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Ruth Ann Hopper Sarracino

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by
Elizabeth Castle
in 2005

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Audiofile 2

Born in New Mexico—dad worked for the railroads and then came back to the reservation—applied for work when she came to the Bay Area—fear of Japan bombing Standard Oil—John L. Lewis opened stores for coloreds in North Richmond—Star Guild—part of a Catholic Church—President Eleanor Roosevelt's wife was selling war bonds—people would address her as Mrs. Chief at times—Four Winds Club, a social club—programs were created to help adults with drinking issues and children with adapting to a new school life.

Interview 1: April 12, 2005
Begin Audiofile 1

01:00:00:00

Castle:

Just start again by, tell me your name, the year you were born, and where you were born.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Okay, ready?

Castle:

She's talking to me.

Sarracino-Hopper:

My English name is Ruth Ann Hopper. My married name, I should say. My maiden name was Sarracino. Both of my parents worked for the railroad and got married, I guess, in the forties, and then I was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She came home to have me. Same with my sister. There are only two of us that are the siblings. She basically did the same thing, we were both born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Then later on we returned to Richmond.

Castle:

And what nation are you from?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I'm from the Laguna tribe, one of the nineteen different kind of pueblos in Laguna. My home is actually at Encinal, which is where the Laguna tribal reservation, one of the seven villages—

Castle:

That make up the whole.

Sarracino-Hopper:

That make up the tribe.

Castle:

What year were you born?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I was born May 1, 1948.

Castle:

Then your first few—how soon was it—did you spend time on the reservation, here at Encinal, before you—?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes I did. I got to know my grandparents and my aunt and her brothers and sisters, some returned from the war later on, and that was when we used to come home and also visit too. They would just go back and forth, you know, all the time. [telephone rings, interview interruption]

Castle:

So we were just talking about—so you were just born, in the last part of our interview. [laughter]
In Albuquerque, and you are the second of two girls, yes?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

So where were we? Continue to tell me about your life after birth, starting with Albuquerque.
Then what happened? You came home from the hospital? [laughter]

Sarracino-Hopper:

I came home from the hospital, I stayed here.

Castle:

You were here—how long were you on your reservation before you went?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Probably—

Castle:

You're not going to remember necessarily, but—

Sarracino-Hopper:

By the pictures I've seen, my mother took me back I guess, I was not nine months old. Then she brought us back again. Anyway, I remember the last picture she was going to show you was the lady carrying me on the cradle board at the oven. That was—they built their ovens at that time. Then because I wasn't in school, and we weren't in school yet, so we just were going back and forth. So we did grow up with our grandparents and all we knew was our Indian names and we talked Indian—they talked the language to us all the time. My grandma didn't speak English, and my grandfather, apparently, later on, as I got older, found out that he did understand and he did speak, but he spoke probably like six different languages. But we just never knew.

But anyway, going to school though was interesting. Even at the village where we lived in Richmond, everybody spoke their language. It really wasn't like English, like, well, it depended I guess, on the family home. In our family home my dad always spoke Indian to us and my mom. So it was like when you got to Richmond, you're still speaking the language and so when I first went to kindergarten, I guess I was like Irvin. I ran away from class. My neighbor that's older than me and my sister, he was a traffic boy, and the kindergarten room was right down at Perry School {?} all the way to the other end of the block. I went into class and I just came back out. I would get to the corner and he was just about to leave and I was crossing the street, and he would say, "Where are you going?" "I'm going home." "No you're not." Then he'd walk me back to my class, the first three days of class. He would come and check on me to see if I was still in class. [laughter]

Castle:

Oh really.

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was interesting because since I didn't grow up with Ruth and my grandmother and grandpa called me their granddaughter in Indian, and then my mother, same thing, in Indian.

Castle:

What is your Indian name?

Sarracino-Hopper:

My name is {? Roytsiasa?} and so I never really heard Ruth too much. Or I don't remember hearing Ruth until I went to kindergarten and you have to write your name of course, right? So she would show us how to write and stuff like that. That was kind of interesting because I don't really remember the Ruth part. [laughter] Because I grew up as Linda here. You know, all these years, going back and forth as Linda Lou, until I went to school, and that's kind of where it kicked in I guess, as far as my name was Ruth. Or they would call me Ann, once in a while, my grandma, my dad's mother. Other than that—

Castle:

So in kindergarten it would be a really strange experience because not only are you going in in this totally different language that you're hearing, but you don't even hear a name that you recognize.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

So that would be really alienating.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. And then of course, from then on, it's like you practice your writing, writing your name, and you hear it all the time. But it didn't work that way because when I would come home, even in Richmond, the neighbors and the kids knew me as Linda. Then we would go to school.

Castle:

Was Ruth on your registration papers? How did Ruth—

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, it was on my registration papers. It was on everything I wrote that was my paper, like for your assignments at school. I think I stayed Linda for a long time. Like my uncle that came, he knows me as Linda also. Everybody from here knows me as Linda. Then later on—don't ask me how I got Belle—but then my name was Belle. It was like Linda Lou, but it was Irvin's sister that was named Linda also, so they just called me Linda Belle. But here I'm Linda Lou. So even when I come home, nobody knew my last name, even when I got married they still thought I was a Sarracino, and they still called me Linda.

Castle:

So that's a lot of different names.

Sarracino-Hopper:

But you hear my mother though, she'll always say, "Ruth Ann." When she's introducing me, she'll say "Ruth Ann." Like say, I just now met you, she'll introduce me as Ruth Ann. Because as I got older, into like junior high school, and we would go—they would take us everywhere. Actually, they took us everywhere when we were little, though. She would introduce me as Ruth Ann, but everybody just like knew me as Linda.

Castle:

What point in school did you—

Sarracino-Hopper:

Even Irvin knew me as Linda. Like when I talk to him on the phone, I tell him, "This is Linda. Linda Lou, Linda Belle." He'll say, "Oh, okay." [laughter]

Castle:

So now he knows.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

You're comfortable now with all these different ways that you're named?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, because like when I come home, I'm Linda, when I go there I'm Ruth. Even though on my birth certificate it doesn't say—Ruth is in there, but that's not my first name. [laughter] Kind of interesting. Same with my sister. Everybody knows her as Buchy {?} when she's home, not Joanne. They know her as Joanne, because my uncle gave her that name, so she grew up with Joanne. A lot of time people just knew her as Buchy.

Castle:

So when you're in school, this is at Perry's? School?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Perry's School. {?}

Castle:

What point did you start to—how long did it take for you to learn English or start to feel comfortable in the classroom, and do you remember being treated any differently because of how people saw you?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, I think because I was kind of quiet and shy, so I really didn't. I had friends at school, I made friends and stuff. But coming home, like my mother would come—the mothers would come so far to meet us and then they would walk us home. Or like my dad would walk us to—half-way to school. He usually was at work, but on days when he wasn't he would walk us. Usually my mother would walk us. Some of the ladies they walked us to school.

Castle:

How far was school? What was the walk like?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was dirt road, just like home. [laughter]

Castle:

Just like the res.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Just like the res, dirt road. Maybe it was like three, four—six blocks long. It wasn't too far. Then when we got to junior high school, school was like thirty-six blocks away plus going through A and B Street, thirty-nine, going over the viaduct{?} forty—forty-two, forty-three, forty-five blocks if you wanted to do it. A lot of times we walked over the viaduct, caught the bus and went to school, but going to Roosevelt Junior High School we just walked to school.

01:00:10:00

Over the viaduct to school and back.

Castle:

Describe that for me. What were the railroad grounds like? Where did you live? Where did you eat? Where did you play? Give me a sense, geographically, of the space that you—what the Indian village was like.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Well, by the time all the families got family homes, they were duplexes, they were two boxcars and the middle was like—it was shaped like an H but the middle were basically a little block added to the middle which were the bathrooms and the showers and the kitchen. Everybody cooked on the wood stove. They had a woodpile that we all went to chop wood, or our fathers did, and bring wood home. That's what heated the water. We had a water tank, it was attached to the wood stove, and there was hot water all the time by building the fire. After that, it didn't change much, actually, after we got there and that I can remember, except that when they built the last new homes, which we were move in, but then since there was not very many Acomas left at that time, then they moved into those homes, which were more of a HUD housing kind of a style. They were also duplexes but there was only four—two duplexes that were four families, and then one more Acoma family at the end of that that lived in the style of boxcars that we had. That was when they tore down the Acoma—that became the Acoma village which was made of the older boxcars, which were that deep red burgundy color. That's where they had the community shower stalls for the women and men, showers and bathrooms. Then they tore—when most of the families from there retired or got laid off, most of them got laid off, at that time then they moved home. That left only those six, five families, left at that time. The rest were all Laguna. By the time 1970 there was only two families of Acoma left in Richmond. Those were the Garcias and the Sanchezes.

Castle:

Let's—we'll trace back through that chronology. If we can go back to kind of fifties sort of, in addition to the boxcar and the spaces, the homes that you're describing, what else? Was there a main meeting space? What are the other buildings that were involved in your daily experience?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The railroad decided, because the men requested, so they built them a hall, a meeting hall.

Castle:

The Santa Fe Railroad?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The Santa Fe Railroad. So that became our little community center. The men had meetings there. Us kids, the older kids, used to have a record hop. Then later on as we got older we still continued it and we had a dance on Friday night, we had a record hop. Sometimes the guys that played, which was a couple of them, then they would play, they would practice there, and play guitars and stuff.

Castle:

How old were you?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Hmm.

Castle:

Teenager?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Teenager. Sixteen at the time I got to go, kind of go more out and do things.

Castle:

Yes.

Sarracino-Hopper:

But at elementary school though, the teachers actually kind of worked with the parents, and our principal, he was nice. But what ended up at the elementary school was that they used to do field trips to the village, to the Richmond village. The teachers would—

Castle:

Take a whole class?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Take a whole class and do a field trip. The women would prepare food and bake bread and then they would go to this hall, our rec hall, our meeting hall, and they would serve them there and they would tell them about our tribe.

Castle:

Would you be a part of this? Like were you ever part of a class that went to your own village? I mean, when you think about it—

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, I don't think so.

Castle:

You just knew that that happened.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I just knew that that happened because the older kids at that time were ahead of us. Those were the ones that, at that time, they were in those classrooms that went on a field trip to the village. I don't know—I guess that was just arranged with the principal and I guess someone that knew that we lived there. Then junior high school was—and I remember a lot of the kids that were there. It's interesting, my mom and dad would walk downtown, like when I was in high school and they would stop and ask them, "Oh, you're the Sarracinos, right?" It was kind of like—from grade school we all remember each other still. I think because we actually really got along and our teachers, with the projects that we did.

Castle:

So wait, the teachers remembered you? Or others?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The teachers and the kids, the ones we grew up with.

Castle:

The non-Indian kids?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The non-Indian kids. They would see our parents down town and they would always ask them. Then we got to high school. At junior high they split us up and we ended up going to Roosevelt Junior High School, where our older brothers and sisters went to.

Castle:

They split us up.

Sarracino-Hopper:

They hadn't changed the boundaries of the school district yet. But when we got to high school, all our brothers and sisters that were older than us went to Richmond High. Then by the time I got to high school, in 1963 they changed the boundaries so I went to Harry Els {?} High School.

Castle:

Where was that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was on Thirty-seventh Street, on MacDonald Avenue.

Castle:

Was that a good change? Or was it bad?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was kind of interesting because you see the different—

Castle:

What was different?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I think it was kind of like, actually it's where we saw the difference in class.

Castle:

How is that? Describe that.

Sarracino-Hopper:

In class where you had a lot more Caucasian kids, white kids, going to school there that were from the hills that were considered kind of—where their parents' income were—

Castle:

More money?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. Then you had the kids from Point Richmond that were kind of at that level too. Then you had us kids that were coming—the Mexicans and the blacks and us going to that school, where Richmond High was more the minority, mixed minority school, where there were hardly any white students going to school there.

Castle:

Was—do you remember feeling—a lot of people, when they get older, they realize that they didn't have a lot when they grew up but they never really noticed. Did you get any sense, did this make you feel any different? Did you feel like you had less, whether you did or not?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, really, I guess we felt okay, because we didn't ask for much. I think it's just the way you are raised, and getting along with people and sharing to begin with. Being taught that way.

Castle:

Especially as a Pueblo cultural value.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, mm-hmm. But as kids living there we basically learned a lot. It was like—leaving the reservation really was like a little copy of our reservation there because we had a government, we had a curfew, the kids had a curfew. So we had to be inside. [laughter]

Castle:

The whole village?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The whole village had a curfew.

Castle:

What was that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was like no later than at ten o'clock. Before it was at nine. As we got older and whatever—because I think we were going out more with our friends from the city than our sisters and brothers that were older than us.

Castle:

I see.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Then, like my friends, my friends would come down into the village and pick me up and we would go to shows sometimes, and that went on in high school.

Castle:

These are not—what kind of background were these friends?

Sarracino-Hopper:

This didn't really happen until high school. I had three white friends, one black girl, one Chicana girl, and me. We used to tease each other, because she had a Cadillac, right, and she would drop all of us off, and they would come into the village and drop me off and once in a while pick me up. We would go to a show. One of the girls, we ended up doing stuff together and we ended up, during the summer, like, "Okay, let's become candy-stripers." So we went to the Red Cross and we went through this whole schooling thing, and then we ended up working at the veterans' hospital in Martinez all summer long. It was really good, though, because we got to go to every section of the hospital, work in the laundry room, we got to see the operations from the dome. We went into—we even—basically did everything, worked in the offices. It was a really neat summer. But we didn't get paid.

Castle:

I was going to say, how did you earn—what made you do that if you weren't earning? Was it for the experience?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, I think it was for the experience. And we had fun. Then we ended up working at the Napa state hospital, which was really interesting because it was really weird.

01:00:20:06

Every time you go through a door it's locked. We only worked there for the summer also. We got a chance to go back if we wanted to, during the holidays when we were out of school. Then I don't thing—we didn't feel that comfortable there, but it was interesting, to see how they treated people and their patients. They even had their own canteen outside the state hospital, the ones that were able to get out in the yard for a while and do stuff. Then my senior year, her and I signed up to work at the Richmond hospital.

Castle:

What was her name?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Sharon Key. Her dad—where did he work anyway? I think he worked for the—now I can't remember. Her dad played the guitar too and he used to like to tease us. Our other friend was Mary, that was in—they lived in Atchison Village, so they were part of that group of people that kind of like moved there also during that time.

Castle:

Who lived in Atchison Village?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Sharon Key and Mary Martinez.

Castle:

And what was the village? Who lived there?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Atchison Village was built there I guess after the war or during the war when they needed housing and stuff. It's been there ever since I can remember.

Castle:

Right.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Anyway, her and I signed up for Richmond hospital, so we used to work after school. Gosh, I think I've been working since I was sixteen, whether it was paid or not. It was just something that I guess I got to do. In senior year of high school I played football.

Castle:

You did!

Sarracino-Hopper:

We had a girls' football team.

Castle:

A girls' football team.

Sarracino-Hopper:

A girls' football team. I think the guys were mean to us sometimes because they would make us do the whole routine, and some of the girls were tall and we'd have to go bounce each other—they'd call a number and you'd go in the middle, you'd come out. Or the girl would be in the middle and you'd come out and bump her. They made us run that field and they made us exercise and stuff like that. But it was fun.

Castle:

There's not a lot of girls' football teams—how did this come about? That's pretty advanced stuff.

Sarracino-Hopper:

They used to have the powder puff football, flag football for girls, right? The year I was there—

Castle:

Took the puff away.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

So was it full-on tackle?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, it was full tackle. [laughter]

Castle:

What did your parents think of this?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Well, I don't think they really knew, because it was just at school, I didn't have to stay after school really.

Castle:

You didn't tell them?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Hm-mm.

Castle:

Do you think they would have had a problem with it?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It's in my yearbook though. I don't know if my yearbook's around though.

Castle:

Yes, I'd love to see that picture. Actually this reminds me. I want to ask you about coming of age and we talked a lot about how much time you spent with your father. At what point in the village—you've made quick reference to things, but there was quite an infrastructure set up in the village, and that it was a colony. Can you explain a little bit about the relationship between the village and the home reservation and then the structure of it, government-wise and security-wise?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I guess ever since I can remember they've always had a government. I know the history of basically how it came about. They elected officers and they had a governor, a lieutenant governor, a treasurer, a secretary. The {?} that they have here in the village.

Castle:

The who?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The meadowmus {?} they're the ones that are in charge of the village, like—nowadays, in this time, they're like the village cleaner—like if they're having a feast or something all the men have to go and work, or they do ditch work. A long time ago it was ditch work because they did a lot of fills and growing things. But nowadays they go around and clean the village to keep it clean. In Richmond, they had fields, so they grew corn, tomatoes—the Acoma side was near the Southern Pacific side by the fence, and the Laguna side was further towards the railroad overcrossing.

Castle:

So there was an actual separation between the Acoma and Laguna?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Different fields, yes. Because the Acomas lived in one end, but right next door to us. So there was actually, then became an Acoma village and then the Laguna village. But we did stuff together and all of the parents participated in stuff like that and doing things for us kids. Then later on this lady that worked for the Chevron company at Standard Oil, was—well, she was Catholic and I guess that's one of the things that her and her friend did, when she found out about us—and that was the older kids, like in what year—maybe the early fifties—and they would come and teach catechism. Then we all did a Christmas play. All us kids participated and our mothers made us our angel wings and halos and stuff like that. We all had parts to play and after that we all ate. That was before Christmas night, we had a play. Then on Christmas Eve, though, we would all still have our traditional stuff.

Castle:

Laguna traditional?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Laguna, yes, and Acomas also participated, but mostly the Lagunas had their stuff. The village was basically like home. You had a village, a community, that worked and shared and did stuff together. We had a meeting hall, which was kind—I guess you could call it later on, kind of like where they did some of their certain dances and cultural stuff and the women built their outdoor ovens. Acoma built one and then the Lagunas built one. My uncle that was first there, they had built their oven so that was her oven, but like my mother would ask if she could use it. Then the ladies got together and then they all built like a community oven, so there was two of them. It was interesting how they got the sand for it, because they had to have a certain kind of sand to build that oven. The sand they found was—I think it was on private property or something, so they had—I have to ask—government or whatever—so they went in to ask permission to haul sand from that place. That's where they got that sand from to build their ovens and stuff.

Castle:

So there was a lot of negotiation that was going on, maintaining Laguna tribal life in the city space, still means there's times where you have to deal with city jurisdiction. One of the things I'm interested in knowing is how, from what you remember, what was the relationship between the village and the city of Richmond? Were they involved in village life?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The language, the culture, fields like home.

Castle:

When you say fields like home?

Sarracino-Hopper:

You know, where you got to go and work. We used to come home and then we would work in the field with my grandpa. Or at picking time we'd load up the kids and we'd all go pick or irrigate with him and stuff like that.

Castle:

Where is this?

Sarracino-Hopper:

We passed it—

Castle:

You were here in Laguna.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Here in Laguna. They had two fields, one on the Acoma side by Southern Pacific, because Southern Pacific was right on the other side of the fence they built. It was kind of like our back yard. We had a back yard but that fence was Southern Pacific's on the other side of it.

Castle:

That was their rail yard?

Sarracino-Hopper:

That was their rail yard. Then we were on this side of the fence which all belonged to Santa Fe. The Acomas had their field by the Southern Pacific, like where their little workshop would be on that end, where I guess Southern Pacific, the engineers or the what do you call them, the switch guys, I forget what they're called. Anyway, they would go in that little place and I guess like report.

Castle:

The operators on the railroad? The cars would switch tracks?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, but it was like their little work place where they could go and have coffee and like it was their little work site. Santa Fe had, like the men, electricians, they had their shop, but they had a little place where they'd take a break. Anyway, the fields were on our end, but farther on, like going to school.

Castle:

This is where you grew stuff?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

For crops.

Sarracino-Hopper:

My Uncle Sam had his garden. I forget who else had a garden there. Anyway, he used to put me and his daughter in the wheelbarrow and he—the wagon, and he used to pull us and take us to the field and then we'd go and pick tomatoes or something. He grew corn, tomatoes, melons and stuff right there. Then later on, of course, we had tribal police on our reservation. Well, in Richmond, we had a man that we called a special officer, but he was the special agent for the railroad. They were the ones that like, if someone was riding in a boxcar and the men caught him, that's who would go to pick them up and take them wherever, or whatever.

01:00:30:05

Furey:

So {?}

Sarracino-Hopper:

So what happened then was that he was in charge of the yard. So police and City of Richmond had no jurisdiction, so they took care of the village, they were kind of like the tribal police. The city couldn't have jurisdiction, they couldn't do anything. A lot of times, the city didn't even know we were there, except the police though, later on, they knew we were inside the yard, but they couldn't do anything if anything happened, because it wasn't their jurisdiction, it was private property. The special agent was kind of like tribal police, because the city didn't have any jurisdiction.

Castle:

Do you recall there ever being any issues? Any criminal problems or any reason you needed to call the police?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, not really. Except when people run into the village, then the special agent would be the one to try to look or see what's happening, because I guess the city police would let them know that someone has come into the yard and stuff. He was the one that actually would do the arresting and stuff like that.

Castle:

So he was like a private security officer?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

Hired by the railroads. And it sounds like probably that there was an understanding with the Richmond, the police, locally.

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, they didn't know, because—I remember the special officer even telling him, “You have no jurisdiction here,” and the police kind of like, were hesitant, and he had to explain it to them. Which was interesting, that they had no jurisdiction into the company yard. Because what happened is that, I guess the Mexican kids had done something and they caught our kids, the boys, and they were bringing them, and then when the special officer got there he told them, “You can't take those boys, you have no jurisdiction.” He explained it to them so they left. It wasn't our—it wasn't the kids that lived in the village that did anything. They just assumed they were Mexicans. [laughter] They even didn't know really that we were inside the yard.

But the government part, as far as the governors of the village that were elected, and the lieutenant governors, they actually were the ones to settle stuff, or talk to the people, if there was, let's say there was a spouse dispute or something, where they weren't getting along. I remember them coming after my father when he was governor, to go talk to their husband or whatever. Or if anything was going wrong, like with their kids sometimes. They would bring it up at the meeting, when they had the regular meetings, I guess the government staff for the tribe. They would talk about it, and then like my dad would come home and we would be having breakfast by the time he would get back. Most of the families all sat down at breakfast time when they'd come back from the meetings. I know my dad talked to us about the meeting, what went on.

Castle:

He was out at the meeting all night?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, during the morning, they had them early in the morning before breakfast.

Castle:

Oh, really early.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. He would come home and he would tell us what went on at the meeting. Or he would ask us questions about the kids, or if we knew anything about stuff. Or he would remind us, “You know, there's a curfew.” [laughter] Or, they switched the time for the curfew.

Furey:

Kurt wrote in his dissertation that one of the worst forms of punishment was to send somebody back to the reservation.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, it was actually that strict. Because if you couldn't control your children, and in order for discipline and whatever, they would actually send the kids home. They had to find a place for them with their aunts or uncles, or you know. But that didn't happen too often.

Castle:

I was going to ask, how often did it happen? It did happen.

Sarracino-Hopper:

It did happen, but after that, I don't think—there wasn't really that much of anything like that again. But they do discipline though. They would sit their kids down and talk. But for us, the family part is that our relatives are there, and it's kind of like they have the right to discipline your children. Because it's your aunt, your uncle. It's not spanking them or anything like that, it's just sitting them down and talking to them. That's why we tell our children too, that if someone comes up to you and corrects you, or sees you doing something wrong and they lecture you, you just say, "Thank you," and it's up to you to take it and use it. You know how some kids are, "Oh, they don't know what they're talking about." But that's not what we teach our children, that they have to basically stand there and listen, and either take it in and learn something from it, because maybe they know that something happened like that before, or maybe they experienced something like that, and they're the ones that are going to tell you what's going to happen, what might happen. Anyway, they always talk to the kids though, and discipline them.

Castle:

By they, you mean the council, or governor?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The governor, the parents. That's why I'm saying the community was very close.

Castle:

I see.

Sarracino-Hopper:

They didn't, like basically—they always looked out for each other. Even their children, they always looked out for their kids. But the guys, when they turned sixteen, they had to attend the village meetings. Just like here, they have to attend the village meetings starting at sixteen.

Castle:

Just the guys?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Just the guys. Because women at that time were not really, they didn't go to meetings. You could basically say at the time they weren't allowed to go to meetings, until recently—like how many years now? Because of women's rights now. [laughter] They attend the meetings. It's interesting for me, because you grew up, like, say, women don't attend, but if you went to one of these village meetings, it was kind of funny because the women do really speak up. Sometimes, it's like it takes forever sometimes. It just depends on what it is. Sometimes it seems like nothing really gets done.

Castle:

What, now?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, sometimes like now at the village meetings, sometimes. But out there, as far as being out there all these years, the women never really went to the meetings. They basically stuck to the old—I guess you could say guidelines or whatever.

Castle:

Was it like division of—different roles?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, different roles.

Castle:

How would you describe those roles? What were the expectations of men and the expectations of women?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Well, actually, they are to share those roles. That was basically it, because they're supposed to support each other. Let's say my mother wanted to go back to school when she was young and my dad would basically support her. Instead of telling her, "No, you belong here with the kids," or whatever. Or washing dishes, the men helped, they shared their work. It wasn't like some tribes that I've noticed, where the women do all the work. "Oh, that's a woman's job." The men here didn't. The men out there were the same, they basically shared the responsibility in helping, raising kids.

Castle:

In terms of public governance though, it was still kind of—what I think is interesting that's hard, that's not often expressed, is that there are different ways of expressing or sharing power. Maybe not power, but certainly influence. You're not saying that just because women weren't present at the meetings, it didn't mean they didn't have a say in how the village ran.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Right. They basically did, because when the men went home they talked to—they listened to their wives at the same time. Because they're sharing that. And the kids, because that way you have input into what is going on also. Then the men take it back to the meeting, "Hey, my wife made a very good point here. Let me think about it." It's kind of like that. Then they go back to the meeting and then they present it and say, "Okay, we have a consensus on what we're going to be doing." It's kind of like they brought it home and the women did get to discuss it with their husbands. They share it with their family, in other words, to get that feedback into what was happening. I don't ever remember anybody saying, "Well, that's your job," kind of a thing. "Because you're a lady, this is what you're supposed to be doing." But growing up though, they do tell you, like to cook, you have to learn how to do certain things. They don't actually—they tell you in a way, but it's basically showing you. They're your mentor, they're your example of kind of like what you're going to be doing, growing up, supporting your family.

Castle:

And it's part of being a good tribal member, a good tribal person? Just your role, whether you're male or female, it's less about a role being demeaning, right? It's just more about you being a good part of a whole?

01:00:40:08

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, basically.

Castle:

I'm just trying to see if I understand it right.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I've never seen, like, at least in our family, or growing up, my grandparents, like fighting over something or whatever.

Castle:

The thing I really have to ask is—so you played tackle football in high school as a girl, and you also—I saw some pictures of you war dancing in men's regalia. That isn't something that a lot of other girls did, did they? How is it you came to do that? And did you ever meet resistance for that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, I thought it was fun. [laughter] Just competing. Because when I was growing up, I was quiet, I guess, or like I was the good kid on the block, because like, I remember the girls in the village, when they would say, "Oh, she's going to be a nun." Basically, I just didn't do anything bad. I guess growing up, having no brothers—he didn't put pressure or anything, just basically I did it. My sister went away to school. She stayed with my uncle, he wanted her to stay with him because he had one son and they had lost their daughter who was older than their son, so she went to Grand Canyon and went to school. From there then she went with my mother's baby sister to Heymouth {?} when she got her teaching credential at twenty. She taught at Heymouth High School. My sister was always kind of away at school. She didn't actually stay—

Castle:

She wasn't in the village with you.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Not all the time, yes, because she was away at school. She left when I was in the fourth grade. Basically, growing up, helping my dad chop wood, saw wood, stack wood, and dancing. When she was little too, we already were dancing. My dad—I guess just because my dad made us our outfits and whatever we used to hoop dance, war dance. Then basically as I got older, to me, it was fun. So I just used to—I learned all the male dances. My grandparents, when we came home, and I'd take my grandpa the drum and he would sing and we'd dance, and I'd get my grandma up or my sister would, and we'd get in line and she'd show us how to dance certain dances too, women's. Actually, we learned both, but I did more of the male dancing than my sister did. I think it was just all because I had no brothers.

Castle:

Do you remember times—do you remember any stories about people—because you're out dancing, people can't always tell if you're male or female, they assume you're male.

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, not when I was young, yes. [laughter] It was funny because my dad came home with us that time and they had Encinal {?} feast here and my dad said—

Castle:

That's the village feast?

Sarracino-Hopper:

That's the village feast. My dad said, "Ok, we're going to dance, we're going to participate and we're going to dance." I looked at him and I said, "Okay." So for whatever reason, all the rest of the people go to the kiva to practice to dance, but ever since I could remember when we were little my grandpa always took us from here to the plaza. [telephone interruption]

Castle:

We were talking about you came home to dance and you were saying that some people practiced in the kiva.

Sarracino-Hopper:

In the kiva, but as long as I can remember, we've always danced here and then they took us out from this house to the plaza. All these years we still do the same thing. I never asked my mother why, but my grandpa just kept us here and then took us from here to the plaza. Anyway, one year we came home, my dad came home, and he said, "Okay, we're going to dance," and brought all our stuff home. We were going to dance war dance, which usually no one really sees around here, danced too much. Except like in Taos they dance war dance because of the combination with the Comanches.

Anyway, we danced and my cousins just happened to come from Mesita {?} so they were standing there. The girls that were also standing by then, I don't know who they were, but anyway there was a bunch of girls standing by them and I came running through because I was late, because they had started out and I was the last one. I don't know if I came back or something or what. Anyway, I ran all the way back and I ran through the—because there was still the little opening before they closed it, you know when you go out to the plaza. I ran through there and we danced. Then we came back here. Then my cousin came and she was laughing, she goes, "Them girls still like you." I started laughing at her. I go, "What?" She goes, "Well, they kept saying, 'Oh, look at that cute boy, I wonder where he's from? Is he from Encinal?'" Then my cousin turned around and she said, "That's not a boy, that's a girl!" [laughter]

Then in California when they started the pow-wows in the Bay Area, we used to go dancing, my dad would sing and stuff too. He belonged to a drum group earlier, and then later on they got their own drum group which was called the Mocking Bird. There was only four men in that drum. I used to dance I'd sign up because they'd have contests, right? I would sign up, I think when I got to junior high school, I started to, like, "Okay, I'm wearing a war outfit, I'm going to sign up." So I would sign up. Nobody would say anything to me, right? Then I would dance and then if I won then it's like, "Who's that?" Then they come up and ask me, "Who let you dance?" I said, "Apparently you guys. I signed the book, no one said anything." See, when they looked at it, it said Ruth. It's a men's dance. It was a war dance, competition, ruffle dance, whatever. Because you wear a number and you sign your name with that number. I guess that's probably where they finally asked, "Who allowed you to dance?" I said, "Well, I signed up."

Castle:

"You didn't say anything until I won."

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, “You didn’t say anything when I signed up.” “Well, you can’t dance.” I go, “Why not?” “Well, you should be dancing with the women.” “Well, women don’t wear war outfits,” I said, “and I wear what these guys are wearing.” Then they’d have to say, “Well, we’re sorry that this contestant is—” How did they say it? Not withdrawn. I can’t remember how they used to say it. Anyway, then I would do it again. Then after that it was like, to heck with that. I would sign up any time they had a competition, I would sign up.

Castle:

So did they disqualify you?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, they disqualified me. They would disqualify me, and I would dance again. I remember dancing, well, several places they had pow-wows and if they had competitions I would sign up. And I’d win.

Castle:

And did they disqualify you every time?

Sarracino-Hopper:

They would disqualify me every time. Then the people that knew me, some of the people, they’d sit in the audience, “Boo, boo!” [laughter] That was fun. Then one year at Hayward State—not Hayward State, at Hayward, there was kind of like, kind of an amphitheater, a small one. It was—what was the name of that place? Anyway, that was the first year that there was this Sioux girl that came from the north and she wore just all leather with kind of fur, anyway, she had a fur hat on, that they wear up north, a men’s hat, and she was dressed in buckskin. She danced and then my friend from Nevada, we were laughing. I said, “Hey, why don’t you go dance? Let’s go dance!” So we all signed up, all of us, us girls. We all signed up and went out there and danced, competed with the men, and we all won. [laughter] But I swear, that Sioux girl was good. She looked like a man when she was dancing. She basically just had the style down.

Castle:

Was it a traditional dance?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was a traditional dance. I came in first, she came in second, and the girl from Nevada came in third. That was something, when they basically said, “Oh, wait a minute!”

Castle:

What did they do? Did they disqualify all three of you?

Sarracino-Hopper:

They couldn’t disqualify us because we won. It was really interesting. That was the first year that all women won that contest. She was really good though. The next time we competed with them at Marin. This time it was a Chippewa girl that danced.

Castle:

What years was this?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Those were in the late fifties. But she wasn't really—she just did it just to do it.

01:00:50:00

But I knew her. The other two girls, the girl from the north, she must have danced when she was young, because she was good. The one from Nevada, she kind of danced on and off, but when she got into her teens, she used to come but she wouldn't dance. I danced until I was forty-two, war dance. My last show I did was with my dad when he came back to Richmond. My nephew was there, and he said, "Okay, you two," he said, "I got a contract, this man wants us to dance." That's why he had gone to California. I don't know where he had met him. Anyway, so we went to—not Petaluma, it's past Petaluma. Anyway, we danced, and that was the last time I danced with my nephew and we did war dance and stuff. My dad likes to tease us, "You guys can still dance." [laughter] We tell him, "Yeah." That was the last time I danced full dress in men's outfit, was when I was forty-three. I still dance though, you know, just at the pow-wow or something. When my dad was still living we came home, and there's Taos, there's like the patterns and the rhythm stuff, but Taos is really fast. It's like—Kiawah's medium is like slow. Their fast is like—

Castle:

In the war dance?

Sarracino-Hopper:

In the war dance, the rhythm, yes. They're fast. The beat is just a little bit difference but my dad, he was making fun, and he got the drum and Ian {?} he was here—let me see, he was twenty-something, and my sister was here, she had come home too. My dad said, "Do you girls still remember?" My dad said, "Ah, I bet you can't dance." We said, "Yes we can, Dad." So my sister said, "Come on, let's go. Sing, Dad." He started the drum and she said, "Come on Ian! See if you can keep up with us." Her son. My dad started singing. He couldn't get started. Just the beat was different.

Castle:

It was too fast?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was fast. My dad said, "You girls still can dance, huh?" [laughter]

Castle:

So this is something you had done all the way from—you started when you were in the village?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I guess, I don't know. I know I was dancing in the picture at six. I must have started dancing whenever, just listening to my dad singing and watching him dance and stuff like that. Ian started when he wasn't even one. He was like, maybe, before nine months, after nine months. We used to laugh because he'd have to come and change his diaper and then go back out. [laughter]

Castle:

Go back out and dance.

Sarracino-Hopper:

But walking-wise, he could dance better than he could walk by himself. Because he wasn't even one yet. He would get out there and he would dance. Ever since then, I used to baby sit him and whenever I went dancing, we went to pow-wows, he was with us, and basically also dancing when he was young too. This last pow-wow I went to I was dancing and they did an honor song for the students, so we were dancing. I guess this old man, he competed in the traditional dance, and I finally figured it out when he came up after the contest, he won, right, and when he came to shake our hands—I guess he saw me dancing. He said, “Hey, you know what? You practice a little bit more,” he said, “you’re going to be good.” I was laughing, and I said, “You haven’t seen me in full swing yet.” Because I was just—because the women don’t really dance except for their fancy show dance and the girls kind of really dance around.

Castle:

But he had no idea that you were a ground-breaking dancer from a young age.

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was fun though. I just probably, after that I just did it to see what they would say, or to see if I could actually compete with the guys. Probably just to see if I could actually do it, because the world champion of war dancing came one year and they used to call him Woogie, and his name was George Watch Taker. He was the first place in the world’s competition. I was only, what? Maybe I was in high school, my last year. They told him that I danced. I said, “Okay, you guys are coming to—” because they were performing also, because they were doing their tour.

Castle:

Was this in Richmond?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It was in San Francisco. We went to San Francisco to the Indian Center, because that’s where they were. My brother in law’s uncle was the hoop dancer. His hoop dances were like eighteen inches. He was a small man anyway, thin, but he used to dance hoop dance.

Castle:

People who dance hoop dance, you have to pass the hoops over your body.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, and a good hoop dancer to me—I watch hoop dancers now, you know how the hoops look big or whatever? Good hoop dancer is an inch off your shoulder. That’s a good hoop dancer. If you can dance as fast as you compete in war dance, through those hoops, or just with the one hoop, you’re a good hoop dancer, because you keep that step and you’re going in and out of that hoop just as fast as you’re competing in war dancing. Anyway, he was good, and he was on the tour with him. That night we went and he was joking around, you know. He said, “You want to dance?” He said, “I’ll bet I could out dance you.” I said, “You probably could.” And he picked a drum and we danced that night. He said, “Dang, you’re good.” [laughter] I was laughing at him. My dad was always proud of me I guess, because no boys, right, only girl that could dance in the Bay Area. If you came, if my dad was living now, he’d bring out all the pictures. “This is my daughter, she used to war dance and get first place.”

Castle:
Right.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Anyway, I thought—it was competition for me at the same time, because it was like no other girl was dancing during those years. I think I just kind of enjoyed seeing if I could out dance the guys.

Castle:

So this is something you did all throughout school and high school?

Sarracino-Hopper:

All through school, yes.

Castle:

Obviously up until later in life. You were saying that some of the traditional—that there was both—tell me about spiritual life, if you will, because that allows you to talk both about if you went to church, what role that played, how that plays into the life of someone who is Laguna and how you brought together those, living in the village.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I guess basically at the same time, the majority of the tribe is Catholic. I don't think I would have ever went to catechism if the ladies didn't come from Standard Oil, come into the village to teach catechism. I don't think I would have ever gone if they didn't come in. At the same time, it's like, do I really remember what they taught me? At the same time, but comparing it, and I've never read the Bible. But comparing stories, they're similar. I could change the characters and it would be the same, kind of the same, especially with the emergence and the Bible when the people left at that time and they all spoke different languages, you know, in the Bible, when it says that. I grew up basically, because of my grandparents and my dad, that really believed in his religion, just hearing them and talking and praying and stuff like that, that I guess you just deal with both, basically. I mean, I was baptized Catholic, and then I made my first confirmation, I mean, my holy communion, then my confirmation. Other than that, and after that, then it's like, I probably went to church about twice a year. [laughter]

Castle:

In order to practice traditional religion in the village, was there anything built for that? Did you have a kiva? And what purpose does a kiva serve?

Sarracino-Hopper:

It serves a lot, but basically we had a meeting hall and the men actually used another part of the duplex housing for their regalia and stuff like that. Religion is like, everyday, it doesn't matter. Even the dancing is religious, and they tell you about the dancing, about what you do, what it's for. It's the whole living style basically, of religion. Everything is—everything means something.

Furey:

Can you give us an example of spiritual practice in daily life? I know we break off a little bit of food at the table.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Like for grace, when you say grace at the table. Oh, my sister is good at it, she basically does it every day. She'll get her cornmeal and go outside, before that. I don't know about now. I do that also. It's kind of like when you remember. [laughter] You're supposed to be doing this. Where I'm at in Richmond, I do, I come out of my house before the sun comes up and pray. Then for—because that prayer is for everybody, it's not just a family, it's the whole world, all the people who live in it, for you guys.

01:01:00:04

But even just—I guess the use of certain plants too, that are part of the religious thing. But like I said, it's every day life. I don't know how many people go out, like in the morning any more. Yet, even though they don't, it's still part of a lot of things they do inside the home. Of course they still have their religious dancing, which the men take part in, and the women do a lot of the cooking and preparing their stuff for them and things like that. It's just the whole thing.

Castle:

So in terms of Catholicism—oh, go ahead.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Then they did that at Richmond. There are certain dances that they could do there. The boarded up between the houses, they boarded it up when they were going to have certain dances so people couldn't see in, in Richmond, in the colony.

Castle:

Oh really?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

Let's stop here and switch tapes.

Begin Audiofile 2

02:00:00:00

Castle:

About daily life in Richmond growing up. Specifically, you've shared a lot of stories about how nice people were to you as kids. Maybe you can give that a framework of how old were you, and what is it you remember when you left the village, where are the places that you went? I guess we could start with the typical day question. How you got up, how you walked to school, how you came home—did you stop and get sweets somewhere? Why were people so nice to you, do you think?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I know I got up early because school started at 7:30 at Harry Els. [laughter] It started that early in the morning, so we got up no later than six, because then we had to get ready and we walked to school.

Castle:

How far away was school?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Like, I would say, maybe forty-five blocks total. Because where we walked from, the village, to the yard, past the doctor's office, up the stairs, across the Vie Dock, down the Vie Dock, across the street to Atchison Village. Then from there just walked straight up to Harry Els High School.

Castle:

Who did you walk with?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Sometimes, actually, most of the time by myself. I was kind of like in the middle, and the girl younger than me, at the time when I was starting school, I was the only one in that age group. So they were older than me, so they were a year ahead of me, like in the tenth and eleventh grade. But when the girls came from I think Richmond High, sometimes they came on the bus and got off there too. During the time, the early part of that tenth grade year, I used to catch a ride with the Sanchez boy across the street. Especially during the winter, his dad would drop us off at school. Then after that, I would walk home or catch the bus from high school. I think I got home about 3:30 when school was out, no later than 4:00. By the time I got home—because my dad got home at 3:30. By the time I got home, we were ready to eat. Then after that I'd go and do my homework, or if my dad needed help I'd go help him.

Castle:

What kind of things did you help your dad with?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Like bringing in the wood, or going to the woodpile, collecting wood, or if he chops there, stacking it there for him on the cart. Then walking back and helping him stack it in the wood shed and stuff. But just all the things—because he even had a garden on the side too. He had his own small garden on the side too. He's the one that basically did that stuff. As I got older, I think, like from eleventh grade to twelfth grade, I still helped, but I didn't do as many chores. Then I ended up having to learn to make oven bread and cook and stuff because my mom, when she went to the hospital or when she came home, then my dad and I were by ourselves so I ended up—because I used to help her, but then I ended up learning how to do the whole thing, and make Easter pudding that everyone was talking about, and tamales.

Castle:

Are these things you hadn't done before?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, I really hadn't done it. I would just watch everybody. I would watch. Because when we came home they were always making stuff and then I learned how to make cinnamon roll bread and put it in the oven and stuff like that. Then sewing, I had a sewing class. Actually I learned how to sew in the eighth grade, because in seventh grade I took shop. [laughter] I had shop class.

Castle:

Were there a lot of other girls in shop class?

Sarracino-Hopper:

A few, there was a few. Anyway, I took shop. I didn't want to take home-ec. Then I did in the eighth grade, I took home-ec at Roosevelt Junior High School. They had us cook whatever things for the event, turkey. We learned to make pies, pie crust, and learn measurements and stuff like that, when you're making stuff. The other half of that, the other half of the year in eighth grade then, we had sewing, so I learned how to sew. Not that I didn't know how to sew, but it was part of the class. I learned how to make clothes with no patterns, like the—I can't remember what it was—the facing, inside, so without a pattern. We learned how to make facing and stuff like that, without a pattern, make stuff. When I was little though, I think by the time I got to the fourth grade I was already sewing. Sewing traditional costumes already. My mother taught me how. So I was already making things that needed to be used for dancing or sacred dancing, things that other people can't see. There are certain stitches you learn, certain things you can't tie knots in. It's a special kind of—those were special. The ones with no knots. I learned that when I was little. I guess by the time I got to the sixth grade, in between there then I learned to embroider. I used to embroider. My classmate, he was a white guy, and he embroidered. He didn't have a father, he had a mother. She taught him to embroider I guess. He used to come from Perrys School, after school, or on the weekend, he'd bring his little bag, and he'd ride his bike, and he'd come and knock on the door. My mom, she used to laugh at me. She said, "It's your friend Norman." [laughter] And he would come in. We'd sit on the porch and we'd sew, we'd do embroidery.

Castle:

What grade were you in?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I think we were like in the fourth—between the fourth and the sixth grade, because he was my classmate for a couple of years. His mom would like, I guess, call my mom once in a while, "Is Norman there?" Because she would miss him. Then the two Spanish boys, Henry Romirez—he was our newspaper boy. After he found out that us kids lived there, he used to come down and they would play baseball with us. On the other side of the second row they had a court, Mr. Sanchez had put in a basketball—he made a basketball ring. He made the whole thing for us, so we used to go play basketball in the back, and play baseball back there. I thought it was fun because the guys would come from school and they would come and like play baseball with us. Norman was the first one that used to come to the village. Out of all the kids—except Linda when she got older—during elementary school he was the one that first, out of the village person that would come in and visit, as far as kids our age. He was my classmate and he used to come and he would bring his—

Castle:

Just this young white boy coming to embroider.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes! [laughter] I'm sure he didn't show his embroidery when he was coming in. He would pull it out and we would sit there. My mom and his mother would talk at school.

Castle:

They were friendly?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes they were friendly, his mom was friendly. It was funny though. He would come. The first time he came though, you know, it's like you're shy, and it's like, he's knocking on the door and he asked for me and my mom said, "Norman's here." Because she met—my mother would go to the PTA meetings and she would see the kids, or come to our classroom if they ever gave talks. I would always kind of, I didn't know him that well at that time. I would always tell him, because my cousin lived down the row, and her name was Bobby Ann Sarracino, and said, "Oh, I'm doing something, go see Bobby Ann." [laughter] I would send him down the road! Then she'd talk to him and they'd talk. Later then, after, I guess I was doing something anyway at school—we were probably doing something and that's probably where he saw me embroidering but I didn't know he embroidered. But then he would come and he'd bring his bag and that's when we would sit on the porch and embroider. Then I guess in junior high school, basically I think we had the first yearbook too, I think we worked on the first yearbook at Roosevelt Junior High School because we never had a yearbook. The last year I was meeting there we had a yearbook before I went to Harry Els High School.

Castle:

Before we move from that, I was wondering when—here you are, you're in this very segregated space, where there's very positive community feelings but it's all Indian. When did you first become aware of race difference or cultural difference? Was it positive, negative? What are those memories like?

Sarracino-Hopper:

They weren't bad though.

02:00:10:00

Castle:

Can you locate them to a special, particular incident?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I think it was like in the—by the time I got to the third grade and we had to have partners and stuff like that. They used to teach us folk dancing and stuff like that and we had to have partners. I think that's when we used to get teased, a lot of us from the village, because they would say, "Oh, you're Chinese." Like, squint their eyes, like that, and we just looked at them. It didn't bother us though, I guess, because we used to get teased.

Castle:

Were these white kids?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Black kids, Mexican kids, all the kids.

Castle:

Did they know you were Indian? Did they have any concept of that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, but when they found out we were Indian it was a whole different story. [laughter]

Castle:

In what way?

Sarracino-Hopper:

In that basically, in a way, it's like you—it's not saying that they were afraid of us kind of, but they kept their distance. They basically—they were friendly though, after they found out what nationality we were.

Castle:

Why do you think they kept their distance? What was it?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I think they were afraid of us once they found out who we were, because you know, TV, cowboys and Indians were still playing at that time. We used to watch Gene Autry and what's his name, Gabby Hayes, Hop-along Cassidy. Those were the ones they used to play together, Dale Evans and Roy Rogers. They were still cowboys and Indians, I remember, because the kids at school used to have cap-guns in their belts and stuff like that. I think when I got to junior high school I didn't have a problem though because it was all mixed.

Castle:

It was very diverse?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, it was. So we all got along at school. There was not really any kind of—except one Spanish girl, she had long hair too, and I always got called into the office, and my counselor would always say, “What are you in for?” And I would say, “I don't know, what am I in here for?” And he would tell me and I'd go, “That's not me.” Then I'd have to stay for detention.

Castle:

They wouldn't believe that it wasn't you?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Then the next time something happened—I guess she got in a fight, and so I got called in and he said, “What were you doing out there? They reported you.” I said, “Me? Not me.” I go, “I know,” I said, “can I go and come right back?” He said, “Where are you going?” I said, “I'm going to class, but I'll be right back. Can I go? I'll show you.” So I went to class and I got Ruth out of class and I took her with me, and I said, “This is the one that was fighting, and this is the one that I'm always doing detention for.” She just looked at me and smiled, right?

Castle:

She's getting away with it.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, she was getting away with it. Finally he looked at her and said, “Oh I guess I can see that they would mistake you for her.” Except she wore glasses, I didn't. It was funny.

Castle:

He wasn't very apologetic?

Sarracino-Hopper:

That was the first time—actually, twice, I think junior high was my most exciting year.
[laughter]

Castle:

Why is that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Because—my mom made me laugh, she goes, “Okay, if anybody gets you in trouble or you get into trouble, don’t say nothing, just walk out of that school and come home.” I said, “You’re serious?” She said, “Yes. Just walk out and come home and I’ll be right at that school.” And the parents were. Even when their grandchildren, our kids, my sister’s kids and my kids, my kids were fine, but if anything happened, my dad was right down at the principal’s office, dean’s office, just in case. We couldn’t make it ourselves, we were working, my mom and dad would go to the school. At school, I wasn’t doing anything, I was just sitting my role. This girl was messing around with this guy. She threw the comb, right? So all I did was pick up the comb and give it back, which I shouldn’t actually have done. But I got caught with the comb, because I was passing it, right? He kept saying to be quiet and I was sitting back there. He was a white teacher and he had an attitude anyway, because a lot of kids didn’t care for his class. It was a history class. Anyway, he goes, “Sarracino.” We’re all like, “Oh, shoot, what?” He goes, “What are you doing?” I said, “Nothing, I didn’t do anything.” “Yes you did, I saw you.” I go, “No you didn’t, you were facing the blackboard, then you turned around when I was handing the comb because it fell.” But actually they were messing around. He said, “No, you were throwing that comb.” I guess he heard the comb dropping. [laughter] “You were the one that was doing it.” I go, “No I wasn’t.” “Don’t talk back to me!” I looked at him and I walked out of class. I just remembered what she said, so I walked out of class. I went straight to my counselor and I sat in his office. He saw me coming in and I sat right down and he said, “What are you here for?” I said, “You’ll see in a minute.” Sure enough, here comes my teacher straight down the hallway. He saw me sitting there and he looked at me. He goes, “Don’t you walk out of this class.” I said, “Well, I’m sorry, but my mother told me whatever happens to leave the classroom and go to your counselor and have him call me and she’d be right here.” My counselor looked at him and he goes, “What did she do?” He was telling him, I go, “No I didn’t.” See, he already knew I was getting blamed for stuff anyway, because of the incidents earlier. So he said, “Well, okay, it’s alright, she can stay here.” So I stayed there and I was talking to him.

Then I went to English class, right? And right now I don’t remember what happened in English class, and maybe just from that class or whatever. But anyway, I went and got blamed for something in that classroom. So I got up, walked out, went back down to my counselor and sat there. [laughter] I told him, “Why don’t you just call my mom? I didn’t do anything.” My English teacher, he wasn’t bad though, he was a pretty good teacher. He called my mom. He goes, “Well, your mother will be up tomorrow. She has an appointment.” I said, “Okay.” So the next day I went to school, went to my classes, got to my English class. My English teacher said, “Oh, I met someone today.” I go, “Yeah, my mom, huh?” He goes, “Yes. I don’t know why, but I thought your mother was English.” I looked at my English teacher and I go, “Do I look white?” He goes, “Well, no.” He said, “But your mother writes so well.” I go, “Because my mother writes well,” because they had an accent kind of at the time. He goes, “So that doesn’t make like

she has an education or what.” I was telling him. “No, no, no.” I guess he didn’t mean to say it that way, you know. But I guess just because that’s what happened.

Castle:

That’s what happened.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, I go, “Dang, just because my mother writes well he thought she was English.” [laughter] I was laughing, I told my mom when I got home and she was laughing. I said, “That’s kind of weird.” That’s why I told him, “Do I look English?”

Castle:

And you called him on it, too.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes I called him on it, too.

Castle:

Did he act with some embarrassment?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes he did. Especially when he saw my mother walking in to see. She goes, “Yeah, I wondered why he was kind of—your teacher is nice though.” I think he was just surprised to see her because she wasn’t English, when he talked to her over the phone I guess. Because he said, “I met your mother but I thought she was English.” Because she writes very well. I guess—I don’t know what she did or what, but—and I can’t remember if she sent a note back with me really. Anyway, he saw her writing. I don’t know if he had her fill out anything either, or ask her to do whatever. He said her penmanship was really beautiful. I was laughing and I said, “And then?” He goes, “Oh well, we talked about it.” I said, “And then?” He goes, “Well, I guess you don’t have to stay for detention.” I said, “Well I shouldn’t have to because I didn’t do anything to begin with.” I guess that was just my bad year in the eighth grade.

Castle:

Misbehaving? [laughter]

Sarracino-Hopper:

Misbehaving and it wasn’t even me. Then like—the same girl, I went to the gym, right? I went to the gym, two black girls came out, and the two white girls that I was friends with that had the Cadillac, we went to school at junior high school too. I come out of the locker and I saw them, I saw them talking. I was carrying my books and they came out. They came out, right, and they walked in front of me and they talked smart and stuff. I was standing there and I go, “I didn’t do anything, what are you talking about?” “Well, you did such and such to my friend.” I go, “That wasn’t me.” And they go, “Yes it was.” So I said, “Okay, all right, what are you going to do?” They pushed me, right? So I put my books on the fountain, right? And the two white girls came and they said, “Don’t touch her.” They looked at them, and they were already black and white already. They go, “You know what? If I were you I would not mess with her. She’s not Mexican, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

02:00:20:03

They told them, the two. They looked, “What are you talking about?” And she goes, “No, she’s not Mexican.” Then they got smart and said, “Well, what are you?” I said, “I’m Native American, I’m American Indian. And I didn’t do nothing. But you want to go to it? Let’s go.” They just looked at me like, “Oh no, okay.” Because the two girls were standing there and they were saying, “Well, we don’t have to do anything, but we will back her up.” It was funny because they were my two friends and they were white. [laughter] Because there was already that kind of thing already, but basically everybody got along fine, it’s just that when somebody messed with something. But see, I always got blamed for something. I was never there, it was the girl that wore the glasses. [laughter] It was funny. That was my worst year at school in the eighth grade.

Castle:

So those two girls were threatening basically, they’re pulling out the, “You don’t know who you’re messing with,” and build up the fact that you’re Indian, and being Indian means that, you know, you’re a threat?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, because North Richmond is considered bad at that time. Parchester Village, you know? At that time, in Richmond. It was so funny though because some of the kids that went to school with us, I don’t know, somebody must have had something with one of the Indian kids or one of the adults. All that I remember saying, when we were in school too, “Don’t mess with them, they’re Indian.” It’s almost like someone saying, “No, you just don’t mess with them, they’re crazy.” [laughter] They don’t care, they’ll beat you up. They just never bothered us.

Castle:

So there was an advantage to the stereotype.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, I guess so, at that time, sometimes it was.

Castle:

It’s still dehumanizing to a certain degree.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Right.

Castle:

Because it’s like—did anyone ever say anything like, “Oh, they’ll scalp you.”?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Junior high school, same year, it’s like, “Oh, you’re Indian. Is your daddy a chief? Do you live in a teepee?” And when I got to Berkeley, I couldn’t believe it in the dorm, they were—the kids would tell me, the students, when they’d come in, “I don’t believe this, the guy asked me if my dad was a chief.”

Castle:

A university student?

Sarracino-Hopper:

A university student! I go, “Dang! You guys are still going through this.” And my kids went through it too. They went through the same thing at elementary school at Point Richmond. They thought that they were a different nationality. My son made me laugh. He said, “Mom!” I go, “What?” He goes, “These two kids were bothering me.” I go, “For what?” He said, “Because,” I didn’t like it, he goes, “But I didn’t do anything.” I said, “What did he say to you?” He goes, “Well, that black kid was telling me that I’m Chinese and I told him, ‘No, I’m American Indian.’” He kept pushing his eyes back and saying, “Ching ching ching,” songs like that to him. I said, “Well, what did the white kid do?” He said, “He was doing the same thing.” I said, “Oka7, when you go back to school tomorrow, if they do the same thing to you, you say, ‘So what? I’m American Indian, at least I know what tribe I am and where I come from. What kind of white are you? Or what kind of black are you? Do you know your heritage? Do you know where you come from? Because we’re all supposed to get along, it doesn’t matter what color you are.’” Anyway, my son said, “I told them.” I go, “What’d they do?” He goes, “They didn’t do anything, they just looked at me.” [laughter] Kind of a thing.

Basically, I was laughing, I said, “I shouldn’t have told him that.” But basically, I said, “They do come from somewhere, they have a heritage. They’re all different races whether they’re white, they’re Swedish, Irish, whatever,” I said, “they come from somewhere. And so do the black kids. Just that for them they were brought here,” I said, “by other people. But they may have lost some of their heritage and they may not know exactly what tribe or which section of African they originated from, or from wherever, but they do have that heritage.” I told him. “So people are different, so you just have to get along. And just ask them, too, if you’re not sure. Where do you come from? Do you speak a different language?”

It’s interesting though because my mom and them, when I grew up, my mom and them spoke Indian to us all the time, even in Richmond. And the neighbors, they always talked together. But whatever reason, we don’t speak fluent—or I don’t—I speak enough to get me by, but I can understand the language. I can tell you what they’re talking about. I don’t know. My dad never pushed it. He just said, “Education is important.” I think also with the fact that they couldn’t speak English when they were going to school, they didn’t want their children to basically go through that kind of thing at the same time. But they also told us, “You need to learn, because that’s what you’re going to use so you can understand other people. Learn from it, and then use it.”

Castle:

Right, it’s an important tool.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

The thing is, what’s pretty amazing is that your parents continued to speak their language even though most of the forces in their life tried to beat it out of them, psychologically and physically.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, really.

Castle:

If you manage to continue to speak it without a lot of damage—because I know a lot of people who won't speak the language even if they know it.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, that's true, some of them don't.

Castle:

In other tribes and such. But it's still going to affect you. Then, you know, they're people with jobs, just trying to raise kids, we always wonder, "Why aren't you passing on the language?" Well, think of how hard it is to kind of maintain a completely bi-lingual house, so that you will make sure that you're fluent both in English and in {?}

Sarracino-Hopper:

Some of the girls married other tribes, so it's like they can't speak their language either. Same with me. But my husband, when we got married, he had to attend meetings, because we lived in the village, because he worked for the railroad. He would come home and say, "Why are we going to the meeting? I can't understand a word." Because they speak their language in the meeting, they still carried that culture and that language with them, and it still stayed there. My husband would come home and say, "Why am I going to the meeting? I don't understand one word they're saying." I said, "That's why they have an interpreter. You're supposed to ask him, 'Excuse me, what did you just talk about?'" I said, "You can do that if you want to."

What happened was that when they came back to the house my dad would explain to him what they were talking about, you know, in English. When he would come to the house out of courtesy, my parents won't speak their language, they'll talk English to him. If I go over myself they'll talk Indian. They talk Indian to the kids, so they just know a little bit here and there. It is true, it is up to the parents to teach their kids. They can dance though, they know how to dance our dancing and they learned their father's dancing. They know, like, I think a couple words in his language.

Castle:

When you're back in the—I'm just thinking about village life and Richmond and some of the things you just mentioned—you weren't really around to observe at that age, how Richmond transitioned from World War II boom back. How this massive influx of people during World War II—you're there, from your experience, is there anything you can kind of remember about how Richmond settled in after the war and the impact of the industries ending or scaling back, and maybe how that affected your family in particular?

Sarracino-Hopper:

School wasn't bad, but going to town wasn't really bad—I think my dad made a lot of friends with the people that worked in the stores, when they did shopping. But they didn't—at that time they were called colored people. They had a curfew, even when we were young.

Castle:

Who's that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

What they called black people, colored people, at that time, that was the term that was used when I was growing up. They were called colored people, not blacks. Black, the term, came in later but it was basically colored people. Then my mother would tell us too, you know, that's because, having to do with segregation. I think she told me it was Eisenhower, or was it Truman at that time? When they—she said, after that she said, “Now you see them a lot more on the street, and after a certain hour.” Stuff like that, and restaurants were—when we used to go to the restaurants too there weren't any in the restaurants when we were little. And like in the soda shop we used to go to, there were basically just white people.

02:00:30:01

Then we used to go to this one on—

Castle:

But you never had a problem? It's interesting, because it really is about black identity or colored identity. Obviously you're a dark-skinner person, but you were never mistaken for someone who was colored.

Sarracino-Hopper:

No. Basically just Mexicans. Everybody thought we were Mexicans. [laughter] We all got a long.

Castle:

What about neighborhoods?

Sarracino-Hopper:

We used to have to walk from elementary school. So at that time it was—I guess the white people had moved out and the black people had bought homes on Pennsylvania Avenue. They were fine, they were friendly. I think it kind of depended on where they came from, like from the south, what state they came from. There seemed to be a difference in where they came from. Their attitudes and how they treated people. A lot of them during that time were very friendly. There was a lady that lived on Fourth Street, my mom, when we'd come from the store—I don't know how she met her—but we used to stop and they would exchange—she would give my mother a plant and the next time we would go by my mother might give her a plant to exchange plants and stuff. She was a nice lady.

Then coming from Perrys School on A Street—B Street, a little ways down there was—what was that store called? We just called it the Colored Store because colored people owned it. So when we went from the village that was the closest little store to where we lived besides Second Street, which was owned by Portuguese people. Then Fourth Street, by MacDonald, was the grocery and the meat counter and stuff like that. Second Street had a meat counter also. But like when the guys would ride their bikes, if their mother sent them just to get something, a specific thing, they would just ride to the colored store. It actually had a name, but I can't remember right now.

Anyway, we just called it the Colored Store because it was owned by black people, and that's where they would go just to pick up something if they needed one item or something. The guys would ride their bikes to the store right there. I know we shopped at the Second Street little market and Fourth Street market at that time.

Castle:

So was Richmond divided up? Do you remember other neighborhoods going into—were there kind of white, ethnic neighborhoods? Did people live together around their ethnic identity or culture?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Kind of, because there was North Richmond, there was Parchester and they were all black. This side of Point Richmond was all white. The hills were all white. It's kind of like, towards out end a little bit, from Pennsylvania, the last houses were Spanish. And a house over here was Spanish.

Castle:

So Spanish speaking?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Spanish speaking.

Castle:

Was it Hispanic people or Mexican?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Probably Mexican.

Castle:

This is where we're using some contemporary racial language to describe it then.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Right. At that time, well, all we knew was basically Spanish people were Hispanic at that time. Because we came from here, so they always used the term Hispanic people.

Castle:

That's what you used to describe?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Or Spanish people. Mexican, to me, wasn't really used that much. The term Hispanic, basically, I think more than anything. Because they spoke like the people here. [laughter]

Castle:

Right.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I mean, they had their own—kind of like sections. It just depended. As you walked, you kind of saw the difference. Living in the village, it's all Indian, right? So when we walked to the store, you just kind of notice where people live and what group of people were there. But they were, they had their own little sections where they lived. As far as I know they actually got along, basically. Went walking downtown and whatever. They seemed to be okay. Let's say, on this side of Richmond, everything was fine. Maybe not on this side of Richmond, it was just a little bit bad.

Castle:

Now is bad a reference to crime?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

Or concern? Was it actual crime or was it more concern over crime?

Sarracino-Hopper:

A little bit.

Castle:

Because there's often paranoia attached to this.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. For us it wasn't because we didn't care. I mean, it was like, "You're people," so we didn't have any issues as far as race. But I guess the people that lived kind of near each other, and like a lot of people were afraid of North Richmond. But it didn't seem to bother any of us really, I don't think. At least during the time I was growing up, it was already basically everyone was getting along except for a few things. But it was interesting, too, because you had Oakland, then you had North Richmond. They didn't get along, from East Oakland, they didn't get along with each other for some reason.

Castle:

You mean the black communities?

Sarracino-Hopper:

The black communities. By the time I was going into high school.

Castle:

How did that manifest itself? How was that something you observed?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I guess just because the kids in school, you know when they talk about it, and then you see them not getting along or whatever. They talk about it at school.

Castle:

Okay. [to Brendan Furey] Did you start to ask something?

Furey:

In some of the oral histories we've collected until now, people have painted this narrative that everything was—in terms of racial relations—rosy during World War II, and then by the sixties with the civil rights movement and race riots that things changed, and race became an issue.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I guess it did.

Furey:

Would you agree with that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

A little bit, because you had the Black Panthers and the Hell's Angels and they were all in Richmond. [laughter] Yes, I guess you could say you could see people—but I guess in a way—I knew they were there and I knew Hell's Angels were there.

Castle:

You were twenty in 1968 when the Panthers were two years into their organization.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Right.

Castle:

And like you said, they were in Richmond.

Sarracino-Hopper:

They were in Richmond. Actually, even before they became well known, they were already kind of a little group already.

Castle:

They were known to you in Richmond?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

For what? What kind of things were they doing that were noticeable?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I guess because they were out there.

Castle:

On the streets, you mean?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Kind of. I guess it's something normally that other blacks wouldn't do, kind of thing. It's like Hell's Angels, you didn't know who Hell's Angels were then either, until you kind of hear about them in school, or what they've done from the newspaper or whatever. I do know that they were there though, just like on Cutting Boulevard and on Twenty-third and where Hell's Angels used to have their little club thing.

Castle:

Where was that? On Twenty-third and Cutting?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No, on Twenty-third and—passed {?} and there was another group before the Panthers. They used to be on Cutting Avenue, what were they called? They had—oh, shoot, what were they called? Because there was a fish market on that site also, on Cutting.

Castle:

Another group like a race-based group?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. They were blacks, but they had a—they used to wear their jackets. Oh shoot, what were they called? This was when I was in high school.

Castle:

They had jackets?

Sarracino-Hopper:

They had jackets.

Castle:

That had some kind of logo on them?

Furey:

Could it have been NAACP members?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No.

Castle:

The Muslims?

Sarracino-Hopper:

No.

Castle:

Because that's the time when you would have gotten the Nation of Islam also, more prominent, but other than the Black Panthers, that's a hard one.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I don't know—

Castle:

The Black Liberation Army didn't wear jackets, they were underground.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, but this group had jackets and they used to be right in that section on Cutting, on lower Cutting, because there was a fish market there. I don't know if that was—I guess basically where they actually hung out and whatever. They had their—I don't know if it was the clubhouse or whatever. They were there at that time. I guess it was—well, let's see.

02:00:40:01

Who else was there?

Furey:

In the sixties there were a couple of small race incidents on MacDonald. A couple of businesses were—

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes, they broke their windows and stuff.

Furey:

Do you remember that?

Sarracino-Hopper:

I just remember the windows being broken, but I don't remember what year actually it was. Because when we were growing up, by the time I came of age, I think, junior high school—because they used to cruise down MacDonald Avenue, the white kids used to cruise. Then pretty soon, as we got into high school, then it was a mixture of kids. There was a mixture of blacks and Chicanos and white kids that used to cruise MacDonald. Because I remember when we used to go shopping and we'd be in town and all of a sudden at a certain time there would be cruising up and down MacDonald Avenue. There was no low-riding at that time, just driving back and forth.

Furey:

Then after the incident, the race incident, the police became more of a presence?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. [laughter] Even now, you see all their little police stations here and there.

Castle:

Sub-stations?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Sub-stations, yes.

Castle:

You were talking about high school and the increased races that would cruise the boulevard. When were you allowed to—when did you start dating?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Actually I never dated.

Castle:

Okay.

Sarracino-Hopper:

I was just like one of the gang, kind of thing. It's like, when my sister—before—let's see, when did she come back? She left when I was in the fourth grade. She would come home during the

summer, or like when my mom—we went after her to bring her back to visit. The kids in the village, it was funny, they did, like, in a way, say like, “Who’s going?” And if we were going, it was okay, they could go. Because my cousins would come and say, “Let’s go.” “I don’t want to go.” “No come on, let’s go!” “I don’t want to go.” “Well, I can’t go if you don’t go.” “Why can’t you go?” “Because my parents said if you guys aren’t going, I can’t go.” I think that’s why they used to tease me, because it’s like, “You’re the goody two-shoes, you’re the good girl,” kind of thing. Because the boys across the street, they used to tell my sister that, too. They’d come and, “Let’s go!” She goes, “Why?” “Because. I can’t have the car unless you’re going.” Same way with the Acoma guy down the street. He’d say, “Let’s go to the movies.” One time—I thought we were going to the movies, right, I said, “Oh, okay.” “Come on, Belle, let’s go to the movies.” I was laughing after it clicked, right. I said, “You want to go to the dance, right?” I said, “Okay, if you’re going to go to the dance, just don’t leave me, okay?” Because I remember he had a girlfriend that lived in—he’s still married to her—no, he’s not. [laughter] He’s not married to her. Anyway, we would go, we’d pick up his girlfriend and then we’d go to the dance. Same way with my cousin. He’d go, “Let’s go to the movies.” I was laughing. I’d go, “What movies?” I’d go, “Where are you going?” I’d go, “Why do you want to go to the movies?” “Because.” He did the same thing. We went to go pick up his girlfriend, you know? I was laughing because then they would come and say, “Let’s go to the movies.” “No, you want to go to the dance, I don’t want to go.” “Come on, let’s go!” He goes, “We’re going to the dance.” I go, “Nah, I don’t want to go.” He goes, “I can’t have the car unless you go.” [laughter] I guess the parents trusted us. The parents in the village, I guess they trusted us.

Castle:

You and your sister?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Me and my sister.

Castle:

Does that have to do with your dad’s and mom’s status too, do you think?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Probably. Because they knew my dad was—

Castle:

It’s tough when your dad’s like the—there’s some good parts when you’re dad’s like, he’s an authority figure in the village. But it sounds like, you know—it’s not like you had to dislike your position as the official chaperone on everyone else’s dates.

Sarracino-Hopper:

[laughter] No, it was fun. We didn’t care, we got to go. It was just funny because they couldn’t go unless we went. My cousins couldn’t go unless we were going. They couldn’t get the car unless we went. That was the funny part about it, that we should just go, but I can’t. Or they told them that we were going with them. Then, we would go—like, they wanted to go to San Francisco, right? The girls, some of the girls. They would ask me to go, but I knew them and I grew up with them, but I didn’t really hang out with them. I mean, we were friendly with each other, but they were—some of them were real close friends and I was the only one in my age

group. I just—you know, well, “I don’t feel like going.” But anyway, they would ask me to come. They’d say, “Come on.” I’d say, “Okay, let’s go.” I was the only one being quiet, but at the same time I was the only one kind of outspoken. So I’d have to ask the bus driver how to get to San Francisco. I was like the one that was talking for them.

Castle:

You were in charge all the time?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes.

Castle:

Had the burden of getting there and organizing.

Sarracino-Hopper:

[laughter] And getting home, because they didn’t want to ask. Yet, they wanted to go where they wanted to go, but I don’t know if they were afraid or they just didn’t—whatever. But every time I went with them I was the one that always had to ask how to get there and what bus to change to and stuff like that. It was interesting though, after you think back about it. We used to go to the dance though. We’d all go. My cousins—I was the youngest one in their group.

Castle:

These were outside the village? These were dances.

Sarracino-Hopper:

These were outside the village, because they had the Indian Center, but the Friendship House that was located where Laney’s at—where Laney’s at right now. That used to be called the Exposition Building on one side, the left side of Laney, by the auditorium, the one they call Kaiser Auditorium now. On Friday nights they had dances there, after—maybe by 1964. But San Francisco had dances every Saturday night, but they had live bands. They were all live bands at that time.

Castle:

The San Francisco Indian Center?

Sarracino-Hopper:

Mm-hmm, on Sixteenth and Mission. We used to go. I was the youngest one out of the group. I, of course, my sister, she’ll tell you, “Oh, I can’t go unless I take my little sister,” right? Which was true of my dad. [laughter] My dad would say, “Take her,” so I would hang out with the kids who were older than me because my sister is three years older than me. So our cousins, our cousins were as old as my sister or a year older. I was the little kid that hung around with them.

Castle:

So you were sixteen and they were nineteen.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. I was actually twelve when they were—if they were seventeen I was like fifteen, and they would go sometimes when they were sixteen, so I was thirteen. I actually started going when I was like ten years old. So, we would go.

One day, well, I was in high school at this time, the eleventh grade. My sister likes to tell this story, she goes, “Yeah, I had to take her but,” I kept telling my dad, “but she’s got a toothache.” My dad said, “How do you feel?” “Oh, I feel all right.” But my jaw was swollen. My tooth went and got—it swelled. I was going to the dentist on Monday, right? But it was swollen. She said, “She can’t go.” My dad said, “No, take her. If you’re going to go, take her.” So we went. Our cousins, there was like Mary, Alice, my sister, Mike, Gabriel, and me. We all went, right? We got there, I was just sitting there, I’d just sit around when they’d go. I’d get to—because they know me, because they’re from the village. They’ll ask me to dance, so I would dance. It was funny because we go and that night I had my toothache, kind of swollen. They were laughing and go, “Look at that little girl. She’s out there dancing just about every dance,” and they were sitting on the thing, and they didn’t get asked as often. They were laughing at me because I was the one that had the swollen—

Castle:

The swollen jaw and you were like ten.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Yes. I think I was like—I think I was fifteen at that time that I went. I remember, I never told my mom though, when we drove the couple home. He was a bouncer, so he used to, on Saturday nights he was the bouncer at the dance hall, right? He had a girl, we were the same age just about. I think she was so many months younger than me. He would call and she’d go, “Well, call Belle and see if she wants to go.” She would go, “Will you go with me?” Because she was the only girl and her brother was older. He was older than my sister.

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They go to the dance. What I was there for was to babysit and hang around, because we were about the same age. We’d go and sit in the—there was a—what do you call it? Like a little canteen, in the dancehall, and they had pool tables on this side. There was a hat-check girl where you check in your stuff. We went—he would always take us to the little café, the little thing at the counter where people order stuff. We’d sit in there and we’d listen to the music. Or sometimes we’d walk in and watch people dance and then we’d go back to that little café right there in that building. We’d sit there and we’d have soda and he’d come in and check on us and then he’d buy us hotdogs or something and we’d sit there. We’d get up again and we’d go watch people dance and go to the pool hall, just because it was in that row. And her dad was the bouncer.

One night we went and I guess they went to the bar downstairs on Sixteenth and Mission. After the dance we didn’t see them, so we said, “Where did they go?” We were waiting for him to tell us, “Let’s go.” They said, “What are we going to do?” I said, “I don’t know. Let’s go down and see if they went to the car.” Here, they were in the car. I guess they had been drinking. We looked at each other and we go, “How are we going to get home?” [laughter]

So we had a—she got this bright idea because her dad taught her to drive too. Every time I came home here, my uncle, her brother, he'd let me drive any car. He would just stick the—put something behind me, and, “Okay, let's go.” So actually I learned how to drive a stick when I was young, in a car. And as I got older, when he had cars I got to drive his cars. He would let me. Or when we went to the store, he said, “Okay, drive.”

Castle:

So you knew how.

Sarracino-Hopper:

So I knew how to drive. But we were short. [laughter] But her stick—I learned on a stick like this. She said, “It's the same, it's the same.” But their station wagon had the H here, right? I said, “I've never shifted on one of these, just the floor.” I said, “You know how to drive—you drive!” She goes, “I'm too young.” She's only like how many months younger than me, right? We're sitting there, looking around, and said, “Aw, shoot.” I said, “Okay, I'll drive, you shift.” So we came across the Bay Bridge. [laughter] “Read? Okay!” And then she'd shift and then I'd let up on the clutch. We brought them home to San Pablo Avenue. We left them in the car. We just went in the house and went to bed and then in the morning—I don't know how they woke up but they came in the house, and they were asking each other, “How did we get home?” Because they were all in the back seat, and they were asking, “Did you drive?” “No.” “You drive?” “No.” Because he was telling us when he walked in, because we were up by then, we were having cereal. He just stood at the door, since nobody drove them home, right? He stood at the door in the kitchen saying, “Uh, how did we get home?” We were sitting there, like, “I don't know.” He said, “What did you guys do?” We stood there for a second. “Well, uncle, I drove, she shifted, I stepped on the clutch and she shifted and we brought you home across the bridge.” He looked at us and he goes, “You two, don't you ever do that again.” We told him, “Well, don't ever do that to us either.”

Castle:

Yes.

Sarracino-Hopper:

Because we were young then when we came across that bridge.

Castle:

This tape is ending.

[End of interview]