

## 2002 RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FUNDED BY THE VCCF HERITAGE FUND

INTERVIEW: SHIRLEY RUBEL LORENZ

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INTERVIEWERS: CYNTHIA THOMPSON, PIERPONT INN and RANCHO CAMULOS  
SUZANNE LAWRENCE, V C M H & A and RANCHO CAMULOS

SL: This is Suzanne Lawrence for the Rancho Camulos Oral History Project. The date is April 2, 2002, and I am sitting on the porch of the schoolhouse at Rancho Camulos with Shirley Rubel Lorenz, one of the owners of the rancho, and Cynthia Thompson of the Rancho Board of Directors.

The sun is shining, the air is redolent with roses and orange blossoms, and we're surrounded by iris, bougainvillea and wild flowers. In the background we can hear palm fronds rustling, bumble bees buzzing, and birds twittering. No wonder Helen Hunt Jackson's descriptions of this place were so lyrical and vivid!

I've taken Shirley Lorenz away from her work in the chapel garden to ask her about her parents, and their purchase of the rancho in 1924.

The Rubel family is quite illustrious. I told Cynthia after I had talked to you originally, I felt like a "mutt" because the Rubel's history goes back and back and back.... Did you say that they have documentation all the way to William the Conqueror?

SRL: Well, Ann came up with that. She may have read it in those volumes, but they are all in German.

SL: And your daughter, Ann Reinders, married a German, did she not?

SRL: I think he's Scandinavian, from Wisconsin. But I married a Lorenz, which is very German; my sister Boo [Nathalie] married a Trefzger, which is German; my older sister [Barbara] married a Blatt... (laughing) I don't know. But we're a mixture, a true American mixture. Dad's mother was American of course, but of English background.

SL: What was her family name?

SRL: Toel, William Toel. He was a factor, and his business was in the China trade out of New York and Boston. Ships.

SL: Ships that came from China, and that was his business?

SRL: Yes.

SL: So this was the world of international finance; that was his mother's family.

SRL: No, his father's family. No, I'm sorry, it was his mother's father, but the Rubels were in the same financial thing too.

They had family members that had been in Brazil and Argentina three and four generations; they were all very.... Every five years they all come together, from all over.

CT: Did you have the reunion here yet?

SRL: It's coming on August 1. They're coming here.

SL: Where was the last one?

SRL: They've always been in Zurich, until this time. I think it's because of Peter [Rubel, first cousin of Shirley's father, 15 years his junior] that they're coming. He won't last much longer. But Ann and her family went, and of course all of Peter's family. My nephew Mike Blatt and his family were there, so it was really very nice.

SL: How many people do you expect to come to Camulos for this next reunion.

SRL: Well, at last count... the invitations are still coming in. People have known about it, but the formal invitation and the things they want to sign up to do... because they'll be here only one day, on the first - a big barbeque, the whole thing. But plans for other things to do in the United States once they get here... they're going to the Getty, and they're going to the wine country....

Actually, one of Peter's nephews is the Chairman of the World Zoos, and so he has a special tour either just before or just after, with the L.A. Zoo, so it's supposed to be very special. He's a dear, dear person, and he's done wonders with the Zurich Zoo.

SL: He's Chairman of the Zoos of the World organization? That's extraordinary.

SRL: Yeah, it really is, and he just knows so much, and has done wonderful things with it. Anyway, he's coming. And then another niece of Peter's, Hans Ueli's daughter married just a beautiful Japanese sculptor, who's very well-known over there.

So they're coming from France, they're coming from England, they're coming from anywhere, Europe, particularly.

SL: And how many do you expect?

SRL: Well so far they've only got forty signed up, but they're expecting a lot more.

SL: But normally the group would be how many?

SRL: Oh, it would be huge, over 100. Being in Zurich everybody's close, but it's hard for young families to pick up, and the expense, and come over here.

CT: It's great that you got them to do that though.

SRL: I'm really looking forward to it. It should be great fun. Some of the young families should be there because, for three or four generations, there's been a Rubel Family Foundation which will put kids through universities.

If they can get into a university... it pays for the travel to come to this every five years, for them. So if they have the time to make it worthwhile to come all around the other side of the world, then cost is not a factor.

CT: What responsibility does the Rubel family (outside of your immediate Rubel family here) have towards Camulos? Are they involved at any level?

SRL: Well, during the depression, as everybody knows, the ranch was mortgaged to the Swiss family. [The Rubels, doing business in New York, have maintained dual citizenship for three or four generations.]

CT: To keep it from going away.

SRL: To keep it afloat, yes. And we've always had lots of "visitations." My sisters and I had a joke, "I'm Swiss and I'm spending the night." (Laughs) But then they're such warm and lovely people, it's a delight.

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SL: Did you know your husband's parents?

SRL: No, they had both passed away before my parents were married.

SL: That's right, they passed when he was a teen-ager and left him to handle the family. How many siblings were there?

SRL: An older sister, and a younger brother. The parents passed away... his father first; he had a brain tumor. And then his mother had cancer.

SL: Were they in New York?

SRL: In New York. And so World War I came along, and Dad, along with quite a few of his classmates from Harvard (he was only seventeen)...

SL: He was in Harvard at seventeen?

SRL: He joined the American Field Service, which had just been organized.

SL: So he had just started at Harvard when the American Field Service called him?

SRL: Right, because it had never been organized, it was the first time. Of course, it was before the United States went into the war, and so they went over and were attached. They had to be requested by a country, France, they were attached to the French army for some time before the United States came in, and drove an ambulance.

SL: So he was doing service, rather than part of the army.

SRL: Oh yeah, this is a volunteer ambulance service; that's the whole thing it's about. And he was badly gassed. His unit was one of the few that didn't have any fatalities, any of the men killed....

CT: Did he lose his teeth, from the gas? My grandfather lost his teeth, he told me, from the gas in France.

SRL: No, I've never heard that, but as a result of that when he came back he finished Harvard, met my mother, married, and the doctors told him that he shouldn't have a career in an office, he should be outdoors, and in those days it was "go west young man" kind of thing, so they did. Neither of them had ever been off the east coast before.

SL: Before we go into what happened here in Ventura County, let's talk about your mother. You said her name was McIsaac when I talked to you the other day, but Wallace Smith, in his book, called her "Mary Colgate." He was very... snippy. He had a nasty attitude toward them.

SRL: He had a very nasty attitude, and there's a lot of errors in his book, a lot a lot of errors.

CT: And this is?

SL: "This Land Was Ours"  
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SRL: He resented, and said it over and over again, he resented anybody buying the ranch; taking over from the del Valles, and of course the del Valles, bless them, they hung on as long as they could.

They were deeply in debt, and the family... they all... it was a large family, and they all grew up and married and stayed, they didn't leave, so they kept adding roofs. And then there was infighting, and unhappiness, and they wouldn't speak to each other and they wouldn't even eat together, and so it got to the point where there was no return on it.

SL: But that was just that kind of wishful thinking, that the myth were [still] true.

SRL: Yeah, and it was wonderful. Essentially, it was not a myth, it happened, it was just that as the years went by and the whole agricultural thing sort of fell apart, and the Americans came in with their cars and their trucks, and the ranch was working with wagons and horses, and they didn't have the ability to adjust.

CT: Everything outgrows its time.

SRL: Yes, and it was really sad, but there didn't seem to be any member of the family to take over, to be a leader.

SL: That's a thing that I have begun to realize... Was he overtly criticized or ostracized for buying the ranch?

SRL: No, not at all.

SL: The realists recognized that it had to happen.

SRL: Oh yes. Lots of... this was happening all over the west. The land grants were being broken up because they just couldn't operate with Indian labor (essentially "slave labor") etc. and the economy was changing so rapidly.

CT: Particularly after World War I; the economy changed tremendously, and technology changed the world.

SRL: It did, and it's changing right now. I am... it's... it's a scary time, but it's also exhilarating, to see the changes because one of the things about the [Rancho Camulos] Museum, one of our directions is to show the change in agriculture here in the valley, going 'way back.

Well, it's happening so fast, right now. You saw the fields of peppers up here - acres, and acres? Two years ago that was all orchard, all orchard, as far as you could see. Now we're pushing (I love the term "pushing" it used to be, you "pulled an orchard" but now you "push" an orchard.)

It's because of the markets. It's not that the fruit isn't wonderful, but we cannot produce it and sell it with the world competition - tremendous competition.

Our market, here in this valley with the Piru Citrus Association, has always been the Pacific Rim. Now Australia is coming in very heavy, South Africa, Argentina, Chile...

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SL: So suddenly you're growing peppers?

SRL: We're leasing the land because we don't know how to grow peppers. We don't have the equipment! It's the most high-tech operation... a combination of hands-on and high tech operation you've ever seen. They have the most incredible machinery that comes in and levels the land by computer.

This little thing goes up there and makes the blades go up and down and it's just absolutely flat. And then the plastic, and each little plant is poked through the plastic, each little plant has its water, each little plant's going to be staked. It's the most incredible operation.

Anyway, we don't know how to do that, but these big companies do, and they... the lease money covers that while we decide what we can grow ourselves. And there's all kinds of possibilities. The ranchers... there's a lot of networking, a lot of talking to the universities, all of this, and I find it very exciting.

We're diversifying as fast as we can. Across the road we're growing Christmas trees, with the thought that when the railroad comes here, we'll have Christmas trees. And of course the fruit stand is incredible - that is a cash cow, and we've only just started. And so it's just tremendously exciting, I think -- and I love to see anything grow.

SL: It's interesting that it's come all the way around, too, because originally the del Valles were experimenting with what would grow.

SRL: Yes, exactly, exactly. And now of course we have such incredible ways of irrigating, that we're developing the

back canyons, which could never have... it was only good for cattle. And now you can plant on the hills, and each little tree has its own little spigot.

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SL: Now you say "we." Is part of this property in back canyons?

SRL: Yes. My sister Boo and I, and my nephew Mike, who represents his part inherited from my older sister, are the Management Committee. We do not micro-manage, we make the big decisions the long-range planning, etc. etc. so... And I'm the one who is closest to it. I keep them well informed and we do meet two or three times a year, but I'm here every week.

SL: This is approximately 2000 acres?

SRL: It's 1800, around 1800. It was about 2000 when Dad bought it, but among other things, he donated that land that's just across Piru Creek here, that's the settling ponds? That was part of Camulos, and he donated that land for the settling ponds, to increase the water table.

SL: But you own the land across the highway, across 126.

SRL: Yes. Roughly to the top of the first hills, and the center of the river.

SL: And that includes the railroad track, and the cemetery, and some small houses over there.

SRL: Yes.

CT: And who will... forgive me for asking, but I have to. Who will succeed the three of you?

SRL: Well, the next generation. Ann will succeed me, one of Boo's four sons, Kevin Trefzger, who lives right now with his family in the city of Orange, in Orange County, he's been groomed. He's been coming to the meetings, going over the financial statements, and any of the problems we have, so he's ready to step in. And my sister, of course, her son, he's that generation, the next one down, Michael Blatt.

CT: He's the only... I know this doesn't have a whole lot to do, we're skipping here... is the only thing that Michael Blatt disagrees with is the development of the forty acres that has to do with the Museum? The rest of the issues you guys adhere to, management-wise?

SRL: He... I don't know how to say this... he's a developer. That's his business. He's a millionaire, a multi-millionaire, and he's done it all himself. And all he can see is development. He does not see the value of the agricultural land that's fast going through our fingers world wide, and the particular value of this historically.

300 I'm hoping very much (I've been mentally writing so many letters to him) about the possibility of the county revisiting the forty acre part, and looking at the map very carefully, we could live - the Museum could live with - fifteen acres, very nicely. It would go from the road... it would go for about four or five rows of trees on that side [west] and about ten rows on that side [east] for a buffer; from the highway down to this row of gum trees, instead of going to the river.

When I first had to cut out the forty acres I was trying to avoid as much of the agricultural land as possible so I went straight to the river because the sand down there is useless, but I included all of the buildings that were remotely historic.

The little workers' houses across the road, only one is being lived in now, but they were all lived in until just a very, oh, maybe four or five years ago and those were built before the turn of the twentieth century, and now they're being eaten up by termites. I'm restoring one of them, to be lived in, because we do need people living on the ranch.

But if that went back to the ranch, then it would be the ranch's responsibility (laughs).

CT: So with the fifteen acres, you think he will perhaps be more amenable to that.

SRL: I'm hoping very much that he will be.

SL: And Atlas will shrug.

CT: We are talking really about future history, but that's why I am including this. In essence, your fearful anticipation is that he might want to develop all of the ranch land into housing tracts?

SRL: He won't be able to because, so far, this is the green belt, you know. He can't do that. Until that went through, he had very bright eyes.

So now he's kind of... this is small potatoes to him. It really is very small potatoes to him, however, he can... it's a control thing. He can block things; however, Boo and I can outvote him. However, in order to actually legally



get this, the rest of the owners have to sign, and Boo's family and my family are all for it, but he controls his side of the family, and there's nothing we can do. It has to be 100%, so I've got to bring him around.

I just can't believe that he won't do it.

CT: What is his reason when you speak about it?

SRL: He doesn't want to talk about it. He'll talk about anything else, but he just doesn't want to talk about this. But he hasn't heard this new proposal. I have to go up and talk with Christy Madden, and see if this is a viable proposal, because it's very expensive with the lawyers and everything to go through this, and then not have anything happen.

CT: All right. So that takes care of the three branches of the family.

SL: We've talked about family; I want to get back, briefly. Your mother was Mary Colgate McIsaac?

SRL: No. She was Mary Josephine McIsaac. The Colgate came in there because she and her sister, my Auntie Eunie Forbes, (who was really like a second mother to me) and her brother were pretty muchly raised by her father's sister and her husband, by the name of Colgate.

400 Her father was in the Spanish-American War, in Cuba, when he met my mother's mother. She was... this is part of the American melting-pot; her mother was French, her father was Spanish, from Spain, and during the Spanish-American War he was a secret envoy to Mexico, and was assassinated. So he left his wife, and daughter, and son, in Cuba, in Havana, where along comes this Scottish McIsaac fellow, who woos her as the story goes, "through the window." It's wonderful.

He brings her, his wife, and her mother and her younger brother, to Boston where they proceeded to... she had three children. Mother, and Aunt, and their first child who died of diphtheria, which was a blow.

So after she died, the grandmother and her brother went back to Cuba, so that's when Mother, and Eunie, and her son James, lived with the Colgates. McIsaac, bless him, went off and married somebody else, didn't tell her (this is wonderful I love this) didn't tell her that he had children.  
450 So he brought her home to Aunt Alice Colgate and Uncle Bert (who were wonderful) and here were these three children.

Anyway, the Colgates really, essentially raised Mother, and Eunie, and her brother James. So when Mother and Dad were married and came out here, they were all so darn young,

they brought Eunice along too, and she went to high school in Santa Paula, when Dad developed Billiwack.

SL: So they lived in Aliso Canyon, and she went to Santa Paula High School.

SRL: Right, and that's where she met and married Harry Forbes.

SL: How old was your mother when she married?

SRL: Sixteen.

SL: Okay, the book said, "His teen-age bride" and made it sound like something scandalous, but she was sixteen when they married. He was at Harvard?

~~SRL: He graduated before they were married.~~

SL: And they married and came straight west.

CT: And they married in Boston?

SRL: New York; his family had been there for....

CT: And this is post-World War I; he has been gassed, and the doctor says, "Don't get a job in an office." How did he decide on this part of California?

SRL: They traveled. They traveled up and down the state, starting way up north, and visited all of the area. You know Ventura County, the ranchers...

END OF SIDE A TAPE 1 OF 3 AT #500, BEGIN SIDE B

SL: Your parents married in 1923, according to my notes, and you were saying that the ranchers in this area were easterners, so did they know people in the Santa Paula area?

SRL: Yes, we knew most of the ranchers. Every year from the time of my earliest memories, we had open house at Christmastime. This was a custom for most of the ranches. We did, the Lloyd-Butlers always had one, and some of the Shivelys always had one, and the Thilles, and... you know, the one whose house is now a museum over near the Naval Base....

CT: Bard.

SRL: The Bards. All of these people came, but they were all easterners. They were Harvard, and they were Yale, and so forth, and so Mom and Dad started meeting them, and felt more at home here, and of course it was beautiful.

CT: So none of them truly had a farming background. They came here from the east with rather prestigious college educations, and had no true farming background, but they...

SRL: Yes, well, the Lloyd Butler... he married into a land grant family. I mean, I knew... Mother would visit her often, because she was very ill for a long time, and very delicate, but I always heard about her, and how lovely she was.

SL: And the Lloyd-Butlers were Rancho Santa Clara del Norte -- which is now the Saticoy Country Club.

SRL: Yes, so it was her family. He married her, but it was her family that had the ranch.

CT: The [Ashby] Vickers were just right across the street.

SL: Yes, the Vickers [Pierpont Inn] were just down Ditch Road.

SRL: And of course we knew the Newhalls, and all of that.

CT: So when your father came out here he didn't have a background in farming, but he learned. It seems like the first thing was a dairy!

SL: I can't imagine an easterner coming out here with a Harvard education saying, "I'm going to start a dairy!"

SRL: Well, you know, he investigated everything, and he read up on things. He had a very inquisitive mind, always following ideas, but my memories are here, of course. I think I'm the only one in the family who has never been to Billiwack. Boo has been, they've all been to Billiwack, and I've been invited, but I've just never been able to get up there.

SL: Is there anything left of the Billiwack Dairy?

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SRL: Oh yes, there's an incredible barn up there that I've been hearing about all my life, that Dad built. A very special barn. It's near Ojai, way up there, and the reason that it really didn't pan out so well -- two reasons -- was the water situation. They just couldn't get enough water up there. And the second reason was sadder. He hired a friend.

CT: Oh, that never works out.

SRL: And the friend just wasn't a businessperson, and absconded. It was really bad. Dad made a point of hiring veterans, and the bunkhouse here was all *solteros* - they were all unwed men from the First World War.

A wonderful bunch of men, and they drove the tractors and they did all of those kinds of things. I can still remember the horses and the wagons, but they were phased out when I was very small. But the tractors were the big thing, and those were going all the time.

We knew these men well. I remember one of the big things at Christmas was decorating the dining room up there. There was a separate cookhouse...

SL: Across 126, that direction?

SRL: No no no, right at the end of the bunkhouse, where the office is? That was the bunkhouse, with all those little rooms in it, and then there was a space maybe just this wide from here to here

SL: Four or five feet

SRL: With sort of an alleyway, and the dining room and the big kitchen. So we decorated for Christmas, and then we had what we called a Christmas pie, and it was a great big, this big around bowl

SL: Almost a yard in diameter

SRL: with little funny Christmas gifts in it, wrapped, with a big long string, and then there was a paper cover, on this thing to make it look like a pie. And they each would pull a string, and they would get a funny little gift out of this thing. We did that for years. It was something everybody looked forward to and got a big laugh out of it.

SL: When you were talking about the tragedy, or the failure, of the Billiwack Dairy, I thought you were going to tell the story of the bull.

SRL: Well that, too, but that came... Dad still owned Billiwack when he bought Camulos.

CT: Okay, let's back up a little bit. Where was he living when he bought Billiwack, here?

SRL: No no no, this was after Billiwack. He did Billiwack first, but he was doing both together, something he should never have done.

SL: They settled [first] in Aliso Canyon?

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SRL: Yes. They built a wonderful, modern for the time, log cabin, a large--

CT: Is it still there?

SRL: I don't think so. I asked Auntie Eunie, she, of course, remembers it very well. I think there was a fire, or something, years later, but it was quite a wonderful house.

SL: Did he design it, or just have it built, or did he participate?

SRL: Oh, I'm sure he participated. He participated in everything. This building [the schoolhouse] he essentially designed this. He always got professional help, to be sure it was viable (laughs) but yes, he did.

He bought Prince Aggie from the Bards.

SL: What do you suppose he spent on that bull?

SRL: A lot. I've heard it was a lot of money. You know, that's something I don't bother my mind with (laughs), but it was huge. He was a famous bull, and he made the circuit to all of the cattle shows. This was a big thing.

And he was murdered; he was murdered. He was fed a wad of bailing wire, and they had vets trying to figure out what they could do, and he died; he died.

But he was to be "the stud king" for the dairy cattle.

CT: This is a great story, so I'm going to try to pull more detail out of you. Your mother and father have settled in Aliso Canyon, they've built this log cabin, he decides to open the dairy; why a dairy?

SRL: I've never asked that question but he had the latest equipment for everything, for pasteurization and all of that....

SL: Ventura County may have been a good market at that time.

SRL: Well it was. They had trucks that delivered the milk; it didn't go to markets, it went to homes. It was 1924, you had your milk delivered.

CT: I was born in 1950 and I remember the milk coming to the door. They still do.

SRL: As a little child, like five or six, we had three or four milk cows here on the ranch, and there was a little pasteurization... the little buildings are still there across the road, and I can remember drinking the milk right from the cow - warm milk (it was always kind of funny - I liked my milk better cold).

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CT: Getting back to the dairy as far as chronology is concerned, he started the dairy, and he figured in order to have a great dairy he needed a great bull. He knew the Bards, and the Bards owned Prince Aggie. Did they raise him from infancy?

SRL: I don't know that, I don't know that. He was a young bull.

CT: So then your father bought Prince Aggie, and how long did he have him before Prince Aggie was killed?

SRL: I can remember when he was killed. I can remember the agonies when he died; the days before he died, trying to get help and trying to help him survive. It was agonizing.

SL: Did they shoot him? I doubt they told their little girl.

SRL: I don't know, but I remember it was a big huge black cloud. I have a lot of very early memories, and so many of them are... sensual. Like, the atmosphere, the scent, the emotional feelings.

SL: This is a very sensual place; you're very much aware of where you are. You feel this place.

SRL: I have one very vivid memory, when I was a baby, taking a nap in a carriage, with what turned out to be a mosquito net over, on the south porch there. And there was a honeysuckle vine that came up and over the roof there, and there was the warmth, and the scent, and the bees, and just being very lazy and in and out of sleep; hearing conversations of my Mother, with my Aunt or other women friends. It was very peaceful, very calm... and that stays with me. It's the darndest thing, and I was a baby in a crib.

CT: You probably weren't a year old.

SL: But the sounds and smells every season repeat the memory.

SRL: It does, and the feeling of security, which I didn't realize then was security, but looking back on it.... Boo and I have talked about this. We both have just a wonderful remembrance of... of Dad, of course.

200        Going back, the ranch ran with the siren, which was turned off only maybe twenty years ago, because the police decided it was causing too much trouble. The whole valley would go, Piru and everything, would go by the sound of this. It started at 7:00, at noon, at 1:00, and at 5:00 and it would go WOOOOO all over the place. Of course there wasn't much traffic, but what was there would stop, and look around (laughing).

      But then the siren would blow at noon and Dad would come down from the ranch headquarters there, and Boo and I would run up the long porch, and Dad would come down and he would grab both of us and hold both of us, carry both of us, one on each arm, down the porch and down into the dining room, and this we did almost every day. It was just the most wonderful feeling.

SL: Was he a big man?

SRL: Yes, well, he was 6', but he was strong, and we were little when he did that. (Laughing) But it was wonderful.

SL: I gather the outdoor life agreed with him.

SRL: Very much so; very much so. He appreciated the outdoors, he appreciated....

SL: He looks very studious in his photographs; he looks very serious. Was he?

SRL: He had a wonderful sense of humor, the biggest grin. He was always concocting little surprises, particularly for Mother. Just funny little things that he would do, and bring her.

      Books were a big deal; we always had lots of books, and she loved murder mysteries, so he would pop in with a new murder mystery, or whatever.

SL: I'm getting a better sense of her, because in the book [by Smith] she was just this... came across as the spoiled teenage bride sort of thing.

SRL: She was so busy having children (laughs).

SL: At sixteen, did she have a chance to get more schooling? Had she been privately schooled?

SRL: Not really, she kept being invited to join the University Women's Club and she'd say, "I'm sorry." But she read, voraciously. She was self-educated.

Dad developed really a very fine library here, because it was long before TV, and radio was great, but it wasn't all that educational.

SL: There was no running to the mall.

SRL: No, so reading was a big part of our lives. Boo and I were talking about that. We had tea every afternoon. It was great fun, and as little kids we had what was called "Cambric Tea" which was half and half, tea and milk.

250 Mother would read to us, and as we grew older, even into our teen-age years, having Mother read to the family... she had a wonderful wonderful reading voice, and pronunciation, and intonation when she read, and she would read books that all of our ages could appreciate. Dickens, and Sir Walter Scott and then later on some of the more modern things, adventures and historic things, and it was just great.

And then Boo and I, when we weren't doing anything else we'd go to the library or bring books out here on the lawn, and lie on our tummies and read to each other. She'd read a chapter, and I'd read a chapter, and we'd go through the whole afternoon reading a book to each other. And that was something we did often.

SL: One thing we have not talked about is the five children, and where they came in succession. Gerald was the oldest.

SRL: Gerry was the oldest

SL: And when was he born?

SRL: Well, he's six years older,

SL: Than you. You were born in '27, so he was born in '21. And then Barbara in '23.

SRL: Yes, she's four years older.

SL: Then you were in '27 and Boo in

SRL: Boo was in '28.

SL: Oh, so you two were very close.



SRL: Yes, a year and two weeks. Our birthdays are both this month.

SL: Your mother was busy, wasn't she?

SRL: She was busy, yes. And they lost a child between Barbara and me. We always called him "Little Boy" but he was August Alexander after my father, and he's buried right over there.

SL: By the pond?

SRL: No, past the chapel, there's a little circle on the lawn. There's a beautiful little bronze statue that I took up to the house on the hill because I was scared it would be stolen. So many things were stolen, and this was one of a kind.

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SL: The house on the hill being... your house?

SRL: No, it was built... Ann is living there now.

CT: Marvelous house!

SRL: It was built after the Second World War for my aunt and uncle. After Dad was killed our foreman that Dad had trained to run the ranch for years, died of a heart attack. So here was Mother, in 1944, the middle of the war, with a bunkhouse full of men, and the vultures started circling. So she made this disastrous marriage.

SL: Did he have any training for running the ranch?

SRL: No. He came from Port Hueneme, a SeaBee. {Construction Battalion} Mother... during the war, and before the war... they had the Women's Auxiliary of Something or other in Ventura. It was so cute. These women had uniforms, they had a... place where all the service men came for coffee...

SL: Like a canteen?

SRL: A canteen, in Ventura. The women used to get together once a week and learn military etiquette, and they marched - they marched! And they learned how to do all these things. Mother would come home and she'd make us get up there and she'd put us through the marching routine (laughs).

SL: She'd drive to Ventura to do that?

SRL: You know we always... driving to Ventura was nothing. Driving to Los Angeles was nothing, even on a two-lane highway, or Santa Barbara. You just did it.

CT: That's what it took to get where you needed to go.

SRL: Right. But it was too funny.

Anyway, she met Edwin Berger at the canteen.

SL: And he looked like he could bail her out of her...  
350.

SRL: Oh, he knew machinery, and in the war, anybody who could take care of a machine. He was a SeaBee. And so forth and so on, much younger than she, and so....

Boo and I were in school on the east coast, we were in prep school.

SL: You and Boo went together to prep school -- boarding school.

SRL: Yes. And after that, I graduated in '45 and went to Occidental. I had originally thought of going to a college back there, but I felt that I had to be out here. (This was before Mother remarried.)

Dad more or less trained me, of any of the children, to know... I worked in the office in the summertime, and so forth.

SL: What about your brother Gerald. Was he not heir apparent?

SRL: No, Gerry didn't want to do that. Gerry was a soldier; on his way home from Germany they had the terrible influenza, just like the First World War, remember? The Second War they had the same thing over there bringing the troops back, and he had it, and his lungs collapsed on the plane coming back over the Atlantic, so they made an emergency landing as soon as they got to land, and he was in the hospital for a long time.

Anyway, this was not his thing.

SL: So what did he do?

SRL: He did various things. He ended up, I think... well, he worked for the Gas Company in Santa Barbara for a long time. Before he went into the service he was at Berkeley, at the University, but he didn't finish that when he came back. And then Mother and Eddie, together, bought the northern ranch, up at Healdsburg, so Gerry was up there taking care of that ranch, with his wife.

SL: So you had a second ranch up at Healdsburg?

SRL: Yes, this was after the war. This was when... Boo and I went with Mother and Eddie to look at land up there, and it was a charming ranch. Healdsburg is north of Santa Rosa, and it's a lovely town, just a lovely town. Hidden Valley Ranch... they built a house there, and they had cattle and orchards.

SL: What prompted the purchase? I should think this place would be a colossal handful.

SRL: Well it was, but it was also a get-away, so they spent quite a bit of time up there. After Dad was killed, here was Mother. She went on bended knee to her sister's husband, Harry Forbes, who was a top-notch citriculturist, working for Sespe, and he had a very nice career there. He gave up a lot to come here and become the manager of this ranch. And they lived here, in the schoolhouse.

SL: What year would that have been, right after your father died?

SRL: Yes, that had to be in '44 or '45. They had a kitchenette; you saw the pipes in the wall behind that round table over there on the other side. They did this so nicely.

This was a big living room, as you can imagine, with a dining table over there, and the master bedroom was on the stage, with the big curtains over it. They had a son and a daughter. Jerry had this bedroom, and Joanne had the one over there, and it worked out very nicely.

Mother promised to build them a house, as soon as they could get the materials, so that's when the house up there was built.

SL: The house on the hill that Ann's in?  
450

SRL: Yes, that was built for them, and they lived there many years.

SL: So how long was he running the ranch?

SRL: Well it had to be, from about... what did I say, '45, until Eddie had his way, and got rid of Harry - which was a tragedy. Oh, I don't want this on any kind of tape.

SL: It was not a smooth transition, let's say that.

SRL: Well, when Mother first married Eddie she came to me and said that she was so sorry about the ranch, because at that point I was the one who was supposed to become educated for the ranch, and she promised me that Eddie would not have anything to do with the ranch, ever. He was going to have his own business, his own automobile agency, whatever....

Of course that never worked out. He never found just the right thing, and little by little he helped with the machinery on the ranch, and so forth and so on. Harry was the manager. But it became increasingly very unhappy.

END OF TAPE 1 OF 3

BEGIN SIDE A OF TAPE 2 OF 3

SRL: Did I tell you about Boo and I running up the long porch?  
Is that on the tape? Are we on?

SL: We are on.

SRL: This is live. (Laughing)

SL: Tape two, side A of the Rancho Camulos Oral History Project interview with Shirley Lorenz, Suzanne Lawrence, and Cynthia Thompson, sitting at the table indoors now - it got blustery out. We've had a good lunch, and we've kicked around a lot of ideas.

I think what we want to do at this point is talk about just everyday life at the rancho. One of the things you mentioned at another time, Shirley, when you and I were talking... you said that your father would go to I suppose the bunkhouse, or where the men were, and discuss the work of the day, and then he would come back to the house and he would have a second breakfast, and you'd plan your own day.

SRL: Yes, that's very true. The ranch was run by a siren, which floated down the valley. Piru ran by the siren, so did Newhall Ranch. 7:00 in the morning, 12 noon, 1:00 in the afternoon, and 5:00. Very loud siren, re-echoed down the valley.

But our own family was run by a gong outside the dining room. It would reverberate around the gardens and everything and bring us in. Instead of everybody screeching, which we did also. (Laughing)

SL: Did you ever use the del Valle bells? Or had they been taken off the armature?

SRL: No, the bells were only taken down recently, after the earthquake, because they were so fragile. And actually, the superstructure holding the bells... we had to replicate that exactly.

SL: So that's a reproduction.

SRL: Since the earthquake, and it's been allowed just to weather so it looks exactly as it always did. Unfortunately the marvelous white cross came down after the earthquake. The base of it just rotted away. We have it.

SL: Was this a cross on the chapel, or the one for Ygnacio del Valle?

SRL: The one that was straight ahead, where they poured the holy water afterwards? We still have it, and that at some point will be replicated. The original script writing on it we've lost. That has weathered away, and we're hoping very much to find out what was written on it. I'm not even sure whether it was Spanish or Latin, but it was very beautiful in a free-flowing script, anyway.

CT: Was that the cross for Ygnacio del Valle? As I recall the story, when he died they put the white cross there.

SRL: That could be, that could be.

SL: In the garden, right by the bells.

SRL: That's it. Well that could very well be, because it was never moved from there.

CT: And now it's even more important. Is he buried there?

SRL: I don't believe so, no.

CT: Or do you think he's in the cemetery across the street?  
50

SRL: I don't know where he's buried. The cemetery was quite full actually, and there was a little structure there which has fallen into a heap; somebody was buried there, and I don't know who it was.

But they had such close ties to Los Angeles; one of them was one of the first mayors of L.A. and they had a home there for so many years, so I'm not sure what they did.

SL: Let's see. You said you were rather a loud family (laughter)

SRL: Yes.

SL: Well, five children running free. We did not mention Peter, but you said he was adopted in 1934 to fill out the family. So you were five, and then the bookkeeper's children also were here. How many children were there?

SRL: There were two, Mark and Veronica, who lives in Ojai. Mark, as I understand it was in the Navy, a Navy Airman, and retired in some high office. I think he is in Las Vegas.

SL: Was that the extent of the student body at the schoolhouse? All seven of you.

SRL: Yes, we'd come and go.

CT: When was the schoolhouse built, 1930?

SRL: About '30, '31, in there. You know, several of the other ranches did the same thing. The Converse Ranch, and the Bates's did that. I don't know about the Lloyd-Butlers, but they all had their own schools.

CT: Because of the great distances that the children would have to travel and it was just more feasible to educate them right here on the property.

SRL: Right, right.

SL: So you had one teacher full time...

SRL: Full time, who lived here with us, a wonderful wonderful woman.

SL: What was her name?

SRL: Veronica Casey. And her family came from Denver, and she ended up being head of the public schools in Denver before she retired. We're always in contact with her. She visited Bob and myself in New York when we were first married, and when I made various car trips across the country would always make a point of going to Denver to see Ron.

SL: And then you had other teachers for art, and...

SRL: Yes. Once a week we had art teacher, Mrs. Esserick, and did all kinds of artsy crafty things, but she gave us the basics for drawing, which I've always enjoyed, and other creative

kinds of things. And once a week with Madam Andrea for French, and we've been known to put on little French skitsy-type plays here, and Boo was telling me on the phone (and I didn't remember this) she said that she was so terrified on the stage when she was supposed to be saying her lines, and there were various guests here watching this thing - it wasn't just family - that Dad got up and picked her up and held her and faced the audience so she could say her lines. She said, "Oh, it was the most wonderful feeling." (Laughs)

100

SL: Did he speak several languages? I would think with an international financing family that there would be languages bouncing around.

SRL: Yes. Of course he spoke German, and Swiss-German, which is quite a different language actually, and French of course, and English, and he did pretty well in Italian. Before he went overseas in the Second World War he was studying Arabic because his unit was attached to the British Eighth Army in North Africa [He was killed there in '43]. But of course Mom didn't speak those, so it didn't work for us children to pick it up; as it's worked out, my children speak Spanish - two of them were born in Mexico, but they have pursued it. And even Barbie who was born after we came back to the States, she speaks Spanish well enough to teach in it.

SL: Didn't your father speak Spanish?

SRL: No, no.

SL: How did he... oh, you said, he didn't have Mexican workers, he had workers from the service.

SRL: Yes, he had veterans from the service. We did have Mexican workers, but they were not from Mexico - they'd been here for generations. They were Piru natives who were Mexican-Indians. I don't know if you ever saw the picture... my wedding pictures... I think it's over there. The last page of it is the families of workers who came to our wedding.

So we inherited these people; Dad inherited these people, and they belong here, and they feel they belong here and their descendants feel that they have a piece of Camulos and that they belong to Camulos; they have a strong feeling.

CT: They have a very strong attachment.

SL: They have people in the cemetery, so that's a clue.

SRL: It pleases me so much when they come. For the last few years we've been asked by the Catholic church to have their All Saints Day services here, and we get over 100 people here, just from Piru, and Fillmore.

It's always been the local priests who have been just wonderful. But this past October was Monsignor Webber from San Fernando Mission. It was very nice. And various ones will come up to me and so, oh, their mother was baptized here, or their grandmother was born here, or whatever. It pleases me very much that they want to come, and have that attachment.

SL: I was tickled... in doing the research I've been studying Charles Fletcher Lummis, and he actually wrote to your father, who is described as "a Swiss albino"

SRL: Oh, I know, it's just awful.

SL: Was there any...

150

SRL: No... have you seen my parent's portraits? They're hanging in the big room and they

SL: I thought something must have been touched up if

CT: Well there's your father right there [points to photograph] and the portraits, where are they hanging?

SRL: Well I put them up this past December when we had the first annual "Christmas Begins At Camulos" I hung them then.

CT: In the living room.

SRL: Yes.

SL: Well, let's move on through, then (you said Wallace Smith made a lot of mistakes). He described him as having "profitable Baldwin Hills oil wells"

SRL: (Laughing) Isn't that hysterical?

SL: "and Randsberg mines."

SRL: (Laughing) Well, he did have some Randsberg mines, in fact they still belong to the family.

SL: But not a lot of gold and diamonds though.



SRL: At one time they were profitable, barely, but we still own that property and pay taxes on it every year. (Laughing)

SL: No oil wells.

SRL: I can remember going... and there were some oil wells there, but, you know

SL: It makes him sound like he just rode on a river of money.

CT: I'm sorry, I'm missing this. Who's Wallace Smith?

SL: Oh, he's the writer of "This Land Was Ours" the Camulos book but he has so much information that it's sort of the bible when you begin studying Camulos, and there's so much that's wrong. Well anyway, that was not my point.

SRL: We never saw any profits from those oil wells (laughing).

SL: My point was that Lummis had the audacity to write to your father and urge him to "people [his] ranch with those of Spanish heritage, and ask Belle del Valle and her husband, Charles, to stay on as caretakers of a glorious past."

He felt that this was an obligation for your father... and I thought, what do you suppose he thought when he got that letter from Lummis?

CT: Did he ever speak to you about that?

SRL: Lummis? No, I don't remember him... I was very young at that point, and we had a wonderful collection of California history books, and a lot of first editions (that were stolen after the earthquake, and there were some very important papers in there that we have never seen since).

But we had a very good relationship with the del Valle families who wished to make themselves known to us, and one of them, Juan Forrester, would come almost every year.

He was just a very few years older than myself, and as a young man he would come by himself and make himself known, and he would tour around, and have long conversations.

200 As it turned out, when I went to Thunderbird school in Arizona [graduate business, where she met Bob Lorenz] lo and behold, there's Juan Forrester and his wife. We became very good friends there, and since.

He's now retired in Guatemala; he was head of Catholic Relief Society there, but visited us several times when we were in Colombia. He and his wife and family were in Peru. Coming back and forth they'd stop in Bogata and see us.

He came through just a couple of months ago, talked on the phone, but missed seeing him here. He did come here and stop, and talked with people. He was very glad for that, but he was on his way back to Guatemala.

So we've had a relationship with various members of that family all along, and of course now we're just so delighted with Karen and Mark [Roswell].

CT: And getting them all here together again [the del Valle family reunion held at the ranch]. However... the beginning of the twentieth century, as far as history is concerned, is astoundingly remarkable when you really study it because the world changed so dramatically.

SRL: So rapidly.

CT: From 1901 which is when Queen Victoria died, until the same period your father bought the ranch, there was an enormous leap forward, but it also brought all of this creativity - the great artists, the great writers, the people that founded the cultural bent and direction of the twentieth and the twenty-first century - came out of this group. Lummis is one of them, Georgia O'Keefe is another one. And the photographers... Ansel Adams, born in 1902, that sort of thing.

So to have your family be a part of that whole era and have communication from Lummis and what have you, and then to have your family's contribution, this is why it's so important to get this down. Because pretty soon it's going to be....

SRL: Lost entirely.

SL: I noticed, reading about Lummis, that Harry Carey was a friend of his, and that he had been here, and the del Valles had visited Harry Carey and vice-versa, and I see that your family retained that association. Do you know him?

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SRL: (Laughing) Oh yes. A wonderful family, they have two children, Doby, and Cappy. Doby has had parts in the movies too (I don't think recently). But his wife, after Harry Carey passed away, his wife lived for many more years, Olive Carey, and she ended up living in Montecito.

SL: Where was their ranch?

SRL: Well, you go out past... I want to retrace my steps out there, but I understand that it's a museum or whatever now,

but it was very primitive, beautifully built adobe — no electricity. They carried coal oil lanterns everywhere, one room into another, when they were there, and also used them as heaters.

SL: How do you get there?

SRL: Dirt roads, and you had to ford a stream, and if it had been raining you didn't go there, or if you were there you didn't leave (laughs).

SL: Was it far from here?

SRL: No. It was out past Saugus, the old town of Newhall, out in that little valley out there. It's a tributary...

CT: ~~William S. Hart ranch is out there.~~

SRL: Yes, but this was further north from William Hart.

SL: And the book said that he had Indians from the reservation working for him.

SRL: Yes, he did. Actually, he went to the reservation and contracted families for two years at a time, so they would come with their wives and children. I remember seeing them so often, in what we would consider "Indian clothes." You know, the women would have the long skirts, and so forth.

And actually this bread oven out here [points through the northeast window of the schoolhouse to where the oven is located] was built by those... they were Navajos.

They came, and while they were working there, they built this oven for us, in the '30's, so that's an authentic Navajo oven.

SL: Did you bake bread in it?

SRL: Oh, we have, yes, and it roasts meat beautifully... haven't done it for a long time, but we used to. Still operational. I keep trying to find somebody who really knows how to do it. I know you build a fire in it (laughs) and then you rake it out of course, and put it in... But how do you time it? You can't look at it, you have to close up the hole.

CT: I think it's an art that's probably lost.

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SL: I had a friend who lived in a big English castle and she said they'd get that huge fireplace blazing, and they'd put

a whole tray of loaves in there, and four minutes later you'd better have them out because they were done, so the heat factor is a whole different thing. Now this is right outside, between the schoolhouse and the big tree, this oven. There's also an indentation over there which I think you were going to make an herb garden.

SRL: Oh, it is an herb garden.

SL: Is it? I didn't look. I parked in the other place.

SRL: The herbs have overgrown, and I've got to put names on them. I've forgotten what some of them are... and replant the things that are annuals.

SL: Well was it a pool?

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SRL: It was a small swimming pool, but it wasn't terribly deep; it was for we children. I don't think it's any deeper at any place than about that.

SL: So it's about 4' deep.

CT: We saw it when you first brought me here, remember? Two... and a half years ago? The pool was still there.

SRL: Well, the pool is still there. We filled it up, banged holes through the bottom of it for drains, and put good soil and mulch and everything in there, and now it is an herb garden, and I got the inspiration from the Huntington Library - I've got their posters up here [framed, on the schoolhouse wall].

What I've tried to do... it's divided into eight sections, and each section has herbs in it that are for a different purpose. Some are for the garden, some are teas, some are dyes, some are insecticides.

SL: Are any medicinal?

SRL: Medicinal. Anyway, there's eight different sections, and like an idiot, I didn't put the names on them when I planted them, (laughing) so now I have to find somebody who knows what they are.

SL: You've got the nice drawing, you forgot the chart.

SRL: Well, a darling woman from the Armstrong Nursery down near me in Palos Verdes Peninsula... she has written books on

herbs, and she helped me pick them out, and came up here a couple of times, so I've got to persuade her to come back and identify for me.

350 But it's great fun. It was an eyesore before, and people would say, "What is this?" And the reason it wasn't used, was because of the polio epidemic that started in the '30's. They closed all the pools, and everybody was scared of swimming pools, so Dad said, "I'm not taking any chances; no more swimming pool." So it did not have a long life as a pool.

CT: I don't remember that but I remember reading, and I know that Roosevelt suffered from polio. Why were pools associated with polio?

SRL: Contamination. All of the public pools were closed for years and years. My first year at Occidental, polio was still around, and the two classes before me had students that were in iron lungs at that time. It was very scary, and it hit the campus very hard at that time, so it was just trailing off when I came in, in the fall of '45.

CT: Then it went away completely.

SRL: That was quite a bit later. A footnote to that was interesting. When we were living in Mexico City, and we would come home every year for vacation, the pediatricians that I had, and other doctors, begged that could I please bring the polio vaccine back to Mexico with me.

Of course it had to be refrigerated, and all of this, and we'd make special arrangements to get the vaccine delivered to the plane, and put in refrigeration on the plane, and then the doctor would meet us at the airport in Mexico City, even before we went through customs, to get this vaccine because there wasn't any, and Mexico was just being demolished by it.

CT: So you did bring the polio vaccine back from Los Angeles to Mexico City.

SRL: Right, in those years.

SL: So you did that every trip you made? Wow.

CT: Did they not have the technology to replicate the vaccine?

SRL: They just didn't have it, or they didn't have enough of it, or whatever. It wasn't common to be able to get it, and so

the doctors themselves, when they could, would take trips to the States, or Canada, and try and bring it in, but you could never bring in huge amounts.

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CT: Was it - and this is really off the subject - but was it actually proved that contaminated water was how polio was carried?

SRL: I don't know whether it was or not, but it was one of the things that they felt... it was logical, I mean, they were thinking germs, they weren't thinking viruses. They probably didn't even know the difference between a germ and a virus at that point - at least in most people's minds.

CT: When was the pool put in?

SRL: Oh, after my birth. It was probably shortly after this schoolhouse was built.

SL: When did you did the pond?

SRL: (Laughing) Oh, Boo and I have such memories of that!

SL: It looks so beautiful now with the rock lined pond.

SRL: Well, it's wonderful; it never looked like that before! Of course Barbara and Gerry were older, and they could really dig better than Boo and I could, but the ground was so hard; it was just absolutely like... it was adobe, hard adobe, and I can remember with the shovel, I'd stick it in and it would bounce. (Laughter) And it was so hot, it was so hot!

Anyway, they outlined what they wanted, Mother and Dad, and they wanted a kidney-shaped pool, and it is a kidney-shaped pool, but it's not a very deep pool. (Laughing)

CT: Did they want it to be a pool, or just a pretty little pond with fish in it?

SRL: Just a pond, just a fish pond. But we had two other wonderful fish ponds that are no longer there, because they were concerned in later years (actually they were both taken out in the '50's) with leaks getting in under the adobe walls.

SL: Was one in the courtyard of the adobe?

SRL: One was in the courtyard, that was square.

450

CT: And was that pre-existing with the house, before your father bought it?

SRL: No, Dad and Mother built those ponds, they didn't have ponds here at all; there were no ponds, but the fountain was here, that was the only thing. And the one on the north side of the house was a big, shallowish pool that wandered all over the full length of that part of the house. It had a little island in the center with a weeping willow tree, a pussy willow tree in it.

That's where... we had ducks. They would go from one pond to the other pond, around the house. That's where "Oscar the Mud Lug" lived.

SL: The mud lug?

~~SRL: Oscar the Mud Lug was an alligator.~~

SL: Oh yes! This is my favorite story!

SRL: (Laughing) Poor Oscar! Oscar was sent to us, through the mail, from friends traveling in Florida. It was quite the thing for tourists. A teeny little thing, like this (2"), and he came in a little bitty box with holes in it. It came right through the mail, and of course in those days it was probably a week or more before he got here (laughs). But you know, they can hibernate.

SL: Wait a minute, stop, I think our tape is about over, and I don't want to miss a word about the mud lug, so just hold on.

END OF SIDE A AT #490, TAPE 2 OF 3; BEGIN SIDE B AT #8

SL: Okay, so he arrived in the mail.

SRL: He sort of lived in various bowls and things for a little while, and was fed, but then he was put into the pond. We were all intrigued with him, and he grew and he grew, and he grew some more. And then he got to the point where he could crawl out of the pond and walk around the edge of the house into the other pool, the square one in the center patio of the house.

Mother's pride and joy was... every year she would try tulips in the garden that went around that pool. Alligators hibernate in the winter, and so she would be digging up her tulip garden, and she kept digging him up. He would have buried himself, and poor thing, he would sort of wake up,

and he would sort of waddle off, and try and find another place to dig in for the time being. It was too funny.

SL: How big was he at that time.

SRL: He would probably be about that big.

SL: Almost 3 feet.

SRL: So then the war came along, and everybody had rations, and meat was a big problem. So at that point Oscar was left to his own devices.

SL: What were you feeding him in the meantime?

SRL: Well, he would only occasionally... he would eat other things. He would eat the fish, he would, you know, find his own fare. I don't know whether... he ate frogs, there was always lots of frogs and lizards and things. But along came that [the war], and he was cut off with the free lunch.

We had a wonderful gardener, Mr. Yunkin, who was a casualty in the First World War. He had a serious head injury, and he had a silver plate in the top of his head. Mr. Yunkin had to be very careful to always wear a hat, because if the top of his head got too warm with the sun, he kind of... went in circles.

He was on his hands and knees, down here, tending to a vegetable garden at that time, down there by the fig tree, and he felt this nudge from behind. He thought it was one of the dogs and he just said, "Go away, go away" (gestures). And finally he turned around and here was Oscar with his jaws out like this, and by then he was about that long.

SL: Four feet.

SRL: (Laughing) He ran all over the place. So we decided well... maybe it's time for Oscar... and it was war time of course, and my oldest sister was here with her new little toddlers, so Mother was concerned and decided, "Well, Oscar's got to go." She called around to zoos and things, but nobody wanted him; at that time they couldn't be bothered.

50 And at that time the orchards would be fumigated at night. They'd throw these huge canvas tarpaulins over each tree in turn, and when it was completely down to the ground all around, they would stick a hose in there with cyanide gas. We thought, "Well, this is the thing to do with dispatching Oscar" and we stuck him under the tent.



Well, (laughing) it became kind of grisly and macabre, because he wouldn't die. They'd take him out and he'd be alive, and they'd stick him under the next tent, and this went on for several tents. He got worse and worse, so nobody could face Oscar, so one of the men who was working there took him home and shot him, and had his pelt for many years afterward.

He was a good... between three and four feet long, fast on his feet -- when he wasn't hibernating and all groggy he could really streak.

SL: Did he ever endanger anybody? Did he ever seem a threat?

SRL: No, he just wanted attention from Mr. Yunkin.

SL: You didn't look like food to him.

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SRL: (Laughing) No, but Mother was concerned about the toddlers, and anything else. He was known to catch a rabbit occasionally, so...

SL: I should think he'd have been quite a threat in the orchard for people trying to steal oranges.

SRL: He stayed pretty close to the pond.

SL: What about the other pets around here?

SRL: Well, we always had lots of dogs, a herd of dogs, and we each had our own dogs.

They all got along well except once in a great while there'd be a huge blow-up. One time I remember it happened underneath the dining room table and everybody left and all the chairs were knocked over backwards (laughing).

We had chickens, and we had ducks, and of course we inherited the peacocks from the del Valles. They were indigenous here by then.

CT: Do you still have them?

SRL: No.

CT: Did they just die off?

SRL: Yes.

SL: They're so noisy; you have to really want them.

SRL: I live on the Palos Verdes peninsula, and they were introduced there about the same time they were introduced here, and I feel as if I'm really at home. It doesn't bother me a bit, and they're almost like pets. There's one who's adopted our house, and he comes and sits on my patio all day long.

CT: Why do you think that they disappeared if they'd lived so long with the del Valles?

SRL: Well, Mr. Berger stopped feeding them. So then they wandered out into the orchards. It took a few years, but little by little they just dwindled away.

They nest on the ground. A lot of people don't realize that. They don't build huge nests up in trees, they nest on the ground and they'd nest under the orange trees and the branches would come right down to the ground and it was very nice. But then the skunks would come and get the eggs... and the coyotes... and an occasional road kill... and an occasional feast in Piru... and they just dwindled away.

I'm hoping very much, once we get this thing thoroughly going and there are people living here, to reintroduce them because Palos Verdes thins them out every once in a while and they try to find homes for them, and I'd love to get them back.

100

CT: It would certainly be the right thing.

SRL: I really plan to do that.

SL: Do you have a coyote problem here?

SRL: We have lots of coyotes, but they're not a problem.

SL: How close are you to the river?

SRL: Well, the river moves around, but right here on Camulos we have a very wide river bottom, and the river snakes around and changes its channel, but it's...

SL: Close.

SRL: Yes.

SL: Did your children play in the river?

SRL: Oh yes, but you know when we were kids, before they built all these dams, and release water, and there's development

upriver with all of the treated water that comes down... our river dried up completely in the summertime. It was completely dry for at least four months at a time.

So we would play down there, and you know, it would always have adobe silt on top. The sun would come out and break it up into these great big pancake things that we'd try to lift up and they'd be terribly heavy (laughing).

But one of our favorite things to do was to hike across the river and up onto those mountains across the river and there was a beautiful little mesa up there, with some oaks on it, and we'd take picnics up there. That was one of our favorite things to do.

SL: Could you play in the barn, or was it strictly for work?

SRL: It was strictly for work. Most of what we call "the headquarters" was off limits for us as little children.

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CT: Now, "the barn" is the winery?

SRL: No no no. The big red barn.

SL: Beyond the winery [toward 126].

SRL: But as we got to be older, and we would have friends come for the week-ends and things like that, from school, we could -- we'd get permission so that we'd know that nothing else was going on there.

We had these huge hay forks that were curved and they would come on cables down from the ceiling, that would take the hay that was stored up high above the first floor, and the center of the barn is two, three stories high and the bales would be up on the sides. And you could swing if you got up there, you could swing across the whole thing to the other side on those huge forks. It was wonderful.

CT: Did your father build that barn? [MICROPHONE NOISE #139-161]

SRL: No, the del Valles built that; it was late, like 1880.

SL: 1910 I believe.

SRL: It was that late?

SL: Yes, 1910, and the gas and oil house was built then.

SRL: That was built then. Well, you see, they were coming into the modern age.

SL: My notes say that most of the walnuts, apricots, and orange trees were planted between 1909 and 1916. So what they were doing...

SRL: It was mostly apricots and walnuts, and a little citrus, but that wasn't the biggest thing here. I can remember the apricots. And of course the walnuts only faded out late, late - I would say, after the Second World War. We were still harvesting walnuts. We had our own --

150

CT: Where did that market go?

SRL: I honestly don't know where it went, but Dad built a walnut dehydrator - it's still on the ranch, up there. So we were a self-contained operation here.

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SL: ~~So he put in the majority of the oranges.~~

SRL: Yes, yes. Dad and Harry Forbes did that.

CT: So when you bought it from the del Valles, slowly over time your father changed the agricultural products?

SRL: Oh yes, yes.

SL: [MICROPHONE NOISE OBSCURES QUESTION] ...introduced the citrus?

SRL: Yes, that's true.

CT: But still when he did that, it still wasn't a huge [profit?]

SRL: No, no.

SL: Oh, I had another thought. I pulled this out of the book - the "BOOK": "August Rubel converted the winery building to a museum housing del Valle family artifacts."

SRL: One half of the upstairs, yes. It has wonderful things in it. A lot of it went to the County Museum for safekeeping; a lot of it was stolen. Some of the bigger pieces they couldn't move are still there, like the wonderful brandy still. It's just gorgeous, and that's up there. When we restore the whole winery, that will hopefully be a major exhibition of that.

The del Valle coach was up there until after the earthquake, and we finally got it down into a shed here on the ground. Hopefully that will be restored, among other things.

SL: Now was this a carriage, or was this the stagecoach?

SRL: No, a carriage. I think Karen has a picture of it.

CT: I've seen it, so I'll describe it for the tape. First of all, when we were at the Board meeting in the schoolhouse Ann gave us a tour of the barn, and when you go upstairs the signs that your father had made saying "This is a museum" and "this is this artifact" and whatever, they're still there; they're still on the wall upstairs in the winery.

And there's also the carcass of a cat that's been there for nine years that Ann just loves.

SRL: (Laughter) Well dried.

CT: Well dried, it's true. But on the same day, Karen Roswell took myself and Michael Phillips, who is a del Valle also, over to where this carriage is, and it is... well, it needs repair, tremendously, but it is very elegant, very magnificent, and it looks like something that Cinderella would step out of.

200 Very... tufted quilt kind of upholstery on the interior walls; still has the slide windows for privacy, it's shaped like an eggplant or a pear, I would say, and then comes around like a wonderful sleigh on the bottom part of it. And of course there are the long pieces of wood that are coming out that would have been attached to the horse.

But it is an obvious piece of Victorian "mobility" and finery.

SL: And it had been upstairs in the winery?

SRL: Yes. I think it was put up there, Dad put it up there, to save it. There's a huge trap door up there to get things up and down with, and so it had to be cabled up and down. But, you know, we've had so much trouble over many... all these years, and I'm sure the del Valles had the same problem, of security. I mean, how do you secure something?

SL: Well where did the stagecoach come from?

SRL: Dad got that.

SL: He bought that somewhere?

SRL: Yes, he bought that. He saw that, and said, "The ranch needs that." (Laughing)

SL: What did you use it for?

SRL: For fun. Pure fun, and it was fun. When we would... particularly, I remember the times we had classmates who would come... we were so far away in those days, no five lane highways; if somebody came to visit, they stayed. You don't just come for a visit and go away again.

We'd have six or eight friends here for the week-ends, and Dad would hitch that stagecoach up to a Ford Ferguson tractor, the ones that had the huge rubber tires on it?

And we'd go tearing around the ranch, these dirt roads, in a cloud of dust, and of course you always feel as if you're going so fast in something like that. (Laughing)

It was a great fun thing to do. We always had to do that when we had an excuse to do it.

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SL: ~~This must have been a fun place to grow up.~~

SRL: (Still laughing) Oh, it really was.

SL: That's amazing.

SRL: And you know, there were the five of us, mostly. Peter was so much younger, but he always managed to get in on things. We always had games going, of some kind.

SL: I can picture just hide and seek in the house, because it's so big.

SRL: Yes, we did that. And if we had a big long rainy season, Mother would relent and let us in the living room, move all the furniture into houses, you know, with blankets over them and cubby holes, and we'd have room after room with chairs upside down, and tables.

SL: Does an adobe feel cold and damp in rainy weather?

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SRL: It's hard to keep them warm. We only had heat coming up into half of the main living room, and one bedroom. Everything else was fireplaces, so those were going lickety-split all the time. But, yeah, of course we thought it was great. We always dressed for the weather. (Laughing)

SL: Indoors or not. Did you play on the courtyard corridors in the rain?

SRL: Oh yes, we certainly did that. You can do lots of things on them. You can kick balls, you can skate, you can race, you

can do all kinds of things (laughing).

But I was thinking about... you were asking about what sorts of games and things we played. Of course, if we had any friends it was always kick the can.

SL: Where did you play?

SRL: Here on the south lawn. But just by ourselves, just messing around, we would go through great efforts to do all kinds of gymnastics: back bends, and walking upside-down on your hands, and all these kinds of things. And statue - did you ever play statue?

CT: Yes, well, freeze, where you have to stand still.

SRL: Freeze, yes, yes. You'd swing somebody around and they'd fly off and you'd say "freeze" and they had to stand in that place and not move. (Laughs) Those were great games.

And of course the tree. We lived in that tree.

SL: I wondered about that tree. You must have just... you could make a whole town out of that tree and everybody have territory.

CT: Did it look any different to you over... this is what, sixty years ago that you were a child, so has the tree grown significantly since that time?

SRL: The tree keeps going sideways. Unfortunately, in the last very few years we've had to cut down some dead wood from the very top of the tree; what's happened is that the birds... it's like an aviary out there early in the morning.

If you're here when the sun first comes up, it's filled with birds, and they brought in the... what do you call it, the stuff that you're supposed to kiss under?

SL: Mistletoe.

SRL: Mistletoe. They brought in the mistletoe - "senior moment."

SL: Oh dear, that's a killer.

CT: Is that bad for trees?

SRL: Oh, yes, it roots into trees.

SL: It's a parasite, isn't it?

300

SRL: It's a parasite, and over the years - many many years, but still - it killed the top of the tree. I have to keep after it, and we can't reach it all. We just haven't got the equipment, or even, when I get tree people in here, they can't get up to all of it. But it keeps growing, and I have to keep it off of the main adobe.

CT: Which way, sideways, does it want to grow?

SRL: In any direction, but horizontally. I have to keep it off the roof of the main adobe, I have to keep it off the rose garden, the main rose garden up here, the road over here, and I've had a lot to cut off - it was coming out over the herb garden and everything. And of course that's where we have all of the supports [to hold up the heavy branches].

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SL: ~~This of course is the tree, the black walnut that was planted around 1870 and has been growing ever since.~~

SRL: Yes, it's a wonderful tree.

SL: We have not got all the way... I mean, we're talking about things you did as a kid, but, as long as we're talking about the tree... can you describe the double wedding that you and Boo had?

SRL: Well, this was June of 1955. Actually, Boo set the date, and I horned in on her wedding. We decided, "Well, we can't put Mother through another wedding a month later." So I asked, "Boo, can I join you?" (Laughing) And she was very gracious about it. The invitations were already printed for her, so they made new invitations to include me. So it was huge, because all... two families.

We were married on the steps of the chapel here by Bishop Loy of the Anglican Church, and had a reception line, too long, on the south porch.

There was a wonderful big barbeque dinner served underneath the walnut tree, and there were... I don't really know 250 people?

But Bob and I were standing in that line -- as were Boo and Bob, (her Bob -- we always have "her Bob" and "my Bob") and being plied with champagne through the door from the little patio there behind us.

Well of course, we were feeling no pain. So afterwards we went up to the living room and that big monastery table was in front of the big window in the main living room there with a big cake on either side, and the wedding glasses, and I had a little lady, who was my Godmother.



I knew her, but not well - she was a close friend of my parents when I was born. She kept saying to me and nudging, "I'm your Godmother, you've got to give me the first piece of cake." And I was feeling no pain, and very happy, and I knew in my heart that no, my husband, my new husband is supposed to get this piece of cake, not my Godmother!

So we cut the cake and she held out her white-gloved hand, and I picked up the cake and I slapped it into her white-gloved hand. It was a rum cake; it was kind of juicy. It was gorgeous. And you know, I didn't realize what I had done until we were driving away for our honeymoon, and I thought, "Oh, what did I do to that lady?" (Laughing)

I never saw her again. Of course we left but I thought, "Oh, how terrible." Everybody was crowding around so tightly... but anyway, it was a great wedding.

But everybody stood out on the lawn and everything, and at that point we had sprinklers on the lawn that were "Rainbirds" that stuck up? Mother was scared to death that people would trip over them and get hurt, which you can do, so she got gladiolas, great bunches of gladiolas, and we ribboned them around each one of these. It looked like a graveyard. (Laughing) Here were these big rings of gladiolas around the lawn on top of each one of these sprinklers.

CT: Do you have pictures of that?

SRL: (Still laughing) Yeah, I think so. I left them in here. Let me take a quick look.

SL: This is a good time to take a break. We're close to the end of this tape, and that way you can stand up and stretch.

END SIDE B OF TAPE 2 OF 3, AT #400  
BEGIN SIDE A OF TAPE 3 OF 3

SL: This is tape 3 side A of our marathon with Shirley Lorenz, Cynthia Thompson, and Suzanne Lawrence. We are going through the wedding pictures, and Cynthia is beside herself with "pictorial architectural records."

CT: Well first of all, it clearly shows the house and grounds as someone's home, and not as a shrine. Here we have people eating under the walnut tree. I've heard this story before, that there was a reception underneath the walnut tree.

Very clearly you can see, here are the posts that hold up the branches, and here are people underneath this, having their reception. To see the pictures....

SL: The reception line must have gone on forever.

CT: It looks like you had a lot more than 250 people. Here are the tables underneath the large tree, and of course everyone is dressed in their finest 1955 regalia.

You could definitely plan a movie off of this.

And Shirley has just told us the story of the Rainbird sprinklers that her mother had attached gladiolas to, and here are the pictures of that very thing.

It really... I mean, this is someone's wedding, but this is a family.

SRL: This is Jim Lloyd-Butler, and this is Bob Bates and his sister, and this is... Doral Converse, and this is Mrs. Converse.

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SL: ~~What was the name of the Bates' ranch?~~

SRL: Rincon del Mar. This is Peter Rubel, looking very young there.

SL: Did you socialize with any of the Bard family?

SRL: Mother and Dad did. They always came to our open house parties. This is my brother Gerry, and this is his wife, who is now passing away, as we speak.

CT: And Gerry is deceased too?

SRL: Yes.

SL: Did you socialize with the Camarillo family?

SRL: No.

SL: You were talking about how these ranchers were essentially easterners who'd come west, and the Camarillos were local all the way back.

SRL: Yes, I think so.

CT: One of the architectural things that impresses me about this house, in the pictures that are in this wedding album is the (I want this on tape) is the extraordinary ironwork artistry that surrounds the entrance door of the large adobe. Around what time period would you say that this was done?

SRL: Well this was all done over a period of time of course.

It was done by one man, Carl Peterson, who was the ranch blacksmith. He designed them, and built them, and they were all in place by at least '34 or '35.

SL: Are these candleholders? [around the iron door frame]

CT: They were for flowerpots.

SRL: They were California Pottery - each one is a solid different color: orange or yellow or green or blue, and they had (originally) (laughs) they had cacti in them.

SL: Hundreds of hours represented in all that work. What is this that looks like a shelf with a little birdhouse?

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SRL: Well, it's been there forever, and it's still there, or it's been put back - I don't know if it's been put back or not, but that was there when the house...

SL: Is it a birdhouse, or...

SRL: No, it's just a shelf that always had a pot or something on it.

CT: It looks like a birdhouse.

SL: Yes. And this is on the south porch. And there's the moose up on the wall.

CT: A huge moose.

SRL: Now this is Ron Casey, who was our teacher, and she came out from Denver for our wedding. And this is Mrs. Myers, who Eddie...

SL: All the elegant hats they had on. Are these the wedding gifts?

SRL: Those are the wedding gifts, for the two of us.

SL: And the guns! Right next to the gun rack.

SRL: You know, we were all taught to shoot guns at an early age, and to drive. We could all drive by the time we were ten. In case of emergencies.

SL: You were far out in the hinterlands. What were you driving? Whatever vehicle was handy?

SRL: It's funny. Dad started us on the Ford Ferguson tractors because they were standard shift. They were all out in the open, and they could get up to twenty miles an hour, but no faster. So we learned by careening around on the lower ranch road, to steer, and to judge distances, and to shift gears, and to use brakes, before we ever got in a car.

CT: I have a question here about the interior of the house. First of all, the stuff that you got for your wedding... I hope you still have it because it's worth about ten times.

SL: Highly collectible good things.

CT: This is all called "mid-century modern" for the most part now. But I see that there's some kind of a parquet flooring and what room in the house is this?

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SRL: That's what they now call the rose room the north west wall.

CT: This is the room with the fireplace with the [ 81 ]

SRL: Yes.

CT: And you had just installed wood flooring in there?

SRL: Dad had done that years before.

SL: It's reminding us both so strongly that this was a beautiful family home. This wasn't the place that we know as the Camulos adobe.

CT: Here's [ ] with the curled things. What is this picture here?

SRL: That is a painting of the adobe that's up in Ann's house right now. That'll come back down here when we...

CT: Who's the artist?

SRL: That was Merriman, who did Mother and Dad's portraits.

SL: Did you put any sort of finish over the walls? Just adobe and then paint?

SRL: They all were whitewashed.

CT: It doesn't look white in the picture, it looks dark. Is that just photography?

SRL: In later years... no, it's not just photography. In later years that was painted, but the rest of it is whitewashed.

SL: This was June, so it wasn't yet too hot. You were saying, too, that it's much more moderate now. That you used to have terrible heat.

100

SRL: Yes. You know, I have recently, - this is so ridiculous - recently come across a box of Dad's and Mother's (but very few of Mother's) letters to me. First at camp, the summer before I went back east to prep school, and all the years in prep school. And almost every letter from either one of them, has some comment about what was going on on the ranch.

And I was so startled when I read just last night, Dad said, "We've had a terrible freeze." This was 1942. "The worst freeze in 100 years," he says. It got down to 16, for over 24 hours, and then when the sun did come out it took a long time, and the fruit froze, and when the sun finally came out, it came out strongly, so the fruit didn't have a chance to unfreeze slowly, so the crops were just ruined.

SL: And it would get up to 120?

SRL: Yeah. I can remember them. And you know it got to the point where it was so dry.... Our air is much more humid now because there's more water, more irrigation, and the river runs all year long, and look what's happened to Newhall and Santa Clarita. All of that was dry dry dry. It was just cattle country. There was no population at all.

One of our favorite remembrances was, when it got really hot and work was over for the day, Dad would load the men up into the pick-up trucks and go into Piru to Brands, for sodas. Dad always got his dogs, his personal dogs, at the pound, and they were always wonderful. And Muggsy, he had some kind of bulldog in him, but lots of other things, and a corkscrew tail. He would "host" sodas around for all of the men, and get Muggsy an ice cream cone. Muggsy would lap up his ice cream on the way back.

Boy, it would really get hot. But to my own sense of the heat (which was just that you would be hit in the face by it, coming out of the cool house) was that anything after about 105, you couldn't tell the difference.

SL: Would the men go jump in the river? Oh, the river was not there.

SRL: It wasn't there; Piru Lake was not there. No relief. Hoses, sprinklers, well water.

CT: To segue from that, is this the fireplace in the living room or was it?

SRL: No. It was in the master bedroom.

CT: And the master bedroom was where?

150

SRL: Well, it's... it was always the master bedroom. You know the room at the end that we have used the story of the rose room, right next to that - between that and the main bathroom. [Looking at the floor plan of the adobe]

Mother and Dad took away that partition, so this was one big room here, and this partition was taken away. Actually, these two partitions were taken away.

CT: So this is the master bedroom?

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SRL: Yes, there's back-to-back fireplaces here.

CT: Is this sort of where you kids slept and stuff?

SRL: Well, different times in our lives we slept in different... I can remember when we three girls, my older sister and Boo and I had this end room, and it was great. Then in later years Boo and I had... okay, this is the rose room, this is the master bedroom with that wall out; this room totally was made into a huge bathroom.

SL: Oh yes, and we still find the wreckage of it now.

SRL: This was taken apart; it was one big bathroom, and it was great.

SL: Just directly midway down that long corridor of rooms.

SRL: Yes, and this room was the room that now has the big armoire in it that we couldn't get out. The rest of that bedroom set is in here [schoolhouse storage], and it's gorgeous. It's so Victorian.

That was Boo's and my room for many many years. This is the big living room. This partition was taken out.

CT: Then that window's where your finger is [on the diagram].

SRL: The big window is here.

SL: Now this floor plan makes it look as though almost every room could be entered from the one before.

SRL: Yes, it really was, as I understand.

SL: So beyond the entrance from the corridor, you could also enter from the room in front of you.

CT: Did you guys ever populate this part of the house?

SRL: Yes. [South porch part]

SRL: Dad... one of the few things that Dad did because he wanted to keep the integrity of the building, was... there's a huge difference in elevation between this room and this room [due to the wine cellar beneath], and he put that door in there, and the steps going down, and made this into the library. Now, as little teeny tiny children, when we had a nurse at one point, we lived down here; we two girls lived down here.

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SL: In "Ramona's room."

SRL: Yes. We lived here and she lived there, and this was divided with a bathroom in here. This was made into a hallway, and this was made into a bathroom.

SL: The #3 room. Now, when you go from the #3 room to the #4 on this floor plan, there is that copper hooded fireplace.

SRL: Yes, (fondly) Dad had that built.

SL: Was that in the library?

SRL: Yes.

SL: All right, because that's absolutely extraordinary.  
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SRL: Isn't it marvelous? And boy, does that throw out the heat. I don't know if you've ever looked up inside of it to see how it was constructed? Well, it's a tent on the outside.

SL: It looks like a tipi.

SRL: Yes, it's supposed to. And on the inside, it's got a cone coming the other way, so the heat comes up and is pushed to the outside of this tipi and it really heats up wonderfully.

SL: What tickles me is seeing this very formal bridal picture in a room with a formal fireplace and these elegant china pieces and this fabulous clock with angels, and...

SRL: I have that.

CT: Those are European pieces.

SL: Yes, and it's in the adobe.

CT: And we think of the adobe as...

SL: We think of it as a mud house.

SRL: You go into the old ones... they were like this. They all had European....

SL: Full of European elegant pieces.

SRL: Oh, yes, they all traveled to France, and everything.

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~~I want you to come and see the paintings before you go.~~

SL: I think we will close at this point. We have lots more to talk about. We'll save those notes and maybe next time when Boo is with us, we'll start all over again.

SIDE A OF TAPE 3 OF 3 ENDS AT #220.