much bigger. I think the size of the lots was set at that because it was his land, or Godchaux's land; and they didn't know about any lots except 25-foot lots.

There's a book by this author, Ruth Bransten McDougall, have you read it, What Makes Manny Run? Well, that has some mention of the Brandenstein family; I think it mentions the Godchauxs, too.

Aunt Flora said it's not very accurate. She didn't care for that book at all. But the lady that wrote it was a descendant, I think, of that Brandenstein [M.J. Brandenstein]. I've met her. She's a very interesting woman and she seemed to know more about the Godchauxs and the Brandensteins than we did, really.

Walter's family was not very communicative. They'd tell many stories, but if you showed interest and asked a question, then they'd say, "Oh, I forget that." And they wouldn't tell you any more.

But I know their house in San Francisco was dynamited during 1906, I know that. And I think that Meyer Brandenstein had died within the year before it. Their house was on Van Ness*; and then they moved to a flat,** and stayed, I think, in that flat 'til the mother [Fanny] died, which had to be some thirty years, almost. Twenty-five to thirty years.

And Joe Rosenberg's mother, apparently, had a big house, too,*** which was not dynamited; and Walter always said he remembered going to Grandma Lena's, and then being sent down here with a nurse as soon as the railroad was running. But, I don't know if you know, the trains weren't running for several days.

He was seven years old at the time of the earthquake and fire. And he did talk about that quite a bit. Not to me so much, because I wasn't born yet, but to people who would come down that remembered it.

Naturally, it must have made a terrific impression on a child that age; and I know his grandfather, Meyer Brandenstein, was dead by then, because he never mentioned getting his grandfather out of

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*1305 Van Ness

**at 2442 Clay Street

***at 2123 Jackson Street. She was Lena (Mrs. Samuel) Rosenberg.

San Bernardo Rancho and the Town of San Ardo,
aerial view taken in June 1974 by William F. Winchell.

The railroad tracks are at the left, the Salinas River
upper right.

The town lies close to the eastern foothills of the Southern Salinas Valley. This view of the northern part of San Ardo shows a lima bean field, the town water towers, and, at the right, rail cars on a siding next to the main line.

At the entrance to San Ardo from the south is a marker created for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration. It is topped by a sculpture of a cowboy mounted on an oil well, which was made by Gene Delaney. The curved road to the left is Cattleman Road. At the right is Godchaux Street.

The San Bernardo grange hall is on Main Street. The town water tower stands next to the building. This photograph was taken on a Sunday in September, 1980, when the annual flea market was being held on the streets beside and in front of the hall.

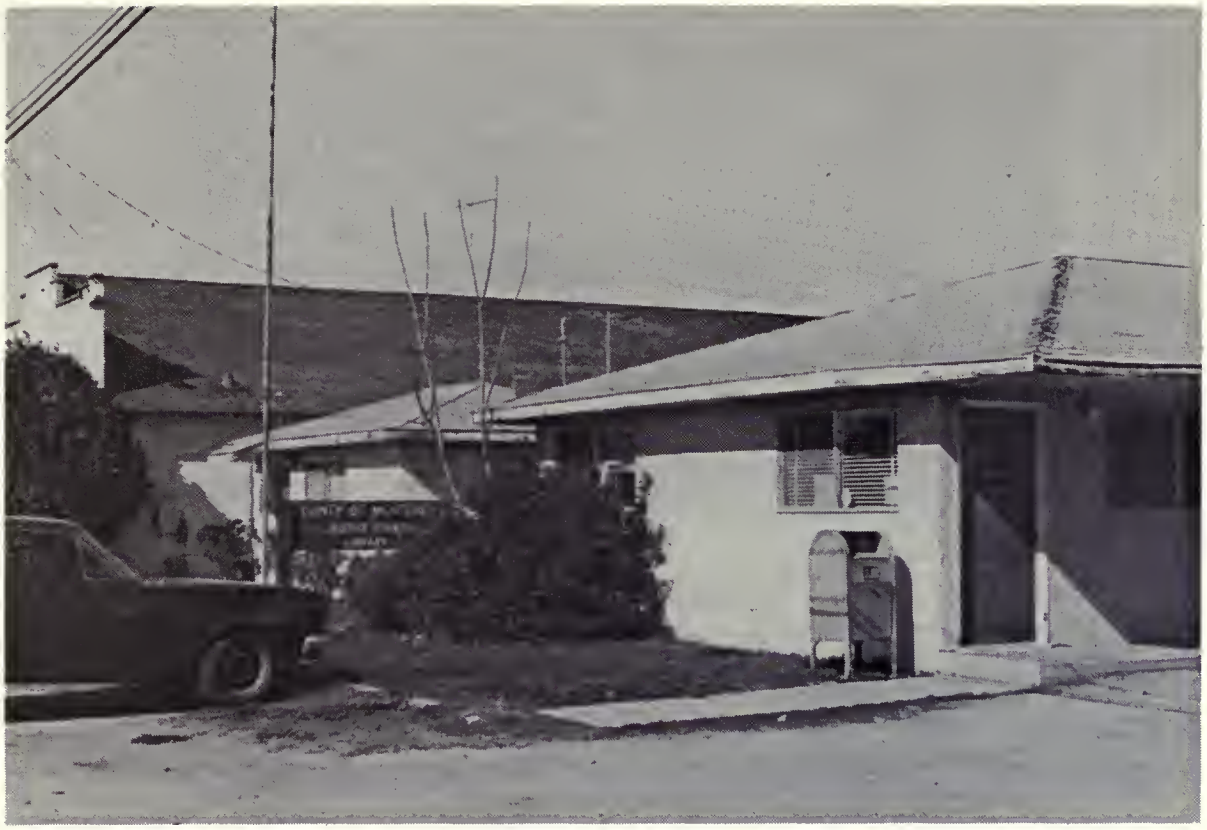
Lopez´ Market on Main Street, across from the San Bernardo grange hall, is San Ardo's major general store.

One of the oldest buildings in San Ardo, this was originally the residence of the manager of the Southern Pacific Milling Company. It is on Jolon Street.

Another of San Ardo's oldest buildings, this was originally the Robinson Brothers' store. It is now an apartment building. It is on Jolon and Main Streets.

A typical modern home, at Rico and Martin Streets.

A community of stationary mobile homes on Godchaux Street.



The San Ardo branch of the county library on Main Street. There was but is no longer a Justice Court in the town.

The playing field of the San Ardo unified district primary school, with the school buildings in the background.

Joseph Rosenberg Memorial Auditorium, High School, San Ardo

The R & M Bar & Cafe on Cattleman Road, serving Mexican and American food, is the longest-lived restaurant in San Ardo as of 1981. It has been for periods the only one.

The San Ardo cemetery. The land was given by Meyer Brandenstein. A cemetery district was later created to maintain it.

Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church

Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Church

Rosenberg: the house. And I think he had been confined to a wheelchair the last year he lived. He was a very heavy man, a short, heavy man.

Teiser: In this little town, was he the unofficial mayor? Was he the one who was the center of the town in the early days?

Rosenberg: I don't know; I've heard all these stories about him. He was rather dynamic, I'm sure. They just came and went. There is no mayor, as such, as you know.

San Ardo People and Their Activities

Teiser: Who else lived here then; what brought people here besides the railroad?

Rosenberg: The railroad brought many people of Basque descent, and many people of French descent, and then there were a few of the original California Spanish here. One of the grocery stores when I was married was still run by Joe Alvarado, who was descended from an early governor. However, there are no descendants of theirs around here now.

The families that came, many of them were from Alsace-Lorraine. They were Alsatians, some Alsatians; it was the war of 1870 that sent them here, you see.

There's a valley across the river here, that we call Paris Valley. And the Tresconys were instrumental in bringing many of the Basque people here as sheepherders.

There was, still is, I think, what we call the Basque hotel in San Francisco, I think it's Hotel España. Isn't it still there down on Broadway?

Teiser: There are still Basque hotels, but that hotel is gone.

Rosenberg: But that was where people would go to find laborers, and sheep-herders. The Tresconys brought many of the Basques in here because Julius Trescony's mother was a Basque, and her family owned that hotel at one time. Do you know the name of Aguirre? Well, her name was Aguirre; and I believe they had come to San Francisco from San Sebastian. After all, this isn't the only place where there are Basques.

Rosenberg: When I was first married and went to church here, it was a very linguistic area; people talked French and Basque, as well as English, after church. And Spanish. Now, they talk a great deal of Spanish and some English; very little Basque and French.

Teiser: The French people, did they take up farms?

Rosenberg: Well, that was all there was here, farming. There was no industry, as such. The cattle, sheep. Sheep are very much Basque and French. In the Midwest, you know, you can see that. And if they raise sheep in the Midwest, I find out they never eat the meat, they sell the wool; have you heard that? I'm the type of person that, when I have guests, I'm inclined to have a leg of lamb, because we eat our beef very rare. And when I say rare, it is rare; I only cook roasts for people I know. But if I just have somebody coming in; I'm inclined to have a leg of lamb; and I've been surprised at the number of people that never eat lamb.

Jewish people are very fond of lamb; all Mediterranean people eat lamb. And Irish people are equally fond of it. And Basque people. All eat lamb; and I don't cook my lamb in the French style, I cook it in, I don't know what you would call it, maybe the Irish style? Well-done. Pink lamb doesn't appeal to me. But many of these people, maybe they only had it pink. In my case it was because Walter couldn't stand to see lamb pink. The beef, we'd eat it rare.

Teiser: The people who took up the lots in the town--I assume it wasn't immediately sold out--

Rosenberg: There were many left after I was married. The family owned the town water system, and a great many lots. Many had been sold, but they still owned quite a few; the family no longer owns any lots in the town as it is laid out, and as it is defined on the maps.

But the people that bought lots were--well, I think there were the Chiappones. He was Italian and had a hotel, which is now a labor camp. Very few people bought lots, when I think about it. There were Wittmans, and--well, there was a great deal of railroad land around here too, you know.

Teiser: Did people sometimes live in San Ardo and work land outside?

Rosenberg: Not to my knowledge. There were very few people living in the town when I was married, and they either had stores or restaurants. There've always been a couple of restaurants, and a couple of stores, at times three or four stores.

Rosenberg: No, people that buy lots are people like--people that work in the oil fields. And the Chiappones owned quite a few lots. Their sons have houses on them, and the mother's still living. Now that takes up quite a piece of the town of San Ardo.

There were service stations, which have mostly closed, due to one thing and another. There are still three, but they're open a little spasmodically. Then there's a garage, and one restaurant that isn't open* and one restaurant that is. There aren't too many businesses in a small town.

There's a grange hall. There's a sign out there as you go out--

Teiser: Four hundred and forty-five population--is that accurate?

Rosenberg: It's from the last census. I don't know. I don't think it's changed much since then. There are a few what you'd call pensioners, people living on social security, elderly people that have never moved away.

What houses are for sale are snapped up immediately; there's always somebody looking for a house. There aren't many. I'm trying to think of what house has been built recently. We had two new houses last year. They were both built by young couples with growing families. One man works for Howard Sandich, who is a contractor for the oil fields; the other man has trucks and harvests beets.

But those were two new houses, which was rather unusual in one year for San Ardo; and both built by couples in their thirties, with young children. And they're nice houses.

Teiser: Did people buy, actually, 25-foot lots, or did they buy two of them and put a house in the center?

Rosenberg: Well, there is a subdivision down here which Walter's father, I believe, created, but there was very little on it. We call it the Brinan subdivision, because Walter sold it to some man who eventually sold it to Bill Brinan, and I think the lots are probably varied. They're 60 to 90 feet.

Teiser: As I go along and look around, it didn't seem to me that the lots were so narrow, but maybe I just wasn't observing.

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*It later reopened.

Rosenberg: No, you haven't seen it, you only see it on a map. I don't think anybody bought a 25-foot lot. But I'm sure they're defined that way on the tax bill. I have seen the map of the town and that's the way they were laid out.

The people who owned stores, of course, bought lots. Most of the original lots that were sold were on the road coming from the depot, for business purposes; it led directly to the school, as I recall. Then the highway, instead of going along the old county road, went through in a circular arc, and then there were more lots sold along there.

And consequently, because of the way the Cattlemens Road goes, there are a few three-cornered lots that nobody knows what to do with.

Teiser: Is the state highway the same as what is now called Cattlemens or Cattlemans Road (we see it both ways)--?

Rosenberg: Approximately the same road, with some changes in grade, etcetera.

Teiser: One of those three-cornered lots has nice rosebushes in it now.

Rosenberg: That's a 4-H project; it used to have a Christmas tree, and the Christmas tree did not thrive. This is as near as we have to a little park. It was put in about the time of the Bicentennial. It is nice; it makes a little change.

And there is the recreation club here that has the barbecue pits and tables down here by the teacherage. The teacherage is actually built on what was school property that Walter's grandfather gave to them, and when they built a new school they felt they needed a lot more land; so they acquired a much bigger piece, up toward town. The school has the most land in the town; naturally they don't pay taxes.

Teiser: Is there a municipal government now?

Rosenberg: No.

Teiser: You don't have city taxes, just county taxes?

Rosenberg: They do have county taxes; we are part of the county.

Teiser: In the social life of the town--there are so many varying people, that--

Rosenberg: Years ago, I think the grange might have been the center of the social life, but I rather doubt that it still is. In the twenties, for instance, they had a dance hall. It was upstairs somewhere. I always remember that, because we occasionally came to dances here. Those were Saturday night affairs. My feeling would be that social life is rather nil in San Ardo, if you are looking for Culture. But I think you find that everywhere. I think television ruins social life. In small areas particularly.

Teiser: But the schoolhouses were kind of social centers, too, in earlier days?

Rosenberg: I think you're thinking before my time.

Teiser: You said, however, there was a hall next to your Oasis schoolhouse.

Rosenberg: Yes, and they had dances occasionally.

Teiser: Are there any other things that Meyer Brandenstein did that created what's here now, today?

Rosenberg: As I say, I suppose what was inherited from him was the town water system. But that has been turned over to a water commission. There are small county commissions. There's a board for the cemetery, which is supported by county taxes. And there's this water and sewer commission that's--I can't explain. I think most of the people serve without recompense. The water and the sewer, I believe, go together, and I think that has a tax. Somebody does get a small salary for sending out the water bills and sewer bills, and they have a little building over by the grange hall.

And there is a county library here. A very nice woman, Winnie Hazen, runs it, and the children get quite a bit of use out of that. She's a conscientious librarian; and in the summer she'll have readings for the children on certain afternoons, which is very nice. My daughter's found her very helpful in getting any books the children need for their extra reading. The school does have a library, but the county library is helpful to the school children.

I notice each teacher taking her class over to the library, possibly once a week, and I know it's for the extra reading, and for the things that Winnie gets for them. So that really is, I think, a great help to the school, and I suppose saves them from buying books.

Rosenberg: Right now, there's a Red Cross swimming program going on, that goes on every year; and that's volunteer, as you know, and very good. The swimming pool belongs to the school and is administered by it. However, it is maintained by private funds.

I think all that would be considered quite good; I really do, for the size of the town, and the varied interests. They have the reputation of having quite a good school, with a good board.

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Rosenberg: You seldom hear of very much praise of the public schools, but since my grandchildren have been going here, I have felt it was quite good. And they came from a much larger school.

Teiser: Your daughter--

Rosenberg: She's very pleased with it.

Teiser: But doesn't she do some work for it, too? She probably adds to its value.

Rosenberg: But it was good when she came in. It so happens that most of the people on the board have been her contemporaries.

San Ardo Streets and Structures

[Interview 3: June 26, 1980]##

Teiser: You told us, when we were visiting here earlier, that some of the streets of San Ardo were named for specific people.

Rosenberg: The street, or road, at least, to the cemetery, is called Rico. There was a man named Francisco Rico, or Pancho Rico, that the little creek up here was named for. He was one of the original owners of the San Bernardo rancho.

So one street is named Rico and there's also Pancho Rico Road. Then there's a street named Martin, which, I believe, was for one of the early foremen on the ranch, and an old family in this area: John Martin.

There's a street called Jolon, which is logical; it goes across the river and out in that area, towards Jolon. And the wide street in town is Main Street. And Railroad Avenue is because there was a Railroad Avenue in San Francisco, where all the wholesale butchers were. My grandmother lived off that street, and I remember when it was called Railroad Avenue, before it was Third Street.

Rosenberg: Annette Street was named after a Godchaux daughter, so I've been told. There are no streets named for the Brandensteins. College Street was named because the school was there. There's a Godchaux Street. Center is the continuation of the lane to my house, I believe. The Catholic church is on College Avenue, and the school was moved from there up to Center.

I get these streets occasionally confused with the streets in San Lucas. Those in San Lucas were named for the Trescony daughters.

Teiser: What about Pleyto?

Rosenberg: Is there a street called Pleyto?

Teiser: On the map.

Rosenberg: Oh, well, that's the one that runs into the Pancho Rico creek, and there's no street there any more. The Pancho Rico's changed its course. This is a creek that, when it rains heavily and the creek flows for several days it's very high, and it will wash out a great deal of land. And it took that street.

I don't think anybody lives on Pleyto Street; but Pleyto is an area over towards Lockwood, so I suppose they just named it after that town. Pleyto is a little area like Jolon. Pleyto is much south of Jolon, so maybe there was another road through the hills, when you cross the river, before they had bridges, or something.

Teiser: Where did Meyer Brandenstein live here?

Rosenberg: Well, my daughter lives there. It's across the Pancho Rico.

Teiser: It's outside the town plan?

Rosenberg: Oh, yes.

Teiser: To the south?

Rosenberg: More east than south, in that direction.

Teiser: Is it far from the rail line?

Rosenberg: Not very far; it's about as far as this house is from it, about a quarter of a mile. It's across the Pancho Rico, which is the natural southern boundary of the town.

Teiser: That was originally an adobe home?

Rosenberg: Never to my knowledge. There is an adobe there that was built by Meyer Brandenstein for a store room. Who built the original house, I'm not sure.

I believe I've showed you the original U.S. Surveyor's plat of the grant [dated May 19, 1859]. It's hanging on the wall in the dining room.

I have the guarantee of title by the United States, after California became a state. The man to whom the grant was confirmed was a Soberanes.

I don't know whether he built the original house or not; the house had been one story, and Walter's father, Joe Rosenberg, added a second story. But the grape arbor and the fountain that are still there, and the bunkhouse, I believe, and the barns, were originally built by Meyer Brandenstein.*

The adobe was also built by him; it's just a square adobe that people used to build for storerooms. They were cool, and you kept, before the days of refrigeration, the slaughtered meat there. It had a screen. There still is the old screen cupboard where they kept the milk pans, I'm sure, and things like that.

Teiser: Then when was this house built?

Rosenberg: This house was built about 1940.

Teiser: And the lane of trees was just--

Rosenberg: Was there.

Teiser: And you built at the end of it?

Rosenberg: Not really at the end of it; we were limited by the power and telephone line. We needed the telephone, we needed the power line, and this was the most logical place to put it. There are more trees down the lane. That goes down, I don't know the exact distance.

That was the practical reason for choosing this site. The lane was here, in dire need of clearing at that time. And the electricity and the telephone were available.

Teiser: You did landscaping, did you?

Rosenberg: Well, I suppose we did, but after forty years, it's pretty overgrown right now. It could stand a little clearing out. The west side of the river is much prettier.

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*See photographs pages 36 and 62.

Two views of the Meyer Brandenstein house. The second story was added sometime between 1916 and 1920.

The ranch headquarters sign, with corrals in the background. The number 460 is the fire department's code for the location.

The shop and foreman's house, ranch headquarters.

The tree-lined lane leading to Mrs. Walter Rosenberg's home is known as Rosenberg Lane. The trees were planted by Meyer Brandenstein.

A field of lima beans to the west of Rosenberg Lane.

Mrs. Walter Rosenberg's home.

Mrs. Walter Rosenberg during interview.

The bed of the Salinas River as viewed westward from near the cemetery.

Looking eastward at part of the San Ardo oil field, about eight miles south of the town of San Ardo.

The Ranch and Its Water Supply

Teiser: The ranch itself. Was it originally, as Meyer Brandenstein had it, cattle alone, or did he have some crops?

Rosenberg: As far as I know, and I'm not very definite about this, there was probably very little, if any, farming on it. He did have an orchard put in, and I know that he particularly bought it for the pasture. I'm sure of that; he particularly bought it to hold cattle until they were ready for slaughter. And I'm sure, as much as you've read of the people like the Soberanes, they really didn't have anything but cattle. To my knowledge, they had hides, they had tallow, which are by-products of cattle; and that was their main commodity of trade.

The farming was very incidental then. What I imagine they may have done is cut wild hay in good years. It was as much agriculture as either the Mexican government, or those people who settled under the Spanish government, had. But you always read about their selling their hides and their tallow; in fact I think they killed the animals for the hide and the tallow.

Did you ever read Two Years Before the Mast? I think that was what they traded with. This ranch did not have one, but on most of the old grants you'd have a vineyard of some kind. On this one, Meyer Brandenstein put in the orchard.

Teiser: Did he start leasing the land along the river, do you think, for crops later, or--

Rosenberg: I have very little knowledge of that. That must have started probably about the time of his death, or somewhere in there.

We have a few pictures. One shows sort of a meadow with cattle in it; and the other one shows the people playing croquet in the front yard, I believe. And pictures of him in the hammock, on the front porch.*

But I know they had a Chinese laboring crew; and I somehow connect them with the orchard. I don't connect them with the dairy.

Teiser: Did he have dairy cattle?

Rosenberg: No, I don't think so; I've never heard that he did. Undoubtedly, everybody had a milk cow for the house, or a couple.

Teiser: When Joe Rosenberg took over, did he start leasing out land?

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*See pages 35 and 36.

Rosenberg: I think he did that early development, with the irrigation. I know he did. At the time I was married, he hadn't been dead very long. I recall there was 1,000 acres of irrigated land which had been developed over the years. And there were two dairy ranches, but those were leased to dairymen.

They themselves didn't have dairies, but there were two dairies on the ranch that I know of, because there's still a dairy barn up there, and anyone can tell a dairy barn. It's a long barn. It's entirely different from a horse barn.

Teiser: What about the water rights on the ranch?

Rosenberg: This is something that we're very concerned about now. We have the water rights, the riparian rights on both sides of the river for twelve miles. We have them if nobody takes them away from us--and they're not for sale.

Teiser: How could they be taken away?

Rosenberg: Legislation. That's one of my great worries.

Teiser: This is not federally irrigated?

Rosenberg: No, that had nothing to do with this area. But, haven't you ever heard of how Los Angeles will steal water wherever they can find it?! There's a piece in the Chronicle today about it. And, you know, Southern California's going to get all the water they can, and they'll take it wherever they can get it. They have the votes to pass the legislation to get it. The California riparian laws are very complicated. In fact, I asked a man, the other day, at Davis, who had some connection with the law school, if there would be any way to have a study of the riparian rights of California. My own lawyer tells me they're so complicated that it's a special study of its own.

I know one man that pretends to understand them, and maybe he does, an engineer. He's expounded to me at great length, but we don't agree always. He doesn't own any-- [laughs]

But it's a very complicated subject; it's complicated by the laws that were made for the hydraulic miners, by laws that come into hydro-electricity, so I've been told, written into the California laws. It covers such a variety of water.

And you do remember the story of Owens Valley, I hope? I grew up on two water stories; my San Francisco family was very proud of Hetch Hetchy. I was very young when Hetch Hetchy went in, but I certainly heard a lot of conversation about it. And it must have been a very controversial subject then.

Rosenberg: Then later, when I knew more people from Southern California I heard about Owens Valley. Those are more matters of history now. But I was alive at the time, a child, but--I did tell you that I spent quite a bit of time at my grandmother's house when I was a small child. I heard a great deal of adult conversation because it was a family of adults. And very politically minded, all with different opinions.

Teiser: I was just thinking--Hetch Hetchy was unpopulated when they took water away, Owens Valley--

Rosenberg: It was de-populated when they took it away, so I've heard.

Teiser: I was thinking of it in relation to this valley, which is now really populated.

Rosenberg: Well, it is of some concern. It's a violent business in this state. People used to kill over water rights, you know.

Teiser: The Pancho Rico creek here, which sometimes overflows, is that a source of usable water?

Rosenberg: It comes into the Salinas River; it's just another creek--

Teiser: You don't tap it on the way for use on the ranch?

Rosenberg: Well, it'd be difficult. It's very dry most of the year. We don't have any springs on this ranch. A ranch that is watered by springs considers itself extremely lucky. There may be some at the very far end of the Pancho Rico, which really rises in the Peach Tree area.

It's a very interesting ride, if you had time some day to take it, through the east side of Monterey county. You go along, and you see the gorge of the Pancho Rico. There used to be a men's prison up there. It isn't there any more, as far as I know, and it was more of an honor camp, where they had prisoners who fought fires and things like that. It's called Slacks Canyon.

Going through that area you would see what I call the gorge of the Pancho Rico, how deep a gorge it cut in some places. I really think it's more than a creek, but I don't know that it has the dignity of the term river. In so many years there's no water in it.

Teiser: In Joe Rosenberg's time, did he also continue the cattle?

Samuel Rosenberg, father of Joseph Rosenberg

Lena Rosenberg, Joseph Rosenberg's mother

Joseph Rosenberg

Linda Brandenstein (Mrs. Joseph) Rosenberg in middle age

Walter Rosenberg and his mother, Linda Brandenstein Rosenberg, in the 1940s

Four generations of Meyer Brandenstein's descendants: great-grandaughter Margaret Rosenberg Duflock, daughter Flora Brandenstein holding great-great-grandson Walter Duflock, and grandson Walter Rosenberg

Rosenberg: Yes, there were always cattle on the ranch, one way or another. Sometimes they didn't have very many cattle, and then they'd take cattle in on pasture, which is a very common thing here--was, in this area, still is for some people. When you have feed and no cattle, that's the way you utilize it, by renting the pasture.

But there always were cattle on the ranch. As a rule, even when it was leased, the ranch was in charge of the operation, more or less. I remember one man had cattle here for many years. Of course he bought them and sold them, but the men on the ranch, generally speaking, took care of them. There was always a crew on the ranch, to mend fences and look after the water, which was mostly in connection with cattle.

It was during Joe Rosenberg's lifetime that they put this 1,000 acres under water, I'm sure, the irrigation. It's been added to since then quite a bit. So that right now I can't tell you how many acres there are in the irrigation. But he was managing it when that was done originally; and again, that was tenant-farmed.

I'm sure when there were dairies here--there were no dairies when I came--but I'm sure that when there were, this field west of this house must have been in alfalfa. Just now it's in beets, beans and carrots.

The Rosenberg Family and the Ranch

Teiser: I was speaking to Mr. Reuben Albaugh, and he said that Joe Rosenberg--

Rosenberg: I imagine he knew him quite well.

Teiser: Yes; he said he was a very fine cattle man. He spoke highly of his wife, also.

Rosenberg: She was a very interesting woman. In our present-day parlance, she came on strong.

Teiser: She was Linda, Meyer Brandenstein's daughter.

Rosenberg: Yes.

Teiser: Did she take a hand in running things?

Rosenberg: She left it all up to her husband; and after he died,* she left it all up to her son. She had nothing to do with managing things as such. She had many piano lessons, and enjoyed playing the piano.

She was very myopic, and she always took off her glasses to play the piano because she couldn't see the notes with her glasses on. I have seen other people that take off their glasses to read, you know, and she put hers on to look out the window. I guess one would say she said what she thought, most of the time. She was a great woman.

Teiser: Was she devoted to this place, or did she like San Francisco better?

Rosenberg: I think that that would be a very difficult question to answer. She was a San Franciscian. She lived in San Francisco most of her life. And when she moved down here, it was more to her like camping. They didn't really move, they were just staying here for a while. They'd always come to the ranch. Her summers were always spent at the ranch when she was growing up. It was a summer place to her, even though she knew full well that that was where her living came from.

She and her sister Flora [Brandenstein], I remember, after I was married, always went to San Francisco for the Jewish holidays, but they never went to the synagogue. And they always came back here for the Christian holidays; it was more fun here. The Jewish holidays all come along in the fall, you know. Are you familiar with it? The last few years they spent their winters in Santa Barbara, because when the rainy season began, you were never too sure--there is a good bridge now, across the Pancho Rico--but at that time there wasn't. And you were never too sure if you could get out in the winter.

For some years they spent their winters in Santa Barbara. After New Year's, you know, they'd usually go down there 'til toward Easter.

Teiser: Did they observe Friday night services, or anything of that sort?

Rosenberg: I told you they never went to the synagogue. They liked to be in San Francisco when it was the Holy Days, or the ten days in there between Yom Kippur and something else.

Teiser: Has the family ever become Catholic?

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*In 1937.

Rosenberg: I'm Catholic; no, the family isn't. My daughter's Catholic and her children. Walter's older children* were brought up in the Jewish faith, naturally.

Teiser: The ranch was always quite profitable?

Rosenberg: That would very much depend on whom you spoke to. From my point of view, it was. The fact that the family could live off it without working particularly, made it seem to me that it must have been profitable. Their living was from the ranch.

I would say, well, I couldn't see where anybody did much physical work.

Teiser: They lived comfortably?

Rosenberg: I thought so. But comparatively, as many people do, they, I think at times felt poor, because they had such wealthy relatives. That's the only explanation I could give, but I felt it must've been very profitable. So many people were able to live off it. And because it was all tenant-farmed, you have to realize that they had never any great investment in machinery. Though at one time they kept horses for the use of the tenants.

As a matter of fact, the twentieth century was very slow in reaching San Ardo, I've always said. When I was married, everybody else in the county that I knew was farming with tractors, and I looked out my window, and saw this man cultivating beans with horses. I didn't fall out the window, but I was awfully surprised.

Teiser: That was about 1940?

Rosenberg: '38. I say the twentieth century is very slow in getting to San Ardo. About ten years ago, they had the rural free delivery. Also, when I was married, there were only four telephones in the town. And I had lived on a ranch, and had never been without a telephone to my knowledge. It might not have been the best phone, because it was a country line; but I had never been in a house without a telephone any more than I had lived in a house without a bathtub, and I used to wonder which I'd rather do without!

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*Ruth Ann and Gorden Rosenberg, and Janet Rosenberg Lynch.

Oil and Cattle

Teiser: The oil wells--I think this was in the Portrait of a Town--early on, Joe Rosenberg had formed a company to explore for oil, called Rose Brand.

Rosenberg: That's long before my time. I do remember it, and I know where the location was; it was over in Paris Valley. But it was not profitable at all.

Teiser: Was it on this ranch?

Rosenberg: Yes. As far as I know, there was a seepage of oil, and they drilled. But they didn't discover any oil in paying quantities.

In this country, you must know, there are seepages of oil in various places; but the real discovery of oil here, and development of oil, was on the east side, what you call Sargent Canyon.

Teiser: When did that come, then?

Rosenberg: I was afraid you'd ask me that, I'd have to look in a book to find out. I think you're asking me a lot of questions to which you already know the answers.

Teiser: Well, not necessarily, and you're correcting some things I've read that are wrong. But I do have a press release that General Petroleum put out in 1972 that says the San Ardo field was discovered in 1947.*

Rosenberg: They didn't develop it for a while, because it's extremely heavy oil, and they had to develop a system to get it out of the ground.

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Rosenberg: [looking at album] It's a long time since I looked at this picture. This is the first successful well. There's absolutely no date on it! I thought I had clippings.

Teiser: It must've been a big day when they brought in the first one.

Rosenberg: Well, I don't think it was on this ranch, it was on the Lombardi ranch.

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*Appendix II.

Teiser: There's an oil field south of here. There is a turn-off on 101.

Rosenberg: That is Alvarado Road. That's the San Ardo oil field. It's operated by Texaco and Mobil; it's quite large.

Teiser: I gather that this development was something that happened gradually then. It wasn't just that one day you didn't have oil and the next day you had a lot of oil?

Rosenberg: No, it took a long time, several years, to even develop it. At that time it was a different process to get the oil out, to make it flow.

It flows to a--I don't know just what they call that plant, a mixing plant or something. They have to pipe in light oil to mix with this heavy crude, and then pipe the heavy crude back to Estero Bay. That's where it all goes out.

Estero Bay, down by Morro Bay, is where the tankers come in; and that's how this oil goes out of here, through a pipeline that goes through Hames Valley and Hesperia, through the hills.

And there are two lines; one brings the light oil back here to mix with the heavy crude. Then it's mixed, and they have another process of heating it to get it out of the well.

Actually, I think what made this more desirable than anything is the fact that this heavy crude makes jet fuel. So I've been told. I am no authority on any of this.

Teiser: In the oil field, there is a series of what look like stacks, with some kind of emission coming out--

Rosenberg: Well, they have to heat this oil, and now they are heating the ground with steam injection to even get the oil out of the ground.

Teiser: We were looking at the Salinas Californian files on the south end of the county, and there wasn't much.

Rosenberg: I shouldn't get on the subject because I feel so strongly about it. In Salinas, they really aren't sure that we are part of the county. The county line goes to Camp Roberts.

For fire protection and the sheriffs, and police protection, I think we do at least as well as could be expected. But because Salinas is the county seat, what happens down here is not of paramount importance to them. And we have very little representation. We used to have a supervisor in the King City area, and then

Rosenberg: one for south of King City. But because of our population, which is small, compared to that at Salinas, and the one-man, one-vote--we lost most of the representation we had. One man has this large territory to take care of, which extends from the coast, from the Pacific Ocean, all the way to the San Benito County line. And one man really has great difficulty representing that. And then it goes as far as Salinas.

So that, area-wise, it's very unfair.

Teiser: The county is fairly homogeneous, is it?

Rosenberg: It's primarily agriculture.

Teiser: So that there aren't such dissimilar things to represent?

Rosenberg: No, the whole Salinas valley is agriculture. The biggest industry for years and years was Spreckels Sugar factory. For many years, from 1880s, I believe, I don't remember the exact dates, that was the biggest industry for the county.

And the cattle industry has always been very important around here, which is much more of a business now than just turning cows loose in the hills. And this intensive row-crop farming. But still, there doesn't seem any way much to go in this county except agriculture. The Monterey Peninsula has little understanding of agriculture because they have so many retired people there. And their business, I suppose one could say. It used to be the sardine factories. So there always was a difference. But now there aren't any sardine factories, except a restaurant called that. And, tourism. Of course, it's a beautiful area, and it was the first capitol; and it has a great deal going for it in the way of tourism and retired people. They are trying to promote a medical center there now.

Teiser: Do you feel that the rest of the county has much in common with that peninsula?

Rosenberg: I think we do, because we have great pride in it. We have pride in the fact that Monterey was the first capitol. It has a great deal of historical appeal, I think, to most people in the valley. We are glad to have it, but sometimes they don't know we're here.

Teiser: Its problems must be quite different--

Rosenberg: They have big military installations over there, you know. They have problems.

Teiser: We took off at a tangent when I said that the Salinas Californian file on the south end of the county hasn't got much in it. The only thing I remember there was more than one piece on was oil, and there was a picture of laying pipe from San Ardo. It said that the pipe had been from some other oil field--*

Rosenberg: Yes. The first oil company I remember here was Jergins oil; and they were bought by General Petroleum, and General Petroleum had a plant over in Bel Ridge or Bellevue, somewhere in the Taft area. I don't know which town. And they brought this plant over, and that's what they installed to transfer this oil to the coast.

Teiser: Was it much after the field came in?

Rosenberg: I would say maybe several years.

Teiser: Up to that point what had they been doing with the oil, trucking it?

Rosenberg: No, they hadn't been pumping it. This is what I think. Now really, I was right here, but I was very busy with other things, and I really never took the oil seriously.

Teiser: You had a small child.

Rosenberg: I did. You can tell from the pictures in that book [album] that Margaret wasn't very big. I really hadn't taken the oil too seriously anyway. I was surprised. Nobody was more surprised than I was that it became so lucrative.

General Petroleum company, I know, put in that dismantled plant to transfer the oil to the coast. Then General Petroleum sold out to Mobil; and the plant has been updated, I'm sure, in the last thirty years, or twenty-five, and is used jointly by Mobil and Texaco.

At one time most of the oil flowing through it was Mobil, and now a high percentage is Texaco. Those are things I know. But as to dates, I really would have to search somewhere for them.

Teiser: Does it make any difference in the operation of this ranch? For instance, was there land under cultivation that's now oil fields?

Rosenberg: No, it was pasture.

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*Appendix II.

Teiser: Then you did lose some pasture land?

Rosenberg: Not a great deal. You'd be surprised. Sometimes you go down there and see the cattle wandering through the oil fields. This is a large ranch, about twelve thousand acres, and the amount they lost to that was not a great deal.

Teiser: Did it make any difference in the operation of the ranch?

Rosenberg: Everybody became suddenly rich. [laughter]

Teiser: Did everybody buy a new pump or something they'd been always wanting?

Rosenberg: It didn't make, I suppose, as much difference in the lifestyle of the family as one might have thought. They weren't living so poorly anyway. They bought more cars and things like that; but they'd always bought cars, so it really didn't seem that different.

Teiser: Did they put some money into the ranch that they would not have?

Rosenberg: Big improvements, not as much as you might have thought, and not as much as should have been done, really. The fences were rebuilt that needed it, and there's quite a system of roads through the ranch that were carved out, and oiled, and that have been kept up.

Then there are a couple of new houses. But there hasn't been as much done as one would have thought because of the fact that the oil came from the ranch. But there has been some development since. And of course it's more expensive than ever to put in wells and bring in irrigation; but I think the irrigation is more sophisticated now than it was then.

Some of it has been just keeping up what was there, and some of it has been improved. For instance, there's a good bridge across the Pancho Rico now.

Teiser: Did the operation of the ranch change at all?

Rosenberg: The same foreman is here that was here when I was first married; we came together.

Teiser: What's his name?

Rosenberg: Paul Strohm.

Teiser: So the leases continued and the cattle ranching continued, and so forth?

Rosenberg: The ranching operation has improved, of course, but that's more due to the tenants, and new ways of things. I suppose, we have a better or more profitable breed of cattle than we did, but they never were too bad.

Mr. Albaugh said that this ranch had always been "cooperators." I guess that's the word they use for people who cooperate with the University of California Agricultural Extension programs. At the time I was married, Rube Albaugh was the Extension Service man down here. And they did have a selective program of breeding of some kind that I really can't use the correct term for. It went on for some years. This was something that he and Walter were carrying out.

They came once or twice a month to put tags in the cows' ears, or something; that's when I saw him the most. I had known him before, but then I knew him during those years. And I think when he left, well, the program was given up shortly afterwards.

Teiser: He said that you were all very kind, and would allow other cattle people to come and see what had been done here--

Rosenberg: Oh, yes, well, everybody does that that has any program with the Extension Service. That's inherent in the program; it's for research, and it's for everybody's benefit.

Teiser: You must have done something here unusually well for him to be so enthusiastic, because he seemed to set the ranch apart from others.

Rosenberg: Well, it was a big ranch, for one thing; and he and Walter were quite friendly. I know there are other people that he was at least equally, if not more so, friendly with.

But they, I think, got along very well together; I'm sure that he was easy for Walter to work with, and Walter was probably easy for him to work with. And Paul Strohm remembers him well. He says, "When you see him, be sure and remember me to him." He would like to see him again.

Walter Rosenberg with one of the first oil wells on the ranch.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Rosenberg, about 1965

Walter Rosenberg

Teiser: I guess Joe Rosenberg's interest was mainly continuing things. But did your husband have any special interests about ways the ranch should go, innovations?

Rosenberg: Yes, he was maybe more interested in irrigation than his father. But it's still his father that inaugurated it. He was more interested in mechanical things, and he was a cattleman but not a cowboy. He was interested in the upbreeding of the cattle and in improving watering systems. He was more mechanically minded, I used to think. More mechanically minded than livestock-minded. But he would never have given up the cattle for anything else.

Teiser: What specific things did his mechanical interests take him into, then?

Rosenberg: Mostly new automobiles. [laughter]

Teiser: Not tractors, not graders--

Rosenberg: Yes, he did see that the men had trucks to take the cattle from here to there, instead of driving them, and things like that. He saw to that, and electric pumps for water. He was extremely interested in the local dams and worked to have them built. He served on many county commissions.

Walter had many personal charities which he never mentioned. I learned about some later. Many I'm sure I will never learn of.

Teiser: Had he had a specific education for farming or ranching?

Rosenberg: He went--this is something I'm not sure of at all--he went for a couple of years to the University of California, and I think he took a course in horticulture at Davis, and that's about all I know.

Teiser: He'd grown up in San Francisco, had he?

Rosenberg: Graduate of Lowell High School; had the true Lowell High School accent. He was in the service, I think, after he got out of high school. He was quite young when he went in the service for World War I. He'd been very interested in airplanes; he was in the early aviation, but not as a pilot.

He learned to fly after. Well, I suppose I should have mentioned that he got an airplane after he had oil; and he learned to fly. I said he was more interested in mechanical things!

Teiser: That's why the airstrip just to the east here!

Rosenberg: That airstrip is at least thirty-five years old. So maybe I could date the oil from that. I'm sure he didn't get the airstrip built until they had the oil to pave it with, and the airplane to put in the hangar.

Teiser: Then after the service, he came here to live?

Rosenberg: He married, and--yes; I think he went to college a very short short time after the service. I'm trying to think, his oldest daughter was born in 1923, and they were living here when she was born. She is Janet Lynch; she lives in Pebble Beach, you know. But she did live here on the ranch for many years. I've had to look up her birth so often that I know it was 1923; December.

Teiser: And then a son, too? Yes--Gordon.

Rosenberg: They were living here when he was born, also. Then the family moved to Salinas. But that's a period I really don't know a great deal about. The two older children went to school in Salinas, and the youngest, Ruth Ann, was born there. But by the time she went to school, they had moved to San Francisco, and Walter and his wife were divorced.

So that his three oldest children went to school in San Francisco, except for a short time in Salinas. It might have been longer than I think; I really don't know.

Teiser: And your daughter Margaret was born--

Rosenberg: She was born here. She went to school here. She always has lived here, except for the years since she was married that she spent in El Centro. And she was there for thirteen years.

And then her husband, William G. Duflock, is, at the minute, flying out of Houston, and she's back living in her grandmother's house.

Teiser: He's a commercial pilot?

Rosenberg: Yes.

Teiser: You've got lots of flying in your family.

Rosenberg: And Gordon flies, too. He and his father learned together.

Teiser: Does he live here on the ranch?

Rosenberg: Yes; on further south. Margaret is living in the old ranch house, and he lives about maybe a mile or two further south. It's a long ranch.

Teiser: Does he take an active part in the management of the ranch?

Rosenberg: Yes, and he has a walnut orchard on the ranch.

Teiser: Is he interested in cattle, too?

Rosenberg: Not particularly; he's more interested in farming and irrigation. And flying.

Teiser: So who handles the cattle, the foreman?

Rosenberg: The same foreman that's been doing it. I think this ranch has only had four or five foremen. The first one I ever heard of was this John Martin. There might have been somebody before him. And then there was one for a brief period of time there in the twenties, and the man's name escapes me now, because they didn't mention him very often. He wasn't there long enough to make a lasting impression.

And the next foreman was a man named Bill Nattrass, who was there for many years, anyway. And then another, Junnie Bernard, then a man named Charlie Johnson was there a short time. And then Paul Strohm. There may have been others whose names I don't know.

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Teiser: The cattle business has not changed--?

Rosenberg: We hope it's improved, but--

Teiser: I mean, you sell your cattle through generally the same channels?

Rosenberg: You can only sell them to cattle buyers, and if there are any that are rejected by the cattle buyers, they go to an auction yard.

Instead of driving the cattle to the railroad and loading them on boxcars, the trucks come to the ranch and pick them up at the corrals.

You have scales at two different corrals, sets of corrals, so the cattle can be weighed and loaded from there. Which is a much easier operation. It still entails a lot of work. Somebody has to get on horseback and round them up and load them. But it's not as difficult as driving them to the railroad, and then you used to hold them in the railroad corrals overnight.

Rosenberg: And the thought is coming back that people may be doing that with the energy shortage. They may go back to shipping by rail. I don't know how likely that is.

Teiser: You may look out and find the man cultivating the fields--

Rosenberg: --with the horse again. I'm afraid it would take years to train work horses.

Teiser: Do you buy cattle at all?

Rosenberg This is what is known, I believe, as a cow-and-calf operation. We buy bulls. And the cows are culled every year, so I would say that we raise the good heifers.

It is known as a cow-and-calf operation in the trade.

Teiser: I understand that you've been on some boards, and worked on some civic and general public affairs.

Rosenberg: Really the only county board I've been on for some years, I think, is what is known as the Social Service; it used to be known as Welfare. At the minute I'm hoping I can find someone to take my place. The Red Cross I would like to continue with, because I'm turning all the difficult parts of the Red Cross over to my friends. But I am still on the board for a while. It would be wise if I found someone to take that over, too.

Teiser: Someone told me that if there was anything that went on in Monterey county, you knew about it.

Rosenberg: I'm afraid they were talking about someone else. The county at large often escapes me.

Public Service and Community Affairs

[Interview 4: September 30, 1980]##

Teiser: We wanted to ask more about your service on the Social Service commission of the county. When you were first appointed?

Rosenberg: I've been on it too long, I know that. Maybe six, seven years ago. Whatever the supervisor's term is, I've had two terms and I'm into the third one.

Teiser: Are there many social needs that are acute?

Rosenberg: The social need that I can think of right now that really I would say is acute is a convalescent home of some kind in King City for the older people who are not able to take care of themselves. There was a combination home for ambulatory patients and temporary shelter, but it had been closed.

Teiser: Was it run by some government agency?

Rosenberg: That particular thing was run through the Social Service. They call it a temporary shelter, until they can get these people established somewhere. People that have run out of funds. Particularly in winter, you can't have people sleeping in the park.

The convalescent home was for ambulatory patients, so it really wasn't so much a convalescent home. But the two were run together in an old hospital. And the property was sold, and so as a consequence the old people that were there had to go to Greenfield, which was the next best place. But it didn't satisfy them, because that's too far. Their friends don't drop in to see them. If they're old and can't drive, there they are.

The other thing that they ask for quite often in King City, and that is operation I believe, is a children's day shelter. I am on this Social Service commission because there are so few people to draw from to represent the south end of the county. I'm just looking for somebody who would like to take my position.

Teiser: There is a day center now?

Rosenberg: There is one. Whether it's big enough or adequate, I really don't know much about that, because I don't come in contact with the young working mothers.

Then of course there's a great floating population of migrant workers who seem to be quite well taken care of by the rural health project in King City.

Teiser: Is that a federal project?

Rosenberg: I believe so.

Teiser: How about the housing needs of the migrant workers?

Rosenberg: You can see they're deplorable, what's offered. There's a great need all over California for adequate, low-cost housing, not potential slums. The minute you say low-cost, you think of these cardboard things.

Rosenberg: I may as well be honest. The least interesting thing I do is this Social Service. It's hemmed in by regulations. Everything is mandated, more or less. There isn't a great deal the individual can do, except in these cases where some need arises before your eyes and can do something right about it because you're there. That's the most obvious thing, as far as I'm concerned, and why a local representative is needed.

People in small areas, fortunately, are very well taken care of by their neighbors. It's very fortunate in a little area like this. If they have to go to the doctor, there's always somebody that will take them to the doctor, or take them to the hospital. But it's the ongoing care that they need that's so difficult, such as nursing in the home and things like that. It's just not possible to get anybody that you can trust, which I think is also statewide. I don't think that has anything to do with this county.

Teiser: How about the education of the migrant workers' kids?

Rosenberg: Are you talking about that controversial thing known as bi-lingual education? I try to be a middle-of-the-roader on that.

Teiser: One way or the other, are the kids getting educated in any language?

Rosenberg: Oh, they are, well. In San Ardo, we have a very good school system.

Teiser: And the Mexican workers' kids?

Rosenberg: There are not as many here as there are in other places. Teachers, as I understand it, know basic Spanish. I think their object here--and maybe it shouldn't even be published--but their object here is to teach them English. But the teachers know enough basic Spanish so that the first and second graders have no problems at school. They are accepted. It's a small community, and there isn't too much of the class distinction that you run into in other places.

Teiser: Have the social problems of this area in the years that you have known them changed markedly?

Rosenberg: I would say not.

Teiser: You always had migrant labor.

Rosenberg: California always had it. California would never have had the railroads built or their crops harvested or many of their mines worked, I'm sure, if it hadn't been for migrant labor. I grew up with migrant labor. Of course, migrant labor I remember distinctly. I don't remember when everybody had a Chinese cook--I only remember one. But I do remember when--because this would stand out to a child--when the Hindus worked on the railroad, and they wore turbans. That you couldn't forget.

I went to a school that was half California Spanish and half English. They were bilingual, but we weren't. I always regretted that I wasn't.

Teiser: I think one of the other organizations that you said you had served on was the Red Cross, that you'd enjoyed that.

Rosenberg: Yes.

Teiser: Have you been active in that for many years?

Rosenberg: Oh, for maybe thirty. A long time. My first experience, when I actually did anything for it, was as a nurse's aide at Camp Roberts when it was going full blast during the Korean incident. I began working on blood banks there. You know, you had an unending source of volunteers. The soldiers needed it. You were getting blood for the soldiers, but you got it from them, ironically. The more recent blood bank that I served on is over at Hunter Liggett [Military Reservation]. But I just recently turned the blood bank work over to another friend. I thought I had served on it long enough.

Teiser: Have you done other things with the Red Cross, too?

Rosenberg: Some organizational work, I suppose you call it. Like lining up people to help with swimming classes. It's a long time since I did that. And people to man the drive for funds that they have every March. I still do that. That's not hard to do, because I don't have to collect.

Teiser: I know that you are a member of the Cowbelles.

Rosenberg: Strictly a supporting member.

Teiser: Have you been a sponsor of the 4-H?

Rosenberg: I was a leader for a long time when my daughter was growing up. I taught people cooking; dragged people to many meetings and exhibits and fairs. My daughter is doing it now for her children. I don't have to do it any more.

Teiser: Did it involve taking kids and their stock to the fairs?

Rosenberg: Or getting some man to haul the sheep. My daughter always showed sheep, so that was easier. There was always a man who had a truck that took all the sheep.

Teiser: Where did she take care of her sheep?

Rosenberg: Right out here. There's a little pen. We use it for a dog pen now. She also raised a seeing eye dog, which did not go to the fair. I was really very active in 4-H for quite a while, and still support it.

There's a fairly active 4-H group here now made up of parents, many of whom I taught in 4-H that now have their children in 4-H. You have to have the parents. It's a parent-involvement type of thing. Nobody's as good a leader as a parent. You need interested parents and young parents, and people that can show the children how to raise the animals. Fathers that will help them. They become family projects, you know. But it's very good, I think, for a small community. The nicest thing about it is that if your community shrinks, your age group goes up and down, which it does here quite a bit. It's for boys and girls both, so that you at least have them all in one club. You don't have to be running from Boy Scouts to Girls Scouts. [laughter] To me that was the greatest joy about 4-H.

There is a pretty active Boy Scout troop here, but the town really isn't that large. There again, you have to have parents for children's clubs. And the parents can only spread themselves so thin.

I think 4-H is the answer; but I must admit, I'm thinking about the parents as much as the children. One meeting a week is enough.

Teiser: How long have you been on the board of the College of Notre Dame in Belmont?

Rosenberg: Six or seven years maybe.

Teiser: Do you enjoy that?

Rosenberg: Well, I enjoy the people very much. They happen to have an extremely interesting board. There are men who are very busy, but they're dedicated to giving so much time to this. It's a variegated group of doctors and lawyers and accountants, builders. Sister Catharine Julie, who's retiring as president, has been fortunate in picking her board, because there's an expert in nearly anything that she wants to know, such as insurance, who's more than glad to help her. And varied ages, and men that have served on other boards and know what is needed to keep a college going. She has a wealth of knowledge to draw from. Actually, you don't feel that you as an individual have accomplished much, but you feel that they have. It's so very worthwhile.

Rosenberg: Of course, there are educators on the board, naturally. But she has found such a varied field of experts. There's a great deal of maintenance to a college. A board member that happens to be a building contractor is very shrewd about what she needs and what she doesn't need, and can assess what has to be fixed, and whether this just needs a paint job or if it needs a complete overhaul. You need someone like that. They give so much time to it because, as I say, they're men active in their fields.

Teiser: In a period when small, private colleges particularly are having difficulty, it's been very successful, has it not?

Rosenberg: I think part of that is the college's attitude. They're not trying to grow bigger, because they're in an area surrounded with higher education. They do try to offer something very good in what they have. They're not trying to be a university, as far as I know. But they want the caliber of their staff to be as good as it's ever been.

In high school I went to the sisters of Notre Dame for a couple of years. I was brought up with the idea that they were a very fine teaching order. I've had no reason to change it since I've been on this board.

Teiser: Your daughter went to the college in Belmont?

Rosenberg: Yes, she went for two years. Margaret's on the board of the University of San Diego, and they have a lay man as president of the college. But I think at the College of Notre Dame the president has to be a member of the community.

Teiser: Did your daughter go there, to San Diego, after Notre Dame?

Rosenberg: Yes, for two years and graduated there.

The Rosenberg Family and Relatives

Teiser: I understand that the Rosenberg family long ago gave a grant to the University of California at Davis in memory of a family member who was killed in the First World War. Could you tell about it?

Rosenberg: Not very much. It was Walter's brother, and his name was James Rosenberg. He died in the First World War. As a matter of fact, it's a very sad story. He died in Italy of the flu after the armistice had been signed. His mother and father gave whatever

Rosenberg: his insurance was (I believe yearly sums for a certain period of time) to Davis for scholarships. It might have been twenty years, and possibly not a very big sum. But in that time it didn't have to be a very big sum to be a scholarship.

I myself thought that was a nice thing to do. They wouldn't have known what to do with it themselves, so this was a commemoration.

Teiser: There are some families and groups of people who have a tradition of public benefit. I presume that the Rosenberg family has.

Rosenberg: I think it's very common among Jewish people. They're very philanthropic.

Teiser: The Regional Oral History Office has had the opportunity to interview members of the Haas and Koshland families--

Rosenberg: They were related to my husband, you know. Dan Koshland's mother [born Corinne Schweitzer] and Walter's mother were first cousins. They knew each other.

Those pictures*--most of the people were first cousins. Leon Guggenheim that you see there was a first cousin of Walter's mother. There was a large Schweitzer family that was related. There was a Georgia Schweitzer.

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Rosenberg: Mrs. Koshland had several sisters, and I used to hear them called by name. One, I think Lilly, married a Guggenheim. These were the families that Walter grew up with.

Teiser: They look in those pictures as if they were having a good time.

Rosenberg: Well, this was their summer place. You can see that. It was when San Francisco was cold and foggy. I think they spent most of their summers here. Those young people didn't think of it as a year-round home. You could see they thought of it as a place to go for the summer, to the ranch, as many people would.

They'd come down on the train of course. Some of them rode horseback. You could see they were definitely an urban group. [laughter] They must have enjoyed it very much. I think that's when they had the Chinese cook.

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*1889 pictures taken at San Bernardo Ranch; pages 35-38.

Teiser: Was the croquet ground near the Meyer Brandenstein home?

Rosenberg: Right there in front. I don't know whether it was on the fountain side or the other side. At that particular time the present one-story house wasn't there, and the gazebo was moved.

Teiser: Where was it originally?

Rosenberg: I saw it as a child. It was in the yard. It shows in one of these pictures. There wasn't a second story on the house then, of course.

I remember being brought to that house as a child, and seeing the gazebo, which was the first one I'd ever seen. I think Walter's mother called it a summer house. I was about eight years old, and they were having a Liberty Bond drive. In those days they had tea; and I guess you signed up and bought a Liberty Bond. At that time my mother was knitting for the Red Cross.

Actually, this is a very good picture of the house, because it shows the grape arbor, and the--

Teiser: --the one with Emma Patek in the front.

Rosenberg: I think she was a friend. But Georgia Schweitzer was a cousin, I know that.

Teiser: This fountain--

Rosenberg: I pointed it out to you the other day.

Teiser: Yes; it's rather covered with vegetation now.

Rosenberg: But it works. It still waters the yard. It has a sprinkler on it, and it's always watered that lawn.

Teiser: They really are urban, as you say.

Rosenberg: They're a very urban group. Urban people.

I haven't looked at these pictures for a long time. But they were definitely a dressed-up group. Except for the men in the picture at the ditch. [laughter]

Teiser: Does that ditch still exist?

Rosenberg: No, it's been cultivated and farmed over. There's very little indication of it left now.

Transcribers: Steven A. Wartofsky, Matt Schneider
Final Typist: Keiko Sugimoto

TAPE GUIDE-- Mrs. Walter Rosenberg

APPENDIX I (The house number was originally 1542 McKinnon Avenue)

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD 1562 McKinnon Avenue
Case Report - August 17, 1972

OWNER: Michael D. Reich and Robert M. Pace

LOCATION: 1562 McKinnon Avenue, northeast side 150 feet southeast of Mendell Street. Lot is rectangular with 50 foot frontage on McKinnon Avenue, depth of 100 feet and area of 5000 square feet. Lot 31 in Assessor's Block 5295.

HISTORY: As one of the oldest and most attractive houses in the Bayview area, this two story wooden frame structure possesses an architectural style and quality which enhances the community's visual environment. Although the date of construction is not known, the house was occupied in 1875 by Mrs. Mary Quinn. In addition to owning other properties in the area, the Quinn family owned this house for eighty three years, selling it in 1958.

ARCHITECTURE: The two story wooden frame structure represents a particular stage of Victorian architecture. Built in approximately 1870, the house reflects the simple and refined qualities of early Italianate Victorians.

Occupying approximately half the width of the lot, the structure rests directly upon the ground, without a basement. Faced with shiplap boards, the structure's notable quality is its facade and exterior decorative elements. The facade consists of a two story slanted bay window and a projecting porch entrance. The bay window is modestly decorated with ornamental keystones and wooden trim. A dentillated cornice surmounts the first floor bay. The porch consists of two corinthian columns and pilasters, surmounted by a roof with a dentillated cornice. The porch frames the arched doorway, which is surmounted by an ornamental keystone and wood trim. A wide projecting cornice, supported by consoles, decorates the roof line of the house. Each console displays a moulded foliate pattern and painted designs.
The fenestration is regular, with arched, double hung windows. Moulding and an ornamental keystone decorate each window. The wing contains two windows, one on each floor, facing McKinnon Street.

Wooden quoins distinguish each corner of the facade and side wing. A simple picket fence encloses the property.

SURROUNDING LAND USE AND ZONING: The subject property is in an R-1 (One-Family Residential) zoning district surrounding the base of Hunters Point, developed primarily with single-family residences. The Third Street commercial area is one and a half blocks west of the property. A church occupies the southwest corner of Mendell and McKinnon and the South San Francisco Opera House is one block further southwest on Mendell Street and Newcomb Avenue.

APPENDIX II - 1972 Report on the San Ardo Oil Field issued by the Public Relations Department of the General Petroleum Corporation

The San Ardo oil field was discovered in 1947, but the crude oil was so viscous that no one could find a way to move it to market at a reasonable profit. The gravity of San Ardo crude ranges from 11 to 14 degrees.

The original discoverers of the San Ardo field drilled 65 wells hoping to find a less viscous oil, but when none was found, most of the wells were shut-in and the field stood virtually idle for four years. Hence, it was nicknamed the "reluctant" oil field by oilmen.

As demand for crude oil in California grew, however, oil companies began to think about how to make use of the idle crude at San Ardo.

General Petroleum -- Mobil's predecessor company on the West Coast -- finally solved the problem by coming up with the idea of bringing in a lighter oil to mix with the heavy San Ardo crude. This light oil, called cutter stock, with the aid of heat, thinned the San Ardo crude enough to move it through a pipeline. But due to the Korean War, there was a shortage of steel pipe with which to build a pipeline. GP also solved this problem. The company hired Bechtel Corporation to move its idle 8-inch Lebec to Mojave pipeline which had at one time connected the GP refinery at Lebec with the Santa Fe refueling station at Mojave. This 53-mile line was rendered obsolete when the Santa Fe shifted from steam to diesel engines.

2,600 tons of steel pipe -- approximately 98 percent of the line -- was salvaged. This pipe was reconditioned in a factory set up in the field at San Miguel and then laid between San Ardo and Estero Bay -- a distance of about 40 miles -- at a cost of nearly $2 million.

GP bought approximately one-half of the San Ardo field from the Jergins Oil Company and the General American Oil Company several months after the pipeline was completed. The purchase price was approximately $36 million.

The first barrel of San Ardo crude oil flowed through the line on June 19, 1951. Since that time, more than 230,000,000 barrels of oil have moved through the pipeline.

The oil is heated to 200 degrees F and reheated along the route at the Adelaide and San Antonio pump stations. It arrives at Estero Bay, where it is loaded aboard tankers, at 150 to 160 degrees F.

In 1966, a new 12-inch pipeline was laid at a cost of $3 million. This increased the line's capacity by 24,000 barrels a day to 56,000 b/d. The new line is automated, and valves controlling the flow of oil are triggered by microwave signal from Torrance.

In 1964, Mobil began a steam secondary recovery project at San Ardo to increase production at the field. Steam is injected into the oil formation through producing wells to thin the heavy crude so it can be brought to the surface.

Mobil currently operates more than 300 wells at San Ardo which produce approximately 13,000 barrels of oil a day.

The San Ardo operation generates an annual payroll of approximately $600,000, and royalty payments on production amount to more than $1 million per year.

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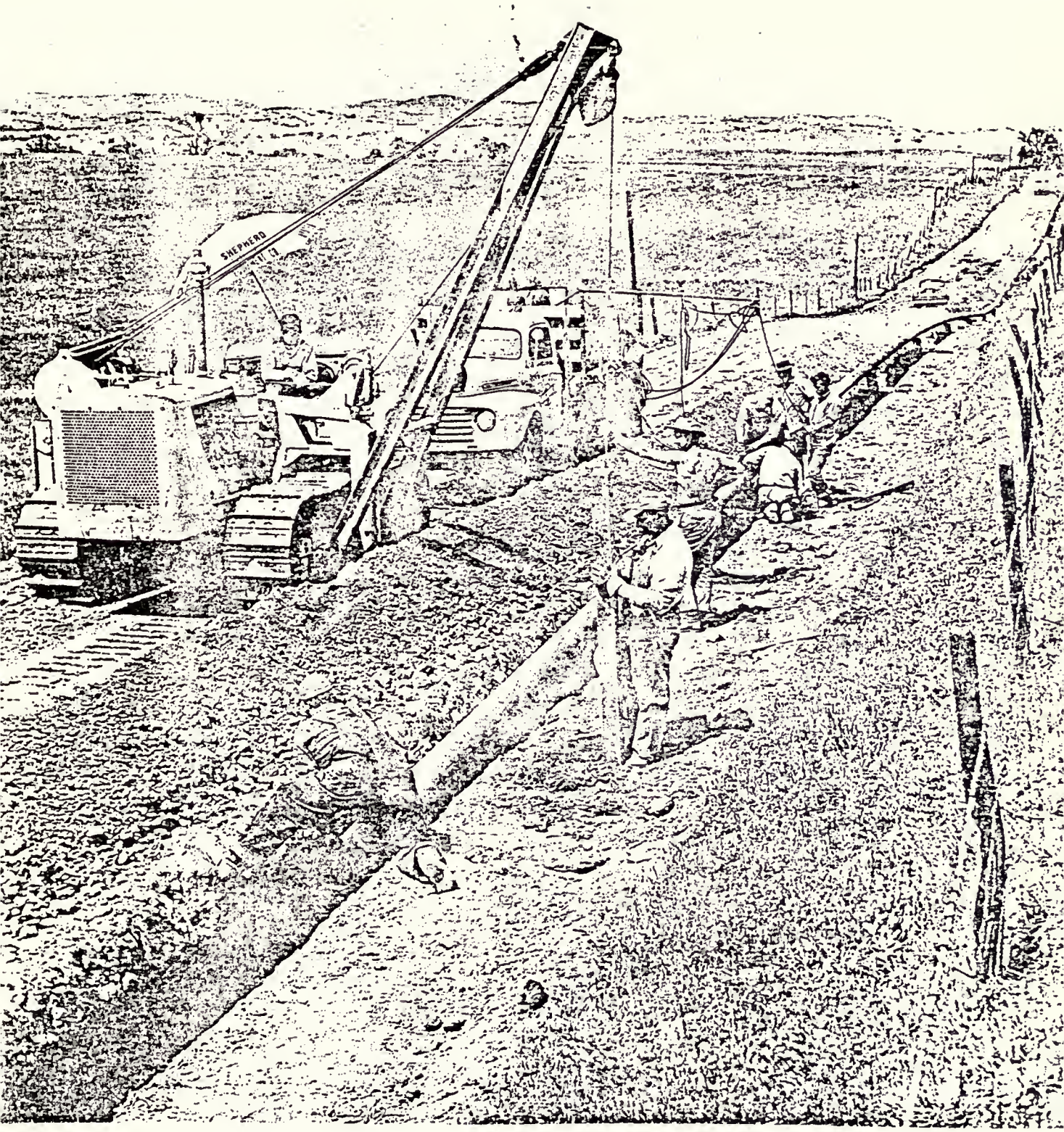
6/8/72



An oil pipeline that had been in service 38 years was ripped up and moved 200 miles to create a pipeline from the San Ardo field to Estero Bay. Putting it back in the ground at San Ardo.

APPENDIX III - copied from Spectator, University of California, Davis, January-February 1981

$500,000 ESTABLISHES ROSENBERG FUND

UCD has received a gift of $500,000 to establish the Walter Rosenberg Research Fund for support of applied as well as basic research by senior and junior faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and Ph.D. candidates in the Departments of Agricultural Engineering, Agronomy and Range Science, Animal Science and Vegetable Crops.

The money was given by Mrs. Walter Rosenberg to perpetuate her husband's memory and his lifelong interest and devotion to ranching and agricultural sciences, according to Charles Hess, dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Hess says that he and Mrs. Rosenberg have also discussed "the possibility of using the income to support joint Experiment Station/Extension research as well as for graduate student recruitment and grants for new faculty." ...

In announcing the establishment of the Walter Rosenberg Memorial Fund, Chancellor James Meyer expressed UCD's appreciation "for the new opportunities this gift will provide. As times and conditions change and new opportunities develop, this fund can serve as vital seed money to inaugurate new research projects. Gifts of this type are essential to enriching UCD's capability to seek new knowledge and making it applicable to meeting society's needs."

INDEX -- Margaret Barbree Rosenberg

Note: All place names are in California unless otherwise indicated.

Ruth Teiser

Born in Portland, Oregon; came to the Bay Area in 1932 and has lived here ever since.
Stanford University, B.A., M.A. in English; further graduate work in Western history.
Newspaper and magazine writer in San Francisco since 1943, writing on local history and business and social life of the Bay Area.
Book reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle, 1943-1974.