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Regional Oral History Office

Ethel Duffy Turner

WRITERS AND REVOLUTIONISTS

An Interview Conducted by

Ruth Teiser

Berkeley
1967

Mrs. Ethel Duffy Turner

Photographs taken during interview August 10, 1966

INTRODUCTION

Ethel Duffy Turner was born on April 21, 1885, in San Pablo, California, the eldest of the seven Duffy children who grew to maturity. When she was ten, her father became a guard at San Quentin state prison, thus beginning the long and constructive association of the Duffy family with that institution. Mrs. Turner's years there, at grammar school on the prison grounds, then high school at San Rafael, and finally college at the University of California, formed the background for her novel, One-Way Ticket. Her college career closed a year before graduation when she married the twenty-six-year-old Socialist journalist, John Kenneth Turner, who later wrote Barbarous Mexico.

Mrs. Turner's adult life has been divided into two parts. During the years immediately following her marriage, and again in recent years, her main interest has been Mexico and its politics. The period between, spent in Carmel and San Francisco for the most part, was devoted primarily to literary pursuits. Her interest in writing began in childhood, was recognized in high school, and continued at the University. In San Francisco she contributed columns to the Bulletin, edited a poetry magazine, and wrote not only the novel mentioned above but also a novella, and short stories published in Story magazine.

Mrs. Turner's writing ability had also been put to use in the years before the Mexican Revolution when she participated in publishing a magazine devoted to the Mexican liberal cause, then wrote a regular page in a Los Angeles weekly newspaper committed to Mexican revolutionary aims.

In those years, as she recounts in this interview, Mrs. Turner worked in many ways for the Revolution, and since her return to Mexico in recent years she has been honored for those early activities.

In 1960 the Mexican State of Michoacán published Mrs. Turner's biography of the Revolutionary leader Ricardo Flores Magón. Other recent writings include three essays referred to in this interview, which Mrs. Turner has placed in the Bancroft Library: "Early Literary Carmel," "George Sterling in Carmel," and "George Sterling in San Francisco."

The interview was conduced in three sessions in Mrs. Turner's cheerful adobe bedroom-study in the hilltop home of her daugher, Mrs. Juanita Lusk, at San Anselmo, California. This was during a visit by Mrs. Turner to California from her home in Cuernavaca. Between the first session, on July 27, 1966, and the third, on August 10, Mrs. Turner began work on the book which she discusses in the interview, an account of the participation of Americans in the preparation for and execution of the Mexican Revolution.

When interviewed, Mrs. Turner spoke clearly and animatedly, making every effort to recall events accurately and explain them clearly. She checked the final typescript carefully, making only a few corrections and additions, understanding the value of preserving the spontaneity of the spoken word.

The Regional Oral History Office was establish to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in recent California

history. The office is under the direction of Mrs. Willa Baum, and under the administrative supervision of the Director of the Bancroft Library.

Ruth Teiser
Interviewer

31 March 1967

Regional Oral History Office
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Mrs. Ethel Duffy Turner - Interviews No. 1 and 2, July 27, 1966 and August 1, 1966*

FAMILY AND EARLY YEARS

Turner: I am now living in Mexico under a permiso de cortesía, a courtesy permission. This is granted upon request to writers, especially those who are writing about Mexico in a friendly way. In addition to the writing that I have done down there, I am considered a precursora, which means a forerunner of the Mexican Revolution. This gives me prestige in Mexico.

Teiser: Did you apply for the permiso de cortesía?

Turner: No. Friends of mine are always doing things for me and they handled it completely. I didn't lift a finger. It has to be renewed every six months, but it is being renewed in the same way by my friends.

Teiser: You don't have to go to the border?

Turner: I didn't have to do a thing; I didn't even have to sign my name, which amazed me.

Teiser: Were you actually in Mexico before the Revolution?

Turner: I was there in 1909. I was the wife of John Kenneth Turner, who wrote Barbarous Mexico. But at the time of the Revolution, in November, 1910, we were in Los Angeles. The leaders of the Liberal Party, which was the party that actually kept the revolutionary spirit going with two former revolutions that were both betrayed--they were sent to prison for violating the neutrality laws in connection with one of those revolutions.

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* Material in these two interviews was slightly rearranged to provide greater subject continuity.

Turner: The leader was Ricardo Flores Magón. His fame is increasing in Mexico, where for a long time it was deliberately suppressed. John met Ricardo while he was a prisoner in the Los Angeles County Jail. Ricardo told John about the atrocities of Porfirio Díaz. So it developed that John, who was a newspaper man, went to Mexico and saw these atrocities for himself. That's a big story, though.

Teiser: Before we come to that, may we go back to your early years in this area?

Turner: I was born in San Pablo, Contra Costa County, in 1885. I am really ancient, you know. I am 81. My father was a farmer and also justice of the peace in that little pioneer town. My mother was born there. Her family had crossed the plains, and my father's family had gone from New York to Panama, then crossed the Isthmus of Panama and got another boat to San Francisco.

Teiser: When did your father's family come to San Francisco?

Turner: Dad was a year old when they arrived. That was in 1854.

Teiser: What was your father's name?

Turner: William Joseph Duffy. The Duffy family is well known in Marin County. My father used to tell many stories about his life. Fortunately my sister Alma [Mrs. Zang] took down these stories, so we'll have them when we get around to writing "The Duffy Family," a project in the near future.

Teiser: What was your mother's family name?

Turner: Palmer. My mother was Eugenia Amanda Palmer. My sisters and I have just finished the Palmer-Barrett genealogy; it's the account of my mother's ancestors. I have been reading proof. This is going to be a beautiful book. We have so much on the family.

Teiser: Do you have an overland diary of your mother's family?

Turner: No, it has been a matter of using material that other members of the family had done research for, and I added to it and assembled it. My sister, Mrs. Grace Zubler, has completed the descendants. It has been a big job. I'm glad it's finished. But I wanted to leave that behind me when I go. My brother Bill, William Joseph Duffy, Jr., of Woodland, is having it printed in Davis. He is a very successful farmer up there, especially in rice.

I was brought up in San Pablo until the age of ten. Small farmers didn't make much money in those days, so my father got a job on the guard line in San Quentin. We moved to San Quentin; all my later childhood and teens, I lived in San Quentin and went to the San Rafael High School. I went to the University when I graduated from high school.

Teiser: I read with great interest and pleasure your novel, One-Way Ticket, and I wondered how much of that was either autobiographical or drawn on fact.

Turner: Well, the background was true, but the story wasn't. Some of the characters were drawn from life, but not the main story. That was invented.

Teiser: I wondered if the character Captain Bourn was based upon your father at all.

Turner: Yes, but it wasn't my father's position....nor very closely on my father. Nor the mother either. It wasn't my family literally. But it was more or less the way a child in San Quentin was brought up and thought. Most of the ideas were authentic.

Teiser: Did you feel yourself somewhat apart when you were a child growing up there?

Turner: Apart from...?

Teiser: From other people and other children in the community?

Turner: A little. I was that type of child, I guess.

Teiser: Not from circumstances, but from within yourself?

Turner: Yes, that type of child.

Teiser: Did you have a large family?

Turner: We were seven, when I was home. I was the eldest. My youngest sister hadn't been born. My mother had eight children. One died in San Pablo, so we were seven in San Quentin. My brother, Clinton, as you probably know, was born there, and all his background was San Quentin. He became the famous progressive warden in a time of the old-fashioned way of treating men, and he changed that.

Teiser: Are any others of your family in prison work?

Turner: My sister, Grace, married a man who was superintendent of the jute mill, and she lived on the state-owned grounds. She afterwards moved into the house that we lived in when we moved there from San Pablo; it was enlarged. And just last year she left there. She spent most of her life in San Quentin. I didn't, you see. I went to the University and I met John Kenneth Turner, and we were married in March, 1905.

Teiser: What was it like to be a student at the University then?

Turner: I met a man I liked very much, Professor Robert Sandels--this isn't too important about him, except that he took me over to Bancroft Library about a year ago. He asked me about my impression

Turner: of the University now. I said: "There is no space. There was so much space then; and beautiful landscaping came a little bit later. Now there are buildings all over the place. You can't see anything but buildings."

Teiser: Where did you live as a student?

Turner: I lived in a boarding house on Durant Avenue, for only one semester. I was waiting on table. Then I got a California scholarship so I was able to live at home in San Quentin. I had to leave at 5:15 a.m. on the bus to Greenbrae, then take a train to Tiburon, then a ferry boat to San Francisco, then a Key Route ferry, then a train to Berkeley. A friend of mine, Eleanor Gilogly of San Rafael, in the class above me, did this too. She caught the train in San Rafael, and didn't have the bus trip. I saw her at lunch the other day at my sister Alma's, and we talked about it. We had quite a trip. But when you're young you don't mind getting up early and all this traveling and getting home at eight o'clock and having to study.

Teiser: You were an English major?

Turner: Yes.

Teiser: Had you always been interested in writing?

Turner: Oh yes, always. I can't remember when I wasn't. Even in high school. The way I went to college....of course I wanted to, but it looked impossible. There was a professor from Cal....They used to go, I don't know whether they still do or not, but they used to examine the high schools. This professor was Hugo Karl Schilling of the German Department, a highly cultured person. He saw me in the different classes--not in mathematics I am sure, because he would have changed his mind. But he saw me in the English class,

Turner: especially, and in history and in the languages. He took our high school principal aside and said, "That girl should go to college." The high school principal said, "She will." He arranged that I would go over there and wait on table in this particular place. And that is how I got into college.

JOHN KENNETH TURNER

Teiser: Was John Kenneth Turner a special student at the University?

Turner: Yes. He took special courses. He had been a school teacher.

Teiser: What was his background?

Turner: He came of an interesting family. He was born in Portland, Oregon. His grandfather, Clinton Kelly, had traveled across the plains as an itinerant Methodist minister. He was going to Oregon where they were opening up new country. Portland didn't exist then. It was about '49, I guess. As they neared the Sierra Nevadas, scouts came and said gold had been discovered in California. About half of his caravan left to go to California, but he went on to Portland. If they don't call him the founder, he was one of the founders of Portland, Oregon. John's father, Enoch Turner, married Laura Kelly; he was a printer on the Portland Oregonian. When John was young, maybe about seven or eight, they moved to California near Tulare, where they farmed. John became, as I said, a schoolteacher. He was also a newspaper man.

Teiser: Where did he first work on a newspaper?

Turner: You've got me there! He later worked on the Fresno Republican, under Chester Rowell.

Teiser: Was this after college, after you were married?

Turner: Well, he had this job before we were married, but after we were married he worked there.

Teiser: Was he at that early age a liberal?

Turner: Oh, fiery! He was a Socialist. He had gone to Los Angeles at the age of sixteen and had met very active members of the Socialist Party. He was seven years older than I was, but he seemed a lot

Turner: older than that. I seemed young. I was rather childlike.

Teiser: At the time of your marriage you left college?

Turner: Yes, we went to Fresno and he worked on the Republican. Then we went to San Francisco, and we were there at the time of the earthquake.

Teiser: Where were you that morning?

Turner: We were staying in a hotel at Sixth and Market. I was thrown out of bed, I remember. The plumbing was all twisted and torn. We managed to get down the stairs. We were adventurous and wandered all over the central part of the city. We saw ruins and dead bodies being taken out of different places. The City Hall had fallen. That was a great adventure, but we got out that morning on the last ferry boat that left, and went to San Quentin.

Teiser: Had much damage been done over at San Quentin?

Turner: No, but they had an earthquake there at 6:00 that evening, and the prisoners were locked up. They screamed with fear. After a couple of weeks, John and I went to Portland, Oregon, where many relatives still lived. He got a job as the sports editor on the Oregon Journal.

Teiser: He was quite versatile, wasn't he?

Turner: He was a good athlete, almost tops in tennis. He got this job and we stayed there a year and a half. It rained, you know, and as a Californian I longed for the sunshine. So we went down to Los Angeles, and he got a job on the newspaper.

Teiser: What newspaper was this?

Turner: I think at first it was the Herald, but he wrote an article in which he called a whale a leviathan. That was far too literary

Turner: for them; they couldn't stand that.

LOS ANGELES AND THE MEXICAN LIBERALS

Turner: The next job was on the Los Angeles Record, but all in a very short time. This was now 1908--a great year for us. He was sent to interview some Mexican refugees from Porfirio Díaz, who were held in the Los Angeles County Jail, accused of violating the neutrality laws between the United States and Mexico. I believe we were both members of the Socialist Party then--I wasn't a member very long and I didn't know what it was all about, but I had tendencies that way. Anyway, in Los Angeles we met a group headed by the attorney who was defending these men who were in prison. This attorney was Job Harriman, a very well-known figure. He is now dead. By the way, I forgot to mention the names of the imprisoned Mexicans. They were Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio I. Villarreal and Librado Rivera. Later, Manuel Sarabia was also made a prisoner. The newspaper sent John there to interview them, but he knew Job Harriman from his earlier experience in Los Angeles, when he was sixteen.

Teiser: Was Job Harriman a Socialist, too?

Turner: Yes. But he was quite a successful lawyer, a sharp-witted man.

Teiser: What was he like?

Turner: He was tall and slender, kind of loose-jointed. I don't know that I can make a comparison to anybody. He had the air of belonging to the workers, but at the same time he was a very, very astute lawyer. We met at the house of P. D. and Frances Noel. I have to say P. D. because he never used his name, which was Primrose. Can you blame him? His wife was very active in trade union work; they were both active.

Turner: We met at their house also John Murray, an outstanding figure of the day who was engaged in trade union work and editing trade union papers, but was very volatile with a lot of fire and enthusiasm. And we met at their house a woman who was to be very important in this particular phase of the Revolution. Her name was Elizabeth Trowbridge and she was from Brookline, Massachusetts; that's a "swell" residence district of Boston. Her family had money. Her father had died. He had been a great philanthropist, but he died before Elizabeth was born. Well, Elizabeth had a lot of money. She had to get rid of her mother, who had taken her west because she wasn't well. She had to tell her a tall story to get her to go back home when she heard about these Mexican refugees and what Díaz was doing. Anyway the mother went back home and Elizabeth stayed and threw herself into "the Mexican cause" completely. My next book is going to tell about this part, the North Americans'--we call them North Americans in Mexico--participation in the days before the Revolution and the Revolution. It's going to be written for North Americans. I think I can get an English language publisher.

Elizabeth had met Manuel. We used to interview them in jail.

Teiser: What was the purpose of your interviews?

Turner: To show our support, I suppose. This was in 1908. One time John came and told Elizabeth amd me that we had a task to perform. We went to the jail and María, who was the sweetheart of Ricardo, was there, and the three of us went in to interview the men, Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio Villarreal, and Librado Rivera.

Turner: Ricardo sat in the middle toward the near end of the corridor, with Antonio on one side and Librado Rivera on the other. María sat opposite Ricardo, I sat opposite Antonio, and Elizabeth opposite Librado. There was only one guard there in the jail, and he walked from our end up to the far end of the corridor. As we were sitting at the near end, it took him a couple of minutes to get back. As soon as he started his walk, Ricardo dropped a piece of paper and pushed it below the iron mesh. María dropped her purse, and as she picked up her purse she picked up the paper. Elizabeth and I had spread our long skirts on either side of María to hide what she was doing. It was a success. The guard didn't catch us. After we left, we could hardly walk down the street, Elizabeth and I, we were so excited--what a pair we were!--because those were the plans for the 1908 Revolution.

Teiser: For the whole of it?

Turner: Enough of it so that others could take up from where it left off.

Teiser: What did you do with the paper?

Turner: María sent it down to the border, but it was captured. They were exposed. That was a betrayal of the Revolution. The 1906 and 1908 Revolutions were both betrayed.

Teiser: Do you remember the specific incident of the exposure of these plans?

Turner: Yes. The other side were watching everything, you see. They found a man in prison in Torreón in Mexico who looked very much like Antonio Villarreal. They let him out and they got him to play the role of being Antonio. The Liberals were not able to check to see if he was still in prison. So he got into the

Turner: secret Liberal club. Every place they had formed these clubs for arming and organizing. He got into the local one; someone said, "Oh sure, it's Antonio." He got their confidence and betrayed the Revolution.

Teiser: And he betrayed the specific plans that María brought?

Turner: I think that is the way it was. I tell you it was tough--it makes me ache inside even now.

BARBAROUS MEXICO

Turner: Elizabeth first sent John Murray to Mexico to find out the truth, but John came back, not being able to penetrate into the hidden spots. Then John Kenneth Turner went down with a Mexican man, Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, a highly educated lawyer.

Teiser: I suppose he was interested, and that was why he was willing to spend that much time and effort and be exposed to danger?

Turner: We were all worked up. It's hard to describe.

Teiser: I am thinking of de Lara, who must have put himself in a position of danger.

Turner: In a position of great danger! He had escaped danger before, but that's another long story. But it was all to try to free Mexico.

Teiser: De Lara was one of the liberal Mexicans who had come across the border into California?

Turner: Yes he was. He had been in Cananea at the time of the copper mines strike in June, 1906. He had been agitating--teaching Marxism to the workers. He was arrested after the strike, but was released due to the misinterpretation of the telegram of Porfirio Díaz to the governor of the State of Sonora. He fled to Los Angeles.

John Kenneth Turner and de Lara worked up a plan. Believe me, it's incredible that this thing really did operate. In late July or early August they rode the rods, they went as tramps in other words, to the border. Then they elegantly bought tickets to Mexico City and rode the train in the proper

Turner: way. The plan was to penetrate into the worst area--into the Yucatán plantations of henequen, from which they make hemp, and into the tobacco fields of Valle Nacional. There workers were bought for so much a head and taken down there. Very often their life span would be up to six months. The Yaquis were taken away from Sonora and forced to march all the way down into Yucatan.

Teiser: It was most vividly described in Barbarous Mexico.

Turner: They penetrated first into Yucatán. The way it is told in Barbarous Mexico is literally the way it was. Later they had the incredible daring to go to Valle Nacional. The other men might have been suspicious, but they got away with it somehow. I suppose if you dare you sometimes do accomplish something. Anyway, they did.

While John and Lazaro were in Mexico, Elizabeth, John Murray and I went to Tucson. There we took a house. Elizabeth paid for everything. The men were being tried there.

Teiser: The other Mexican liberals were being tried in Arizona?

Turner: Yes, the ones who were in prison. Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio Villarreal, Librado Rivera, and Manuel Sarabia.

We started a magazine called The Border. It was a monthly magazine. We had very good articles in it, showing up Díaz. Elizabeth bailed Manuel out of jail because he had incipient tuberculosis--no, it was more than incipient I guess. He wouldn't have lived in jail. He couldn't have, you see. So in October he came to live with us in this house; he, John Murray, and then John came back from Mexico. John was awfully depressed, awfully upset by what he had seen.

Teiser: Had this been just the tour of the henequen plantations?

Turner: And the tobacco. What he learned in Mexico City, too.

Teiser: Had he stayed long in Mexico City at that time?

Turner: No, not that time. He wrote Barbarous Mexico, the first part--the articles on slavery--then he took off for New York where he sold them to the American Magazine. They wanted him to go to Mexico City and get the political end of it.

In December Elizabeth and Manuel were married. John Murray took off, went to Chicago and founded the Political Refugee Defense League. From then he worked very hard in all kinds of ways for Mexican refugees--not only Mexicans; there were some refugees from other countries too, but mostly from Mexico. Elizabeth sold the magazine and she and Manuel went to live in England. He skipped his bail. She insisted that he had to, because he was spitting blood.

Teiser: How long did you stay in the house in Tucson?

Turner: We went down in September, and in January I left for New York, and Elizabeth a little later.

Teiser: Did The Border continue then?

Turner: Well, it did but it changed its character.

Teiser: How many issues did you put out?

Turner: I think there were four.

Then I went to New York, and John had sold his articles to the American Magazine. They kept very very secret anything on what the articles were about. There were some famous people on the American in those days: Ray Stannard Baker and Ida M. Tarbell. It was a good magazine.

Turner: They sent us to Mexico in January, 1909, to get more on the political side. John took a job as sports editor of the Mexican Herald, an English daily, and got away with it. We used to go to the Churubusco Country Club. They were having a tennis tournament between the United States and Mexico, with the greatest stars of the United States. The Mexicans were good too. So John was the umpire. He used to go up there and umpire the matches--this man who was trying to kick Díaz off his throne! [Laughter]

Teiser: It must have been a vigorous time for him, carrying on all his journalistic duties and all the other things too.

Turner: Well, we were undercover and you couldn't do much at a time.

Teiser: Did you also do some investigation?

Turner: Not on that trip, no. But I was aware all the time.

We went down in January and I returned in April. I became very sick; I was pregnant and I had "turista." I didn't know it, but the water was awful and I became very, very sick. I was down to skin and bones. So John sent me home to my people in San Quentin and he went on with his material to New York.

I went back on the same train that the tennis stars took, and as soon as I came to the border--I don't think it was psychological exactly--but as soon as I came to the border, I began to feel all right. Then I went home.

Teiser: You had been staying in Mexico City?

Turner: Yes. We took a trip down to Cuernavaca where I live now, because the climate was good. I did feel much better down there.

Teiser: Is it lower in altitude?

Turner: Lower and a perfect climate. If there is such a thing, Cuernavaca has it. We were there for a little while and then I went home.

Teiser: How much longer did Mr. Turner stay then?

Turner: I should say a couple of months--maybe June. Then he went to New York to see the American Magazine and wrote up more articles for them on the political end. The American accepted them, and in the fall of that year, 1909, they started publishing Barbarous Mexico. It was a tremendous shock to the American people. There were all kinds of reactions. He was attacked and he was praised. Everything!

Teiser: Was all of Barbarous Mexico printed in the American Magazine?

Turner: No; there is a point. After the first articles were printed--in four issues, as I remember--someone--we don't know whether it was Standard Oil--bought out the magazine and it became the most wishy-washy publication. It was just nothing, right away.

Teiser: How many of the articles appeared? Did all the articles on the plantations and the Valle Nacional appear?

Turner: Yes, this much appeared.

Teiser: Not the political part?

Turner: No, not the political part. That's what upset us. That never appeared in the magazine.

Teiser: What did Mr. Turner do then?

Turner: He went back to Los Angeles where we were living then. In these years from early 1908 into part of 1911, we lived in Los Angeles. We settled down in the house of the Noels and he finished his book.

Teiser: How did you live in those days?

Turner: I don't know. It was a mystery to me. I was in a dream world I think. Elizabeth Trowbridge had put up for the trip, but she had

Turner: gone. Oh, he had advance money from the American Magazine, of course. He was paid for that, and we managed without spending very much.

Teiser: You by then had a daughter?

Turner: In October, 1909, my daughter was born. We had moved to the beach and she was born in Santa Monica. Then after six months we returned to Los Angeles and he continued to write his book. In the meantime he gave lectures or spoke at protest meetings on behalf of the men in jail. He lectured here and there.

And you know, with all the publicity John had from the magazine articles--he had a trunk full of clippings--he couldn't get a standard publisher for the book. He did in England, but not in America because the word had gone out. When the book was finally published by Charles H. Kerr in Chicago, a socialist publisher, the editions would be bought up as soon as they appeared. Kerr would put out another edition. It went fine.

Teiser: Did the English and American editions come out at the same time?

Turner: Practically.

Teiser: Was there immediate response to the book?

Turner: Not on a big scale the way there was to the articles. The henequen owners or somebody would buy up most of the edition and it didn't get around very much.

Teiser: Did the British press review it well?

Turner: Yes, they were very favorable, very good.

PRE-REVOLUTION EVENTS

Turner Well, we went through 1909. In 1909, the book was published, and he was giving talks and carrying on propaganda against Porfirio Díaz. I don't know who started it, but it was arranged to hold a Congressional hearing. I think it might have been through Representative William B. Wilson of Pennsylvania. He was very much aroused. Anyway, there was to be a hearing before the House Rules Committee. It was held and "Champ" Clark, who was very popular in Congress at that time, was the chairman, and a good chairman he turned out to be. But there were congressmen on the committee, I think two of them, who were hostile. The others were fair-minded. Those who testified were Representative Wilson; John Kenneth Turner; Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, who went with John to Mexico; John Murray, and Mother Jones.

Teiser: Who was Mother Jones?

Turner: Oh well, I'll have to give you a bit on her. Her real name was Mary Jones. She was very active in the labor movement. She was militant and went into the mining camps, especially--oh, the misery of those places in that period! We don't realize it now that labor gets good wages; then they were miserable. She fought, and it was due to such people that labor did get better conditions.

When Manuel Sarabia was in Douglas, Arizona, carrying on his propaganda work, he was kidnapped and taken across the border to be liquidated. People got to know it and they raised a tremendous row; it got to Washington and the newspapers took it up. Mother Jones happened to be there fighting for the miners

Turner: and she put on a meeting. It was fiery! It was in front of the Mexican Consul's office. He was one of those who was involved in Manuel's capture. The miners hung a rope, a noose, in front of the consul's office, with a sign: "You are going to get this unless Manuel Sarabia is returned alive." After about ten days he came back. The United States authorities sent word that he was to be freed.

Teiser: It's almost as curious that the United States would have the power to have a Mexican national freed as that it would have the power to jail him here, isn't it?

Turner: Yes, but it was a political tie-up. That is one of the stories I am using in the book that I am writing now, because it is very close to me. I knew Manuel very well. When he and Elizabeth were married, I stood up for them.

Teiser: What was he like?

Turner: He was an intellectual, well educated. He was fair, fairer than I am, except for black hair and dark eyes. He was a fine person; I liked him very much. He was not what we could call a big he-man type, but he was gentle and courageous.

The Congressional hearing was held and there was a great deal of evidence to show that the Mexican enemies of Díaz were persecuted in the United States. John Murray had all kinds of evidence of what was going on in the southwestern states and along the border, about the opening and seizure of mail and all kinds of things.

The hearings were reported in the press, which was a good

Turner: thing, but the matter was tabled. This was June, 1910. In November, 1910, the Revolution started.

In the meantime, the men, Ricardo Flores Magón, Antonio Villarreal, and Librado Rivera, had served their time for violating the neutrality laws and were freed. They had been in Florence Penitentiary in Arizona. In July, 1910, they came to Los Angeles. There were crowds at the station; you know there were many Mexicans living there. The crowds threw flowers. The men walked on a carpet of flowers. Then a big mass meeting of welcome was held. They were carried on the shoulders of the crowd to the platform. John was one of the speakers that night.

Teiser: Was he a persuasive speaker?

Turner: Just as in his writing, matter-of-fact. A good deal of energy and sincerity, but not a picturesque type at all.

They renewed publication of Regeneración, which had been done away with by government agents in St. Louis. Regeneración, I haven't explained, was the paper that had been started in Mexico, had been smashed there and was attacked in San Antonio. The editors, leaders of the Junta, had gone to St. Louis, Missouri, and were finally put out of business there. As soon as they returned to Los Angeles after serving their prison sentence, they started Regeneración again, and John and I used to go to the office all the time.

Teiser: Where was the office?

Turner: It was on Fourth Street and Towne, the other side of Los Angeles Street. They had the whole building and some of them slept and ate there. We ate with them sometimes and got to know them. Enrique, the brother of Ricardo, had joined the staff, and also

Turner: Praxedis Guerrero was one of the editors. He was a gifted writer and a marvelous person. One afternoon Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, Librado Rivera, and Praxedis Guerrero invited John and me to go into an inner, very private office, as they had something to tell us. What do you think it was? The date of the Revolution!

They had such confidence in us that they told us November 20 would be the date the Revolution would start. You know, it's one of my proud memories that they had such confidence. It did start on November 20, although it didn't get on its way so quickly. They had the same date with Madero. They had made an agreement. Praxedis left to go down and start things in Chihuahua, and he was killed in the last days of December.

They had an editor for the English page of the paper. The paper was a weekly of four pages of the standard newspaper size. The final page was in English. They had a man who was the English editor but he left because he didn't get on with them. When he left, they asked me to edit the English page. Just a young, inexperienced person! But I had always wanted to write, and I was writing, and I was full of fire. It made me so angry when it was later said that John wrote everything! He didn't. I had guidance from everybody, but I wrote most of the articles myself. That gives me prestige in Mexico today, that I was on that paper. My name was on the masthead.

Teiser: How long did you write for it?

Turner: About six months.

Teiser: You were a good sport.

Turner: Well, I had belief in everything we were standing for.

While I was doing this, John was buying up all the guns he could find. They were shipped to the border labeled as tools or implements for the farmers, but they were guns for the part of the Revolution that was in Lower California. That part was nearest to us.

After the Battle of Juárez, Porfirio Díaz was forced to flee, and it looked as though the Revolution had been won. Well, Madero side-stepped the issues. He wasn't too bad, but he wasn't good either. He didn't get along with the Liberal Party men. So John decided--he made more decisions than I did--that it was time to write articles and even fiction. He was fairly good at fiction, but on articles he was splendid.

Interview No. 3 - August 10, 1966

JACK AND CHARMIAN LONDON

Teiser: You knew Jack and Charmian London?

Turner: I didn't know Jack London personally. I have seen him. When I was in college he came and gave a talk. Every Friday, or every other Friday, we had a speaker at Harmon Gym. Jack London came there one time. All the professors were very correct in several rows on the platform, and Jack London came in a soft shirt and no tie, looking very handsome. He called himself a revolutionary--no, I think it was another time that he called himself a revolutionary. But his talk was to show that he was a non-conformist because he had done so many things, like going to sea and bumming on the roads. The professors sat there trying to look receptive, but I know they were shocked. He was not their type. However, he was pretty famous by that time.

Teiser: Did he interest you in Socialism at all?

Turner: No, John was a Socialist from the time he was sixteen years old when he made a trip to Los Angeles. I think that's it; I don't know.

Teiser: So you had already been interested in Socialism by then?

Turner: Oddly enough, I didn't know it by name, but I used to go to the University library and I picked up books by Maxim Gorki and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward. These set my thoughts in that direction, but this was completely on my own. It was just that kind of thing, but I don't know how I got started on that. I had no particular influence.

Teiser: You knew Charmian after she had married Jack London?

Turner: Yes. In fact it was after she was a widow, she asked me to go up to her place in Glen Ellen, but I never went.

Teiser: What kind of person was she?

Turner: She must have had some good qualities. She was brave enough to go with Jack on these long trips in his yacht. She was a good companion for him because he demanded a lot of a woman. He didn't want a feminine type, but she was not masculine. George Sterling used to say, "She'd squeeze a nickel until it screamed!" She wasn't too happy about Jack's friends. In fact, she was pretty possessive.

John Kenneth Turner knew Jack, and he liked him very much until toward the end of Jack's life when the U. S. Marines fired on Vera Cruz and Jack went down there to get a story for Collier's. He said that the Americans should march to Mexico City and take over the whole country. Of course, that wasn't the way we thought at all, and that infuriated John. He had no more use for Jack London.

Teiser: He was a man of principles and ideals then?

Turner: Oh yes, John was.

I was going to talk about Charmian, and about how I knew her when she was married to Jack. When I was editing the English page of that paper I told you about, Regeneración--this was about March, 1911--we, Regeneración and the Junta, wanted to put on a mass meeting to explain the Revolution to the confused people. They asked Jack London to speak. Then Charmian came to the

Turner: office to explain why Jack couldn't do it. She talked to me because it was a matter of language. I was sitting at my desk in the outer office, and Charmian talked to me about half an hour. She explained that Jack was sick, but that he would write a letter. He did write a letter, and that was the letter where he signed himself "a chicken thief and a revolutionist;" he made a joke, you know. It was a serious, good letter, though.

Well, Charmian talked to me--I was a very young unsophisticated type--I was even young for my age. I guess I was about 23. Charmian went back home--and I think she did this very often--whatever material she gathered she turned over to Jack and he wrote stories. I am in his story "The Mexican." It turned out to be mostly about a prize fight, but it was all supposed to be in connection with raising money for the Mexican revolution.

Teiser: This was one of his short stories?

Turner: Yes. I don't think it is one of his best, but a lot of people have admired it. Maybe it is a good one, I don't know.

Teiser: Do you have a name in the story?

Turner: No, I don't think so, but I am the woman. It doesn't describe me particularly.

That is all I know about Jack personally, but he was a very close friend of George Sterling. He and George really cared for each other; they were more or less the same type.

Teiser: Wasn't Sterling more sensitive?

Turner: Yes, I guess he was, but they liked to be individuals and not to conform to the pattern. They were not of the Establishment,

Turner: we would say nowadays, wouldn't we?

I met Joan London. She was secretary, for a while, of the state AFL-CIO. I don't know if she still is. Their office was on Market. I went with my very dear friend, Ina Connolly, but that is another story--all about Ireland. Joan was so glad to see us; she welcomed us and we felt that we had a real friend there, but I have never gone back. If I were the type who pushed things, I would have; but I would not, so that was that. But we had a very fine talk with Joan.

Teiser: When was that?

Turner: It was around 1958, I think.

CARMEL AND MEXICO AGAIN

Turner: We went to Carmel in 1910, before the Revolution, on an exploratory trip. We fell in love with it and then in 1911 we went there to live.

Teiser: How did you know about it?

Turner: It was getting into the news that it was a literary colony. You have read my stuff on it, you know about it.

Teiser: Yes, I read your essay on it that you sent to the Bancroft Library.

Turner: You saw the George Sterling material? [Also sent to the Bancroft Library.]

Teiser: I did.

Turner: So it shows you more or less what our life was there. It tells you some details about our life there--for instance, Sinclair Lewis coming down. We went to New York in 1917.

While we were in Carmel, John made another trip to Mexico, when he was arrested, during what they call the "decena trágica."

Teiser: Oh yes, would you tell about that?

Turner: Well, John decided that he wanted to see how the Revolution was going, if the aims were being carried out.

Teiser: This was during the presidency of Madero?

Turner: Yes, this was the winter 1912-13, but he got down there late in 1912. While he was there Elizabeth and Manuel were living in Mexico City and he stayed there with them. In January, 1913, the shooting started--the Tragic Ten Days, during which the

Turner: nephew of Porfirio Díaz took the lead. The American ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, was on the side of the Revolution against Madero. John, being a newspaperman with a nose for news which was very marked in him, went out on the street with a camera and field glasses. He had a carte blanche from Madero. He had gone to see him, and Madero had praised him, said that he helped to win the Revolution with his book Barbarous Mexico. He had that carte blanche on him. He was captured in the streets with all this. He managed to get rid of the carte blanche. If he hadn't, it would have been too bad. It was too bad anyway, because they threw him into a "black hole of Calcutta." It was a room where there were about forty men and almost no air.

Teiser: Was this in Mexico City?

Turner: Yes, in the barracks. He was held there. George Sterling and a couple of other persons, whom I can't remember now, and myself went to see Harry Leon Wilson. He lived down the coast about five miles below Carmel. The San Francisco Examiner was there, and in that first edition it had two or three lines about how John Kenneth Turner was condemned to death. So George and I--George was one of John's best friends--rushed back to Carmel and we burned up the wires. Also John's mother, his sister and his brother--we all got very active. In Washington, Senator Ashurst, of Arizona, was very valuable on this. And Richard Harding Davis was furious that an American would be treated that way. He had more or less race prejudice, but nevertheless he did a good act. He aroused a lot of protest in the East. This was all

Turner: immediate. I went to Los Angeles and was interviewed by the Los Angeles Times, and George went to San Francisco. I got a box announcement in the Associated Press that John was down there as a writer and not as a politician. I don't know whether the newspapers believed me or not. Well, the outcome was that he was freed after four days.

Teiser: Had he actually been tried?

Turner: No, they wouldn't think of such a thing.

Teiser: Just condemned?

Turner: Yes, he would have been shot. He called on Ambassador Wilson to do something for him; he was an American citizen. The Ambassador found out that he was the author of Barbarous Mexico and completely ignored him.

Teiser: He was able to communicate with Wilson?

Turner: Yes, John sent for him and he came.

Teiser: He did come?

Turner: Yes, he came, but he didn't know who John was then.

Teiser: I wonder how it got on the wire services from Mexico.

Turner: We never found out. But you know it was only in the first edition. It was killed after that.

Teiser: Was Hearst* against the Revolution?

Turner: Oh, very much so. He had been given hundreds and thousands of acres of land at ten cents an acre by Díaz. No wonder he loved him!

---

*William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the San Francisco Examiner

Teiser: Where was the acreage?

Turner: It was in Lower California. There might have been some of it in Sonora. I don't know about that; but I know there was some in Lower California.

Teiser: Did Mr. Turner come right back to Carmel?

Turner: No, he went to New York with his story. It appeared here and there, but there was an inclination to crush it. He did get it out, and then he came to Carmel.

Teiser: What sort of a looking man was he?

Turner: John was good looking. He had an aquiline nose and an olive complexion, dark eyes and black hair. George Sterling used to say that an Indian got into the family somewhere.

Teiser: He was tall, was he not?

Turner: Yes, he was about 5 feet 11, and slender.

CARMEL FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES

Teiser: I'd like to ask about some of the people you knew in Carmel, to add to the material you sent the Bancroft Library. Did you know Lincoln Steffens?

Turner: I did not know him personally. He was a friend of John's, though.

Teiser: What sort of person was Harry Leon Wilson?

Turner: I think he had genuine talent. I liked him very much. He was a man who knew literature, and he certainly knew how to write. He had at one time been editor of--this goes way back for me--was it Punch or Puck? There was the old Life, and then I think there was Puck. He was from Indiana and he knew Booth Tarkington. They did some writing together. He had a good way of writing humor. I learned a lot from him. We used to talk literature. He was very fond of H. G. Wells, so I read all of Wells. In those days I read Wells and Conrad and Arnold Bennett. Then I got to the Russians, Dostoevski, etc.

Teiser: You mentioned Jimmy Hopper.

Turner: Yes, he was quite a person. He was not much over 5 feet tall. A lot of good people are not. You know the poet Keats was only 5 feet tall. Jimmy was maybe 5-2 or 3, but broad and strong and powerful. The last time I was on the campus I looked over in that direction, but I did not see the football statue. I wonder if it's still there. His name is on that as a football player. He played--I can't think of the name--I know he wasn't one of the powerful ones. He was light on his feet and ran well, and his name is on that statue. He got married, and he and his wife went to the Philippines, where the United States was setting up

Turner: schools. They both taught there for a while. Then he wrote stories and McClure's Magazine published them. I doubt if they were ever in book form, but he did write a couple of books. His mother was French and his father of Irish descent. It seemed to be a good combination for wit because he was one of the wittiest persons I ever knew and always good company. The last time I saw Jimmy, he was dying. His wife had died years before, and he had remarried, a young woman who was a musician. I was in Carmel so I went to see Jimmy; he recognized me but he couldn't talk. It was so sad to see Jimmy like that. He was also a very close friend of George Sterling. As a person he was wonderful. He had three children. Jimmy Hopper, the son, is a doctor in Sausalito, and the two girls are married, but I have lost track of them.

Teiser: Fred Bechdolt?

Turner: Oh, I can't think of Carmel without Beck. We always called him Beck. His wife had been married before and she had two fine children. They lived in the house next to George. We were very close friends of the Bechdolts. John used to like to play cards with them, but I never went for cards. I would sit at the side and read a book. We were on the best of terms with them. He was lean and lanky. He wrote about the West, not this phony stuff that you see in the movies, but the real West.

Teiser: What background did he have for that?

Turner: He had been a newspaper man; that's all I know. What state he came from I don't know, but he had lived in California quite a while.

Turner: His wife had been a beauty and was very good looking up to her old age, but she was not spoiled. They were such "personalities" that it is hard to put on paper. These people were themselves, so completely different, but they all got along fine together. Beck looked like a Westerner--long and lean. He rode horseback beautifully. I wrote about the parties he put on every year. I remember one party which Harry Leon Wilson attended. That was before he married Helen.

Teiser: You mentioned Grant Wallace. I used to know his son, Kevin, who is a writer.

Turner: Did you ever know Moira, the artist?

Teiser: That is the daughter, isn't it?

Turner: Yes, she is the same age as my daughter, Juanita. Peggy Wallace, Margaret her name was, and I had these go-carts, and we would go walking with our babies in the go-carts; Moira in one and Juanita in the other. Grant Wallace was a striking, handsome man, big and broad-shouldered. He never made it as a writer, although once he won fame. He was said to have pioneered those world reporters that came along strong in the two world wars, but this was before. He wrote syndicated articles on the Russo-Japanese War. He was well-known in that field, but he was trying to write fiction. I don't think he ever made it. I remember the agony of going to the post office and getting nothing but rejection slips. They needed the money.

You know, Kevin and Moira are Irish names, and I think the wife was Irish or of Irish descent.

Teiser: Herbert Heron?

Turner: He is still alive! He and I are the old-timers. He is still down there, and he is identified with the theater. He founded the Forest Theater, and he promoted it all these years. Grace Wickham Odhner, when she was down there recently, saw Bert and he gave her a whole stack of programs of the Forest Theater. If you ever want to know more about that, I can give you her address and his. He is still in Carmel. I saw him about a year ago. He looks fine. He is married for the third time. I knew his first wife. She divorced him and married a musician. Then Bert married somebody else I didn't know. Now he is married to a much younger person; I don't think she's forty, and Bert, I know is almost as old as I am. We are contemporaries completely. She is interested in theater, too. Bert has been interested in theater all his life. For a while he was mayor of Carmel. He had that interlude.

Teiser: Could you tell more about Perry Newberry?

Turner: I can't tell what he wrote, but I am sure he wrote stories and maybe they went to popular magazines; not the slicks, but the others. He didn't have a big reputation. Bertha, his wife, used to write poetry. She wrote other things too. She died a long time ago, and I don't know about Perry.

Teiser: You mentioned Michael Williams.

Turner: Yes, Mike lived there. Grace Wickham Odhner tells me he came from Canada and settled in Carmel. He wanted to be a writer and was writing. He was drinking heavily. He became a Catholic and gave up drinking. He was editory of the Commonweal for quite a few

Turner: years. That was after the Carmel period. There were two children, Marnie and Tippy. Tippy's name was Phillip. Marnie became a nun, and Phillip is married and lives in Florida. Grace had that letter from him about Halley's Comet.

Teiser: Oh yes, the one you mention in your account [in the Bancroft Library]. What of Harvey Wickham?

Turner: Harvey Wickham was Grace's father. He was really what you would call an intellectual. He had been the music critic on the Chronicle. He and his wife broke up finally. His wife was not an intellectual and Harvey was. His wife was a fine woman all the same. He finally left Carmel. He married Phyllis ~~Bottome~~ Dix Smith, the English novelist, and they lived in Italy. He wrote a book. I don't remember what it is. He died there.

Teiser: It sounds as if some people who had made a reputation in writing elsewhere were inclined to go to Carmel and free-lance. Is that correct?

Turner: Yes, that's right, they were.

Teiser: Was living inexpensive there?

Turner: Yes, it was, but of course groceries were what they were elsewhere.

Teiser: It must have been a very interesting community.

Turner: That's right. There were some college professors who retired there, too.

In those days I was studying art. I liked outdoor sketching--landscape with figures. I studied under Townsley and one summer under the famous painter William Merritt Chase. And I sold an

Turner: an occasional poem to a magazine.

Teiser: Did you meet Lotta Crabtree when she visited Carmel?

Turner: No, but John did. I was down in art school in Pasadena at the time. John was a dignified person in those years. You just didn't fool around and act silly with him. Anyway, at the reception that was held for her, Lotta Crabtree walked up to John, said "Naughty, naughty!" and chucked him under the chin. I thought that was the cutest story--that she did that to him. She didn't know John was a dignified type. Maybe she guessed it, and acted that way on purpose. Well, he couldn't resent it. I bet he was pleased.

SAN FRANCISCO

Turner: I have to tell you this, I don't like to; but we did separate. Then I went to San Francisco with Juanita. I had to earn my own living then. I used to work in offices here and there.

Teiser: What kind of jobs did you do?

Turner: I was a dictaphone operator. In those days I could always get that kind of work. I still wanted to write, so I would go around San Francisco, which was very familiar to me from my childhood because it was "the City" to all Bay Area people. I went around San Francisco with fresh eyes and saw things. I thought, "My, the city is full of beauty and drama and stories of all kinds." I wrote a series--they were free verse, but not exactly verse--they were on different subjects and I finally used the streets: Fillmore, Third Street, California, Mission, etc., giving them character and color. I am trying to think of the last words of my "Fillmore Street." This was in the days after the earthquake, when life had more or less concentrated out there, but it was still shabby. This is the way I ended "Fillmore Street": "Searching for glamor or who knows what romance at one-third off." That's the kind of writing it was. I sent them to Fremont Older, who was running the Call-Bulletin.

Teiser: Did you know him?

Turner: No, but I admired his reputation. Within half an hour--I was working at General Electric then as a dictaphone operator--within half an hour, he called me up and told me they were accepted. He was awfully nice to me. Such praise! I met the city editor, too.

Teiser: Who was he?

Turner: Arthur something. I can't think of his name at the moment. Was it Hoffman? He was very pleasant, but Fremont Older was the one.

Teiser: What was Fremont Older like as a person?

Turner: A great big fellow. He sort of overwhelmed you looking at him. A very straightforward person. I was very sensitive then. He asked me to come and have my photograph taken. I had a by-line. I was a feature writer right away. "Pictures of San Francisco" they were entitled. I had to go and have my picture taken; it was the coldest day in thirty years, and I had worn a very pretty little turban type hat the day I met Fremont Older, but this day I wore a wider hat. He didn't like it; he was mad. That's the way he was, very outspoken, but good. That series ran for a while.

Teiser: What year was that?

Turner: It must have been the early part of 1923. Then he wanted me to go out to write about personalities in town, but my style is ironic. Somehow I couldn't see myself going out and interviewing people and dealing in an ironic way with them. So I gave it up.

By June of that year I was co-editor of a poetry magazine, The Wanderer. It was the day of the poetry magazine. I built it up and got recognition here and there. L. A. G. Strong in England quoted poems from it and said it was one of the best poetry magazines.

Teiser: There is a file of it in the University of California Library. I don't know whether it is complete or not.

Turner: Yes, I know. I have two bound files, both in Mexico at the moment.

Teiser: Your co-editor was---?

Turner: Will Aberle.

Teiser: Who was he?

Turner: Just a guy who liked to write poetry. He was the "angel"--he paid the bills. Finally after a couple of years he took me aside and told me we would have to stop publishing it. That was a funny story. We went out to the beach and he told me out there that we would have to stop publishing The Wanderer. My heart was in it, and I began to cry. A cop came up and waved his billy club at Will and said, "Whatever you are doing to that woman, you stop it!" He said he would throw Will in jail. I said, "You wouldn't do that! He is just telling me we have to stop publishing our poetry magazine." Well you never saw such a face as was on that cop!

Teiser: Did you write any of the poetry?

Turner: I wrote some of it under a pseudonym.

Teiser: What was it? Can you remember now?

Turner: Different ones. Frank O'Hara, I remember, was one. That was one that was reprinted in L. A. G. Strong's anthology, but I had several in anthologies.

I kept on working in offices and doing our magazine on the side.

Teiser: Oh, you had not stopped working in offices at any time?

Turner: No, I kept on working.

Teiser: Where did you live?

Turner: Different places around town. I went to live in the "Monkey" Block--the Montgomery Block. I had what somebody described as a salon. It wasn't; it was just a lot of people who were interested in writing, especially poetry, who would come. Every evening we had a great time.

Teiser: Who were there? This was a period which is of interest now, I think.

Turner: We weren't famous, none of us. It was a striving period. I wrote a story, a novelette. I like it better than anything I have done. I sold it to Story magazine.

Teiser: What was it called?

Turner: "Likewise After Supper." I liked that story; I really put myself into it. It was published in Story around 1937, some years after I lived in the Monkey Block. I don't remember dates. Before that I had a novel published--in 1934. [One-Way Ticket]

Teiser: How did you have the energy to both write and work?

Turner: I did have a lot of energy. My child was staying with my mother in San Quentin most of the time. She had a happy time over there; she loved it.

I had some short stories published in Story magazine, too.

Teiser: Did you know Anita Whitney?

Turner: She lived on Macondray Lane in San Francisco. I knew her a little. I found her a very lovely, lovely person. I didn't know her well enough to keep going to see her.

Teiser: What did she look like?

Turner: She was nice looking. Not at all oldish looking, although she had plenty of years. She was very refined; she came of educated people in Boston, I think, or in New England somewhere. She looked what we called "the lady," but had no affected mannerisms whatever. She was very simple.

Teiser: You mentioned that you had two trips to Europe.

Turner: Oh, I'd better tell you about those. I told you about living in the Montgomery Block and having a group come in every night. We were never a drinking crowd. It sounds as if living in the Montgomery Block with a whole lot of writers and poets, etc., that we might have been, but we were not.

Teiser: Were you a talking crowd?

Turner: We were certainly a talking crowd. How the rafters rang! I don't know whether you know of her, but Marie Welch, who was afterwards Mrs. George West, became acquainted with me. She came from a very wealthy family. We were all poor as church mice, and we didn't know how she could be attracted to us, but she was a good poet. I recognized the quality of her poetry. She has had several books of poetry published. She was shy and did not know how to handle sending out her poems. I knew how to do that. I had edited The Wanderer, and I was sending out the poetry of young poets and my own. So I sent out her poems, and I had quite a few acceptances for her. In those days it wasn't so hard as it is now. I never expected her to do anything for me. It was not in that spirit that I did it, but she did take me to Yosemite and we had a lovely time together. She did nice things,

Turner: and we went to her house.

Teiser: Where did she live?

Turner: She lived on Broadway in a beautiful home. So she gave me this trip to Europe. It was wonderful. A lifelong dream of mine was to go to Europe. I didn't go everywhere. I went to Paris; that was where Marie's mother used to go quite often. I went to England and Ireland. I wanted to go to Ireland. My father's people, my grandmother and grandfather, were Irish, and the other side were English. It was a rather short trip. I didn't stay very long. I think I stayed two weeks in Paris, about ten days in Ireland and a few days in England. It was a lovely trip.

Teiser: What year was it?

Turner: 1930.

Teiser: Right in the Depression!

Turner: It was crazy! Then I wrote this book, One-Way Ticket.

Teiser: How did you happen to write that?

Turner: I had always wanted to write.

Teiser: But to undertake a novel while you were employed so fully!

Turner: Yes, but if you want to write you do these things.

Teiser: It does seem like a great deal of work.

Turner: It was. It was accepted. Then my agent sold it to the movies. First it was sold to B. P. Schulberg--I can't remember what company he was with, but Columbia finally bought it. A girl from the New York theater played the lead, Peggy Conklin. She never went on with movies.

Teiser: Was she good in the picture?

Turner: Yes, she was just fine.

Teiser: Did they call the movie One-Way Ticket?

Turner: Yes, One-Way Ticket. I saw it once, but I never went to see it again. I couldn't bear it. You know, they seldom make them the way you write them. They just take all kinds of liberties. They just take it and do what they please. Most writers have had that experience, I think.

Teiser: Did they change the plot?

Turner: Yes. They had a big prison break in it, and it was all melodrama.

Teiser: I liked the whole book, and I thought it had a perfect ending.

Turner: I'm glad to hear you say that, because I was never sure.

Teiser: You were not called in to help write the script?

Turner: No.

I sold the book to the movies, so I went to Europe again. But I still didn't get to Italy. I went to Paris again, and I went over to Berlin. Hitler was in power. My daughter was with me, and we slept in a hotel with an awful Nazi flag flying from the window. That was 1934. Hitler was already making his weight felt. The people in Paris seemed gay and carefree, but in Berlin they were hangdog. It was shocking.

Teiser: How long were you there?

Turner: Only a few days.

Teiser: How long was the whole trip?

Turner: The whole trip was about three months. I went over to England and stayed a while in London. I went to Ireland and stayed

Turner: nearly two months on a farm in County Kerry. I wanted to see the famous Puck Fair in August. I also spent some time on the seacoast, at the Strand of Rossbeigh. I didn't get to the north of Ireland. My father's family came from County Monaghan, but I didn't get up there, and we had lost track of them. It was so long ago.

Teiser: Was your daughter with you the whole time?

Turner: No. I came back by way of Scotland, and I had a beautiful trip through Scotland. I love Scotland. So that was about it. I wish I had seen more. Italy. And I wish I had seen the Scandinavian countries too, but I didn't.

Teiser: Did you write about your trips at all?

Turner: One short story came out of it, "Eclipse." It was published in Story magazine. I wrote another short story, "Sitting in the Kitchen."

[The following paragraph and the brief essay on the Stage and Studio Club were written out by Mrs. Turner for inclusion in this interview at the request of the interviewer.]

In the early twenties, while in San Francisco, I began to associate with fellow creative spirits. I was a member of the Poetry Club, in which Gladys Wilmot Graham was the most active member. I was one of the first members of the Western Arts Association, founded by Raine Bennett (a poet) and run by him. We met first in Arnold Genthe's old home out on Clay Street, and later took over the big Raphael Weill home on top of Russian Hill.

There were many interesting gatherings up there. I remember meeting Rebecca West.

Then there was the Stage and Studio Club. Attached is a brief account. My memory was stirred by Paul Romer recently. He is a very good artist, who lives at 22 Broadmoor, San Anselmo. He was one of our most enthusiastic members. He gave a talk on art at one of our meetings.

I remember, too, a small group of poets who met weekly. Two of them: Genevieve Taggard and Rolfe Humphries. My taste in this period was greatly influenced by The Sun Also Rises - Hemingway; Peter Whiffle - Carl van Vechten; The Magic Mountain - Thomas Mann.

STAGE and STUDIO CLUB
San Francisco, California

This Club was founded by Ethel Wickes in 1922. Ethel Wickes was an artist, at that time in her late thirties. She was know as the "goose woman" because she often painted geese, very successfully. She also painted California wild flowers, and the series was frequently on exhibit, notably in Golden Gate Park. My cousin Fred Smith was a good friend of "Wicksie," and he helped her organize the Stage and Studio Club. It was to be exclusively for those who were doing something in the arts, either creating or practicing. My sister Alma and I joined through our cousin Fred, who was directing plays, acting and writing plays of his own; he was also painting. I have a list of 27 members. I am listed as "poetess and writer," but I also

Turner: painted. When an exhibition of paintings was held, I had one canvas - of Washington Square (Greenwich Village) in the winter, with bare trees, and the old church across the square.

We held programs every week. I was horrified the other day to see that I gave a lecture on "Early Chinese Literature." What did I know about the subject? But when you're young you dare to do anything. Several times musical programs were given. There was considerable talent among us. We met every Friday evening.

We served coffee and cake. The spirit in our club was joyous and friendly. All went well until we started to accept as members those who neither created nor practiced the arts. "The bloom was off the rose."

Shortly after this episode in my life, Will Aberle and I started The Wanderer, a poetry magazine.

RETURN TO MEXICO

Turner: During that period I was writing and writing, but my mind was going back to Mexico. I wrote verse, and I continued to write verse until 1960 when I became ill. Now I probably will write verse again. Eventually I began to write about Mexico. I was reading a lot, going back to the history of Spain, even. First I started to write a history of Mexico from what I thought was a little different angle. It was into the early 1940's. There wasn't much production on my part during those years. I did not finish the history of Mexico. In 1950 I made a trip to Mexico.

Teiser: You had not been there in all those years?

Turner: Not since I got sick in Cuernavaca and came home. I went in 1950, and I met people who had fought through the Revolution one way or another. I made contacts.

Teiser: Had you maintained contacts over this period?

Turner: No, I hadn't. I used to see John once in awhile in Carmel, and I told him what I was doing. He seemed very enthusiastic, but he wouldn't do it himself. He should have. His relatives always said that I was the one behind him who made him tick about Mexico.

Teiser: He did not write a great deal afterwards?

Turner: Not very much. He wrote articles on labor for the Scripps papers.

Teiser: I remember reading in Ella Winters' autobiography that when she and Lincoln Steffens went to Carmel, John Kenneth Turner had come loping down the hill and was selling real estate.

Turner: Oh, we laughed about that--my friends down in Mexico. She came down to Cuernavaca with Donald Ogden Steward, and I saw her again after all those years.

Teiser: What was she like?

Turner: Pretty well self-centered. A very brilliant woman. She did good things, but she loved Ella.

Teiser: Was that an accurate picture of John Kenneth Turner?

Turner: Oh, I don't think so; we thought it was funny that the man who wrote Barbarous Mexico would get this kind of treatment.

Teiser: Was he actually selling real estate at any time?

Turner: Yes.

Teiser: Had you maintained an interest in Mexico through the years?

Turner: It was dormant all the time. I met some people, and we finally talked about it. One was a Mexican. I made an exploratory trip down there in 1950 and contacted some people who are still my friends down there today.

Teiser: People you had known earlier?

Turner: No, but who had known of the whole situation. You know, that's the book I am writing now. It is about the participation of the North Americans in the Revolution, before and during. There are so many stories that are full of drama and yet are true that I think it will be all right.

Teiser: These are people you knew first-hand?

Turner: Some of them. I am telling the whole story. I am taking the whole Liberal Party, but especially the participation of the North Americans. I have plenty about those that we knew very well. It's a great time in life to start writing that way.

Teiser: You said you had gone to Mexico in 1950?

Turner: Yes, at that time I was trying to decide whether I wanted to go down there and live. I made a trip and stayed about a month. I renewed-- you see, the whole thing was never strange to me. It seemed as if I belonged there. After all, we lived so intensely in those early days. John and these others, especially Elizabeth Trowbridge and myself, were so wrought up by what John and Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara had discovered, about the horrible slavery where they bought people for so much a head. Sometimes they didn't even buy them, they just seized them. After that their life expectancy could be about six months, because they worked them to death. We were so wrought up by this that we felt it our duty to do what we could to get rid of that situation. So you see how it was---the emotional part of it. Those things go so deeply that you can't ever eradicate them. I have never been able to. I lived those years over and over, even in Carmel. When I first went to Carmel, I almost had a nervious breakdown from the quiet and the change from extreme activity to quietness. I couldn't get used to it for a while.

Teiser: When did you decide to return to Mexico to live?

Turner: I went to live there in 1955.

Teiser: Did you go to Cuernavaca?

Turner: No, to Mexico City. I lived very inexpensively there.

Teiser: Where did you live?

Turner: It was out towards San Angel. It was called a compound; that is, there were several houses. It was very nice; I liked being there.

Teiser: Was that where you first knew Alma Reed?

Turner: Yes, I did not know her here in San Francisco. We had mutual friends. In fact, the other day I went over with one of my sisters and had dinner with Gobind Behari Lal, who is the science editor of the Examiner. He has been for many years and was syndicated when the Hearst papers were around more. He knows Alma Reed. Lal is a Hindu from India. He was telling me, "I am in three parts; I belong to three cities, Delhi, India; San Francisco; and New York. He was in New York 28 years, but I knew him when he was a young fellow out here, before the Montgomery Block days. He is a brilliant man. He asked me to dinner, and I said I wanted a Chinese dinner. He took us to a place called The Mandarin out on Polk and Vallejo.

Teiser: That's north Chinese food, isn't it?

Turner: Yes, it's very sumptuous, but I like the plain old stuff you get in Chinatown. Anyway, we had quite a talk. My sister, Alma was listening and she said, "Your memory seems to be all right. You were just clicking, talking about this, that, and the other person." Sometimes I forget, though.

About Alma Reed. I knew Alma in Mexico. I had been there about a year before I met her. I met a couple José and Ruth Gutiérrez——he is an artist and she was a schoolteacher then, but they have their own business now. He invented a paint called Polytec and has been very successful with it. Some of the biggest artists are using it, Siqueíros for one. Anyway, that day Ruth said to me, "There is someone that you absolutely must know, and

Turner: her name is Alma Reed." But I did not meet her through them. I cannot recall how I met her. We hit it off right away. We were both from San Francisco and we had mutual friends. We just fell together and have been that way ever since. If you think that I am a live wire in any way, Alma is so much more so! She is on so many things and does so much. She goes to conventions and meetings all over the world. She has a column in the English language Sunday paper in Mexico. She writes books. She is the journalist for Cedam, which is a deep-sea exploration organization. She goes to archeological conventions. She has lots of honors. She is an Aztec Eagle, and very few people get into that. You would think she'd be impossible, but she is not. She is nice, straightforward, and simple. In the last letter she wrote me she said, "When I finish this book"--that's the story of her romance with Felipe Carrillo Puerto--and she will finish that in a little while--"I am going to take it a little more easily." *

Teiser: When did you move from Mexico City to Cuernavaca?

Turner: In 1961. Because I had pneumonia and the doctors said that Mexico City was too high and the climate was too harsh. Cuernavaca boasts that it has the most beautiful climate in the world, and it is not far from wrong. I don't know how it could be better.

Teiser: I wanted to ask about the circumstances of the publication of your book on Flores Magón.

Turner: I wanted to write it because the people who knew the story were dropping off. There wasn't anyone around to do it. So I met Lázaro Cárdenas, the former president, who appropriated the oil.

---

*Alma Reed died November 19, 1966.

Turner: He was the best president they ever had, and is a wonderful person. I was introduced to him and it was proposed that I go to Uruapan and write, and he would pay all my expenses while I wrote the book. So I was put up at a posada [inn] and he paid all my living expenses while I wrote the book. I wrote it in six months because it was so fresh in my mind. I wrote it three or four years before it was published--it was published in 1960. But in those days, I could make a card catalogue of my head and pull facts out, dates and everything. Of course, I would double check afterwards. I was in a lovely place, very comfortable in every way.

Teiser: Wasn't it a government publication?

Turner: Oh, yes, it was published by the State of Michoacán. That was where Cárdenas had the most influence. He was from Michoacán. There were only 1,000 copies, and the Governor appropriated 700 of them for himself--for the State, so he said. I don't trust these politicians. It never got into the book shops, but it might be published again.

Teiser: What do you think happened to the 700 copies?

Turner: I never have heard.

Teiser: Did 300 come to you?

Turner: Yes. I gave them to people to whom it would mean something, but I sold a few.

Teiser: Did the State undertake all the publication costs?

Turner: Yes. You wrote it in English and then it was translated?

Turner: Yes. I never have done anything with the English original

Turner: because I am going to do this other book that will interest Americans more.

Teiser: I believe, in an interview that a member of the Chronicle staff had with you about a year ago,* there was a mention of the possibility of republishing Barbarous Mexico.

Turner: It has been republished in Spanish, but not in English.

Teiser: There is no thought of it then?

Turner: It has never been followed through as yet, but I expect to try it out soon. I have not shown you the articles on me in El Día. They ran five days in the daily paper down there, in April this year. I have been written about in Mexico in other ways. I don't know why, except that I belong to a period when there aren't too many left.

---

*Judy Stone,'Mexican Reflections of 'A wild One,'" "This World" section, San Francisco Chronicle, March 14, 1965, pp. 29-30.

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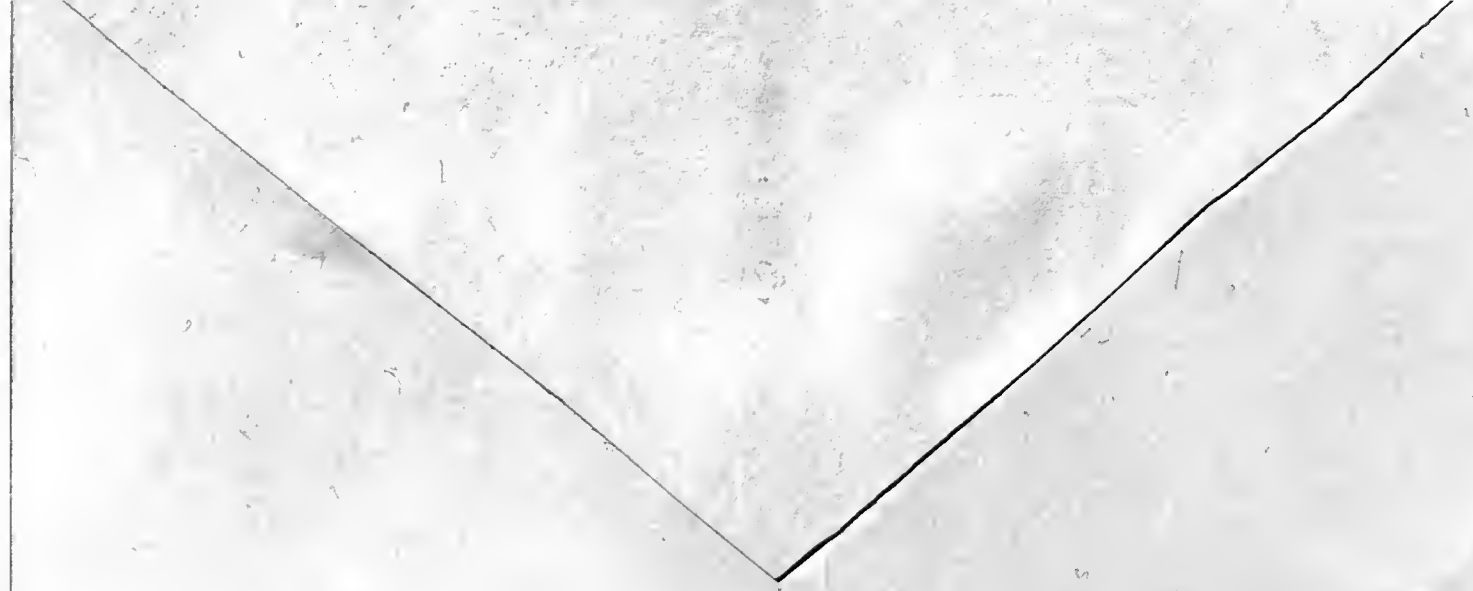
Ruth Teiser

Born in Portland, Oregon; came to the Bay Area in 1932 and has lived here ever since.
Stanford, 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 since 1943.



S.F. Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1969

Ethel Duffy Turner Dies In Mexico

Ethel Duffy Turner, who grew up at San Quentin Prison and later became actively involved in the Mexican revolution, died last Friday at a hospital in Cuernavaca, Mexico, her friends learned yesterday. She was 84.

A resident of Mexico since 1955, she had completed the memoirs of her Mexican experiences shortly before her death. A slight, frail woman of fiercely independent spirit and courage, she lived alone in Cuernavaca, maintaining her interests in world events, an inspiration to young writers, and a woman honored by the Mexican government.

Her earlier book on Ricardo Flores Magon, a writer and founder of the Mexican Liberal Party, who formulated plans for the Mexican revolution of 1908 against the dictator Porfirio Diaz, was published in Mexico several years ago.

SMUGGLED

As a young girl, Mrs. Turner had smuggled plans for that revolution out of the Los Angeles county jail where Magon and his associates were being held for violation of the neutrality laws.

When the Mexicans told her husband, the late John Kenneth Turner, about slave-labor conditions on the henequen and tobacco plantations in Yucatan, he went south to investigate and wrote a damning indictment against the Diaz regime.

Later, in 1913, under the Madero government, Turner narrowly escaped execution by a Mexican firing squad. He was saved only by the intervention of the Carmel poet George Sterling who alerted newspapers to his plight. Turner later wrote "Hands Off Mexico."

ETHEL TURNER
Aide to revolutionaries

NOVEL

Mrs. Turner, who had been editing an anti-Diaz English newspaper in Los Angeles, returned to San Francisco where she wrote a column of "free verse pictures of San Francisco" for the old San Francisco Call, then edited by Fremont Older. Her novel about San Quentin, "One-Way Ticket," was made into a film.

The daughter of a prison guard, she hated the hangings at the prison and disliked telling people where she lived. Her brother Clinton T. Duffy later became one of the most famous wardens of San Quentin. He now lives in Walnut Creek.

In addition to him, she is survived by her daughter, Mrs. Ray Lusk of San Anselmo; two brothers, William, a Woodland farmer, and Ray, a retired State highway official and three sisters, Grace Zubler, Alma Zang and Mrs. E. A. Peters, all of San Rafael. Funeral services were held in Mexico.