

Ethel Grubb

Selections from Growing up in the Cities: Oral History Transcripts of Tape-Recorded
Interviews: Interviewee: Ethel Grubb
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**Selections from Growing up in the Cities: Oral History Transcripts of
Tape-Recorded Interviews: Interviewee: Ethel Grubb**

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Ethel McAllister Grubb

Mrs. Ethel McAlister Grubb
San Francisco

A: I was born 1890, February 18.

Q: What was the neighborhood in San Francisco where you were born?

A: Well, I was born at 1214 Hyde Street which is near Clay. Nowadays, it's almost Chinatown, not quite. But I lived there until I was five years old. Then I moved to two dozen, three dozen Jefferson Street which is just four blocks down.

Q: Two dozen..?

A: 2436 Jefferson! I lived there for twenty-two years. So that was my home.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: I went to Miss West's School.

Q: For the grammar school?

A: For everything. Miss West was my cousin Mary and she lived with my grandmother on Sue (?) Street, and that is a picture of the house. She had a big school, she was The Big school. Miss Bert was a mathematics teacher at Miss West's before she started Miss Bert's.

Q: So you had all twelve of your grades there. Did you have any advance schooling? College or other training?

A: I graduated from the University of California, but the family owned the college, so.

Q: What class were you from Cal?

A: I never went to Cal. I went to the art school. See, I paint. Not many of them are mine in here. I took the normal course so as I could get the graduation. See, six months of normal training, therefore you can teach in the schools you want to. So I took the regular course at art school, then when I took the normal course, I got the graduation certificate at the University of California.

Q: The normal training is what we later came to call "teacher training." How old were you when you were married?

A: Twenty-seven.

Q: How many children did you have?

A: Three.

Q: Grandchildren?

A: Three.

Q: Were your mother and father natives in San Francisco or did they immigrate here?

A: Oh, my mother and father didn't happen to be..one was born in Benicia. They almost ran Benicia, but they lived on Rincon Hill. He didn't happen to be born there. My mother, just by mistake was born in Boston, but

the family were all living here. They just happened to take a trip.

Q: What is the tie between your McAlister family and the McAlister Street of San Francisco.

A: That is my granduncle. There were three Halls, they were all getting mixed up. My father was Hall, cousin Hall, the statue was Hall, and my great grandfather was Hall. The people who have written about the streets in San Francisco often put those two Halls together, and one is Mathew Hall and the other is just Hall. He was in the Supreme Court. My great grandfather was a justice in the Supreme Court, and my grand uncle was the statue man. He is on the statue in front of CityHall on McAlister Street. I've written down and said they ought to have it cleaned because the pigeons like it too much. They said metal is better not cleaned, so I told them I'd give them a hundred dollars but they didn't want it.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

A: McAlister and Company.

Q: And this company dealt in what business?

A: Commission merchant. It got to be the largest commission merchant in the world, I think. It got to be pretty big, but something went wrong. A very nice man used to be, I can't think of his name, but he wrote me a letter and said, "That never would have happened if your father had been alive."

Q: Just for the record, what does a commission merchant do?

A: Coffee.

Q: He imported coffee?

A: Anything. It could be a bull terrier.

Q: They would buy things on commission and bring them in and sell them to wholesalers or retailers here?

A: Yes. It was mostly coffee. Mostly coffee. But I remember once he told me he brought in a bull terrier. But it was called the coffee business. But they had sugar, too. There's a certain amount of gamblin in it. And my father, how much you're going to make on certain things, and the oldest McAlister is my uncle, my mother's brother, the oldest McAlister in the company, Mr. B., he was a third. There were three partners. Evert Bee was the third. My father retired in the latter Fifties, which was very early, but he didn't like the tension of the gambling part of it. It was something about sugar. I don't know.

Q: And what did your father do after he left the commission merchants?

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A: Nothing, he retired.

Q: Did your mother ever hold a position outside the family while you were growing up?

A: No.

Q: I gather that when you were brought up, you had brothers and sisters?

A: My brother was quite a character. He's been decorated by the President of Mexico. I'll tell you his story, do you want to hear it? He graduated from Harvard as the leader of philosophy from Harvard, and he came out here. He worked a very short period, didn't work. That was for McAlister and Company. So he went and...?.. and worked for a year. Then the war broke, First War, and he's a pacifist. He would not kill. He's a vegetarian still and he's eighty-eight now. So he vanished. My mother didn't hear from him. I came back from the..OutStudent Theater? where I'd been working in New York. I came home and my brother had vanished.

About three or four months later, my mother got a letter, said, "There's a boy in his early twenties here, pulling potatoes with the potatoes. For heaven's sake, send him some money and let him go to Mexico City. I happen to meet him because I have a stamp collection and he knew more about stamps than anybody I ever heard."

So they knew where he was. He went to Mexico City and he went to the university there. I asked him when he came back, "What'd you teach?" He said, "Anything they want to know. French, grapes...: And he knows three Aztec languages. And he goes amongst the Indians there. He married somebody—in the beginning, she married him. She was ten years older than he was, and he was a lonesome, lost boy, and she was a peon. Luckily, she died and they didn't have any children. She died after they'd been married about eighteen years. He never would divorce her, but she certainly wasn't his class of person. Then he married a very nice Spanish-Mexican whom he's married to now. He was ten years younger than he was. He started then, he earned his money by being a professor of what ever they wanted, but he started climbing, like the Sierras, like the Sierra Club. He started a club called the Exploration Club of Mexico. It has gone on for over fifty years and it has more than four thousand people. I've got a book here on the subject of my brother being presented a medal by the President of Mexico. So that's the story of my brother.

Q: When you were a very young girl, did your family have one of the first automobiles in the city?

A: I remember my first ride. We rode out to Hunters Point.

Q: How old were you then?

A: Oh, about ten or so.

Q: What route did you take out to Hunters Point? Or do you remember much about that first ride?

A: Yes. It broke up the automobile. Something happened to it, but

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I've forgotten. We had to walk back. But it was the first ride we had in it. But there was one automobile in our block belonging to Mr. Shields, and if you've read that book about the earthquake, Mr. Shields automobile was the one that took us all away at that time.

Q: When you were a young girl growing up, did you have any sense of economic conditions of life? How did you think your family was doing? Well off or comfortable?

A: I didn't think about it. I never have. I never have. In depression time and we didn't have any money, well, I always had money. I taught school. I taught dressmaking, put my daughter through Hamlon(?) School for nothing, and I took in boarders here. I was very glad I'd bought this house, because everybody, all my friends said, "What on earth did you buy a house, a big house like that for? You've got to wash the bathroom floor." And they told me all the things I should do. I have always had a cook and I always have other people in the house. My husband died last February, he'd been mentally gone for almost ten years, so it was not a, it was a great relief. I had nurses and everything, right in the house here. I had to fire the Chinese cook because her husband came, and he thought he was a professor and he wouldn't even carry a tray. I said, "I'm not running a boarding house for Chinese." So I fired her, and I found that very afternoon, I got a Spanish girl who didn't speak a word of English, and she had to be off two 24 hours a week, and I didn't like being alone, so I have two girls living here, for friends. Apartments cost quite a bit now adays, so they are delighted, and I am delighted to twenty and twenty-seven year old girls living here in the house. One is a gardener.

Q: You graduated from art school, and you taught. What other odd jobs did you have when you were a young lady?

A: I taught painting, too, down in Monterey. It was just a scholarship affair. It was my best friend, Evie Fortune was my best friend, and she was the painter for the Catholic church of the United States, which is was quite of

a bit to be. She painted all the..., and she took me as her assistant teacher. There was no money passed in any of these cases. Well, of course, when the girls live here there is money, but I mean when I went, my daughter, who is very brilliant, she's a champion trimmer (?) as a matter of fact, but when she was nine, she had TB. I took her out of Grant School and doctors told me that she would be dead within a year and I couldn't take her out of San Francisco. I didn't feel that they were correct. I put her out on the back porch and she was there for a year and a half. She did very well. Then Miss Stanwick of the Hanlon School rang me up and said, "Ethel, will you take the dress making class?" I said, "How do you know I can do that?" "Well, I'm sure you can if you want to. We'll take Betty in school." I made up my mind I'd never buy anything ready made from then on, and I made everything from tailored suits to... I had two days at school a week. I ran my sewing bee three times a month for thirty-eight years.

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A: Upstairs, I've got seven sewing machines up there. I'll show my list of stuff that I've, well, every year I, this year I have 639 articles that we've given to the charity, recreation and the handicapped.

Q: Let me take you back to the time you were in grammar school. Did you have an ambition in life at that time about an occupation? Did you have a particular occupation that you wanted to undertake?

A: Well, two or three times. When I went around the world, I thought I was going to be, you know at Tut's Tomb, I thought I was going to be an archiologist. I got very interested in reading books about that. We went around the world for about five months with my mother and father and sister of five years old. I always..?.. (whisper) Always, unconsciously. THERE was this, I remember the teacher, I remember her name, Miss Warren at Miss West School, and she said, "Now this is little Ethel's picture." It was always little Ethel's picture that was good. So I mean, I was just born to draw and paint. I'm still doing it. I'm naturally, I'm naturally so. I guess naturally sew. The fact that I can go and teach sewing when no one taught me how to sew. I mean, my mother wasn't a real sewer. She could hem some handkerchiefs.

Q: Were these all young ladies at the school?

A: In the very beginning, there were boys. I mean, kindergarten, I think first grade, possibly. I remember there was Buzzy Mills and Lilly Osborne. I remember their names. And they were there until perhaps eight years old, something like that. But then they were all girls.

Q: The classes consisted of the regular academic courses, I suppose? Reading, writing, arithmetic?

A: Yes.

Q: What other subjects did you have?

A: Well, I didn't have Latin. I had one day of Latin, and I thought that was awful. I wished it had, because it would help me speak in my Spanish and French better.

Q: Did you have any language training at Miss West's?

A: Well, I hate to say it, but we had French, but I never studied anything. We all cheated. We all did it. When you do it all together, why, it isn't as bad. We all kept the verbs, I don't know, but I never learned anything in French.

Q: How large were these classes?

A: About a dozen.

Q: Did you have any social studies? History?

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A: Oh, yes. Yes. We had English History, French History, Medeval History.

Q: Did you have physical education?

A: I went to dancing class, but that wasn't Miss West's. We went to Matu Deeta's (?), a Spanish teacher that came, just taught us. Just there were my cousins and the Smith family and my family. I remember Mrs. Sidney Smith sitting on my brother's foot because every time he'd get up and dance, and he had to, and in a minute he'd sulk. He started taking the girl to her seat, so she sat on his boot between dances. My mother was furious, "That's my child and not her child."

Q: How was discipline maintained by teachers in that school?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Was anyone ever punished for doing something wrong?

A: I don't think so, no. No, I don't remember. Oh, scolded. Ooooh, I do remember once. See, I'm always dog minded, I had a fox terrier, he was just sort of a mutt, but we thought he was beautiful. So my family decided that we would put him in the dog show. I took him down to the dog show and I was a little bit late for school. Miss Grant scolded me. I dripped tears. I remember that so well. I was about twelve, I guess, eleven or twelve. But there was no, that was all.

Q: Did you have any science training at Miss West? Botany, biology, physics, chemistry?

A: No. I never studied anything.

Q: Did you have training in what was called "social manners"?

A: No. No.

Q: What was the subject that you best liked?

A: Oh, Miss Peckum. When I was going to go to Europe, I wasn't going to graduate because my cousin Julia was taking me to Europe when I was seventeen and that was in February. I left in May and the graduating class was in the end of May, so I just didn't happen to be here, that's all. I never, it didn't make too much difference and I left. But Miss Peckum gave me history of architecture. Of course, that was right up my alley. I mean, art and architecture are, I mean, matter of fact, when I went to art school, if it hadn't been for mathematics, I think I would have been an architect. I just naturally...

Q: And Miss Peckum was your favorite teacher.

A: And Miss Gram. I have a teacup. Miss Gram died and Miss West gave me her teacup because she said I was her favorite student. I still have it.

Q: What made her a special teacher? What did she have or do that made her that way?

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A: She was ugly. She looked like a camel. That's dreadful to say. I don't know why a person can look like a camel. But she was very sympathetic, that's all. I don't know. I liked her, she liked me. I remember her coming to call on us while we were playing on the floor, about ten years old. I had animal crackers, I think, on the floor, and she was talking to us. We liked her, that's all.

Q: Let me ask an historical question here. Most of the people have had some recollection of the earthquake and fire—

A: Well, you've read my book, you see. I mean the book about the earthquake that Mrs....uh, "The Damnest, Finest Ruins." Well, she didn't get it straight. This person came to tea with me, she came because one of my sewing bee ladies brought her in from England, she was visiting her, and so she brought her in for tea time. My daughter, well, I didn't know, I talked with her like I talk with you. I went down to Palo Alto a couple of years later and they said, "Well, here comes the heroine." I said, "What are you talking about?" And they said, "Haven't you read this book? Your name is in it, Ethel McAlister and Ethel Grubb." That was Dr. Langly Porter, as a matter of fact, Porter Clinic, you know who that is. He said, "You can have the book, it is yours." So I have the book. I came home and my daughter said, "I know who that was. That woman who came with Mrs. Remington. I heard you telling her stories that I'd never heard."

The things she didn't get straight were my brother's name, Otis McAlister. She called him Otto or something like that, which anybody living in San Francisco would know Otis McAlister, really. Otis McAlister Company, and Otis Street and McAlister Street. They just naturally know Otis McAlister. Not Otto.

Then she said, well, I can tell you quickly. Do you want me to tell you? Well, when I woke up, there's a picture upstairs, it's still hanging, it was moving. I thought it was the end of the world. I was sixteen but I thought it was the end of the world. I fell out of bed. In the hallway, all the books were fallen down so my door was blocked. It was very hard to get out, but I finally bumped it out and fell over the books and got out. I got my dog, the fox terrier. Everybody was stirring around and my brother said, "I'm playing the piano." My mother said, "How could you play the piano at a time like this?" So I stopped. Then Aunt Martha, who lived at the Bella Vista, my grandmother's sister, Martha McCundry (?), had at the age of twenty-three, her father had died and she decided she had something the matter with her eyes. She went in that room and she stayed in that room until she was ninety-two, in the dark, excepting for one year, that year of the earthquake. She went right back after. Well, anyway, Aunt Martha had to be rescued. Mr. Shields had an automobile, he was the third neighbor to us. Mr. Shields said, "I'll take Ethel down to get your aunt, because we want to go down and see the fire as long as we've got the automobile. We want to go down to see Market Street." They didn't know it was all gone. So after we got in the car, we went to Aunt Martha's. She said, "I will not leave. I will not leave my room." For me, she wouldn't. But she says, "You can take my two suitcases." So she gave me one suitcase full of silver and the other full of clothes. We put them in the automobile. Then we said, "Now we want to go see the fire." Mr. Shields, he was out to have a good time. So we went down to Market Street. We saw the windows go boom, boom, boom from the heat. Down on the floor, on

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the sidewalk, was a sign, "Come and get your tickets to the Opera." Everybody was laughing at that, of course. Then all of a sudden, the automobile went boom and the gasoline tank gave out, the gasoline gave out. There was no gas. An old fashion automobile, you see, and there was no, well, we moved as far as, you know where Shreve's is on Post Street? We moved up from the Palace Hotel, two blocks on Post and Grant Avenue, and the woman who was with me (there was Mr. Shields and a man and Mrs. Shields and a friend), the woman with Mrs. Shields got hysterics. It was too much for her, she couldn't take it. So they said, "You take her out and walk away from the fire." Mr. Shields said to the man, "We'll go and get the gasoline." I was all alone. There I sat in the automobile, and boy, I saw a lot of things. I mean, there was a man trying to get into the White House, he was mentally going fuzzy because you, well, nobody was going to the White House, the door was closed. He said, "I've got my job. I've got to go in." I remember that. Then there was a little boy of fifteen, or twelve, I guess. He came and talked to me. He said, "My mother"— I guess they were killed—"My mother and father have gone on a little mission. What do I do?" Well, I don't know. But an actory looking couple, man and a woman, came up to me. I don't know, but they looked like an actor type of person, not a fancy actor, but just an actor. They said, "You come along with us. We're going to sleep in Union Square or something like that. We'll probably stay there, and you stay with us." I was young and I couldn't do anything with the boy, so they took him along with them.

Then it was Buckridge (?) Patterns, here was Shreve's, and this was Buckridge (?) Patterns, men's clothing store then, and there was a red-headed darky trying to get a trunk with a round top out the window. Whether she got it out or not...But then at six o'clock, another big earthquake came. The Shreve Building wasn't quite finished. It was there, still the same stone structure is still there. But it wasn't quite finished and it shook like anything. Mrs. Shields got her friend quieted down and they'd come back. They said, "Well I guess we better go home." So I took the suitcase full of silver and Mrs. Shields took the suitcase full of clothes and we walked home to my home, which was quite a walk. Quite a load. When I got up there, the family were all weeping because they thought I was dead. But the minute they saw me, "Ethel, you've got to go and tell your grandmother you're alive." You couldn't telephone, you know. My grandmother was on Broadway where the convent is now, Broadway and Fillmore. My grandmother was staying with her son's family for the time being. And so I had to go over there and tell her I was alive. Then, we slept that night, and the next morning Mr. Shields very kindly took us down to Fort Mason. He took me and my brother and my two cousins and the person across the street asked me if I would take care of her poodle dog, that she'd give me a puppy if she had one (she never did). So I had my fox terrier, and the poodle dog, and the canary bird and the nurse for my cousins. We were all in that automobile. I don't how! They told everybody to get one pillowcase and put in whatever they wanted into that pillowcase, so we each had a pillowcase. I took my very best dress that was absolutely no use to me. Then we all got down to Fort Mason and got on a boat and went over to Mill Valley.

Over in Mill Valley, the papers as big as this, music, would come, was a little bit burned, but you could read the whole music. It was the heat would send them up, and they'd come down there. Really big pieces. Then my father came over with us, and so he had

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to spend the night, he got us installed and we rented the cabin for the summer but we hadn't planned to go there in April, we were going in May or June. So there was one double bed, and my cousin and I and her three year younger sister, we all tried to get in the bed, but we kept jumping and the younger sister always fell. So she went to bed with my father. I think my poor father was embarrassed, but it was alright with me because we knew.

But anyway, I probably shouldn't tell all those tales. But my father went home the next day, and he had to get Warren McAlister who was, now this is what she got wrong somehow, he was in the St. Francis Hospital, paralyzed. This is the son of Snobby Ward.

Q: The Ward McAlister of New York?

A: This was his son, yes. The other was a big snob. I don't know, this one may have been, too, but I always remember he got him somehow, I don't know how he got him from the St. Francis Hospital to our house where they got him in my bed. I remember seeing him sitting in my bed. Then they felt they had to get him further away because the fire was getting pretty close and by that time there was a soldier on the corner ready to shoot anybody if they stay in the house. See, the military, so my brother, how the devil he did it, he took a chair that had two casters like that chair, and he put my cousin Ward, Ward McAlister, on it, and he pushed him from Jackson Street up that hill there, he pushed him out to cousin Isabelle's - that's the other side of the family - who lived on the corner of Presidio and Jackson. He said, "Will you take him?" And they said, "No! He has nothing to do with us, he's not our family." That was my mother's side of the family, Bigelow, Sam Wood. So my brother, who was seventeen, took him and pushed him the whole way down to Letterman Hospital. Terrible hills. I don't see how in the dickens he did it. But he left him in the hospital. Then, after things settled down, my father went down to get him, and he couldn't speak. He was paralyzed. He wasn't there. My father advertized. Three months later, he found him up in Livermore in the Army Hospital. She didn't get that straight in the book, I forgot what it was but she didn't get it straight. That's that.

Q: As a young girl growing up in San Francisco, did your family have anything much to do with politics?

A: Yes, my father was Supervisor. When Mayor Schmidt and Rufe, well, everybody said they want the good, solid citizens to be Supervisors, so they asked my father, and he said alright, he would be. Then my father, they wanted him to be mayor, they wanted him become all (?). My mother said, "If you get into politics, I'll divorce you." Her father died in politics, her father died when she was fourteen, and she always felt he died of a broken heart because he was maligned. So I don't think she would really do it, but that was the story anyway.

Q: But your father was a Supervisor for how long a period?

A: One period. After Rufe and Schmidt were thrown out.

Q: Was there much talk over your dinner table when you were a young girl about local political things in the city?

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A: It didn't touch me.

Q: What political event do you best remember in Washington up until the time you were about twenty-five?

A: I don't remember. I remember Fighting Bob Evans coming for dinner. Admiral Evans was called Fighting Bob at the time of the Spanish War. He swore, everything he said he swore, so my mother had a fit. I don't remember much about it myself.

Q: Did you meet any local, state, or national political figures?

A: Well, I remember seeing, what was his name? Uh, well, I lost it. Well, of course I know Julia Ward Howe, she was my cousin, my father's cousin. Sat on the armchair right here when I had dinner with her. I've got all their pictures around here.

Q: This is the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." What recollections do you have of her?

A: Well, we were there for a big dinner party. We went to Boston, of course, we made a trip to Boston. We went there for dinner, and I know I sat on the edge of the chair and talked with her. Her daughter was there, her daughter was Laura Richards, you know. Laura Richards wrote a lot of girls' books, girls' stories. Same as Louise Alcott, Louise authored "Little Women" and "Little Men." Well, this is the same thing, only she didn't write quite so many. She was there. That's all I remember.

Q: When women got the vote, you would have been of voting age. Did you register to vote? Were you involved in that suffragette movement?

A: When I was twenty-one, I could vote. So my cousin Cora and I went down and registered. My cousin Cora was a friend of mine, a very good friend. We voted for a civic center, and my uncle and my father voted against it. So the two daughters canceled their votes, and boy, were they annoyed. But we won. I remember that. I was twenty-one when it happened.

Q: At that time, were you a Democrat or Republican or Independent?

A: I haven't the vaguest idea what I am now, but I'm a Republican. I don't know much about politics.

Q: But through the majority of your life you've regarded yourself as a Republican?

A: Yes.

Q: How about your father?

A: Republican. In the beginning, he was a Democrat, and then he changed to be a Republican. I don't know why.

Q: And your mother? How did she regard herself?

A: She was always interested in politics. But she never voted.

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Q: After that—

A: She was interested in politics and I voted. That's the silly part.

Q: Did you continue voting after that, pretty regularly?

A: Oh, yes. I always voted. I usually say to my son, "Who do I vote for?" But I always vote.

Q: Of your childhood friends, did any of them go into politics later?

A: No.

Q: In your first twenty-five years—

A: My boyfriends all did other things. Yeah, I wasn't until I was twenty-seven, so of course I could have.

Q: Up until about 1915, what political figure, if any, impressed you?

A: I don't know.

Q: Do you have any recollections of World War I?

A: Certainly.

Q: Did you have any members of your family that went into the war?

A: My husband.

Q: Was he overseas?

A: Yes.

Q: He made it back alright?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you in San Francisco during the war?

A: Uh, certainly. I was at Camp Fremont. We got married in 1917, I'd known my husband ever since I was fourteen. I remember he gave a party and invited my brother but not me. They wanted boys. But then life went along and, I don't know. See, he was only a year and a half older than I was, and somehow or other as a debutante, I went with people about five years older. I went to Greenway Balls and things like that. Always somebody older. They were in college. At any rate, at the time of the war, I'd been to the Oscar Marine (?) New York. I came home and I worked down in Monterey. Then when I came back here, the war was really going. I guess, he said the Kaiser did it, well I guess it did, a little bit. Then we got engaged and we waited until he got his commission, he was out at the Presidio, because the commission is a second lieutenant, and so we announced

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our engagement on Saturday and were married the next Saturday. Just like that. We went down to live at Fremont, he lived on the camp, but I had a room. He lived there and worked in the army camp. I was just on the apron of Camp Fremont. We expected to be there about two or three weeks. We were there for ten months. We bought a new Scriptsu(?) automobile and I had my dog which he had given me two and a half years before.

I remember I made a level thing at art school, and I said to my mother, "Do you think this is too much to give Hanson(?) Grubb in the way of a present?" And she said, "Oh, no." See, she knew he was getting me a thoroughbred Irish terrier. So at any rate, that dog went down with us to camp.

Q: You were married at twenty-seven?

A: Yes. And we were down there for ten months and then he was overseas for ten months. He was overseas, I remember, he spoke French, that's the reason he went ahead of the division, because he was the billeting officer.

Q: (new tape)...in those days. Did you have any idea what you wanted to be as a wife before you got married? Did you have some notion of what you wanted to do? How you wanted to act?

A: Well, for a long time, I don't know. I didn't really think much about getting married at all. I was going to be a career girl in an office, I presume. I had a studio down on Ledadorf (?) Street, and I painted, Mrs. Monteel hired me to paint a mural for the Count Kip(?). That's what I was doing down there. I never finished it.

Q: But you did get married. And young girls then, as they do now, must surely talk amongst themselves about how they'd act as a wife. Do you have any recollection of that?

A: No.

Q: Did you have any notion about how large a family you wanted to have before you got married?

A: No. I don't plan ahead too well. I have six children.

Q: Do you think anyone taught you about how to be a wife, or how to be a mother?

A: No, no. No.

Q: Picked it up on your own?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think children then were, acted different toward their parents compared to the way they do today?

A: Yes. I would say so. Nowadays, they don't get married. Or some of them don't.

Q: Other differences?

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A: No. I don't think so, no.

Q: What were the attitudes about divorce?

A: Well, people didn't get divorced in my, my...

Q: No one was divorced?

A: Oh, well, very few.

Q: Did you know anyone divorced?

A: Not in my age, no. It's funny, I don't. My daughter, about half her class is divorced. Extraordinary. She just crossed the fifty line. The difference is just remarkable. I don't think there was anybody divorced in my..., that I can think of. One that was thinking of divorcing, didn't do it. She died instead.

Q: Before your marriage, what sources of sex education did a young lady like yourself have?

A: Nothing, nothing.

Q: Miss West School didn't touch on this?

A: No.

Q: Your parents?

A: No, no.

Q: Ministers?

A: No, no. No one. They just meant to be like the dogs...

Q: There is now a growing awareness of one's ethnicity. Do you have any ethnic identification?

A: Sure I have. I've been knocked out by the black ones. Knocked unconscious by the blacks.

Q: How about your family? Did they identify with any particular group? Scotch, Irish?

A: Well, naturally Scotch. I've often asked people, "Where would you live if you weren't living in San Francisco?" And I'm very interested to hear what some people tell. For some unearthly reason, I don't know why, I'd rather live in Edinburgh.

Q: You have spent time in Edinburgh?

A: Two weeks.

Q: Not in the winter?

A: Snow, yes. Also, my best friend, Effy Fortune, who painted for the Catholic Church and was my maid of honor at my wedding and all,

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she wrote me from Edinburgh, she said, "I see you and Tippy on every corner." In other words, I look like the Scots.

Q: Do you attend the St. Andrews Day festivities or Scottish games over at Santa Rosa?

A: No.

Q: But you have visited Scotland. Do you have relatives there?

A: No. I only know Duncan McDuffey. I rang him up and told him a relation he had here, she told me to look him up. I said, "Also, I have a friend that knows you, Effy Fortune." "OH!! Effy!" The change between his relation and...well, we've been corresponding together ever since. He's gone now.

Q: Before you were married, I'd like to get to the picture you had of the various ethnic groups around you.

A: Chinese, of course, we had Chinese in the kitchen all the time.

Q: Alright, what was your picture of the Chinese?

A: Louie worked for Mrs. Grubb. I mean, after I was married, I was just..? (whisper).. because I had two boys, one, two. The first two children were boys. The first one, see, my husband was in France and I lived with my in-laws. It was a very difficult time. My mother-in-law was not exactly, well..At any rate, my first baby was born there. The Chinese, I've got pictures of him, he couldn't have been nicer.

Q: Did he go back later?

A: Yes. I can tell you something. Mrs. Grubb sold the house, her husband died, and she lived at the Canterbury for twenty-five years. She was here for three years before she died. At any rate, she said, "I've sold it to Mr. Alvarez just as it is. We can't take anything different out of it, it's got to be just as it is." I saw one of my paintings and I saw a book of mine and I thought, "Oh, well." So I let him go. But poor Louie wanted the mirror in his room, she wouldn't let him have it. So I was much more concerned with that than I was with a book on the "Ancient Mariner" and the painting.

Q: In those days, did you walk down in Chinatown very much? Did you go there?

A: Well, we didn't think anything about not walking there.

Q: It wasn't considered dangerous even though they were having Tong Wars in those days?

A: No. We walked anywhere. I mean, I walked anywhere. But on the corner, see I was on level block on Jackson between Fillmore and Steiner, and on the corner of Steiner where that big apartment house is, was a Dr. Palmer. He had a nice Chinese cook, and he was murdered. A man came in with an ax. Tong War. One Chinaman, you have to murder one member of the family, don't you know that's what Tong War is.

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No matter what he is, if one member of the family is killed, that other one has to go and murder somebody else. No matter who it is. It doesn't matter anything at all. I remember poor Dr. Palmer's cook, they hit his head with an ax.

Q: How did you think about the Irish when you were young?

A: I don't remember. We had a lot of Irish cooks. We used to do terrible things, my mother and myself. We lived in that house on the level there, and you could ring the doorbell in those days and a string went into the kitchen and you rang this way and it went dingalingaling in the kitchen. Here was our living room and here was a dark hall and they had to come from the dark hall. We used to fill it with buckets of water and they'd all fall. Buckets of water, very naughty. Then after lunch, the cook would take a nap in her room which was off the kitchen. We would go quietly in and take all the, put them all over. Very naughty, I know. I remember she came out and caught us. "Come back here and I'll get you with the kindling wood." She'd come tearing down the street after us.

Q: Where there any Irish in society at that time?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't remember. I was never feeling that I was in high society. I went to the Greenway and I did all the things, but I'm not exactly that kind of a person.

Q: There's another group that was very large in San Francisco in those days, the Italians. Did you have any contact with them?

A: Well, I worked at Telegraph Hill. I was the secretary for the Telegraph Hill Navy association. I went to business college for one term and learned how to do shorthand and stenography, and I worked there and I was the sewing teacher there for one grade. My family didn't like it at all, they had no use for Betty Ash. Betty Ash was credited with luring me in to do that, and they wanted me to stay clean, not go out with the dirty Italians.

Q: But what was your picture of the Italians whom you met? What did you think about them?

A: Some of them were absolutely bats, you know. They thought, they came in and they thought that the bathtub was a coffin. There's be eleven in a room. I never did stand anything like that. But I mean, permanently they'd be. And they'd think the bathtub was their coffin. I made a chart for Betty Ash once, with little green spots in it, showing how many people were in each house. They had a good time with the Catholic church, and all.

Q: Did you have any contact with Spanish speaking population?

A: No.

Q: Blacks?

A: No. None at all. There weren't blacks here. No. The, in the kitchen now, doesn't speak a word of English. She's from Ecuador.

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Q: Now I want to ask you about what spending money you had. When you were—

A: My father gave me a hundred dollars once.

Q: When you were ten years old, did you have any spending money?

A: I think we had twenty-five cents. I don't know. I think we had twenty-five cents.

Q: When you were fifteen, did you have any more than that?

A: I don't remember.

Q: How about when you were twenty?

A: Well, when I went to New York, I had a hundred dollars a month. I was twenty-six. And I had that when I went to Monterey. My father gave me, when I went to Europe with my cousin Julia, I guess that would be the time, I went to Europe for nine months, and I had a letter of credit. Well, I just don't remember, but my father thought we were spending too much money. He found out that she bought the Opera seats and then she wouldn't have had to spend so much afterwards, but the first bite was too big and he wrote and I remember the excitement about it. That's all I remember.

Q: When you were a ten year old girl and you were given twenty-five cents, what did you spend it on?

A: I don't know. Shrimps and angel cake. We bought an angel cake for sixteen cents, and some shrimps that you have to, on shells, you know. We'd take them out and we'd have a feast. Then we, on the cable car, we'd always try to avoid the conductor.

Q: When you were about fifteen, still at Miss West's, do you remember how big your allowance was?

A: No, I don't.

Q: And at twenty—

A: I don't remember. I just remember later in life it was just about a hundred a month, that's all. Whether it started when I was twenty or seventeen, I don't know.

Q: When you were ten years old, what would be the main thing you would do for leisure, to have a good time?

A: Ten? Well, I don't, I guess I sewed. I always sewed. I used to get up at five in the morning and sew on my mother's Christmas present and then go to bed again so she didn't know that I'd sewed. I remember doing that. I also did very naughty things, so... We used to go out, poor Chinaman who delivered the laundry had a horse. We'd go out quietly—of course my brother helped me in these things, he was one year older—we'd take the bridal and we'd put it this way and this way.

Q: Put the bridal in the wrong way?

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A: Yes.

Q: Well, at fifteen, what did you all do for leisure then? What would be the main thing you would like to do to have fun?

A: Well, we used to go and Lowell High School was right across, as I say is now on Civic Street, and we used to go and sit in Blum's on the corner of Polk and Center and watch the boys go home from work. But I would never, I wasn't the heroine at all.

Q: How about parties at that time?

A: Yes, we used to go, and on picnics. Through the sand dunes. Of course, in latter life, I climbed a thousand times, but it was mostly later. I used to do it then, yes, we'd go and climb Tamalpias on weekends and go down Cataract Gulch, that's on the other side of Tamalpias. Tamalpias, now adays, I don't get there, and the great tragedy is that Muir Woods lets you in after you're sixty-two, for nothing. They won't let any dogs in, and the only reason I go there is to walk the dogs. So I don't go there any more. But we used to be able to go into Muir Woods for picnics, you know.

Q: When you were about twenty-five years old, what would be your main leisure activity then?

A: Well, I went to the Greenway and I went to all the gaities and parties.

Q: What is the Greenway?

A: Well, Mr. Greenway, he wanted to sell champagne. He was in the champagne business, so he, well, he was a wine presorio or what ever you want to call it, for the balls that were given at the Fairmont. You paid, I think it was ten dollars a head for each ball.

Q: And you went with a young man who invited you and you'd go?

A: Oh, no. You'd go on your own.

Q: And single men and women would do that? Of good family.

A: Yes.

Q: This was a very formal arrangement?

A: Yes. Supper.

Q: A long ball gown?

A: Oh, if you had one. You'd hope somebody would ask you, and if they didn't, it was tragic.

Q: But you, a young lady, could go there and wait all night without getting asked to dance?

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A: Without getting a supper partner. Well, you'd tell somebody else, and they would take sympathy and get you fixed up if you didn't have one. You'd tell one of the hostesses. The mothers had to sit there all night, chaperones.

Q: What were the hours in which this was held?

A: Oh, ten 'til two.

Q: Would there be a supper party before hand?

A: Usually you'd have a supper party, yes. A dinner party, and then there was supper. They always had, supper was we'd all sit down and there was a sudden silence because it was tappin(?), and there were little bones. You'd always get your mouth full of bones.

Q: How often were these held?

A: I don't remember. I think there were about three a winter, something like that, but I don't really remember.

Q: I'm going to move to another subject now. You've know World War I, II, and the VietNam War. At the time of these three wars, did you feel each was justified? World War I, did you feel it was justified?

A: I don't think I had any brains. I don't think I had any opinion.

Q: How about World War II? Did you feel that war was justified?

A: I don't really think I had ideas on things like that.

Q: VietNam War? Did you feel that was justified?

A: I just don't think I think of it that way. I do my part, but I don't think of..

Q: Did you participate in World War I?

A: I had a Red Cross, and I worked before I was married, I worked down at Calvary Church, there, just in Red Cross sewing.

Q: Did you participate in World War II in any way?

A: Well, of course, I've been running this thing upstairs here (sewing bee), a lot of that was Red Cross. I have all the medals for all I've done for Red Cross.

Q: You've been awarded medals by the Red Cross for your work?

A: Oh, yes, and the Princess of England, Princess Alice, and Lady Reading. So I guess that is participating, I don't know.

Q: Did you do anything like that in the VietNam War?

A: No. They didn't want us there. They've forgotten us down at the Red Cross. They used to deliver things to me and tell me to come and

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get them, Mrs. Persch (?), but she died. I guess they think I did, too. I haven't done anything about it. I guess they don't need anything.

Q: In World War I, did you lose any member of your family or a close friend?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Who was it?

A: Well...

Q: They were friends? Not members of the family?

A: Well, the interesting part is that my wedding table of twelve, every man was in uniform. They all survived and three of the girls died. Flu. I had the flu. They expected me to die but I didn't.

Q: What was it like?

A: Well, it hit you just all of a sudden. I was standing on the corner at the side of the street, down at Fillmore. Oooo, I was sick. I went home to my in-laws, not my home, and I had the flu. The doctors didn't think my baby would arrive, but he did.

Q: You were pregnant at the time?

A: Yes. He arrived and I remember hearing afterwards, "He won't be alive tomorrow." I didn't hear them. He arrived on St. Patrick's Day, and everybody said, "What do you expect of a baby who's going to arrive then?" I could hear that. But I didn't hear the other, luckily, "He won't be here tomorrow." But the nurse told me that. He was only six pounds. But what were we talking about?

Q: That the men survived and three girls did not.

A: Oh, yes. I knew a great many. Bob was a very good friend of mine, Jack Talp(?) was another one.

Q: How about World War II? Did you lose any member of your family or close friends?

A: No. My son was, of course, over in Arabia, Persia. He was over there for quite a long time.

Q: In the Viet Nam War, did you lose any members of your family?

A: No.

Q: I'd like you to tell me about the house you lived in for such a long period of time while you were growing up on Jackson Street.

A: In Monterey we lived in what we called the Nut House, and believe it or not, there were two girls, myself and another girl, that rented. Then all the other ones who wanted to paint under this teacher of ours, we had, at the end of the month we made out what was spent, everybody cooked for one day, there were six girls. Sunday we opened

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a can of tamales. And ice cream. We counted the water and everything, and I think it came to a dollar and seventy cents a day. Can you imagine doing that now?

Q: This Jackson Street house that you grew up? Can you describe that to me? How big it was?

A: Yes, vaguely.

Q: Three floors?

A: Yes

Q: Plus a servants' floor on the top?

A: Well, that includes a servant floor on the top. Upstairs on the top, there was one, two three. Downstairs there were four bedrooms. Then downstairs was the living room, dining room and a cook's room outside.

Q: Was there a basement beneath that?

A: Yes, a furnished room. It was cut out after we were there.

Q: How do you feel about that house? What kinds of—

A: I went down there the other day, it's turned into five apartments now. An architect told me the other day, it's the only house in San Francisco that the bay window made of two windows, not three. But this is the only house in San Francisco that has a bay window of two windows. You can see it if you go down there, you'll see it. Two windows like that, and two windows like that. They've painted it yellow now, they painted it last week, bright yellow like a canary.

Q: What was the color when you were growing up?

A: Drab. Grey, I guess.

Q: When you were growing up, was it a happy place to grow up, that house? Did you have a good feeling about it?

A: Oh, yes. I can see my fox terrier running up and down the plaza there. We used to call, "Hugh, Hugh." Now adays, you can't say, "Hugh, Hugh." There're too many automobiles, you can't hear yourself think.

He also, I'd go downtown and he'd go downtown with me. You know, the White HOuse had, well, all stores had cash thing, a little thing you'd pull that would go whoosh (pneumatic system), and he'd see it and he was a bird (?) and go. I'd say, "Not my dog." I'd just go home. And he'd go home. That was the White House, and it was a long way off. He'd find his way back.

Q: Did your father build that home himself?

A: No, my best beau lived in it before I did, and had this tree planted in his honor and we cut it down.

Q: I gather you traveled a good bit in the early stages of your life. Before you were ten years old, how much traveling did you do?

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A: We went Summit Soda Springs when I was six, up in the Sierras, near Donner Lake. Up in that direction there.

Q: How often did you go up there?

A: Two years we went there for summers. Then we went to Watsons, Shasta Springs, summer vacation trips. We never had a home in the country.

Q: Between the time you were ten and fifteen, how often did you travel outside of San Francisco?

A: Well, same thing. Every summer. When I was twenty, in 1910, I came home from my European trip and I went to Fallen Leaf Lake and we've been there almost every year since. We never made our own house. I went there this year for one week.

Q: Now, you took a trip to Europe and a trip around the world.

A: Yes, when I was seventeen and eighteen. I was home for almost a year between those, somehow or other. I went when I was just seventeen for nine months, I came home, I was fluffing around here for quite a while, the family went to stay in San Rafael because the house was..?.. I commuted to art school.

Q: That nine month trip, the around the world trip, what was the purpose of that?

A: My father had retired, and he was, my sister was five years old and she was a sort of, a surprise, I think. She's fifteen years younger than I. So they always wanted to do it, so they thought, "Well, we'll do it." Take her along. So they did. My brother was at Harvard then. I had a lovely time, I was eighteen, and I was the only American girl on all the British boats. I had a very good time, yes. I had lots of fun, yes. We went over on the Manchuria.

Q: And the trip to Europe, what was the purpose for that?

A: I went with cousin Julia, who was. I thought was an old lady, but I suppose she was only around fifty. She was very stout, and she didn't have too much money. She always wanted to go to Marienbod (?) to get thin. So to make the money for that, she took two girls and myself, two girls from Rosemary Hall, nineteen, and I was seventeen, and we went and got all my dresses to come out and we stayed there for a month. Very lovely dresses made, beautiful, by Madam Freeling. She lived on Rue de la Longhee.

Q: You were expected to be exposed to the cathedrals and grand gardens.

A: Yes, and that's the reason I took the course in architecture before I left, you see, with Miss Peckum, in school. I was meant to learn French, but I didn't. I can speak French and Spanish, but not too well.

Q: Pretend that you had a time machine that could take you back in

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time. If you could go back to one day in your early years, what day would you chose?

A: My first thrill, I suppose. Dancing at the St. Francis, with my best beau. I guess that would be it.

Q: How old were you?

A: Eighteen. We won't go into the rest of it!

Q: This was one of those dances where you had gowns and dinners before hand?

A: Oh, yes. We danced a barn dance. I can remember it.

Q: If you could live a year of your life over in the time before you were twenty-five, which year would you like to live over? Would you like to live a year over?

A: I don't think so. Not that I can think of.

Q: If you could go back for a few days to any time and any place in the entire history of the world, where and when would that be?

A: Oh, I suppose it would be anywhere on horseback, galloping. I love to ride horseback.

Q: Can you think of any place in history where you'd like to do that?

A: No, not any particular place. Just the horse and lots of room to ride.

Q: What's the greatest difference between living in San Francisco today and living in this city when you were growing up?

A: Well, you just went anywhere and slid down hills and nobody worried about you. Now you can't go anywhere without sort of looking out and holding onto your purse. Walking with caution.

Q: You've already been mugged one time, you told me.

A: In the fushias out in Golden Gate Park with the two dogs and my husband. My husband wasn't well, he was near a bench about fifty feet away. I said, "You go and tell them to hold that big dog." So I stood, and I never felt anything, but I was knocked unconscious. He came from behind me. Then I came to, grabbed the two dogs, and saw him with my purse. I went velling after, chased him. I don't know what I was going to do with him if I caught him, but I chased him. But of course he could go faster than I could because it was, well almost ten years ago. Eight years ago.

Q: Do you go out at night now?

A: Yes. Well, I go in an automobile. I do drive an automobile at night, but I don't like to drive an automobile at night. I always get my daughter to drive me, or somebody else.

Q: Do you feel locked in at night, as it were, that you can't go

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out at night and do things as easily as you want to do?

A: No. Oh, well, I suppose unconsciously you just kind of get slowly used to it. We have an alarm on the house.

Q: Is there anything that is similar in San Francisco today and when you were growing up?

A: Life in general seems the same except when you stop and worry about it. Otherwise, it seems much the same.

Q: Does the city itself look the same to you now as it did then?

A: It's all grown so slowly. I haven't gone away and come back. I've been to Australia. My daughter lived there for eleven years, she married an Englishman and I went after she'd been there for five years. Well, I do things in a funny way, sometimes. Mrs. Grubb was here, my mother-in-law, and the nurse slept up in the room upstairs. She came into me one morning and she said, "I had a dream"—she was a gypsy, she had a gypsy background, and she said, "I had a dream. You will never see your daughter or son-in-law again." I said, "Teresa, you shouldn't say things like that, even if you had a dream. What are you trying to be?" She said, "Well, death is a marriage. If you see one, it means the other, and I saw them both walking into the church together." I said, "Forget it." I made up my mind I was going to Australia. I had Mr. Grubb and I had the boys and another cousin staying here, and I had Mrs. Grubb in that room with a night nurse and a day nurse. I had the couple in the kitchen, the husband was working in the Post Office. So I went to Australia for a month. There they were. This is quite a story. I had a nice time, I flew over and the plane caught fire and came down. I was in Canton. We were taken up in life boats and I was put in a room with two Scotch women, I suppose they were probably younger than I but I thought they were older. They were..?.. my undercloths, they were Scottish. And when they went to bed, they snored.

Q: One final thing I want to do is to take the title of your book and make sure we have it in the record. It is one you wrote, and it is entitled, "As I See It, By a Grandmother." The author, of course is—

A: That's my brother.

Q: Ethel Grubb. Mrs. Grubb has given me a copy of this for my own files. This was published privately by Mrs. Grubb and is a 105 page autobiography of her life. It was published, the year of publishing was—

A: The reason I wrote it was, my eldest son died in Italy and I had a psychic experience, that's what it's written for. It isn't written for my life.

Q: What year was this done?

A: Ten years ago.

Q: 1967.