

Interview with

Henry Johnson

September 8, 2007

by Kristi Hawthorne

for the

Oceanside Historical Society

Interview with Henry Johnson on September 8, 2007. Interviewer: Kristi Hawthorne of the Oceanside Historical Society. Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Kristi: I'm Kristi Hawthorne and I'm here with Henry and Sandy Johnson. It is September 8, 2007. I'm here at the Oceanside Historical Society and we're going to be talking about Henry's memories of Beachlake here in Oceanside.

Henry: And Oceanside in general, the downtown area and the pier.

Kristi: Please tell me your full name and when you were born.

Henry: My name is Henry C. Johnson and I was born in 1943 in April. I was in Oceanside from age 10, during the summers, to age 18.

Kristi: Where were you born?

Henry: I was born in Inglewood, California.

Kristi: What were your parents' names?

Henry: My father's name was Henry Johnson and my mother's name was Ruth Johnson.

Kristi: Did they come from this area?

Henry: No. They grew up around Elsinore, California.

Kristi: Were they California natives?

Henry: No, my mother was. My father was born in Detroit.

Kristi: What brought him out here to California?

Henry: My father came out...why did he come out... I don't remember.

Kristi: Do you know at what age he came to California?

Henry: His high school years.

Kristi: His parents brought him out here?

Henry: His mother did. His father was deceased.

Kristi: What his mother's name? Your grandmother?

Henry: I never knew her. I know I know, but I don't remember.

Kristi: Do you know how your parents' met?

Henry: Yes, through a mutual friend, a friend of my mother's named Betty who grew up in Marietta and her family owned the only restaurant; it was very small, in Marietta. My father worked there at the restaurant.

Kristi: What was it called?

Henry: I think it was called the Marietta Café.

Kristi: What year would this have been?

Henry: 1934 or 1935.

Kristi: When did they get married?

Henry: 1936.

Kristi: Did they get married in Marietta?

Henry: Yes, they did...they might have gotten married in Los Angeles because my mother's parents lived in Los Angeles for a short time at that time, so they might have gotten married there.

Kristi: What did your father do for a living?

Henry: He was working in LA for the American Can Company. Then he worked for Lockheed just before the war.

Kristi: What did he do during the war?

Henry: He was in the merchant marines.

Kristi: Did that send him off a lot then?

Henry: Yes, mostly in the Pacific off the coast of Chili and Europe, off the coast of the Netherlands. They did a lot of supplying up in the Netherlands.

Kristi: How long did he do that?

Henry: Until the end of the war, in 1945.

Kristi: What was he doing after the war, when you were a little boy?

Henry: Here's where we come to an obscure connection to the Coutts family. Art Coutts owned a garage in Los Angeles. I was only 5 years old. He went to work with Art Coutts at his garage and the reason I remember, it was right near the trolley tracks and I went and I used to like to watch the trolleys go by. That's where the connection to Oceanside is, because the Coutts family had history in Oceanside. So the connection to Oceanside actually begins with the Coutts family in 1947.

Kristi: How long was your dad working with Arthur Coutts?

Henry: Until 1949. My brother was then a year old and I remember overhearing my parents talking. My dad needed to do something that brought in a little more money. So he went to plumbing school and he worked in new construction plumbing from then on until the time he retired. So he left Art's garage but they remained friends throughout the time till Art's death, which was in 1963.

Kristi: Where were you going to school?

Henry: I started out schooling in the Los Angeles school district and then my parents moved to Montebello for a year and I went to the Montebello school district and then they moved to Monterey Park and I finished in the Alhambra school district. I also went to Herbert Hoover High School, during my senior year in 1961.

Kristi: What was the first year you summered in Oceanside?

Henry: 1950 was the first summer.

Kristi: Why Oceanside? Was it because Arthur Coutts suggested it?

Henry: Okay, I mentioned Betty who grew up in Marietta. She and her family frequented Oceanside down at the pier. They knew about Beachlake and they had a tent there. My folks visited them and my mother loved the beach. One hour of visiting them they said, "we're going to be here next summer" and they in fact started. So that was in the summer of 1949 and they began the next summer. So they found about that through her long time high school friend Betty.

Kristi: Do you know what Betty's last name was?

Henry: Collins.

Kristi: Was Betty married?

Henry: Yes she was, to Wesley Collins. There might be some people in your society that knew them maybe because they had a huge turkey ranch up in Marietta.

Kristi: So they were the ones that invited you to Oceanside and set the family tradition.

Henry: For 8 summers.

Kristi: In 1950 when did you first come? When school got out?

Henry: It was usually immediately after school was out, the next day. The next Saturday.

Kristi: What all did you pack and what kind of car did you come down in?

Henry: We came down in a 1949 Kiser and we would have the backseat fully loaded. My sister and I essentially laid flat on top of blankets, bedding, table cloths, just everything you would think of in terms of what could be put in the backseat. Behind the car was a U-Haul trailer with then an icebox, beds, rugs to be put down over a cardboard floor, orange crates to be nailed together to make cupboards, table, chairs, just about all you would need essentially for like a little tent cottage, to be set up on the beach.

Kristi: Did your dad take off the whole summer or did he move you guys down there and he would come down on the weekends?

Henry: He continued working through the week. In those days the wives didn't work, as it is now. So most of the husbands came down on Friday night. So Friday was kind of an interesting time because all the women needed to save a parking space for the husband who would arrive generally anywhere from 6:30 to maybe 8:00. Now to reserve a parking place in the 1950s -- it wouldn't work now -- but all she had to do was put a camping stool out in the parking place that she wanted to save. So all through Beachlake there were these stools, chairs, a box—anything that says, “this place is saved for my husband.” These days someone would walk up a remove the thing, and drive in, but it worked then! So Friday night parking spaces filled up with all the husbands who arrived during the Friday evening hours.

Kristi: You mentioned you had siblings. Tell me their names.

Henry: My sister's name was Valerie and my brother's name was Clyde. They are both deceased now.

Kristi: When were they born?

Henry: My brother was born in 1948, as I referenced earlier when my dad needed to quit Art Cout's garage, and my sister was born in 1939.

Kristi: How did you all get along?

Henry: Quite well, really. Retrospectively, looking at it, we got a long quite well.

Kristi: So were you all excited to be coming down?

Henry: Oh you bet!

Kristi: Describe the drive. Do you remember what route you took?

Henry: It changed through the years. But prior to what was called the Santa Ana freeway, which is now I-5 going through Orange County, prior to that, we would go down to Highway 101 on Atlantic Boulevard, which met Highway 101 in Long Beach and then it was down the 101 clear through to Oceanside. Into Oceanside is not the route of I-5, it's the first road up through the railroad tracks and the bridge would cross over and you would enter into Oceanside at that point. The whole ride through those years would go through the beach towns and there was a very locally famous guy that was a greeter in San Clemente. Maybe you know about him. There's a picture I have of him somewhere. He would be greeting people and he did that I guess until about the day before he died, an old guy and he would be the local greeter. So my sister and my brother and I, we would always look forward to waving to the greeter! That was our marker for when the summer began when we would go through San Clemente and wave to the greeter. Then later the route changed. They built the Santa Ana Freeway and we came down the Santa Ana freeway then went as far as San Clemente then there was a road that came down, from the end of the freeway, came down to the 101 and then we went on the 101 down, which is almost the I-5 route now, and that's how we got here.

Kristi: The route through Camp Pendleton, has that changed?

Henry: You know, we didn't pay much attention. Remember I was a kid, so we didn't pay much attention to the entrance of Camp Pendleton but I think Sandy and I were there not long ago, she works for the Navy so were able to get on the base. I think the entrance is pretty much in the same place, pretty much.

Kristi: Describe your first summer at Beachlake for me.

Henry: The first summer was the smallest tent we had. It was a 12x12 small camping tent. They don't make them anymore. It looked like a simple roof building. It had a slanted roof; it had four windows and a zippered door at one end. And we had crammed into there, 3 beds, a table and an icebox. We didn't start using refrigerators until probably about 1956, so everyone had an icebox down there. So we had the icebox, the tables and beds and the a camping stove, a butane camping stove, which took the butane from a small tank on the exterior to the tent and that's what it was. That was our first summer there. The icebox was similar to what everybody had – a small icebox. So you had the traditional ice truck going through the Beachlake I think twice a day.

Kristi: Do you remember the name of the company?

Henry: No, I don't.

Kristi: What about the driver?

Henry: No. The only thing us kids had anything to do with the ice truck going through was when the ice man we'd climb in the back and grab these long slivers of ice and carry them around all day. We would run thinking he would make us put the ice back! They were just chips of ice! But we'd carry those treasures even when we'd go in the water swimming. We used to brag, who had gotten the longest chip! They'd be about this long and we'd carry them around all day.

Kristi: Tell me about a typical summer day. When would you kids first wake up?

Henry: It changed through the years, because when we first came there I was 7 years old and then by the time we were through I was 17, so the years changed what a typical day would be. So I'll kind of give you a general description that would kind of cover all those years:

I'd usually wake up prior to when my mom would because during the week she was by herself with my brother and sister and me. I'd wake up and often times I'd take that time to do something by myself before my friends joined me. So many times I'd take a walk in the surf, often times I flagged down the Helms man. There were several bakeries that came through and one of them was the Helms. He would have those old trucks where the drawer would pull out and there would oodles of donuts you could pick. I'd usually buy myself a couple of donuts and take them down to the beach and walk in the surf with my morning donut before my mother got up. So I'd take the walk down in the surf and then go back to the tent later. She would usually be up and I'd have breakfast. Oftentimes during breakfast one of my friends would come by and we would talk about, "well, let's do this" and usually go down to the pier, go swimming, take a walk into what we called "the swamps" which was the area where the water in the river, the river was never full, so it was swamp. Go downtown; take a walk out on the pier. None of my friends or myself fished, so we wouldn't go fishing on the pier but we'd go out on the pier, oftentimes watch the fishing boats. The fishing boats would leave in the morning and come back in the afternoon.

Oftentimes we would play a game of Scrabble or Monopoly. Monopoly was big; Scrabble not until the later 1950s. Popular at the time was a game called Canasta. So we'd have these big Canasta tournaments, and by the end of the week we would see who own the most, three out of five games like that. So we'd have these private, long tournaments. Take walks on the beach, build sand castles, chase the ice truck and get our big chip of ice. In the later teen years, the day would end with the dances. Beachlake built an outdoor dance floor. It was just a huge cement slab and they'd have local bands play and that's how the evening would end during my teen years or it would end with a walk on the beach with your girlfriend or a stroll out on the pier. After a stroll out on the pier we'd go up to the miniature golf course, which had a penny arcade. Then across the street was a bumper car place.

I'll give you an example of what happened when I was about 8 years old. Right by where the community center is now, but before it was built, was a Frosty Freeze down by the pier. Later on they built another one up on the street that emptied right where the tram was located, right next to the miniature golf. But prior to those years, when I was about 8 years old, my girlfriend and I, Paula, her family was one of the "regulars", she and I would go to this Frosty Freeze, which was right next to the pier, next to the stairs going up to Pacific

Street, and we would get a Frosty Freeze. One day we came and I could only afford one. So I bought one and the lady that ran the Frosty Freeze could see us, we were sitting on the beach there next to the pier, passing this Frosty Freeze cone back and forth. Well, the next day we came I could still only afford one. So I bought one. And she leaned over and she said, "I'm going to give you two" and she looked at me and said, "and everyday when you can afford to buy two, you buy two. But today, you can't afford two but you have two anyway. And that's the way it will be all summer, but don't tell any of your friends." So we would go and when I could afford to, I bought one for Paula and one for me, and then the days I could only afford one cone I'd tell her, "I can only buy one today." And she would give us two. She'd always remind us, "don't tell any of your friends!" and we didn't, otherwise there'd be a line clear out to the end of the pier.

Kristi: Do you remember her name?

Henry: No, and I don't think I even knew it at the time. But she ran the Frosty Freeze, the original Frosty Freeze that was right down at beach level, right next to the pier. I've always remembered that lady.

Sandy: Tell about Mrs. Trask.

Henry: Mrs. Trask was Paula's mother, Helen Trask. During the years down in Oceanside they were one of the few that didn't have the cardboard floors with the rugs over the cardboard. They set their tent; it was an army tent, right down on the beach, right on the sand. So when you went into their tent you were standing in the sand. Mrs. Trask, every evening would read to any kids who wanted to come in to their tent. So sometimes it was quite full, because nobody had TV's down there! Most people had a radio, but no TV. She would read a little bit from a book each night. Two of the books I remember, three that I remember her reading was the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and she read one of the books about the Donner Party. She would then also encourage us to walk from Beachlake clear up to this building where the library used to be right over there. I checked the map program and measured it, three quarters of a mile. She would come up to the library here with us and we'd pick a book and she'd read that every night, just a little bit of it. She'd pick a place to stop, an exciting place, and say, "Now tomorrow night come back and we'll find out what Tom does, and Becky, hidden in the cave."

Kristi: Where were the Trask family from?

Henry: They were from San Diego. Webb Trask was a fireman with the San Diego Fire Department. They were one of the regulars.

Kristi: What were some of the regular families?

Henry: I can't remember any from San Diego, actually or from this area. There was the McArthur's, the Trask's, the Robinson's, the Dick's, the McFarley's. A lot of them I had as friends and didn't even know their last names.

Kristi: Where were the majority of these families coming from?

Henry: Los Angeles County, most of them. There was one, the Cheeseman family, who came from one of the mountain towns way up in Northern California. That was the furthest and the closest was the Trask's from San Diego.

Kristi: Were the buildings at Beachlake? Was there a community center?

Henry: No.

Kristi: Were there bathrooms?

Henry: The only buildings were the store, that was built later. But originally there was Betty's Café, and right next to that was Betty's Bar. In that building was, facing the beach, the office for Beachlake, a very small office. Later they built adjacent to that, they built a store, a small grocery store, a laundry and I can't remember the third shop and then there were the offices. Those were the only buildings at Beachlake outside of the restrooms. There were 7 or 8 buildings for restrooms that had showers. They were quite large because they accommodated everybody taking showers.

Kristi: Did you have a regular spot? I know you can't see the picture on the tape.

Henry: No, it had to change every year. Most of the time we were down at this end, you can see those tents there (pointing to picture).

Kristi: So you were on the beach on the most northern point.

Henry: Exactly, right on the beach. Our last two years, and I don't know the reason, I think the reason was my dad didn't want to set up the Army tent anymore, it was a lot of work, they stayed on the bay here, right there (pointing to picture).

Kristi: Did you go into the beach lake or did you go into the ocean?

Henry: Most of the time, Mrs. Trask used to bring her book and sit and watch everybody swimming, but most of the time we swam in the lagoon.

Kristi: So you swam in the lagoon.

Henry: And the ocean. The boat activities, if you knew someone that had one of the powered boats, you did. I knew someone that had a powerboat. The Chase family, Bobby Chase, but I didn't know his parents. I was about 14 or 15 at the time. One of my fondest activities—it didn't look like this during the week. This was when all of the husbands were down. (looking at photograph) During the week there were no boats out there. There was this one guy who owned a kayak, not the kayaks you see today, it was a very small kayak and it was right at water level, in fact the water would splash over the top of it. He would lend it out to a number of kids, not every kid, but some kids. I was one of the fortunate, so a

lot of times I'd be out there on the lagoon paddling this kayak all over the place. Further down here was the existing jetty; further north was the jetty that still exists up there, that is on the southern most part of that Marine camp where those cottages are rented out. That jetty was there and that was further north, so we would take walks up to the jetty. This area here is where now the boat harbor is. The boat harbor was sand dunes, where the harbor is now. So all of this is built up now.

Kristi: So the most northern part of Beachlake—

Henry: What is now the harbor. So we would go up into this area and in the evenings we would have what we called wienie roasts, marshmallow bakes and we would go up into this area in the evening hours.

Sandy: You told me a little bit about contact with the Marines.

Henry: There was a fence right at the point of the jetty; it came right down to the surf. One of the recollections I remember when we were about 12 years old, my friends and I went up to the jetty, northward up to the jetty. It was low tide so we decided to cross over the jetty and walk around that fence on the ocean side, which you usually couldn't do because of the tide. This was a very low tide. We were about 11 and 12 and we were now in the Marine camp and there was this big sign right at the end of that fence that said, "No Trespassing. US Military Property." We went around the fence because it was low tide. Well some Marines had some fun with that. A couple of Marines shouted at us, "Hey, you guys! Outta here!" Of course we just ignored that! They might be telling this story now from their side of it! They turned the tank toward us and we saw that big gun lowering! And they said, "You better move!" And we're running to save our lives! They started rolling that tank toward us and we were chased by a tank with the barrel coming down and it was "going to blow us away!" We skirted around that fence! Those Marines probably tell that story from their side of it till this day.

Sandy: Tell about the time in Oceanside when you were running from the police officer.

Henry: You know how the pier goes over North Strand? That real high section? This was maybe about a year after, or it might have been the same summer we were chased by a tank off the Marine base. It might have even been within a couple of days! We found a great big bag of plaster of Paris, real fine, fine powdery stuff. There must have been six or seven of us. We all took this bag up to the top on that part of the pier that goes over the Strand. Now we didn't know what to do with it. We thought, oh how much fun it would be to watch this bag of powder hit the pavement and have this huge 'poof' cloud of dust. We thought that was a great idea. So we thought, all we've got to do is all of us heave this over the side of the pier, smack it goes on the pavement and this huge billowing plaster of Paris! Now, what we didn't consider the possibility that there was also northbound traffic. As we heaved this bag over towards the pavement below, simultaneously a motorcycle cop came underneath the pier and it smacked right in front of his motorcycle. And we started running back, similar to the way we ran from the tank on the base.

Kristi: Did you get to enjoy the big poof?

Henry: No! We didn't even get to see our big poof! But we saw the results of it, which I'll tell you about in a minute! We ran towards the pier side and we were going to run down that ramp that goes on down toward the Strand but here comes this cop up that ramp and he was angry to say the least. The front of his motorcycle and his uniform was covered with this white powder! Just covered with this white powder! And I remember Richard hollering, "UH-OH!" Richard Trask, my girlfriend's brother, he goes, "UH-OH!" The cop looked up and he pulls up, rmmmmm-ummmm. He gets off of his motorcycle and he says, "Alright, boys." He's going to take our names and he reaches in for his pad and it's poofing with this powder! And he goes like this, he's trying to get his hands so he can take the pen and it's all full of powder! And he says, "What's your names?" And he's taking down our names and we're thinking we're on our way to San Quentin, you know. Poor guy, he took our names down and he goes, "Alright, no more throwing things!" and he gets back on his motorcycle which is all full of this powder and he goes off. If he went into the squad room he must have been the laughing stock of the police force!

Kristi: This was about 1955?

Henry: Well, let's see. If I was 12, yes.

Sandy: He handled it well.

Henry: Yes, he handled it real well.

Sandy: Did your parents ever hear from him?

Henry: No, no. Because where it hit and where he was, he must have realized our intent was not to throw it at him. He somehow knew that. I think it was Richard who hollered out, or maybe Melvin, "We only wanted to see only a big poof!" He might have said something like, "well, I'm the one that got the good view of it!" It would have been the summer of 1955. If you find anybody on the force, they may remember it. That was funny, but not for us at the time!

Kristi: What did your mother do all day while you were all out having your adventures?

Henry: She read and visited with Mrs. Trask, somewhat, not a lot. My mother was social-ble but not social. So she mostly read and visited with Billie Coutts, Art Coutts' wife. They visited a lot of time. Then she'd have friends down from the Los Angeles area. They would stay a week at a time.

Kristi: Did you ever have bad weather?

Henry: No. Light rain, that was about it. Never any bad weather. High tides. Using this picture as a reference, the tide would come clear up to these tents here all the residents would need to build trenches around the tent. Beachlake would take a bulldozer and go

along the beach when high tides were scheduled and build this big embankment in front of all the tents. In fact, when this picture was taken, these down at this end were trailers, but at the time it was tents all the way down to here. People would need to put these trenches around as the waves got real large they would come up over that embankment that Beachlake built and if you didn't have a trench around your tent, the waves would just come right through the tent. So a lot of the tents were just isolated little islands.

Sandy: And you never locked it up, did you?

Henry: You couldn't. Nothing was ever locked up.

Kristi: Was your mother a disciplinarian? What were the rules of the summer?

Henry: None. No, I grew up with very few 'don'ts.' The only thing we had was we were to let her know where we were around dinner. She wanted us to come in somewhere between 4:30 and 5:30 so that we would know what time dinner was going to be and if we went swimming we had to let an adult know that. Those were the only rules, that you go swimming you had to let an adult know and you couldn't go swimming within an hour after you ate lunch or breakfast or dinner. So those were the only rules, you had to let an adult know you went swimming, no swimming with an hour after you ate, and be back and let me know when you're going to be around for dinner. I grew up in a household where the only rule was, literally, almost, was we had to be honest. No matter what the occasion, honesty was almost the only rule. If you were honest then everything took care of itself. So we didn't have a lot of rules.

Kristi: Was there a lifeguard at any point?

Henry: No, no lifeguard. At this point here, there was a lifeguard tower, which was the city of Oceanside, but none for Beachlake.

Sandy: The little boy you rescued, was that at Beachlake?

Henry: Yes, that was Beachlake. A lot of us had an experience of pulling someone out of the water. I was swimming right about that point there with a bunch of my friends. It was about 5:00 in the afternoon and we were in the water. I was swimming and I felt this, and I realized it was a little kid in the water, he had gone down. So I pulled him and brought him ashore and a few people gathered. I was about 14, 15 or 16 at the time. This woman comes up, of course I was a teenager at the time, and she says to me, "What did you do to this boy?" because he was crying. And I said, "Well, what I did to him was, I pulled him out because he was drowning." She started hollering and I just walked away. I was 16, I didn't need that!

Kristi: Did you have a new girlfriend every summer or was it always Paula?

Henry: Paula and then Paula's cousin!

Kristi: What was Paula's cousin's name?

Henry: She was Diane.

Kristi: Did she come down with Paula?

Henry: She came down to visit every summer?

Kristi: Did Paula feel betrayed?

Henry: No, because Paula was infatuated with Bobby Dick! Remember I mentioned the Dick family? Well, there was a little shuffling around. So the later summers at the miniature golf course it was Paula and Bobby Dick and me and Diane. Diane was Paula's cousin.

Kristi: How old were you then?

Henry: 15 or 16 by then.

Kristi: So you went up to Holidayland to play miniature golf?

Henry: Yes, we would play miniature golf there and there was the penny arcade and then there was the second Frosty Freeze right on, it's Pier View now, it was Third Street then. Across the street from Third Street was the bumper cars. We'd come up there and go back to Beachlake for the nightly dance.

Kristi: When you mentioned money, did your mom give you money or were you earning this money somehow?

Henry: My mother never gave any of us any money beyond our allowance. The allowance, I forget what it was, not much, that was the 50s. And sometimes I just passed it. I had a different system than my brother and sister did. They had a weekly allowance regardless. Mine wasn't weekly. I based mine on when I needed it and then she was actually banking it. Sometimes I would need to buy a Fats Domino album or something and I would need a little more, but because I hadn't had an allowance for 3 or 4 weeks, then I'd want that. But what I did, and this is even when I was very young, 8 and 9 years old, during the school year I would save any pennies I had. I had my "Oceanside" money. I would pass up going to the movies or do anything with the kids to have my summer savings. I was the richest kid down there in Oceanside!

Kristi: What was it like when your dad came every weekend?

Henry: The later years my parents and their friends would take the boat out. My dad had built a boat and we'd go down to Carlsbad and run around in one of the big bays there. His boat was too large for Beachlake. The largest boat was 14 feet and his was an 18-foot outboard and then changed it to an inboard. But we'd go down to Carlsbad and sometimes

go fishing. My dad and his friends would go fishing, launch the boat off the end of the pier and then I would go fishing with them on occasion, as well. Then we would go out to Live Oak Park on maybe a Saturday night with the Coutts family and many other families. We'd go to out Live Oak Park Saturday and stay until 11:00 at night. That's how the weekends were different, in that we would have recreation with the boat, and friends out to Live Oak Park, which I think was out a little beyond Escondido. That's how the weekends differed.

Sandy: You had a hippy family there, didn't you?

Henry: This was really something, pre-hippy days. They would have been beatniks. Paula and I, we'd have an evening, and I don't remember their names, but for the purpose of our story we'll call them "Rosemary and Jack". We'd say, "Hey, let's go see what Rosemary and Jack are having for dinner." We'd go to their tent site and they didn't have the big elaborate Army or Marine tent, they had a simple umbrella tent with a patio built. For dinner they would be having nuts, dried nuts and vegetables, raw vegetables. Paul and I would be there and they would talk to us. They were in their 20s. That's what they were having for dinner, with water. Paula and I came out of there just laughing, "walnuts and raw vegetables for dinner!" "Ho, ho!" We thought that was hilarious. But they were nice people.

Kristi: Do you know what the rent was?

Henry: The last one I'm aware of was in the later 50's, about 1956 on, it was \$75 a month.

Kristi: Do you remember whom you paid? Do you remember the manager of Beachlake?

Henry: I remember Zaiser's wife more than I remember Zaiser. It was \$75 for the whole summer, \$25 a month. It would be \$75 a day now!

Kristi: Describe when the summer was over, when you started to pack up and how that feeling was.

Henry: The last day, the last weekend was Labor Day. Labor Day was kind of fun because that was the Swim Around the Pier. There was a swim around the pier on Labor Day and it was usually pretty busy because that was the last shot of your day at Beachlake. So we would close up camp, close down the whole thing on Monday of Labor Day and it was back to Los Angeles, or Monterey Park. So a lot of those cars that pulled in on Friday night had U-Haul trailers on the back of them. People just closed it down.

Kristi: Were you brokenhearted? Melancholy?

Henry: I never wanted to leave. It was back to school and that was never a good experience anyway! A lot of the people were hollering, "See you next summer!" and it was kind of like a bittersweet ending. We had a great summer, sorry we have to go, see you next year, that's what it was.

Kristi: What was the trip like? Did your dad have to pack everything up? Was he really regimented on how he packed things?

Henry: No, it wasn't regimented, we just all chipped in and did it. It was done relatively quickly. A lot of the things, I don't know what they did with the things they didn't take back. You have to remember when I was old enough to know what was really going on they had switched from tent to trailer, and they would leave it there all winter. My folks would go down there and use it when they visited the Cousts. So they made it a winter place as well. The latter years there wasn't a whole lot of pack up because they left it a lot of it there.

Kristi: What was the last year that you came down?

Henry: 1958 was the last year I came down, being that my folks left the trailer and the cabana set up throughout the winter. My mother came periodically during the summer of 1959, but by then the regulars weren't there anymore. It was a bygone era. So she only came down occasionally and when she came down it was mostly to visit the Cousts anyway. So the last year really was 1958.

Kristi: Why was that the last year then?

Henry: I wanted to stay in Monterey Park. My sister had discontinued coming down because she was working in Los Angeles. My brother, he still wanted to come down, he was younger, but I didn't want to come down anymore, I wanted to stay in Monterey Park. The same thing was happening with all the other families. And Beachlake was beginning to deteriorate somewhat. It was an end of era, is what it was.

Kristi: After 1958 did you make any trips down to Oceanside?

Henry: My parents continued regularly to come to Oceanside until 1964, that's when Art Cousts died. But they continued to come year round all the time, about every 3rd or 4th weekend, not to the beach area, but actually very close to it, because Art Cousts had the house behind the garage. I'm sorry, the garage was behind the house where he ran the brake and tune-up business. The house burned down in 1959 and they had a second house, which was right near the beach. So Cousts took that beach house and built it up into a primary residence after the house burned down. They continued coming down through the years, but I didn't come down. I saw it as a chance to have the house to myself. My sister was gone most of the time and my brother went with them so I stayed in Los Angeles.

Kristi: Any other favorite stories?

Henry: I have many of them. If you have an old newspaper article from the summer of 1951 or 1952. The summer of 1952, and it was in the paper, in this lagoon here, there was a guy who had a power boat and he was giving boat rides to all the little kids and I guess, looking at it from the adult perspective, he had tipped the bottle I guess a little bit too much. He put too many kids in the boat at once. Paula and I were sitting near the front. I went everywhere

with Paula. If we weren't down having our Frosty Freeze, we were doing something else. We were taking a ride on the boat and I must have been 9 years old. I had been around boats all the time and I told Paula, "There's too many kids in this boat." I was only 9.

Kristi: But very wise!

Sandy: He really was!

Henry: I said, "This might capsize." Paula didn't believe it. But I saw water coming in. I said, "It's gonna capsize." And it did! All of a sudden it was under the water and it flipped over, capsized. Well, I knew how to swim. I was fully dressed. Actually, no shoes. If I would've had shoes on I would have taken them off. And I couldn't find Paula. I remember hollering, "Paula! Paula!" I don't know how many kids were on there, a good number of kids. None drowned. The fire department shows up. I remember, I was angered; this fireman comes with his float that I was supposed to hold onto. I don't want anything to do with him; I wanted to look for Paula! I remember telling him, hollering, "Find Paula! She's my girlfriend, leave me alone!" I didn't want to be saved, I was safe. I wasn't worried about me. "Come on, son, put your arms around it." "I don't want to!" I started arguing with him! I said, "Go look for Paula!" Of course he didn't do that and he pulled me to shore. The reason I couldn't find Paula, other firemen had pulled her and she was already on the bank. That was in the Oceanside paper. It must have been mid-August 1952.

Sandy: Remember that one thing that happened at the train station?

Henry: We were in that cement block railroad station and we used it for our restroom when we'd go to the pier and there was a small park over there. So were using the restroom and there was some guy in there, an adult man, soliciting the young boys as we went in. So he solicited me and I said, "I'll be right back!" I went out and I told all my buddies and I said, "there's a guy in there..." and I explained what he was doing in terminology I would have used on that day. "Let's report him!" So we went up to the ticket agent and we said, "Don't talk loud, but there's a guy back there" and I won't use the terminology we used and he immediately reached for the phone and called the police. I think he wanted us to stay there but we didn't want to stay there. So we went around to the loading dock and we were watching the police over the loading dock come in and get the guy. I'll always remember that incident that was our "civic" act.

Sandy: Your sister worked in Oceanside.

Henry: She worked at a place called Gene's Café. It was on Third Street, maybe two blocks up from Cleveland. Then it moved up to what is now Nevada, I think. The place I remember dear to heart was Mel's Café, the corner right across the street from the theater, the Crest Theater. It was Mel's Café and ever since I've always looked for a chilidog to equate that one! Never can find it. Is that hot dog stand still there?

Kristi: No, there's no Mel's Café. The Crest theater has been transformed into a church and what I think is Mel's Café is now a Mail Boxes, etc.

Henry: Is it the same building?

Kristi: I think it's the same building.

Henry: I was there at the Star Theater had its opening night. I think they showed "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?"

Kristi: I think it was "Moby Dick".

Henry: I remember seeing Moby Dick there. I remember "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter" because I was 15 at the time and I wanted to see Jane Mansfield! Anyway, those are some of the recollections I have of Oceanside. They used to have community fish fries underneath the pier restaurant, right at the surf. This was in my early 12, 13 or 14 years, some agency or group or somebody was having a great big fish fry and they had breaded, fried swordfish, which was really good. Us kids would get in line. They'd say, "just act like your one of the kids with your parents here." And we'd get in line; "Our turn!" and we'd sit there eating swordfish, having a good time.

Santa Fe ran the Del Mar Special, which wasn't the diesel locomotive; it was an old steam locomotive. So everyday there would be this steam locomotive go by with those olive green Pullman, Santa Fe cars on it and it would go down as far as the race track everyday. I remember again, Labor Day was the big weekend. Once there were three of them. Quite a weekend, quite dramatic to see that steam locomotive cross over that bridge.

We would around all the time, those many restaurants they had, we would go in the water all day, in and out, in and out. So once in a while we'd go in and rinse off. Many of the kids, I didn't, but many of the kids with these towels strapped around their waist. So it would be towel from here down. Many times people would go into the showers with their trunks on and then since they dried off they didn't want to put wet trunks back on, I always brought clothing with me, but some didn't and some would wrap the towel around there with nothing on underneath and the trunks they took off in their hand. So one late afternoon, Richard had gone in and taken a shower and we came across, Richard and I came across about 5 of the girls we knew. Now we're in our teens now, we're not little kids anymore, they said something, they challenged us with something, and Richard said, "well, one more word like that and I'll flash you!" and they said, "No! No!" Now, Richard had trunks on underneath but they didn't know that and I didn't know which it was either! And he said, one more word like that and I'm just to open the parachute! So they challenged him verbally, I forget what they said. Richard goes like this, and they all scream and they turn around and ran and screamed! And he had trunks on!