

Willam Bauer

Selections from Growing up in the Cities: Oral History Transcripts of Tape-Recorded
Interviews: Interviewee: Willam Bauer
BANC MSS 79/34c (Bauer)

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Tape-Recorded Interviews: Interviewee: Willam Bauer**

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William Bauer

William Bauer
San Francisco
July 26, 1977

Q: What area of the city were you born in?

A: Noe Valley.

Q: What year was it?

A: 1898. February 4. Same day as Lindberg.

Q: How old would you have been when Lindberg flew?

A: That was 1928? '27? I was twenty-nine then.

Q: Were you born in Noe Valley?

A: Yeah. Same house that my grandfather built in 1870. Patrick Kelly.

Q: Tell me about your family. Where did they come from?

A: Originally from New Orleans.

Q: Both of them?

A: Yeah, my grandfather, grandmother. He was out here first from New Orleans, before he met my grandmother. He was about twenty-one at the time. He went with his cousins up in Tuolumne County, gold mining. Martin and Michael Kelly, they were his two cousins, and his name was Patrick. Or Patrick William. My grandmother called him William. Anyway, he didn't care too much for that work, so he came down on the Sacramento River and had a little farm there. The flood of 1954 washed him out. So, he got disgusted and went home, back to his mother in New Orleans and stayed there until after the war was over, I believe. Then he married my grandmother there. My uncle Joe, he was born in New Orleans, but the rest of the family was born here, in the town of San Quentin. He was a guard over there.

Q: San Quentin was a town at that time?

A: Yeah, well, there is a town of San Quentin. I have never followed that up. But I know my mother was baptised in St. Rafeal's Church in San Rafael, so the youngest daughter of the family, she was drowned over there in the Bay under peculiar circumstances, so they were kind of heartbroken about that. So they pulled up stakes and came over to San Francisco here and had this cottage built that I'm still living in. Built in 1870.

Q: You're still living today in the same house your father built and the house you were born in? Grandfather built.

A: Yes.

Q: How big a house is that?

A: Well, it started out three rooms and then we built on a kitchen and bathroom. Then I put a sundeck on there. An enclosed sun porch.

Q: That's getting close to being an historic home in San Francisco.

A: Oh yes. There's a lot of them that's even older than that place. Right in that block there.

Q: When you were a young lad growing up there, was it a rather isolated portion, separated from San Francisco?

A: No, you had cable cars half a block up the street that came from the ferry right out to Twenty-sixth and Castro. We lived half a block off of Castro on Elizabeth Street. Within a block of Twenty-four and Castro. We had the car barn up at Jersey and Castro, and where there's what they call the Little Bell Market is there now. They torn the brick car barn down where it had the big machinery to revolve the cable. They did that job after the earthquake, put the machinery in there. After that, it was just a car barn for housing the cars, you know. Originally, where there's a motel at Valencia and Market, that used to be the big power house, there. It had a huge brick stack for years, there. They never took it down after the earthquake and fire.

Q: It stood up through the earthquake? It didn't fall?

A: It didn't fall. They had quite a job getting it down. Anyway, everything was out of order because the machinery was recked to operate the cable on Market, but they, I don't remember now what was the longest cable line in San Francisco. It might have been the California that went straight out to Presidio Avenue.

Q: Describe the neighborhood as you remember it as a young lad of ten or fifteen. Were the houses as close together as they are now?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there parks and gardens?

A: Oh, sure. No, no parks. The only one we had was Mission Park, which was a former Jewish cemetery that runs from Eighteenth to Twentieth and from Delores to Church Streets. Then, of course, they were, I think the bodies were just about completed removal at the time of the quake. They used that two square blocks, you might say, to set up the tents for the refugees.

Q: Do you remember that, seeing those tents?

A: Oh, sure. I was eight years old then. I remember going down to Twenty-fourth and Castro, and they were sweeping out of the drug store at the corner there, Semore's Drugstore, they were sweeping all the shelf bottles that had medicine in them that had been shaken onto the floor. That was my first impression of the what the damage of the earthquake had done. It didn't bother our buildings there at all.

Q: Did it wake you up, for example?

A: Oh, my, yes. We woke up. It'd shake you right out of bed, but we couldn't get out. The house boxed and the doors jambed, and we had a heck of a time.

Q: No fire in the area?

A: No, no. No, there was an old Irishman. He was quite nosey, and he noticed water dripping out of the hydrant at Twentieth and Church Street. Prior to that, all they could do was to dynamite the buildings and flatten them down and trail ahead of it. The horses that were attached to the fire engines were sent out to pasture because they just left the fire engines where they were, the big old pumpers, steam pumpers. So he went down and told them there was a good head of water from the hill on this hydrant at Church and Twentieth, they come up and dragged the hoses up, and they dragged the fire engine, the big pumper up to connect onto the hydrant to give the pressure. That's why you notice, going out to the Mission District, from Twentieth Street in t'ard town is relatively new structures. From there out is still the old, what do you call the old buildings, Victorian structures. I remember as a kid running down to Valencia Street to see what was happening, and saw one building laying over against another. With the brick foundations, that's what caused so many deaths and accidents, or buildings collapsing. They had that mortar between each brick, about a half inch of it, at least. Every time the quake shook the building, that pulverized and dropped down, and the first thing you know, the floors, the walls spread and the floors dropped from four or five floors right one on top of the other. Of course, that's early in the morning before they had gone to work in those buildings. That was lucky.

Q: Did fire get very close to you? You had this pumb here, but did it get very close to where you live?

A: No, there was the Twenty-first Street hill was in between. See, we were down in Noe Valley, and you had to climb the hill and then go down the other side to that...

Q: Did you climb the hill to see the fire?

A: Oh, sure. Sure. The next morning, the sidewalks had about a inch of ash on them. Just covered with ashes. Then we had to put our stove out in the street, on the sidewalk there, and build a wind break around it and then roof it over, because you weren't permitted to use your stoves or chimneys because so many of them had been shattered and they just would leak and set the timbers afire that were surrounding the chimney.

Q: For a young lad, this must have been a very exciting event. Were there a lot of things to go and see?

A: It was. The only thing I can think of was to get down into the ruins and find some of these wheels from hand trucks and one thing and other, to make coasters out of. And did I get strapped for that! I come home all full of soot. Any one that was able to clean bricks to

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keep them out of mischief, the militia, which would shoot you on sight if they saw a light in your window, they'd shoot right through your window. On and on it goes, you know. But it was quite an experience for me, because, the stores were all thrown open. People could go in and help themselves. The grocer would give them what they wanted and they just charged it to the government. My uncle, of course, he was a blacksmith, and he and Jim Riley next door. They went down to the corner of Twenty-fourth and Castro and they proceeded to load up with booze. Did they ever go on a royal toot. Blacksmiths always have the history for being thirsty for liquor, you know.

Q: Tell me a bit about your family's economic condition. For example, what was the occupation your father had?

A: He drove for the bread companies or the breweries and one thing and another like that. Being German, he talked - he was from Germany, so we might as well say that. He could along well with the German companies at the time. Then he up, with the Spanish-American War, when I was only a baby, he was off to the Philipines. So, he had such a heavy German accent that he didn't give my mother's name just right, it was fouled up. She never got anything - she wouldn't get anything anyway, because at the time, the government didn't give anyone, any widow, any compensation due to the fact that he didn't die of war injuries. He was drowned in the bay, you see. When he come down from Tuolumne County, he went up there to help my grandfather bring in the hay crop, and then on the way down, maybe somebody knocked him on the head and he fell off the boat,

because people in those days, they used to take little wagons called stages. They weren't big ones like you see the ones in the movies or anything like that. Just a spring wagon with a pair of horses, that was all there was to it. They'd drive into the boat landings and then hop on the boat. That was a common occurrence. You'd take the boat up the Sacramento River and then from there over on little stages to Marches Flat, which is just above the Moccasin Creek power house. I don't know who this fellow March was, but anyway, my grandfather and his two cousins, they had to dig this to get up to Marches Flat, they had to dig about a mile of road out of the side of the mountain there, the hill, you know, to be able to get up there. They always called that the Kelly grade because the three Kellys dug it out. Of course, you see, they had time in the summer when they didn't have the water for placer mining. So in the summer they would dig that out, and when the rain came for the fall of the year, why then they'd start processing the soil again for placer mining.

Q: Let me get this sequence straight on your father. Your father went out to the Philipines during the Spanish-American War and came back from that alright.

A: Yeah, after three and a half years.

Q: So your family, was your mother making do on his salary?

A: No. She took me down to Mountain View and was on a little farm down there, and these people were very nice to her, and she did the cooking down there. I grew up there, I guess about three or four years old. I got a good start there on that farm.

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Q: Then you came back to San Francisco? And your father came back?

A: Yeah, he came back, and my mother's error. She should have left him alone. She said, "Fred, will you go up to help my father bring in the hay crop?" He says, "Well, I've been away long enough, I don't want to leave you now." See? He went against his will. The result was, they fished him out of the bay over at Powell Street wharf.

Q: Did your mother remarry?

A: No, never remarried.

Q: What did she do for a livelihood?

A: She did housework. In those days, you got 50¢ a day for your work.

Q: Plus meals?

A: Well, yeah, they gave you a little lunch, I guess. It was really tough. I remember, she had to take care of my grandmother and one thing and another. I'd know where she was, and I'd go up to bring her home because grandma, I thought she was dying or something like that. She would come down the hill. She was a powerful woman, I can tell you that. You don't see women doing that nowadays.

Q: How many children did she have to bring up?

A: Just one. I was the only one.

Q: Did you think of yourself as a young man growing up, did you ever think of yourself as poor or well off?

A: Well, we knew we were poor.

Q: Well, did you have any notion that this was caused by something outside your family?

A: No, it was just a case of, we accepted it. That was all you could do. I'll never forget my mother. At the earthquake time, she had a lot of silver, money, you know, and she had tied it up in something. To keep anyone from grabbing it off, she put it in where you have this little place where you take the soot out from the stove. It got all tarnished. She was worried stiff that the money would be ruined that way. But it wasn't, it was just tarnished from the soot.

Q: Did you work to make any money while you were going to school?

A: Oh, yeah. I got a dollar a week for working in the, uh, on two occasions I had jobs as a, filling bottles with wine and labeling them.

Q: How much did you have to work a week to make that dollar?

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A: Well, you'd work after school and on Saturdays. That was a lot of money. Prior to that, I had newspaper routes, you know. I know I had 160 papers I had to carry. Had to be down at three o'clock in the morning at Twentieth and Guerrero from where I lived, walk down there, and then start my route and go up over lower Terrace, upper Terrace, top of Ashbury Heights there. I was delivering the Chronicle at the time.

Q: Every morning?

A: Yeah. Clear over to Stanyon Street. That's a long stretch.

Q: How old were you when you were doing that?

A: I was about fourteen, I guess. Yeah.

Q: You were still going to school?

A: Oh, sure. Yeah.

Q: So you'd get up at three in the morning and go that whole route and then go to school.

A: And for not getting enough sleep and rest, I had a breakdown. Landed in the, had what you call St Vitus Dance, I was so nervous. They cured me up, went out to the U.C. Hospital, that was the old one. Don't think there's anything left of that now. There's huge buildings there now. They kept me asleep out there with chloral (?), chloral hydrates. That's the old stuff they used to give the sailors in their drinks so they could shanghai them right off the waterfront down there. So anyway, after they keep you asleep with that stuff, and when you wake up, you're alright.

Q: Did you turn your dollar a week into your mother?

A: Oh, sure. Then in 1914, the drug store I spoke about formerly about the bottles being broken, the neighbor across the street, his name was Will Murphy. Later on, he had his own drug store at Twenty-fourth and Alabama Streets. He had a sign in the window, "Delivery Boy Wanted." I left school just like that. He said, "The job pays \$5 a week." You worked six days a week and, I think it was half a day on Sunday, if I'm not mistaken, if I remember right. I put up all kinds of medicines. I mean to say, in packages and one thing and another. Never any mistakes because I was very careful about anything like that.

Q: You worked full time at that job for a while?

A: Yeah. The first part of the job I got was this: Twenty-fourth and Castro is the low spot there. From the Twin Peaks, it used to rain pretty good in those days, you know. The first thing when I went to work at the drug store, was they handed me two buckets and says, "Go down and bail out the basement. Can't get to the stuff on the shelves there," the supplies, you know. So I had to go down and fill the two buckets up and dump them in

the sink, you know, and mop it up afterwards. It had quite a bit of water in there. Anyway, Mr. Murphy says, "You do such a good job, I'm going to start you out

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at \$6 a week. Oh, I was in seventh heaven. Yeah. So I told my mother, "Now you can quit work. You don't have to work any more." Big shot. So anyway, that went on for a year or two, I don't remember just how long that was. It couldn't be, because that was 1914, and 1915 I went to work for Scott Company, the plumbing outfit. Everything was done the hard way then, in those days. I got \$7 a week there. Finally, the old boss, his name was Henry Fetgather (?), he was German as they make them, you know? So one of the fellows didn't show up that drove the old 1915 Model T Ford. He says, "I don't think he's going to come to work any more. Hey, Kit. Go down to the trading company and get these valves." I'll never forget it. I says, "I have to walk down there?" He says, "No, take the Ford." I says, "I never drove a car before." I had a motorcycle, see, at the time. So he says, "You get in and drive it. You can drive it." So, and that was the day you had no self starters. If you killed the engine, you had to get out and wind it up and that was all there was to it. You got to the point where you didn't kill it very often. That was Scott Company. I stayed there a couple of years, and I went into a electrical shop which was attached to that building and worked there for quite some time. Then after that, I went to work in the tire shop, changing tires. That was tough in those days. You beat the tires on, and you beat them off, see. You had no equipment like they have now adays, all air pressure, knocks the tire right off and it's beautiful. Well, you got a lot of exercise from than anyway.

Q: About how old were you at that time?

A: Let's see. I was about seventeen. Yeah. Yeah. So then, from the tire shops, I had a Harley Davidson motorcycle. One night we worked late to catch up - I was working for the Norwalk Tire at that time. I'll say it because it's non-existent now as far as I know. So, we hopped on the motorcycle, and I was driving, of course. I had these big old cow horn handlebars, and they were so long that you couldn't turn short. I had the boss sitting on the seat, and I'm sitting on his lap and I've got this soldier from the First World War, he was being assisted to get a trade. So anyway, the government was apying for it, and he was sitting on the tank. We come down Bush Street, no signals in those days, see, in 1917. I come down Van Ness Avenue and some guy come down in a Dodge Roadster, I'll never forget it. Only two wheel brakes, and he comes shwooping right across Van Ness Avenue. Knocked the front wheel caddywampus. So the three of us, we shoved, brought the motorcycle back to the, around the corner was the Jackson Garage. It was very close to Jackson Street, the Norwalk Tire, at that time. So we put it in the Jackson Garage so I could come back to work on it. So next day I come back to straighten up the motorcycle and one thing and another, and the owner of the garage, he saw, was polite, and I was a hard boiled guy, so he said, "My boy, how would you like to drive a limousine?" From that time on, I drove limousines for twenty years, better than that. Private chauffeur. The first people I worked for, they owned the Parker Ranch in Honolulu. Richard Smart was the grandson, and I believe later on he was one of the directors on the Golden Gate Bridge board, because I read in the paper, Richard Smart and that was his name.

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Q: You mentioned the soldier. Where you involved in World War I?

A: No, I wasn't, due to the fact I had my mother to take care of. I was working. When I was in the tire shops, I was earning \$18 a week. A lot of money then.

Q: Did your mother then stop working?

A: Oh, sure. This job I got, it was like manna from heaven, because this lady was very fair at the time. She says, "I think that.." your're on the job seven days a week, let's put it that way. So she figured \$5 a day should be the proper wage to pay a man because Ford did that, see. So I got \$150 a month, the car was on live storage, it was a 1918 Cadillac. We used to call them pneumonia specials because they were all open in the front. So

anyway, two wheel brake car and stuff like that, you didn't travel too fast in those days. We traveled anywheres from around.the car vibrated too much if you went over 38 ro 40 miles an hour. That's a fact. You drive out to Los Gatos. She had a big, beautiful home there, and then the apartment was on 1824 Jackson. She had a nice apartment. I thought, "My God. She pays a hundred and fifty dollars a month rent." Terrific. I couldn't simulate that in my mind, because it just was too much. Now, look what you pay for rent.

Q: Let me go back here a moment. You said you left school. What schools did you go to?

A: I went to the old Noe Valley School which was located on Douglas Street and surrounded by Twenty-fourth and Elizabeth.

Q: Was it a six grade school?

A: Yeah. It went up to the fourth, completed the four. Or was it the fifth? No, it was the fourth. Then I left there and went over to James Lick for the fifty grade. That's when I quit school. But then after I went to work for Scott Company, quite a gang of us that had left school, we went to Horace Mann (?) in the evenings, and we graduated from there.

Q: So you finished your high school education?

A: No, that was grammar.

Q: Do you remember very much, what was your earliest memory of being in school?

A: Well, I was going to school at the time of the earthquake, let's put it that way. So it, I don't know, to me it just seemed, I got the extra work there, too. Like for instance, I got 10¢ a week for washing the dishes where the school teachers had their lunch. That was, I guess, the first job. Yeah. They, they.

Q: What was your reaction to school? Did you like it?

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A: I always in back of mind, I wanted to go to work so my mother wouldn't have to work, and so forth. But you're kind of hamstrung to a certain extent, because you can't concentrate on what you're doing, you know what I mean.

Q: Because of your money worries?

A: Yeah, you see, now the government takes care of any wetbacks that come into the country or anybody that's brought over from the old country by some relative, and in a couple of weeks time, they're on the dole. But prior to that, you just had to root, hog, or die (?).

Q: Did you have any favorite subjects in school?

A: No. I liked history and geography, but I guess most all kids have a little trouble with mathematics.

Q: What was the school day like? For example, did you stay in the same room all day?

A: Oh, yes. You stayed in the same room.

Q: The teacher gave you all the subjects?

A: Yes. One teacher. A first grade teacher, that was it. Low first, high first. First I went to kindergarten on the opposite corner, which later on was the start of that little hall there, St. Phillips Church, that I belong to. So, Father Cullin, he started what they called the "Sweetmeats Hall," where they had a little candy store in the front, and they called that sweetmeats. So the hall got the name of that. I'll never forget in church, he was a marvelous man, a wonderful mixture, this Father Cullin, see. Jovial and one thing and another. He'd dress the

people down at church. He'd say, "Now, this is your church. It's built for you and it's yours, and you've got to pay for it. I don't want to see any buffaloes in the collection."

Q: Buffaloes?

A: Nickles. No buffaloes. He was a wonderful man, yeah.

Q: Did you read much after you left school?

A: Oh, yeah. I think I was one of the first Readers Digest and the old Liberty Magazine, when I was chauffeuring, I was waiting for the people, I always had a book, reading it. A little self-education there.

Q: Another thing about early life had to do about politics. Do you have any recollections about anything that had to be with politics when you were a very young lad?

A: Well, yes. I know we had a mayor here at the time, and he was running for re-election, Mayor James Rolf. He was a very good mixture. He promoted good feelings among the people. I'll never forget, I thought you had to be a Republican to vote for him, and

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I was a Democrat and I changed to a Republican just to vote for him. But you didn't have to do that.

Q: Did you come out of a Democratic family?

A: Oh, yes, yes. On our block, there was only, there was all Irish on our side of the street except one lady, Mrs. Setcher (?), she was German, see. But clear from Castro up to Noie, they were all Irish.

Q: Was Mayor Rolf popular among the Irish?

A: Oh, quite so, yes.

Q: Did you, yourself, before you could vote, participate in politics in any way? By going to parades, or meetings, or working for candidates?

A: No, I didn't participate in that, no.

Q: Do you remember, around your dinner table, was there much talk about politics between you and your mother?

A: No, no. We were mostly intersted in surviving, making a living, make a dollar here or there, you know.

Q: Did any of your friends that you grew up with, go into politics later?

A: Yes, this fella, he was conctected indirectly with politics. Tom Gosland. He was connected with them indirctly, like I say, but other than that.

Q: Did he run for office, or was he apointed to office or something?

A: No, he didn't run for office, but he knew some of the powerful ones that were in office. He's a big, uh, eagle. There's an organization called the Eagles, and he was quite well up in the Eagles, and quite a number of those Aeries, an aeries would be like a nesting a area, you know.

Q: So Eagles was a kind of a lodge or fraternity?

A: Yes. Similar to the Elks and whatnot.

Q: When you became of age to vote, do you remember if you voted right after you were twenty-one?

A: I believe I did, yes.

Q: Have you been a regular voter ever since or just off and on?

A: Yes, I have, yes.

Q: Do you regard yourself still as a regular Democrat?

A: Yeah, I've followed the Democrat. I've been approached that I

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should be a Republican by my cousin, because he's a Republican.

Q: In your first twenty-five years, the political figure that most impressed you was Mayor Rolf?

A: Yeah. Local one, yeah.

Q: How about national political figures?

A: Well, naturally, we all thought Teddy Roosevelt was tops, way back then, but none of them.. Taft came along after him, I believe.

Q: But Roosevelt was the national figure?

A: Yeah, because he was a Rough Rider, and any kid thought that was really wonderful. Up San Juan Hill. "Arsenic and Old Lace," I'll never forget that. I saw it several times. That guy, they were all nutty, that family, and he would charge, and he'd dash up the stairs.

Q: Harding was through San Francisco at the end of his life.

A: Yeah. He died at the Palace Hotel.

Q: Do you have any sense of any political figures at the state level?

A: No. No.

Q: Do you remember any political events, particularly at the local level?

A: No. Right at the earthquake time, I guess probably history tells that, we had a Mayor Schmidts. He got involved in some kind of a deal with Abe Rufe. Between the two of them, I think they served time, I'm not sure about that.

Q: Did you follow it very closely then?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: How about political events in Washington?

A: No. It seemed to me we were just involved in just the local area here. Not even outside of San Francisco.

Q: Did outside events ever come in to that local area? Like, say, the war?

A: Oh, yes. That changed things drastically.

Q: How's that?

A: I don't know. Just the population was so infaltrated with bizarres that came here for work, building ships over at the, at the time of the First World War, it was called the Union Iron Works. Course now, it's the Bethlehem.

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Q: Is that down in the Candlestick area, the Coyote Point area?

A: Yes, that's right. Hunters Point.

Q: How were these people, these undesirable elements? What kinds were they? Where were they from?

A: Well, I guess, people like, that drifts where the work is to be had.

Q: Do you recall, talking about how World War I changed things. There was a lot of anti-German feeling during World War I.

A: Oh, definitely.

Q: And you were German, of course.

A: My mother's side was Irish, and my father German.

Q: Did you suffer from that? Was there anything said to you about that?

A: No, not at that time. But at the Second World War, I had a lot of Canadian and English friends, Scotch friends, and they kind of kept me at arms length, believe it or not. None of them went in the service, but I did, in the Second World War. Sure. So there you were. I was put in a tank outfit. See, we were the service company. We had to know everything about the parts of the machine gun and the parts of the...ordnance company. We were confined to quarters. But at that time, if you were over thirty-eight years old, you could get out. So the people I chauffeured for for thirteen years before I went in there, he was a big-shot attorney. There were two brothers, Cushing and Cushing. They were attorneys that had big companies that they handled their cases. One of them had power of attorney when I went away, what property I had. So he wrote back to me, he says, "William, you know you can get out and come back and work in the war industry again." I was working in war industry before they drafted me. I was working as a pipe fitter, being from Scott Company plumbing, I know all about the pipes and stuff like that. So anyway, he wrote that letter back to me, and he says, "If you want, I'll go through the process of getting you demobilized or something." So anyway, it was a long process, but it finally came through. As I say, we were confined to quarters. We couldn't even go to the PX.

Q: But there was some anti-German feeling, you're saying?

A: Yeah, among my friends. We'd have a party, see, and people'd go here, there, and around. My first wife had taken me to the cleaners, and so I mingled with the same ones after that. There was a sort of a, they'd get a few snorts in them, and they'd start looking daggers at you, like, because you were a German, German name. They changed everything. The German Hospital, they changed it to the Franklin Hospital. The German Hall changed to the California Hall.

Q: Did any of this happen during World War I, changing the names?

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A: Uh, I think that's when it was. I think that they were more bitter then, I think, then they were in the Second World War. I don't know. It was more the commercial part. People were making money during the war, and they wanted it to go on.

Q: Do you recall the end of World War I?

A: Yes, oh yes. Parades on Market Street.

Q: Did you go down for those?

A: I don't know if I did. Gosh, I don't know, to tell you the truth. I never was much for going to parades. New Years, I went to bed and had a couple of apples, and read a book.

Q: Do you remember the Spanish Influenza?

A: Oh, defini—I had it myself very bad. I pretty near died from it. I was working for Simmons, the steel department, where we made the steel frames for Simmons bed factory over there on North Point Street, if I remember right. So anyway, we used to travel on the old Powell Street cablecars to get over to work. We'd take down Market and over Powell. So, there was such a crowd of people on, everybody had masks, you know. But before we got the masks, gauze wore the masks, most of us got the darn influenza. That really knocks the tar out of you. Ever since then, I can always tell when I'm going to get a cold because the calves of my legs gets chills, believe it or not. That's the first sign. So the main thing is to warm up fast. Otherwise, it seems like the bug is still in your system, somehow or another.

Q: You've had flu since. Was this any special kind of flu?

A: They only call it the Spanish Influenza.

Q: Did later flus that you have seem like that?

A: They weren't so sever. No.

Q: Were you in the hospital?

A: No. I was home in bed in Elizabeth Street. It was right around the holidays, or maybe it was a little after the holidays, and I say that because a kid had a brand new coaster, and he came down Noe Street hill. This big pumper that had a tractor like on it, a tractor truch on this big steamer. She was pouring steam out. They had a fast way of starting the boiler up, so they come down Elizabeth Street, and they used to make a awful vibration. So this kid come down Noie Street on his coaster, didn't hear the fire engine coming, and in order to avoid the boy, the fireman cut it to the right side, jumped the curb, and hit the corner house. They killed the boy, and there was two sisters sitting out there. One of them I think had just come from Ireland a few days before that. And the flesh of their legs was in the honeycomb of the radiator. After that, for many years, they used to have benefits for the Scanlan girls because they lost their legs in that accident. I was in bed with the flu at the time, see. I heard the crash. I had good hearing then.

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Q: How long did it lay you up?

A: Oh, I guess a couple of weeks. That was a dilly.

Q: And it killed people, didn't it?

A: Yeah, and no medication that they could give you for it that would do, the only thing you could do was keep warm.

Q: Moving on to another area. When boys and girls are brought up, they're trained to be boys and girls. Can you remember anything early about that sort of training that you might have had about shaping you into what a man should be like? Your father was not with you, of course, but do you have any recollections about how you learned what a man was supposed to be like?

A: No. I think we were just like Topsy, we grew. And, of course, we were told to behave ourselves. As little kids running around, you'd get involved with some little girls, see what I mean? Inquisitive? Then you would be strapped for that, and dressed down, and one thing and another. But other than that, why,...

Q: What comes to your mind when you first think in those early days about love and marriage?

A: Well, my love went all in to mechanics, believe it or not. Motorcycles and automobiles, that seemed to be the big deal in those days. I concentrated on that to keep away from getting involved with girls I'd have to get married, because I had my mother to take care of. She didn't demand it, but I assumed that responsibility.

Q: When was the first time you were in love with a young lady?

A: You mean, like for instance, school and one thing or another? Oh, boy, I had a lot of crushes. One girl, I thought she was the most beautiful thing in the world. She was a brunette, and she had a voice - a heavenly voice. She used to sing in our classes in school. I'll never forget Mrs. Conroy, she said, "Annette, you have a God-given voice." She was an entertainer after that.

Q: What was your first serious falling in love?

A: I don't think, ummm, like I say, I was mostly involved with mechanics and motorcycles.

Q: But somewhere along the line you fell in love with a woman, though?

A: Yeah, I did, I guess that was when I first got married, but that was in 1930 that I met a girl down in Gilroy. Oh, I had many affairs before that, but I didn't get serious enough to get married. When I got down there, I thought I had the right one. I thought I had the right one, let's put it that way. But she had a strain of Cherokee in her, and when she detested people that drank liquor. Her family brought her up that way. Or smoked - oh, it was a dirty, filthy habit, smoking. Finally, she got to drinking and smoking herself, and that was the cause of her death. That was after she

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left and took me to the cleaners, and I mean cleaners. The story is this, that she went off with her brothers and some boyfriend up to Fairbanks, Alaska, and that's where she's buried I understand.

Q: You were divorced then?

A: Oh, yes. Definitely.

Q: When you were being brought up, what was the attitudes toward divorce?

A: Well, naturally, being a Catholic, my mother a Catholic, my father was a Lutheran, the thing was this, that you just didn't get divorced. If you got divorced, that's the finish. You didn't get married again. In the eyes of the Catholic church at the time, I know when I wanted to get married the second time in 1948, it was a case of where I went to the St. Philips and I went to St. James where I was married by the priest there. Nothing we could do to set it aside. They take into consideration, if you married a Baptist, you practically married a Catholic in the eyes of the church, because they're baptized. That was a technicality and I didn't know that. I probably could have had it set aside if I was married to just the ordinary Protestant, you know, a Lutheran, or what have you. But a Baptist, that's a different city. In the eyes of the church, you're married. That's it. So I understand that she died from, I understand that she was full of liquor up there in Fairbanks, and I understand that she fell down the stairs and died from the results of it.

Q: When you were growing up, what was your notion of the ideal family size?

A: Well, with a Catholic, they would have a large family.

Q: Do you remember thinking, "I'd like to have a lot of children"?

A: Well, you mean when I was married? Well, I'd a liked to have had children, but it just seemed like it wasn't in the cards. In those days, we used to get every child's disease that come along. I had a bad case of mumps. That could have affected me, see, cause I remember we used to have, in the old wooden coal stove, we used to have...In those days, you bought salt in sacks, yeah, and you'd have two or three sacks of salt in there to put around your jaws, hot salt. As a kid, the kids would call outside, and out I'd run and aughhh, and I'd run back in the house with a terrific pain, you know about it. So it could have affected my life that way.

Q: In what ways do you think your mother may have influenced you in later life?

A: Well, she was quite religious, let's put it that way. Of course, I always have ran across women that have destructive criticism. My mother was that way, she never had confidence in me. Criticized. Actually destructive criticism can ruin a person's life to a certain extent. They have no reliability in their own actions. But I was stubborn enough that nobody was going to tell me what to do. So anyway, my, the second wife, she's in nursing

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home through her own fault. She was a very, another one with destructive criticism. I don't think that the one that took off, she didn't criticize very much. She was a good person up until the time she got involved with some old friends of mine and then got to partying and drinking, and the first thing you know, she was smoking and going to town like everybody else of the parties in those days. In the thirties, things were pretty tough. I had a good job all during the thirties, all during the depression. Had a beautiful home, I can really say it was a beautiful home, six rooms and all like that. Then she took me to the cleaners. I'm still involved with it, but I turned it over to my nephew because my ticker is not too good at times, you know.

Q: What comes to mind when you think of your earliest religious training?

A: Well, kneeling down and saying prayers, night and morning. And going to church, on Sundays, especially. We had a long way to go to church on Sundays. Now, we walked. In those days, we walked. It cost a nickle on the streetcars. All our streetcars in those days were all open. We had what they called "open dummies" on front and rear. You sat out there and hung on, on the steps you had steps so you could hang on to the pole and ride. You could hop off in the middle of the block any time that you wanted to. Cable cars, the same way.

Q: So you walked to church. What was your Sunday School training like? Catechism?

A: Yeah, catechism, that's right. And the instructions that goes along with it. You had Sunday School teachers that were very good. I'll never forget that when I come out of the service in '44, I went to different churches on Sunday because I was living in a hotel down on off of Bush Street there when I was working on the waterfront. On your day off, you'd go to church. Father Collin that I mentioned originally, that started St. Philips church, he was retired and over at the Sacred Heart Church over on Filmore. So I went to there one Sunday, I didn't know he was there, so I said, "Father Collin, remember me from St. Philips Church?" He reared back, bushy white hair. Fine man, well built man. So he reared back and says, "Where do I know you from?" And I says, "St. Philips." I said, "Don't you remember? In 1911 I went to you for instructions." "What was your name?" "Bauer." "Oh, it 'twas a convert you were then?" He died shortly thereafter because he was well, well along. The archbishop used to plant him in a location, and he'd start up a parish, you know, and get it going good. Then the archbishop would take him and plant him someplace else. He was a wonderful man for organizing a parrish.

Q: Did your mother encourage you in this religious training?

A: Oh, yes. Had to go to church, that was it, see.

Q: Did she lead you in your prayers, morning and evening, or did you do it on your own?

A: On my own.

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Q: What do you recall about the sisters who were involved in your training? Did you have any of the nuns as teachers?

A: No, no.

Q: You didn't go to a parochial school.

A: No, we couldn't afford it. No matter how small it was. When you live from day to day, thank God you had enough to keep you going.

Q: How did you react to this religious training? Do you have any recollection of what your thoughts were as a young lad about all of this religion?

A: No. It was just part of the life, and you assumed it and went along with the tide. I never questioned it because I thought it was the right thing to do. My mother, she was a very straight woman, she didn't drink or smoke or anything like that, in those days. Of course, people have taken on smoking now, too much so. Anyway, like I say, she was a wonderful woman.

Q: Do you think that religious training has had some good effects on you through the rest of your life?

A: I think it straightens you out. I never made the bucket in my life.

Q: What does that mean?

A: Oh, the jails, the can, as we called it.

Q: Were there any parts of that training that were not so good?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: On another side, the whole business of ethnic groups that we hear of today. You were reared primarily among Irish, is that right?

A: Oh yes. We had a Scotch family across the street that the husband, he used to go to Alaska on a sailing ship, the Star of Alaska, the one that's anchored down at Fisherman's Wharf now. but they changed the name on it. That took these men up to Catchekan (?), Alaska, to do the salmon fishing. And Mrs. Campbell, she used to have these barrels of salmon bellies in the basement, salted down. She'd say, "How would you like a salmon belly?" "Oh, fine, Mrs. Campbell, thank you." I'd go over and get the salmon belly, and then to get the salt out of it, it was so impregnated with salt, you had to boil it in the frying pan to get the salt out of it. Then you'd cook it and put butter on it. You'd have to maybe put a little more salt after you'd boiled all the salt out of it. He was a boss - the Scotch are great for machinery, you know. He was a machinist up there in Catchekan (?).

Q: Your mother was Irish, is that right?

A: Yes, she was full-blooded Irish.

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Q: Did you have any sense of yourself as being Irish or being German?

A: Well, I will say a split personality, but you do lean both ways. I don't think it does anything to you spiritually at all, because I know I was raised in the valley and this German family on Twenty-fourth Street, this father had a saloon. The mother was full of diamonds, you know, and one thing or another. They were, I thought, wealthy. Well, the one, Charley, I went to school with him, so we started up with skates, then to bicycles, then to motorcycles, and then to automobiles, see. From there on, we palled around until I went to chauffeuring, and then he got married, I got married, one thing and another, and we fell apart. He went through a dental college and became a dentist, made a good living through that.

Q: Were there any German-American groups or organizations in town?

A: Oh yeah, there was one on Eighteenth Street, they called it Turnverein, but I never did know much what that was all about.

Q: Being Irish, did that give you any special kind of a sense?

A: Well, no.

Q: How do you regard yourself today?

A: Well, like I say, you lean both ways. If you have, like at St. Philip's, we have what we call the Seven Twenty-five Diamond Club. That's attached to the church, or rather, it's attached to the San Francisco College, I believe. We have a woman on there that's employed by the college. She signs us up every so often, under her wing, and that way, we enjoy all the outings that she can arrange for us.

Q: Have you ever taken a trip to Germany or Ireland?

A: Oh, no. I thought I might, one of these days. Maybe take a trip. I know quite a few Irish in Noe Valley. There's quite a number there, and the club I belong to, there's quite a few Irish there. I thought I'd like to take a trip to Ireland and see what it's like, 'cause so many of them are from there, believe it or not.

Q: You'd know where to go? What county your grandfather came from.

A: Well, he was from Kings County, and my grandmother was from Donnegal (?), the town of Donnegal (?).

Q: And what part of Germany was your father from?

A: Chemnitz, in Germany.

Q: When you were younger, did you have any sense that there were other ethnic groups that were closer to you or farther away? For example, Italians?

A: Oh, yeah. They generally had the vegetable stores and fish stores in Noe Valley.

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Q: Did you have any contacts with Italians when you were young?

A: Oh, yeah. Sure. We'd shop around there. In fact, my present wife is half Italian. But she's in the nursing home, like I say.

Q: Do you have any sense of what you thought about Italians?

A: Just that they were, a lot of them, in business, you know. Vegetables, like I say.

Q: How about some other groups? Like Chinese.

A: Well, at that time when I was growing up as a kid, they used to have laundries, hand laundries. They all worked with the charcoal hand irons. I never did this but some of the kids did, they'd be driving around with their horse and wagon, the cover was all black and covered so they'd keep the rain away from the clothing. They'd be delivering the clothes to the people's houses and these darn kids, I never participated in this because my mother taught, said it was the wrong thing to do to torment anybody like that. There was lots of rocks in those days, you know, the size of your fist, baseball size, and they'd throw them at the poor Chinaman as he'd go along in his wagon. He'd go like the dickens. We used to have junkmen that used to come along with a horse and wagon in those days. On Saturdays we'd go through all the lots, because in those days, they used to have a lot of soup bones, soup meat, and they'd throw the bones over the fence into the empty lots right where the church is now. We used to go there and gather the bones that was thrown there and the bottles, that's where that song came from: "Any rags, any bottles, any bones today? the same old story in the same old way." This deal, anything that was saleable, we'd pick it up. Gunny sacks were maybe a penny a piece or something, potato sacks. Bottles, oh God, the junk men bought them and they were all reprocessed. Now they're dumped and they don't reuse them any more.

Q: How about Spanish speaking people, any contact?

A: Not at the time. There wasn't any like that around. There was no blacks here. There was one black that lived up on Diamond Street, Edna Goodman, her name was. And there was no body.

Q: You didn't go to school with them or work with any?

A: No, we didn't have any. They just weren't, see. That's what these wars, they brought them all in from the south, there, and they're takin' over now to the point where you're. ..

Q: When you were young, did you belong to a gang? A group of boys in the neighborhood?

A: Well, yeah, there was a gang over on Church Street. If you went over there on your bicycle, they'd run out and grab your bicycle.

Q: Did you belong to a gang yourself?

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A: No, no. When then the motorcycle gangs—we had a motorcycle group that, we just went for rides. But we didn't act up like they do now, these motorcycles. Of course, we felt the more noise they made, the better. So we used to have these, uh, I made them in the shop there that I worked in. It was a big, brass tubing, 2½ inch brass tubing, and I put a door that would close over the end of it like this, that was cut on an angle, the brass tubing, and I put a hinge on here, and I could close it with my foot like this, you see, if you saw a cop. You know, it's terrible, I never heard one so noisy as yesterday, down on Northridge, in Daly City area. That's terrible.

Q: Were there any fights among ethnic groups when you were young?

A: No, no. No. No, I believe so. We have a problem, get into a fistfight with some kid at school, that was over in nothing flat. Seemed like there was always teachers around, and they'd rap that bell, on the side of the bell there, and boy, you paid attention.

Q: How'd they punish you?

A: We had Kelly, the janitor at First Noe Valley School. He had a big strap, oh, two inches wide and quite thick. When he hit you with that thing on the hand - you had to put your hands out, and you got so many on each hand. We had, I thought she was a very pretty woman, her name was McDonald - she was tough. If you spoke out of turn, if you just whispered or so. "Come up here," see. Up to the front of the class, and put your hands out. She had a brass bound ruler, and she hit you with that brass edge and your fingers bled. It was your fingers that got it. If she couldn't handle you, Kelly would, the janitor, with that big strap, see.

Q: Was that hard enough to make you cry?

A: Yeah, at times. Well, no. You wouldn't admit that. Kelly was quite a boozier and he was quite strong in the arms.

Q: Among your Irish friends when you were growing up, did any of them marry outside of the faith?

A: I guess they did, yes. I imagine so.

Q: Was that very difficult?

A: Uh, yeah. But most of them married in their faith.

Q: Did many of them marry outside of the Irish? Was it unusual?

A: I think it was so, yeah. Because they traveled pretty much so in their own groups.

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Q: What is the greatest difference, then and now, living in the city?

A: I don't know. I think now, of course, it's much better. Naturally it's much better for people. They're getting a living wage on account of the unions. If that's what you're alluding to.

Q: That gives me your opinion of how it is for other people. But looking at yourself, your life, what would be the big difference?

A: I think the blacks have the expression, in those days there were a lot of fat cats that were living off the little guys wages. Now they don't get the profits they used to, and the workers are getting more of the profits.

Q: What is the greatest similarity then and now?

A: Anything the same? I don't know, I don't think so. No, I can't put my finger on anything there.

Q: Have you ever thought of leaving the city?

A: Yeah, but that's as far as it goes.

Q: Why would you want to leave the city?

A: Well, get out where it's quiet, you know. I always have had the idea I would like to get up on some area where there's big pines trees and not rough it, but get some clean air. You're just breathing other people's dirt, as far as that's concerned. Even in your own bedroom, it's drifting right in through the window. Every time a car tears up and down the street, it's stirring up the dust and one thing and another, the exhaust fumes.

Q: Back in those early days, wasn't there a lot of horses manure?

A: Oh, yes. We had one Austrian family next door, he was a painter. The little boy, he was only about six years old or so, maybe not that old. They're very progressive people. We used to be playing ball on Elizabeth Street, and Hans, he had a bucket and a shovel right underneath the stairs, there's a flat upstairs and they had the lower flat, and as soon as a horse and wagon would pass, Hans would run after 'em with a bucket and shovel. His father raised a beautiful crop of potatoes in the yard. That's really the truth. It used to be, I don't know how true it was, but kids in those days, you had to be very careful of lockjaw. That was blood poisoning, you know, and they said it actually come indirectly from the horse manure. If you get some of that in a cut or something like that, you'd get lockjaw. Now, we never hear of lockjaw any more. I don't know how they eliminate it, it must be with all the antiseptics and one thing and another, but in those days, we was always running nails in our feet from an old piece of wood or something. Then your shoe would come off and my mother would get the turpentine bottle and scrub it out. She even would suck the poison out from my foot where the nail hole was. I remember that. Then she'd douse it with turpentine and bandage it up. In those days, you know, if you had a sore throat you

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had kerosene lamps, you know, you just hold up the spigot there and gargle your throat with kerosene and the sore throat was gone. Then we had the habit of stealing a little of that, a mouthful of it, and going outside and getting one of those big California Wait Awhile, you know, matches. Then spray the kerosene and a big sheet of flame would go out. We thought that was wonderful.

Q: Can you think of a single incident that stands in your mind that would best explain to other people what it was like to grow up in San Francisco?

A: No, no. I'll never forget the first airplane we were supposed to see. We went up to Twenty-sixth and Noe Street on the hill there, and a fellow was supposed to come up from Tamforam(?), but he never showed up. His name was Paul Han (?), he was a Frenchman, and he had this biplane, you know, two wings. I don't know, later on I guess we saw him sailing around, but he didn't show up that day, he was supposed to sail all around.

And boy, we waited and waited and waited. The hillside was just full of people.

Q: What's your feeling about living in San Francisco today?

A: Well, it's a little different from when I was a kid, because things are, I don't know, they're not desirable like they used to be, I'll tell you that.

Q: What's changed?

A: Well, you mentioned ethnic groups. You talk to people that, half of them it seems like in the Mission District, they all talk Spanish and they, well, they just don't mix with us. They don't seem to want to learn the English language.

Q: Anything else that's changed today?

A: Yeah, I guess so. Offhand, I don't know. Everything's changed. You can't just put your finger on one thing, things are just completely changed. I would say that.