

HILMER MANGOLD

MEMOIR

Alsatian Customs and Traditions

B27

PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by the Castroville Public Library Oral History Program Project B on April 14, 1981. Deanna Hoffman transcribed the tape and Connie Rihn was the interviewer and editor of this transcript. The interview took place in the home of Hilmer Mangold.

Hilmer is 73 years old and is retired from the post of Medina County Commissioner of Pct. 2. He is still very active, ranching and has a large garden. Hilmer's family was always active in Castroville city government and church affairs. Hilmer began working for the County in road maintenance, and in 1946 after the death of Com. Herman Bippert, he ran for County Commissioner, was elected and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1974. Hilmer married Elsie Schuehle in 1935 and they had five children, all of whom are married and still living. Elsie died in 1960. In 1966 Hilmer was married to Laura Brieden Marty, the widow of his boyhood classmate Leonard Marty.

Hilmer was interviewed about the social customs of Castroville in the early 1900's, and he has distinct recall of people and events. He is very knowledgeable in genealogy of Castroville families.

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Tape # B27
1 hr.
transcribed

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Today is Tuesday, April the 14th, 1981. This is Connie Rihn interviewing Hilmer Mangold in his home in Castroville. I'm interviewing for the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B.

Q Mr. Mangold, when and where were you born?

A I was born in Castroville, 1907, July the 23rd.

Q And where were you born, in what house? Do you live in it now?

A Where Martha Rihn lives now. It used to be --

Q Next to the Rainbow Theatre.

A Right.

Q Okay.

A Right.

Q And who were your parents?

A Louis Mangold and Eugenia Naegelin.

Q And how many were in the family, how many children?

A Three children. Two girls and myself.

Q Were you the oldest, youngest or --

A Florence my sister was the oldest and Madeline is the youngest in the family. Two girls and myself.

Q Okay. Did your family live there then all the time?

A Lived here in Castroville all the time.

Q I mean in that house?

A In that house and then they moved over to, it used to be called the Haby house. Miss Haby from Rio Medina

owned it. Wilfred Wernette's grandma. Yeah, that's where Mr. Foxworthy owns it now.

Q Oh, that one.

A That one, yeah. And from there we moved over here where Oscar Suehs lives. And we lived there and my daddy died in '25 and my mother died in '29 and we lived there till I got married.

Q Okay, what was your father's occupation?

A He used to run the saloon down there where the theatre is now and then when prohibition come in he went to work for the County and he worked for the County until he passed away.

Q Oh, is that how you got interested in politics?

A Yeah.

Q Well, what did he work for the County? What was his job?

A It's grader operator.

Q Oh, uh-huh.

A They didn't have no motor grader at that time, they had two pull graders behind a caterpillar. And Emil Halbardier was on one and he had one and Arthur Holzhaus was the tractor operator.

Q Oh, and that's how they fixed the --

A They maintained the roads.

Q The roads in this precinct.

A No motor graders at that time yet. Pull grader you know. You had to work it by hand.

Q Okay. When did you get married then? What was the date of your marriage?

A Mine?

Q Yeah.

A In '35.

Q And you married who?

A Elsie Schuehle from Hondo.

Q And what was the date?

A The date, May the 10th.

Q May the 10th.

A Yep. And we have five children, three boys and two girls.

Q Okay, you want to name them?

A They're all living. Wiley Mangold, Rodney Mangold, Temple Mangold, and Gail and Mary. Five children.

Q And your wife died when?

A In '60. 1960.

Q Okay. Then I know you married again. Who and when did you get married.

A I was single six years and then I married again. And I married Laura Marty and we've been married, it's going to be 15 years in October.

Q Okay. And what was your marriage date to Laura? What was your wedding date to Laura?

A October 13th.

Q 1966, huh?

A And so far we've been getting along all right.

Q Well you better after 15 years.

A Yeah.

Q Laura was the widow of Sebastian Marty?

A Leonard Marty.

Q Leonard Marty.

A And she had two sons. One lives here in Castroville and one lives in Storm Hill up there.

Q That's Darryl and --

A Wayne.

Q Wayne. Okay. Now we've got all the family statistics out of the way. How did you get interested in running for -- or what was your occupation before you got into County politics?

A I was working for the County. I started in '35. And then Commissioner Bippert drowned in '46, uh, '45 and I run for the job. And I had applications made and everything to go and work Civil Service in San Antonio. And the people come up here, tonight maybe two, three come and so on, they want me to run for commissioner. Well, finally I decided on it. I could have went to Civil Service job and could have retired a lot sooner. But then the people begged me to run for commissioner and I said well, okay. If you want me to run, I'm going to run. Well, one day a guy come up, he said I believe there's six of them going to run. I said well, I don't care, I promised these people I'm going to run

and I don't care how many are going to run if I get beat, all right, if not and finally it ended up nobody run.

Q Oh. Okay. Were you ever opposed?

A Yeah. One time I had one. The first time I had one, Harvey Groff and the next time I had two. Robert Rihn and Henry Geiger. And then it went on again and then finally Leon Tschirhart run against me. He quit the JP job and he run against me and then I wanted to retire already for four years and I thought well, I'm going to stay four more years. And then in '74, December I didn't run no more and I retired then.

Q Oh, that's when Leon ran and became commissioner?

A Yeah, Leon and Jerome Noonan run. Them two and Leon beat Jerome Noonan. And he's got it now about, well, '74.

Q Yeah, six years.

A Six years.

Q And you say Mr. Bippert was commissioner. Herman Bippert?

A Yeah. And he drowned out here on Highway 90 on that first creek.

Q Yes, I still remember that. That rainy night.

A And I was working for the County at that time, see. And then the Commissioner's Court appointed his wife for the unexpired term. And she hired me to run it.

Q Oh, I see.

A And then I run it till her term was up. And then I run for it.

Q When you became commissioner what was the County government -- how was it run at that time?

A Well, it was a lot simpler than it is now. It wasn't that much to it but still you had a lot of roads. When I first got in I had the whole town of Castroville to take care of. The whole town of LaCoste and all them streets and everything.

Q Oh, I see. In other words, mainly what you did was maintain the roads. That was the early job of commissioner.

A Oh, yeah. Had to maintain everything from down below LaCoste about three miles till up Bexar County line and Bandera County line.

Q And this is precinct what?

A Precinct 2.

Q Precinct 2.

A Yeah.

Q Okay.

A I went all the way to the Hondo Creek bridge.

Q And the Hondo district is Precinct 1.

A One.

Q Well, was Castroville always Precinct 2 even when the courthouse was in Castroville?

A Yeah, I guess so, as far as I know.

Q Oh, I thought maybe --

A I don't know it might have been Precinct 1 when the courthouse was here. I don't know but that's long before my time.

Q Yeah, of course it moved to Hondo in 18 --

A See, I wasn't even born yet when they moved the courthouse to Hondo.

Q You say your dad worked for the County. Now we know that the county courthouse moved to Hondo in 1892 and was before anybody that's living now can talk about it. But did you ever hear any stories about that. Can you tell me the story of how that happened?

A I know quite a few stories but the best one I ever heard when Judge Fly at Hondo. He's dead now. When he come over to the courtroom one day and I happened to be there and Judge Rothe was county judge and they were talking about this and Judge Fly said he was a young boy and somebody brought a wagon up there with two horses or mules and sent him up north of Hondo where a whole bunch of Mexicans were worked and they loaded them up and brought 'em down and voted 'em.

Q And they voted. And in those days --

A Never had no poll tax I guess. They weren't even citizens, no, they were Mexicans that were scrubbing fields or something like that.

Q Okay and in those days you had to have a poll tax?

A Yeah.

Q And in order to have a poll tax you had to be a property owner, is that what the rule --

A Right.

Q Well, why did Fly tell that?

A Well, he just happened to. I don't know they were talking about stealing that. Well, the old-timers all said they stole it that time, you know. They tried it several times and they didn't get it and then --

Q Okay. What do you mean they tried it? They tried what?

A Tried to move it to Hondo before.

Q By --

A By election and it didn't carry.

Q So did they petition for election?

A Yes.

Q And this was the third time then.

A Yeah when they got it finally.

Q But then didn't after this election was over and it showed that their side won, what did the government here in Castroville do, the county government?

A Well --

Q Did they impound the records?

A Yeah, I guess they, I don't know I guess they come over here and got all the records and everything.

Q Well, I thought there was a story about how they came over and got the records. That they were supposed --

A I heard it was by force with guns and stuff I heard.

Q Not by night?

A Well, I don't know.

Q Somebody said it was a mock wake for a Carle or something.

A Oh.

Q You never heard that?

A No, I never heard that.

Q Well, I guess we'll never get the straights to that story.

A But they always, the old-timers here when I was a young boy about ten, twelve years old always heard them say they stole it.

Q Yeah.

A Well, you heard that story too already probably.

Q Well do you think there was a lot of bad feeling between Hondo and Castroville because of it?

A Well, I imagine there was at that time. I guess it was pretty hot that time. Of course the old generation is all dead now and we just know what we heard from them and we was too young at that time. We could have found out a lot more if we would have asked questions but I don't know.

Q Okay. Let's, now that we've talked about your life I want to get back and talk about some of the things you did when you were young and even when you were older, but we're trying to establish some of the customs and traditions that were here in Castroville in the early days. Okay. How many years of schooling did you have?

A What?

Q Schooling, how many years of schooling? How many years did you go to school?

A School, went to the St. Louis School here through the ninth grade. That's as high as they taught.

Q Yeah.

A Yeah.

Q Did you go any more then?

A No. I didn't.

Q You didn't go over --

A Started night school one time and then I don't know what happened there, the teacher, I don't know got trouble or something and left.

Q Here in Castroville they had a night school?

A Yeah, Castroville, yeah. One time.

Q What was the night school for?

A Well --

Q Adults or --

A Well, for anybody could go you know. They used to have it here. There was a feller here one time he was a druggist by the name of Homer Magee. I don't think you knew him no more but I knew him well and your daddy knew him. He had night school one time too.

Q What, was it sponsored by the county school system?

A No, he done it himself, on his own books. You had to pay so much. A week or a month, I don't --

Q Well, what kind of classes did he offer?

A Well, anything you wanted, like history or arithmetic or algebra, anything like that. You could take anything you wanted to.

Q Was it more or less for people who did not have any education that wanted to catch up?

A Well, people that wanted to get more education, see. That wasn't too good. We had a lot of people here, elderly people that didn't have too much education and like arithmetic and algebra and stuff, well, they couldn't add or nothing like that, or subtract or anything like that and some went for different things and I went there awhile. He was a pretty smart man, Magee. He was Irish.

Q Well, were you in the same grade of school that my dad was in?

A Yes, same class. We were seven boys.

Q So you were one of those seven stars?

A Right. Seven boys and it's myself, your daddy, Tommy Hans, just three living yet.

Q Oh.

A Leonard Marty is dead. Sylvan Halbandier is dead. Anthony Fitzsimon is dead and Herbert Biediger is dead. Those four.

Q Those were the seven boys.

A Seven boys. In one class. They had one teacher.

Q And who was the teacher that called you the seven stars?

A Well, Sister Marcella. We went to school and then when we got in this last year or two we had a Sister by the name of Sister Romanus. And she just taught us seven boys. That's all.

Q Oh, that's all she taught?

A That's all she had, no more.

Q Okay. Well, my dad said that they created another year of school for you all. That they normally only went eight years.

A Yes, that's right and just for the seven boys.

Q There were no girls in your class?

A No, not one girl in the class. All boys, seven boys. No girls.

Q And you all went to school all your lives together then? Those nine years. So you got to know each other.

A Right, from where we started. Your daddy lived about where you live now. Where we faced and I was living over here then when I first went to school. We walked to school and at noon we walked home for lunch. WWalked back again.

Q So you and my dad were good friends all your lives?

A Oh, yeah. All the time. Always together.

Q Uh-huh.

A And Clarence Holzhaus stayed up here with his grandma in the northwest part of town and he come by and then we went down to school. At noon we walked home.

Q Well, what did you boys do for fun when you were growing up?

A Well, we had, we played baseball sometimes and different things and at vacation time well we got up a little bigger, say about oh, 14 years old, 15, and we went with the threshing machines. Maybe for five, six weeks to help thresh oats.

Q And helped harvest, huh?

A Yeah, harvest oats and we done a lot of coon hunting at night.

Q Just down here on the river?

A Yeah, all the way up from here to Gabe Hans' lake, that went up on one side and came back on the other side.

Q Just walking, huh?

A Walking.

Q Yeah.

A Sure. Didn't have no cars. Leonard Brieden come over horseback across the bridge and up to Montels. And they had some dogs, too. And from there on we went hunting.

Q Well, was Ralph Montel your age?

A Ralph was a little older than I was.

Q And he went to public school?

A Yeah, we always run around together. Went to dances together and everything.

Q Did you all swim a lot?

A Oh, swim like a fish. Oh, yeah.

Q Did you ever --

A That was before bathing suits come here. Wasn't nobody on the river. No, we just pulled our clothes off and went swimming.

Q Well, you all just lived, what two blocks from the river here?

A Yeah. A swimming place down here. Miss Halbardier they lived down there where Castigliones live now. Next to Alice Hans.

Q Yes.

A Miss Halbardier.

Q Yes, sure.

A Then Miss Halbardier come up with her girls and her son, she had three in the family. And down here where Richard Schott lives called it the Hoffman crossing. That used to be a crossing years ago and it went out to the Rio Medina road.

Q Uh-huh.

A And there's where we went swimming a lot. Real beautiful place. Gravel just as clean and everybody. Melanie Heusser, that was your daddy's aunt. She come down here. And I remember yet when the old people done that. She brought egg along to wash her hair with.

Q Oh, really?

A You heard that already haven't you?

Q Yes.

A That's what she did everytime she come down and then Miss Jungman with Clara Menk now and she come down. We all went swimming. Everyday almost. Summertime.

Q In the summertime?

A Oh yeah.

Q Carey said that when she was young the river was just as clear and you could see the bottom.

A Gravel was just as clean as you could see. You could see the bottom four feet deep.

Q Did you ever see any of those little alligators?

A The who?

Q Little alligators that were in the river?

A Well, I never seen alligators around here.

Q You didn't?

A No. Now what they call the gar fish that's, some call them the alligator gar, but that's a fish. They were in the river here then but no alligators at that time.

Q Well, did you all do fishing? Did you fish a lot too?

A Oh, yeah. We fished a lot. My daddy liked to fish.

Every Saturday evening he went upriver and put out some lines. Sunday morning he run 'em early.

Q Uh-huh.

A Sometimes he caught a lot of fish, sometimes he didn't get so many but, the old people all fished all the time.

Q Yeah. Okay. So you lived at home till you got married and you got married when you were about what, uh --

A 28 years old.

Q 28?

A Yeah. Yeah, I wasn't too young.

Q So you weren't too young?

A No.

Q Well, what I was wondering is it before your mother and dad died, what did you all do at home like in the evening when the work was done?

A Well --

Q Did they do anything for recreation?

A We'd go and play cards somewhere you know, sometimes at night people come over. Mrs. Rosa Biediger lived where the rest home is now and she had one son, she had see, Lawrence, Nora, Margarite and Agnes. Four daughters yet at home. Alice was married already, Fritz Rihn's wife. Then we'd go over there at night and play cards and they'd come over --

Q What kind of cards were played in those days?

A Pitch.

Q Pitch?

A High Five. Pitch and High Five.

Q How about dominoes?

A Well, sometimes we played dominoes too, we had dominoes too. Yeah. And that's the way the people passed the time, they didn't have no place special to go at that time.

Q Oh, just kind of visited --

A Maybe went to San Antonio once a year or so, or Ringling Bros. Show or something like that.

Q But the neighbors visited a lot with each other?

A Oh, yeah, everybody. Miss Alice Suehs, that was Charlie Suehs' first wife, they lived up there where Emil Biry lived and they come down all the time and of course Charlie and Alice was younger than I was but she always come down to visit my mother and brought them --

Q Oh, that's where Charlie Suehs lived before they moved?

A When he first got married, he lived there before he moved down there.

Q Uh-huh, where Emil Biry lives? Emil Biry's house?

A Yep. Well, it was his mother-in-law's house that time. Mrs. Naegelin, yeah. Aunt Josephine they called her and she was a sister to Mrs. Holzhaus and she lived there and when Charlie Suehs got married he lived with her. And then when he bought that place down there they moved down there. And since then he opened up a filling station there and run that filling station for I don't know, quite a number of years.

Q Madeline Boubel interviewed him. We've got a long tape with him.

A Yeah.

Q Uh, well, uh -- okay. At home you say you played cards and visited. Did you have special family get togethers? Did your family get together with the --

A Well, sometimes like if somebody got married or something like that, but otherwise they never had no, no barbecues or anything like they got now and invited a bunch of people. Only thing was when they had the 25th of August Celebration or ball games on the Plaza, Houston Square on Sundays and there all the people went there.

Q Uh-huh.

A They walked down and darn, half of the square was covered with people.

Q Really?

A Yes. Not like now, they really drew a crowd from Rio Medina, everywhere.

Q Of course there wasn't as much going on then.

A Yeah.

Q That was the main attraction.

A Yeah, then it was nothing goin on otherwise, no. Once in a while a tent show come by here, had a few Shetland ponies and monkeys and stuff, well, people went there. Didn't cost but about 15, 20 cents, that's all at that time and they stayed here maybe a couple of days. And then finally I don't know what year that was, Mrs. Harellson from Hondo she come over here moving picture show. And no tent, just put up a --

Q A screen?

A Yeah.

Q Where at?

A Anywheres on the square or anywhere, and the people I don't know she charged ten cents or something.

Q Well, what would she shine it on?

A She had a --

Q Oh, she put up a screen. Oh, just out in the open you'd sit.

A Yeah, right in the open, yeah.

Q Well, it mustn't have been run by electricity then?

A She had a, oh what did you call it, where they made light with the first ones that come out? I can't call the name now, you know what I mean.

Q I know what you're talking about. It's called a --

A Delco plant.

Q Delco plant, yes, uh-huh.

A That's what she had. Delco plant. And she come over here, oh, I don't know, several years.

Q Uh-huh. Well, these baseball games, when were they usually played? Sunday?

A On Sundays, Easter Monday, big days, Fourth of July, yeah but Sunday all the time. Well, they didn't play here every Sunday, they went out, Rio Medina, Cliff, Hondo, LaCoste, everywhere.

Q These baseball teams were made up of grown men, young men, either married or unmarried?

A Yeah, they were young men, some were married already, real young that time like I remember Fred Jagge played

yet, Phil Jagge and my Uncle Joe Naegelin and Arthur Holzhaus, guys like that and then it come down later on to younger ones again. But people were really interested in baseball. Yeah, they got good crowds there. They just passed the hat around, that's all, when the game was going on.

Q You mentioned the Fourth of July. Do you ever remember a Fourth of July celebration here? How did they celebrate it?

A Well, I remember Tragesser started this dance hall down here, Electric Park Hall, He had a celebration there once on the Fourth of July. In the bottom, barbecue and stuff like that but before that the only celebration that I really know of was the 25th of August. That's all.

Q Was that the biggest day in Castroville?

A Yeah.

Q All the time.

A And they used to have 'em there where Dr. Burges is now in that --

Q St. Louis Verein Hall.

A Yeah. And down at Biediger's where Floyd Tondre's got that bottom.

Q Do you remember that?

A Oh, yeah. I was down there.

Q When they had them there?

A Yes. Your daddy's mother and the kids went down with a buggy and a horse, that's the only way they could go down to people they didn't have no cars.

Q Well, see we have some newspaper accounts where it was held at Biediger's grove in the 1890's already. But see that was before you were born. But they still held them there after the 1900's then. You were born in '07.

A Oh, yeah, your daddy could have been about, oh I'd say six, seven years old when they had them down there yet.

Q Well, what did they do when they had them down there?

A Well, they had barbecues, beer, that's all. Footraces and stuff like that and played a little ball. That's all the enjoyment they had, heck, it was that pecan bottom down there.

Q Yeah. Did they ever have a dance then, too?

A Yeah, they had a little platform.

Q Oh, they had a platform.

A Yeah. That's right. But that was after they quit here I believe. They used to have them here. Of course that was just the people around here, that was no strangers here at that time. All local people that came to the celebration. Heck, not like now, people come from everywhere.

Q Okay. In those days did they charge for the food or --

A Oh, yeah. They charged, but it wasn't much that time.

Everything was cheap.

Q Something like 25 cents. Do you remember any amount?

A Fifty cents, I believe. I don't know and beer, that was all keg beer at that time. All keg beer.

Q Well, they used keg beer for a long time even at Wernette's Garden.

A Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Q I remember when they changed over to bottles.

A Yeah.

Q It was a big fight because they used to have it in cups.

A Yeah, when they first started here when beer come out they had keg beer.

Q Yeah, and somebody said they used these glass with the stems and all they did was dip them in a tub of water and that water was so full of beer after awhile. You know they'd just clear off your glass a little bit.

A That's right. Well, now with glasses you couldn't serve 'em no more. It's too many people.

Q Oh, yeah.

A No, you never could.

Q Well, they'd use paper cups.

A They had one guy that just filled the glasses. Set 'em down and filled them and then the others sold them. That's the way it went and I know when they first started the keg beer they had it on a saw horse and they drove a wooden faucet in there and that's all they had. Set it

out with a wooden faucet and we should have kept one of them but --

Q Oh, they laid the keg down.

A Yeah.

Q And stuck that thing in on the side.

A And that was tapered, that wooden faucet was tapered.

And they drove it in with a wooden hammer.

Q Uh-huh. In other words, there was no pump on it.

A No, no pump on it that time, no, huh-uh, no pressure.

Q And they put the beer into wooden kegs, is that how it worked?

A Yes, it come in all wooden kegs that time.

Q From the breweries in San Antonio.

A From the brewery. They hauled a couple of wagonloads out here and they had some kind of a hay the brewers furnished that to put in the bottom and then they put the beer kegs in and ice on top and covered it up with a tarp and hay. They had some kind of a prairie hay.

I seen it yet but I don't know --

Q And that served as an insulation?

A -- that's to keep the ice from melting.

Q Yeah.

A And then they just hauled the wagons down there.

Q Well, as a kid what did you do at St. Louis Day when you were a kid?

A Well, we, I remember, we didn't work anything as kids,

we just running around and playing --

Q Having fun?

A Having fun, that's all. Yeah. Older people done it, some tended bar and some fixed the barbecue and it was all local people that time. No strangers from San Antonio. Maybe once in awhile one come out here and spent here a night or two and maybe he made it, yeah.

Q Well, what did the women -- did they make the food down at the park where it was going to be held?

A Well, I believe they took it along, what was to take along. Of course it wasn't many people that time like now. Now they couldn't make it that way but I believe my mother fixed potato salad yet and took it along, a bowl full you know and then I guess the rest of the women brought some, brought cabbage slaw and stuff and that's the way --

Q And they just put it all on the tables and everybody would eat.

A Yeah, they could eat family style.

Q Family style.

A Yeah.

Q Uh, well do you remember if they played any kind of games?

A Well --

Q Or wasn't that just later?

A They played a little ball, I know that. Foot races and stuff like that but otherwise I can't remember no more. If they had any other kind of entertainment like penny pitch or something like that, they didn't have that, no.

Q Well, they started out then with keno. And I guess that would have been in the '20's.

A Yeah.

Q They pasted those cards. Nine cards on a card and every year they kept those.

A Yeah, that was later on.

Q Yeah, that was the forerunner of bingo.

A Right.

Q And then also another thing somebody told me, I think Martha Rihn told me, is that the young ladies and the women always embroidered for St. Louis Day.

A Yeah.

Q Scarves, pillow cases and they sold this stuff.

A And they had what we called a grab bag. That's what they had. I remember it down here, when they had it down here at --

Q Wernette's Garden?

A Yeah. Wernette's Garden. Yeah. That was later and well, when we went down there to Biediger's Grove I was just a young boy about five, six years old. Seven maybe and then it come back up here they had it at Wernette's Garden then. And one time they had the 25th of August Celebration at Tragesser's Park.

Q Oh-huh.

A They had it there one year.

Q Yeah, just one year.

A Yeah.

Q Somebody said that these men would always kind of vie for it. I mean would want to have it at their place.

A Yeah, that's right.

Q And it caused a little trouble, didn't it, I mean a little arguing?

A Yeah, I don't know, just one year, then they went back to Wernette's Hall.

Q Oh, someone said they had trouble there. I don't remember what kind of trouble but then the next year they voted it back to Wernette's.

A I know, I know this they dug a new barbecue pit at Tragesser's Park in the ground. And I don't know who dug it no more. They had a bunch, Latins I guess dig that. Just one year and the next year they moved back again. Yeah.

Q Well, un --

A Some kind of friction, something, I don't know.

Q Say as a young person when you thought of St. Louis Day, what did you look forward to it for. Why did you look forward to it?

A Well, uh, we done a little of everything but when it got up here when I got older at Wernette's Garden, St. Louis Celebration, it was a lot bigger then when they used to have it down at Biediger's Grove and then they had a few games like uh, like you were saying while ago

with them cards --

Q Keno?

A Yeah.

Q What about a raffle?

A Raffle and they had a grab bag and uh, I think one time they sold some chances on something, too. I forgot though what that was. I was pretty young but I know they had a grab bag, you get a nickel and you could go down --

Q Oh and pull out a prize.

A Prize, yeah. Whatever you pulled out, you got. See, it was different items in there.

Q Well, did they have that for kids, too, didn't they like it was a fish pond. Didn't they have that sometime?

A No. Never seen a fish pond at that time. That come in later on. Later years. Yeah. No. And like bingo, that they didn't have. No but the people mostly come together to talk to each other.

Q Just to talk,

A Enjoy themselves, see?

Q Yeah. Okay and then did they -- how about at night?

A Well, at night they had dances. Oh, yeah. They had dances. But then at one time I don't know why they quit Wernette's Garden and then the Mexicans used to have that place.

Q On the 25th of August?

A No, no, not the 25th of August. During the year.

Q During the year.

A They had dances there and two dance halls burned down down there. I remember yet when the first one burned down and then they rebuilt it again and I don't know how many years later it burned up again.

Q Somebody said Johnny Ahr owned it one time when it burned but it didn't have a roof on it then. And Ed Lamon had it, too.

A It had a roof on it both times when it burned.

Q Both times?

A Oh, yeah.

- End of Side 1 -

Q Okay, you were talking about Wernette's Garden. When the Wernette's owned it.

A Yeah. And she worked there a lot in her younger days. Mrs. Wernette, she took care of it. Had fruit trees all over and of course, like the boys were at that time, we were the same way I guess, if we seen good peaches on a tree we went across the fence or under the fence and got some. A lot of the boys come by there, see that crossing was across the river there.

Q Uh-huh.

A What they call Hoffman crossing and all kinds of people come by there. The peaches were hanging on them trees there looking real pretty. They went in and got some.

Q Yeah, those trees --

A Then later on when she got too old well there wasn't no fruit trees there no more. I remember when it was a few there yet, but very few in my time but nobody planted them no more. Then she had, you remember where the ice box is now, the vault, the cooler.

Q Yeah.

A There was two rows of Box elder trees. Not too far apart and they took them all out finally and along the road here.

Q What kind of trees?

A Uh, Box elder they called them.

Q Box elder?

A Yeah, that's what they said they were, now I don't know. I seen 'em yet but they took 'em out then later on and she planted them yet. And then along the street up here there were these century plants.

Q Oh, yeah.

A You remember that? When some of those were there yet?

Q Yes, I still remember.

A She had a whole row of them along the street but they were taken out then at later time. They was a mess you know they -- whenever they bloomed then they fall down and decay and then they finally took 'em all out.

Q Well, tell me something about the dances. Now, you mentioned Tragesser's.

A Yeah.

Q Uh, was that the main dance hall when you were young?

A After it was built, yeah, but we went -- when we went to dances years ago it was Wernette's Garden and one time it was where Red and White Store was upstairs and then it was a dance hall down where Charlie Suehs lives in the back there.

Q What was that one called? Empire?

A I believe the Mayflower --

Q Mayflower, okay. I've heard it called the Empire and the Mayflower.

A This here upstairs was, what did they call that again.

Q Wernette's Hall? No? It was Philip Wernette that owned it.

A Yeah.

Q It was Tondre & Heiligman before him.

A Yeah, they had, let's see, did Tondre build it?

Q Well, Kieffer built some of it.

A No, I believe uh, L. M. Tondre bought it from Wilfred Wernette's mother.

Q Yes, right.

A But I believe, uh --

Q But see Philip Wernette added that second story in 1906.

A Yeah.

Q So it was a one-story building before that?

A That's right. It was a beer joint, used to be.

Q And it was a brewery in its very early days.

A Yeah, yeah.

Q Which was Huesser.

A Huesser and Kieffer, had the brewery in the cellar.

Q Right and Huesser is my great-grandfather.

A Yeah, right. They had the brewery there.

Q Do you still remember --

A And I believe uh, Kieffer built it. The first part, yeah. And then when they had the dances that time, course I remember that yet, I was just a young boy and they always had a picnic at twelve o'clock at night you could take your girl, if you took a girl to the dance and go and eat all you want. They had everything family style at the table and that was behind the building where uh, who lives now in that house there?

Q Well, McPherson's live there now.

A Where Clara Tondre used to live.

Q The Juluis Tondre house.

A Yeah, that basement there. It was a kind of a basement in there.

Q Yes.

A You remember?

Q Sure.

A That's where they had the supper.

Q In there?

A You could pay so much to dance and then you could go and take your girl to eat there. Everything was included

in that.

Q Oh, that was included in the dance price. Do you remember what it cost?

A Well, I don't know. It was a dollar apiece I believe. Something like that.

Q Or a dollar a couple? Wasn't it 50 cents?

A Or a dollar a couple, maybe.

Q Everybody said it was 50 cents.

A Might have been 50 cents apiece, yeah. And old Artz, he come up here with the rail, he come by train till to LaCoste and they had to pick him up down there and bring him up here.

Q Theo Artz?

A Theodore Artz.

Q Do you remember his music?

A And he played sometimes in the evening already a little. That was free you know. He just done that.

Q Yeah, just because he liked to play.

A Or maybe 30 minutes or so, 45 minutes.

Q Well, how long did the dance last usually?

A Till daylight.

Q Till daylight?

A They danced, sure.

Q Golly.

A Yeah. Henry Bourquin told me a many time he come down horseback to the place up here. He went by the sun was

coming up already when he went home.

Q Yeah?

A Yeah. All night but they didn't have dances like now, just on the big days, Fourth of July, 25th of August and like that. They didn't have 'em every two weeks.

Q And they were always in, like if it was Christmas or Easter they were held the day after it weren't they. Like on St. Stefa's Dawg. And then Easter Monday.

A Yeah, that's right. And New Year's.

Q Did they have them on New Year's?

A Yeah, Christmas, yeah, then I don't think they had more than about six dances a year or eight maybe, that's all that time, but when they danced, they danced all night.

Q Yeah.

A All night.

Q Okay. Did you ever go to any other dances besides the big dances. Did you hold any dances any other time of the year. Now you said these were only held at these public dance halls on the big days.

A Well, I made a lot of surprise parties in my time. Of course, uh, we didn't have no car yet that time and we had to get a ride with somebody and it was always somebody that went to these surprise parties. I know they had one over here where the Wernette Ranch is now and John Boubel lived there at that time. They had a big one over there and then I remember over here where the

Mueller Rest Home is now that was a big room, the school house years ago. I remember when they still went to school there.

Q Yeah.

A We lived over here. And uh, there was a big room and they moved the furniture on to the side. Mrs. Schneider was living there, Mary Schneider and her son and they had a big surprise party there.

Q Uh-huh.

A Big dance and a lot of people, well, they charged maybe 25 cents or something like that to dance that time.

Q Oh, they did charge?

A Yeah, see they had to pay the orchestra.

Q Oh.

A Yeah.

Q Okay.

A But that was cheap.

Q What kind of music was it for that --

A It was a violin and a flute and a guitar.

Q Can you remember any particular men that played?

A I believe it was Haby over here.

Q Slim Haby?

A Slim Haby and uh, Henry Carle and Joe Riff. Them three played. And then uh, before that, uh, I remember when Joe Schott and Willie Schott and August Schott and uh, they played upstairs there too where the Red and White

Store is.

Q Oh, really?

A And then I don't know they had uh, Alice Ahr used to play the piano for them.

Q Uh-huh.

A But I don't know what happened, if Alice got sick or something or something and they had a fellar by the name of Hutchinrider. He was a, he had a place up at the Medina Lake. He's dead now, too. I knew him well, and he played the piano for 'em.

Q Oh.

A He was a plasterer.

Q Uh-huh.

A Yeah.

Q Well, at --

A And they played, they played at Rio Medina, they played at Quihi Schott Band, Red Wing up there they had dances, Rio Medina and --

Q Red Wing, that's where Riverside is?

A Yeah. No, on this side of the creek where Gene Schott lived.

Q Oh, yeah.

A That was Red Wing.

Q There's a store building there. It used to be one there.

A Yeah, right, that's where it was. The dance hall. No, the pool hall was across the road. That's right. The

pool hall was on the north side of the road and the store and the dance hall was on this side. They had dances there.

Q Well, at this surprise party like over here at the Mueller, what is the Mueller Rest Home now, what kind of music did these guys play?

A Well, they played uh - they played --

Q Old-time?

A They played some old-time and then at that time uh, they got one by the name of "Spearmint lose the flavor on the bedpost overnight," did you ever hear that?

Q Yes.

A That they played a lot and Henry Carle sang that a many a time. At these surprise parties.

Q Say that one again. Say that again.

A Uh, "Spearmint lose the flavor on the bedpost overnight." You heard about that already?

Q Yes, I heard it.

A That's what they played a lot and then different, oh, they played let's see, uh, "Till We Meet Again." You heard that already?

Q Yeah.

A That they played too. And then I had an uncle, he was a musician. Otto Naegelin, he played around quite a bit too. Albert Groff and Charlie Groff.

Q Yeah.

A Albert played the guitar and Charlie played the flute and they played around Rio Medina, Quihi.

Q I heard that the Groff Brothers had a band.

A They had a band too. Well John Groff could play the violin too and Frank could play. Yeah. And Charlie was a real good flute player.

Q Yeah. Everybody mentions Charlie.

A And Albert Groff played the guitar, yeah. And they played around. They played out here too at Wernette's Garden.

Q At Wernette's Garden? Well, what did Otto play?

A Otto played the violin.

Q Oh, he did?

A Yeah. He was --

Q Did anybody in your family play a musical instrument?

A Nobody but Uncle Otto. That's the only one I knew.

Q That's the only one you know?

A Well, Uncle Bill played the brass band. He had a trumpet.

Q Well, did they learn this music -- how did they learn this music?

A Well, Uncle Otto learned it in school from a nun, a music teacher here. He could play off the notes, he was real good one.

Q Uh-huh.

A Yeah, he could play anything.

Q Oh, so he did take lessons, violin lessons?

A Oh, yeah, he took violin lessons and then uh, when they started the brass band here a feller come up from Devine by the name of Balmos.

Q Uh-huh.

A And he learned it and I still remember when they had that brass band and they marched the streets here playing in Castroville.

Q Really?

A Yeah, they played on the 25th of August Celebration. And when somebody got married, they played, they didn't get no money but they got plenty to eat.

Q Oh, so they would play at the reception, you know for dancing or just --

A No, they didn't play for dances, just at celebrations.

Q Oh, kind of like a marching band.

A Yeah, marching band. The called it Castroville Brass Band.

Q Well, who was in there besides Bill?

A Oh, Joe Holzhaus, Walter Holzhaus, Bill Biediger, Dan Biediger, Frank Zimmerman, Charlie Biediger, Uncle Bill Naegelin and Arthur Holzhaus played the big drum.

Q Uh-huh.

A A drum that big and --

Q Well, that Walter Holzhaus became a well-known musician.

A Oh, top musician, yeah. But he played in here with the brass band, was just a young kid. That's where he started learning.

Q And I understand he played in the army, he played.

A Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q He played for Sousa.

A Well, a lot of 'em went in the army like Joe Schott played in the army and Willie Schott played in the army. Uncle Otto Naegelin played in the army, yeah.

Q Huh?

A Well, they were musicians already when they went in there see and you had it a lot easier if you was a musician. You didn't have to drill so much.

Q Yeah. You were telling me yesterday that you went to a barn raising party once. And where was that at?

A What?

Q A barn raising party out at Quihi. You went to one.

A Oh, that was at George Balzen.

Q Yeah.

A His wife was a Weiblen, a sister to Fritz Weiblen and he built a new barn.

Q Uh-huh.

A Two-story, brand new. Never had a thing in there and I don't know how we found it out. Raymond Moehring, myself and Tommy Hans and a whole bunch of boys went out there. The young folks danced upstairs and the older people danced down below.

Q Uh-huh. How did you get out there?

A We went out, I believe it's Steve Droitcourt took us out.

Q Oh, I thought you said Oscar App.

A Well, we used to go with Oscar App a lot. But I believe we went that night with Steve Droitcourt. He had a Model T Ford. Yeah.

Q Who is Steve Droitcourt?

A He was uh, John Droitcourt, Joe Droitcourt's brother. The youngest one.

Q I never heard of him.

A Yeah, well, his name was Oscar.

Q Oh, Oscar, okay.

A Yeah, they called him Steve. Oscar. And he had a Model T Ford and well, we boys go to him and say, "Steve," that was his nickname, "Steve, we'll give you so much apiece if you take us to this dance." "Okay, get in." And he took us out there and he stayed there until we was ready to go home.

Q Uh-huh.

A But we went with Oscar App a lot but he only had a Roadster, Ford Roadster and three guys was all that could go in there. Sometimes we piled four in there.

Q You couldn't stand on the running board?

A Well, yeah, you could but we didn't want to do that. Sometimes it was cold. We went to D'Hanis with him to dances and Quihi a lot.

Q Were the roads pretty good already then?

A No, no---oo, no roads, heck no you'd get stuck if it

rained. Heck, you had to take out if it started lightning. No, we sometimes piled four in Oscar App's Ford. He was pretty big guy and we were smaller, we three got in there yet and paid him 25 or something like that to pay him for the gas but we went to D' Hanis with him and everywhere.

Q Uh-huh.

A I remember when Bill Rihn had a Dodge car and they went to D' Hanis, a bunch of girls, my sister and Clara Jungman and Theresa Hans and uh, I don't know, Bill Rihn. And Adolph Ahr went with 'em. And I believe Gabe was along too, Gabe Hans. He wanted to advertise a dance back there and he went with 'em to advertise this dance and then Charlie Groff asked Bill Rihn to use his car for something and that time wasn't no roads and he busted the crank case on it and the oil all run out and they got as far as where the Dunlay -- on the other side where the Dunlay overpass is and could go no more. Adolph Ahr walked to Castroville. Walked and come back with some oil to put back in the car. Then it was daylight when he got back but he come back, walked back.

Q My gosh.

A Some of 'em stayed on the road all night at that time if something happened you couldn't call nobody, no telephone or nobody come by. But we enjoyed life, it wasn't like it is now. No, that you could go 50 or a

hundred miles to a dance. We went to Quihi and Quihi had one dance a month.

Q Oh.

A Once a month only and just a little hall that time.

Q Uh-huh.

A When I first went out there it was three old fellers playing, one was uh, Gus Mann and his brother, Leslie Mann and their brother-in-law, Tommy Neumann. Violin, and a flute and a guitar. Them three fellers was playing there when I used to go there first dances. I was just a young boy then.

Q Were you a good dancer?

A What?

Q Did you like to dance?

A Oh, yeah. At that time, oh, yeah, we danced a many a mile.

Q What were the dances that you danced?

A Well, they had waltz and two-step and fox trot, stuff like that and then they played the schottische.

Q Yeah.

A Put Your Little Foot and uh, Herr Schmidt. That they played and of course not like these western bands now. They weren't that loud, no, heck, no, these western, not that wild. But you never heard nothing about Cotton-eyed Joe at that time.

Q Yeah, right. Well, how did you meet your wife from Hondo?

A Well, I met her at dances at Quihi.

Q Oh?

A Yeah. Then they used to have a dance hall at Hondo we used to go there and uh, used to go there and dance but they didn't have too many dances at Hondo. Now D' Hanis had a dance hall upstairs, they called it the Koch Building. It's still on the north side of the tracks. We used to go there quite a bit.

Q Yeah, uh-huh.

A They were good dances out at D' Hanis but Hondo never was noted for too many dances. Once in a while. Well, they ain't got 'em now yet.

Q Do you think that's because there weren't as many Catholics there or as many Alsatians?

A Well, I don't know but baseball -- football, they went Hondo all the time. That's what they went for. Dancing, they come over here to dance from Hondo. All them boys come over here, Devine.

Q Well, when you were young did you ever get into any little fracas after the dance with these boys that came from Devine and Hondo? Was there bad feeling?

A No, I didn't but they had a lot of fights with some of 'em. I remember down here one night when Joe Conrad, Buster Conrad's daddy --

Q His daddy?

A -- and Bill Rihn, old man Bill. They got in fight with

some guys from Devine and I don't know who was the law at that time at least they shackled some of 'em and they left with the shackles on that night, got away from 'em and Les Howard was living down where Mrs. Ruby was living.

Q Yes, right.

A And there they went to saw the handcuffs off, Les Howard, yeah. And then they went home but they got 'em then, they picked them up or something, I don't know --

Q Well, were these fights kind of a regular occurrence at a dance?

A Well, sometimes they had quite a number of fights but it was mostly always the same guys all the time, you know that picked the fights.

Q Uh-huh, and they kind of had grudges --

A But some boys never had no trouble.

Q Yeah.

A But some of 'em always had trouble.

Q Uh-huh.

A But in our, in our group we never had no fights with anybody, no.

Q But I just know --

A We tried to get around it but --

Q -- when I was young and went to the Wernette Garden for dances there was always a fight with Devine and Castroville.

A Oh, yeah, at that time, yeah, when you was young. That

was the younger generation then. That was after my time.

Q But it was only certain boys. They were always the same ones that would fight. One would pick on the other and it seemed like they'd have to get it out of their system before the night was over.

A Well, some guys you know they get hot right quick and they won't back up and some do. Some try to stay out of trouble.

Q Did Gabe like to do that?

A What?

Q Did Gabe like to do that?

A Well, yeah, he started some of 'em. Yeah.

Q Gabe was such a good singer.

A Yeah, he was, yeah.

Q Uh, did he always do that when he was young?

A Always, over at the telephone office, you know the telephone office was next to the uh --

Q Drug Store or --

A Yeah, where the drug store was and he'd go over there and boy you could hear him sing when he come down the street already.

Q Would he sing over the telephone?

A No, he just went over there. Well, different girls worked in there. My sister worked in there and Alice Rihm worked in there and I believe Gabe's wife worked in there, too at one time and he was always over there

and his grandpa Leo Tschirhart. See Gabe's daddy died when them boys was young and then uh, she kept up the meat market, Mrs. Hans did. Joe Hans done the killing for her and uh, Harry was the oldest one and he start working in there and when Gabe was supposed to be there and old man Leo Tschirhart his Grandpa come, Gabe wasn't there he said where's Gabe at. Oh, he's over at the telephone office singing. Boy he got mad. Gabe was always, you know he had a field up here on the canal right here where the Old Highway 90 is up here on the north side and he hired a bunch of these boys to pick up the big rocks in the field that Gabe had and they got two bits a day and Gabe kept the other ones from working and then he gave Gabe 50 cents to stay at home.

Q Why did he -- why?

A Well, he kept the others from working. He was always catching mice and stuff and the others didn't work.

Q Now, who was it that owned it?

A His Grandpa.

Q Leo? Leo Tschirhart?

A Leo, the one-armed guy.

Q Yeah, yeah.

A He lost his arm, too. That was in a fight, a shooting down there where the theater is now.

Q Yeah.

A There was where the saloon was.

Q Some Bandera --

A Boys, yeah from Bandera and one shot his arm off.

Q Uh-huh. That was -- he was the constable here?

A Yeah, he was the law I don't know constable or yeah, he was the law and I don't know whatever happened. They didn't get 'em that night them boys but they got them later on and I don't know, I never --

Q Was he trying to arrest them at the time? Was he trying to arrest 'em?

A He wanted, I don't know what they done and he, I believe he wanted to arrest them and they shot his arm off, one of them boys. And they, they pulled out. They were down here on horseback from Bandera and I don't know, they caught 'em, they got 'em later on but what they done to 'em I don't know or they paid off or what, I don't know. But that's long time ago and he gave Gabe 50 cents to stay at home and the other boys only got a quarter to pick up rocks. That's right. Oh, Gabe was --

Q He was one of the characters in town?

A Oh, never be one like him again I don't think so.

Q Yeah.

A And always -- always bragging, you know, loud, talking so the people could hear him everywhere.

Q Well, he was one that kept the story alive about Hondo stealing the --

A Oh, yeah.

Q -- the courthouse and then I heard at -- you were just telling me a story about an early murder in Castroville. You want to tell me that story again. What was the name of the man?

A Which one are you talking about?

Q The Grunewald.

A Grunewald. I don't know what his first name was but he was a brother to Mrs. Grunewald that lived over here where, uh, Ella --

Q Tondre, well, she's Ella Haas now.

A Yeah, Ella Haas lived and that was the house and I remember that lady yet I seen her several times and her brother got killed and uh, they claim --

Q He was real young, wasn't he?

A He was drinking water on the river or on a tank or something, where it happened really I don't know. But somebody shot him for a bear. But then I heard different stories from the older fellers that said he was supposed to have been a witness in a case and they wanted him out of the way and that's why they killed him.

Q So they never did anything or had any inquiry or anything?

A No, they never done nothing about it then. See, he said he shot him accidentally for a bear but --

Q Wasn't he a pretty young boy at the time?

A He must have been pretty young. Yeah. But that was his sister over there and I knew her yet uh, let's see, what

was her first name. I used to know it but I don't know it no more. Now it's some Grunewalds out here at Yancey but I don't know if they were kin to h--

Q I was wondering too if the Grunewalds in Hondo were related?

A I don't know. I would want to ask once if I think about it but I never did ask but I knew this lady. Well, she lived over there on the river.

Q Uh-huh. Uh -- was your grandfather -- who was your grandfather Naegelin?

A Joseph Naegelin.

Q Joseph Naegelin. Was he on that city council when the town disincorporated?

A When it first incorporated, yeah. Right.

Q When it first incorporated or when it disincorporated?

A He was on the city council but I don't know if it was the first time when they had the first election or not but he was on there at one time.

Q Uh-huh.

A But I don't remember what year. Maybe it's, would be some records somewhere but I don't know. But I know he was one of the city council. And who was Mayor at that time I forgot. See, I was too young.

Q Was it James Paul? Dr. Hoffman's son-in-law, James Paul, he was the last mayor in 1897.

A I believe this was his house up here where Theis lives now.

went across the river and I remember when the people still come from Rio Medina and went, come across there into Castroville.

Q Was it shallow there that's why they --

A Yeah, oh, yeah, real shallow. Before theybbuilt that dam down there it was no water here hardly. If you take that dam away down there it's no water there.

Q But that dam was built --

A Yeah, but not that high, they raised it then.

Q Oh, they raised it?

A Yeah, they raised it.

Q I was always wondering --

A No, it was just low for --

Q Yeah, because I knew that George Haass and Quintel had built it in 1854 already. But it was just a low dam.

A Low dam.

Q Well when did they raise that?

A That uh -- Courand raised it and then uh, let's see Courand got it and uh, he raised it I believe twice he raised it. And I don't know if Lawler put any on again or not when he got it. I don't really remember that but I know they raised it. You can tell --

Q So that's what made the river deeper there?

A Yeah, it was all built with rocks, then they added on with concrete on top. You seen that already?

Q Yes, yeah.

Q Oh, I thought he lived where Mrs. Whitehead lives now?

A Well, that was Dr. Hoffman's place.

Q Yeah, well, that's where I thought he lived.

A No, Paul lived here. The lawyer. Yeah.

Q The lawyer.

A And then Mechler bought it I believe.

Q Did you know that he came to Castroville with Henry Castro? That Paul?

A Paul?

Q That lawyer, he was here. And he had come with, he's listed in Henry Castro's household in the census of 1850.

A I didn't know that but uh, like Dr. Hoffman he had a will and it had to be a factory on that place or you can't own it.

Q Now what are you talking about? You have to explain it a little more.

A Well, uh, he made that will.

Q Which property are you talking about?

A Well, then I believe he deeded it to the City of Castroville. And they started the creamery on there.

Q Okay. What property is this?

A Where Winfred, Mrs. Whitehead lives.

Q Winfred Whitehead?

A Yeah. All that property was his.

Q Was Dr. Hoffman's.

A And that's why they called it the Hoffman crossing,

A The rock part is the first part they built, yeah.

Q Oh, I didn't know that.

A And then they built that channel back in there --

Q You know that's probably what caused the river to be muddier, too.

A Oh, yeah. Well, it holds all the silt down there, that dam.

Q Yes, that dam holds it, yeah.

A See, before that it went right straight, straight through and cleaned the mud out.

Q Sure and because that was there well then the mud would just naturally never flow off.

A Oh, yeah. Well, we used to go swimming down there by that dam and it was a lot of mud in front of it.

Q Oh.

A See it held all the silt there. But before that dam was there the water went right through when it got a big rise and washed everything out of there clean. It's solid rock down there where the dam is.

Q That's solid rock?

A Sure. Right.

Q Did you all play down there a lot when you were kids?

A Oh, we swam there a lot too and played there. Tony FitzSimon fell in the water there one time when the river was up not too high but pretty good stream.

Louie Gerloff, and I don't know, some other guy held

Louie Gerloff's hand and he reached down there and grabbed Tony by the hair and pulled him out, he'd have drowned.

Q Oh?

A Yeah.

Q Well, was Tony kind of a rascal?

A Well, he, I don't know, somebody pushed him in, I wasn't there when it happened but -- or either he wanted to walk along that wall on the side and lost balance and fell in there. Well, let's see, a Pettibon boy drowned once, yeah. That was when the river was --

Q Well, that was on a rise though, too.

A See, when that water falls over that dam it comes back like a wheel and you can't get out of it, it just keeps you there. That's what happened there.

Q Uh-huh, yeah.

A And some more fell.

Q Do you remember when those Renken boys died on the Fourth of July, drowned?

A Them Renken boys drowned up here where Charlie Montel's gate is. Right down the river there. In that hole.

Q It was a whirlwind there or what?

A Well, it's uh --

Q I mean an eddy --

A I tell you what happened. They come over there, Paul Renken and some more friends from Hondo and they asked

mu uncle if they could have a barbecue in his bottom. He said yeah, anywhere's you want to go and they went in up there by the flat rocks where the little bridge is and started digging a barbecue pit. And they asked him if they could swim down there and he said yeah, it's real shallow here, and like kids are, and the men started getting ready for a barbecue and the women went to the river with these kids and they were pretty good sized boys already, I guess about 12 years old. And I got there after they had 'em out of the water, both of them was dead though and they went down there where the water was shallow and these kids always kept going further down and the women walked along the bank finally they got to that hole and it's a jump off just like this and they couldn't swim and the little feller got in there first I believe and the other one wanted to help him and one drowned the other. Yeah, two of 'em. Dr. Williamson and Dr. Brymer was here. They had them two doctors up there after they got 'em out.

Q Oh, Dr. Williamson and Dr. Brymer?

A Yeah, the old man Williamson.

Q Oh, old man Williamson oh, okay.

A Yeah. Old man Williamson, Yeah. Dr. Dorsey's daddy. Them two. Heck, them would be old boys now, that's about, heck --

Q Well, I think Milton is about 55 and he's one of the

younger ones, yeah.

A Oh, yeah, there was older ones.

Q Yeah, right.

A Two pretty heavy nice built boys they were. I seen 'em.

Q That must have been terrible.

A Yeah, it happened on the Fourth of July.

Q Yeah.

A Yeah, and they -- that could have been about in the late '20's I guess, sometime. My daddy died in '25 and I wasn't no 18 years old yet and it happened after that.

Yeah, after '25 but I and Charlie Montel and Ralph Montel got there and we seen all these people there, we

- End of tape -

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