Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

# Alice B. Toklas (1877-1967)

## The Bancroft Library Interview

Interviews conducted by
Roland Duncan
in 1952

Copyright © 2012 by The Regents of the University of California

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

********************************

This manuscript is made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. Excerpts up to 1000 words from this interview may be quoted for publication without seeking permission as long as the use is non-commercial and properly cited.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to The Bancroft Library, Head of Public Services, Mail Code 6000, University of California, Berkeley, 94720-6000, and should follow instructions available online at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/cite.html

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Alice B. Toklas, (1877-1967) The Bancroft Library Interview conducted by Roland Duncan in 1952, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2012.

Alice B. Toklas, left, with her companion Gertrude Stein and their dog Basket II, near Belley, France, ca. 1941.

Photo courtesy of The Bancroft Library.

**Table of Contents—Alice B. Toklas**

Audio Reel 1 1

An account of Gertrude Stein's family and upbringing—Stein's family in Europe and in the San Francisco Bay Area—Stein's early love for books—A dinner party at the home of Professor Alfred North Whitehead—More on Stein's literary interests—Attempting to bring books into Spain—Stein's education at Radcliffe, influence of William James and others—Early lack of interest in literary criticism—Stein's medical school education at Johns Hopkins—Stein's early interest in painting and prints, including Chinese art—Stein's childhood adventures in the East Bay hills—Toklas's opinion of Jack London—Gertrude Atherton, the Sequoia Club, and Stein's 1935 literary tour of the United States

Audio Reel 2 14

Gertrude Stein and her siblings, and establishing a trust for their income—Meeting Stein in Paris in 1907—Comparing Stein to Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris—On Stein's writing process, and little need for editing—The summer home outside of Belley, France (1928-1942)—Toklas's first travel to Europe—The Toklas residence at 922 O'Farrell Street in San Francisco—Visits to Monterey, California—Toklas's family history

Audio Reel 3 27

Thoughts on the Stein family—Contesting contemporary notions of "cultural opportunities"—Stein's East Bay—Stein's reaction upon visiting her childhood home upon her return to the States in the 1930s—Stein's happy childhood and difficult adolescence—The importance of reading to Stein—Stein becoming an outsider upon moving to the east coast after the death of her mother—Gertrude and Leo Stein's interest in art, especially Chinese art and Tuscan Renaissance furniture—Spanish architecture and Spanish colonial architecture—Stein's love of gardens—Stein's admission to Radcliffe—Stein's initial inspiration to begin writing—Stein's interest in grammar and structure—Leo Stein's travels in Asia—More on the Stein family and *The Making of Americans*

Audio Reel 4 43

On Stein's mother—Stein's family background—Stein's experience in medical school—Medical service in the First World War—More on meeting Gertrude Stein and her siblings—On Toklas's parents—Flower arranging—The death of Toklas's mother—On becoming a cook and food rations during wartime—Instruction in the arts as a child—Visits to the Monterey Bay area—Visit to Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks—On Senorita Bonafacio and her home—On William Randolph Hearst and Phoebe Hearst—The farming background of the Toklas family

Audio Reel 5 61

Developing an interest in modern art—Comparing literary interests with those of Stein—Stein's sense of the English language—The sequoia—Music and theater in pre-1906 San Francisco, and the French influence in San Francisco—West Coast literature, including *The Lark* , *The Wave*, and *The Argonaut*—On Mexico, Alaska, and native arts—The 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, and how it would change the city—Decision to move to Paris in 1907—Impressions of Parisians and Paris—Comparing France to Spain

Audio Reel 6 79

On "Culturing" and the process (and fallacy) of acquiring culture—Attending the University of Washington—The shock of the First World War and the ensuing deprivations—Assisting the Americans and French in France during the First World War—General lack of interest in politics, including thoughts on the Japanese and Chinese in California—On being American expatriates—More on Professor Whitfield and his circle—The First World War and the Battle of Marne—On *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*—Stein's selective memory

Audio Reel 7 94

Recollection of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire—Toklas's instruction in the arts, and pre-fire cultural life in San Francisco—Attending Miss Lake's School in San Francisco, remembering classmates—Moving to Paris in 1907 with Harriet Levy—Some reminiscences of Paris—Physical descriptions of Stein and Picasso—Harriet Levy's return to San Francisco—Going to live with the Steins—Fiesole and Florence, Italy—Impressions of the United States on her return in 1935

Audio Reel 8 111

Toklas's and Stein's chihuauas—The German Occupation of France during the Second World War, and the decision to remain in France at Belley—Return to Paris in 1942, discovery that the Germans had stolen items from the apartment—Move from the apartment on the rue de Fleurus to one located on the rue Christine. More on the return to the United States in the 1930s—The dissolution of the relationship between Leo and Gertrude Stein

INTERVIEW WITH ALICE B. TOKLAS

Reel 1

| | |
|---|---|
| Alice B. Toklas: | The father had ideas about education, but you can get that all in the autobiography. That's all written. I have very little to add to what she wrote about her family and all. But the father was very keen on education and changed his mind about what kind it should be, very frequently. He was impatient and mercurial. |
| Roland Duncan: | And very volatile. |
| Toklas: | Yes. So that in the beginning she was taken to Europe because he wished the children to have a European education. Of course, she was in arms. She was the youngest, and so she was a baby when they took her over. |
| Duncan: | About how old was she at that time? |
| Toklas: | I think she was yet under a year old. |
| Duncan: | That was the first trip to Europe? |
| Toklas: | Yes, they stayed over four years so that she was nearly five when they came back to Baltimore, and they had spent four years in Vienna and one year in Paris, and she remembered Paris. |
| Duncan: | From that early time? |
| Toklas: | Yes. She was five years old and had been put in a day school and didn't like spinach because she was forced to eat it and didn't like the little French girls because she couldn't understand them, of course. You know how a child doesn't like something she can't understand and so she didn't like the French children. She remembered her mother's riding in the Bois de Boulogne. Her mother was very fond of horseback and she rode here. And then the father came over and brought them back to America. |
| Duncan: | About what time was that? |
| Toklas: | She was born in '73 and five years after would have been – '78. About that vaguely. I am not calculating absolutely. |
| Duncan: | But her experience with Europe then was very early? |
| Toklas: | It was early but still it made its mark upon her because she spoke German and she spoke French a little bit. She learned enough to patter |

in French, you see. So that when she finally had to have a language for her entrance at Radcliffe, for which she was not at all prepared because she had never finished high school, she gave up high school to go and read, when her mother, at first, and then her father, had died. They moved to San Francisco while Mike Stein was settling the estate. He was the oldest brother. He was the only one, I think, who was not a minor. (That couldn't quite be.) Well, I don't know definitely. The sister, Bertha, and the brother, Kahn, must have been already of age. But Leo wasn't yet. Nor Gertrude. Gertrude was 17.

Duncan: That's at the time they first moved?

Toklas: When they moved from Oakland – East Oakland – to San Francisco. She went to the common grammar school finally, after the father had tried to raise them on the European plan of having governesses and tutors at home and things of that kind.

Duncan: I imagine that at that time it was quite a change for her to have to go to the grammar school.

Toklas: No, she liked it. She liked it. She liked it. They had this large garden, very large. It was, I don't know how many acres. It was a number of acres and they had horses and cows and fruit and vegetables and a great many, a whole hedge of roses that enclosed the place. There were rose hedges.

Duncan: Is that possibly where she first began to have her interest in roses, as you once mentioned yourself?

Toklas: No, she was fond of all flowers and she liked being out of doors and she and her brother Leo were allowed – that was after the mother died. Her mother died when she was, I don't know how old exactly, but young. Perhaps five years before the father did, when she was 12 or 13. So of course she remembered her mother vividly. Her mother was a very gentle, charming person, and the father was abrupt and brusque and impatient. She remembered those roses, always, as something too lovely. Flowers never had pleased her to that extent as those roses.

Duncan: Of course, in California we can all appreciate that.

Toklas: There weren't common roses, they were hedge roses but they were rather fine ones and she remembered that very vividly. Then they moved to San Francisco and you would know, because I don't remember, which was the Mercantile and which was the Mechanics Library. Which was the one that was on Post Street?

Duncan: That was the Mechanics.

Toklas: Yes, well then she went to the Mercantile Library on Van Ness Avenue. It was already on Van Ness Avenue. I hadn't thought so but she assures me that it was on Van Ness Avenue. You will have to look that up. Check that, because we never agreed about that.

Duncan: At that time, that would be quite a ways out.

Toklas: They lived on Eddy or Turk Street. I don't know which. And it wasn't a far walk, and she spent all day there from early morning to late at night because they had not only all the 17th and 18th century, but particularly 18th century, books, but they had a number of them in first and second editions and she liked that.

Duncan: In order to compare them?

Toklas: No. She was too young for that. She liked the feel of those books. She never liked - she never collected old books of any kind. She was indifferent about what kind of binding or what kind of edition. So that when I sent her books to Yale – I finally arranged to have her library sent to Yale – I said they'll have a frightful shock because the Shakespeare, complete, I think, still, were in several editions because she had loaned them and not had them returned. She loaned all her books always because she said books were printed to be read and if the young men wouldn't bring them back – *tant pis*. So that she filled them out with Tauchnitzes and the Tauchnitzes were very nice because she had large pockets and they fitted into her pockets when she took walks in the country. She spent half a year, a year in the country usually. Over five months. And she'd take a book along in case she got tired – to sit down. And these were bound together with rubber bands because they were falling out — but they weren't as much surprised at that as the Harley Missal in an early edition which she had just bought in England as the only thing she could find complete, you see. She bought a lot of early English books, wherever she could find them, do you see. The things that were difficult to get. She had all the Trollopes in all sorts of editions, too. With the exception of Shakespeare and Trollope, I don't think anything was complete.

Duncan: More or less whatever interested her at the time, and just about everything did interest her.

Toklas: Yes, well, she did a great deal of reading at the British Museum when she was – that was after – when could that have been? That must have been the year before she came over to live in Europe. It must have been in 1902 that she spent nearly a year there until she got low in her mind. She couldn't stand London any more.

Duncan: Her memories at first of London were rather poor, weren't they?

Toklas: She hadn't liked London until we went back there in 1912. Then she liked it because she knew a lot of people. That first time she didn't know anybody except Logan Pearsall Smith and [Israel] Zangwill. I don't remember her speaking of anyone else. She knew very few people.

Duncan: But she must have read very vastly.

Toklas: Oh, enormously. But you see when she read she read continuously. I mean, it was not reading for two or three hours. She'd start, you see, early in the morning and not give up till late in the evening. She'd go off when she got hungry and come back again.

Duncan: Probably taking a book with her?

Toklas: No, she couldn't go out from the library, the British Museum, you see.

Duncan: Where did she eat there, just across the street?

Toklas: I think so, dear. They lived out in Bloomsbury. That's why she hated it. She said Bloomsbury and Oxford Street were memories that she would *never* forget. They were horrible. So that when we went over in '12 to see some publishers she found it delightful.

Duncan: That was to see John Lane, the publisher?

Toklas: Pardon?

Duncan: John Lane, the publisher?

Toklas: Yes. Oh, no, we saw a lot of others before we found John Lane. John Lane must have been in '13, the following year, or '14. Because the contract for the re-publishing of *Three Lives* was signed just a few days before the outbreak of war.

Duncan: Before the war?

Toklas: Just at the outbreak of war.

Duncan: In fact, that is the time when you stayed a while at Professor Whitehead's?

Toklas: Yes, we stayed in the country there.

Duncan: Down near Salisbury?

Toklas: Yes, at Lockridge. They had a home down there. A charming place.

Duncan: He must have been quite a wonderful man.

Toklas: A wonderful man. Really wonderful. Because I sat next to him the first time. We were staying with people named Mirrlees, who were intimate friends of the Whiteheads and there was a dinner party and Housman, the poet, was there and he was on one side of me and Dr. Whitehead was on the other and I had considerable conversation with Housman about—who was the first president of Stanford? Jordan?

Duncan: Dr. Jordan.

Toklas: Because he was fish too.

Duncan: The mountaineer?

Toklas: Yes, not only mountains but fish too. That was his subject, and so was Housman, and he was violently interested in my having known him. Oh, he got quite excited at my having known Dr. Jordan. And I said that was where I had learnt my pacifism. Jordan's lectures on the Napoleonic Wars. Do you remember hearing of that?

Duncan: I do.

Toklas: Yes, well, and then I came out – no, I'm mistaken about that. Doctor Whitehead didn't sit next to me – he sat opposite me and I looked at him. When we went out of the dining room the men came out because everybody had coffee out in the garden, and he came and sat next to me and I was frightfully impressed. I knew he was to be there, but it was a large party and I didn't know which man he was. And I thought this must be Doctor Whitehead – nobody else could be this – because the name of Housman had been very distinct when he was presented and I hadn't met Dr. Whitehead at all before dinner and he came out and I said: "Oh dear, this is it. Definitely."

[*Gap in the recording*]

Toklas: … a profound interest was not in anything but the family. He loved his family really. He loved his wife and he loved Gertrude and at one time he loved Leo.

Duncan: That has always been a question to us.

Toklas: Oh yes, she was a great reader. She read everything. But what she really liked was pure literature – Elizabethan.

Duncan: Particularly Elizabethan?

Toklas: Well, she always had a fondness for it, and memoires. All sorts of oddments that come from England largely. Some American but mostly English. Of family reminiscences, histories by men who had taken part in things. And people not of the first importance always.

Duncan: Actually, as you say, "oddments" would be a good term.

Toklas: And she read all the others and then took a real interest in that, and for a time from Moody she got all the missioners' stories. You see, Moody's had an excellent library and she belonged to that for years and books went back and forth.

Duncan: From London?

Toklas: Yes. And went to Spain, went to Italy and went to wherever she was.

Duncan: Followed her in all your extensive travels. Must have been quite a bookkeeping job just to keep direction for them.

Toklas: No, I made the packages and made the lists for her. In fact, I used to select the books largely because she didn't like catalogues much and I had the big Moody's catalogue and before we would leave for the summer I would make out a long list to cover it. Once when we got to Spain on a little boat going down the Spanish coast we thought we would go down on this coast boat to Murcia but we never got as far as that because at Cartagena it was time to get off. We had had enough. And there, that was during the troubles in Africa. And they were very suspicious. First of all there had been a mutiny of the troops in Spain. There had been, I don't know what it is called when there is a mutiny in prison. What is that called? An outbreak.

Duncan: An outbreak.

Toklas: Yes, they had trouble in the prison there and there was an enormous military prison. The soldiers that had been put into prison in Africa were brought back to Cartagena. That we didn't know. And we saw the prison. Enormous place, belching faces, and a line of women who wanted to go back to see their men who had been living there. And when we came off the boat we were in the greatest trouble at once, because these books of Gertrude's that they had examined had maps in them – inland (?) to be sure. Some of the history of their campaigns. And there were two or three of these books and so I had to go and get the Captain to say we were all right.

Duncan: That's interesting. Perhaps we can go down the list a bit here and I'll read off a few questions.

Toklas: She was a great reader. I have already said that. "Did she do any writing as a child?" Not as a child but as a young woman at college. She had her daily themes that [William] Vaughn Moody, the poet, who was then a teacher – not a professor, just a teacher – corrected at Radcliffe. He may have been at Yale [Harvard], because at that time there was only one faculty, it wasn't an exchange, there was only one faculty. And he was very impressed. He gave them very high marks. Reading them over they seemed very immature to me when I read these themes.

Duncan: At a later time, of course.

Toklas: Yes, because they seemed very immature.

Duncan: It always seems that way.

Toklas: Very immature. She had the grammar school and I think of one year of high school.

Duncan: Her reading? [Consulting list]

Toklas: No, Markham was no longer her teacher.

Duncan: Ah.

Toklas: I think that was a mistake. In fact I never heard of her speak of him. I never heard her speak of any of her teachers with any particular respect. They were just teachers.

Duncan: Particularly at that time?

Toklas: No, not until she was at college. Then she came under the influence of Münsterberg, William James, and Santayana.

Duncan: In philosophy and more in that line?

Toklas: It was William James who really formed her in a kind of way because it was he who suggested her going to medical school, you see. She wouldn't have gone to medical school. He said to be a philosopher you must either have mathematics or medicine and it was Oliver Wendell Holmes who had told him that, and so he had chosen medicine, and so she'd better. Which she did.

Duncan: It was certainly unusual at that time for a woman to go to college – to have interests in higher education.

Toklas: Oh no, not by that time. No.

Duncan: To such an extent? There were many, but–.

Toklas: No, she had a very lively intelligence, very young.

Duncan: This vast amount of reading which she did as you mentioned, out in California. That's a rather an interesting point, because it reminds me of Thomas Edison. You remember when he—

Toklas: Oh, she'd have loved that. She had a great admiration for Thomas Edison.

Duncan: Did she? In his youth when he was living in Port Huron, Michigan, he had a job when he was about fifteen or sixteen, I believe, of carrying the newspapers on the train. The daily train between Port Huron and Detroit. And the actual schedule coming down in the morning and leaving in the evening gave him about five or six hours in Detroit before he had to be back aboard the train carrying the papers back, and so he went to the library every day – religiously almost – during his early years, and read. And he started reading just from one side, not with any discrimination, but just reading voluminously.

Toklas: Oh, that's the way she did. She read. But finally she began to discriminate. But her instruction concerning the books she read was nil. She never had any. Wasn't interested, and she never liked books about books.

Duncan: I see. She preferred to form her own opinions.

Toklas: She never wanted anyone's opinions about books. Oh no. That was anathema, the kind of a person who would do that.

Duncan: To suggest something about it.

Toklas: She was very Californian, you know. She was so Californian that when she went east she found it very strange. And the people she met found her strange. She was almost a foreigner. And not because of Europe, because Europe she left when she was five years old. It had all worn off by the time she was seventeen.

Duncan: Actually, she hadn't been to Europe between that time?

Toklas: No, she didn't go until after her first year at Radcliffe, or maybe even her second year. I wouldn't be sure of that.

Duncan: Was that the trip to Spain?

Toklas: No, that was later. That was about possibly—before, no—it was after she went to medical school. The first year after Johns Hopkins, as late as that. She went with Leo. They went down to Tangiers and then worked their way up. That was when she saw Granada first.

Duncan: That would have been right after the turn of the century?

Toklas: Eighteen and four, is twenty-two. She was about twenty-four years old. Now you have to do the arithmetic. From '73. Oh, I can tell you exactly. It was the year after the Spanish American War.

Duncan: 1899 again.

Toklas: Yes, because the feeling about Americans was rather tense.

Duncan: That is rather an interesting point. As yourself, you both appreciated Spain a great deal?

Toklas: Leo was very quiet about his appreciations, but Gertrude must have shown it because her eyes would sparkle. I can see them sparkling at things, and all. But they weren't aggressively American in that way. I mean, they took their American for themselves.

Duncan: They didn't ask anything particularly of the Spanish and they didn't expect the Spanish to ask anything of them.

Toklas: No. They had very good relations with the few people that they met. They met people that they would see again, you know. From a train they would make an appointment to meet someone, who offered to show them something, things of that kind. But otherwise—

Duncan: Just the ideal way of actually travelling through a foreign country for the first time. Of just wandering.

Toklas: Well, Gertrude in that sense was a great wanderer because she would walk, you see. Leo would write letters and read books, or do something, you know. Investigate things. Now, she wasn't of an investigative turn of mind. She was very much interested in pictures, already then.

Duncan: Ah!

Toklas: Oh, deeply interested. She had bought American pictures already. She had a Prendergast by that time and they had bought Japanese prints over here.

Duncan: Particularly Leo?

Toklas: No, both of them as well.

Duncan: Oh, she liked those too?

Toklas: Yes. She had bought a very fine Chinese object. Now I don't remember what it was. Which is a nice story, because she took it back to America and in those days you made no declaration on boats, of course, you made it directly to a customs official of some kind. And she had that wrapped up very carefully and she said, "Be careful. I want to open this for you and I'll show you." Whether it was an old vase or an old ivory or what I don't know. But she spent a lot of money for it. For her. She had a small income. They never had large incomes you know.

Duncan: She really had to be discriminating in the expenditure of her father's–

Toklas: Oh yes. This was the one object she had bought for herself. She had bought a few small gifts but she had bought this for herself. And she said, "I'll open it and show you," and she showed it to him and she had the bill, the receipt. And he looked at it and said, "Oh, Miss. They robbed you." He said, "That's all right, you don't have to pay on that."

Duncan: You paid already.

Toklas: Gertrude said he didn't know and she did, so that was that. She didn't try to explain to him.

Duncan: Of what its real value was.

Toklas: No. Well, as a young person she was very active, and she and her brother were allowed to go off with a little go-cart of some kind, something that you pulled, a child's cart. What do you call that, a wagon?

Duncan: A little wagon?

Toklas: Yes. A little wagon, and on that they put their provisions for several days and they went off to the hills by themselves.

Duncan: This is in California?

Toklas: In East Oakland. Where the mother had died, so she must have been about thirteen and Leo, fifteen, or perhaps younger.

Duncan: They certainly had their responsibility at an early age.

| | |
|---|---|
| Toklas: | And he had a gun and he killed some rabbits. And I was shocked when I heard of this, because it didn't enter into my conception of the proper raising of the child, but it was allowed, and they came back, and that was that. |
| Duncan: | Where did they go back, perhaps towards Walnut Creek? |
| Toklas: | I haven't the faintest idea where they went. |
| Duncan: | Just over the hills. |
| Toklas: | They went around. Once they went – but there they didn’t walk, they took the train by themselves – up into Napa County where the father, I think, had a mine or something. |
| Duncan: | Along the Silverado Trail, near Jack London’s country? |
| Toklas: | They didn't know Jack London at all. |
| Duncan: | They didn’t know him at all. |
| Toklas: | No, never did. |
| Duncan: | I wondered about that. |
| Toklas: | I knew Jack London. I didn't know him, I met him. |
| Duncan: | When did you meet him? |
| Toklas: | Oh, about two years before the fire, I should think. |
| Duncan: | About 1904. |
| Toklas: | Yes. And I thought he was—there was a good deal of pose in it all. He wasn't natural at all. He wasn't convincing at all by that time. He'd made money and he dressed like a working man in good clothes, you know. A white silk shirt. Good clothes, workingman. It was all very unconvincing. I think I met him through Arthur Putnam, the sculptor. I’m not certain, though. |
| Duncan: | Did he have his place up in Sonoma at that time – the Valley of the Moon? |
| Toklas: | I haven’t the faintest idea. Don’t know anything about that. Never knew anything about his life. Never took him on. I didn't care for his writing. |

Duncan: He apparently had the ability writing to just write straight off without re-composing like so many writers making such a diligent job do to compose. That is what they have said about him, that he could sit at the back of his boat, presumably, and write straight off.

Toklas: His writing never interested me – never had any form to me or style at all.

Duncan: More in the adventure field. What other California authors of that early time were you acquainted with yourself? Gertrude Atherton, perhaps?

Toklas: Yes. Not at that time. I only met her either immediately before or after the fire. There was a club, a literary club, called the Sequoia Club. Is that it?

Duncan: I believe so. It was named after the Cherokee Indian Chief, Sequoia.

Toklas: Well, I met her there, and she was beautiful beyond words then. Oh, she was a beautiful creature! And then I didn't really know her until I went to California in '34.

Duncan: When you went back on your trip?

Toklas: She was old and very wonderful. Oh, she was very wonderful. She gave a dinner for Gertrude Stein. And there was, as a matter of fact, though it isn't the same man. What was it? Professor [Henry Hersch] Hart, who was in the Chinese Department, who did some translating from the Chinese and he was on the faculty. And he was there, I sat next to him, and I don't know who the other people were. I have forgotten.

Duncan: This was in 1934.

Toklas: The Spring of '35. Then she gave a lunch party for Gertrude Stein. She took us up into Napa County to her granddaughter's convent where the granddaughter was a nun, a Carmelite nun, and Gertrude Stein talked there and she said she had never had such an appreciative and intelligent audience. And she said to the Mother Superior, Sister Superior, whatever it is, Mother Superior of the Carmelites, "How is it your girls understand so much?" And the Mother Superior was a San Francisco woman and when Mrs. Atherton came there, and Mrs. Atherton told us, whenever came there she wanted all the gossip from San Francisco and anything that she wouldn't have heard Mrs. Atherton had to tell her.

Duncan: What other authors—?

Toklas: I think that's all. Gertrude Atherton – and Frank Norris was just a casual.

Duncan: When did you meet Frank Norris?

Toklas: I never met him.

Duncan: You didn't?

Toklas: I never saw him. It was Jack London I meant when I said Frank Norris. No, Frank Norris was my first and only fan letter until Henry James, and then it wasn't a fan letter at all. Just a simple request to be allowed to dramatize *The Awkward Age*, and I had an answer from him too.

Duncan: Wonderful.

Toklas: That was an *awful* thing because I hadn't realized to what extent he was interested in the stage when I wrote it. That came just before he came to California after the fire. He came out to California.

Duncan: Did you, by any chance, meet him?

Toklas: No, I was to have met him through a man at the Bohemian Club and he wasn't accepting any invitations except to dinner to the Bohemian Club, to which no women were invited.

Duncan: Up there, near Russian River?

Toklas: No, in San Francisco.

Duncan: Oh, they had it there? You know they have a summer camp.

Toklas: Surely.

Duncan: Wonderful place.

Toklas: I went up there after the fire.

Duncan: Oh, did you?

Toklas: When it was still in the making. We spent some days up there, because they allowed each member to bring some women during the year, or something. I have forgotten. Women weren't to be encouraged, but they were there.

Duncan: Well, it's something you can't avoid sometimes. Even in the most strictest of men's clubs.

Toklas: We went to dinners there sometimes – what was it, once a month, when they could ask women to their dinners.

Reel 2

Toklas: Mike took charge to save the family of his father's affairs, which were very involved. The father was a man of brilliant ideas and no patience to carry *anything* through. None of the detail interested him. And he had conceived of a consolidated street railway for San Francisco long before there was one, and when the father died all the father possessed – he had a little money – but what he possessed in the street railway was a franchise and an idea. And Mike Stein was twenty-seven years old and he put it up to Collis P. Huntington, who *was* railways in California, although the Southern Pacific was anathema. He presented it to him and finally put it over at par value and the old man, I think, was so surprised and thought it was such a brilliant coup on the part of this young person—

Duncan: He was just twenty-seven at that time?

Miss Toklas: And Collis P. Huntington was a power.

Duncan: Yes, indeed.

Toklas: And he just persuaded him. He said that he had to because he couldn't support six people – five children – and he didn't know how he was going to support himself. He'd never earned a living. Not anyone of them had ever earned a sou, and to be able to do this he had to put it over so that there would be a competence, a pittance, for each of them. Otherwise they would have been sitting on his doorstep all his life, because he saw that not anyone of them would ever earn any money. None of them were made for a business career of any kind. And he didn't think of any profession in which they would succeed. Leo and Gertrude quite as well as the two incompetents. So he put this thing through and then Collis P. Huntington said to him, "You have done this. Now I want you to be director of the street railway." And he said, "Oh no, not at all. I don't want to."

Duncan: He had no real interest in going on?

Toklas: No, it was his father's plan, not his. He said, "Well, you'll have to do it until I find someone. I'll find someone and you do until then." I think he stayed a year or two at quite large figure for those days.

Duncan: It would be for that amount of responsibility.

Toklas: And he got that money. He put aside. He was always very simple. They all had simple tastes though they lived in considerable luxury, they had simple tastes. So Mike put that money aside, and he was therefore richer than any of the others because he had earned that. So that he could marry and have a family, a child, and come to Europe, and all the rest. Whereas they could only just make it. That's the story of Mike Stein. And his distaste for business was horrible, was very great because this experience was horrible to him. The anxiety and not knowing, of putting that pressure on a man, on a very able, experienced man who was known throughout the country for the fortune he had made. It gave him such a distaste that when his son, many years after the other war, cornered the European market in something, he was furious. He said to him, "You are too young to be able to do that. It's a dangerous game and I don't like it, if it were safe for you." His son said, "If I had chosen one of the arts you would have backed me to any extent but because I am choosing business, you won't." And he never would. He washed his hands of his son. He said, “Don’t bring me your troubles. Don't bring me your successes. I don't want to know about them."

Duncan: His feeling was so against the business occupation.

Toklas: Oh yes, it was done once as a coup and he would never do it again.

Duncan: He may have had some interest in that respect?

Toklas: Well, no, it was merely the necessity that drove him to it, you see. And that's not un-California. Because I know of another case that was absolutely similar, of a man who had never heard of Mike Stein. Young men can do that to save the family. Go up against a bad situation and come out very well.

Duncan: Right on top.

Toklas: Well, this was done by another man perhaps ten years later. I suppose it had something to do with the Californian perseverance, you know.

Duncan: I think Professor Hart wrote out a bit on that. Of course, that would be obviated by what you have just said, on whether he felt his reason for leaving was feeling sympathetic with the union labor. That he could no longer work with the company that had opposed the union.

Toklas: Mike Stein wasn't interested in politics or social questions at all. He was a man of great tenderness and great sympathy and he could do anything for someone he knew. And he didn't care for many people, and the people that he cared for he would do anything for. And did have an occasion to. Frequently.

Duncan: Go greatly out of his way?

Toklas: Oh, more than out of his way. More than out of his way. Frequently. He was what the French call "good as good bread" – *comme du bon pain.* He was. Oh, really was. He was a really very lovely person. Had a beautiful character. And Gertrude was devoted to him. More than dependence. It was more than dependence.

Duncan: It was real appreciation.

Toklas: Oh, yes. She knew Mike down to the ground and loved it. She was devoted to him.

Duncan: He hadn't married at this time, had he?

Toklas: When he was twenty-seven? No, he married shortly after. About two years after, I think. I don't know exactly. He was married and had a child of about five years old in 1906.

Duncan: When *did* you and Gertrude Stein meet?

Toklas: I met her when I came over here. I never knew her before. In fact, I didn't know—when I met Sarah and Mike Stein, I thought he was an only child. He had that air. You know the air of an only child who has been carefully raised and is very quiet and has a deep appreciation for having been an only child.

Duncan: Yes.

Toklas: Well, I had that impression of him. Then I found that he had a brother. Because Harriet Levy had met Gertrude and Leo and spent a winter in their society in Florence by the time I knew her.

Duncan: That was when they had been living in Florence before, going to Paris?

Toklas: No, Gertrude wasn't living there, she was just spending some months there with her brother.

Duncan: Was that near Fiesole?

Toklas: I think that was—I wouldn't really be certain if that was before her last year at medical school or not.

Duncan: Had you been acquainted at all with the family?

Toklas: No. As I say, I met Mike Stein and his wife just isolated, in San Francisco-and didn’t know anything about the family at all. Never knew anything about the family.

Duncan: And it was through his introduction or referral to –?

Toklas: No, it was through Sarah Stein rather than Mike that I met Gertrude at their house. Because Harriet Levy had been an intimate friend of Sarah Stein’s and she said, "Let's go and see the Steins” the day we arrived and we went there and Gertrude was there.

Duncan: What was your impression at the first meeting?

Toklas: Well, she had a certain physical beauty and enormous power, that she showed.

Duncan: You felt that power immediately? It radiated?

Toklas: Oh, definitely. Definitely. Yes. She sat there and said nothing, as usual. She didn't talk until she commenced to talk, you see. She sat there and smiled a little bit. Just a small smile. She had such wonderful eyes. I had an impression of her eyes.

Duncan: In other words, you could communicate actually just by–visually.

Toklas: Well, I don't know whether there was any-communication, but I just drank it in. I was so much younger in experience. I wasn't so much younger in years – I was only two years and a few months younger. But it was the enormous life that she'd led, that you could see.

Duncan: The vitality?

Toklas: Well, yes, and the experience. And experience, too.

Duncan: This experience, to a considerable portion, would be the inward experience, wouldn't it? She had absorbed so much.

Toklas: Yes, surely.

Duncan: And had a feeling inside of her and yet—

Toklas: Well, it wasn't that really. She had so much sense of life. Such an enormous sense of life. And what life was, you know, the thing that was alive.

Duncan: That's a rare quality, certainly.

Toklas: Oh surely - that's part of the genius. Picasso has it to the equal extent, you see.

Duncan: Just feeling it automatically without being really conscious of it.

Toklas: Well, you become conscious because you live in it and it moves round you, all the past experience – it gives a richness to every new vision.

Duncan: I suppose you wouldn't feel a relationship to any one period or time but sort of engulfing experience.

Toklas: Yes. Because Picasso, you know, and Juan Gris even more delicately than Picasso, understood *everything*, literally. First of all he knew everything about painting in an extraordinary sense. His genius was like his on most points. So that if you asked Juan what something meant he could always give you the full answer. It was always so. What anything meant. And I used to tease him and say that he was *angel del fatto,* and he didn't like that. He said, "That was a bad joke, Alice." I said, "Maybe it's a bad joke but it's true." And I remember once, and the worst of it is I can never bring it back – I knew it until a few years ago and now it escaped me and I never recovered it. What it was that I wanted to know of a woman who was smiling. Why did she smile at that moment? I said to Juan, "Did you notice her smile?" It was some story and we knew part of it, or something, and something had been said, and I saw her have a small, wee smile—

Duncan: Just a vague smile?

Toklas: — and so I said to Juan, "Did you see her smile?" And Juan said, "Yes, of course I did." I said, "What did that mean, Juan?" And Juan answered and he gave me the answer to the question that had been in our heads for months. It's an understanding, that's just all.

Duncan: "Understanding," I think, is a very good word.

Toklas: A complete understanding, but complete and profound, and Gertrude Stein came to that. As a woman once said (I quoted that to Katz the other night when he was asking questions), she asked her once, to our great amusement—we thought it was a scream, she was an intelligent woman, and very sympathetic—she said, "Listen, Miss Stein, do you come to your conclusions about character from experience, intuition, or imagination?" Well, we just thought that was a scream because Gertrude's work at that time, on the psychology of what she called "the bottom nature of people" you see, was profound. Her work was enormous. It was one of comparison and of likeness and difference *every minute* of the day, so that when she said that so easily, we thought it was a great joke.

Duncan: When Gertrude Stein did work, she worked with an intense energy, didn't she?

Toklas: Well, it really wasn't energy. It was more than that. It was with complete comprehension. The thing was clear, finally, not in those early days – up to, let's see – Katz has given me the date, more particularly than I really realized, that from the beginning until about 1920 there was a good deal of actual work of preparation in the building up of character before she wrote, but after that she gave up that whole theory. She believed it was true, but she was no longer interested. So that she had in her mind – so clear that there was no hesitation when she sat down to write – to write it off as quickly as her hand would move and there were no corrections in the manuscripts from that day forth.

Duncan: None whatsoever.

Toklas: None whatsoever. So much so, there's a great joke, when Yale got the manuscripts they wrote to me and said, "There are so few corrections. Have you the *earlier* typescript? There are so few corrections." I said, "There are no corrections, it's my bad typewriting that she corrected." Because they said, "We see by her handwriting that there are very few," and I said it was because my typewriting was not infallible.

Duncan: Actually, I think you mentioned in the autobiography of yourself that you got such a much deeper appreciation of Gertrude Stein's meaning by having either proofread or having typewritten.

Toklas: Well, you see you get the rhythm of the thing finally by reading proof, in the phrasing. Because the experience of reading proof was really – the long book, *The Making of Americans*, done by French compositors – so that you looked for every letter as well as every word. And we read proof of some parts of it fourteen times. We worked together for about – one reading and the other correcting – for about nine hours a day for over five months on that book.

Duncan: It was a dedicated task.

Toklas: It was frightfully fatiguing. We were exhausted when it was over. We spent our summer at it, our vacation.

Duncan: Where did you do the proof reading? Where did you go for your vacation?

Toklas: We always went, from the time that we gave up with the other war, to a foreign country, Spain or Italy. We then had the four years of war and then after that we had a year in moving about a little bit in the car.

One year in the south of France, and then finally found Belley on our way south to France again, and from that time we went there regularly for three years until we found a house there which we rented on a long lease. Then we went to Belley to plant a garden in April and stayed through the grape harvest, because that was a great celebration. This man who was one of the gourmets cooked a lunch for about forty people, for the wine – for the vintage.

Duncan: For the celebration.

Toklas: And so we always went there. The table grapes – not table grapes, the wine grapes – were all picked by about fifty people: ten servants, the gardeners and servants of the house and the forty guests, picked from early morning to late at night. So we got this wonderful meal, and it was a great celebration. It was very amusing because there were all kinds of people there.

Duncan: That sounds like quite pleasant memories.

Toklas: It was in an old seventeenth – oh earlier, sixteenth – century property, with the house looking exactly – I guess it was seventeenth century – it looked like the background to a Shakespearean play, the whole thing. A wonderful country. And this house with an outer stairway, oh, what a house!

Duncan: Where was the exact location of the house?

Toklas: Of the house? It belonged to the Chateau de Beyrin and the hamlet – it's escaped me. I could look it up, though. The name of it has escaped me. Because Gertrude Stein worked there. They offered her the Chateau during their absence but Gertrude said, "There are gardeners moving about, and I don't like that." So they said, "Well, why don't you go down to the house?" It ends with "IEU," because it's the country, they're all over the place–all the little hamlets there.

Duncan: What is the name of the district?

Toklas: It's called The Bugey, B-U-G-E-Y, and it is in the department of the Ain, A-I-N, where we spent our summers. It's a very large department.

Duncan: After you found this location you spent many summers there?

Toklas: Oh, all the summers from '28 through '41. And in '42, the army having been abandoned in France by the order of the Germans, the landlord, who was a regular army man, wanted his house back because there was no garrison to put his family in.

Duncan: Housing being so short at that time?

Toklas: Well, no, they weren't during the occupation, it was only after, funnily enough. Well, no, it was really because the prisoners came home and found their families who had gone to the country during their absence. Not to live in towns, because living was too difficult. Everybody piled into their country relations' homes, because living was more comfortable, was possible.

Duncan: You say you didn't have any actual acquaintance with Gertrude Stein prior to her departure?

Toklas: No, no, no. I had only heard of her. No, no, no. I never knew of the existence of their family when it was in Oakland, at all.

Duncan: Would you tell me a little about your early experiences in California, because in many ways those had a bearing upon your later life.

Toklas: Well, funnily enough, the great influence in some *curious* way was a year spent in Europe between the time I was nine and ten.

Duncan: You came here also at an early age, then?

Toklas: Well, not like Gertrude, not as an infant in arms.

Duncan: Not at four or five.

Toklas: No, I came over when I was about nine years old, as I remember, came over when I was eight or nine, and we stayed about—

Duncan: Where did you travel on your trip?

Toklas: Oh, not very much. In Germany, Austria, France, and England. My grandmother had a brother in England who had married a Scotch woman. A lovely Scotch woman. And I was put there while my father and mother travelled about. Meantime they had secured (my father was of Polish birth), they secured a Polish governess and she travelled with us until we went to England, because we sailed from England. So there was nobody to take care of me and I stayed with the English cousins, Vidalia (?) and Violet, while my father and mother went about, went to London and places. So I really had very little impression of London. But I remembered Paris, very well. I was in Paris, speaking of authors, and saw Victor Hugo's funeral, so that will date it. The Polish governess and I sat in armchairs, as my memory is, on the Rue de Rivoli. Now that may be incorrect, but that 's *always* been my memory. It may have been the Champs Elysees. Because as I

think I have heard since, the body was under the Arc de Triomphe, the way they do.

Duncan: Yes, came up that way.

Toklas: Yes, and so I saw this funeral procession which didn't mean anything to me, because the only funerals that were interesting to me were those that went down Van Ness Avenue of the generals who died, with the flag over the coffin on the gun carriage.

Duncan: The caissons carrying it.

Toklas: Yes, with the very sad music of the military band.

Duncan: The dirge.

Toklas: Yes, and that's what I remember. When I was being taken to walk. Why, that was always happening, it seems to me – but it couldn't have been.

Duncan: You were very close to the Presidio.

Toklas: No, that was when I was grown. No, no, no. That was much later.

Duncan: Where did you live in San Francisco?

Toklas: On O'Farrell Street, near Van Ness Avenue. I saw the soldiers going off to the war, the Spanish-American war – went out and kissed the boys goodbye. Because I had friends in the Washington regiment and friends in the California regiment.

Duncan: You have actually really witnessed either imminently, or partially, three wars then? Which is enough for any person.

Toklas: Oh, yes.

Duncan: Was it 916 that you lived at on O'Farrell Street? Do you remember the address on O'Farrell?

Toklas: 922, of course.

Duncan: Because it was 920 that Harriet Levy—

Toklas: Yes, and 922 was next door.

Duncan: You remember Carmel, I imagine, and Monterey quite well?

Toklas: Oh, I knew Monterey intimately, through – wait till I get her name – Madame Bonifacio, an old Spanish lady, with whom I stayed. I stayed with her frequently.

Duncan: That was on your vacations?

Toklas: No, there was no question of vacations by that time. I went down there whenever I had enough money. I took the train and went down there and stayed for a week or two weeks at a time with her.

Duncan: How did you feel at that time in respect to Spanish things, because you've had such an interest in Spain and the Iberian peninsula ever since.

Toklas: No, I liked Spanish things then. I liked Spanish history and I liked the Spaniards before I knew them. I was all pre-disposed about them. As Gertrude Stein used to say, "The only blind spot that you show any evidence of is in connection with Spain and Spaniards." And I was not really, I *was* partial to them.

Duncan: You remember the mission at Carmel?

Toklas: Oh yes, I saw all the missions, because my grandfather had been in California and knew all of the Spaniards. And when I was sixteen or seventeen years old he took me to Southern California – the first time I'd been there – to find his old cronies, and some of them were Spaniards. And we went in all sorts of conveyances. On horseback, on mule back, in a buggy, to the places that he had known, you see. Around to find his friends.

Duncan: Is that down around Los Angeles?

Toklas: Well, that really wasn't where he had lived. But some of them had moved there or had come from there to San Francisco in the early days.

Duncan: When did your grandfather first come out to California?

Toklas: Late '49.

Duncan: Did he go up as a miner, or stay?

Toklas: He went with some money that he had earned in—well, that will give you some idea of the year that he came to California if you could look that up, because I don't remember – but they had a cholera epidemic in New Orleans where he was living and where he was a contractor with a partner. And the partner died, he buried the partner, he buried all his

friends, but he didn't catch anything, but got discouraged because the partner had died and there wasn't going to be anything. He was discouraged with New Orleans and the possible future. And then there was this story of a mine and so he took what money he had and went out to California.

Duncan: That was at the time of the Gold Rush?

Toklas: Yes, and so he knew it. He knew all that history.

Duncan: Did he come by way of the Panama Canal? Across the isthmus there by land?

Toklas: Yes. Then he went back to marry my grandmother and they came back again.

Duncan: Was your grandmother in New Orleans?

Toklas: No, no, no. She was in Germany. She was born in Hamburg. He had met her – because he was Polish too, there was Polish blood on both sides – he had a letter of introduction to her father when he was sailing from Hamburg to Charleston. He went to Charleston.

Duncan: That was the port that he first came into, then?

Toklas: Yes, and from Charleston he went to New Orleans, and there he made his money. And he made enough money to go west. And he bought a mine there which was absolutely no good at all.

Duncan: Where was the mine located?

Toklas: Mokelumne Hill.

Duncan: Oh yes, I know that quite well.

Toklas: Amador County, where my mother was born later, after a year spent in Brooklyn to accommodate my grandmother to all that she was about to encounter. She came to San Francisco on the boat, up the – whatever the port was called, with an "A," down in Panama – what was the other side? Well, never mind. After you cross the isthmus. You took the boat.

Duncan: You go by Chagres—

Toklas: No, something with an "A", as I remember. However, they landed in San Francisco in '56, the day that Casey and Corey were hanged. My

grandmother asked why the bells were ringing and they told her, which was a mistake.

Duncan: Perhaps that year should have been longer in Brooklyn.

Toklas: Oh, oh, oh. She did think she'd come to the wilderness indeed. Then they stayed in Jackson for about – oh, my aunt was born some six or eight years after. They stayed until she was about three years old there. And that was then time for my mother to go to a proper school. Because my grandmother had gone to boarding school for some nine years in England. All the girls in the family were raised at boarding school there. So my grandmother was capable of getting her through the lower grades at school, but it was time that she went to the proper school.

Duncan: That was the reason that they moved down from Jackson?

Toklas: That was one of the reasons. My grandfather was discouraged with Jackson, the mine was panning out very badly.

Duncan: Do you remember the name of the mine at Mokelumne Hill?

Toklas: Haven't the faintest idea. Did it have a name?

Duncan: All of them had some kind of a –

Toklas: Number, or something.

Duncan: A number, or usually the Spanish name.

Toklas: No, I haven't the faintest idea. Well, one of my grandfather's nieces was named Felicita, and then they turned it into Felicite, and finally into Fay. She was known as Fay. The Spanish influence got into the family in that way to that extent.

Duncan: Well, that whole area, of course, up there at that time was a very interesting section. Did your father and mother – or your grandparents, actually – then move on down to San Francisco?

Toklas: Then I am a little vague. By that time my grandfather had already bought the land in the San Joaquin Valley, in which he lived for the rest of his life.

Duncan: Where was that located?

Toklas: Somewhere near Tracy. Not at Tracy – the railway station was Tracy. And this will interest you. His brother-in-law—well, a half-sister

married a man named Brunell (?), and he owned the ranch on which the farmers put up the fight for Frank Norris' story [*The Octopus*].

Duncan: Oh, indeed?

Toklas: And that was near Lodi. They weren't at Lodi, but near it, and Lockeford. Lodi and Lockeford is where they had their lands. Lodi, Lockeford and Tracy. And the Lockefords – Dr. Locke was the father-in-law of my mother's favorite cousin. He married a Locke.

Duncan: Then when did your relations move to San Francisco?

Toklas: I don't know the year. I'm telling you that my mother was grown. My mother was – '56 and ten - about '66, something of that kind, I suppose. I wouldn't be able to say the date exactly.

Duncan: Was your father also in California for quite a period of time?

Toklas: Not as early as that. He came to America in about – just after the Civil War. My grandfather brought him over to America and he put one son after the other in banks, he said, so they wouldn't be Germans. He was violent (like my father), a Polish patriot – they were always flying the flag. He brought him over and then my father heard something about—he got a situation in New York in the Oregon Woolen Mills as a bookkeeper because he was good at figures, and he had that job for years. He bought land and a business up in Seattle, from Oregon, though he was living in San Francisco. The Oregon Woolen Mills didn't require that he lived on the spot – and my father was awfully good at that. He was, for a time – do you call someone an accountant, a person who goes over books? Well, he was that and he took the books home and worked at them for a few hours, do you see, and did all the stuff and brought them back and got paid. He was never paid by the month, he was paid by the work, and as he was quick at it, well, he made a lot of money that way. He did that even in later years after Seattle. He went completely to pot in the '80s. There was a terrific financial depression and there was no income.

Duncan: Yes, around the 1883-1887 period.

Toklas: He had very little income. You see I was grown and going to school and my mother was—in fact, my brother was probably born by then. There's over nine years difference in our age. Ten years difference. He had to support us all in the way, more or less, the way that my mother had been accustomed to – not quite, but still comfortably. And he would do these books at night. From 10 to 2. In no time.

Duncan: Probably he could concentrate better late at night.

Toklas: Well, not only that, but he wanted to be alone and quiet, and then he could do them. I can remember my father's doing that. So he gave up the position when the Seattle thing turned out well, as it did. Why he gave up the Oregon Woolen Mills.

Duncan: When you went to live at 922 O'Farrell Street –

Toklas: Well, I was born there and my mother only left her parents' home when we came back from Europe when my brother was to be born. Then she rented a furnished house. She hadn't her own furniture yet. Until – oh, he was a baby – after he was born. She took the house for a year, but I don't think we stayed there a year. Then she moved back to be near my grandmother, who was dying and who had a long, long illness. On the same block in O'Farrell Street, further down the street, near Polk. And my grandmother died and we moved to Seattle then. My father's affairs were none too good, they were getting bad again. There had been a fire at Seattle.

Duncan: Besides the San Francisco fire?

Toklas: Well, that was before, actually. I was accustomed to fires. And my father thought it would be better to live up there, and see what things were doing and not leave it to other people. So we lived there for four years, and my grandmother was dead by then and my grandfather went to a hotel and gave up the home and rented it – furnished, I think, no, unfurnished – rented it. Then when my mother was ill we came back to see the doctors in San Francisco. She had several operations before she died and when she died my grandfather insisted that I take on the O'Farrell Street house, which I didn't want to do at all. My grandfather was an unknown quality to me. I was the child who was raised by women and influenced by women, so that I was devoted to my grandmother. She was a very fine musician. I was interested in music. She was a beautiful musician. There used to be quartets and trios and things of that kind at my grandmother's house. From the days of my mother's youth. My mother always remembered that. And by the time I came along she was paralyzed on the left side, and so she played not so well any more, but she was interested in my music. And she once said—I was reading Louisa Alcott when I was about nine years old, and I remember – there was one called – I don't remember the name – *May Blossoms*… [*Clover-Blossom*]

Reel 3

Duncan: When did you first come to know the Stein family?

Toklas: Well, I told you that. Nineteen hundred and six. Nineteen hundred and five, Mike and Sarah. Nineteen hundred and six, Gertrude.

Duncan: What was her family background like?

Toklas: A normal bourgeoise family with an erratic father.

Duncan: [*having trouble with the recorder*] What was her family background like, if you wouldn't mind repeating?

Toklas: Well, as I say, it was a bourgeoise family with the normal culture and an erratic father that broke it up from time to time. He had original ideas of education.

Duncan: Was her home one in which any unusual attention was given to cultural opportunity for the children?

Toklas: It was natural. It wasn't any "cultural opportunities." People didn't say such things in those days. It was background of culture, of a certain culture which was accepted without question. There was no consciousness of it.

Duncan: There wasn't something that was specifically built up?

Toklas: No, I never knew anyone like that. My generation had it or hadn't it, but if you had, it wasn't a conscious effort on anybody's part. You weren't raised culturally to anything.

Duncan: You didn't have any certain goal that anyone who was trying to be transformed into—

Toklas: No, no. You had the culture that the family offered you, and it was great, medium or none, and it made no difference in your acquaintances. You knew all kinds, like Gertrude Stein did – she knew all kinds of people.

Duncan: She seemed to have such a wide contact, as you've said, of people.

Toklas: Yes, but then that came from her gift and her experiences, and the fact that the background of the family permitted such things. You could know anybody in California in those days you pleased, and that was that.

Duncan: Do you happen to remember where it was in Oakland that Gertrude Stein first lived when she moved out?

Toklas: Yes, on the Stratton Place. It was called the Stratton Place in East Oakland. It isn't in existence any more, just nothing but small houses.

Duncan: Toward San Leandro way?

Toklas: No.

Duncan: Not quite so far out in those days?

Toklas: No. It was in the direction of San Leandro and Fruitvale.

Duncan: Oh yes, I remember that.

Toklas: Yes, with the blue hills in the back you could see.

Duncan: That is what is now part of the Sequoia and Redwood Parks, the Regional Park System, up in the Skyline Boulevard.

Toklas: Yes, because we were on that, when we were out there in '’34 to '35.

Duncan: Did you go riding up along there, with the view out towards the bay?

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: Actually, when you were talking about Gertrude Stein and her brother, when they were young—

Toklas: That wasn't the direction. No, they went north. They didn't go in that direction at all.

Duncan: Up towards Martinez, along that way?

Toklas: Probably I haven't any idea where it was, into the foothills.

Duncan: Perhaps right back over what is now Berkeley?

Toklas: Oh no, beyond that, considerably beyond that, because Berkeley was already built, though it wasn't built up so high. Oh no, it was beyond that.

Duncan: Tilden Park and Lake Anza?

Toklas: I don't know that because that didn’t exist in my day.

Duncan: It has developed into quite a beautiful regional park system up there now.

Toklas: We drove through that and I was horrified. The country that I knew as country was all houses, houses and gardens, endless number.

Duncan: It has all been developed a great deal, in fact, since this last war. I don't imagine you would recognize it again, because it has expanded tremendously.

Toklas: I've already had one surprise.

Duncan: You haven’t been back since the time the Broadway [Caldecott] Tunnel was put through, out to Walnut Creek and Orinda.

Toklas: No, if it was, I didn’t know it. Funnily enough we were taken on a drive by a man, one of the Bowies – you know, the Bowie knife?

Duncan: Oh yes, from the old Wild West days?

Toklas: No, that wasn't the Wild West, that was "Wild South." Yes, that came from the South, from Texas and they came from Virginia. They were Virginians who went into Texas, some part of the family, and he came from a family directly from Virginia to California – that's his part of the family and I’d known some of them. There was a Miss Bowie when I was a girl in California, and her sisters, and they were very southern. They’d come after the Civil War and they were ruined. They came west. There were quite a few. There were any number of families; the Breckenridges and the Tevises and the Bowies and who else? The Gwins.

Duncan: Gwin.

Toklas: The Senator. Yes, he came from the south. Because in the other war the son was working in the same—he was wounded as a volunteer in the Serbian Army and came to work as a Californian at the same (inaudible) de guerre that we were working at. It was the American Fund for French Wounded, and he was there. And he said when the war was over, a little after the war was over, "Well, we lost our fortune in one war, and I’ve made mine in this one." Because they still had their cotton land, some of it, and cotton had gone up so enormously during the other war.

Duncan: When you made your trip back in 1934, did you go back with Gertrude Stein to visit her former home in East Oakland?

Toklas: Yes, we went out there – she was lecturing at Mills College – and we went out there before the lecture, and she was very disappointed because it was all built up and the character had changed. Because their house, as a matter of fact, was the only private house with a vast garden and land left out there, because the little people had come in and had bought up the gardens and things. Small people, working people and all from Oakland. It had become a suburb of Oakland, East Oakland.

Duncan: Did she at that time reminisce as to what her former life had been?

Toklas: No, but I knew that very well. She played with the poor children. The poor children came into their garden and they played with them. That was how she began as a child, knowing all kinds of people–the children of working people, and small-salaried people, she wouldn't have normally known so young. She got to know all kinds of people there in their garden and then she went and played with them in their house later, in their homes.

Duncan: What did she say, upon coming back to what had been a somewhat trying period, of her earlier life?

Toklas: Well, it was only trying inasmuch as adolescence was trying, otherwise it wasn't trying.

Duncan: Couldn't have been a very pleasant time.

Toklas: On the contrary. No, she had a happy childhood, an extraordinarily happy childhood, and even her youth up until a few years before she left, and then she said she had adolescence pains and it was frightful.

Duncan: Was it a sharp period of adolescence, or one which extended over several years?

Toklas: Over several years, I should imagine, from the way she spoke. It was all over when she went East, you see, that broke it.

Duncan: That snapped it?

Toklas: Yes. That did, that and her reading at the library, I think, her happiness there. She was very happy at the library.

Duncan: You really say that she more or less found herself in that year of reading at the Mechanics Library?

Toklas: Quite a bit, but then, of course, that was upset with getting pleasure, and disturbance, in going East and staying with her mother's family in Baltimore. Pleasure, in their charming southern ways, and very charming aunt with whom she lived, who she loved dearly, and who, she had not known at all before, one of her mother's sisters who had never been out to visit them. She had never been taken East from the time she was five years old. And so she met this aunt and was devoted to her and was very happy there. At the same time she had to accept the fact that she was a wild westerner to these eastern people. It was impressed upon her

Duncan: Impressed on her by the eastern people themselves.

Toklas: Yes, from the outside entirely. She never thought of it, but *they* did, and she was able to answer her New York cousins by some of the people she had met and whom she had gotten very intimate with, which impressed them, those were the people they hadn't known. They were a little more than bourgeois, they were the old families of New York, you see, and that upset her aunt. Her aunt had to keep still about her western ways.

Duncan: That reminds me of the two elderly ladies from Boston who once did come all the way out to California, and knowing that west of the Hudson River was Indian country, were quite perturbed about making the trip, and somebody out there, when they did arrive, asked them which way they'd come. They said "By way of Dedham." Were the children reared so as to look forward to careers other than their father's in business, indeed toward the kind of literary and artistic expression which later marked them?

Toklas: They weren't marked, there were only two of them. There were three who weren't. Mike had no literary or artistic career.

Duncan: He wasn't inclined that way at all, even from the early years?

Toklas: No. He was interested in music and the theatre and things of that kind, but he wasn't interested in painting. He was interested, as a matter of fact, in oriental objects. He had a good deal of rather good Chinese stuff that he'd picked up in San Francisco, from Vickery [Atkins & Torrey] and they brought those things along, and that was part of their home here in Paris, when they began to buy, as Gertrude had started, Tuscan Renaissance furniture, and they made them go together, I may say that. They made a whole, very well. They made a very nice interior in their home here.

Duncan: That was the first home in Paris that they had?

Toklas: Well, they had a rented place first, but the first home that they'd established.

Duncan: Established.

Toklas: Yes, they bought the furniture in Florence and had their things sent out from California, which were in storage. They brought some early Chinese furniture, one or two pieces, which were rather nice, and they had those.

Duncan: Actually, the Chinese influence was quite strong in the early days?

Toklas: Oh very. It *was* the cultural influence, outside of the things that were normal, in your home. It wasn't France, it wasn't England. It was China.

Duncan: And the Japanese prints, too, which would go along the same line.

Toklas: Yes, oh, it was all Asiatic in California.

Duncan: Was that something which had been developed from her contact with Chinatown in San Francisco?

Toklas: A little bit. Vickery [Atkins & Torrey] and Chinatown, and then there was a man who collected and sold – a German named Herman Janer (?), and he did a great deal. He just pushed his things around, almost with the idea of teaching what these things were. He liked to buy and sell as an adventure, but he liked people to have them. No, he was more interested than Vickery was, in Europe. European things – he had a little French furniture. Not bad. I had an eighteenth century chair from him I remember. But Vickery was purely Chinese. It wasn't to any extent Japanese. The Japanese prints, but not the Japanese porcelain. His porcelain was all Chinese.

Duncan: How about the influence of Spain and Spanish culture which was prevalent in California also?

Toklas: Well, that wasn't as deep, really, as the Chinese in San Francisco in my day. Because after all, you see, Mexico was a colony, it was colonial, and we suspected that.

Duncan: But at the same time you would see evidences, like the missions, and so forth around California?

Toklas: Yes, but then if you had been to Spain, which I hadn't, but I knew enough to know that the missions were really nothing but a few parochial churches in the village you see all over town.

Duncan: Thinking of the Spanish architecture and some of the ways of building around the plaza?

Toklas: Yes, but this was poor Spanish architecture, the missions.

Duncan: It was a reflection, of course. Something—

Toklas: Yes, but it was of the least interesting type of Spanish architecture, when you've been in Spain.

Duncan: Which type of Spanish architecture, by the way, do you appreciate the most?

Toklas: Early Gothic.

Duncan: Early Gothic, around Burgos?

Toklas: Yes, and Avila.

Duncan: Avila would be the real center. How about the Baroque? The Spanish Baroque and the Mexican Baroque?

Toklas: Well, Baroque never interested me deeply. It's amusing, but I never want to live with it. The Spanish Baroque is very good. I rather, as a matter of fact, like late Gothic, too, in Spain. Sometimes late Gothic has a Baroque quality in Spain. That fantastic side of the Spaniard came out in an exaggeration of the late Gothic.

Duncan: The same thing as in literature in Don Quixote. A strange combination, and yet it is very appealing. On the Chinese background, had Gertrude Stein any contact with Chinese art before coming to the Bay area?

Toklas: Oh, surely.

Duncan: Where was that?

Toklas: In San Francisco.

Duncan: I mean before coming to the Bay Area and San Francisco.

Toklas She came there when she was five years old.

Duncan: Oh, she came there that early, right after their return from Europe?

Toklas: They stayed a few months with her mother's people in Baltimore, and her father thought he was going to settle in Los Angeles, and didn't like it; he went right quickly to San Jose and didn't like it, and went to San Francisco – to Oakland. Never to San Francisco. He never lived in San Francisco.

Duncan: He never did?

Toklas: But his business was there.

Duncan: He died in Oakland?

Toklas: Yes, his plans and projects were all conceived in San Francisco, but they lived in Oakland, in East Oakland.

Duncan: Taking the ferry back and forth?

Toklas: Taking the ferry back and forth. And Gertrude remembered with the same excitement that I did, the Portuguese and Italians, three musicians playing on the boat.

Duncan: That was such a wonderful trip back and forth across the bay.

Toklas: Yes, and she remembered hearing before she went East that some tourists evidently saying, "Isn't it strange. It's all so burnt up here." And so when she went East and saw the green summers in Connecticut, you see, in New England, she realized what they were up to.

Duncan: Of course she would have been too young when she was in Europe to see some of the landscapes which would be similar?

Toklas: She had no memory of landscapes in Europe at all. She had memory of gardens.

Duncan: Even at five years of age?

Toklas: Oh, yes. I remember the gardens I played in. My godmother died when I was an infant – I never knew her – one of my godmothers, and I played with her little son, and his other grandmothers. He had two grandmothers and one, his father's mother, had a lovely garden in San Francisco in the heart of the city, with trees and shrubs and flowers, and a summer house and all, close to Pine Street – I don't remember. Because that house – the grandmother died when I was still a child – and that house was sold and flats were built there. Post Street, probably, near Van Ness. And I can remember that garden distinctly from the time I was five, till eleven.

Duncan: That would certainly be one part that would impress itself on your mind.

Toklas: Any child remembers a garden. Remembers *all* gardens, I think.

Duncan: Actually, in many of the places in San Francisco in the early nineteen hundreds, the little garden just out in front, between the walk and the house, would be a great pride.

Toklas: Well, that wasn't where you played. You played in the back. If you didn't have a big garden you just played in what was in the back,

because that was bigger. That wasn't just a little entrance to the house. The back garden was sometimes – well, say it was, what was a vara?– Fifty-five feet?

Duncan: Fifty-five feet.

Toklas: Well, they had a double lot, not a single lot, a double lot.

Duncan: That's going back to the old Spanish land grants.

Toklas: Yes, surely. Well then they had that fifty -five by eighty, or something of that kind. But Ray's [?] garden was bigger than that, his grandmother's garden.

Duncan: Then Gertrude Stein lived in East Oakland until about sixteen?

Toklas: Yes, sixteen or seventeen. She left when she was seventeen, I think, for the East, or the father died when she was seventeen. I don't remember which. And she didn't go immediately to Radcliffe.

Duncan: They moved to San Francisco first?

Toklas: Yes, they had a year in San Francisco when she read at the library, and then went East. The whole family went East, except her one brother, Simon, stayed in California, and Mike stayed in California, but Leo and she and Bertha, the sister, went East, and Leo went to Harvard. And Gertrude stayed with her aunt for a year and got to know the family and their friends and things and liked them, and suddenly decided that perhaps she'd better have a little more education, perhaps she'd go to college, and so she went to Radcliffe.

Duncan: What inspired her to go to college, to delve into higher education?

Toklas: Well, because she was bored with this doing nothing and she knew that she'd had very little schooling, and that you had to have some schooling some time, and she might as well get it over with. And then she went to Radcliffe because of the Harvard faculty which interested her, you see. James, Münsterberg, as I told you, and Santayana interested her, that seemed exciting, and so she went and registered there one day, out of a clear sky, and they wanted her credentials and she had nothing. She said she had passed examinations. She hadn't been to high school, you see, but a year, so she had to pass in English and the things which she could pass in, and make up for the rest afterwards.

Duncan: They were willing to take the chance?

Toklas: Yes. Her German was—she could read Schiller, they asked if she could, and she said yes, and so she read Schiller. Not that she was interested in Schiller or Goethe at all, and the German writers, but that was one thing, and the rest was English – English literature, history. She had more of that than the average graduate student.

Duncan: Do you have any idea what sort of books Gertrude Stein read during these years?

Toklas: She read everything. She read *all* the classics. She read everything. She read a great deal, as I say, she always read memoires and political things. She read all the political pamphlets of the eighteenth century, and things of that kind.

Duncan: Really a very gregarious appetite for reading?

Toklas: Oh, yes. She could swallow *every* written word. Everything.

Duncan: Did she, by any chance, re-read things?

Toklas: Oh, surely.

Duncan: She liked doing that?

Toklas: Oh, yes.

Duncan: There was such an urge for reading?

Toklas: Yes, that when she couldn't lay her hands on something new, she laid her hands on the old. She had to, because she got to the end of things, in a kind of a way. I mean the possibilities of where she lived, of having the books. And then of course when she *could* have had all the books, she had her special interests by that time in college. She would have gone on reading indefinitely, and never done anything except lie on her back with a book, if it hadn't been that she was at college and got interested in psychology and James's theories.

Duncan: Did she at one time feel that almost all the available books would soon be consumed?

Toklas: No, she thought at one time that there were no more books to read, when she was quite young. What was she going to do when she got to the end of them? And she looked around the library and said, "I'll get to the end of this, and then what?" I think that's very natural.

Duncan: It's most natural. When did she actually realize that there was an endless stream of books, as far as anyone individual was concerned?

Toklas: Oh well, after she'd been there, I suppose, a very short time. That wouldn't take long.

Duncan: The Harvard Library certainly would –

Toklas: Yes. Oh, no. Long before that. In San Francisco – the Mechanics.

Duncan: Even there?

Toklas: Oh, surely. Surely, because in reading those she'd soon find there were the contemporaries that they didn't have, she would have to find somewhere else. Because she didn't mind minor writers at all.

Duncan: From what you've said, she seemed to appreciate the minor writers the same as something which would be a little bit different, a little bit odd, in curiosities and so on, so that she would feel that that was exploring.

Toklas: No, no, no. They excited her. No, she never was exploring. Exploring and experimenting and all those things didn't exist for her. It made things more lively, more exciting. She could bury herself [*inaudible*], you know.

Duncan: Just a desire to absorb?

Toklas: To be in it.

Duncan: Did Gertrude Stein do any writing when she was a child or a young woman?

Toklas: The first writing she did was the daily theme at Radcliffe.

Duncan: Actually that was her first writing? Not until she was about nineteen or twenty? She didn't keep any diary, or anything?

Toklas: No, no. Nothing.

Duncan: She didn't indicate any real interest in actually composing.

Toklas: No. Interest in writing, but other peoples' writing.

Duncan: Did she have at that time possibly an idea that she would eventually like to write?

Toklas: That she would write? No, when it came upon her, it came upon her like that. She'd never made up her mind that she was going to be a writer, never thought that she would be a writer, never expected to be one. She started her writing by translating the, what is it, of Flaubert?

*Trois Vies Simples*. And then she started it – I think that's at Yale – she did the first paragraph and said, "I don't want to do somebody else's writing. I'll do the story myself."

Duncan: When was this?

Toklas: 1905.

Duncan: That was after coming over here? To Paris?

Toklas: Oh yes. How old would she have been? Thirty-two years old.

Duncan: So that actually the writing briefly, say, at Radcliffe, did not determine in any way her future occupation?

Toklas: No. Those daily themes, it was necessary to do them and she didn't mind doing them. She did them quickly, the way she did everything, because her real interest was something else at that time. Besides which she had to go to the opera in New York, and she had to pass examinations, she had a great many friends by this time, and she led a really very busy, happy life there.

Duncan: But it included all of the cultural things that she later came to appreciate and later to develop, but not specifically as coming from her?

Toklas: No, no. no.

Duncan: In one of the lectures in America, Gertrude Stein remarks upon her youthful enthusiasm for grammar and vocabulary.

Toklas: No, diagramming was her passion.

Duncan: Diagramming also and grammar, of course. Can you add anything on your own recollections about these things?

Toklas: Not a thing. That was always a passion, and she started in her notes for *The Making of Americans* with diagrams, but they weren't diagrams of sentences, they were diagrams of character. The relation of the profound nature of a person to another one's. The comparison, the difference, and the resemblance. Those were her diagrams by that time.

Duncan: In respect to people, not in respect to words?

Toklas: No, by that time her words—she knew where her words were coming from and how they were going to be placed in advance of writing them.

Duncan: Would you mind going over just briefly the sort of education and instruction that she received actually in school?

Toklas: As I told you, grammar school, one year at high school, her reading at the library in San Francisco, and Radcliffe and Johns Hopkins.

Duncan: So her early education was really—

Toklas: You might even say that if she hadn't been a student, she would have had no education at all. She'd have been just literate, and that's all.

Duncan: So, really she is self-educated?

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: Very much so.

Toklas: Yes, definitely. Except, of course that she fell under the influence of these men as she was developing.

Duncan: Who were these particular people besides the three you mentioned at Radcliffe and Harvard? Were there any of the other teachers who had a transitory appeal to her.

Toklas: She was impressed with them as *men* rather than as teachers of medicine, in which she was not interested at all. She went there really because William James told her she should, that it was necessary for her education as a psychologist, and then she was interested—there were three of them there, I think: Doctor Osler, Doctor Mull, and Doctor Cushing, who was a student at that time.

Duncan: The Cushings from Massachusetts?

Toklas: She didn't know him as a teacher, she knew him as a student and was very impressed by him.

Duncan: Were there any other adults besides the people in education who particularly had an influence on her?

Toklas: Well, her brother in the early days – Leo. They had a great influence one upon the other – a great influence – because they were *very* intimate until they were no longer intimate at all, and they did a great

many things together, they discussed things together, they worked at things together.

Duncan: There was a constant interchange?

Toklas: Yes, until he was at Harvard, but then she was seeing him quite frequently. But his second year at Harvard – I think he was only a freshman in Harvard – and then his New York uncle invited him to go with his New York uncle's son around the world, and so he went around the world. And then – he'd known Europe before – but there he got in contact, in China or in Japan, with Hutchins Hapgood, not Norman, but Hutchins, the writer, not the journalist. And he became interested, I think, vaguely at that time, in the Tuscan Renaissance. He didn't know [Bernard] Berenson at that time.

Duncan: But that was actually in the Orient where he met him?

Toklas: He met Hapgood there but he was in Florence, but didn't meet Berenson, but looked at the Italian Renaissance pictures – the early Renaissance pictures.

Duncan: How was this trip around the world conducted, by ship?

Toklas: Just by themselves, naturally.

Duncan: Just going from one country to the next?

Toklas: Yes, surely. In those days you weren't conducted and taken in and led. "And please remark…." You did or you didn't, whatever you did do. Oh no, that's a modern idea of culture.

Duncan: No, I prefer the wandering aspect.

Toklas: They didn't wander. They just went and when they got bored they went further. The understanding was that they had to go around the world so around the world they went, because that was the uncle's gift.

Duncan: What a wonderful way to receive a broad education.

Toklas: Well, it's not a bad way.

Duncan: What sense can you give of her nature as a younger person?

Toklas: I can't give any because I didn't know her. As I say, her youthful memory before coming to Baltimore was one entirely of living in the library and the growing pains of adolescence which really affected her. Because I was shocked with those bad years she'd had, when she told

me, and I said so. I said, “How horrible!” I'd never heard of anything like that. She said, "Well, didn’t you have that period, too?" I said, "Not I," and she said, looking at me, “Lucky you.”

Duncan: I like the way she must have said that, just “Lucky you." What were her relations to her own family and to friends of her own age?

Toklas: Well, she didn't have much relation with people her own age after they left Oakland. She was then on her own and she didn’t see anybody but her brothers, and the only one she was fond of was Leo and Mike, the only two – and the other two she ignored completely. I mean they didn’t enter into her existence any more than they had to, than she was forced to accept from their presence, and there were no other people. They didn’t know anybody in San Francisco, anybody at all, as far as I make out. They didn't see anybody that year.

Duncan: Not any young girls the same age?

Toklas: Mike was unhappily arranging to do in old Mr. Huntington. He hadn’t time to know anybody but one or two friends that he had, and two of them were Frenchmen – one of them was one of the Sutro's, but I wouldn’t know his name.

Duncan: That might be very interesting.

Toklas: I don't know anything about that. He kept up his relation with this man, liked him all his life.

Duncan: By any chance did Gertrude Stein do any reading or work at the Sutro Library?

Toklas: Never heard of it. Nor I. I don’t think there was one then.

Duncan: It may not have been. Probably where that developed was from the papers of the Sutro family.

Toklas: No, no, no. That was long after. That was a whole generation later. No, no, no. That wasn't in existence.

Duncan: I know they have a great deal of English material in the Sutro Library.

Toklas: I knew some of the Sutro family but only one and she was married to an Italian - Madame [Rosa Victoria Sutro] Morbio – the Morbios.

[*Sounds of closing French windows*]

Toklas I’m sorry. It has to be done.

Duncan: It sure does. It's getting late autumn into the evening now.

Toklas: Well, it gets dark so early now. So beastly, it's going to be two months before it's as light as this again.

Duncan: I felt that too. And then, you know, there's the difference in time between –

Toklas: Why we're still on the Hitlerian time in France, you know. Isn't it ridiculous? [*Hitler had imposed Daylight Savings Time*]

Duncan: Can you furnish any information concerning the family history of Gertrude Stein which complements the autobiographical aspects of *The Making of Americans*?

Toklas: She put it all down there, all that I knew. No, I didn't know any more than that. I happened to know the people – because they had fictitious names naturally, she couldn't put them down – and the New York cousins were outraged when they found it was their story. Oh, they were outraged. Oh yes, there was quite a moment's embarrassment, because she had been fairly intimate, not so much with the aunt and uncle as with some of the cousins, some of the children, and they were furious. And one never forgave her – Fred, the brother who went around the world with Leo Stein – never really forgave her. On the other hand, he was very nice when the other war broke out. He and another cousin sent over the car that we drove.

Duncan: The Ford car?

Toklas: Yes. Everybody contributed their car and the support of the centre where you were located, and of course your own expenses. It was volunteer service. It wasn't like the Red Cross and the Y and those things.

Duncan: So you had to have somebody purchase the car?

Toklas: Yes, someone had to buy the car. And when I found this place – the winter of '14-'15 had been very dreary and unhappy because of the war, and so we went to Spain, and we came back, it was a summer day and we walked down the street and I saw a girl, in what turned out to be a uniform I didn't know, she was in dark blue, and she was very competently driving back and forth like a dance, up and down, right next to the sidewalk.

Reel 4

Duncan: In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Gertrude Stein writes about her life with her father and her brother after the death of her mother. Is there any information you can add to this period?

Toklas: I didn't know much about it.

Duncan: That was a little bit early. Did she ever mention how she felt?

Toklas: At the death of her father?

Duncan: No, after the death of her mother.

Toklas: No, she was a child and her mother was ill, and it was sad, and that was all.

Duncan: Just one of those early memories which she perhaps felt?

Toklas: Well, it was a sweet memory, because though it was the death of a mother, it was all sweet, because her mother was sweet.

Duncan: A very kind person. Was her mother a small person?

Toklas: Yes, weenie. Very small, and Gertrude said she had a very considerable personality, but she never put it out, it was all very quiet. She was retiring.

Duncan: She could have been a very influential person, but in her own quiet way?

Toklas: I suppose so. She made no effort in any way, for anything.

Duncan: What type of influence would you say that she may have had upon Gertrude Stein?

Toklas: None, I should say. Nothing but the inheritance.

Duncan: It was a little too early to be formative?

Toklas: Yes. It was a little girl with a tender mother. And her appreciation of all her mother's people came through their resemblance to her mother, I think. The sisters and brothers were like the mother, you see. They were all little people and all gentle. There were two sculptors in the family – an uncle who was a sculptor and a cousin who was a sculptor, but that had no influence or effect of any kind upon her. No, it was their gentleness, their southern ways, because they were southern sympathizers during the Civil War.

Duncan: They had come from New Orleans, you said before?

Toklas: No, no, no. They had been in America since 1830, or something of that kind. I am not certain. They had been there for some time, and the Civil War found them all very American. They must have been born earlier than that.

Duncan: Did they actually live in the old South?

Toklas: No, no. Baltimore. They had cousins who married to the far South, the deep South. With the exception of one branch in the family which was in North Carolina, they were all from Baltimore. And the mother remembered – that's something which would interest you, perhaps – the mother remembered the Massachusetts regiment as a little girl, going through Baltimore at the beginning, of the Civil War and that they were stoned. And the mother remembered either hearing about it or seeing it, and mentioned it to Gertrude, told Gertrude the story of these dreadful people.

Duncan: The Yankees, with a prefix, of course, from the North.

Toklas: She had either seen or heard it. I rather suspect she had seen it. They may have passed the house or something.

Duncan: What part of Europe had Gertrude Stein's family come from?

Toklas: Her Kaiser's side of the family had come from Holland and then went in the seventeenth century to a little town in Germany that I don't know the name of. They were Dutch originally and then they went into Germany, and the father's family came from Frankfurt, or near there, and was very much looked down upon, as being purely a family in commerce.

Duncan: And not with any of the elite atmosphere of intellectual activity, and so on?

Toklas: No, Gertrude's grandfather was a man with considerable force of character, but very gentle always. Even on both sides of the grandparents there, there was a certain gentleness, and a certain liberty – acceptance of other peoples' ideas. “Let the children have their way,” and things of that kind.

Duncan: He didn't try to force them at all?

Toklas: No, some of the children had ideas that didn't suit him, but he always said, “Let them try it. Let them find out for themselves.”

Duncan: He sounds like a very sensible person.

Toklas: Oh, very. More than that, he was a person of enormous sympathy.

Duncan: I suppose that would have had its effect for herself too?

Toklas: Well, you see, in that way her influences, as I said, came from her mother's family, but on the other side, the force – the dominating force that she had – which, if she hadn't had her gift, her genius, would still have counted in the woman – with Stein that overpowering security and going ahead with it, you know. "Beating the table," as I used to call it, which wasn't literally true.

Duncan: But still it was –

Toklas: Enormous force. You see, when she had anything to say, it came with considerable, not only force, but there was a continuous flow until it was said, and it was said with enormous vehemence.

Duncan: It was a welling-up?

Toklas: Yes, and she was so convinced that it was the truth that she couldn't be stopped from saying it.

Duncan: A very positive side of her character.

Toklas: Well, it was positive, but it was more than that it was conviction. It was deep conviction. She wouldn't have talked if she hadn't been convinced of its being the truth. And, of course, she was so practically continuously right.

Duncan: Which of course, would reinforce the feeling that—of assurance.

Toklas: Yes, that after all, experience had taught her, and it wasn't to be denied, such experience.

Duncan: Of course, with so many people wavering, with her it was entirely the opposite.

Toklas: I mustn't mention the name; this oughtn't go down on the record; but you know the lady, you know of her – always wavered, and she called her the "Indecision Board." And for that she had nothing but occasionally a little humor, otherwise she had no use for it. She wouldn't touch it. She didn't like undecided people, people that wavered.

Duncan: When did Gertrude Stein first show an interest in scientific experiments, particularly in medicine and psychology?

Toklas: She didn't show any interest in medicine, she didn't show any interest in scientific experiments, unless you call handwriting – not handwriting, automatic writing. You know, it was psychology, it wasn't science – real, I mean, pure – what you'd call experimental science, that is.

Duncan: There wasn't any actual, as you say, experimenting, but was it in pure science or medicine that she would have been interested in?

Toklas: Not at all.

Duncan: Not at all either?

Toklas: Oh, medicine, no. One of the doctors flunked her in the last examination for her graduation because she had shown such scorn in her interest in his work.

Duncan: This was at Johns Hopkins? In his actual experimental work, and so on?

Toklas: It was obstetrics, I think. She was bored to death with it. And he said, "Well, of course you'll come back," and she said, "Oh, never."

Duncan: That was the end of it.

Toklas: Well, it was all right, because she had found out by that time from William James that William James had intended she should become a student – not a student, an intern – in a mental hospital, and if there was one thing she loathed, it was the abnormal. So *that's* what decided her, really as much as—oh, she hadn't intended to go back in any case. She hadn't intended to go back, but there was a reason. The definite reason why she *shouldn't* go back was that. Not one that she had decided upon, but that was a prevention.

Duncan: That she just wasn't interested?

Toklas: Oh, she couldn't do that. She never could bear it, the insane really alarmed her. I had seen twice in my life people that were mad. One who had returned in convalescence and then broke out, you see, in my presence, and I never could tell her anything about that. I told her about these girls that I knew and she was very much interested in one of them, wanted more, and then something typical – a response to the mother's sudden apparition.

Duncan: She felt a revulsion towards anything abnormal?

Toklas: She walked away from that story.

Duncan: Could just leave it?

Toklas: I knew it from that, that was early, that she didn't want anything of that kind. And then we had two mad landladies, and she was up against one with a slight outburst once.

Duncan: And that probably threw her off.

Toklas: No, what she said to her was — she treated her exactly like a doctor. Her medical attitude, not experience but her attitude, was, “Don't allow this to take possession of you. You are as ruddy as a turkey gobbler. Calm yourself and go home.”

Duncan: So her early training actually came in handy there?

Toklas: Well, she did that in the hospitals, too, during the other war.

Duncan: During the first war?

Toklas: Yes, because the doctors, knowing that she had a medical education, insisted upon her taking part in all the operations, which she *loathed*, and she got out of as many of them as she could, except when they were Americans, stray Americans in French hospitals. You know they were taken off–

Duncan: Right from the battlefield, and so on?

Toklas: And got put into the French hospitals alone there, and then Gertrude thought it was her duty.

Duncan: But it was still something which she would have preferred to stay away from?

Toklas: Well, it revolted her, the whole thing.

Duncan: Do you know how this interest – actually her training in medicine and psychology and so on – was regarded by her friends and her family?

Toklas: The family? There was no family by that time. No, there were nothing but the brother and the brother Mike – Mike was always pleased with everything that Gertrude did, and Leo would say, "It's all right." And the friends were all interested enough. They thought it was normal. Quite normal. Everything that she had done previously was leading to

it, so it was all right. And the family, there was nothing, because the aunt, the aunt which she was so fond of, was devoted to her, and the - same thing as Mike: anything that Gertrude did was right because she chose carefully.

Duncan: So she had a free hand?

Toklas: She had no opposition. None at all. And the women she knew at college were the same kind as she was. I mean, they had gone into it of their own free will. No one was pushed into college in those days.

Duncan: They had been led into it because they desired to do it.

Toklas: No, you weren't pushed into college in those days. You went because you wanted to go. It wasn't inevitable.

Duncan: Exactly when did yourself and Gertrude Stein first become friends?

Toklas: Nineteen hundred and seven, in Paris.

Duncan: Nineteen hundred and seven. That was your first actual meeting? Even though, of course, you had heard of her before and knew of her family relations?

Toklas: Well, I knew something – very little about the family, really. I knew that there were a brother and sister, and two other brothers, and another brother and another sister.

Duncan: Which one of Gertrude Stein's brothers was it who suggested that you meet her in Paris?

Toklas: None of them. No, it was just natural. No one suggested it. You see, we came to Paris and went to see the Steins and she was there, as I told you. No, there was no suggestion. There was not so much conscious effort in those days as there is now, to lead to things. Things happened normally. And more things happened as a result of it.

Duncan: I'm quite sure. How did you feel when you first met her?

Toklas: Well, I was very much impressed. I told you, I was impressed with her presence and her wonderful eyes and beautiful voice – an incredibly beautiful voice. I don't know any speaking voice that has its quality, its resonance and its fullness. It was like a very fine mezzo-soprano singing.

Duncan: But actually in conversation?

Toklas: Yes. Anything she said had that quality. It was as if it had been the thing that never happens. The singer's speaking voice isn't as beautiful as their singing voice, ever. Amongst the singers I've known, great singers, their voice has a certain quality but nothing of the beauty. Well, hers had the beauty of their *singing* voice, in speaking.

Duncan: By the way, could Gertrude Stein sing?

Toklas: No, she improvised on the piano, but she never sang. She was interested in music, desperately at one time, in her early college days.

Duncan: It's amazing to have that musical quality actually in her conversation.

Toklas: But I don't think it has anything, either. I think, from my experience with musicians, that the singing voice and the speaking voice are two different things, exactly as the written language and the spoken language are two very separated. I think there is just as much difference.

Duncan: That's a very interesting reflection. Now, will you tell us a little bit about your own upbringing and your own family?

Toklas: Well, what do you want to know?

Duncan: We would like to know about your father's business, or profession, about your mother's interests, about their general and social life.

Toklas: My mother was like Gertrude's mother, except that she had, I think, more force of character. She was a stoic. Quite without volition, just naturally born so. She was a very serious person who had no particularly serious interests. She had the interests of a woman. She had great taste for flowers in her home, for flowers particularly, and she liked her garden and she liked cutting flowers and arranging them, and she made beautiful flower arrangements in the days when it wasn't studied. The combinations of her own that were very interesting – still are – quite original ones.

Duncan: That's amazing. Were they—

Toklas: She used to combine, for example – with difficulty because it was hard to get – hops and sweet peas, and they are lovely today.

Duncan: That's interesting. How about wild flowers, from the hills around California?

Toklas: Oh yes, wild flowers, wild flowers were just commonplace in California. We didn't think about those. We didn't think about that.

Duncan: But did she use them in some of her arrangements?

Toklas: Oh, that was so general in San Francisco. There was a woman who used to go out and cut down trees in the woods and berries and things, and she was the first floral decorator I'd ever heard of, and she got enormous sums for putting grapes on long things and arranging the dining room table in the dining room and then the drawing rooms.

Duncan: Was your mother influenced by the Japanese act of floral arranging?

Toklas: Not at all. Not at all. Oh, not in the least little bit. She didn't like the Japanese. We liked the Chinese in our home.

Duncan: Actually being closer to Chinatown, there, too.

Toklas: She had charming taste. She dressed charmingly. She was a little thing, and she had a great deal of presence in spite of that, and violet eyes. Wonderful violet eyes.

Duncan: That would be charming.

Toklas: Quite unusual eyes, so that when I was little once I said to her, "Mummie, you've got the loveliest watery eyes," and she said, "I think you mean liquid." I remember that because I didn't much care between "liquid" and "watery," but she did.

Duncan: She did, because they were her eyes. How about your father?

Toklas: Well, my father was, he was a – a friend once said of him, I think it was from somebody else, I don't think it was original – said he was a "minister without a portfolio." And there was a good deal of that in him.

Duncan: Very ecclesiastically inclined?

Toklas: Oh no, not that kind of minister, a Minister of State.

Duncan: A distinguished-looking gentleman?

Toklas: Oh yes, very distinguished and very—he gave the appearance of great indifference to *everything*, but he wasn't indifferent to my mother, or my brother. Not the least bit.

Duncan: How many other children were in your family?

Toklas: Just one. Just a brother, much younger than I. When my mother died, my father and he chummed up marvelously. It was wonderful, because I had charge of the child. I was nineteen, and he was nine.

Duncan: When did your mother die? What year was that?

Toklas: I was nine old, ten years old.

Duncan: So it was very early in your own life?

Toklas: She died in ‘87 – ‘87 or ‘88.

Duncan: That was right at the end of that hard period, the depression time in California, too.

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: And your brother, you say, must have been just a very young child?

Toklas: Oh, he was a sweet child. Yes, he was young but very charming. He was never so charming again as he was at that age.

Duncan: At that age.

Toklas: Oh, between nine and fourteen he was adorable. He had my mother eyes, you see. Those lovely eyes. He had long lashes. My father gave him a great deal of freedom and he used to go up to grandfather 's ranch and live there, just higgledy-piggledy, for his vacations from school, and what he really was doing was going on the engines, on the locomotives, with the driver, sitting up in the cabin.

Duncan: Was that on the Southern Pacific?

Toklas: Yes. In and out of the round house, when he was about ten years old, scarcely a year after my mother died, and he came back not having bathed that whole week, and you would have thought not very much having washed, because he had washed, but around his eyes there was a sort of black rim that made those wonderful eyes of his like a wanton’s eyes that are *maquillé* – and he was *beautiful*! He had high color, you see fairly blondish, not blond, but pale-ish coloring. Oh, he was wonderful like that.

Duncan: You did a great deal, then, actually after your mother died to help bring him up?

Toklas: Yes, I raised the boy so to speak. From that time on I did his lessons with him, got him, to school, made him skip grades and things like

that. I said if you work with me for an hour a day, you can skip a grade. I can see by the work that you're doing and the marks that you're getting that you could certainly skip grades, so he skipped two in the grammar school. He had six months' illness and another time he not only made that up but skipped a grade the next year.

Duncan: That was certainly a heavy responsibility for one as young as you were at the time.

Toklas: But I had a great deal because I had this household of my grandfather's, and no experience whatever. I hadn't *any* idea of a household, and my grandfather was rather hospitable and that meant that the house had people in it a great deal, and so I had to come up to scratch.

Duncan: Actually, that's where you learned to cook so well, wasn't it?

Toklas: Oh, no. I never did any cooking. I learned to cook over here in France. I cooked American dishes for Gertrude Stein because she was bored with French cooking. And so once a week, Sunday evenings, I cooked for her American things. And then the next thing was this war, that taught me to cook. Because the cook we had was a great cook, but she couldn't cook with what I could give her. And I had to do the cooking to prove that you could live on what there was possible. She said she couldn't cook without a pint of cream, the yolks of six eggs, and a bottle of white wine. I said, "Here's the bottle of white wine. Go ahead, without the cream and the yolks." And she couldn't, and so I showed her how to make a meat loaf with a hundred grams of meat for six people, which was perfectly edible.

Duncan: Wonderful!

Toklas: Yes. Well, there were mushrooms in the country, wild mushrooms, you see, that gave it a flavor. And I think the reason that America took on spices was because the meat ration was low. Because I did unconsciously, first, and then consciously, knowing that it replaced meat. Onions and herbs and condiments take the place of meat, if you're clever. And you mustn't forget that there wasn't much bread or eggs. If you got an egg it was a wonderful thing.

Duncan: This was during the first war?

Toklas: No, the second war. Oh, no, in the first war you were just limited to bread and meat.

Duncan: It's almost like my current situation in London. I have a ration of one egg a week.

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: The only food that I miss.

Toklas: I learned to cook without material. You *can* cook without material, if you're put to it. And of course we had fish, excellent fish, and that's where the white wine was valuable. We had excellent white wine, a quantity of it that I used (inaudible).

Duncan: Actually, when you were helping to keep house for your grandfather in O'Farrell Street, didn't you help a bit with the cooking then?

Toklas: No, because I had a cook. No, I had a good cook at that time. No, I made the menu, and I had to learn that: what was suitable, what went with other things, as I remembered them in my mother's better days, when she made the menu. And then I remembered my grandmother's, and then further than that I went to the provision people who supplied my grandmother and they said, "Oh Miss, you don't need to tell us what to do, we know." And I knew very well they didn't, because I wasn't living on that scale, at all, that I couldn't afford to have the terrapin, and the things that she had, you know. And so I said, "Well, I'll let you know. I'll telephone you." Stevens, that was the fishman down California Street market, said to me, "Oh, Miss, don't you bother about telling me. How many are there of you in your family? You let me know how many you want it for and I'll just send it to you." And then the poulterer said the same thing – Murphy. Murphy said, "Oh, don't bother me with what you want. *I* know what your grandmother had." That was just what I couldn't have, so I had to come to some understanding with them. Oh, it was a great bore. I didn't like it.

Duncan: You mean taking care of the house?

Toklas: I didn't like taking care of the household in O'Farrell Street at all. I was very gênée there. I didn't like it. I was at that time going to be a musician, a pianist.

Duncan: Tell us about your interest in music.

Toklas: That was inherited from my grandmother's family. Because my father and my father's side, they turned to painting as a distraction. His father painted and some of his sisters painted.

Duncan: Did you take lessons at that time on the piano?

Toklas: Oh, yes. There was finally a Dane there, rather a great – not so much a great teacher as really a very fine pianist – named Otto Bendix, and I fell upon him.

Duncan: How far did you actually progress in your musical education?

Toklas: Well, I was going to be a musician and then I found out that everything I did was absolutely fifth rate, and so I gave it up.

Duncan: How long did it take before you realized that?

Toklas: To find that out? Oh, quite a while. I'd been taught music when I was a child, oh when I was about nine or ten years old, and it didn't interest me at that time. I was about seventeen. From seventeen to — oh, I was at it quite a number of years – to twenty-four. Seven years.

Duncan: Even up until the time you came over to Paris? Or just before?

Toklas: Oh, no, no, no. Oh, no. Some time before – four years before.

Duncan: That's right. You were twenty-seven when you first came to Paris.

Toklas: No, no, no. I was older than that. I came over in nineteen hundred and seven. I was born in '77. I was thirty.

Duncan: Thirty already?

Toklas: Yes. I gave it up when I was twenty-six, four years before, when my grandfather died. By that time I was bored. It was a distraction, I think, it was something that held my interests, forcibly against the family life, which bored me. There was my grandfather, my granduncle, all these old gentlemen, you see.

Duncan: There just wasn't very much to hold your interest in the household?

Toklas: No, it wasn't *my* household. It was my grandfather's.

Duncan: You felt like you were merely sort of a guest?

Toklas: Well, it wasn't that so much I was a guest. I was the responsible grand-daughter. Because I was the only grand-daughter, at least grown. There was one other grandchild – a granddaughter, but she was a little thing.

Duncan: These visits you were able occasionally to have, like down at Monterey, and Carmel, were really—

Toklas: Not Carmel. Carmel was just a little village.

Duncan: Carmel was just a little village.

Toklas: It wasn’t so much that, but we despised it.

Duncan: It hadn't taken on the artistic character.

Toklas: And what was the other place there?

Duncan: Right near Monterey?

Toklas: Yes, it had more than active life in those days. Carmel was rather low-down.

Duncan: Oh, Del Monte?

Toklas: No, no. Del Monte was the hotel.

Duncan: Pacific –?

Toklas: Pacific Grove. That’s it. Now, Pacific Grove was a little better. There were respectable people, at least. I mean, people you *could* know. But Carmel was *frightful*. Just as it’s frightful in another way today. But at that time it hadn’t the artistic pretentions. It was the same thing without any artistic pretensions.

Duncan: But it was a very pleasant time for you?

Toklas: Yes, that was always a relief, to get away from the household and go down there. I had a horse down there. I had a horse in town occasionally, not always. I’d ride madly.

Duncan: Would you go riding out along the seventeen mile drive?

Toklas: Oh, surely. Every morning early.

Duncan: And Tres Pinos. Out towards the point?

Toklas: They tell me that that's all going to be taken up by the Navy. Is that true?

Duncan: Well, I don't – no, actually, what the Navy has taken up there is the Monterey Hotel.

Toklas: Del Monte?

Duncan: No, not Del Monte, which is on the other side of the point, but actually the grounds close to Monterey, on the way back towards San Jose.

Toklas: Oh well, that's not so bad.

Duncan: No, not too bad at all.

Toklas: Hasn't changed the town though?

Duncan: It has, but then it had already been changed during the war with Fort Ord being close by.

Toklas: Yes, because we went to – well that was before the war of course, but in 1935. Gertrude got her drive-yourself car down at Pasadena and we drove up. I made her see everything that I had seen.

Duncan: Did you drive along State 1?

Toklas: No, on the contrary, we went into the Yosemite. Went to the big trees first and up to Yosemite.

Duncan: Up to Sequoia and General Grant?

Toklas: And just skirted Tracy and Stockton, so that I could see it, look at it like that, out of the car quickly, because Gertrude was tired and wanted a rest, and went out of our way for that, though. I saw a sign to Stockton and I said, "This is our road."

Duncan: Lodi, and all the towns with memories. How did you and Gertrude Stein like Yosemite when you returned? Or was that the first time?

Toklas: That was the first time she had seen it.

Duncan: But you had seen it before? How did she like it from the first visit?

Toklas: She liked it a lot, but we couldn't stay long, unfortunately, anyway, because she was lecturing in San Francisco, at the University of California in San Francisco and Stanford, and she wanted to rest in between. This was, so to speak, that western trip was a rest. There weren't many lectures, only about half a dozen along the whole coast.

Duncan: It was a pleasant travel?

Toklas: Yes, it was lovely.

Duncan: Do you remember Senorita Bonifacio quite well?

Toklas: Well, I went to see the house because I'd told Gertrude so much about it, the Sherman rose and all. And, you know, she was very funny about the Sherman rose.

Duncan: Tell us about that.

Toklas: She spoke no English and I spoke no Spanish, but we got along, because I pattered a few words of Spanish and she understood a few words of English, so I said to her, "Was that Sherman rose, was that a true story?" She looked at me – she had devilish little eyes, *charming* dark eyes that must have been very beautiful when she was young. She was another one of those little women who had a dominating personality. A little bit the kind that Gertrude Stein used to call "Generals." Very often you see that in southern women. We knew three southern women like that, weenie things, you know, delicate.

Duncan: But forceful.

Toklas: And with a wonderful sense of organization, which she had in her little way. She could have lived a big life, that woman. And she looked at me a little bit, and I said, "Was it? Is that story true?" And she said – like that [*demonstrates*] – she made a little face as much as to say, "Keep up the legend." So what I used to do to please her was—I had a Spanish shawl, a dark one, and I used to put on my Spanish shawl and stand in the garden. The tourists could take my back, thinking I was the daughter of the house. That pleased her a lot.

Duncan: You told that story later on in Spain, perhaps?

Toklas: They don't know anything about Monterey. It doesn't mean anything to them.

Duncan: You used to walk in the garden quite a bit when you were down there and do quite a bit of reading yourself, didn't you?

Toklas: Well, that was just natural living.

Duncan: It's such a beautiful area now.

Toklas: Well, I took Gertrude Stein there to see the house. And I located the house. I knew where it ought to be. I hadn't lost my sense of place in relation to the hills, I knew where that house was.

Duncan: Where it should be.

Toklas: Where it should be. So a policeman said, "Well, what are you doing here?" There were traffic regulations, lights, and we weren't paying the slightest attention to them. I said, "I'm looking for Madame Bonifacio's house, which evidently isn't here anymore. What did they do with that house?" I was so angry. He said, "It's up in the hills." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Some of those millionaires from the East bought it and carted it up there." I said, "An adobe house?" He said, "They did."

Duncan: Not an old castle but an adobe house.

Toklas: And they carted it away, I don't know how. I should have thought it would have fallen to pieces the moment you touched it.

Duncan: There it was. Did you go up and then find it up in the hills?

Toklas: No, no.

Duncan: It wouldn’t have had the same memories.

Toklas: No. It was a lovely little place, with her garden. She had a nice garden at the back. As you said, very little in the front, but at the back. She had about the usual fifty vara, I suppose.

Duncan: By the way, did either yourself or Gertrude Stein ever visit San Simeon, where Hearst’s place was, or did you go by on Route 1 along the coast?

Toklas: Hearst was anathema, I tell you. We wouldn’t touch Hearst with a ten foot pole. I had a set-to with Mrs. Hearst over the telephone in New York, and that was enough.

Duncan: What was that in respect to?

Toklas: Gertrude Stein was supposed to speak at a benefit, at a charity lunch and it turned out that Mrs. Hearst was in charge of it. And the date had not been fixed when we left New York. So I wrote and said, “If I don't hear anything further about this,” (I didn't know it was Mrs. Hearst at that time) “I will consider that the engagement is not to be kept.” And I didn't have any answer from them until we got to Bryn Mawr, where we were staying at the college. We’d been asked to stay there. And we came back from Philadelphia, where Gertrude had lectured one night, at 12 0 'clock, and there was a cordon of police around, so that we couldn’t get in without their knowing it to telephone to Mrs. Hearst. There was a pile of wires like that I hadn’t opened from Mrs. Hearst saying that she expected us the next morning. So I telephoned her and said that I thought that she was lacking in correctitude in not answering me in time, to wait till now. And finally she said, “Well, every newspaper has announced it.” I said, "I’m sorry, but I don’t read the newspapers." And she couldn't believe that. She didn’t believe it. So I said, "I'm sorry, I don't see how we can make it.” She said, "I’ll send my car up for you." I said, "Oh, don’t bother, thanks, we have our tickets back on the train. We'll go back on the train and Gertrude Stein will come and say her few words and leave. She wasn’t eating at your luncheon *anyways*!” I was furious with her. I said, "She never eats in public. Never, never eats in public. She may speak in public, but not

eat in public." So that was what happened. We drove from the station to her hotel, whatever it was, restaurant, hotel, and Gertrude said a few words and left. Mrs. Hearst was buzzing around but Gertrude never saw her.

Duncan: On your own relations again, how about your grandparents, and your cousins, or aunts and uncles – were there very many of them living in California also?

Toklas: No, my grandfather and two brothers of his, that was all. There were none of my father's family there, and the one or two brothers – the one brother lived in Stockton, not in San Francisco, lived in Stockton, and there was the half-sister, who was married, at Lodi – near Lodi, between Lodi and Lockeford, as I remember.

Duncan: Actually the Tracy-Lodi-Stockton country is quite familiar in your own family background?

Toklas: Yes. Oh, I knew that well, because I'd go up there for vacations and my grandfather would take me driving around the country to see his land, and all. He *adored* that country. He loved that – much more than his San Francisco home.

Duncan: What was he doing, farming? What type of farming?

Toklas: Farming. *Métayage*, you know, renting it 50-50, the French system. And he had a lot of land and he had beasts and things.

Duncan: That is now, you know, quite a center for the California Valley Project, the Central Valley Project of irrigation. There is what they call the cross-channel canal.

Toklas: In those days, instead of having that they had floods, and a dam would burst. The McNears and – somebody else whose name escapes me. The McNears were neighbors on the south of my grandfather's land. Lux – Miller & Lux, that's it. They were great landowners and they built the dam, you see, the length of the three properties.

Duncan: As a flood protection.

Toklas: Yes, but then somebody north and south wouldn't, and in it would come.

Duncan: Come all the way around?

Toklas: Yes, so that a great deal of their earnings went in building. At least my grandfather's (who hadn't as much land as the other two) a great deal

of the money that came from the farms went into building up of the dam, everlastingly.

Duncan: Just to protect the farm?

Toklas: To protect them and protect the others as well, but they never did enough.

Duncan: You say, however, in feeling that your grandfather appreciated the San Joaquin?

Toklas: Oh, he adored the San Joaquin. He would have lived on the land there if my grandmother would have. But there was no music up in the San Joaquin Valley, you understand, there was no theatre, there were no books, and she loved all that – that was *her* life.

Duncan: So San Francisco was the loadstone to draw her there, and your grandfather, too? Yes, well, the valley has meant a great deal to a great number of people.

Toklas: Well, it did to me. It hurt me dreadfully when I had to sell the little parcel that was left of my share, that was left me, and I had to sell that in '32, '30 or something, whenever the *crise* was. That broke me up a bit because that little parcel was just something—

Duncan: Knowing that you had yourself a little bit of land –

Toklas: A little roots there.

Duncan: —there in a place which you and your family both appreciated. It is now quite an extensive area for small industry, you know.

Toklas: Don’t tell me about it. Industry bores me. Farming is my field. I understand farming perfectly.

Reel 5

Duncan: What stimuli do you think there were in California, particularly in the Bay area, which opened your own interests to the world of modern art?

Toklas: Vickery [Atkins & Torrey].

Duncan: Nothing at all?

Toklas: Vickery. Yes. It wasn't modern art, but it was art. You knew what art was. You knew what painting was. You knew what beautiful things were. You knew what was *really* aesthetic and what wasn’t.

Duncan: You also had his acquaintance in San Francisco?

Toklas: Oh, yes. Surely.

Duncan: Was there any other place where you could find art?

Toklas: That was the only place you found things, except in private homes. In homes people had pictures occasionally, but not frequently. I had friends who had Corots and things of that kind.

Duncan: Some of the Impressionists?

Toklas: No Renoirs.

Duncan: None at all.

Toklas: Never saw a Renoir until I came to Paris.

Duncan: Of course, no Cezannes?

Toklas: Oh, no. Oh, no. There were none in New York then. It was scarcely a name in 1907. I don't think there were any owned in America as early as that.

Duncan: I don 't believe there would have been. In fact, it was Gertrude Stein who in many ways found the Cezannes, didn't she?

Toklas: No. Oh, no. Cezanne was known in Paris – well known.

Duncan: I remember the description—

Toklas: Because, you see, Cezanne had died in 1904, I think, and then in 1905 they had an enormous *rétrospective* of him. He was sufficiently recognized that the State gave an enormous room of one of their salons for a *rétrospective*. And that proves how well known he was in Europe.

Duncan: Was here, but not at all in America. You say that the homes had most of the art of that type which was available, if it were available. Where did you come in contact with it, if you did?

Toklas: Well, one's friends. People one knew.

Duncan: Who had contacts with Europe themselves, primarily?

Toklas: Yes, yes. Oh, Californians always went in Europe. Wasn't there a saying that "A good Californian when he dies doesn't go to Heaven,

he goes to Paris?" Well, that was proof. You never stayed in New York. You never went to New York. I never knew anyone who went to visit in New York as a tourist. They came to Paris.

Duncan: True. Very true.

Toklas: Oh, no. We had a great scorn for New York. It was a port of entry, and ours was a port of entry for Asiatics, who were sympathic. But what came to New York? Everything. Everything horrible.

Duncan: It was actually just a port of exit many times in order to come to Le Havre. Were there any of these art forms that Gertrude Stein knew of in the Bay area, besides her reading?

Toklas: No, of course they weren't known. They weren't known in Paris. Those that she became interested in. They were thoroughly unknown.

Duncan: Did you, and did she, for example, read many of the new authors at that time?

Toklas: She read everything, of course.

Duncan: But I mean authors of the type of those who were just beginning to be known?

Toklas: Sure.

Duncan: She read very voluminously?

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: How about yourself?

Toklas: Of course. One read everything.

Duncan: In other words you had almost as universal a taste in literature as she did?

Toklas: Oh, no. I hadn't the same experience with the Elizabethans. I didn't know any Elizabethan prose at all.

Duncan: What type of reading did *you* particularly appreciate?

Toklas: Oh, Eighteenth-century English, that was it, and I read French a good deal. She didn't. Gertrude read French in translation.

Duncan: I see.

Toklas: She didn't want to read a foreign language, really. She spoke French because she lived in France, but otherwise she wouldn't have.

Duncan: She wouldn't read in French, even in her later years?

Toklas: No. She didn’t want to see it. The spoken French was one thing, but the written French was another. If she read Gide, for example, the early Gide, in translation, she waited for it to be translated.

Duncan: She was so accustomed to the English language?

Toklas: Well, she wanted to keep it pure.

Duncan: To keep it that way.

Toklas: Yes, and she was very much upset when she heard English on the street in London. She didn't want anyone else to speak it. It was her language, so to speak.

Duncan: You mean she didn't like the English accent?

Toklas: No, she didn’t like anyone else speaking it.

Duncan: Did either or both of you attend stimulating theatrical productions, opera or symphonies, art galleries?

Toklas: Oh, surely. Always. From the beginning of time. She and I both saw the same pictures in San Francisco at a loan show, without knowing each other. She was eleven or twelve, and I was seven, or eight – nine – and we never saw the picture again. It was Millet's *Man with the Hoe*. It was owned in California, you know. And we didn't see it again until we went out in '35, and when we saw it we were so shocked because it wasn't as big as this [*indicates size*]

Duncan: You had that in your mind’s imagination?

Toklas: Our childish memory was it was an enormous picture. And the woman who owns it today, the daughter – her parents bought it, oh, at the time it was painted, way, way back – they really discovered Millet on their own. They bought that back to California. And I told her the story. And there was another nice story of their place. On their place they have a sequoia, one of the only sequoias in captivity – they have two of them, in fact – and they’re weeping sequoias. And I said that Gertrude was so impressed, not only with the picture but with your weeping sequoias, their being weeping, that your mother had had the gardener train them, “Oh, not at all,” she said. "That’s the way they

grew. They're a sport." And we concluded it was because they weren't in a forest of them. There was too much sunlight around them.

Duncan: So they didn't grow straight up?

Toklas: They grew straight up, but they didn't grow as high—well, they aren't old enough to grow as high as that. They've had them for forty years, I think. And she told me not how they got them, but who gave them to them. She didn't say how they came into his possession. Must have stolen them, because they were national property from the beginning of time, I should say.

Duncan: No, not beyond 1860, and so on. By 1869, of course, was the first national park.

Toklas: Yes. But then, this was much later. They're not fifty years old, those trees.

Duncan: Actually, it's very interesting, because sequoias, you know, are only on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada between an elevation of 4000 and 8000 feet.

Toklas: Well, there are sequoias in Spain, a few.

Duncan: Yes, and they've been brought there, I believe. Must have been.

Toklas: They have been? From where?

Duncan: From California, in the early days. Transported.

Toklas: That's interesting. I never knew how they got there.

Duncan: Actually, it's the only area in the world now, that western slope in the Sierra Nevada range in California, where they grow.

Toklas: They are the most beautiful trees, the most beautiful tree I've ever seen, and the way they sit on the ground. They sit on the ground like a cathedral does. They come out of the earth but they sit on the ground. They have no roots in the ground, you see.

Duncan: It's such a huge trunk to walk around. I've seen one tree up in Sequoia Park where it took just about thirty people, hands together, to go all the way round it.

Toklas: Oh, they are wonderful.

Duncan: Where did you go for the operas, symphonies, and so on, in San Francisco?

Toklas: You went regularly to a little theatre called the Tivoli, which gave a new opera every week, and they were indifferent as to what it was. They gave operas that had never been played in America. They gave the first performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* in San Francisco, long before New York knew anything about it. Then there were companies which would come up from Mexico City, from Spain, and from Italy, and come to San Francisco and play there for months. Some of them would come and stay several weeks, six-seven weeks, two months, because it was an agreeable place to stay in and to rest. There was the local French theatre that was only mediocre, but still, it was a French theatre.

Duncan: Where was that located?

Toklas: Oh, I don't know. Some small theatre down on Pine Street, as I remember. My grandmother would take me to these places. And they'd have *opéra comique* from Paris – formed in Paris from the old members of the Opéra-Comique when their voices were a little past. One of the great French tenors came out once, called Guy, and his voice – the middle register – was still good. The high notes were no good any more. But still they had the tradition of how things should be sung. And the Tivoli gave, as I say, a repertoire that was enormous. All sorts of things that were no longer played anywhere and things that were new. You see, when you say "culture," San Francisco was a town of culture – naturally. You didn't talk about it. It was.

Duncan: You just felt it?

Toklas: No. It was there. And it was fed by people who made their living at it, quite normally.

Duncan: How would you have felt about San Francisco in respect to other cities at that time?

Toklas: Well, I didn't know them.

Duncan: I mean did you have a feeling that San Francisco was unique?

Toklas: No, no. Just San Francisco was your town, and it *was* unique because it was your town. Otherwise not.

Duncan: You haven't felt like it in retrospect, that it was unique?

Toklas: Surely. I suppose there is nothing but New Orleans that's like San Francisco.

Duncan: That is the one other city I would have suggested as having the international, cosmopolitan element.

Toklas: Well, but you see, New Orleans had the Spanish influence as we had, and the French influence as we had, because we had French influence. I don't know why, after the war of '70 a great many French people who were ruined by the war came out to California, and when I lived there and left it, there were 250,000 inhabitants in San Francisco, and 25,000 were of French blood – a tenth of the population had French blood.

Duncan: I hadn't realized the figure was so high.

Toklas: Yes. And there were three hundred volunteers on the first boat that left New York when the other war was declared, of French descent, from San Francisco. So that the first wounded soldier I saw in any hospital I spoke to was from San Francisco, and he recognized me.

Duncan: Who was he?

Toklas: He was the elevator man, boy – he wasn't a boy, he was a man – at the White House, the French luxury shop in San Francisco. I suppose it's still in existence?

Duncan: Yes, it still is.

Toklas: Well, he was *frightfully* wounded, oh, he was all banged in forever. And I said to him, "You're not sorry, are you?" And he said, "Sometimes I wonder whether I am or I'm not." No, the son of the owner, his name was Raphael Weill (or something of that kind), of the White House, who was French-born, an American citizen, but he was born in France – his son was a volunteer with the elevator boy. They all came over together, three hundred of them, so I was able through Mrs. [Isabel] Lathrop and William Gwin, the Americans, when we were working, to get something to him, to get him taken care of a little bit.

Duncan: That really made you feel that after you'd gotten into war service that you had a direct connection with your former home?

Toklas: Yes. Well, my connection with my home was always very close. Oh, yes. I've not forgotten California at all. Not at all. It's still God's country to me.

Duncan: Do you ever by chance expect to go back again?

Toklas: No, of course not, at my age you don't move. No, after Gertrude died I made up my mind I'd stay here.

Duncan: You intend to stay here in France the rest of the time,

Toklas: Well, there's nothing else to do. To stay in her home seemed the proper thing.

Duncan: Did you by any chance know of, or have any interest in such literary ventures as *The Wave* (as you know) and *The Lark*?

Toklas: Surely.

Duncan: *The Lark* also?

Toklas: Surely.

Duncan: Would you tell us a little about it?

Toklas: No, because there's not much to tell, because I never knew any of them intimately. I was a younger person than they were at that time, and I was an outsider. I wasn't in any of the movements. I didn't write; I didn't paint; I didn't etch. Miss Lindborg, wasn't that her name?

Duncan: Lindborg.

Toklas: Florence Lindberg or Lindborg [Lundborg], who made the etchings for *The Lark* – the covers and things. And Gelett Burgess, whom I met, that was all. And who was it? There was a third one I knew. I've forgotten. Gelett Burgess went over here. He lived here in France, you see, for years. I knew him over here, and so I told him my enthusiasm when I was a kid. He laughed. We talked about the old times. Because he was at the University of California. He was on the staff there, on the faculty.

Duncan: I didn't realize that.

Toklas: Yes. It was some minor thing, but he was on the staff, on the faculty.

Duncan: How did *The Lark* and *The Wave* seem to you at that time?

Toklas: Well, the only thing I know was that Gelett Burgess' drawings were really very modern. They really were.

Duncan: You felt it at that time?

Toklas: At the time I thought they were different, but today I know he was really in advance. He really was a pioneer in a kind of a way. There was a great deal in *The Lark* that was followed by others later, a great deal. Oh, no, *The Lark* had solid interest.

Duncan: Yes. Did you follow it up at a later date?

Toklas: Well, it didn't go long. Two or three years.

Duncan: No, but the people involved at the time, except by chance meetings and so on?

Toklas: No, because Florence Lindberg or Lindborg was a very uninteresting person and her work was no good. There was plenty of mediocre work on *The Lark*. There were a few people who were animated by something, but the rest of them were quite mediocre. I wasn't interested in her drawings, heavens, no.

Duncan: But you were interested in the ventures as ventures?

Toklas: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. As a matter of fact, I had the *Yellow Book* when it was first published. May I have a light again? [referring to a cigarette]

Duncan: Yes, yes, certainly.

Toklas: Well, wait a moment, I won’t bother you. Let me alone. You go on. You ask your questions, that's more important. Oh, no, I was always interested in what was going on. I had a fairly lively curiosity. I had more curiosity than money.

Duncan: I think that happens to most of us. In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Gertrude Stein mentions your pleasure in reading the *Argonaut*. Can you add anything to her comment?

Toklas: I read it regularly from the time I was a child. My grandfather had subscribed to the *Argonaut* when it was founded, and he kept it up all through his life, and it came on Saturday mornings, and Saturday mornings I had a music lesson. I used to say, "Well, there's one good thing and there's one bad thing. The *Argonaut* will console me for the music lesson.” Because I was thoroughly uninterested in practicing piano in those days. I was a child. Well, how old was I? I don't know, perhaps eleven years old, when I first remembered the *Argonaut.* There was once an *excellent* story in the *Argonaut* and I *never* could run it down. I found out who the man was who wrote it. He was a consumptive in Dakota. His wife had taken him from New Orleans to Dakota, and it had something to do with a deep well. Now, I don't know what happened to the deep well any more, but it was awfully

well written. The mystery was held back. In fact, the mystery was so great that you were enthralled with it, and it was never divulged. The mystery existed and that was sufficient.

Duncan: You still recall it?

Toklas: I still have a memory of that story being thrilling, and I don't know who found out for me. I wanted to know who he was. He wrote a story from time to time and they were all extremely well written. I don’t remember his name at all. I haven't the faintest idea. I mean it wasn't like Frank Norris, that he wrote novels after, that you read, that kept his name alive.

Duncan: But at least the effect was there?

Toklas: And then, of course, there were Mr. [Frank M.] Pixley's editorials which were admirably written and which always satisfied our tastes besides. We always agreed with Mr. Pixley. He always expressed our emotions. Oh no, we thought it was a wonderful newspaper.

Duncan: You always looked forward to it with anticipation?

Toklas: And then Geraldine Bonner wrote the dramatic criticisms very well, very well. In fact, you were surprised when you met her to find that such an agreeable person seemed to give so little attention to anything. The first time I met her – I don't know who took me to see her, one Sunday afternoon. She was at home Sunday afternoons, and there were quite a number of people there. I haven't the faintest idea who they were. I was youngish – I was perhaps nineteen or twenty – and there had been a play put on by some visiting actor whose name I don't remember. I think he was an Englishman, and it was written by somebody in California. It was a Mexican play – it was rather convincing. It was a very well-constructed play, it really was, but there was one moment in the acting of it and in the play itself where I thought it fell down at the same moment, funnily enough. I thought the actor could do nothing with that moment and hadn't relieved it sufficiently, *as* he should have, and I spoke up at this point, and she said, "You're quite right.” So when I left, all I remember of this story was – she hadn't gotten my name and she came up to me and said, “I hope, Miss Tuggles, you will come to see me again." That was all I said the whole afternoon, but she had agreed with me, which was a great pleasure to me, because it struck me, you know, at that certain moment that there was that jar. I wanted to know if it was just my ignorance of the theatre, or if it was really true, and she answered it for me. She had felt it. She hadn't mentioned it in her criticism because it was a local affair. It was a matinee, as I remember. One of the Briguerres [?] - you know who they are?

Duncan: No, I don't.

Toklas: Well, one of the Briguerres was a musician and he wrote the accompanying music. I thought it was a beautiful play. Whether it was the Mexicans in California, or a play of Mexico, I can't remember. It was very simple, it was very direct. It wasn't bad.

Duncan: By the way, have you ever been to Mexico?

Toklas: No, Just across to Tijuana.

Duncan: You can hardly say that that’s Mexico. It's interesting, but—

Toklas: Not very interesting in those days. It was just filled with curiosities that you bought to take back with you. Postal cards that you sent to your friends. That was in my youth. That was when I was sixteen years old. I never was there again.

Duncan: Have you ever had any desire to see Mexico?

Toklas: No, I would rather go to Spain.

Duncan: See more or less the fountainhead?

Toklas: No, I don't like colonials.

Duncan: I was thinking that there is so much of Spain which is, in many ways, reflected in Mexico.

Toklas: No, I think that it’s Mexico reflects, very thinly, Spain. I imagine, from photographs.

Duncan: So much of the Indian element does come to the fore.

Toklas: Oh, the Aztec things interest me. I had a lot of Aztec objects. I collected those in San Francisco. I spent my money on that. Down Santa Barbara there was a shop that brought in some diggings, and I blew in all my money there.

Duncan: They were for sale?

Toklas: Yes, they were for sale. Yes, it was in a curiosity shop. The man went down there himself and brought these things back, and I just chose a few and then I wanted to make a dicker with him because I had some Indian, Alaskan things.

Duncan: Had you been up to Alaska?

Toklas: Yes, as a child. I was on the Taku iceberg, or whatever it's called, when I was a child. I walked all around there.

Duncan: How old were you then?

Toklas: Nine years old. Ten years old. The summer after we came back from Europe.

Duncan: Was that a trip up through the Inside Passage, on the boat, and you stood off from the iceberg while parts of it crashed down when they blew the whistle?

Toklas: The old *Ancon*, which came a cropper, which was shipwrecked later.

Duncan: How did you like Alaska?

Toklas: The things I liked in Alaska really were the forests and the wild flowers around Juneau. Oh, they were incredible.

Duncan: You have always had an appreciation for flowers.

Toklas: Yes, the wild flowers there were finer than in California, finer than the Yosemite flowers.

Duncan: More lush?

Toklas: Yes, more varied and the colors much clearer.

Duncan: Did you by the way come in contact with the art objects of the Indians along the north-west country of British Columbia, like the Haida art objects, the masks, and so on?

Toklas: Oh, no. I saw those in Alaska, though. Masks that they danced with and the masks of the medicine men. The man who was Governor of Alaska in those days was appointed, he wasn't elected, you know. It was a territory, and I think they appointed the governor in those days, if I'm not mistaken. A man named [John Green] Brady, who was the governor, who my father knew, and he took us to places. He took us to a dance, where there was no audience, you know, and he took us to the medicine man and all the rest. They were all in costume just normally.

Duncan: Your memories of that early period were sharp.

Toklas: Well, why shouldn't they be? They were so different. And I remember the Russian-Greek Church in Juneau.

Duncan: Did you go around to Nome?

Toklas: No, there was no Nome. That was long before Nome. Nome must have been ten years later, eight years later.

Duncan: This actually then was at what date?

Toklas: '87.

Duncan: A decade before even the gold rush in the Yukon?

Toklas: Yes, because the Yukon was when we were living in Seattle, and your servants' brothers left, you know, and then they came down with fifty thousand dollars, literally. She would stop working. She was no longer your servant. She went to take care of the brother. Oh, no. I remember Juneau very well. Sitka less, in some strange way. You see, I don't even know whether the church that I remember was at Juneau or Sitka, probably Sitka. Probably Sitka.

Duncan: Right at the head of the Inside Passage? What were your feelings—

Toklas: It was a month's trip from Seattle in those days, it was very slow. You saw everything.

Duncan: You stayed aboard ship all of the time?

Toklas: It took some freight but mostly it was tourists – not tourists, but travelers who went there. Most people got off. We were amongst the few who made a round trip.

Duncan: Made a whole trip?

Toklas: Yes, came back again on the boat.

Duncan: It was a service for people up along the coast?

Toklas: Surely. From Seattle to Sitka and back again. Because I saw a picture I don't know in what – someone sent me a magazine – and I saw the Taku iceberg, glacier, and I said to myself—oh indeed, I was taken off the boat in a row boat, my mother and I, and put on a floating iceberg and had our photograph taken with it.

Duncan: Do you still have the photograph?

Toklas: No, those things were destroyed when I came over here. You didn't travel with excess luggage to that extent.

Duncan: Knowing that you would probably have quite a bit to add to—

Toklas: No. I had that and I had a small totem, not in wood, painted wood, but in slate, carved in slate. And I had a great slate platter, a long one and a round one. I say "I had" – my mother had them and they were mine later, and the masks, and I wanted to trade in my masks for Aztec things and the slate things, and she was willing to, but it didn't seem to be practical. I didn't know how to get them to her and what I'd have in return and all, so I let that drop, and I sold those when I came away.

Duncan: You just about sold most of the things you weren't going to need when you came here?

Toklas: Yes, that my father didn't want and that I wasn't keeping.

Duncan: Did you realize at the time when you were coming first to Europe and to Paris that it might be a long time before you returned?

Toklas: Well, I hoped so. I came with money enough for a year, but I thought that if I was very careful I could stretch it, and that by that time the money I was to have from my grandfather would be settled, the estate would be settled, and I would have an income sufficient to live on. And it wasn't settled, so my father put up the money.

Duncan: However, in your mind it was a definite break?

Toklas: Yes, but then it was for a great number after the fire. San Francisco was going to be another city. It wasn't going to be the place we knew.

Duncan: It wouldn't be like the Phoenix rising from the ashes?

Toklas: No, it was going to be something else, it was evident. Because at that time they were planning—of course, I think in a kind of way it was fortunate they weren't able to put it through—but there was a plan to make a beautiful San Francisco, you see, with parks and things, and that *was* frightening.

Duncan: But not the charming livable type of city?

Toklas: Well that I don't know, because they hadn't yet been made public, whatever they were thinking of. It was frightening.

Duncan: How long after the fire did you decide to leave? Was it immediately after?

Toklas: Well, I'd decided to leave before, but I couldn't leave until I got some money, until some money came in.

Duncan: Until you could be assured that you'd have an income for a time.

Toklas: Until I would have at least a year here. I waited for that, and there were several friends who left at the same time for one reason and another. Not for the same reason that I did, just because they wanted to come to Paris. One married, another went to Canada because of her husband.

Duncan: Was Paris inevitably your goal?

Toklas: Yes. Well, it was for so many, you know.

Duncan: There was no other place which had the same aura or appeal?

Toklas: Oh, no. It wasn't London at all. It wasn’t Rome. No, no, no, no.

Duncan: It wasn't Spain, either?

Toklas: No.

Duncan: Did you anticipate possibly Spain as a side trip?

Toklas: No, I was taking Paris, and I would see what would happen from Paris.

Duncan: How did you come over? By train to New York and then a ship over?

Toklas: Surely. Well, that was all there was. There *was* no other means of travelling. There was no commercial flying until after the other war – no, later, '35 was the first commercial flying, because a friend of ours who we'd seen in New York came over that summer.

Duncan: How did you feel as you came across the country, knowing that it would be at least a year before you would return? Was it with anticipation to what you were going to, or with a slight feeling of nostalgia for what you were leaving?

Toklas: No, it was what I was coming to. Oh, definitely. I wouldn't have come otherwise. It was definite.

Duncan: What was your feeling when you actually did arrive in France, and in Paris?

Toklas: Well Paris, you see, a great deal of Paris was fresh in my memory – a great many things I'd seen. There weren't so many surprises. It was the French who surprised me.

Duncan: How did they surprise you?

Toklas: Well, first of all they looked as if they were in mourning, as if there had been a war, a late war. I said, had they had colonial troubles lately? Everybody seemed to be in mourning. Of course at that time in France you went in mourning for an aunt and an uncle. You wore black, with black gloves. Men wore black gloves, black neckties, and black clothes, black band on their hat. Nothing like that English habit of wearing something on your arm, a brassard was much later. And they said no, and so then I asked.

Duncan: Were you immediately taken by Paris?

Toklas: I wasn't so immediately taken. I thought they had much less taste than the French had in San Francisco. You see the old French taste was much purer than the modern French taste. In fact, there was a great deal of lack of taste – not vulgarity, but lack of taste. The luxury shops were *luxurious*, but the people on the streets didn't look pretty. They had intelligent faces but they didn't look attractive. I don't think they are an attractive race, really, except for their intelligence.

Duncan: Their intelligence is an outstanding asset.

Toklas: Yes. They are not good-looking. They have a certain elegance but not much style in a kind of way.

Duncan: You mean in clothes, or in bearing?

Toklas: Yes. It's the exceptional French person that has real distinction, which isn't true in California. There are a great many Californians who are extremely distinguished. It isn’t true of the French. There are fewer French. I think the percentage is much higher in California. Even in the country in California, daughters of the farmers, and things of that kind, sons of farmers, have considerable (inaudible). You have to be pretty well bred, pretty well born, or be a sport of some kind, to show that in France.

Duncan: It seems so long ago now, of course, to recall your feelings at that time, and yet you've done it very desirably, considering how different sometimes the impression of France is to one who first comes to it now.

Toklas: Well, you see, I remembered a great deal of the things that you saw with your eyes. The Louvre was no surprise to me, I mean the outside, the building, the palace. The Invalides was no surprise, though it was a pleasure. The Invalides remains to me one of the great things to see in Paris.

Duncan: Yes, I came in that way.

Toklas: Yes, it's beautiful, beautiful. There's nothing really quite as fine as that. And then the Arc de Triomphe was just the Arc de Triomphe and the Parc Monceau was a place where I rolled a hoop with bells in it, which was lovely. Bells all along the inside of the hoop, so when you hit it, it jingled.

Duncan: Wonderful.

Toklas: Yes, charming.

Duncan: Actually, the word "charming" to me symbolizes Paris a great deal.

Toklas: Well, certain things, not the whole of it, to me. There is a great deal that isn't to me. There's a great deal that's rather ugly.

Duncan: For instance, what would you consider as that?

Toklas: Well, this quarter I live in, this street, the rue Dauphine. I think that's a very ugly street. I think the people are ugly. They have no beauty to me at all.

Duncan: It's a very old street and, of course, rather cluttered.

Toklas: These old streets aren't necessarily beautiful to me because they're old.

Duncan: What things *do* you particularly appreciate about Paris?

Toklas: From time to time the river, not always, but there are moments when the river does something to me that's wonderful. There's a certain light on it. The sky does something.

Duncan: In the evening usually?

Toklas: Any time. You can't tell. Sometimes it's in the morning. Oh, the early morning on the river sometimes is wonderful, before there are too many people on the quays, and the lights coming onto the trees. The trees, of course, have suffered on account of the automobile. They were finer, the trees were lovely once. But there are some willow trees down on the island.

Duncan: St. Louis?

Toklas: Yes, and when the light catches them in the Spring, it's wonderful.

Duncan: You must have now certain places which you go to, sort of as a pilgrimage occasionally.

Toklas: No, because I go to where I want to go for other reasons, and I see them on the road.

Duncan: And then you stop and that fleeting moment –

Toklas: Suddenly it comes over me that really it is beautiful. They are right when they say it's beautiful. Because the Americans all say how beautiful Paris is, and I say, "Isn't it?" I always say that because there's no use in discouraging them, but I don't think so frequently. Frequently I don't think it's beautiful at all. But when this happens to me, when I see what is going on, you know, *really*, then I say well, it ‘tis beautiful. But it isn’t like Spain. Spain is like that any moment I step out. Anywhere in Spain. Anywhere. Even places I don't like. I don't like Cordova, and I don't like the mosque, I don't like the cathedral mosque, and I don't like the town, and I don't particularly care for the light down there, and still – my, it's exciting.

Duncan: It's a vibrant sort of feeling?

Toklas: Yes, the light has it. It isn't the landscape, it's the light there. The light does something to you, and all of them talking Spanish, that beautiful guttural Spanish that they talk, and moving as they move.

Duncan: Would it, as reflected in the painting, be similar to the van Gogh's Auvergne paintings in the south of France?

Toklas: Not to me. Not to me. It's a purely Spanish thing that no foreigner could see. You have to be Spanish to paint it, really.

Duncan: Do you like El Greco?

Toklas: Yes. He wasn't a Spaniard, if you want, but he became it all right. He was formed under the thing that held his attention, the way it does all of us, in Spain – the light, the sky and the light.

Duncan: His Toledo—

Toklas: Well, the landscapes in the back of all his pictures are wonderful.

Duncan: If you had to sum up Spain in any one way it would be the effect of the light?

Toklas: Well, that's a good deal. The sound of their voices and the effect of the light. That together excites me beyond words. I can sit anywhere out of doors in Spain and be thrilled, thrilled. Walk on the streets and be thrilled!

Reel 6

Duncan: You say that there was no particular cultural circle but just as a family?

Toklas: They were just friends of the family, that was all. Friends you made at school, or you found yourself afterwards outside. It was just the family. You see, the word the *Lark* people invented was "Culturing." Culture was "Culturing", do you see, and you looked at it with a very dubious eye, anything that had a capital "C." Also, you were interested in the theatre, or music, or something of that kind, but you didn't consider it cultural. There was no cultural center.

Duncan: It was culture, but you didn't term it that.

Toklas: No, you didn't name any of it. It was music, it was one of the arts, one of the sciences, some fashion or something, but you didn't put it down as an influence and a center. Nothing radiated like that.

Duncan: No, but who were some of the people that you were acquainted with during this time?

Toklas: Just calm, pleasant friends of my mother's, the Whitneys, and one person and another. My mother was very fond of Mrs. Harry Whitney, but then she was not a cultural center.

Duncan: I think that was phrased a little differently than what I was hoping – you might recall the people whom you associated with.

Toklas: They were very mixed and composite indeed. There were all kinds of – like when we got our dogs. We got an enormous white poodle – the biggest white poodle in France. We got the smallest chihuahua at the same time, a little black chihuahua, very small.

Duncan: A white poodle and a black chihuahua?

Toklas: And an enormous white poodle. Well, that's the way our friends were. They weren't all congenial, one to another.

Duncan: In fact, I imagine there were quite a few feelings one way or the other?

Toklas: Well, they just didn't know each other. They came from different media. Because you see, I broke the bourgeois tradition when my mother died and I went to live at my grandfather's. I was on my own, and then I became interested in music and I met people who were interested in music.

Duncan: So wherever each of your interests led, you followed with the acquaintances?

Toklas: Yes, but there was no cultural center. My grandmother might have been said to have had a cultural center in the days when music was rarer than it was afterwards, and they had string quartets at my grandmother's. You might call this a cultural center. Her friends came with great excitement to this, because there was nothing else like it in San Francisco at the time, but not in my youth.

Duncan: Were they friends?

Toklas: There were professional and amateur mixed. Whatever she could find. There was a French doctor named – I've forgotten what – and an American architect and one played the violin and the other played the cello and somebody else was found for second violin, et cetera, and that's the way it went. It was all haphazard because you didn’t draw on a vast fund or anything.

Duncan: It was a comradeship?

Toklas: No, it was their interest in music.

Duncan: That became the focus?

Toklas: Yes, they wanted to play and my grandmother offered them a large room and the necessary—she had a fair amount of scores and things when they hadn't, and she would say, "You ought to try this." And she played the piano very well and she often played concertos.

Duncan: Do you think you can partly trace your interest in music to your grandmother?

Toklas: To my grandmother, definitely. Yes, to her family, because she had a sister who was a professional musician.

Duncan: Singer or pianist?

Toklas: Yes, she was a pianist.

Duncan: Did you have any interest in music, besides the piano and the violin?

Toklas: No, I went to concerts madly – everything was music – and I heard a good deal of music, professionally and otherwise. But that was normal enough.

Duncan: Was there, for example, any cultural tradition maintained in your family by the speaking of a foreign language or the reading of foreign books?

Toklas: Yes, my grandmother read German and French, continuously. She was an enormous reader. She used to sit in a chair, she was very small, and on a stool she would have books on one side of her and newspapers on another. And then there were no buttons. There were bells in the house of my grandfather that you did this to, and they rang. I don't know what it was – a cord, I suppose – that you pulled that rang as a bell tapped in the kitchen.

Duncan: More than one bell?

Toklas: Every room had one like that, but I don't know whether there were different bells – that I don't remember – but she didn't like that. She preferred one you pulled like that, with a rope, you know, a cord. So she had that changed in her little drawing room where she sat when she was paralyzed and didn't move much, and she read all day. And then she would ring to have them take away that number.

Duncan: And bring another book?

Toklas: Or more newspapers, because she read everything.

Duncan: Did you yourself read in—

Toklas: Yes, I was taught French and German, and I could read German aloud but not know what I was saying. It seems that I had learned something about the construction of languages sufficiently to read intelligently. I could read aloud in German, but I didn't understand it, and French I read a little. Then as I grew up I read more French and then I got to reading French. I read the French plays and the French novels, having read the classics when I was young by force of circumstance in school.

Duncan: What do you mean by force of circumstance?

Toklas: Well, in school. There was so much reading required.

Duncan: You didn't object at all?

Toklas: Well, I wasn't frightfully interested. I wasn't interested until I saw Sally van Rijn (?) in *Phèdre*, and by that time I thought, well, that reading wasn't so bad, that early reading wasn't so bad.

Duncan: In retrospect?

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: Did you and Gertrude Stein have a sense of close relation to a European cultural background?

Toklas: Well, I suppose so, through my grandmother.

Duncan: Your grandmother really was a deciding influence for you?

Toklas: Yes, I suppose she was, although she died when I was so young. I was only twelve.

Duncan: You were only twelve?

Toklas: Yes, but in a kind of way she made that sort of life a normal one to me. Then my mother was ill those last years.

Duncan: Did Gertrude Stein at any time mention that she felt that she had a cultural background akin to yours?

Toklas: There was nothing that ever suggested such a thing in either of our lives to talk about. I mean we just accepted that as being proper and normal.

Duncan: I see.

Toklas: There was no discussion of it. There was no mention of it.

Duncan: It was there, however?

Toklas: Yes, but then you took that for granted. All the people I knew had the same sort of background more or less, not at all the same social conditions, but they had the same sort of—

Duncan: Was there a great variety in social conditions within the group you associated with?

Toklas: Later on, definitely, there were all kinds. All kinds. I got to know some people who went about a great deal – I don't know what you'd call them. In French they say "dans le monde." They went into the world socially, which I didn't on account of my mother's ill health. I never "came out." I never had any social experience at all, on account of my mother's health. And then her death, so at that I escaped.

Duncan: You considered it as being an escape?

Toklas: Yes, and the others outgrew that and had lives of their own. There was no opposition in the family to your reading whatever you pleased. I never was told not to read this and not to read that in the house.

Duncan: You were given pretty much of a free hand?

Toklas: I was told that I could take any of the books I wanted to read because my grandmother had given me, I guess it was *Nicholas Nickleby*, and the Dickens were in her house. After she died, my mother said, "If you want to read more Dickens, here they are." That was all. I had outgrown Louisa Alcott; it was time to do something else. No, those were the things that we never discussed or spoke of. They were things we found normal. Everybody else we knew had done that same thing, except an occasional person outside of that. As a matter of fact, in Seattle, I was amused. I went to the University of Washington for one year, because the school I was going to closed and they said, "You have one more year at this school and you will have to make that up in the next three months so that you can enter University. You can pass your examinations and be recommended." And so I was tutored all through the summer vacation, which I didn't like, particularly mathematics, in which I was very weak.

Duncan: I can sympathize with you on that.

Toklas: And so I went to the University of Washington and there I chummed up with the first person I sat next to in geometry, and she knew all about it. She was far ahead of the class in work. And we had—there was a teacher of the little unpromising freshmen funnily enough, he was a military instructor because they hadn't funds for anybody for that, for that freshman year at the University of Washington, this was. And he was a captain in the army. He was stationed there at the moment, and his sister was one of my friends and she was just harum scarum. She couldn't put her mind to anything but music, and the person I chummed up with was named Violet Startup. I never forgot the name because it was such a wonderful name.

Duncan: What was the last name again?

Toklas: Violet S-t-a-r-t-u-p. And she came from the country, and she had been a teacher, and she had earned her way through the normal school and was teaching, when she wanted a University education so that she could teach at the high school – which you had to have, I believe, in those days. So she went to the University of Washington on more savings. She was the daughter of a rich farmer of the Yakima country. However, there were many children so they each earned their living. You know how parents didn't provide in the country for their children if they wanted to go out and do something else.

Duncan: Let them go, but they had to do it themselves.

Toklas: Yes, so she had done it, so she had plenty of courage. She was about twenty-three or -four years old and I was nineteen, eighteen, I guess, and she was very beautiful in rather a coarse way. She was the most glorious blonde you could imagine and she had high color and dark eyes, and she was this experienced woman from the country. You didn't think country people being experienced, but that she was – she had earned her living and all. And so I was enamoured of this. I thought this was a wonderful adventure. My mother wasn't much interested in Violet Startup.

Duncan: But it was an expression, in a way, of a wider field of experience?

Toklas: Oh, sure.

Duncan: How did you like Seattle? You were there at what age?

Toklas: I think we were there three years. from sixteen to eighteen.

Duncan: In the late 1890s or early 1890s?

Toklas: Not early. We came to San Francisco one, two, three – three years, I think, before the Spanish-American war, and you said that was '99.

Duncan: Actually 1898 it started.

Toklas: Yes, well I think that when it went off, that was my memory of the Spanish-American war.

Duncan: That would be about 1896 that you came to San Francisco?

Toklas: '5 or '6. I wouldn't remember.

Duncan: So actually you were quite young to remember too much of Seattle?

Toklas: Oh no, I remember Seattle very well, the people there and all. Oh, I remember it very vividly. In fact, I am still on the track of one of the people there that I haven't heard of for years, because this one Seattle friend – she spoke of her mother as being the best – what did she say? She used to call her mother "Mivra." She said, "Mivra is the best real estate agent for Seattle in Paris." There was another Seattle girl who said, "Paris is the Seattle of Europe."

Duncan: That's reversing it quite a bit.

Toklas: That's what she said though. Abby Drew.

Duncan: Of course, you might take opposition at that from the San Francisco point of view. Here's another question: Was there any sense in your family that you belonged to a cultural or religious minority which set you apart?

Toklas: Not in the least. Not in the least. On the contrary, we were all good Democrats and believed in our president.

Duncan: I imagine that President Cleveland was quite an honored man?

Toklas: Well, not so much in my family as with Gertrude Stein. Gertrude Stein was converted to Cleveland from his second administration on account of his handling of the trusts. No, my family was Republican—always been Republican.

Duncan: You had a difference then between yourself and Gertrude Stein?

Toklas: No, because that was only a momentary aberration on her part. Oh, no, they were Republicans. Though her family were all Democrats on account of being southerners. Her father was from the North and he was a Republican – and her mother didn't take any active interest in politics at all. The war was over and that was that. She married a northerner after the war.

Duncan: Did you or Gertrude Stein take any particular interest in politics at that time?

Toklas: Oh, yes violently. Not so much then as after the First War. The war surprised us, and I said I would never be surprised by a war again. Well, I was a little surprised by this one. A little, but not like the first one.

Duncan: The first one was a real shock?

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: Of course it was the end of the whole world practically, as it was known before.

Toklas: Well, that was a great shock, so I read politics as much as the papers give, and I read for many years the French *Journal de débats*, you know, and *Le Temps*, every day – *every day* – through the war, the other war and since, up to – oh, into the Thirties, and then I gave it up. We were hard up and I had a lot to do, more to do than I'd ever had to do, because the war in a kind of way had changed our lives. Living wasn't as easy, as cheap as it was, and we had to spend a great deal of money in the other war, and Gertrude and I were terribly in debt when

the war was over. Dead broke. Gertrude sold pictures to live and I got my father to advance the money, and he said "That's no way of living, because you are drawing on your future that way. You have to come to some conclusion." So I said, live on a limited income, that's all. Which I proceeded to do. Because we spent money without knowing what we were doing at all. I would just write to my father, "Wire me money – I need more money," and Gertrude would draw on her account. Well, Mike had to supply the overdrafts, and so there was the reckoning in the Twenties, when he came back from Alsace after the peace.

Duncan: Actually most all of your expenditures during that period were devoted to war efforts, weren't they?

Toklas: From '14 to '18 naturally.

Duncan: But I mean the excessive rate of spending?

Toklas: Yes, there was so much need, and we were in this work. You didn't have to hunt for it. It was put upon you, “What can you do for this?”

Duncan: Yes. So you just recognized the need of so many people which couldn't be handled by any official agency and just helped yourselves?

Toklas: Yes, besides, you see, there *were* no official agencies. All that's modern. There was the French Red Cross, whom you couldn't appeal to because you were Americans helping French. You had no right to appeal to the French. You were Americans helping the French, so you appealed to Americans. Well, I appealed to my father, and he was very good. His club sent an ambulance when we wanted it, and sent an X-ray performance when they needed it – whatever our society couldn't supply. And the supplies were excellent and in quantity, but they didn’t always cover the exact round at the moment you needed it. They might even have had the ambulance, they might even have had the X-ray apparatus for a hospital, but they didn’t have it the moment that people needed it, so you had to find it. No, our society was very good in supplying comforts and bandages, and surgical instruments and things of that kind. And speaking of a larger collection than anyone else – private collection – I think I had the largest private collection, though they weren’t for me, of thermometers at one time in France. I had five thousand thermometers put upon me. Well, you can imagine what that was. I couldn’t let anyone know. When Miligraham (?) came down to see what we were doing – because I had gotten, through some people we’d met, an offer – the Americans were in the war by that time – of a convalescent home for American officers, and it was to be given and kept by the French owners. They did that, that was a *geste* to show that they were interested in the American effort. And so I wrote this, and he wired, "I’m coming down at once. Make an

appointment with the people who offered the house so that I may talk to them, see what the conditions are, and get to work at it." And when he came down, he came and saw the depot and he said, it's a depressing place." I said, "It has to be, because I have to hide everything. If anybody knew what I had here. Those thermometers – do you happen to know that I got these cases of thermomenters?" He said, "Yes. Aren't you distributing them?" I said, "Of course I am, but if I told that I had that number they would want one for every patient, for the future." I said, "We can't afford to do that." He laughed. I had covered them over with blankets and it looked as if they had three blankets in that case, a very small case of blankets. And then I stacked all my cases of the same kind so high, but one out so that I could use each case as a step to climb up to the top one, and so nobody knew what I had.

Duncan: It looked actually just like a stairway?

Toklas: Yes, it looked a little like a stairway, except it wasn't a proper step. I had to step on the side, just on the edge, and cling to the next one.

Duncan: A good bit of camouflage.

Toklas: Well, it was well done. I had no trouble, none of them fell on me. I had a soldier come to do that. I didn't do it, of course. And the French Army was lenient about that sort of thing. The soldier was on convalescence and hadn't any wound. Just a convalescent illness.

Duncan: He would be available for some help.

Toklas: I would just say to them on the street, "Do you want to come in and help me here? I've got some cigarettes." That was all they needed. The British Red Cross sold us cigarettes in pounds – ten thousand in a little case and at times there were plenty of them. Woodbines.

Duncan: Did you often have to purchase that type of supplies yourself?

Toklas: Considerable, because that of course wasn't included. Tobacco wasn't allowed to be brought in, as a matter of fact. It had to come through the Red Cross. It couldn't come through private people, and our supplies all came from private people. They weren't through any society in America. They were just branches that gathered in material.

Duncan: Do you remember actually having any particular interest in the politics of California?

Toklas: Apart? No. After I left, the Japanese and Chinese thing had settled down to something or other, and I lost my interest in that.

Duncan: You had been interested in that?

Toklas: I had been violently anti-Japanese.

Duncan: That was just before the Spanish-American war, or afterwards?

Toklas: No, before and after. Because I don't know what I'd bought in the Japanese shop, and it was wrong whatever it was. He was an electrician or something, and it was convenient and I had sent for him for something, and it didn't work. And I complained at lunch and my grandfather heard me and he said, "Don't complain about the Japanese – don't go to him."

Duncan: A simple way of solving it.

Toklas: Yes, there was no reason to complain if you'd made a mistake.

Duncan: Were there any other issues, politically, that you might have remembered at the time that you were quite interested in?

Toklas: Well, you see, Pixley was anti-Asiatic, which we forgave him because we were pro-Chinese, but as we were anti-Japanese, we liked him to go on.

Duncan: At least a part of his work was the proper work?

Toklas: Yes, besides which we thought that the Chinese were strong enough to resist Mr. Pixley. And the Japanese weren't.

Duncan: Of course the Japanese were quite a small minority in California.

Toklas: At that time.

Duncan: At that time.

Toklas: There weren't an awful lot of Chinese.

Duncan: No, not a great amount, but then—

Toklas: We had a friend who was the judge of the Circuit Court and he rendered a decision in favor of a Chinaman, and he had to go around with a bodyguard, he was so unpopular.

Duncan: Just to make sure of his safety. In the case of Gertrude Stein, do you think possibly that she felt that there was any cultural or religious minority which would have set her apart?

Toklas: No. Not the least.

Duncan: Perhaps made her strive towards certain social or cultural objectives? None at all?

Toklas: Never. We never had any feeling of any minority. We weren't a minority. We represented America. And in England, amongst the people we knew in England, we were the only Americans whom they had liked, and we said, “That's because you treated them as colonials, and you haven't been treating us as a colonial.” Because they couldn't do it to us. They just couldn't do it, you know. They just couldn't make colonials of us. And the only comeback that I ever heard was an American girl who said, when she saw the backs of the colleges at Cambridge – you know the story?

Duncan: I don't know the story, I know the backs.

Toklas: Well, she said, "How colonial!" Which I thought was wonderful. She knew what she was doing. She didn't say that in stupidity or innocence.

Duncan: That's like Boston calling itself the "hub of the universe."

Toklas: Well, we felt that we belonged to it. We didn't feel that we were representative in any way, but we felt that we were Americans and as Americans there were certain things no one could do to you. It's a little bit like the Chinaman. It was said literally to a friend of ours when someone stoned a Chinaman in New York – they threw a stone at him – and Joe Davidson was walking on the street and said, "Why don't you catch him and talk to him? If you don't want to hit him, talk to him.” And he said, "No white man can insult a Chinaman.” Well, that's the way we felt. You couldn't say anything against America to us. I mean, it wouldn't work. It just didn't hold.

Duncan: No, there wouldn't be any reason to.

Toklas: Because after the first war we went over to England to see John Lane, to see what he was going to do for the future, and at the Whiteheads', Dr. Whitehead said to me – (I wonder if I ought to tell you this—with his name. Is his name in already?)

Duncan: Yes, it was mentioned before.

Toklas: Yes, I know. That was all right then, but now. "I'm sorry that your country doesn’t see its way to funding the debt." And I said, “Give us time and we’ll forget." And when Jessie Whitehead came over—

Duncan: That was his wife?

Toklas: No, his daughter. She came over with the Peace Commission, and she said, “Do you think that you could do something about the debt?" And I said, “Oh, Jessie, we'll give it to you, we’ll give you the money back." As if *we* had taken the money, do you see? I said, "We'll give you the money back. If that worries you, it can't worry us. That sum can't worry us, you know." And Jessie shut up.

Duncan: She would be in about her twenties at that time, wouldn’t she?

Toklas: About twenty-six, I should think – twenty-five. She was very able. The only trouble with her – she was a very brilliant girl, really. She had a wonderful instinct about things, and she knew an enormous amount about her subject that they put her into because she studied it thoroughly. it was the Middle East. And she was very well considered at the Foreign Office, and then it was the question of women, whether they would keep women on, and then finally it was decided that Jessie, at the last moment, wasn’t always accurate. Her enthusiasm just didn't permit her to be accurate. But she’s a librarian at Harvard now – one of the librarians – because they all settled at Cambridge, you see. He went over there during the other war – no, after the other war – very shortly after the war.

Duncan: What was Dr. Whitehead's field?

Toklas: Philosophy. Mathematics philosophy.

Duncan: Is he still alive, by any chance?

Toklas: He died about a year ago. He was in the eighties. He was one of the great old men, too. He was well in the eighties.

Duncan: You have mentioned that he is one of the geniuses that is really authentic.

Toklas: Yes. Oh, definitely. He was a wonderful person, a wonderful person.

Duncan: I particularly enjoyed the part of the Autobiography where he would stroll with Gertrude Stein, would walk with her out through the woods.

Toklas: Oh, yes. A number of conversations they had.

Duncan: And during the war, too, when you would think that now actually is the time when people should be thinking. When actually here the two of them were just doing that, instead of being completely involved and wrapped up with the war.

Toklas: No, well, Dr. Whitehead had mornings which were rather painful. He read aloud all the details of all the newspapers about the invasion of Belgium, and that wasn't easy to hear, you know, and the descent upon Paris. That wasn't easy.

Duncan: Yes, because so many of the memories were so sharp.

Toklas: Yes, well, not memories, but the facts, you see. France was very important to us, and the day the Battle of the Marne – when the Battle of the Marne commenced, Gertrude bore up as well as she could and then one day she said, "I'm not coming down." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I'm going to stay in bed. Tell Evelyn I've got a cold." And I went down to breakfast, which is always very painful in an English family to me, in the most normal and beautiful conditions really. That gathering of conversation before you get your coffee at the end of the meal, that I don't eat, so I'd sit there and have to look amiable and try to say something and wait for the coffee, which was half an hour after you were at table. And the first time I visited an English home, and they said, "What do you have to drink in the morning?" – the maid said – and I said, "Why coffee, naturally." Not knowing that she meant would I have fruit juice or tea before a bath and a full meal later. And so I had my coffee during that visit of four days and found out afterwards that it was not included in the question. So I never did it again. The coffee was made and brought to me, and it was very good and I liked it. But no. So I went down there, after being in English houses, and it was very painful – so much so that Evelyn said to me one day, "Why are you so cross, Alice?" What could I say? I was bursting with the need of sustenance, coffee, and *horror* of what I had learned about the war, and the papers would be coming in any minute.

Duncan: That must have been actually the time when, as you say, the first war caught you as a real shock. That must have been the time when you really realized it?

Toklas: Yes, well, then I went downstairs in the morning Gertrude said she wouldn't get up, and I came flying back. They'd had a telephone message that a battle had been fought, that the Germans were held and in retreat, and I went up and told Gertrude, and Gertrude burst into tears. She said, "I can't believe it," and she cried. I said, "It's true really, really, really. This isn't one paper, it's *all* the newspapers. They've had a telephone message from someone in London to tell them and the newspapers have come and they are all full of it, so it's true."

Duncan: Wasn't it Mabel Dodge who had almost a bird's eye view of the Battle of the Marne?

Toklas: Oh, no. Mildred Aldrich.

Duncan: Mildred Aldrich.

Toklas: Mabel Dodge never had a bird's eye of *anything* that happened. Nothing ever happened under her eyes. No, no. It was Mildred.

Duncan: Mildred Aldrich.

Toklas: Mildred, who was really an historical figure. Oh, no. Not Mabel.

Duncan: Her villa was very close to the battle.

Toklas: Above the Battle of the Marne. On the first hill after the Marne about a mile from the Marne. You never read her book *The Hilltop on the Marne*?

Duncan: No.

Toklas: If ever it comes your way, read it. It's a charming book. It's really a sweet book. It's the letters that she wrote – very simply, what was happening day by day in her little village, and she had just gone out there, settled there – oh, two months before the war was declared. She went out there because she was poor and couldn't afford to live in Paris, and someone got her an annuity and she went out there, and we went there to say goodbye to her, and she said, "What am I going to do with me? My letters are answered, my curtains are up, I have no mending or darning, what am I going to do tomorrow, here?" And we said, "Oh, Mildred, you'll find plenty to do. You can take care of your garden. Soon it will be time to plant, and in the beginning there'll be time to gather things, and there's some flowers (not many at that time) and there are berries and things. You'll find things to do." And we left rather really despairful of what was going to happen to her. That perhaps – not having advised her to go to the country, it would have been better to stay on in any conditions in Paris. Then the Battle of the Marne. As a French officer said, "You have a *loge d'honneur pour la baitaille decisive de cette guerre*." And she had it.

Duncan: Yes, a beautiful view, right in the very center of it. I have always been a little bit curious about your own autobiography, you know. Did Gertrude Stein write it completely by herself –

Toklas: Yes, of course.

Duncan: – or did you contribute some?

Toklas: Oh, no. No. What could I contribute? She would ask me, "Have I forgotten anything?" and I'd say, "Yes, you've forgotten this." And then, when she got to a certain distance, there were two things in it that were important, that she should have mentioned, I said, "I don't know what you are going to find apropos, but there are two things you must get in that you've forgotten." That's all. That was my contribution, and the typewriting. Oh heavens, no. No, it was a great joke, really. This friend of mine up in Seattle, who was a musician and who later married an American colonel, and when he died she married a British colonel. As the British colonel says, "Colonels are fatal to Louise." Well, in any case, she was a very amusing person, and she had a way of poking fun at you very gently, and she said to me one day, "I suppose you are helping Miss Stein write her books, aren't you, Alice?" "Oh, surely. Most of them are mine," I said.

Duncan: But you must have helped in prompting her at times, I suppose?

Toklas: No, the only things I helped her with were the two incidents that she should have mentioned, that I thought were important for her to mention, and which she had forgotten really. She had a memory but she didn't like unpleasant things. Things that she didn't like, she didn't remember – *really*, because it was the only way to get rid of the embarrassment of them.

Duncan: Just forgot?

Toklas: But *complete*. So that when you spoke of them, she'd say, "That isn't true. Did that happen? When?" Then I'd tell her. "Oh, yes," and she'd sit back, "Oh, yes." She once denied – but I don't want that for publication –

Duncan: Wait then. Wait till we get off the—

Toklas: Because it's a wonderful story. I oughtn't to tell it to you. It's an indiscretion, but you'll keep this entirely to yourself – of her memory, of her forgetfulness?

Duncan: But then, everyone forgets certain things.

Toklas: No, Gertrude used to say of me – she had a friend who was an awful bore – "Pomposa" I called her. She was very pompous and pretentious. But Pomposa said one day, "I never forget, but I forgive." And Gertrude said, "Alice is just the opposite. She doesn't forgive at all until she can forget. But she fortunately forgets." Which isn't quite so true, I didn't forget so much. I just got less sharp.

Duncan: Your memory is remarkable now.

Toklas: No, it’s because I have seen a great deal, and heard a great deal.

Duncan: But your recollection of times and places and dates is quite astounding.

Toklas: I don't think so. Oh, you should have known what it was. I could have begun with the beginning and given you *everything* connected with *every* day along the line, until Gertrude died. I lost my memory then, because I think I was upset and my head, when it came back, just wasn’t clear about things.

Reel 7

Duncan: You remember yesterday when we were talking about the San Francisco fire, and we didn't have the equipment on. I would like to have you recall just a little more about the San Francisco fire.

Toklas: Well, there wasn’t much, you know. It was a surprise, and my father resisted it, and the only thing he could say was that he thought it would give us a very black eye in the East. We should let it alone.

Duncan: Actually he wasn't very perturbed at all about the fire?

Toklas: He didn't care about the house, or the gas escaping, which it was – the one in the kitchen, the only room where there was any gas. No, he was uninterested, and then he got active.

Duncan: When did you first realize that the fire was actually beginning?

Toklas: Oh, almost at once, because I saw that earth that I thought had been thrown up. It looked like dust in the air, it looked to me. It was hazy – you know it was early in the morning, very early in the morning, five something in April. And I said, "It looks like smoke to me." Finally, I went back and said, "That earth that I told you about is smoke. There must be fires.” And my father said, "Well, what more natural, with the crossed wires.” You see, the factories were already starting, were already lighted. Furnaces and things for factories.

Duncan: At the early time in the morning –

Toklas: They started to work at seven, I suppose.

Duncan: – so that the tumbling of chimneys and so on would have quite an effect?

Toklas: Yes. Oh, sure.

Duncan: How did you feel when the actual earthquake shock came?

Toklas: I didn't feel anything at all.

Duncan: You didn't feel it at all?

Toklas: No, it didn't frighten me in any way, because it was daylight enough to see. I didn't have to turn on the electricity. And I saw the chandelier dangling about.

Duncan: They were swaying back and forth?

Toklas: Yes, and then finally it was coming down, it was getting loose. I went up to my window, which had a good view. It was rather amusing, because there was a house that was built of steel and stone – Vermont stone – and I got to the window in time when the movement was still going on.

Duncan: You mean the vibration and so of the buildings?

Toklas: Yes. And the stones were all falling off the sides. It was the building, a home that was built in the – supposed to be the Petit Trianon, only it had a story and a half more, and all of this was just falling to the ground.

Duncan: Where were you living at the time of the earthquake?

Toklas: On Clay Street.

Duncan: On Clay Street.

Toklas: Yes. Clay Street near – I can't remember the name of the street. Quite far out, on top of the hill overlooking the Presidio.

Duncan: You say that your father was quite unperturbed?

Toklas: Oh, yes. No, no, the only thing he thought of was what a bad reputation we had.

Duncan: Was it just about this time, of course, that you left San Francisco for Paris?

Toklas: No, it was June, a year and several months afterwards.

Duncan: But did the earthquake have a decided influence on your decision to leave?

Toklas: No. No, I was going to go whenever I had the money to go.

Duncan: What was your own education after primary school?

Toklas: I didn't go to public schools. I went to a private school in San Francisco and then in Seattle. That was my education. I didn't go to school until I was ten years old.

Duncan: Did you yourself read quite extensively the same as Gertrude Stein did?

Toklas: Oh, dear. We went through all that yesterday. Didn't that get on?

Duncan: Not all of that.

Toklas: I always read. I always read. I read as a little girl by myself. I read early. I was taught to read and write early.

Duncan: Very voluminously? Any particular interests that you followed up?

Toklas: I just read.

Duncan: Did you yourself engage in writing or any of the other arts at an early age, or at a more mature age?

Toklas: Nothing but piano.

Duncan: Piano, and you liked horseback riding, of course, which was recreation.

Toklas: Yes. But then, that's California. Everybody rode in California. You bought a horse for twenty-five dollars. Really. And it cost twenty-five dollars a month to keep it in a stable in San Francisco.

Duncan: Where did you ride in San Francisco?

Toklas: In the park.

Duncan: In the Golden Gate Park?

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: Out along the cliff and so on?

Toklas: There are plenty of roads there. You got a good morning's ride there.

Duncan: You mentioned that when you were on your vacations or your trips down to Monterey, that you—

Toklas: I rode down there, too. You got a horse at the livery stable.

Duncan: A most wonderful way to see some of the back lanes.

Toklas: Yes, and it's good exercise. I enjoyed it.

Duncan: Were there any other recreations that you enjoyed?

Toklas: No, I played tennis very badly. I didn't like games at all. They didn't amuse me. The only games I liked to look at really were football. I liked football. My father was a baseball enthusiast, but I couldn't become interested. I never followed it.

Duncan: Of course, football was not too well developed then, or it was quite a different game than we know today.

Toklas: Yes it was a different game than the football – than the Thanksgiving game at – what was it? Dartmouth-Yale. Oh, '35. I think it was Yale. Dartmouth definitely, because we went with Gertrude's publisher, who was a Dartmouth man and we had to sit on the Dartmouth side.

Duncan: Did you want to sit on the Yale side?

Toklas: No, not particularly, as it was cold. We had to keep warm. I don't know where the game was. Maybe it was at Hartford. Maybe it was Yale, which was at Hartford. Because we were in Connecticut, but it was quite a ride. It was about an hour.

Duncan: When and why did you determine to live abroad? 1907?

Toklas: I wanted to come to Paris, like all good Californians. That was all.

Duncan: Of course, right after the earthquake so many people were leaving.

Toklas: Quite a few of my – two or three intimate friends were leaving. And so it was natural for me to. One, two, three – there were four of them leaving for one reason or another.

Duncan: Who were your friends that were coming to Paris?

Toklas: Wel1, there was Nellie Gayhart (?). She came, and her sister went to England. She came over here to see me. I saw them again. All except one.

Duncan: Did you meet them here in Paris?

Toklas: I didn't see them again until I went back in '35. And she had made a joke when we left, and I said it was a very bad one, that it hurt me and I didn't like to hear it. She said, "My dear, we will never see each other again, except to meet someday, in a park encounter and you will say, 'Oh, Claire,' and I will say 'Oh, Alice.'" Well, we didn't meet until I went back in '35, from 1907. She came over and was in Austria when I was on a very limited time. She was over only for a few days really. She came over to see a specialist for her brother. Dr. [Adolf] Lorenz, did you ever hear of him? He did surgical operations without too much knives, and he cured. He went over for two operations to America. She persuaded him to come out to San Francisco. He was going to Chicago for one of the Armour children that was paralyzed. I don't suppose it was paralysis but tubercular conditions of the lungs.

Duncan: But it was a highly technical operation.

Toklas: Yes. And so she went to Vienna and saw him there and persuaded him that he should come out to do her brother, for the case, she had all the diagnosis, and she wired me, "I'm here for a few days. Where do we meet? Will you come to me or will you come halfway? That's all the time I have." And I had just settled in Fiesole and I didn't see my way to meeting her at that time, so we didn't meet again until '35.

Duncan: I imagine that your reunion in 1935 was quite pleasant.

Toklas: It was a happy time for me to see her again. She was my oldest friend. I had known her since the time I was nine years old.

Duncan: What was her name again?

Toklas: She was Claire Moore de Grouchy. She married a man named de Grouchy, who was of French descent – the de Grouchy family of France. That was in the seventeenth century that they'd come over.

Duncan: You had known her in the neighborhood in San Francisco?

Toklas: I had lessons with her for a short time when I was nine, and at ten we both went to school together. She was two years younger and she was put in the same school that I was.

Duncan: What school was it that you went to in San Francisco?

Toklas: Miss Lake's.

Duncan: Miss Lake's?

Toklas: Mary Lake

Duncan: Where was that located?

Toklas: It was first on Pine Street, I think. It was only there a very short while and moved out to a building that was built for her on Sutter Street, quite near the Boys High School. The Boys High School was on the same block.

Duncan: How did you enjoy Miss Lake's school?

Toklas: I liked it. I liked her, too. Oh, I liked it.

Duncan: Have you ever seen her again since?

Toklas: Yes, I saw her afterwards, but then she was dead long years ago. She wasn't alive when I went out there. She was a woman in her fifties.

Duncan: At that time?

Toklas: Yes. She came from a very distinguished family. Her brother-in-law was a man who wrote one of the early best-sellers, and I don't know his name, but the book was called *Jimmy Fadden* [*Chimmie Fadden*], something of that kind, it was Irish boys. It wasn't a novel really. There were character sketches, and it had an *enormous* success. And that rather scandalized Miss Mary Lake, because she was raised in the classical manner. Her father was a well-known judge and there were at least two daughters. I know his name. His name was [Edward W.] Townsend. Mrs. Townsend was her sister. There was a brother and the two sisters, and the one married and the other one started this school, and she had a very fine library that came from, that she inherited. Her father left his library to her.

Duncan: I imagine that you made use of the library?

Toklas: No, we weren't allowed to.

Duncan: You weren't.

Toklas: We could read it at school. If you were boarding you could borrow books, but I wasn't a boarder. I was a day scholar.

Duncan: You were a day scholar?

Toklas: Yes. No, I only stayed there when there were some fêtes, or something, at night.

Duncan: Can you recall any incidents that happened at the time when you were going to school?

Toklas: Yes. King Kalākaua came to a bazaar, a charity bazaar. Bishop Kipp – Mary Kipp's father or grandfather I can’t remember. The Kipp girls went to school with us, Clementine and Mary and another sister, whose name escapes me. And the Bishop presided because it was for the benefit of one of his – I don’t know, something in the parish – and Kalākaua came because he was in San Francisco. And one of the girls, one of the boarders, was of an old family, not Hawaiian Americans, of course, but who had lived in Hawaii, and their interests were down there, sugar or something.

Duncan: He was probably of old New England ancestry.

Toklas: Her name was Cornwall, Madge Cornwall, and she’d brought him. And then – oh yes it was a very funny mix-up, because further than that there was President Eliot of Harvard – all there at one time. And we had all worked for weeks at this. There were the usual things. It was in the gymnasium of the school, I remember.

Duncan: What actually took place that you remember?

Toklas: Nothing, except the combination of people. And I remember Mr. Eliot's beautiful head, he had a beautiful head. It was the first intimate acquaintance with a pure New Englander I'd ever had. Because the New England people that I knew had been – well, the girls at school – and then I didn't know their grandfathers. It was this very beautiful old man's head, you know. He looked to me, you see, like a Greek philosopher. It didn’t look like New England, and then I got to know that that *was* New England. They *did* have a little of the look of it.

Duncan: As they say, the Athens of the States being Boston.

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: Were there any other times that you recall from those days at school?

Toklas: No, I had a good time in school. We had an uproarious time. We were very gay, we had a good time. We learnt our lessons and got some education without too much difficulty. In each class there was a girl who was put there because she couldn’t learn anything. She couldn't keep up in public school and she was put in private school. I don’t know, but it seemed to me every class had one of them. Perfectly hopeless. Couldn't learn anything and she was just allowed to stay on. Pushed along a little bit. And then they disappeared and you never knew them again and never heard of them again. And they weren’t really in the way. You just got accustomed to the person as if she were an irresponsible person.

Duncan: Were some of your school acquaintances and friends at that time, have they since become people of note?

Toklas: Not particularly. No, strangely enough, one of my classmates whom I remembered very distinctly as a very bouncing curly-haired girl, round face with quite a round body. Charming little creature. Who was very gay and bounced about like a ball, was brought to see me three or four years ago by a man who met her on the boat. And he spoke of me to her, and she said, "I remember the name. I don't remember her, but I think I went to school with her." And she was taken from that school to another school. And she came here. Of course, I didn't remember her at all and I told her my memory of her and she said, "I didn't remember how you looked, frankly." And we went over all the past – all the girls we had not seen again, or had only seen vaguely, and all. Well, she became not at all famous and notable in any way, but she did excellent work. She married a man whose interests were in Japan. He was a – what was he? He was a well-known scholar, Japanese scholar. Oh, I think he did excavations or something, and he died. Then the Japanese buried him in a temple there which they built for him. And when the bomb went off, to her horror she thought the temple was within the radius of the bomb and she was flown out two days after by special order on a military plane to see it, to find that it was all right, and was flown right back. She saw nothing. And she had lived there and taught in Japan. She had established kindergartens and schools for girls and all sorts of things.

Duncan: That was at Hiroshima when the bomb went off?

Toklas: Yes. Well, that wasn't the name, because I suppose it was – it may not even have been in a village or hamlet. It had just been built somewhere.

Duncan: Close by?

Toklas: Yes. And then she went back after she was in France here, three or four years ago, she went back with the idea of continuing her teaching there, re-establishing. She thought they probably needed it more than ever, but she found conditions very difficult, and came away. As a matter of fact she got sick there and there were no doctors, and they flew some medicine to her from America, and she went home again to San Francisco.

Duncan: Do you remember her maiden name, by any chance?

Toklas: Yes, but I don’t think I would put that down. She might have feelings about that.

Duncan: Sure.

Toklas: She was a very quiet, retiring person. We went all through the schoolmates, and she sees some of them still, those that I haven't seen.

Duncan: Did most of them stay around San Francisco or the Bay area, or did they also come to Europe?

Toklas: No, they stayed, most of them. They married out there, a good deal. No, she has no children, she's alone in the world. She has a brother, and that's all. She lives alone and would like to come here and doesn't know. I didn't want to encourage her to come here at her age and settle in a new home.

Duncan: Not having already built up her acquaintances.

Toklas: Well, she never lived in Europe. She travelled in Europe but never lived here. I thought it was a very bad idea to uproot herself in an unknown to her – to her an unknown country. Her French is halting. She reads and can write it, but she can't hear or speak it. When she hears it, she doesn't understand it quickly enough. She's a very active person. She looks much younger than she is. Oh, yes. She's wonderful. Wonderfully active.

Duncan: Would you furnish dates from your birth to your residence abroad, which marked major events in your life?

Toklas: There were no major events. My coming over here was the major event.

Duncan: That was a major event, yes indeed.

Toklas: Yes, that was in 1907.

Duncan: 1907. And some of your trips and so on would be major events. Your trip to Spain and so on.

Toklas: No, the coming over was an event, but the other things were pleasurable experiences.

Duncan: Just how did you feel, recall, the trip coming to Paris. Did you meet anyone on the boat, for instance, that was of interest to you?

Toklas: I never meet people on the boats. I always speak of people who *do* meet people on boats. Mabel Dodge always meets people on boats. Most of her friends that weren't from her early days were met on boats. She met her second husband on a boat. She came over as a young

widow with her child. Met him on a boat. Certainly he was a delightful person to have met.

Duncan: That's an advertisement for cruises.

Toklas: For what?

Duncan: For cruises on board ship.

Toklas: Well, I don't know. Some of them may not have been as good as that.

Duncan: When you first got to Paris, where did you stay here?

Toklas: Stayed at the Hotel (?) on the Avenue Marceau. It was a beautiful hotel and it was recommended by a California woman who had stayed there, and you had to be recommended because it was small. It was one of those like – I don't know if it's still in existence in London – is Brown's Hotel –?

Duncan: Oh, yes.

Toklas: Well, it's something of that kind. You had to be recommended.

Duncan: The place where kings always would stay, and nobility.

Toklas: Yes. But then it's very simple, very plain and very quiet and excellent, but *excellent*, accommodations and food. Oh, marvelous.

Duncan: Were you travelling with anyone on your first trip?

Toklas: Yes, I came over with Harriet Levy.

Duncan: Oh, yes. When did she leave to go on back?

Toklas: She went back – I can't remember – a year or two after.

Duncan: But she did stay for a year or so with you?

Toklas: Yes, we had an apartment together, a flat together.

Duncan: Can you give us a description of Harriet Levy?

Toklas: Well, she had a very quick intelligence and what she saw she saw almost at once, or never, and she was interested in the theatre. She became interested in pictures. She had a very important Matisse that she bought under the direction of Mike Stein, and some minor ones. She had some minor Picasso drawings and watercolors. And she went back to America with those. She also, in the manner of the Steins,

bought Tuscan Renaissance furniture, and amongst other things had a marvelous table, one beautiful thing, one really beautiful piece.

Duncan: What type of piece was that?

Toklas: Renaissance.

Duncan: Renaissance.

Toklas: And some other things less important. And then she began later buying pictures, in California though. French paintings largely, as far as I know. I saw her pictures in '35 and there were very few then. She bought most of them later apparently. She had started out her interest in pictures by buying the paintings of a man named William Keith.

Duncan: Yes.

Toklas: And she had a little Keith, which she thought very precious until she came to Europe.

Duncan: That was before she came to Europe with you?

Toklas: Oh, yes, long before. She came to Europe the first time – oh, she was over for a year or so about 1905, or something of that kind. Earlier, 1904 probably. I don't remember exactly.

Duncan: Her interest in theatre was also quite profound, wasn't it?

Toklas: Oh, yes. She was very much interested in French theatre, and we took French lessons together with a man who had been at the University of California as an exchange professor, named Robert Dupree. He was a charming creature, and we read French plays.

Duncan: You'd already had the interest of course in the French language, and the French theatre, when you were in California?

Toklas: Yes, but there was a certain period in French plays that I knew nothing about at all, and they were very amusing at that moment. That was the time of Henry Becque and (what was his name?) – [Georges de] Porto-Riche. I've forgotten who else. The plays, the psychological plays of the triangle, of that period. I didn't know those much. I read contemporary French plays, and they were a little later than that. So he said, "You must read these because they will interest you." They were written at the end of the eighteenth, at the beginning of the nineteenth, which I had missed out.

Duncan: Carrying you back about a hundred years in French literature?

Toklas: No. 1800 wasn't a hundred years.

Duncan: No, of course, but according to your contemporary literature.

Toklas: No, that was about fifteen years before.

Duncan: Oh, I see. At the 1880's, '90.

Toklas: Yes, 1890 to about 1905. No, not 1905, to 1900. Ten or fifteen years.

Duncan: Have you maintained that interest in that period of French literature?

Toklas: No. What was his name? Because I met him as an old man here. I don't remember.

Duncan: When you first arrived in Paris –

Toklas: Donnay.

Duncan: Donnay?

Toklas: Yes, [Charles Maurice] Donnay. Because I met him here, not so long ago, about thirty years ago.

Duncan: A marvelous memory to recall it.

Toklas: Oh, I remember him very distinctly because Gertrude Stein didn't catch his name which was rather amusing, and we were at what you might call a literary salon. We knew the woman who was running a salon. It was our first visit to her. And there were a lot of academicians. And when Gertrude came in she made a great fuss. She was one of these people, very low-key, but very exaggerated. She went down on her knees and took Gertrude's hands and then kissed her and all the rest, and then presented her to all these people, and then me afterwards. And Gertrude's hearing was never very acute. And this woman jabbered a great deal in a very low voice. Oh, she talked like a machine. And Gertrude didn't catch the name very well, of Maurice Donnay. And Gertrude said, "Why how you've changed. I don't remember you looking like this." He said, "No, I haven't changed. Have I ever met you?" And Gertrude said, "Why surely, don't you remember. We had several of your pictures." And he said, "But I'm not a painter. Who did you think I was?" "Maurice Denis." "Oh, no," he said, "I'm Maurice Donnay." She didn't know who Maurice Donnay was.

Duncan: But she remembered the name then after that?

Toklas: No, she didn't catch it then either. She just knew it wasn't Maurice Denis. Maurice Denis didn't look like that.

Duncan: How long after you had been in Paris with Harriet Levy, before you met Gertrude Stein?

Toklas: I told you. I met her the day I arrived.

Duncan: The first day? The very first day?

Toklas: Yes. We came in in the morning, because we had stayed over at Caen overnight to rest a bit and look around. It was so attractive there. They were having a *fête*, and everybody was wearing their best regional costume. Black velvet and black silk, you know, with the starched caps, and it looked so pretty and it was all so attractive. So Harriet said, "Why don't you stay overnight and take the morning train instead of the boat train?" So we did. So we came in in the very early morning and we cleaned up and had lunch and then went over to see the Steins, and I told you, it was Gertrude. That's registered. That I remember.

Duncan: But as you came in.

Toklas: Yes, as soon as we were in Paris, she said, "Let's go over and see Sarah and Mike." And I didn't know them well, but she did. So we went over.

Duncan: Then you of course saw Sarah and Michael Stein and Gertrude Stein quite repeatedly during that time?

Toklas: Oh, yes. That first winter, continuously. Gertrude and I commenced taking walks together. She liked to walk with me.

Duncan: Walk around Paris?

Toklas: Yes, she liked to walk. And it was winter and cold. So if you were out of doors you had to walk quickly.

Duncan: That was actually the time-honored—

Toklas: Winter. This was in September that I came over. And then by October it was cold. Beautiful French climate!

Duncan: Yes, indeed. Well, you have become quite accustomed to it.

Toklas: Not I.

Duncan: Never accustomed to it?

Toklas: No. You mind it less the first winter than you do afterwards. I wasn't so cold that first winter really.

Duncan: You walked along the boulevards and through the parks?

Toklas: No, not the boulevards at all.

Duncan: Up around Montmartre?

Toklas: No, she took me up to Montmartre to see Picasso, early. No, as a matter of fact I met Picasso and Fernande about a week after we arrived at the Salon d'Automne. Met them all, met the whole group there.

Duncan: What did you think about Picasso upon your first meeting?

Toklas: He was very impressive.

Duncan: He is another one of the vital people?

Toklas: Surely.

Duncan: Did you have the same feeling when you met Picasso as you had when you first met Gertrude Stein?

Toklas: I think that he and Doctor Whitehead and Gertrude were the people that impressed me at first sight. Really deeply. They were moving really, because they all had a physical beauty too. You see, Picasso was very beautiful when he was young – *incredibly* beautiful.

Duncan: In a handsome way?

Toklas: No, not handsome. It was beauty. Real beauty.

Duncan: Like fine porcelain?

Toklas: No. Oh, no. Much more *vigorous* than that.

Duncan: It was a masculine type of beauty?

Toklas: Oh, yes. And very Spanish, of course. He was small and his eyes were like nobody's. They each had it – very fine eyes, and not at all resembling. Though Gertrude's and Picasso's both were dark. Picasso's were very different from Gertrude's. Gertrude had a little something in the eyes and her mouth of a primitive Greek thing. You know, the eyes deep set, and the mouth very finely modeled – very finely modeled –

and the mouth not prominent, and the eyes not prominent – on the contrary, in, a little.

Duncan: With a slightly aquiline nose?

Toklas: No, she had a Roman nose. Her head and her nose were Roman. There are photographs of her that make her look like a Roman emperor.

Duncan: Should have a toga on.

Toklas: Photographers liked to do that.

Duncan: And Picasso, as you say, was so obviously Spanish.

Toklas: Oh, yes. Spaniards *are* Spanish.

Duncan: Yes, of course. You mentioned his eyes as being—

Toklas: He had very luminous eyes and they drank in things.

Duncan: Again like Juan Gris?

Toklas: Oh, no. Juan Gris' weren't at all. His were entirely interior. His eyes were black and very fine, but not that at all. No, there was no resemblance between the two men either physically or spiritually. No resemblance. They were poles apart, though they were Spaniards.

Duncan: Having that in common.

Toklas: No, they didn't see anything alike.

Duncan: How long was it before Harriet Levy went back to the States? Was it about a year, or two years?

Toklas: No, it was two years after. It was the second summer, because I went down – she went to Normandy with friends – and I went down with the Steins to Fiesole, and when she was there Sarah Stein was hurriedly called back, as I remember, to America, on account of the death of her father, or rather, of his illness. And she took Harriet along with her. Harriet wanted to go.

Duncan: She did want to go, or didn't?

Toklas: Yes, she wanted to see California again, but she didn't expect to stay so long.

Duncan: She expected to return again to Paris.

Toklas: Oh, yes. So when she got over there by the end of summer, she had already written to me and said, "I'm not coming back so you must dispose of the flat, unless you're keeping it on alone." And the Steins asked me to come and live with them. So I gave up the flat. It was I who saw to the moving of the furniture – at least, not the moving, it was really the storage of the furniture.

Duncan: That was in 1908 or 9?

Toklas: No, we came over in '7. '8 and '9.

Duncan: And then you went to live with Gertrude Stein?

Toklas: Yes, with the Steins. But then it wasn't at all certain at that time whether Harriet was to come back or not. I think it was later that she wrote me that she wasn't corning back.

Duncan: Did she ever return?

Toklas: Yes, but she never stayed here. She never had a home here after that. No, that isn't true. She had a rented place, a furnished place. She came over several years after with her niece after the war, as I remember. Yes. No, it was before the war, before '14. She must have come back in '13, possibly, and she had a furnished flat with a niece of hers. A charming girl, oh, such a pretty girl. Oh my, she was pretty. What is her name now? She lives in Berkeley. Sylvia what? I give up. Her son came over here when I was not in town – she had two sons – but a friend of theirs – of the sons – came to see me and gave me news of her since the Liberation. They're young men now. Both at Harvard. I've forgotten. I think they were both at Harvard.

Duncan: What were your impressions of Fiesole and Florence and the Renaissance atmosphere when you first went?

Toklas: Well, there was no Renaissance atmosphere, except in the museums and peoples' homes, but there was no Renaissance to the eye. It's older than that. Fiesole's much older than the Renaissance, you see, and so is Florence. The really fine things are older than the Renaissance.

Duncan: Which things did you appreciate most at Florence and Fiesole?

Toklas: No particular thing. I liked the architecture and I liked the landscape. The landscape was wonderfully beautiful.

Duncan: The pleasantness of living.

Toklas: Highly civilized, the landscape. A little bit like Provence and a little bit like Wiltshire. Wiltshire is also a very civilized landscape.

Duncan: Again a very old and long-inhabited region.

Toklas: Yes, but it has a finish to it, of civilization. It's harmonious, you see, in a way that other things aren't, other parts of the country are not. And Provence is wonderfully beautiful though, a beautiful country.

Duncan: I have always enjoyed Florence very much, the Uffizi Gallery and the Pitti Palace and the art there.

Toklas: Yes. You haven't been there since the war, have you?

Duncan: Yes, recently. Last year.

Toklas: Got pretty banged up, didn't it?

Duncan: Not too bad.

Toklas: Not too bad? The most beautiful bridge in the world went, though.

Duncan: Which? The Ponte Vecchio?

Toklas: No, no, no. The next one.

Duncan: Next to it, on the Arno? Yes, that was shelled, I believe, during the war.

Toklas: Oh, the Germans destroyed it so that the army couldn't get back.

Duncan: And yet they left the Ponte Vecchio still.

Toklas: Not all of it.

Duncan: Yes. They blasted the approaches to it, and those are being repaired now.

Toklas: And the buildings on it are still standing?

Duncan: Yes, still standing.

Toklas: I hadn't realized that. Not that they were beautiful, goodness knows.

Duncan: They were attractive. When you returned to California with Gertrude Stein in the 1930s, what were your impressions of your home region, and the changes and the general atmosphere?

Toklas: Well, there was – the part of the town which was so pretty had become rather vulgar. Van Ness Avenue was garages with horrible signs and things of that kind. But the hills about and the houses were rather pretty, and so many nice gardens. Little houses with gardens all round. Twin Peaks in the outlying district there. And then, of course, there was a wonderful aquarium. Oh, that beautiful aquarium. I enjoyed that.

Duncan: The one out by Golden Gate Park?

Toklas: Yes, it was beautiful. Oh, I was enchanted with that. And we saw the first clipper, I think they called it, to go off to Honolulu. We just were under them. They were being escorted, but the one that was making the trip – or possibly two or three, I don't remember – but in any case, they were being escorted by a whole flotilla and we stopped to see that on our way to Menlo to spend the day with some people there.

Reel 8

Toklas: You know what their lives are in the forest. They go in bands of a hundred.

Duncan: The Chihuahuas?

Toklas: Yes, in the forests, in the forests of Chihuahua.

Duncan: Where they run wild?

Toklas: Oh, yes. They run completely wild there. They are wild beasts, and when you get one like that that is only the first generation born in captivity and you take it young, it's a fierce little thing. It bites. And it has war dances that it creates for itself and strange cries, and they talk, all day long they jabber, and these were sent to him by a Frenchwoman whose husband was in the Embassy in Mexico City. And he met her one night at a dinner party, she was an old friend of his, and she said, "I understand you like dogs." And he said, "Oh, I adore dogs. I like cats, too, but I adore dogs – dogs and horses." And she said, "What have you got?" And he told her. He had a large place in the South of France, huge property, and she said, "When I go back to Mexico City, I'll send you some dogs." And one day he was at the – in Paris here, and he was called to go to the, I think it was the Gare du Nord, or something, some station – and the stationmaster there had a letter for him written by this woman, who said, "You must go to Rouen," no, to Havre, "You must go to Havre to get the package which is waiting for you." And so he went and got his car and drove right up to Havre, never thinking of dogs, and there was a native servant who spoke no known language. He didn't speak Spanish, he didn't speak French, because [Francis] Picabia speaks Spanish well. He's half Spanish. And

he had an enormous handmade openwork basket as big as that, separated in the middle with a bitch on one side and a male on the other, a dog on the other, and they were so big – weenie, weenie – and Picabia took them and the man went back to Mexico. He was sent over for this.

Duncan: Sent over specifically with the dogs?

Toklas: With the two dogs.

Duncan: The two Chihuahuas?

Toklas: Yes, and so he raised them and he called them Monsieur et Madame, and Madame was very disdainful. She never took part in *anybody's* life. She had her own, alone, but Monsieur was active-minded, and he got to be friendly with the big dogs and everything. And then they had the first litter and Madame raised them, but after a certain time she let them go and then they didn't belong to her. They just were there. [break in tape] He didn't live long. He couldn't stand the Paris winter and the vet said besides which he had gotten some infectious fever, and he died suddenly.

Duncan: When did you have your first dogs here in Paris? Was that in 1909?

Toklas: The first poodle was about twenty-five years ago, and then when he died we got the second one. And then Picabia – who was very sweet, I must say Picabia was a darling – when Vi died he heard about it in the South of France and we went down for the summer, and he sent Sir Francis Rose up with a little pup for us. The second one, to take the place of the first. Of the same breed, of course, the same Chihuahuas, because they were the only ones in France. And one was really a miniature. I never saw it, but it weighed three pounds full grown, and he gave that to Josephine Baker, and Josephine Baker owed her cook a large sum of money when she quit her villa in the South of France, and she said, "Take the pup."

Duncan: Take the Chihuahua?

Toklas: Yes, "Take the dog, because you can sell it for more than I owe you," which she did. And Picabia had others, but by the time that Pepe – we baptised Pepe after Picabia, he was named after Picabia. Picabia was staying with us when it was time to give him a name. He had no name for several weeks. And when he died during the Occupation, really from cold, he was nine years old, but he couldn't stand the cold. He wouldn't go out any more and he had been very well house-broken so I couldn't induce him to use the bathroom, and so he just died from chill. We couldn't keep him warm enough, the house was insufficiently

heated and it was freezing outside. By that time Picabia had no more of them. They had died out. The last was a female, a bitch, and they couldn't find a dog to mate it with. There are none in France. Once in a while you see an American woman with one in her arms. She has brought her dog with her. But nothing as fine as Picabia's were. They were very beautiful.

Duncan: Still, they are relatively rare in the States.

Toklas: Oh, there are quite a few in California, there.

Duncan: In California, yes, but not in other parts of the States, because they –

Toklas: Oh, no. That isn't true. They are in New York. You can buy them in New York.

Duncan: You can buy them, but they are just comparatively rare compared with other dogs.

Toklas: Oh, yes, definitely.

Duncan: Again because they are accustomed to the warmer climates, Chihuahua being somewhat semi-desert.

Toklas: They don't thrive really in a cold climate. Have you ever seen the tan-colored, ones with black marking, instead of the other way round?

Duncan: No, I haven't.

Toklas: You see, the common Chihuahua is black with a sort of fawn-colored, tawny breast and with what the French call "spectacles," I don't know what we'd call them in English. They have these little markings, a round ball, over their eyes, but there are Chihuahuas much rarer, who are all pale and have the markings in black.

Duncan: That would be very charming.

Toklas: And they are weenie-weenie. They are a little bit like the Manchester terrier, which I think is no longer existent, no longer are bred in England. My granddad had three of those, one after the other. When she was old and they couldn't allow her – she was too weak and she was a little thing – to have a dog on her lap. They sent for a Manchester terrier from England, and it stood on a saucer – its four legs fitted onto a saucer – and they said, "Well now, that's settled. She has her dog." And when it was eight years old they sent for another, and when that one was eight years old they sent for a third one. She

lived on for some, I don't know how many years. She didn't see the last one die.

Duncan: Did you and Gertrude Stein take the Chihuahua with you on your summer trips?

Toklas: Oh, surely. We always took our dogs with us. So much so, that during the Occupation, at the beginning of the Occupation at the invasion, and the Consul at Lyons was advising us to get out, get out, before it was too late. Kept telephoning and wiring us and writing us. And Gertrude said, “Do you think we ought to go?” And I said, "I don't know. Where would we go to?” And she said, "Let's go to Lyons and talk to him." That road was still open, and the guns were getting nearer. We went down there and he said, "You go to Bordeaux, and from Bordeaux –" Gertrude said, "I don't want to go to Bordeaux." And he said, "Where do you want to go?" And Gertrude said, “I want to go to Spain. If I have to leave France, I will go to Spain. I will go to Majorca, because I know it. I have friends there." And I began to pack the things, thinking that we were leaving, though I didn't in my heart of hearts, but I packed two suitcases. Oh, that was very amusing because we were establishing on the grounds of the house that we had rented a foyer for the soldiers that were supposed to be coming – the French soldiers. That was before the defeat. And we had made all the preparations to supply – we were going to keep up a foyer, there were going to be several regiments in our neighborhood right around, in the hills there, as a rest camp for the soldiers from the front. And so we bought paper and inks and blotters and pens and games, and various things that you think of for that. And then we were going to supply them with drinks, that was all – we weren't to have food there, just drinks. And amongst the other games – we bought all the games we could. A friend of ours, who was a painter, about twenty or thirty kilometers away, painted one of those heads, do you know, with the mouth open that you throw a ball into?

Duncan: Oh, yes.

Toklas: Well, he painted a Hitler. Really a *very* good portrait of Hitler. And when the Germans were advancing, I said to Gertrude, "Let's burn Hitler. Just as well not to have that around if they come here." So Gertrude chopped it up and I burnt it, and I’ve always regretted it because it was really a wonderful, slightly caricatured Hitler. It was Hitler a little fiercer, so that you would hit harder. So then we came back, and I said to Madame – or she said, "You are packing a valise, I see. You’re packing two valises.” And I said, "Well, there is some question of our leaving. I don't know whether we're going to leave or not." I said, "Listen, Madame, we have always taken the dogs with us everywhere, but if we leave here, we leave the dogs, but it is

understood definitely that you make no sacrifice of any kind for them. You will keep them, feed them, and we will give you money in advance, and send you money if you do need it, but you are not to make any kind of sacrifice either in the way of food or comfort of any kind. You just have them *piquéd* - anyone will do that for you. Will you promise that, or otherwise we couldn't leave if we didn't know that you were going to be not made miserable by the existence of these dogs." Because the mutt was a big dog and the other was a very little one. She was devoted to both of them. And she said, "No, no, it is understood." I said, "No sacrifice of any kind, not only to yourself but to anyone else." And then we came back and decided not to leave. Gertrude said, "Where do we go to? Go on the road with all those refugees?" So we unpacked our things and stayed.

Duncan: You stayed. Were you in this house here or—

Toklas: No, no, no. This was in the country. This was in the country. You see, why the Consul was so worried for us was the Italians were coming up and the Germans were coming down, and they said, "They'll meet at your house." I said, "Yes well" – they met about six kilometers away. And we had one day when we were filled with gun, what do you call it? Powder. What is that? The fumes?

Duncan: Oh, gunpowder, smoke, fumes?

Toklas: Yes. Oh, the place was black with gunpowder smoke. We had to close the house up so it wouldn't come in. And I made jam. It was the raspberry season, so I just made jam. That was one way to forget about it, to keep busy.

Duncan: It certainly is a diversion. What was the meeting actually like? Was it the Germans or the Italians who first came in your place?

Toklas: Germans. The Italians were stopped by the Germans. They didn't want them in France. They stopped them on the Rhone, and the Rhone was just six kilometers down from us. The Germans came. And then we went into Belley to get some provisions, thinking it would be wise to provision ourselves, not knowing what was to happen. And as usual I bought two hams, I always buy two hams, that's the way you provision yourself. And that is a very nice story, because after I'd gotten home I didn't know what to cook them in, so I decided to cook them in cognac. I had no other wine except cognac and white wine. So I emptied the bottles of cognac and we cooked them, and they kept that way better than they would have, you see, if you just boiled them in water, and we ate ham until we didn't eat any more ham, alas.

Duncan: What was the time like living under the Occupation?

Toklas: It was dismal and depressing. It was very sad.

Duncan: You couldn’t move around very much?

Toklas: Well, in the beginning we used our car for several months, and then the Germans wouldn’t allow you to move your car. Gertrude had quite a supply of gasoline which I buried, fearful of bombers, you know. I was afraid of keeping it in the garage. So I buried it deep once more – always buried it deep – and we drew on that until the Germans said that the gasoline had to be turned in. Which we didn’t do.

Duncan: You couldn’t, but then you couldn't drive either after that?

Toklas: No, but I wasn't going to give it to the Germans, not I.

Duncan: They never did locate it then?

Toklas: No, we had it afterwards, but then we hadn't the right to drive the car. We had the gasoline, but no right to be on the road.

Duncan: You couldn't move by train, or any other way?

Toklas: Well, no. Well, you see we were in the southern zone. We weren’t really occupied for a year, until we came into the war. In ‘40. When they came to – they left after, about six weeks. They were there, then they left. Made the line of demarcation of the northern and southern zone. We were in the southern zone until we came into the war – Pearl Harbor. And then we were taken over in January '42, or February '42.

Duncan: What happened then?

Toklas: We had Germans.

Duncan: And when did you return to Paris?

Toklas: Oh, a few weeks after the Occupation. As soon as we could find a means of travelling, because we hadn't the car any more. Gertrude had given her car to a friend of ours, whose car was bombed in Lyons. He was doing Red Cross. He was over age, oh well over age, an old man – and he wanted a car, and Gertrude said, "Well, you can take ours if you can get it out without anybody knowing about it," because the Germans were there already. And he took the car out one night and ran it down to Lyons. So we had no car, and there was no gasoline. There were no cars, there were no tires, and we had to find something that would bring us back to Paris, because the regular train service wasn't running.

Duncan: How did you get back?

Toklas: Oh! Twenty-four hours, for five hundred kilometers, 450 miles. *Twenty-four hours* on the road, because the tires would blowout, those ersatz tires, and they would buy new ones on the road. And we were piled in like sardines, four of us in the car. It was a small car, with all our possessions – that is, the Cezanne and the Picasso portrait.

Duncan: My, such art, and having to jam it in.

Toklas: Yes, and the little furniture that we brought with us, the household things, came up in a truck on their own. We had nothing to do with them. And then there was ice and snow on the mountains and we couldn't go over the mountains because the car hadn't enough power, so we went down into the valley, a hundred and ninety kilometers lost at night. Oh, it was frightful.

Duncan: You were quite happy to see your place here in Paris?

Toklas: Oh, yes, though the Germans had been there. They hadn't occupied it, they hadn't lived in it, but they had come here to pillage, to plunder, in oh, several weeks before the liberation, when they knew they would eventually be thrown out. They went into everything that they could put their hands on.

Duncan: Did they take anything from here?

Toklas: Well, they took no pictures and no furniture, but endless objects, and some of them quite valuable – beautiful things they took.

Duncan: And those were never returned.

Toklas: No, because Gertrude Stein – the Americans wanted a list of them to investigate, and Gertrude Stein said, “Let them go. I don't want to see what they've had, what they've done. Let's forget them. We got out scot free, really. Don't let us talk about those things." Because in the morning – we came in here at midnight – and the next morning I went to the kitchen to make myself some coffee, because out in the kitchen there was no porcelain, there was no crystal, there was no linen, there was no – and then I looked around, the objects I had missed, the things that were gone.

Duncan: You recognized them then as you began to look for their place?

Toklas: Oh, gradually. And I said to Gertrude, "You don't know what has been taken," and she said, "Don't talk to me about it," and I never did.

Duncan: She could just eliminate it from her mind that way as she had done other things, too?

Toklas: Yes, and when they asked, I said, "Hush, don't talk about it," when people would ask, "What did they take?" or something of that kind. I just said, “Don't talk about it, please."

Duncan: You still had many things left, of course, which –

Toklas: Which they left. They couldn't take everything, after all. They had a limited time to do it in. They came with a truck to take the pictures. They had a list of the pictures and they were driven out by the French police. Because someone had warned the police that there were brigands in the flat – they didn't say Germans – and they came down here strong and asked for their papers. Well, it was the Gestapo, but they had no papers to sequestrate here.

Duncan: They were just someone who recognized the value of the art?

Toklas: Well, they had a list of the pictures. No, no, no, it was more than that.

Duncan: It was an organized attempt, then?

Toklas: Well, no. There had been information concerning them and it hadn't been used, and finally they thought they'd make the most of this opportunity. They came here, then they were driven out, but they came back in the afternoon with a car, not with a truck. They had broken the door, you see, open, and the house, the place was still open and there was nobody here to stop them then.

Duncan: Which house was it here in Paris?

Toklas: Here.

Duncan: This house here?

Toklas: Yes, this flat.

Duncan: Did Gertrude Stein and you live here?

Toklas: Yes, from '38.

Duncan: From '38 on?

Toklas: We moved in '38 because the landlord had – she had been in rue de Fleurus from 1904, the winter of '03-'04, had gone back in the summer of '04 and come back to remain definitely with her brother at the end

of the summer of 1904, and she lived there until the end of '38. She'd lived there thirty-four years. And the landlord – the house had been sold, the old landlady had died – and he told us that he was taking it for his, that he had the right to put us out because there were no written leases, long leases, until 1918. It was a year's "*engagement*." It was just by the year, and he didn't wait until the end of the year because he said he wanted it for his son. His son was marrying, and they had the right for the family to use it.

Duncan: Even after having lived there for that many years?

Toklas: Well, there was a moment when we were leaving in 1914, and we were going to move to the Palais Royal, and had a lease, and we went over to England to see the publisher, and then intended to go to Spain and come back and have that place put in order and move in. They were to do the necessary cleaning and repairs, and we were to decorate it ourselves, when the landlord wrote us in London, before the outbreak of war by a day or two, that the doors that we had, that one of the conditions of our lease was that the doors, the entrance doors, would open up – the double doors – and couldn't, because the one was lined in some sort of way for an upper staircase. It was up against a wall and part of that – I don't know, it was mysterious – but it went to the top story, and we hadn't noticed it and he hadn't warned us, so we couldn't get our furniture through half the door. The big pieces of furniture wouldn't go through. Though they were wider than these doors, still they wouldn't go through and so we broke the lease and stayed at the rue de Fleurus.

Duncan: You stayed there to clear up until 1938, and then you moved here to 5, rue Christine.

Toklas: In January '38. We moved in February, but the lease was for January. We found it the same day that we were put out, by accident, from friends.

Duncan: That was very fortunate, wasn't it?

Toklas: No, because there were plenty to be found in those days. There was no difficulty about finding places. No, we liked this because it was light. The Rue de Fleurus was dark, the patio was quite dark. Never had any sun. Never, never, never.

Duncan: You certainly have pleasant light now.

Toklas: Yes, and we have a lot of sun here, too. Sun in the early morning. In the later morning in summer it is far too hot here, as a matter of fact,

because that roof is lead, and the walls, the reverberation. July is impossible here.

Duncan: No wonder everyone goes on a holiday or vacation at that time.

Toklas: Yes. Well, I get away in August. I only have a month's vacation, but July isn't very agreeable here. July is too hot.

Duncan: You still usually go to Spain for your vacation?

Toklas: No, no, no. I have only been back to Spain once, this time, in all those years since 1913. I haven't been back.

Duncan: Which year was it that you went back?

Toklas: We were in Spain in '15, the summer of '15, in Barcelona only. No, no, we stopped in Madrid. We went to Barcelona and Madrid on our way back, when the war was on.

Duncan: You went back this summer on your trip?

Toklas: Unexpectedly, suddenly. Unexpectedly. Friends who had lived in France were going back to America permanently. They were American and had decided on settling definitely at home again, and they came back to sell their house – they had a house near Paris – and pack their furniture and go back to America. But before that it had been a vague idea that some day we would go to Spain, in conversation, which I didn't take any stock in at all, and he said, "You know, we really came back to go to Spain for a month. I am only going to stay here a month and we are going to have five weeks in Spain, and I am going to fly back and my wife will close up the house herself and bring herself and the children and the servants back to America." So off to Spain we went in about ten days time.

Duncan: Was it a very pleasant trip?

Toklas: Oh, it was wonderful. It was marvelous. I saw all those lovely places again I'd never expected to see.

Duncan: Almost like homecoming?

Toklas: Well, I don't know that it was like homecoming. I didn't feel like that, but it was seeing everything that I loved so dearly again. I hadn't expected to, and I do love Spain.

Duncan: How was your feeling when you returned to the States in 1935?

Toklas: Well, I didn't feel like going home until I got to California, because New York doesn't mean anything to me, and the rest of it was wonderful, because it was new. I didn't know New England, I didn't know the South.

Duncan: Did you travel all through the states on the way home?

Toklas: Well, not all of them, but we went to many. Gertrude Stein lectured at thirty universities and some towns, so we went about a good deal. We were in New England a good deal, around Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Duncan: What part of the South did you go to?

Toklas: And then we went to Charlottesville, the University of Virginia.

Duncan: Did you go to Chapel Hill?

Toklas: Chapel Hill, to Charleston, to New Orleans, and Alabama – what's the name of – Birmingham. She lectured there for a sentimental reason. In the other war there was a boy named Duncan. He was a charming creature and we became very devoted to Duncan. He was about nineteen years old, and he had already been on the Mexican border. He was volunteering wherever he could fight evidently, because his father was too old. He had a very old father. And we got very attached to Duncan. He comes in largely in *The Making of Americans*. No, in the *Autobiography*. Well, we had never seen or heard of Duncan, and someone in New England, from Alabama, said, "Would you come to Birmingham and lecture there? There are some audiences waiting for you." And Gertrude Stein said, "I don't think so," and I said "Birmingham. Duncan." I said, "On condition that you find out about his name, what was the rest of Duncan's name. If you can find a man named Duncan, we will come. It's a Duncan who was in the army as a sergeant in the other war, in the war (there was no other war then) in the war, and if you can find him we will come." And she wired me, "Duncan is writing to you. I have located him." Well, we got down there and Duncan had gone to pot like nothing under the sun. That beautiful, upright young man was slowly and quietly, happily, drinking himself to death, and he wasn't drunk but he wasn't sober, the three times we saw him. Oh, it was *ghastly*!

Duncan: It was rather the shattering of a memory?

Toklas: Oh, it was just awful.

Duncan: And after making the effort to locate him.

Toklas: Well, this woman located him. I don't know how she got at him, because he wasn't living in Birmingham any more. He was living somewhere else. She found him. She just went about and I suppose she'd have files, probably.

Duncan: Located him in that way.

Toklas: Yes, at the City Hall probably. The men who went off to the war, don't you suppose there are?

Duncan: Oh, surely. They keep records of it. And then in every small town there would be the list of those who went to serve.

Toklas: Surely. Well, so they located him and that was that.

Duncan: It was a bit sad.

Toklas: And he said to me, "Am I supposed to preside at the lecture?" And I said, "No."

Duncan: Maybe that was why he was drinking.

Toklas: To get his courage up? Oh, I don't think so. No, you could see it. He had no ambition. He had a charming child. He had brought his wife and child. A nice wife – a quiet, nice little woman, who seemed to be submerged, and a very nice child. But, oh dear, Duncan. Our memories. He was so handsome and so forthcoming, such a nice boy. We were devoted to Duncan.

Duncan: That was during the first war?

Toklas: We met him just casually in a town where he was camping.

Duncan: Wasn't he the fellow that never did actually get into action, and he had always hoped to?

Toklas: Yes, he got drunk that day. He had to, he was in a *frightful* state. He said, "I can't go home and say I've been down here. I can't go home and do that." And he was the one, too, who said when he was at the Mexican frontier – well, there were a few blacks in the, not in the regiment, there must have been in the company of them or something there. They were doing railroad work, fixing up the railroads, not railroads – but the paths. Mending them and building up the old paths so that the transport could go on, because everything was worn out by the time we came in. And Duncan had the simple, old, pre-Civil War attitude. He was standing in the hotel where we were stopping, and this Negro, and Duncan said, "Nigger, don't you see that I'm coming? Get

out of my way." Just as simply. I said, "Is that the way you speak to them, Duncan?" And he said, "Yes, that's the way you speak to them in the South. Sure, that's the way." We took him to a hospital and he had a lot of cigarettes, before we got the British ones, and he brought them to distribute in the hospital and he was going in the wards with us, and he had sacks full of them, and there was a negro there and Duncan put on his gloves because he knew he had to shake hands. Gertrude and I shook hands with them, so he knew he had to, so he put on his gloves. And I said, "I don't understand really, Duncan. I can understand your not wanting to shake hands, that's an exterior thing, that's all right. But really you do treat them rather strangely." And he said, "Well, down in the Mexican border we shot them just as if they were chickens." I said, "Well, Duncan –." And then Duncan, on top of this – this is the boy, that's what I want to tell you. The flag was flying over the hotel because part of the hotel had been requisitioned for American officers and the flag was flying. It was a new one. The Army, I suppose, supplied it, I don't know. The French hadn't any flags like that. An enormous flag. And Duncan looked up and said, "It's a fine flag we have." And I said, "Oh, there's nothing like it," and he said, "You know that rose color?" – it isn't really red, it's a sort of a rose color – he said, "Every time I go away to a war and I come home, my mother has my bedroom done over in that color." Now on top of that you can understand the two things going on at once in the boy? The innocence and sweetness of the one.

Duncan: The combinations so close together.

Toklas: One on top of the other.

Duncan: By any chance can you add anything new to the relationship between Gertrude Stein and her brother, Leo Stein?

Toklas: Me to say? Oh, heavens no. She told all she wished known.

Duncan: Nothing that would help to explain their break-up?

Toklas: She explained very fully.

Duncan: But both of them commented so obliquely in their respective biographies.

Toklas: No, in the second autobiography, in *Everybody's Autobiography*, she goes into it in detail. She explains his character, how he came to be what he was, how he acted as a result of it. Oh no, you couldn't have a further study anything further to add to that.

Duncan: There was such a different story that he told himself in his autobiography.

Toklas: Naturally.

Duncan: I wondered if there were anything you could add that would—

Toklas: I could take away. Oh, no, there's nothing with Leo that you can add. Leo's own point of view. Well, we have come to this. No, Leo. I'm not going to defend Leo, nor will I attack him. No, I haven't at all forgotten him, not in the least. He is not the kind of person you forget.

Duncan: When did he actually decide to move to Florence?

Toklas: At the end of '13 or the beginning of '14. He moved in the Spring of '14, left in April or May, I've forgotten.

Duncan: Then they divided their pictures at that time, and so on?

Toklas: Oh, he was a very generous person – he was very sweet, very sweet. He gave her the picture that he knew was important to her, the Cezanne portrait. Oh no. Leo was not – he was petty in some ways but not in that sort of way. He was very generous and very chivalrous. In that respect he was an admirable brother to her. No, it was merely on the intellectual grounds that he could become difficult, very difficult. Not only to his sister but to hundreds of others.

Duncan: They never did really go back together at all, did they?

Toklas: No, we met him in 1920 when we came back from Alsace just before the peace was signed. We had been in Alsace the winter of 1918-1919. It must have been 1919. Was the peace signed in '19? Yes.

Duncan: Yes.

Toklas: There was a traffic jam because there were no policemen. The policemen had been killed at the front and they hadn't gotten new people on yet, trained for traffic circulation. They just had a few security police around, and there were suddenly more cars than there had been since 1914. The cars had all disappeared because they'd been requisitioned, but the foreigners, the people who were going to make the peace, and all the foreigners who were piling into Paris, brought cars with them. And people commenced buying cars where they could find them anywhere, secondhand cars. Everybody had a car, so that there were quite almost as many certainly, and what with the Army cars that were in Paris, there was a terrific jam on the Place de St.-Germain-des-Pres, and we were on the Boulevard St.-Germain-des-

Pres and you really couldn't get in or out, and everybody honked and made a terrific noise and nothing happened. And then somebody would say, "Three centimeters back and I can get through," or something extraordinary. And a few people got through with very small cars – and we had a Ford. And all of a sudden I saw Gertrude Stein bowing to somebody very amiably and I said, "Whom are you bowing to?" and she said, "To Leo" And I said, "Well, where?" and I looked around and just saw him. He had a very lovely walk, he walked very charmingly, very lightly, full of spring, and there he was, making his way through the crowd, and she went home and that night she wrote a very lovely thing called, "She bowed to her brother."

Duncan: On the Place de St.-Germain-des-Pres.

Toklas: It was the only time they ever saw each other again.

Duncan: The only time? They never corresponded at all?

Toklas: Oh, no, no, no. There was never any correspondence from the moment he left. Not a word, but it wasn't that. It was that they had never accidentally met anywhere.

Duncan: Of course they probably heard about each other through mutual friends.

Toklas: No.

Duncan: They just made a complete break?

Toklas: Gertrude made a complete break. I don't know what Leo did, because *I* never saw him. Oh no, she didn't want to hear about him.

Duncan: It was like so many other things – if she wanted to forget it, she could just wipe it right out.

Toklas: Yes.

Duncan: On your trip back to America after you left Birmingham, did you go straight to New Orleans and then out to California'?

Toklas: No, we went from – up to New England, and the South. We went from New Orleans to—END