

Interview with George Fleuret, March, 1997, Oceanside, California

Interview with George Fleuret, President of Oceanside Historical Society, Saturday, March 29, 1997 at the office of the Oceanside Historical Society, 305 North Nevada Street, Oceanside, California. Interviewer: Historian Kristi S. Hawthorne. Also present: William Hart, Videographer

Kristi: First, tell me your full name.

George: George Fleuret, no middle initial.

Kristi: When were you born?

George: I was born August 5, 1918.

Kristi: What were your parents' names?

George: My father's name was Charles, (I don't remember his middle name), and my mother's name was Marie, and her maiden name was B-e-r-g-e-r, Berger, french.

Kristi: Do you remember their birth dates or the year they were born?

George: I'd have to get that from my nephew. I've forgotten, but I think my dad was born in July but I'm not sure.

Kristi: Where were you born at?

George: Punte, California. They call it La Punte now. It means bridge in spanish.

Kristi: How long had your parents been in that area?

George: Oh, before they moved down here, they'd probably been there about twelve or fourteen years. It was probably about 1906 when they came to [this country] and they came to South Dakota. They were at South Dakota for a while, they were out working on a big ranch and then they moved to Denver. And he worked in the old Brown Palace Hotel in Denver. He had real bad rheumatism, which is the reason he had come to the United States. So, he went down to Bisbee. He heard that they had work in the mines and the weather was good, which was true, he got down to Bisbee and his rheumatism was gone. He worked in the mines for awhile and it got to the "company store" deal, you know, you could never get paid up, you always owed the company store. So he scrounged and he saved and then he ... I had two brothers that were born, I had one older brother that was born in France, and he stayed there, then two brothers were born in Denver. From there he came to California and he worked in the sugar beet factory, he worked in the fields were they raised sugar beets. Then finally he came to Montibella, California and then he came to Punte.

Kristi: So your parents met in France?

George: Right, they both were both from France.

Kristi: Do you know what part of France?

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George: I can't tell you the names right now, but it's a province outside of Dijon.

Kristi: Do you know how old they were when they married?

George: No, they were quite young when they married.

Kristi: When was your first brother born?

George: He was born about 1904. He was about two years old when they left France.

Kristi: What was his name?

George: Charles Henry Fleuret.

Kristi: When they left ...

George: He stayed with grandparents and my uncles. He stayed with them. I guess, you know in those days they thought that America was really a wild place because relatives there used to always write and say "now, are you having any trouble with the Indians?" So they left him there. He was 22 years old when he came to this country. He came here in 1925. Both my brothers and the rest of us were born in the United States.

Kristi: So, when were your brothers born? The first brother was born in France in ...?

George: 1903 or 1904. The next brother was born in 1910 in Colorado. His name was Maurice. And there was another brother named Peter. He was born in Denver. He was born two years after in 1912.

Kristi: Are they still alive?

George: No. Peter died, he was drowned. We used to live near the beach and he drowned there in 1926. It was actually Dana Point. We used to farm there.

Kristi: How old was he?

George: He was 16. The next one was Marcel, he was born in Montibella, in 1914. Then when they came to Punte, my brother Jules was born in 1916 and then I was born in 1918, and then my two sisters, Marguerite was born in 1920, she was born in Punte. My next sister was born in 1922. And she was born in Punte.

Kristi: Are they still alive?

George: No, everyone's dead, all except Marguerite. She lives up in Yuba City.

Kristi: What is her name now?

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George: Glines. He (her husband) was an attorney. He retired. She was a school teacher.

Kristi: Did you parents tell you any stories of their life in France?

George: Well, my dad used to some. He used to talk quite a bit, he used to talk to me, but you know I've forgotten some of it. He never said much about where they lived. Now we're starting to get some feedback from relatives who are writing to my nephew. But a lot of the old people are gone. Fact is a gal who is communicating now, which is a cousin, she's 76 years old. I have not found out exactly where my mother came from, I haven't gotten any history on that. All I know is they left where they were and he had a dairy for a while in Paris. And then he drove a taxi and I don't know which came first or which came last. But he drove a taxi in Paris, too. But in those days it wasn't much of a taxi, you know! And then a doctor told him that his rheumatism was bad and it was recommended to come to the United States. Of course, South Dakota wasn't really the place to go!

Kristi: They came by boat?

George: Yeah, they came by boat, but he paid his own way. He wasn't indentured or anything like that. He came to a ranch and a big landowner, a frenchman in South Dakota, and my mother worked in the house as a made and then he worked out in the field with the horses and stuff, until he finally found out that the guy was underpaying him. He'd keep telling my father "you don't have to learn English." "Well, I want to learn English." He said, "I'm here and I want to learn English." "Oh you don't have to, it's fine, you're among your own people." Till he ran into some guy who spoke french and found out that he was being underpaid. So he just quit. He went to Denver, his rheumatism was real bad. He worked at the Brown Palace Hotel for awhile, in the kitchen and then he got this job down in Bisbee.

Kristi: Do you know how they traveled to Colorado? Did they take the train?

George: I think they did. They took the train, I would imagine from South Dakota. Fargo, I think was where it was. No, Bismarck. But, it was out in the country because this fellow had a big ranch.

Kristi: Did your father speak French to you kids?

George: Well, yeah, my mother and father both.

Kristi: Do you speak French?

George: Yeah, I'm kind of rusty now, there's not too many French people around. But I run into some people once and a while and I'll speak French.

Kristi: When your mother spoke to you or scolded you, did she speak French?

George: Well, yeah. We spoke French at home, except among us kids, we spoke English. Of course my parents were really gung ho, they wanted to learn English. They said "we're Americans and we're going to learn English", which they did. They talked a little broken, my dad more than my mother, but my dad read English and everything else.

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Kristi: How old was he when he came to the United States? Or how old was he when he died?

George: 76 and he died in 1954. I was up there in the Eternal Hills Cemetery and I figured it out. I was trying to remember now, I figured out when he was born but I don't remember exactly the year.

Kristi: He was fairly young then when he came to the United States.

George: He must have been about 25 or so.

Kristi: I'm fascinated that they left your oldest brother in France ...

George: Well, my uncle never had any kids, he was married, Of course my brother had a real good deal because he lived with uncles and aunts, and he was kind of spoiled a little bit! And then when he was 22 he came to this country in 1925.

Kristi: And you were how old?

George: In 1925 I was about 7.

Kristi: Do you remember when he came?

George: Oh yeah, I remember when he came because I can still remember this, because I was pretty young and my sisters were real young. But he was so fascinating, we were all, well you know, a whole bunch of kids were staring at our brother, at a stranger!

Kristi: How did he treat you?

George: Oh fine, oh he was good, he was real good. He never married.

Kristi: So did he stay in this country?

George: Oh yeah, he stayed here and he worked as a carpenter. He spoke fluent English, he learned English.

Kristi: Do you remember when he died?

George: Well he was 84 or 85. He died about 3 or 4 years ago. He died in Wilcox, Arizona.

Kristi: What was his occupation?

George: Carpenter, he was a finish carpenter. He would work six months and accumulate money. He loved to prospect. He would work six months, accumulate money and then he go prospecting. He just loved that and he had been all over Arizona in remote areas where he lived in Congress for a while and then he built him a house and after awhile he sold the house because he said there was "too many people" there. There got to be 400 people in Congress, so that was too many people so he moved out! He stayed in the later years pretty much in Arizona, he would build a house or do

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something and he said it was nice working there because he said the inspectors weren't bad. Because you could just tell them what you were going to build, if they knew you ... they wouldn't bother you like here, they're always on your back.

Kristi: What brought your parents to this area?

George: Well, he wanted to get out of Bisbee because of the mining thing and he had heard that California was a good place to come so then he came and he worked in Oxnard, no it was in Ontario, he worked for the sugar beet factory. He worked in the field, he drove a team and cultivated and plowed. Finally he started to farm on his own. He started in Montibello, farming on his own, he'd farm tracts here and then in Punte he was farming tracts. We moved to Dana Point, he was farming there and then we came down here. He was farming quite a bit of land here.

Kristi: That was in Bonsall?

George: Yeah, well that's actually between Bonsall ... for awhile we were in one area that was Bonsall and then we moved about a mile away and we were in Oceanside then. I graduated from Bonsall.

Kristi: What year was that?

George: 1928. I was ten.

Kristi: What did you think about this area? Did you have friends in Punte that you had to leave?

George: Well, no. We were independent, there was people we knew here.

Kristi: Who did you know here?

George: Well, I don't remember how my dad got hooked up. Of course Delpy's owned some of the property and they were French of course and then my dad rented some land from them and we were there for quite a while and then we moved to the old Cassou place. But then we ... Ronse's owned a dairy just below us, of course he was French, and of course my dad didn't want to cater strictly with French people he mixed with other people, too.

Kristi: Your dad rented from Delpy and then you moved to Cassou property?

George: It was an old Escondido family.

Kristi: What was his main crop?

George: We used to grow ... we did some dry farming, vegetables, and then we got into grain and beans and dry beans and stuff like that. And then it became strictly a two and three ... my brothers left, all except Jules. Jules and I and my dad, and we farmed grain and beans and stuff like that. With machinery it became a three-man operation. We farmed two thousand acres, twenty-five hundred acres.

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Kristi: What year did you start school in Bonsall? Did you start right away?

George: Right away, yeah. We came in here, I think it was August or September and we started school right away in Bonsall. And then I graduated there.

Kristi: Do you remember any of your teachers in Bonsall?

George: Oh yeah. One of them was Ted Wackerman's mother.

Kristi: Ruth.

George: Yeah, that was her first school when she got of college. Her maiden name was Steele. She was from Whittier, from the same area we came from and her maiden name was Steele and then she married. Her name was still Steele, that was her first job as a school teacher. There in Bonsall one teacher taught 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Another one taught 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th, 7th and 8th. She taught the middle part of it. I was a little older and I was in the higher grade, but she was our school teacher. You know Williams out here, his wife, that was her first job, Dessie Woodruff. Her first job was out there, she was a teacher, too. They were young ladies then.

Kristi: Do you remember any school mates?

George: Oh yeah, half of Pala went there. There were a few whites but mostly Indians.

Kristi: What were their names if you recall?

George: Ronsse, Woodruffs went to school there, Shirley Woodruff. I'm trying to remember ...

Kristi: How many kids were in your school?

George: In the whole school, about 200 people. The Indians were bused from Pala, because they didn't have a school there, so they were bused from there. One principal we had was a Domnegoni, but that's where they're building the dam up in Hemet right now, the Domnegoni dam? She was a good teacher. Course when you're that age, anybody over 25 is pretty old, so but she was about this wide and about that tall! But the Indians, boy she made them toe the line. She was a good teacher, you know they didn't get away with anything around here.

Kristi: Is the Bonsall school still standing?

George: Oh yeah, there's still people going there. They added on to it. The old kindergarten was separate and they moved it. They've got it on a piece of land there and then they did a lot of remodeling on the other part of the building, they've added to it and it's a pretty good size. We used to sneak off, down below where the golf course is, of course that used to be just country and we used to sneak down there and go swimming, you know. I should say those things, we got caught several times!

Kristi: How many classrooms did it have?

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George: Well, there was a kindergarten which was a one-room deal. Then I think there was just three other classrooms.

Kristi: Did you have a lunchroom or did you eat outside?

George: I think we ate outside if I remember right.

Kristi: How far away was school where your home was? Did you walk or take the bus?

George: No, we walked a mile and then we got the bus there. Fact is, Joe Ronsse, they had the dairy, but he drove a school bus. We'd walk a mile, but in those days that didn't mean anything. Then they'd pick us up and take us to school. Just four of us went to Bonsall because Marcell had already graduated from school. So it started out with Jules and myself and the two girls. Then we moved and we went to Oceanside. I went to high school one year in Fallbrook and then I went to Oceanside High School one year. I was in John Steiger's class, and that bunch. And then I quit, quit school.

Kristi: What year was it that you attended Oceanside High School?

George: 1933 or 34. I did my sophomore year there.

Kristi: Do you remember your teachers or the principal?

George: I can't remember their names now. I remember we had an agriculture teacher and he was from Fallbrook originally. His dad started avocado raising in Fallbrook.

Kristi: When you were living in Bonsall and you moved to Oceanside, where at in Oceanside?

George: Well, both of them were out in the country, out by the morrow and the one section was a ways from Bonsall and then we moved about a mile this way [west] to another ranch and that was in the Oceanside school district then. We were picked up then, one of the Marron's, Pete Marron, but he had a car and he would pick us up and he'd get paid by the school district, that was for high school. My sisters went to, he'd drop them off at the Libby School and then after that then they started, when then went to high school, they didn't go to Oceanside High, they went to the Sister School.

Kristi: How old were they when they went to the Libby School?

George: Well, see, I didn't go there so I was overage, so they must have been 12 and 14, or something like that.

Kristi: How long did the Libby School stay active?

George: Well it stayed there after that for awhile. I'm trying to remember, because after the War, they stopped it as school and we used to use to have parties there. All of the Wackerman's and the Ronsse's and the Johnsons and the Stokes and all those people, we used to have parties there, get-togethers. And finally they moved it.

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Kristi: Speaking of some of the old families in the valley ... You knew Ruth Wackerman because she was your teacher. At the time was she Ruth Wackerman or was she Ruth Steele?

George: No, she was still Steele. She married Ted. She worked there [Bonsall] and then she went to work at Oceanside. She taught in Oceanside for years. It was some time in the 1930's they got married, I don't know.

Kristi: What stories or recollections do you have regarding the Wackerman's?

George: Just get-togethers once in awhile, but not a lot, because everybody was busy, they farmed. Then of course everybody helped each other out, like they had dairies and we had other things and I had some cattle and Wackerman's would come over and they'd fix the steers for me and they'd de-horn them. We had a place to do it and they'd help me brand and all of that stuff. Then the Wackerman's, of course they had cows, and they had a dairy and they'd raise corn and then we'd all get together and help each other fill the silos with corn. The Wackermans and the Stokes and the Lanphers and all of those people, we all got together and helped each other. And the Winn's, too, Othie Winn.

Kristi: Now when you say you owned cattle, how old were you?

George: I actually went into it myself. I first got them when I was about 18 or 19. I would buy cattle, calves, from some people in Montibello, an old french family that we know, and I used to buy their choice calves and I'd raise them and I'd sell them. So I ended up, when I went in the service, I had about 60, 70 head of cattle.

Kristi: Let's back up now ... you went to high school for one year at Oceanside High and you quit ...

George: One year in Fallbrook and one year in Oceanside. I was just past seventeen. I would have graduated but my dad was funny, you know. He sent the girls to college and he sent the girls because they might have gotten a bad husband, and the men, he figured they didn't need to go to school, see.

Kristi: So you dad thought you'd be better off to quit school and work with him on the farm?

George: At the ranch, right.

Kristi: Were you okay with that?

George: Yeah, I really wanted to go to school. In Fallbrook the principal was Potter, he's dead now, but he was quite a principal, but he tried to tell him, "this boy does real good school and he needs to get the education", but it didn't work out that way. And our ranch was pretty modern.

Kristi: How many acres?

George: Well, we farmed about a couple thousand acres.

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Kristi: Did you have people working for you?

George: No, the only one that worked for us for two or three years was John Ronsse, he helped with the combines and stuff. But other than that we didn't really need anybody else. We had a couple of tractors and we had combines and stuff like that and it was mostly machinery that did the work.

Kristi: What was the main crop?

George: It was barley and black-eyed beans. We called them beans but they call them peas back east. We would harvest them and we would take them here in town and they would process them, clean them.

Kristi: Where was the processing plant?

George: It was down here on Cleveland. There was two of them. Ellery had one of them. Henry Ellery. And the other was Wilmont, John Wilmont, he had another one. He was an old timer.

Kristi: Do you remember what hundred block of Cleveland Street?

George: I don't remember the block but it was right there, close to where Larsen's used to be.

Kristi: Did they can them there?

George: Oh, no, no. Just what they did with them was, they cleaned them, you know because harvesting in the field you get a certain amount of chaff and rocks, and everything else, so they would clean them and they would handle them, they were brokers, too and then they would sell them. They would be sold 100 bags, is the way they sold them.

Kristi: How was the barley done?

George: Same method. Of course they were sent and sold, they were sold in L.A. and different places, they were sold for companies for roll mills. Then they would also sell it for cattle and horses and stuff like that.

Kristi: Was there still a railroad spur out to San Luis Rey?

George: No, that washed out in 1916, they never rebuilt it. For years you could see the mounds. Of course they took the tracks out and took the ties out, but you could see the mound where the railroad went. It used to go ... from Marty's Valley Inn, it used to go along in there, because just past where he's at, there used to be a dairy there. The fire chief here for years, Walt Johnson, they had a dairy out there in the valley, and of course he was fire chief, too.

Kristi: What can you tell me about the Stokes?

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George: They had a dairy there, and then they'd farm the same thing. Of course they farmed a lot for their own use for the cattle and stuff, farmed alfalfa and corn and stuff like that.

Kristi: Did they have their own plant?

George: Oh yeah, they didn't pasteurize their milk, but they would ship it out in cans, see. Then it would be picked up. Fact is this Ferbrache, he worked for Coast Truck Line--they'd picked up the cans of milk and later on, when they got a truck and they had a tank on it then they would haul the milk in bulk. But for a long time it was the old five gallon cans they used to put out there. They would process the milk and then they would put it in the cans, they would cool it, but they all had those type of things until they started shipping it out.

Kristi: Went you went up Amick grade, what was that like?

George: Oh no, it would wind up pretty steep.

Kristi: Do you remember the Rosicrucian Fellowship?

George: Oh yeah, I remember that, because you see that was built in 1911. Of course, you know when I was a kid, that was out of town, way out of town. I remember the grade then, it swung around close to where they have the arches, it swung around there, see, not where it's at now. You can still see part of the old road there. It bottomed down around and it came into Oceanside.

Kristi: As you're headed west, after Rosicrucian, what was there until maybe ...

George: There was really nothing much in there that I remember. It was a big canyon where the school is, they filled a lot of that in for a dump. I don't remember what was in the--of course the housing wasn't there then in the 30s. Then you run into east town.

Kristi: So what we call eastside was all in place?

George: That was pretty much there, yeah. Then across the way, they called it Recreation Park. There was adobe walls and it was done by the WPA, but it had adobe wall all around that park. That's where the police department is and Kmart, but that used to be a park there.

Kristi: Do you remember the Kolb nursery, where the Kolb's might have lived?

George: I remember the name Kolb but I can't remember, the only Kolb I remember had a radio shop.

Kristi: What I'm curious about, the freeway overpass and the freeway, did they have to tunnel or blast all that out or did Mission actually dip down?

George: No, it was flat, they built that up. That went straight, because there was no I-5 and it just went straight across.

Kristi: Do you remember any houses that had to be removed?

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George: No, really I don't. Of course the high school was there. I'm trying to remember but a lot of that was part of that Recreation Park and I don't remember any houses on that side. They did something and they tore part of it out and they eventually tore, and I thought it was kind of a shame, they tore out all those adobe walls. It was a real nice park, and of course it had the Mission motif, you know.

Kristi: How many years did you have your ranch until you joined the service?

George: Till 1942 and then I went into the service November '42. I was 23 when I went in the service. I went in the Air Corps. They were going to draft me and then they said they had to take one of us, so I told my brother I'd go and so when instead of waiting to be drafted I signed up for the Air Corps. I was at Fort MacArthur for a little while and then I went to radio school.

Kristi: Where's Fort MacArthur?

George: That's L.A., port of L.A., right down there downtown.

Kristi: You were 23 and had to leave for war? Were you scared? Nervous?

George: No, not really, I didn't have sense enough, I was a country boy! I didn't know what was going on, course I wasn't used to ... at first getting out among a bunch of men, and everybody had a communal toilet and all that, and it kind of embarrassed me to start with! I wasn't really used to it, but you learn real fast. Then I went to radio school and I tied into a fellow, he was older than I. He was from Brooklyn, he was Italian, and he taught me a lot of things. He was at Pearl Harbor when they bombed Pearl Harbor and he taught me a lot of things, you know, how you learn to adjust to this and adjust to that. Which is true, you know some guys would get in there and they didn't like the food, it was all in their head, they didn't like anything, see. But he taught me that you just rolled with the punches and you learned to enjoy it, which I did. Then I went overseas, we were assigned to Tonapah, Nevada where we did our training, B-24's. And from there, we didn't fly across to Europe, but we took a train. We were on a train for seven days from San Francisco to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. Then they put us on boats. We were on the Isle of France on a boat, and then we went to England, and then they shipped us to north Ireland to school. We went to school for six weeks in Ireland and then we went back and we were assigned to our units. The B-24 bases were just north of London, close to the coast there, because we used to fly our missions out of there.

Kristi: Now did you learn to fly?

George: I learned after. But I was a radio operator on B-24's, see.

Kristi: But you say you were on the Isle of France?

George: That was a boat we were on, the Isle of France was a passenger ship that during the war, they confiscated. It was a French ship and then it became a troop ship. Talk about a lot of people, because it was big, kind of like the Queen Elizabeth size, so it was a big boat. They took us there and from there we went to north Ireland and then England and then we flew missions out of

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England, see. Then, of course when we came back, the war in Japan was still going. So they were going to put us in B-29s and then we were just ready to go when the Japanese capitulated and gave up. The B-29 was a nice airplane because it, well so was the 24, but the 29 had a pressurized cabin, see. So that was kind of nice.

Kristi: Did your family write to you.

George: Oh yeah, I wrote.

Kristi: How often did you get mail?

George: Oh, every week or more. I wrote a lot. We had a lot of time on our hands. I wrote a lot of people. I wrote to Sam's (Sam Higley) sister, she used to write all the time.

Kristi: What was her name?

George: Diane.

Kristi: Were you dating?

George: Oh no, she was too young. She had a crush on me, I think. She was about 12 or 13, I was an old guy but she just thought I was something else! But I used to write to a lot of people. I enjoyed writing you know because you enjoyed getting mail. It was important to get mail. I tried to run into my brother, Maurice. He was drafted and he ran heavy equipment and immediately they gave him rank and he went overseas right away. They spent two years getting ready for this invasion, you see, and he was in on the invasion, and then he was stationed in Paris for awhile. Of course, he went out to see the relatives while he was in Paris. I tried to get across but we never got a chance to go. We flew over, but ...

Kristi: So the war was over in ...

George: In '45 and then I got out, I came back home. I met Janie, my wife, in Tucson when we were getting ready to go back overseas again. That's where we trained in B-29's.

Kristi: What year was that?

George: That was in '44 and '45.

Kristi: Where did they send you in Arizona?

George: Davis Monthan Field, Tucson. It's still there. We trained there and that's where I met Janie. Then we went, she went with me, to Nebraska for our final training, before we went overseas and then ...

Kristi: She followed you to Nebraska?

George: Yeah, she came along, we were both young ...

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Kristi: Love at first sight?

George: Yeah. We lived in one of those little towns in Nebraska, in the country, you know ...

Kristi: Okay, so you're French, so you have to back up and tell me this love story!

George: Well, I was just a poor innocent farm boy and I didn't know it and I got grabbed! She lived in Tucson. Her dad was a fireman and we met on a blind date and we got to going together and so we got married. We got married in Lawrenceburg, New Mexico and then we came back here and I decided to quit farming and then I started work.

Kristi: What is Janie' maiden name?

George: Knight.

Kristi: How old was she?

George: She was 22. I was about 26 then.

Kristi: And you were a dashing Air Corps ...

George: I don't know how dashing I was!

Kristi: Did you speak with a French accent at all?

George: No, because ... My two older brothers, when they went to school they couldn't speak any English because they were at home. But there was some Mexican kids around and they [my brothers] could speak Spanish and French! But they couldn't speak any English! But of course, you know kids learn real quickly and then of course they taught us English so when we went to school we could speak English. So we talked English among ourselves, see. Of course we always spoke French to our parents and then we spoke French to our oldest brother.

Kristi: How soon after you met did you get married?

George: Not very long.

Kristi: So you got married in New Mexico?

George: Yes.

Kristi: And you went to Nebraska afterwards?

George: Afterwards.

Kristi: What were you doing in Nebraska?

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George: We were getting ready to get our planes for overseas, and that's when the war ended.

Kristi: At that time did they let people out of the services or did you have to serve out your enlistment time?

George: Well, there really wasn't an enlistment time but the thing is I wanted to get out ... by the time you do the paperwork in the service and then I ended up in Pecos, Texas, getting ready, and then from there I went to San Bernardino and there I was discharged, in San Bernardino. But it took time, between that time, but I stayed in the service exactly three years to the day.

Kristi: What was your rank?

George: Staff Sergeant.

Kristi: Is the Air Corps part of the Air Force?

George: It was part of the Army, the Army Air Corps.

Kristi: Did you have a boot camp?

George: Well I missed it, screwing around with schools and everything I really missed boot camp. The Air Corps, it was a good outfit, we always had better food than everybody else, we always had better conditions. And they were strict, you know, I guess maybe because we were "fly boys" they thought we should have a little extra or something like that, because whenever we'd go to another camp we'd be sloppy in our marching and we'd see the poor old infantry there and boy, they were gung-ho. We saw the marines, boy, they toed the line. And they'd laugh at us and say "you poor old Air Corps", but we enjoyed it, we had it good.

Kristi: You got of the service in San Bernardino, Janie's with you?

George: She was at the ranch then. Where we were farming. The family was still farming.

Kristi: So you brought her down here to Bonsall?

George: Yeah.

Kristi: How did she and your parents get along?

George: Well, mother-in-law wasn't too ... You know these people from the old country, I don't care if your Italian, French or German, they want to keep their kids at home. And I was the first one to get married. I was the youngest boy and she resented my wife. She stayed at the house for awhile and if my wife tried to help, "What's the matter, don't you like the way I do it?" And if she didn't do anything she'd say she was lazy! And that's the way they were, you know. And she just resented the fact that I was the first one to get married and then right after that everybody else got married! Those old country women, they're something else!

Kristi: Tell me more about where your mother came from:

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George: Well, I don't know too much about where she came from in France, whether she was in the same area ... she must have been, I don't know how my dad met her or what. This is what I'm trying to find out know. My sister would probably know something about that. Maurice, he was stationed there after the invasion when they took France back, he was stationed in Paris, see. And he would go and see them [family]. But we never talked about it then. If he was still alive I could probably find out a lot of things. They wanted him to stay there and he wasn't married then and they wanted him to marry some French gal and stay there, because my uncle didn't have any kids and the other uncle didn't have any boys, so the name kind of floated out over there. Full of them here, but over there there's not that many Fleuret's around. Well, that might be in other sections, I don't know. There's a lot of things that I just don't know, I'd sure like to know. They may have found me under a bush or something, who knows!

Kristi: What personal recollections do you have your mom?

George: Other than being old country ... she was a good woman and she was good to us kids. She raised us right. I was the youngest boy and I was probably a little spoiled more than the rest of us. That's what my brother said! But you look back, things come back and some things don't. Something will remind you of something. Just like when I get with Sam [Higley], you know, and all of sudden we start talking about things that happened a long time ago and it just brings things back to memory. Same thing when I go talk to Dave Jones, we start to talking and then I asked him and he starts to remember about things that happened a long time ago.

Kristi: How long have you known Sam Higley?

George: I guess since he was born.

Kristi: Did you go to school together?

George: No, he's a lot younger. Sam's only about 64 or 65. I'm 66! No, I'm 78, see, so there's a quite a difference in our age.

Kristi: But you have a lot of the same memories of the valley?

George: Oh yeah. His Uncle Harold Stokes didn't marry until way later in life, but he practically raised all those Stokes kids. He would take them under his wing and he'd teach them how to work and he'd teach them how to do this and that. Sam remembers that. When Art Lanpher died then Harold married his widow. And of course the kids were all grown, pretty much grown, not completely.

Kristi: How long did you and Janie stay with your folks?

George: Not very long. We built a little house on the ranch and then we moved it to Vista, bought land in Vista, then we moved it to Vista and then we lived in Vista for while and then came to Oceanside.

Kristi: Is your parent's home still standing?

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George: No, that's gone.

Kristi: The little house that you built for you and Janie?

George: Well, I sold it, yeah, it's still there. It's on Willowbrook Drive out of Vista, close to the Guajome. It's on that street there. We bought eight acres ... yeah, the old house, in fact the old house is still there, too. But it was just built in the 1930's, it was a ranch house, nothing fancy.

Kristi: So you built a house and then you moved ...

George: We moved the house to Vista, which it's actually in Oceanside, the Oceanside line.

Kristi: How many children do you have?

George: Three boys. The oldest one is George Charles, the second one is Peter Thomas and the third one is James Franklin.

Kristi: When was George born?

George: He was born fifty years ago. He was born in May 19, 1946. Pete was born in 1948 and Jimmy was born in 1950.

Kristi: Where did Janie have the boys?

George: Here at Oceanside Hospital.

Kristi: Do you remember the doctor?

George: Yeah, Dr. Kelly. Dr. Kelly delivered all three boys. She was our doctor.

Kristi: So it was a woman doctor?

George: Alice Kelly. Her husband was Carroll Kelly. She's the one, remember reading about how they went to Montana and committed suicide. I guess they both were ill and in bad health. They were in their 80's. She was a Lyman, it's gone now, but close to the lagoon just before you get to Encinitas ... there used to be a little house down there and she had a brother and they used to farm there. But she was a nice person, a good doctor.

Kristi: Where did your boys go to school?

George: They went to school in Vista. George finished in Vista and then we moved to Oceanside and Peter and James went to high school here.

Kristi: Where did you live?

George: We lived on Kirmar street for a while, it's down there in South Oceanside, close to the

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freeway, you know where Stewart street is, Stewart school? We moved there in 1962 or 63. There's two-story houses, this builder, Watson in Carlsbad, he's the one who built the houses. We lived there for three, four, five years.

Kristi: Did you continue to farm when you first got back?

George: For awhile then I quit. My brother continued and my other brother came in with him and then they finally quit.

Kristi: What did you do after that?

George: I worked for Roy Workman for awhile. I delivered propane and then I worked for the Navy running heavy equipment for awhile out at N.A.D. at Fallbrook and then I got in the Union and then I ran heavy equipment in the union, different places all over and then I got to be superintendent and then I took the test to be general engineering contractor and I passed that. That was the first mistake I made, I shouldn't have went into business for myself, which was a mistake.

Kristi: When did you fly airplanes?

George: Right after the war. Fact is, Melvin Johnson taught me to fly and then Ronald Johnson, his brother and then there was two or three old army instructors. I took out here at the Oceanside airport, then I went over to the Hi-Hi Sky Ranch. That was down there in the valley and then I got my commercial and then I got my instructor's ticket there. I didn't do it to make a living out of it, I just did it for going flying.

Kristi: Was Melvin Johnson in the Army?

George: Yeah, during the war he and his brother Ronald and then the Clancy boys.

Kristi: So you got together and decided you wanted to fly airplanes.

George: Yeah.

Kristi: Who had the airplane?

George: Well they did at one time. The Clancy boys used to fly mail in the 1930's, late '20s and '30s. They used to fly mail and then one of them flew passengers for awhile. They had the old traveler port? and then things got real bad and then one of them went up north and the other one worked for the Sister School, caretaker for awhile. Then war came along and of course they went in as instructors and then Augie went and worked for the county. Melvin worked for the county, that's Bea's husband.

Kristi: Do you remember any plane crashes around Oceanside.

George: No, I don't remember that.

Kristi: Melvin and Ronald taught you how to fly and what kind of airplane was it?

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George: My primary training I started out as a cub and then on the commercial it was what you call a PT 22 and PT 19 and I used to fly those and I used to fly Serman? Serman were old Army training planes.

Kristi: Where did you land?

George: Oceanside Airport.

Kristi: How long had Oceanside Airport been there?

George: I don't know when it first started. I don't know if started during the war or what but it was there right after the war. Fact is, they moved it in later years, my office down there for years, I used to rent it from Roymar, and that was the old administration business, it was a quonset hut. Then I went to Hi Hi Ranch, I took my commercial instruction there. There was a little airport on Chestnut street in Carlsbad, one of the Borden's owned, Ralph Borden and his uncle. There was nothing there and there used to be a landing strip, the county dump used to be on the corner. I used to fly out of there once in a while and out of San Marcos, I used to fly out of there.

Kristi: Who ran the Oceanside Airport?

George: It was one of the Vitello boys. They used to have a bar here in town, there was talk -- they were from Chicago and there was talk about them being hooked up with the mafia and stuff like that. I guess they were, I don't know. Phil's Place used to be owned by Vitellos and Leo's the one who had the airport. I remember because he had one of those big, Italian noses and then he had it remodeled! One other brother worked in the bar, too.

Kristi: Phil's Place is still down there.

George: Yeah, I don't know if it's the same Phil's place, but I don't think it is. It seems to me it was up town here someplace, but I could be wrong.

Kristi: Who ran the Hi Hi Sky Ranch?

George: That was, I don't know who started the thing, but he had been a flight instructor, too, a civilian instructor ...

Kristi: Was it asphalt landing strip, was it dirt?

George: Yeah, it was paved. It wasn't a big airstrip. Not very big planes could land down there. You'd take off, there's was not really much around there, and then where Crouch street goes across, you'd end up just short of Crouch street and you'd fly over that. Of course the old market wasn't there, none of that stuff was there. I'm trying to think of his name, he built all of that industrial park in there, too. Ken Nill. His wife, after he died, she married Roy Wilcox. He was an instructor in the war, right after the war, the government, veterans could learn to fly and it was part of the deal and all that, he used to barnstorm, he and his wife. She used to walk on the wings. She'd walk the wings and all sorts of things!

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Kristi: Did you go to air shows?

George: I never did, I just flew around here. I used to take that old Sterman. I used to take the Brother, we'd go up to Banning because there was an orphanage there. We'd fly there and I'd take him flying other places. They would give him special dispensation because he was a jack of all trades, he maintained everything around the Mission, he was a lay brother. They give him permission and used to take him flying all the time. He'd go with me and take him aerobatics, he just loved it.

Kristi: When you flew into airports, did they have a control tower? Did you have a radio?

George: No, it was all visual. You'd come in on a pattern, some of them had a light, some of them had a tower, but a lot of the planes didn't have a radio, so you'd come in on your regular pattern and you'd watch and make sure somebody wasn't around. It was all visual and you had to watch for other airplanes coming in.

Kristi: You couldn't fly at night?

George: Well you could, yeah. They had lights on runways at times. Of course at night it's easier to land then it is in the daytime.

Kristi: What year did you fly and take pictures of the Mission?

George: That was either 1950 or 1951. I've been meaning to show them out there, to see if they've got copies.

Kristi: Did someone at the Mission ask you to take pictures?

George: No, no. A brother just liked to take pictures. He had a good camera and he loved to take pictures and of course he loved to fly.

Kristi: What was his name?

George: Edward Myer, he was chairman of the boys. He was originally from Washington. He transferred back out of here and went to Washington and he was out fishing, just a few years after I'd seen him, and he drowned. They said it was one of the lakes up in Washington and the wind come up and he didn't get to shore fast enough. Really a nice man.

Kristi: Do you remember the Whelans?

George: Oh yeah, specially Ellen Whelan, you know we called her Toots all the time. She was quite a ... course she thought all men were no good, you know. I got along with her pretty well. Fact is when I did a lot of work for Fredrichs Development, we hauled a lot of material out the river and I negotiated with her. At that time she had a real nice guy that was her manager. We got along real well. I got along with Toots but she had her own ideas, she was a positive lady. She had one sister who was a retired school teacher and she was in her 80's but she was pretty senile, and then she had another sister that had run the dairy. Ellen used to be a school teacher and then she quit and

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came to live with her sister and her sister's name was ... I can't think of her name right now, but she was really a nice gal and a nice person. She worked hard on the dairy. Like I say, Toots, she had an idea that men were something else! She had horses and she had cows and we used to farm and we used to rent, after we took the grain and stuff off there was a certain amount of feed there and we would rent to her and she'd put her cows and horses in there. I always remember one time she had a bunch-- we told her she could count the animals and then pay us and so she come up with twenty cows and asked her "how about the horses?" She said, "Oh I didn't know we counted the horses." She had about 25, 30 horses. I said, "Well, they eat just like the cows do!" That was Ellen Whelan.

Kristi: Can you tell me about the crops again, black-eyed peas.

George: Well, to us they're black-eyed beans but if you're from the south they're black-eyed peas. They're actually from the bean family is what they are. We used to grow those and we harvest them when they got dry, then we run through with a thresher, we'd cut them in rows and then we had a machine that would come along and pick them up and thresh them. Then we'd put them in 100 pound bags and take them down here. We'd do the same thing with the barley.

Kristi: What were the two processing plants, again?

George: Henry Ellery and John Wilmont. Wilmont I think is related, he's from Deluz and there's some history on Wilmont. He used to live in the valley, but he was from up north. His family originated in Deluz.

Kristi: Do you remember family ceremonies at the Mission? Your boys were all...

George: They were all baptized there, yeah. We were married there. We were first married in an Episcopal church and then we got married in the church after. Then my son George was married in the church.

Kristi: Who married you at the Mission?

George: I don't know whether it was Father Dominic ... there was another priest that was there for a long, long time. I don't think it was Father Dominic, I can't remember his name. He was really a nice guy.

Kristi: Who did your sisters marry? Did they marry fellows from around here?

George: No, one of the sisters went to UCLA, Marguerite. She stayed with Charles up there, my oldest brother, he was working as a carpenter and then she met him [husband] in college. He was in the service for awhile but she met him in college, Glines was his name. He was in the service, he got out, they got married and then he went to law school then. My other sister went to Queen of Angels. Fact is she went there about the same time that John's mother (Dolly Lawrence Daley) went, Queen of Angels Nursing School in L.A. My sister-in-law, Joseph's wife went there and my other sister-in-law went there, all three of them together. ... My other brother married one of the other gals there. Joe married a gal, her name was Agnes, I forgot her maiden name. She's Syrian, or was, she's gone, too.

Kristi: As far as you know your parents were the only Fleurets that came to the United States?

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George: Yes.

Kristi: So the Fleuret line in the United States started with ...

George: My parents, yeah. I've heard so many different stories I don't know if there are Fleurets left in France as far as related to us or not. I got a thing from my nephew and I didn't see, other than the original Fleurets, I didn't see anybody named Fleuret on down the line, they were different names.

Kristi: Do your sons have children?

George: Yes, George has two daughters. One is 28 and the other is 30. Pete has one daughter, she's about 20 and he has two sons, one is 16 and one is 12. Then Jimmy has a son, he's 21 and he's got a little girl, she's six.

Kristi: Do you know what Fleuret means in French?

George: It doesn't mean anything. A lot of people think it means something but it doesn't. I don't think it does anyhow because "fleur" is flower in French. People say "well, that's little flower" but that's not right. "Fleurette" would be a little flower, see. The name hasn't been here long enough, I suppose in another generation or two or three it will probably be [pronounced] Fleuret [using the "t"]. I remember when I was in the service I got called everything but Fleuret! I think once in a while you run into some guy who pronounces it. "Oh, you're French, huh, Fleuret."

Kristi: You mentioned that you remembered Walt Johnson, do you have specific memories of Walt?

George: He was the fire chief, he was quite a boy, too. And he had a voice, a booming voice, that would carry all over. He could stand in the middle of town and you could hear him clear on the other end. And he used to embarrass Harold Stokes, he said "I'd get downtown and then old Walt would be standing there." And this is not dirty, but he'd say, "I'm the heaviest hung man in town!" And you could just hear him all over, and Harold said, "I tried to duck down." But that's the way he was, he wasn't dirty or anything, that's just the way he talked.

Kristi: He just liked to be ornery.

George: Oh yeah! He was an institution. Walt Johnson was an institution.

Kristi: Do you remember any of the politicians here?

George: Yeah, I remember a lot of them. Of course we were out in the boonies and we didn't get involved too much. We knew a lot of people here in town, there was a lot of people in town here that would like to go hunting so they would come out to the ranch. We'd restrict the amount of people who could go out to the ranch, so we'd save everything for them. And they'd come out for deer hunting. We were next to the Santa Margarita and all that stuff would come over the fence. We farmed there and the deer would come in there because they'd eat the crops, see. They were

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better eating, too because they weren't so brushy. You take a deer here that haven't been around where they could eat some of our home-grown crops, well they would be kind of gamey. We ate lots of rabbits all the time. You had a lot of kangaroo rats, which I think are still there. They have this thing ... they were destructive! They would come in and dig the seed out and eat the seed. But they did as much damage as the rabbits and the squirrels did.

Kristi: Are they considered endangered now?

George: Oh yeah. I saw them on TV the other day, but I'm sure if you go out there on the Santa Margarita/Camp Pendleton you'd find a lot of kangaroo rats out there. This endangered species is something else.

Kristi: When you came into Oceanside to go shopping, do you recall any stores?

George: Well there was Borden's. They were there then. Zahniser's had a little grocery store, Red and White Store. They did like the old times, they charged. Zahniser's had the hospital, he started the hospital. The store was right there on Freeman, corner of Freeman and Mission, he used to have a store there, a Red and White Store. I always remember that. And then of course as for farm stuff you never came to Oceanside because they didn't have anything. It was a farming town it was a tourist town. We'd go to Escondido, of course Vista had nothing. There was one or two stores that didn't amount to anything so we would go to Escondido, which we didn't go too often, either.

Kristi: Do you remember Huckabay's?

George: I'm trying to remember when Huckabay's started?

Kristi: I think it was the 1940's.

George: That's what I thought. I remember them after the war, I remember Huckabay's. Art Lanpher and his wife and I and Janie, we used to take dancing lessons upstairs. That used to be a dance hall and a party place. There was a place, I don't know ... what's that dance school?

Kristi: Arthur Murray's.

George: I think it was a branch of them but it was Arthur Murray's, but we took dancing lessons up there and then it was Huckabay's down below. I was too young then but I used to hear those guys talk about the Firemen's Ball in the 1930's. I guess they got real wild! No serious trouble or anything but they used to get pretty well tanked up. I used to hear the older guys talk about the Firemen's Ball.

Kristi: Do you remember any of the policemen?

George: Well, vaguely. I remember Guy Woodward. Of course we didn't get to town very much. I remember Coyle. I remember Harold Davis and I remember old, he was more of a night watchman, Sickler. I went to school with one of his kids because they're from Bonsall. They lived there for a long time.

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Kristi: Who would you call if you any trouble in the valley? Was it the sheriff or the marshall?

George: I don't know. Probably call the sheriff but we never had really much trouble. I don't ever remember having to call the sheriff or anything like that. Well, now there were sheriffs then, so it had to be them. But you pretty much handled your own problems. You didn't kill anybody! But you tried to handle your own problems.

Kristi: Do remember the speed limit on Mission between here and San Luis Rey?

George: Seems like it 40, I think, 40 or 45.

Kristi: Was there a race track out there?

George: Not that I know of. Was there supposed to be one?

Kristi: It was early. I read the Goldbaum's had a racetrack, a horse track.

George: Could have been. Well when we came here, I think the Goldbaum's left here in the 1920's. The Goldbaum's had a jewelry store. Fact is, we used to rent some land, they used to have some land way back there and we used to rent from them and they had a jewelry store in San Diego.

Kristi: Simon's daughter married a Baranov, of Baranov's Jewelry. They're still around.

George: I think he [Simon Goldbaum] was dead when we used to rent because we used to deal with her. She was an elderly woman then.

Kristi: Tell me again the sequence of your homes in Oceanside.

George: Kirmar Street in the 1960's. Then my wife opened up a business in Anaheim. She did DMV work. She worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles for about ten years and she was transferred up to Montibello and then to San Pedro. She worked as an examiner and then she was Manager-3, or something like that, over in Montibello. Then she went on her own doing DMV work for dealers, different car dealers and stuff. Most of them didn't have the capabilities of doing the right DMV work. Then she opened her own business in Anaheim. So what we did was we sold the place there. Of course we sold it to get rid of the kids, so they'd leave home! That's what we always said! So then we rented a place in Carlsbad and an apartment up there. So she stayed up there and I stayed down here because we had the business, and I'd go up there on weekends. The kids were gone then.

Kristi: What business did you have?

George: General Engineering Contractor. We did grading, paving, rip rap. We did a lot of the rip rap along South Pacific [street].

Kristi: What's rip rap?

George: Big rocks. But them up against the bank and build a wall to keep from washing them out. They've had problems when they get high tides and high waves it really erodes, see.

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Kristi: What year was that?

George: That was in the 1970's when we were doing that. We did a lot of that rip rap working the river for old Alex Deutsch. We got through with that, that was in the early 80's.

Kristi: What do you remember about Alex Deutsch?

George: Other than I knew one of his sons and I knew Alex really well. But I just found out the other day he died last year. I was talking to Jack Casson and of course he was a good friend of Alex's. I met him at a restaurant and I started to ask him and he said, "Didn't you know that Alex died before Thanksgiving last year?" And I said no. And he said, "Well, I didn't even know about it. I didn't go to the funeral because I didn't know about it." But he was a nice guy. He had a picnic every year down there for his employees and I used to go every year. We did a lot of work for him. He was very good, he wanted the bottom dollar but he paid you. You would settle on the thing and he paid you and if there was something extra he'd pay it. We got to be pretty good friends, not intimate friends, but good friends. So I'd see him every year. He was eight years older than me and our birthdays were two days apart.

Kristi: When was the big flood in the valley?

George: In the 1970's. In 1978 we had a RV lot there and we got flooded and it flooded Deutsch. That when he [Alex Deutsch] built a dike around there. That was in 1978, I think it was. We were renting from Roymar, besides construction we had this RV thing and we'd store RV's and we sell trailers and motorhomes and stuff like that. And it [the flood] came up, it was sloping down and then it came right up to, we had a store there, but it just came up to the store, but all the trailers we had were in four foot of water.

Kristi: How much did it rain?

George: Oh it rained. We had about 25 inches that year. But it rained and it rained and it rained. That's before he had the dike there and the river just went all over. Then of course he [Alex Deutsch] built that dike around it. He really worked, and he did a lot and he paid out of his own money. We did a lot of rip rap along the river to protect him and stuff. Then when the Corps of Engineers, they didn't like what we had done and they wanted to do their own thing, and they tore it all out. They didn't take advantage of thousands of dollars, you know. We did a lot of work. We did several million dollars worth of work for Alex. But he had a lot of money, and he spent the money, but the city never really was good to him. He was real good about donations and stuff like that. I don't know what's the matter with the city.

Kristi: What are things that you like about Oceanside the best?

George: Well, I guess because I've been here so long! The historical society is what I like. No, really that's part of it. I like Oceanside. There's so much that they could do here and it's not being done. That's the way I feel, but it's a good town. It's really a good town.