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Berkeley, California

ON THE WATERFRONT:
AN ORAL HISTORY OF RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Marguerite Clausen

MEMORIES OF A LIFELONG RICHMOND RESIDENT, 1912 TO 1987

An Interview Conducted by
Judith K. Dunning
in 1985

MARGUERITE CLAUSEN AND HER DOG MISSY

Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1986

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INTRODUCTION by Jim Quay

It is a great pleasure to introduce "On the Waterfront" to you. I myself was introduced to the project in September 1983, shortly after becoming executive director of the California Council for the Humanities. Both the Council and its mission of bringing the humanities to out-of-school adults were relatively new to me when Judith Dunning came to my office to talk about her proposal. Ms. Dunning wanted to document an important period in the life of the Richmond, California waterfront, but she didn't want to write a study for scholars. Instead, she proposed to interview most of the oldest surviving waterfront figures, collect historic photographs of the port and its workers, and to create from these an exhibit for the public. Would the Council be interested in supporting such a project?

Happily, the two dozen scholars and citizens who sat on the Council then <u>were</u> interested and, convinced of the project's importance, voted to fund Ms. Dunning's proposal in early 1984. Six years later, I now know what I couldn't have known then: that "On the Waterfront" had all the features of a typical public humanities project: a powerful subject, caring scholars, a resourceful and dedicated project director, and uncertain funding.

You can appreciate why even the best public humanities project--and "On the Waterfront" is one of the best--doesn't easily attract funding. In a state focused relentlessly on the future, the next quarterly statement, the next development, the value of such a project doesn't show up in a cost-benefit analysis. Who would care about the lives of Californians past? Who would care about a waterfront whose boomtime is passed?

The answer is: thousands of people, as Judith's project proved. First and foremost, Judith, who didn't just <u>study</u> Richmond, but moved to and lived in Richmond. Like so many project directors, she gave time and life to this project far beyond the amount budgeted. In the language of accounting this is called "in-kind contribution"; in the language of life it's called devotion. Those of us privileged to know Judith know that the project both exhausted her and enriched her, and she has won the admiration of those who supported her and the affection of those she has interviewed and worked with.

After Judith came a handful of interested scholars--historian Chuck Wollenberg, folklorist Archie Green, and oral historian Willa Baum--who gave their time and expertise to the project. Next, a handful of people at organizations like CCH, Chevron and Mechanics Bank, who thought enough of the idea to fund it. Finally, eventually, came the thousands of visitors to Richmond Festival by the Bay during 1985-87 and saw the photographs and read the excerpts from interviews and realized that they too cared about these people. And now, you, the reader of these interviews, have an opportunity to care.

In its fifteen years of supporting efforts to bring the humanities to the out-of-school public in California, the Council has seen two great themes emerge in the projects it funds: community and diversity. "On the Waterfront" embodies both. I think such projects are compelling to us because in our busy lives, we often encounter diversity more as a threat than as a blessing, and community more as an absence that a presence.

"On the Waterfront" gives us all a chance to experience the blessings of diversity. The life details that emerge from these pictures and voices make us appreciate how much the people of the Richmond waterfront are unlike us, how much attitudes, economies, and working conditions have changed. Yet because the portraits are so personal and intimate, we can also recognize the ways in which they are like us, in their struggles, their uncertainties, their pride, and their fates. What seemed like difference becomes part of a greater sense of who "we" are.

In the lives of waterfront people, we can also glimpse how a community grew and waned. Busy with our own lives, we often neglect the activities that knit communities together. Judith Dunning's project allows us to see what we are losing and how communities are created and destroyed. And so, "On the Waterfront" fulfills the oldest promise of the humanities: that in learning about others, we learn about ourselves. For the gift of these twenty-six lives, we can thank Judith Dunning.

Jim Quay
Executive Director
California Council for the Humanities

March 2, 1990
San Francisco, California

PREFACE

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

"On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California," began in 1985. Interviews were conducted with twenty-six Bay Area residents including early Richmond families, World War II Kaiser Shipyard workers, cannery workers, fishermen, and whalers.

I was first attracted to this shoreline industrial town located sixteen miles northeast of San Francisco in 1982 while enrolled in a documentary photography class. For ten weeks I concentrated on the Richmond waterfront, often accompanying the crew of the freighter Komoku on its nightly run from Richmond to C & H Sugar in Crockett. It was then that I began to hear colorful stories of Richmond's waterfront and the City's World War II days.

The question which captivated me in 1982 and still does is--what happened to Richmond when World War II transformed this quiet working class town into a 24-hour-day industrial giant? With the entry of the Kaiser Shipyard, the number of employed industrial workers skyrocketed from 4,000 to 100,000. An unprecedented number of women entered the work force. The shipyards set speed and production records producing one-fifth of the nation's Liberty ships. By 1945 Richmond's shipyards had launched 727 ships.

There were other enormous changes. During the wartime boom, Richmond's population rose from 23,000 to 125,000. The ethnic composition of Richmond and the entire Bay Area changed dramatically with the influx of workers recruited from the South and Midwest. There was little time to provide the needed schools and community services. Housing shortages were critical. Twenty-four thousand units of war housing were built but they were soon filled to capacity. People were living in make-shift trailer camps along the roadsides and the all-night movie theaters were filled with sleeping shipyard workers.

James Leiby, professor of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley, called Richmond a "spectacular" case of urban development. What happened to other communities over a period of decades occurred in Richmond in a few years.

Some of the questions I wanted to explore in the interviews were--who were these newcomers to Richmond and were there reasons, beyond the promise of a job, which brought them in steady streams by trains, buses, and automobiles hauling make-shift trailers? And was this destination of Richmond, California, all that they had imagined?

Other questions were just as compelling. After the war ended and Kaiser and fifty-five other industries moved out of Richmond, leaving this new population suddenly unemployed, what made people stay? And for those who left Richmond and returned home to their families in the South and Midwest, what made them come back to Richmond a second time, often bringing relatives with them?

As intrigued as I was by this new population, I also wanted to know how Richmond natives experienced these changes. In a sense, as others moved in to find new homes in Richmond, the longtime residents were losing their once small and familiar home town.

Initially, I tried to locate people who were living and working in Richmond before the World War II boom. They worked in the canneries, at the Chevron Refinery, or made their living fishing in San Pablo Bay. Most of these first interviewees were California natives, born and raised in Richmond. But the majority of the interviewees for this project came from other places--Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, Idaho, Utah--all to start a new life in California. Each one had a story to tell. Armed with a tape recorder, a camera, and lots of unanswered questions, I set out to record these local residents.

INTERVIEW SETTING

With few exceptions, the initial interview took place at the narrator's home. Because I was recording a diverse group, the interview setting varied dramatically. One day I might be in a neighborhood where residents, fearing stray bullets, keep their curtains drawn and their lights dimmed. Another day I would be in a home with a sweeping view of the bay, built by a former cannery owner during the Depression.

When possible, I recorded additional interviews and photographed at locations where the narrators had lived or worked. Some of these included the former Filice and Perrelli Canning Company, Ferry Point, Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, and the last remaining World War II shipyard structures...since torn down. I also spent many days off shore. When interviewing Dominic and Tony Ghio, fishermen for over sixty years, I accompanied them on dawn fishing trips in San Pablo Bay. However, following a turbulent twelve-hour whale watching excursion to the Farallon Islands with former whaler Pratt Peterson, I vowed to continue my research on land.

When I asked some project participants to give me a personalized tour of Richmond to see what landmarks were important to them, all too often I was shown vacant lots where a family home, church, or favorite cafe once stood. The downtown, once bustling with movie theaters, dance halls, and department stores, is eerily quiet for a city of 82,000. I found that local residents are still angry over the loss of their downtown district during the 1960s redevelopment era. Longtime residents spoke emotionally of the city losing its center. Hilltop Mall, built on the outskirts of town and accessible by automobile, was no substitute for a shopping district in the middle of town. The struggle to rebuild the downtown and to attract new businesses is an ongoing one for the City of Richmond.

After the interviewing was completed, there were photo sessions in the narrator's homes and former work places, as well as meetings in which we went through family albums and trunks. Some wonderful photographs and the stories behind them were uncovered during this process. Copies are included in the individual volumes.

PUBLIC USES OF THE ORAL HISTORIES

From the early stages of this project, both the text from the oral histories and the collection of photographs, have been used in community events. Examples include photo panels and maritime demonstrations at Richmond's Festival by the Bay, 1985, 1986, and 1987; and Oakland's Seafest '87. An exhibition, "Fishermen by Trade: On San Francisco Bay with the Ghio Brothers," produced in collaboration with the Richmond Museum in 1988, was developed from the oral history interviews with Dominic and Tony Ghio.

In an effort to present the oral histories to the public in a form which retained the language, the dialects, and the flavor of the original interviews, I wrote "Boomtown," a play about the transformation of Richmond during World War II. "Boomtown" was produced by San Francisco's Tale Spinners Theater and toured Bay Area senior centers, schools, and museums in 1989.

A new direction for the oral histories is in the field of adult literacy. Nearly fifty years after the recruitment of men and women from the rural South and Midwest to work in the Kaiser shipyards, some former shipyard workers and many of their descendents are enrolled in LEAP, Richmond's adult literacy program, where the students range in ages from 16 to 85 and are 70 percent black.

Our current goal is to make a shortened, large print version of the oral history transcripts for use by adult literacy students and tutors. We think that by using the true stories of local residents as literacy text, there will be an additional incentive for adults learning to read. The characters in the oral histories are often their neighbors, friends, and families speaking in their own words on such topics as the Dust Bowl, the World War II migration of defense workers, waterfront industries, family and community life.

THANKS

"On the Waterfront" project has had many diverse layers, including the University of California, the advisory committee, a wide range of financial supporters, and of primary importance, a large group of interviewees. I want to thank all of the project participants who donated their time, enthusiasm, and memories to this project.

Special thanks is due Jim Quay, Executive Director of the California Council for the Humanities, who has been a source of good advice and inspiration from the beginning. The Council's grant in 1984 got the project off the ground, kicking off the campaign for matching funds. Jim Quay's counsel last summer set in motion the completion of the oral histories by introducing me to the California State Library grant programs.

Bay Area historian Chuck Wollenberg and labor folklorist Archie Green have been my primary advisors, as well as mentors, from the early planning stages. Chuck provided insight into how Richmond's transition during World War II fit into the larger picture of California history. Archie Green reinforced my belief that as chroniclers of history we must continue to document the lives of working people.

From the preliminary research to the completed project, Kathleen Rupley, curator of the Richmond Museum, has been enormously supportive. Working in collaboration with Kathleen, and Museum staff Paula Hutton and Joan Connolly on the "Fishermen by Trade" exhibition was an invigorating experience as well as an excellent example of how two organizations pooled their talents and resources to create a popular community event.

Stanley Nystrom, a Museum volunteer and lifelong Richmond resident, has been a continuing resource to me. A local history buff, with a great sense of detail, he assisted me often.

Finally, I want to thank Adelia Lines and Emma Clarke of the Richmond Public Library, Sharon Pastori of the LEAP program, and Rhonda Rios Kravitz and Gary Strong of the California State Library for their support in making possible the completion of these oral history volumes and their distribution to several Bay Area public libraries which serve minority populations.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In my work I am most interested in recording the stories of people who are undocumented in history and who are unlikely to leave written records behind. For me, the strength of this project has been seeing the transformation in how the interviewees view their relationship to history. They came a long way from our first contact when a typical response to my request for an interview was, "Why do you want to interview me?" or "What's important about my life?" And "Why Richmond?" With some encouragement, many became actively involved in the research and the collection of photographs, and began recommending others to be interviewed. "On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California," became <u>their</u> project, with a life of its own.

This set of oral histories is by no means the whole story of Richmond. It is one piece of its history and one effort to generate community-based literature. I hope that it will encourage others to record the stories, the songs, and the traditions of our community members. They have a lot to teach us.

Judith K. Dunning
Project Director

February 23, 1990
Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library
University of California
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Marguerite Clausen

Two interviews were conducted with Marguerite Clausen in February of 1985. When I first asked Marguerite to participate in this project, she responded as many people have by saying, "Oh, I don't know how much help I can be." As it turned out, she was exceptionally helpful, especially in recalling the small-town atmosphere of pre-World War II Richmond. Her parents, Henry and Clara Lexon, ran the Pullman Bakery at 3411 Cutting Boulevard.

Her father, who emigrated alone from Germany at age 14, would awaken at 2 a.m. to start baking. His afternoons were spent delivering the goods in the Richmond and El Cerrito area. In between caring for the children, her mother, Clara, assisted in the business. Marguerite described her childhood as sheltered. The family life revolved around the bakery with everyone pitching in. Her chore was washing the bakery floor.

Before coming to Richmond, the Lexons had a bakery in San Francisco which was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire. They lost everything except a case of eggs and a cash register. Like many quake survivors, they found shelter in Golden Gate Park before relocating to Sausalito, Fairfield, and finally to Richmond. In each place they opened a bakery.

During our second meeting, Marguerite showed me the site of the old family home and bakery. It was located on a busy corner at 34th and Cutting Boulevard with big rigs buzzing by and continuous traffic. One of Marguerite's early memories was of open fields and the wind..."The wind just came blowing through. Our parents put up a ten-foot fence to keep us and the bread from blowing away. Around the front they built a lattice with honeysuckles climbing around to keep us in too."

The scene is quite different today. The former bakery is now a beauty salon with run-down apartments in the back and upstairs. A clothes line bordered the building and an old garage with a battered car stood next to where the ovens once were.

A young woman approached us as we stood in front of the building and asked, "What's going on?" We explained that Marguerite was born in this building in 1912 and her family ran the Pullman bakery. The woman, the proprietor of the beauty

shop, looked amazed. She told us that her grandmother had come from Arkansas to work in the Kaiser Shipyards but had "passed" three years ago. The young woman had no sense of what Richmond was like prior to World War II. When Marguerite explained that once there were no buildings across the street, except a fire house, no gas station next door or major streets, the woman appeared stunned.

Within a few minutes, several people including the gas station attendant and the building's current owner had stopped to ask why we were there. The visit illustrated two things to me--that the local residents are open to this type of community history project, and that the post-World War II generations know little of the City's history. It was an incentive to keep pushing the project further.

That same morning, we drove out to the former site of the Filice and Perrelli Canning Company located on Harbour Way in Richmond, formerly South Tenth Street. As we approached the old cannery, Marguerite revealed that she never would have gone to the cannery in the first place had she found the office job she wanted. When I asked how she got the cannery job, she told me, "You stood at the gate and waited until they took you in. You would come many days in a row at wee hours of the morning."

Marguerite, who loved shorthand and typing, always wanted to be a secretary. Graduating from high school at the height of the Depression, this ambition was not realized. She worked as a mother's helper for three years, married and was three months pregnant when her husband Melvin Nystrom, age 23, died in a tragic accident. She remarried four years later, telling me that her daughter, Melva, chose her new father--"She went to him like she had known him all her life."

We parked near the cannery and began walking around the perimeter of the building as Marguerite recollected her working days. It was quiet except for the sounds of an occasional truck and sea gulls. Wanting to shoot some photographs at closer range, I found a break in the fence and crawled in to the building. I told Marguerite that I would just be a moment but once inside I found it compelling. The cannery was eerie and deserted and in a certain way beautiful. The lighting was exceptional--there was a warm glow in the room, a sharp contrast to the broken windows, cracked cement, and string of catwalks.

Only moments had passed when I noticed that Marguerite had slipped through the chain fence and was beside me again,

remembering. I hooked up the tape recorder and handheld it as we walked. She recalled the nurse's first aid station, and the fruit moving along the conveyor belt with lines of hands not missing a beat. It was as if the cannery was buzzing again.

Being there stirred up more memories, and I wished that the scene was being filmed. There were owls, doves, and gulls living inside. The skylights and broken windows cast soft shadows in the distance, and from the opening in the loading dock, we could see the harbor. It was emotional for Marguerite to be there; she repeated several times..."Oh, this is so sad. It's so empty, so deserted."

Between 1985 and 1987 I saw Marguerite Clausen on several occasions, both at her home and at public events. Whenever I visited her at home she invited me for lunch. Having retained the family tradition of baking, there was always an assortment of delicious cookies.

Marguerite had a heart condition, but you would not have guessed that from meeting her. She attended daily mass, was an active Richmond Museum volunteer, an avid stamp collector, and was very involved in family activities. I should also add that she was devoted to her cat Beau and her dog Missy.

In the spring of 1987, just a few weeks after we had reviewed her oral history and collected photographs for the volume, Marguerite suffered a fatal heart attack. I hope that her family and many others enjoy reading the recollections of this lifelong Richmond resident. Marguerite Clausen was a pleasure to know.

Judith K. Dunning
Project Director

January 30, 1990
Regional Oral History Office
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Family Background

[Interview 1: February 20, 1985] ##

Father Emigrates from Germany, 1881

Dunning: Where were you born?

Clausen: In Richmond.

Dunning: What year?

Clausen: 1912.

Dunning: Where did your parents come from?

Clausen: My father came from Germany, and my mother came from Indiana.

Dunning: Do you know when your father came from Germany?

Clausen: Well, he was fourteen when he left there. He was a baker on a ship for, I don't know how many years. He traveled all over the world, and then he settled in San Francisco. They got married in 1905, but I don't know just how long he was in San Francisco before that.

Dunning: Did they tell stories about how they met?

Clausen: My mother worked as a saleslady in my father's bakery in San Francisco.

This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended.

Dunning: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Clausen: There were six of us, two brothers and three sisters, and myself.

Dunning: Where were you in the family?

Clausen: I'm the middle one. My oldest brother, then I had two sisters, and me. Then there was a five-year lapse, and then my youngest sister and brother.

Dunning: What was your father's name?

Clausen: Henry Lexon.

Dunning: Did your father talk about Germany?

Clausen: Not very much, no. I regret that we didn't ask a lot of questions. But we didn't. And he didn't say anything. Of course, being a baker, he had to be up at two o'clock in the morning. So he went to bed very early in the evening. We weren't together that much in the evening. Of course, we had weekends where we could have done something. I don't know. We just never questioned him, and he never said.

Dunning: Did he ever talk about why he came to the United States?

Clausen: Well, yes he did. He didn't want to go in the army. He was a baker on a ship and traveled all over the world before he came to the U.S.A..

Dunning: Do you know about what year this was?

Clausen: He was fourteen, and he was born in about 1867. I have the family tree in there. I can look up the exact date, too. [December 21, 1867]

Dunning: Did he come by himself or did he come with his family?

Clausen: No, he came by himself.

Dunning: That's quite a brave move at fourteen.

Clausen: Yes, it is. He never spoke much of his family. I know his mother's name was Frieda. I don't know how many brothers and sisters he had. He said the one thing he regretted in his life is that he quit writing, because everytime he wrote, his mother begged him to come home, and he didn't want to. So he kind of quit writing. He said that the only thing in his life he regretted was that he didn't keep up with his family.

Melva, my daughter, is into geneology and has tried to find some connection in Germany. But she can't find any Lexons family anywhere.

Dunning: Do you know what part of Germany?

Clausen: Yes, he came from Potsdam.

Dunning: You said that they got married in 1905 in San Francisco. Do you know where he first came to in the United States?

Clausen: He came to San Francisco from Alaska. He had been all over the world and particularly liked Australia and New Zealand.

Dunning: What do you know about your mother's background?

Clausen: Not an awful lot of that either.

Dunning: You said she came from Indiana.

Clausen: She came from Vincennes, Indiana, yes.

Dunning: What was her name?

Clausen: Clara Wanderer. Wanderer was her maiden name. She had five sisters and one brother. They moved to San Francisco. I guess she stayed there, too, until after the earthquake.

Dunning: Did she talk about her childhood at all?

Clausen: Not very much, no.

Dunning: What about grandparents? Were you familiar with any grandparents?

Clausen: No. I know my grandmother on my mother's side died just about the time I was born. I don't know about the others.

Dunning: I always ask people whether there are any family stories that were passed down to them.

Clausen: I'm afraid not. Not that I remember anyhow.

Dunning: Did your family have any special traditions? Did you celebrate holidays?

Clausen: Well, the regular. There was nothing awfully special about it. But I remember at Christmas we would have our tree. Of course, we had candles in those days. We would light it one time--that was Christmas Eve. Of course, we all had to sit there because there were candles. We all stayed there until the candles went out. But other than that, no, nothing awfully special. Also, my father always made each of us a decorated cake on our birthday.

Dunning: Do you know what brought your family to Richmond?

Clausen: They were burned out in the earthquake and fire in San Francisco. Then they went to Sausalito, and then to Fairfield, and then to Richmond. I don't know why they came here.

The Family's Pullman Bakery in Richmond

Dunning: Your father worked as a baker?

Clausen: Yes, he had his own bakery. He always had his own bakery.

Dunning: What was that called?

Clausen: Pullman Bakery. The building is still standing. I think it's a beauty parlor or a fish market now.

Dunning: Where is it?

Clausen: On 3411 Cutting Boulevard.

Dunning: Did you spend a lot of time there as a child?

Clausen: I lived my entire childhood there. In fact, I was born in that house. After my first husband died, I went back there again. My daughter was born in the same house. I stayed there until I remarried. So, yes, I spent a lot of time there.

Dunning: So the house was attached to the bakery.

Clausen: It was all in one. The bakery was in the front, the bake shop was in the back, and living quarters were upstairs.

Dunning: Did your mother also work in the bakery?

Clausen: Oh, yes. She helped with the bakery, and she helped in the store. And then she had the six of us to take care of.

Dunning: She was pretty busy.

Clausen: At Christmas, I don't know where she found the time, but she always had new doll clothes for us. She must have sewed them after we went to bed, because we never saw her doing it. But we always had new doll clothes for Christmas. She also made all of our clothes.

The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, 1906

Dunning: Did your parents have the bakery their whole career?

Clausen: Yes. They had a bakery in San Francisco. They had just gotten a big delivery and everything went. Everything got burnt. Everything they possessed was lost in the 1906 earthquake and fire, except a case of eggs, and a cash register and a trunk. That was all they saved except the clothes on their back. And my mother was pregnant.

Dunning: Did she have other children at that time?

Clausen: No, this was going to be her first, because they were married in December, and the earthquake was in April. She was just pregnant with my brother, my oldest brother.

Dunning: Did she talk about the earthquake? It must have been quite a fright.

Clausen: Yes, it was. I know they went to Golden Gate Park, but first they went to a hill somewhere close by. And then they went to Golden Gate Park. They had tents set up over there.

Dunning: And then they went to Sausalito.

Clausen: Then they went to Sausalito, and then to Fairfield. At Fairfield they were in an old schoolhouse. We went

Clausen: past there one time, and they showed us where their bakery had been.

Dunning: So they had a bakery every place they went?

Clausen: They started a bakery in each place, except during World War I when it was impossible for a small bakery to get supplies. Then my father worked at a very fancy bakery in Oakland, Zinkands.

Dunning: Did your parents have specialties in their bakery?

Clausen: No specialties. Everything they made was so good. And it was real butter and real eggs and real cream. There were all kinds of pastries and lots of decorated cakes. Just a regular bakery.

Dunning: Did you learn to become quite a baker yourself?

Clausen: No, that was another thing I regretted. And decorating. My father used the decorate the cakes. I used to love to sit and watch him make his roses, but I never really learned much. I never really learned much of anything from them, I guess.

Mother's Busy Schedule

Dunning: Can you describe a typical day for your mother when all the children were living at home, things you remember her doing the most?

Clausen: It was just a regular house, except that she had a lot more to do than we do nowadays. I know she got us all off to school. We always had a good breakfast and went off to school. Then she was in the store a lot. Of course, she had all the regular housework to do. There always were interruptions with the store. Everytime

Clausen: the bell rang, she had to run. Then she helped my father in the bakery. He got up around two o'clock, but she didn't get up quite that early.

Dunning: What time did she get up?

Clausen: I think she got up around six.

Dunning: How would describe your mother?

Clausen: How would I describe her?

Dunning: What was she like?

Clausen: I know she was a wonderful mother, very strict. I mean we toed the line. She gave us one look and we knew that we were doing something wrong. She really watched out for us all and took care of us. She knew where we were all the time. And yet, as we got older, she didn't try to hold us down; she gave us our freedom. I think she was a good mother.

Dunning: That seems to be a good combination.

Clausen: Yes.

Dunning: Do you think there are certain things that she tried to hand down to you, or to teach you?

Clausen: I don't know. Just that we were honest and decent people. I think that was about the main thing.

Description of Father

Dunning: How about your father? How would you describe him?

Clausen: Oh, he was the gentlest soul you ever saw. I don't think he ever punished us, unless it was very bad, whatever we did. He was in the bakery all the time. After the baking was done, he had to do the delivering. We didn't see that much of him. But he was an awfully gentle person. He never raised his voice. He never argued. He was just a fine person.

Dunning: I was going to ask his typical schedule, too. Number one, it began at two A.M.

Clausen: After he was done with the baking he had to deliver.

Dunning: What time would that start?

Clausen: That would be some time in the afternoon. I don't know just when, because we were generally in school, and he was gone when we got home. It was some time in the afternoon that he would be getting out.

Dunning: Who would he deliver to?

Clausen: I remember a lot of the names that they mentioned, but I have no idea where they lived. It was in El Cerrito, San Pablo, or anywhere in Richmond. We didn't have many close neighbors. A few came into the store. It mostly had to be delivered. There were a lot of wide open spaces in those days. It was a long way between customers.

Dunning: At that time he would just drive his truck up to someone's house.

Clausen: Some of them had regular orders. Some of them he would have to call and let them know he was there. Then they would come and tell him what they wanted. But some of them, he just left the order there. They left the back doors open, and you just went in the kitchen and put it on the table or something like that. People in those

Clausen: days didn't lock their doors. When they knew someone was coming like that, naturally they would leave them open.

Dunning: It sounds like quite a schedule he had.

Clausen: I wonder how in the world they kept it up, for years and years and years. There are many times when I look back, when I'm thinking what I do now and what they did--we have so many conveniences that they never had. Like when my father started his bread, everything had to be mixed by hand. Right toward the last, he got an electric beater for his cakes. Otherwise, everything was done by hand. I remember the big long trough that he prepared the dough in. He would have to go up and down the trough. He picked up the dough and punched it down, to have it rise and all.

Dunning: He must have developed pretty strong muscles.

Clausen: I guess he did. He never showed particular strength otherwise. He wasn't a muscular fellow. He must have had good muscles to have done that, because to do that day after day and hour after hour and all that mixing--I mix one cake, and my arms are pooped.

Closing the Pullman Bakery, 1933

Dunning: When did the bakery close?

Clausen: In 1933. My sister, the one just above me, died in 1930. They reopened the bakery after that, but their heart was out of it. Then in 1933 they closed up and bought the first car that Claar Chevrolet sold and took a trip back to Niagara Falls and New York. They wanted to see that.

Dunning: Did they close because of the Depression?

Clausen: No, they worked right on through that.

Dunning: They were basically retiring in '33?

Clausen: Yes. If my sister had lived, it might have been all right. She had been sickly, and then when she died, somehow the heart just went out of it. That was close to the Depression, and they worked all through it. By 1933, they didn't consider it so much the Depression anymore. By that time, Roosevelt was in, and he was starting his New Deal. Things were supposed to be picking up already by then. But they closed up and took off.

They hadn't had much in the line of vacations before that. Of course, in summer my father would take us--there was a park up in Sacramento where we went several times. He would leave my mother and us up there, and then he would come back and work. Then he would come back in a couple of weeks and pick us up and bring us home again. Or another time, my aunt had an orchard in Turlock. We worked there during one summer and went to school there for about a month until the peach season was done. Then he would come back and pick us up. He didn't get much vacation himself, just taking us there and bringing us back.

One year my father came on July Fourth and brought a cake for my birthday on July Fifth. We all had a very small piece and saved the next for the next day, but during the night, some neighbor dogs came and ate the rest of my birthday cake. We were all staying in a tent--there was no house on the property, and the cake had been left outside on a table. I was in about the second grade at the time.

Childhood Recollections

Dunning: Do you remember household chores as a child?

Clausen: All I remember is my job was scrubbing a floor in the store on Saturday mornings. That's about the only thing I remember ever doing regularly.

Dunning: How about the brothers?

Clausen: My older brother for a while did some of the delivering, after he got big enough to help them. My uncle was a plumber, and he said that baking was too hard. He'd rather see my brother as a plumber. So he took him into the plumbing business. Then my father had to start doing it himself again.

As I say, they never tried to stop us. When my brother wanted to go into plumbing, my father never stopped him. And when we worked we got paid just like we were outside help. They didn't expect anything for nothing.

Dunning: That's exceptional. Were you allowed to keep the money?

Clausen: Oh, yes. Of course, it wasn't that much, because in those days, a quarter or a dollar went a long way. We kept our money. We banked a lot of it because we didn't have that much to spend it on. We took a quarter or a dime or a dollar to school--at that time we each had a bank book and made regular deposits. The bankers came right to the school on a regular basis. [laughs] Of course, you wouldn't bother with that now.

Dunning: Would you describe the house and the bakery? I'm trying to get a sense of what the area was like at that time.

Clausen: My parents bought two lots. They built on one in case they couldn't afford the second. At least they would have the house on one lot. So, it's kind of high and narrow. We had a few neighbors, but not very many. Nothing right on Cutting Boulevard, but behind us on some of the other streets. The streets have numbers now. They had names then. There was Beck Street, and Stege Street, and others. We had a big yard. My parents had a nice garden there for having so little time. They always had vegetables. I don't know when they did that either.

It was awfully windy. We used to have a lot of wind, because there was nothing between us and the bay. The wind just came blowing through. So they put a ten-foot fence up to keep us and the bread from blowing away. Around the front they built a lattice with honeysuckles climbing around it to keep us in too.

We didn't have very many neighbors, but we still had to stay in our own backyard. It was a big backyard.

Dunning: Was the whole backyard fenced in too?

Clausen: Oh, yes. The whole thing was fenced in, but the big fences were only in the front because we faced south. That's the way all the wind came in.

Dunning: How far were your closest neighbors?

Clausen: About a block away was the first one. There were a couple of them a little bit further on, and some across the street on the other side, but a block in any direction. Then they built a service station right next door to us, on the corner. So then we had a neighbor there, but that was a service station. The houses were a block away, at least, and then few and far between after that.

Dunning: When did it really start developing? When did you start getting other neighbors?

Clausen: Not until after the war started. That was after the bakery was closed up. During the wartime they started building. My father always said he was about fifty years too soon. As he was laying on his deathbed, they were just beginning to build across the street from us, the wartime housing.

Dunning: That went up right across the street from you?

Clausen: Not directly across because there was a street there, and the firehouse, and then they built along side of that. It was a couple of blocks away, where they started.

Schooling in Richmond

Dunning: I'm going to go back a little bit to ask you about your schooling. What was the first school that you went to?

Clausen: I went to Pullman School. It's Martin Luther King now, but it was Pullman in those days. There were a few houses around there, too. The houses that were there at the time were all torn down to make a great big park around the school, but there weren't many houses even then. The school was four rooms, but they only used two. We had all grades in one room.

Dunning: It went to the eighth grade?

Clausen: No, it only went to the sixth. One through six. I don't remember how many pupils there were.

Dunning: It couldn't have been too many.

Clausen: No, not when they only used two rooms.

Dunning: You must have gone to school with your brothers and sisters.

Clausen: The one ahead of me, she and I went for a couple of years. The one after me was five years younger, so I was practically out of school before she started. I don't remember going with them, with either my sister or my younger brother. When my oldest sister started school, there was a little one room school by--they used to call it Cerrito Hill [now Twenty-seventh and Cutting--Easter Hill]. It's all torn down now, because they took it down to make fill for when they built the war housing. There was a school right there. It was one room. Then one year, the roof blew off. They never fixed it, and then she started going to Stege. I don't know whether she ever went to Pullman or not. But I went to Pullman. And the one sister above me went to Pullman also.

Dunning: How many years did you attend school?

Clausen: I went through high school.

Dunning: You went to Pullman for the first six.

Clausen: In fact, they only went to the low six there, and then I had to go for six months to Lincoln School, to the high sixth.

Dunning: Where was that?

Clausen: On Tenth Street betweeen Macdonald and Bissell. Then for three years I went to Roosevelt Junior High, which is now Gompers. I went a year and a half to the high school when it was on Twenty-third Street here on Macdonald, and a year and a half when they moved it out to where it is now.

Dunning: That was called Richmond High School?

Clausen: Richmond Union High. RUHS.

Graduation from High School During the Depression

Dunning: What year did you graduate?

Clausen: Nineteen-twenty nine. The stock market crash came in October and I graduated in December.

Dunning: That would be a pretty difficult time to graduate from high school.

Clausen: It was.

Dunning: What did you do right after high school?

Clausen: I took a post-graduate course for, oh, a month or two. Then I started job hunting. I was seventeen and a half years old, and many places I was told they wouldn't hire anybody under eighteen. I think I hit every agency in San Francisco and Oakland. First I tried every place around here in Richmond. There weren't many places to go, but what there was I tried.

Dunning: Do you remember where you tried in Richmond?

Clausen: I remember going to Mechanics Bank, and the different stores. There were no openings. Then I went to all these agencies. I remember there was a Marion Doyle Agency in San Francisco. They gave me a shorthand test. She said, "Oh, I must have made a mistake, I'll have to start over again." So then she gave me another one. And she said, "Oh, my gosh, I was right. You are going a hundred and ninety-five words a minute with

Clausen: ease. I won't have any trouble finding you a job." Well, I'm still waiting for that job. I just never did get that.

Ambition to be a Secretary

Dunning: As a teenager, do you remember some of your ambitions? Did you have an idea what you were going to do?

Clausen: I wanted to be a secretary so badly. That was the only thing I ever wanted. I loved shorthand and typing. But I never had a chance to use either of them. Typing I did some, but not ever shorthand. And I kept it up for years, in hopes.

Dunning: But it was just impossible to get a job?

Clausen: I couldn't find any. Of course, I might have been going to the wrong places or something. I don't know. I just couldn't find the kind of job I wanted. I never would have gone to the cannery in the first place if I could have found that office job I wanted. Of course, there I did, for a couple of years, work in the office, but it was much later.

Work at the Filice and Perrelli Canning Company

Dunning: This is probably a good time to ask you about your work in the cannery. Could you tell me the full name of the cannery.

Clausen: Filice and Perrelli Canning Company.

Dunning: When did you first start working there?

Clausen: After we bought this house. We moved in here in 1948*. And taxes came in December. We weren't prepared for them. I think it was fifty dollars at the time. We were so broke all that next year. I thought, "What if I go to the cannery for one season? It will be enough to catch us up." So I went for the one season. That was all I was going to do. But they called me back the next year. So I went in the next year, and I kept right on going.

Dunning: For how many years?

Clausen: I was there twelve years altogether. Part of the time I would have a summertime job there and a wintertime job elsewhere, because by then, I guess, I expected that little extra money, and then I didn't quit. I enjoyed working, though.

Dunning: From the time you graduated from high school when you were looking for a job, until you started the cannery, did you work other kinds of jobs?

Clausen: Yes, when I was in San Francisco after graduation and I couldn't find anything, and I was reading the Want Ads, I saw this ad that said, "Mother's Helper. Willing to travel." Oh, that sounded good. I applied for it, and I got it. So for three years I was there. I traveled from Canada to Mexico with them. I enjoyed it very much. But by that time I decided I wanted office work. I left there, and I tried to find office work. They kept sending me out on these household jobs again because of my three years experience. Finally, I refused to go several times. And then the lady says, "Young lady, do you or do you not wish to work? You refuse once more, and I'm going to take you off of the list." So I went where she sent me.

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*See interview number two, page 53, for more information on the cannery.

Clausen: There was one job offered to me in Oakland. Their name was Stone. I remember they had stones all around, a stone house, and a stone wall around it. I don't remember where it was anymore. They apparently wanted me very badly, and I refused the job. That got the lady in the employment office very perturbed.

Then I went to the cap works for a while, the California Cap Works.

Dunning: I was going to ask you about that. Stan Nystrom mentioned that on our tour.

Clausen: Well, the cannery and the cap works were about the only two places in town at that time to work. I think everybody in town, sooner or later, went there.

Dunning: Was that especially true for women?

Clausen: Yes, because unless you could get into a store you had no other choice, and most of the stores, when they had salespeople, kept the same ones for years and years and years. You didn't really have much chance. There was no turnover.

Marriage

So I went to the cap works for a while. Then I got married, and I didn't work during that time. Then after my husband died*, I went home again with my folks and I had my baby there. There was another bakery in town, the Peerless Bakery. They asked me if I would

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*Melvin Taylor Nystrom was struck by a train and killed in 1937 at age 23.

Clausen: like a job. I grabbed it because I was hanging on to my nickles until the buffalo squeaked. I thought that was a good opportunity. I could be home in the morning with the baby and go to work in the afternoon.

Of course, I was home with my folks. My daughter had wonderful training from them. They took good care of her. I had no qualms at all about leaving her. So I went there and I worked until I married my second husband.

Dunning: You lost your first husband after eighteen months?

Clausen: No, eleven months and eight days.

Dunning: And you were expecting a child?

Clausen: I was three months pregnant. I think I was very fortunate that I had my family to fall back on. If I didn't have them, my mother-in-law said I could come and stay with them. They both offered me a home. Naturally I went to my own family. I was very fortunate in having a family that cared enough to watch out for me.

Dunning: Is your daughter your only child?

Clausen: I had a son by the second marriage. My daughter picked her own father. I never went anywhere, never did anything. If anyone looked at her, she screamed bloody murder. I brought him home, and she went to him like she had known him all her life. She was just as crazy about him the day he died as she was the day she met him. And he felt the same about her. I thought it was very wonderful. I've had a good life.

Dunning: How soon did you meet your second husband?

Clausen: It was four years later. My first husband died in 1936, and I married my second husband in 1940.

Dunning: Was he from Richmond?

Clausen: No, he was from Germany, but he lived in Rodeo. He worked up at the American Smelting and Refining Company in Selby.

Employment Opportunites in Richmond Before World War II

California Cap Works, the Pullman Shops, Standard Oil, and Santa Fe

Dunning: I'd like to go back a little bit to the cap works. What was that like?

Clausen: It was making blasting caps. I did soldering. When I went in, the superviser said, "You see those two little notches on there? That's where you solder." I couldn't see those notches to save me. I got glasses, and then I found them. I don't remember an awful lot about that either. I did the soldering.

Dunning: Where was this located?

Clausen: In Stege. Do you know where the Stauffer Chemical Company is? You can turn across there, and it was right in there somewhere.

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Dunning: About how many people worked at the cap works while you were there?

Clausen: I wouldn't have any idea.

Dunning: Were there equal amounts of men and women? Did any of your friends work there?

Clausen: I don't remember that much about it. I know my sister worked there for a while, and my first husband worked there for a while. All I know is what was right in my little room. I don't know what was going on in the rest of the place.

Dunning: There seemed to be a couple of cap factories around and blasting companies. I've asked this to a number of people about what were they used for. Were they shipped to different parts of the state? Were they blasting the hills?

Clausen: All I know is they were blasting caps. I know Hercules was there, too. That was all there was in Hercules. Then they had the cap works here. What they were used for, I never even stopped to ask, never stopped to think. I just took things as they came.

Dunning: It was a job.

Clausen: It was a job. Oh, yes, it was a job.

Dunning: Do you remember your first salary there?

Clausen: No, I don't. It wasn't very much, though.

Dunning: Stan mentioned that one of the few places that women could find work at that time was either the cannery or the cap works.

Clausen: That was just about it.

Dunning: Where were most of the men working?

Clausen: Well, we had the Pullman shops right around the corner from us. I know an awful lot of men worked there. Then, of course, Standard Oil and Santa Fe. They were the big ones. They still are. Standard Oil is, anyhow. Other than that I really wouldn't know.

Clausen: We were very sheltered. I think we just didn't go out and see that much. We had very little company at all because my father was always in bed so early, and he had to get up so early. There were very few people that came around. We just didn't find out what was going on in the world. We had to stay home when we were little. Either that or I was extra dumb or something and didn't pick up.

The Transportation System

Dunning: How did you get around? What was the transportation like?

Clausen: Feet.

Dunning: You walked a lot.

Clausen: We did a lot of walking, yes.

Dunning: What was the transportation system like?

Clausen: We had the streetcar a block from us.

Dunning: Was that the Key Route?

Clausen: I think that's what it was in those days.

Dunning: Where would that streetcar go?

Clausen: It went up--I guess it's now Carlson. I know it crossed Cutting Boulevard. It went by the Pullman shops, only on the other side of the street there. But it came from the county line [now El Cerrito Plaza]. It came up Potrero, then it came right past us and across Cutting Boulevard and went on up Carlson to Macdonald Avenue.

Dunning: Would that go right to El Cerrito and Albany?

Clausen: Yes, because many times we walked to the county line at El Cerrito to save that first fare. At the county line and at Sixteenth and Macdonald, they had that extra fare. That's where your feet came in.

Dunning: Did you ever get into Berkeley in those days?

Clausen: Not very often. Once in a while we would go into Oakland. I think every couple of weeks we would go into Oakland and go grocery shopping.

Dunning: So, Oakland would be a shopping district for your family?

Clausen: Usually we shopped in Richmond, but Oakland had the Housewives' Market on Sixth Street where we went to buy in bulk for the bakery and store.

Dunning: It's still in existence.

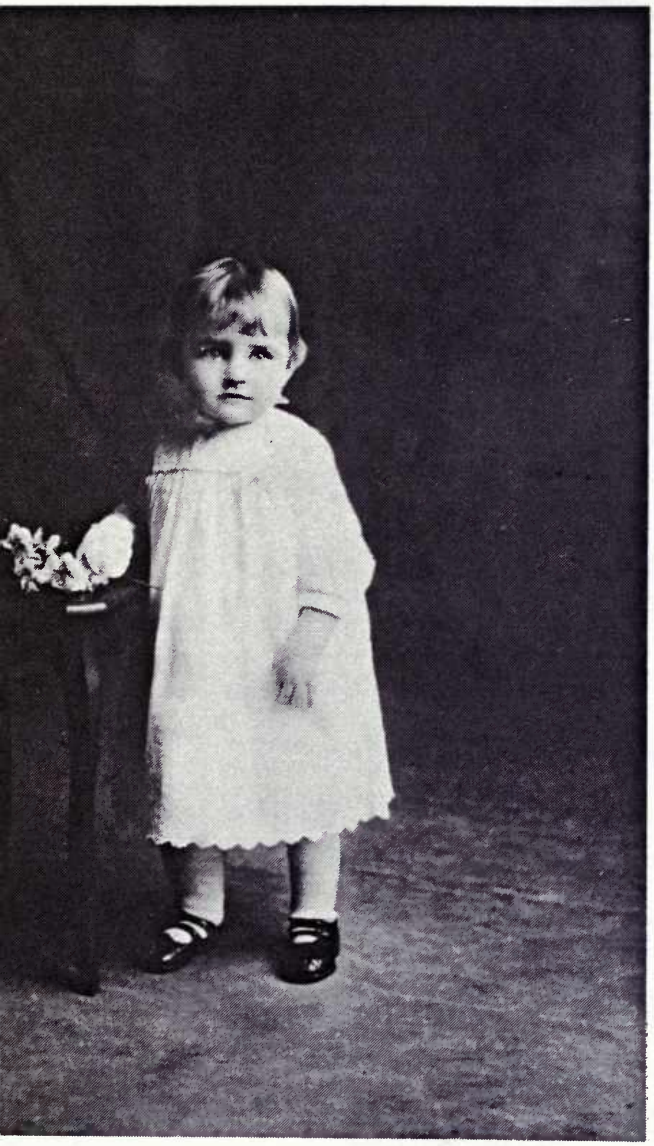
Clausen: I don't know. I haven't been to Oakland in so long. I don't think I would even recognize it anymore. It's so changed. We went there every so often and did some shopping. Then we would go into Swan's. Let's see, it wasn't Swan's in those days. I can't think what it was.

Dunning: What was it?

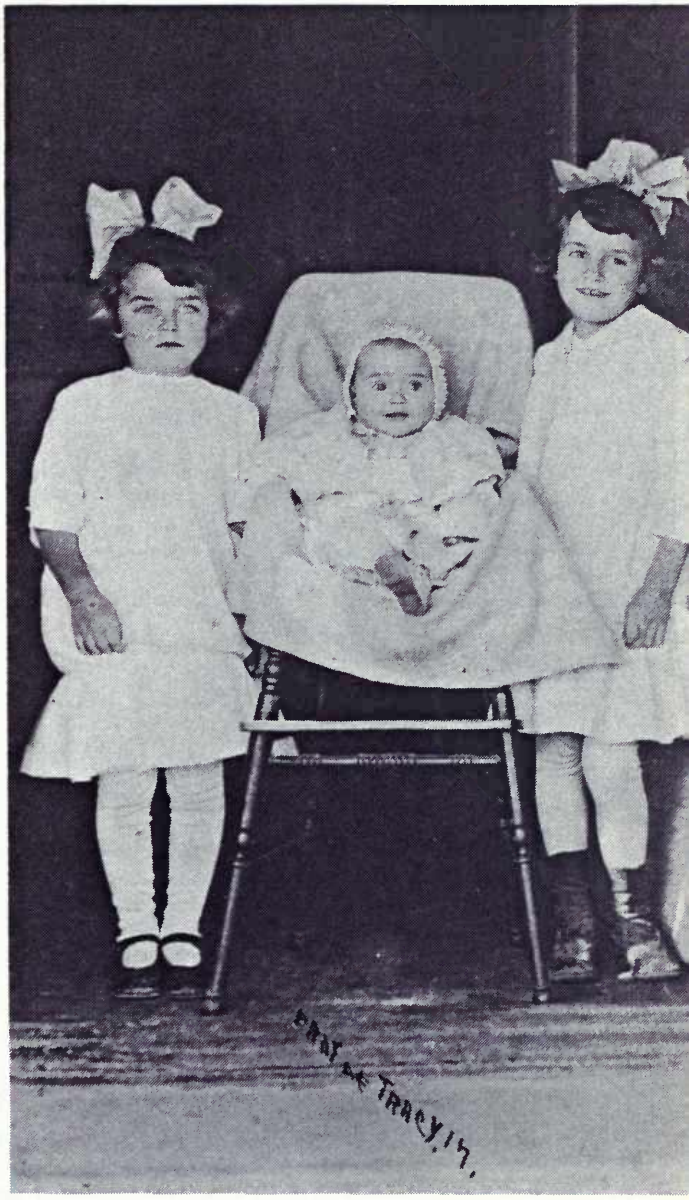
Clausen: A department store. Whithorne and Swan, I think it was. We went in there and looked around at least. If there was anything we needed, we got it. We didn't even go there that often either, except for grocery shopping and then that one store that was right close there.

Wedding portrait of Marguerite Lexon Clausen's parents: Henry Lexon and Clara Elizabeth Wanderer, married December 13, 1905.

Henry and Clara Lexon *(2nd from left)* and neighbors in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park following 1906 earthquake.



Marguerite Lexon, ca. 1917.



The Lexon sisters, *from left:*
Marguerite, Lillian, and Alice, ca. 1919.

Marguerite and Alice Lexon at the family's Pullman Bakery in Richmond, ca. 1917.

Marguerite Viola Lexon, graduation picture, Richmond Union High School, 1929.

Cafeteria building, located on Harbour Way South, formerly known as South 10th Street, Richmond. It was part of the once thriving Filice & Perrelli Canning Company.

Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1985

Interior of the former Filice & Perrelli Canning Company, in operation from 1930 to 1958. The building was sold to the California Canners and Growers Association.

Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1985

Marguerite Clausen inside the former Filice & Perrelli Canning Company building.

Photograph by Judith K. Dunning, 1985

Downtown Richmond

Dunning: I'm trying to get an idea of whether people left Richmond, or was it a kind of self-contained town where you could get most things that you needed.

Clausen: Oh, you could get just about everything you needed here in town. Oh, yes. They had a lovely little town here. I think it's a disgrace that they took it down.

Now they knocked the Elks Building down too, instead of preserving it. That whole block is empty. I can't see why everything has to be knocked down. We've got so much empty space there. Then they have to knock down that beautiful Elks Building besides. It isn't that nobody wanted it. It seems like there were several people that were willing to fix it up. But I don't know why. They preferred tearing it down. That just breaks your heart.

Richmond was such a nice little town. And everybody knew everybody. You'd go uptown. You didn't necessarily go shopping. But everybody you knew you would meet sooner or later. My mother and my three sisters and I, after we were all married, used to go shopping together. We would all do our shopping, put it all in the same car. You never locked your door. Each one would take her their bundles and put them in the car, then go on to the next store.

Dunning: What was the downtown district in terms of the location?

Clausen: It was on Macdonald Avenue from about Fourth Street almost up to Twenty-third. To Sixteenth Street was the main part. Then there was the subway and ten more stores between there and Twenty-third Street. You would go in one store and out the other. You could find anything you needed. My husband didn't believe in

Clausen: going out of town for anything. Everything we bought was right here in Richmond. A lot of people went to San Francisco and Oakland; we never did. Everything we got, we found in Richmond. It didn't make any difference what it was. If you didn't like what this store had, you could go to another one and get it.

Dunning: Was it the same for entertainment?

Clausen: Well, yes. We had a couple of shows, the theaters. Of course, we went quite often in those days. And then my husband belonged to a lodge that had dances. They had those in Richmond all the time. It was a very self-contained little town. Anything you needed, you could find right here in town. Of course, some of them went to San Francisco to the opera and things like that, which they didn't have here. But for ordinary entertainment, you could find it right here in town.

Dunning: How much of the influence of Standard Oil did you feel? Did you feel at any time that it was a company town?

Clausen: No. I had nothing really to do with Standard Oil. The stores that were here, and the entertainment that we had, they had nothing to do with Standard Oil.

Dunning: You didn't get that sense?

Clausen: No, no I didn't. My brother-in-law worked at Standard Oil, and that's about as close as it got.

Local Churches

Dunning: What about churches?

Clausen: Any church you wanted was right here in town, too. Any denomination.

Dunning: That seems to be the case now, also.

Clausen: I think it was always that way.

Dunning: Did your family go to a particular church?

Clausen: Yes, we went to the Catholic Church. Growing up we went to St. Mark's, and then we went to St. John's. After I got married, we lived in town and I went to St. Mark's. Now I belong to St. Cornelius.

Dunning: Where are the churches located?

Clausen: St. Mark's is right downtown on Tenth and Bissell. St. John's is in El Cerrito. St. Cornelius is on Twenty-eighth and Macdonald.

Dunning: Did your family attend church regularly?

Clausen: My mother and the children did. My father was Lutheran, and he didn't go. But he lived his religion.

Dunning: It seems like an interfaith marriage was rather exceptional at that time.

Clausen: Yes. In fact, both of my husbands were Protestant, too. They were both very good about letting me go to church when I wanted to. They would go to their own. Of course, after my second husband was sick, then when he went, he went with me, because he couldn't get to his own. He belonged to the Lutheran Church, too.

Dunning: Would you go to the Lutheran Church, too, at times?

Clausen: I offered to go with him to take him there. I would go to mine, and I would take him to his. He said no, he would go to mine. That was all right. But when he was able to, he went by himself. I went to a couple of weddings and a couple of funerals there. I didn't go

Clausen: to church with him, and he didn't go with me when he was younger either, or when he was healthy. But once he got sick then he just came with me.

Dunning: Any particular priest or pastors that stand out in your mind?

Clausen: I remember we had a Father Sullivan. He had the most interesting sermons. No one fell asleep through those. And, of course, Father Meyer, who just died recently. The priests and the sisters weren't just people; they were Priests and Sisters. They weren't like they are now where they mix in with everybody. In those days they were on a pedestal. You didn't get too friendly with them. I was scared to death of them, in fact, most of the time.

Dunning: They, I'm sure, wore the long habits at that time.

Clausen: They did.

Dunning: Do you think you were taught to believe particular things as a child, through the Catholic Church? Any strong beliefs that came through your early religious training?

Clausen: It seems just like it was the way we were brought up. You had to do what was right. Other than that, I don't think there's anything special. They just wanted you to be a good person.

Dunning: Were there parochial schools at that time?

Clausen: Not in Richmond. I think St. Cornelius was the first one. That was after I was all grown up. I think you had to go to Berkeley.

Dunning: That far.

Clausen: I think that was the closest. Of course, the transportation in those days left much to be desired. So if you went to Berkeley, you probably would have to get up in the middle of the night to get there on time.

Everybody I knew who went to church always found a church for their religion. I assumed that they had plenty. I know there were several of them downtown. On Barrett you've got a lot of churches that have been there for ages. But all these outside, like in El Sobrante and all those places--I don't know what they had there, because they were mostly farmers then. Farmers, ranchers, where they have a lot of property. So I don't know how they worked. But right here in town, we had a lot of churches.

Richmond's Ethnic Composition, Pre-World War II

Dunning: What was the ethnic composition when you were growing up?

Clausen: It was mostly white, but we always had a few coloreds. There were a lot of Italians in our area. Orientals, I don't think we had very many except Japanese. There were a lot of Japanese on the Southside there. They had the nurseries.

Dunning: On the southside of Richmond?

Clausen: Yes, behind Montgomery Wards. They were there even before my folks came to Richmond. I know for each one of us that was in school, there was one of them, too. They had quite a few kids, yes.

Dunning: Did they leave during the internment?

Clausen: Yes. Some went to Utah. Others went to Colorado, Arizona, Oregon, and Arkansas--also Manzanar and Tulelake in California.

Dunning: Do you remember that happening?

Clausen: Yes, because we knew them quite well. As I say, we all went to school together. While we didn't get together otherwise, we knew them. It just didn't seem right because they seemed like such good people, such nice people. Then to have to be sent away like that. Of course, their business went kaput. They had these lovely nurseries. We always knew about the nurseries because they were right close to the school there. It just didn't seem like they should have been sent away.

Dunning: Did many come back?

Clausen: I think they all did.

Dunning: To Richmond?

Clausen: I think so, yes.

Dunning: A couple of people have mentioned that they didn't think too many returned.

Clausen: I know there were the Sakai, and the Oischi, Adachi, and Miyamoto families. One of them has a nursery in Hayward. I know they all started back up again. During the war time my sister and her husband lived right across the street from them. In fact, she still lives there. They were quite friendly. They asked my sister's husband if he would kind of watch out for their property. So my sister started working over

Clausen: there, too, to train some of the new managers how to work with the roses. That's all they have, is roses. Then when the owners came back, of course, the place was a shambles. They had to spend an awful lot of money getting started up again. But at least they kept it going. They kept it open as a nursery.

Dunning: A place to come back to.

Clausen: They might have had to fix it up, but it was still there.

Dunning: Did you socialize with the Italians much?

Clausen: When you say socialize, do you mean like going out and all? We didn't go out very much with anybody. We had these friends we walked to and from school with. We saw them at school and that was it. When you saw them uptown, you would stop and talk. But as for visiting, we didn't. With nobody. Like I say, we had very little company or anything with my father's hours.

Dunning: It seems like kind of a quiet place.

Clausen: I guess it was when I look at it now. I guess it was. I don't know if others went out or went visiting. We didn't. Even though there was nobody around us, we had to stay in our own backyard when we were kids. There was no running around. My mother knew where we were all the time. If we weren't at school, we had better be home. I remember when I was going to junior high and high school, I stayed for the afterschool athletics. We had to be home at a certain time. I always left at the last minute, of course, because I wasn't going to miss any of my athletics. I had to run all the way home practically.

I remember running past the Pullman shops. That's an awful long run. That was in the days before jogging was popular. But I ran past everyday. In the morning

Clausen: I would leave at the last minute and have to run to school, and to get home I would have to run again. I got lots of foot exercise.

Dunning: It sounds like you stayed in good condition.

Clausen: I did. I think that that had a lot to do with it, all that walking and running and all.

Dunning: Getting back to who lived in Richmond, were you familiar with any Portuguese families?

Clausen: Yes, there were a few of them around too. I didn't know as many of those, though. It was just the ones we went to school with and all. Right off hand, I couldn't even think of any of them. But I know there were.

Dunning: Do you know if they were in particular businesses or jobs?

Clausen: I don't know what any of them did.

Dunning: How about the Hispanic community? I know there were some. I'm wondering if you knew any.

Clausen: Not any specifically. They were just people.

Dunning: Were people living in specific neighborhoods? Did the Portuguese live in a certain neighborhood?

Clausen: I don't remember anything like that. I don't know whether they were grouped like that or not. I really don't think so. I think they just mixed in. But, of course, in those days, I didn't think of anyone as being Italian or Spanish or Portuguese. They were just friends.

Dunning: How about with the black families?

Clausen: I only remember a couple that I knew where they lived. We did have one right around the corner from us when we were kids. When I went to high school there were several of them. I think they lived in North Richmond. But I also had other friends that lived in North Richmond. It wasn't exclusively black in those days. It was just another section of town. I really don't think that we had enough that they even had them segregated that way. As I say, those that lived in North Richmond also had white neighbors.

World War II Era: Changes in Richmond

Dunning: I'm really curious to ask you about the World War II years. I can't decide whether I should ask you about the cannery or go into the World War II years.

Clausen: We never went to work in the shipyards, none of us. So the World War II years were not very much different as far as working, except that the town certainly grew by leaps and bounds. And that's when the blacks started getting favored, because they must have spent the money more freely or something. I can remember very distinctly going into a butcher shop. It was on Seventh and Macdonald. There were a whole slew of people there. I stood there and waited my turn, and they took care of everybody else, and when it came my turn, I said, "I would like some of that." The butcher turned around and walked away.

I said, "Aren't you going to wait on me?" He just snickered and kept on a-walking. I never went into that butcher shop again. They were Chinese.

Other than that we didn't have that much to do with the shipyards. We didn't go to work there or anything.

Dunning: No one in your family did?

Clausen: None of us. In fact, women didn't work in those days. My husband was working at Selby. He figured he would have a better chance of staying at Selby than to go to the shipyards, then he would be out of a job when the war was done. So he just stayed up there.

Dunning: Probably smarter.

Clausen: My brother-in-law was at Standard Oil, and he stayed there. My brother went to World War II. He was a mailman by that time, then he went to war. Then when he came back he started as a mailman again. None of us went to work at the shipyards.

Dunning: Do you think that was common for a Richmond family to stay in their own jobs rather than go into the shipyards?

Clausen: The ones we knew did. We didn't know anybody that worked at the shipyards in preference to their own jobs. Everybody we knew stayed with their own. But the ones that came in from other places, and some of the retired ones--we lived on Eighth Street at the time. Our landlord was retired, and he went to the shipyards. I don't know what he did there. He was the only one I knew personally that went to the shipyards.

Dunning: From your perspective it was mostly outsiders who got jobs in the shipyards?

Clausen: I think so, because they had their shipyard reunion last year. The man across the street was there, but he came from somewhere else.

Dunning: Where did he come from?

Clausen: I don't know. It said in the paper where he came from, but I always thought that he had been here a long time. But apparently, he came for the shipyards. There are several I know who were school teachers. I find they originally came to work for the shipyards, but they came from somewhere else. So the only ones that I knew that went to the shipyards were from out of town. So I would assume that most of them were.

We took a vacation one year after the war was done, and we went to North Dakota to see my husband's brother and his family. They showed us a flyer that had been sent out by Kaiser to come to work at the shipyards. I had never seen one around here, but they had them back there.

Dunning: There was a very active recruitment program.

Clausen: Oh, yes. And of course, the wages were good. They were better than what you could get by staying at a job you had here.

Dunning: I would think it would have been very tempting for a lot of people around here to go into the higher paying job.

Clausen: Yes, but I think a lot of them felt just like my husband did. When the war is done, you're out of a job. If you stay where you are, you're getting seniority. I think the majority of them felt that way. Those that had no job and came here, naturally they were going to be glad to get a job, especially a good high-paying job. I guess the majority of them felt they were going to go back where they came from after the war. Well, an awful lot of them did, but before the summer was done, they were back again, with their families.

Dunning: They went back home after the war and then returned to Richmond.

Clausen: Many couldn't wait to get "back home" after the war, but they found they didn't like it back there anymore. They turned around and came back again. And they brought all their families with them. Families and friends, and anybody they could bring. [laughs]

Dunning: I've seen a photograph that was taken from Point Richmond, where you look down and you see nothing, a couple of buildings. Then the next year, which must have been about '42, it was just strewn with shipyards, activity, and the war housing.

Clausen: Oh, they filled every vacant lot with houses. They had to because people were sleeping in their cars. They had four or five all night movie houses in those days, and they would sleep in the movies because they had no place else to go. My goodness, we had nothing but empty fields, and when you get an influx of--what was it? From twenty-three thousand to a hundred and nine thousand at its height.

Dunning: More than that, actually. It was something like a hundred and twenty-five thousand.

Clausen: Something like that. I know it went awfully high. It more than tripled the population. Well, naturally, there was no place. I know a lot of people opened their homes, they rented out rooms. Anything to get the people a place to lay their heads. A lot of them had shifts, three shifts in one bed, just to get them a place to sleep.

Dunning: I was speaking to someone last week who referred to a bed as a hotbed. Your bed was always warm. One person would go in it, and then it would be time for them to go to work--

Clausen: One would get out and then the next one would go in. Anything to find a place to sleep. Our weather now is different than it was then. We used to have a lot of

Clausen: wind and fog. We didn't have much summer. When my relatives came from back East, they thought it was colder here than it was there in the middle of winter in that snow. It's different, a damp cold, and anyhow, it just kind of goes right through them.

In fact, when my brother came home from the war--he was in the South Pacific on the battleship, North Carolina all through the war--we had a heat wave when he came home. The rest of us were just sweltering. And here he was with his peacoat on and sitting there shivering. It was a little bit different than it was in the South Pacific. We always had cold weather. We had never had so much warmth as we've had these last three years or so. Our summers have really been summers. We never had warm summers before.

Dunning: The climate must have been particularly shocking for a lot of the Southerners coming in.

Clausen: Yes.

Dunning: They were probably expecting it to be sunny California.

Clausen: In sunny California, you don't have cold summers. But we sure do in Richmond. Richmond always had its own weather.

Dunning: What was that transformation like for people that lived in Richmond, to suddenly have a whole new population and have it crowded?

Clausen: You used to be able to go uptown, and everybody you knew, sooner or later, you ran into them. During the war years, you saw so many strangers.

Dunning: How did that make you feel?

Clausen: It made you feel kind of funny, because you would go shopping and you would come home again, where you used to spend a whole day talking to everybody. I was amazed how many strangers there were, and how seldom you ran into people you knew.

Dunning: Did the people who lived in Richmond before the war end up getting together more?

Clausen: No.

Dunning: There was no closeness formed?

Clausen: As I say, we didn't go visiting; we didn't have a lot of friends, except the ones you saw uptown, or when we went to meetings or anything like that. There was not an awful lot of socializing. In that way it didn't make that much difference. Not to me it didn't. To others it might have. But not to me.

Dunning: You lived very close to the war housing. Can you describe what it looked like?

Clausen: They looked like pretty nice places to me. In fact, my brother lived in them for a while after he came home from the service. They seemed like real nice places, when they were taken care of.

That was when we first saw people open their windows and throw garbage out. We had a clean town. We just weren't used to stuff like that. People let their kids run wild. We weren't used to that either. People took care of their kids. Then we saw these houses getting damaged. We weren't used to that either. People used to take pride in their places.

That's when we saw how the other half lived. And it was really quite a shock sometimes when you went through and saw what was going on in those places. Where my sisters lived--there was one family--they used

Clausen: to throw the kids out in the morning and lock the door. Those kids went to the neighbors to be fed or to go to the bathroom or anything else, because they weren't allowed back in the house.

Dunning: Where would their families have come from?

Clausen: Oklahoma or somewhere around there. We just weren't used to stuff like that. That's the biggest shock that I could say about, was the way those people lived.

Even today, like we had that Uniment Building that they built right next to the senior housing up there on Barrett. It was a model building. Officials and buildiers came from all over to look at it, because if that had worked they were going to put more elsewhere. Tenants wrecked that place in five years. They had to tear it down. A brand new building that had to be torn down in five years.

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Dunning: You were saying it was quite a shock for you seeing the new population and how they lived.

Clausen: Yes, it was. I couldn't believe it.

Dunning: Were you referring to what's called the Okies or the black population?

Clausen: I don't know who they were. But I know it was in these war housing units. I don't know. There were black ones and white ones and everything, yes.

Dunning: Were the war housing units segregated?

Clausen: No, they weren't what you would call segregated. They built on every vacant lot they could. The Southside was where all the empty land was, so that's where most

Clausen: of the units were. Not that they were segregating them, because that was where the vacant land was.

Where I now live--there were maybe a half a dozen empty lots on the block when we came here in 1948--all the rest were built since. But that was not war housing. They were filling the land up just as fast as they could because the population kept growing. War housing was all by itself because that's the only place there was a lot of empty land.

The war housing stretched throughout the city--they had a number of different units. I know they had Harbor Gate, where my brother and his family lived, also Canal and Seaview. That was right up here by the shipyards. They had little areas of housing and then they would give it a name. The whole Southside was covered anyhow.

Dunning: I'm trying to get an idea whether one stretch of housing was black.

Clausen: No, they were all mixed. As far as I could see, they were mixed.

Dunning: Would that cause a problem, because here you had, number one, a brand new population, but then perhaps some Southern whites and Southern blacks that weren't used to being together suddenly living in the same vicinity. Were there incidents that you recall?

Clausen: I don't remember hearing about anything like that. I don't think the segregation was as publicized. Until they started making the big fuss about it, I don't think they talked that much about it. But once they raised a big to-do, then everybody started with their worrying about it.

We always had blacks. The whole time we went to school there were blacks with us, and we played with

Clausen: them just like we did with anyone else. We never thought of them as being different. The Japanese, we never thought of them as being different either. We all played together. We were all kids. We played together. So until they started raising a big fuss about it--I think if they had kept their mouths shut it would have just worked out fine. Of course, there are some that naturally were going to be prejudiced. But they were going to be prejudiced anyhow. It probably wasn't color at all. There was just something to grumble about. But to the rest of us, it made no difference.

Dunning: Until maybe after the war when there were no jobs, suddenly there were new problems.

Clausen: That might have been, but the ones I knew had the jobs. We all figured that once the war was done, and the shipyards closed, the newcomers would all take off. We never dreamed we were going to have a town the size we've gotten, growing constantly.

Dunning: That was quite a shock to you.

Clausen: Especially when they started covering our hills with houses. They are still building. I think we've got more people here than we need right now. Yet they build and build and build, and more people come in. Of course, the more people that come, the more problems there are.

Dunning: I was asked to inquire about your impression of Okies. Do you have a certain image or description of the Okies?

Clausen: Well, the ones that were tearing the houses apart and letting the kids run wild and throwing garbage out the windows is what we call the Okies. Of course, the ones I have known from Oklahoma are fine people. All they said was Okies and Arkies and that's what they were

Clausen: referring to. But, of course, we didn't get to know any of them personally. They were all too far away for any of us to get acquainted with. But my brother and his family lived in the war housing when he came back from the war, and they got along fine. They've got neighbors that they are friendly with even today, the ones they met in the war housing. So there were good ones and there were bad ones, just like there is with everything. But we didn't really get acquainted with any of them, because we stayed with our own little gang.

Dunning: Did you get to know many Okies after the war years that stayed?

Clausen: To tell you the truth, I don't know if they're Okies or not. The people that I got acquainted with I did not consider as Okies or Arkies or Californians, or whatever. I just never looked at their background. If it's somebody I like, I like them regardless of what they are. And if I don't like them, I don't care what they are, I don't like them. But there aren't very many that I don't like. They seem to be pretty nice people. I didn't get overly friendly with any of them.

We've had black ones right next door to us, and there's a black one right across the street. I have no complaints with any of them. In fact, the black ones that used to live next door had the best behaved three little boys you ever wanted to come across. I heard somebody punishing one of them once; he must have been giving him a spanking. And I tell you, I started to bawl and had to move to another part of the yard. They were such good kids, I just couldn't stand to listen to them being punished. That's probably why they were good kids though, because they were being disciplined. They were awfully nice kids. I don't even remember what their name was.

Clausen: We had some white ones that were not as desirable as they were for next-door neighbors.

Dunning: What about the social services during those war years when the population increased so much?

Clausen: I didn't have anything to do with social services except the O.P.A. That's the Office of Price Administration. You know, they kept their rent prices frozen during the war. We were renting at the time. You had to sign a paper that you would pay that rent and they couldn't raise it. I don't know what all else it was.

That's why we moved from Eighth Street after the war. The price administration was still in existence, but the landlord sold the house to one of his children. They moved to Los Banos, and then she wrote back and said she was going to raise the rent. She couldn't raise the rent, not to us, but we figured if she wanted to raise the rent, she could get some new people in there and maybe they would pay it. That's why we moved here. Otherwise we would probably still be there. In fact, the parents offered the house to us, and we were going to buy it. Then they decided to keep the house in the family and talked the brother into taking it. So we lost out that way. Otherwise we would have owned that house uptown.

Beginning of Redevelopment in Downtown Richmond

Dunning: The downtown area must have been completely bustling during those war years.

Clausen: Oh, it always was a busy town, even before the war years. Up until they started tearing it down, it was a nice busy town. And they had everything up there.

Dunning: When did they actually start tearing it down?

Clausen: Was it in the fifties? I think it was about in the fifties when they tore it down. They were going to build a shopping center up there. Instead of having Hilltop, it was going to be down there. After they tore everything down, they ran out of money or something, and it just stood there. It was empty for, oh, twenty, twenty-five years before they finally built those houses there. That's why I say it's such a crime that they've torn that Elks Building down, because that was a big beautiful building. I bet it would have withstood the earthquake better than some of these new ones would. They still continued to tear down when they had no plans to re-build. I can't see why they need more empty space.

Dunning: It doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

Clausen: It certainly doesn't. And like I say, it isn't that nobody wanted it, because it was in the paper, two or three different ones that wanted to fix it up. Somehow the council or somebody wouldn't let them do it. Or they made it so difficult that they had to drop out or something. I don't know.

Dunning: Have you been involved at all in the politics of Richmond?

Clausen: I have nothing to do with any of that.

Dunning: Any particular political figures that have stood out in your mind as being particularly good or bad for Richmond?

Clausen: No, because some of those that I voted for and thought they were pretty good I didn't like, and some of those I didn't vote for I did like. I have nothing to do with the politics. Maybe I would understand better why they're tearing things down if I did. But just from my

Clausen: point of view, it's a crime, no less. Rather than preserving their historic buildings, we're tearing them down. In fact, the museum building they wanted to tear down too. There was an awful fight to keep that building there. Of course, it's an historical building now; they can't do anything. But they wanted to tear that down before they started remodeling it too.

Dunning: This is the redevelopment agency or the city?

Clausen: The redevelopment agency, I think, is what's behind it all. As soon as they stepped in is when everything started collapsing.

Dunning: Do you see any hope for downtown?

Clausen: No. As a shopping center? No, I don't see that anymore. I don't see how it can be. Hilltop Mall leaves much to be desired. There are so many things they don't have, like grocery stores and drug stores, and a Five and Ten and things like that. I don't even go up there. I have no reason for going up there, because what I want they don't have. If you want clothes or something like that, they have a lot of those stores. But I don't need any clothes, especially not the kind they have. I'm not a teenager anymore.

Dunning: Where do you go for your shopping now?

Clausen: I haven't bought any new clothes in an awfully long time. When I retired I got rid of all my clothes. I was going to get a whole new wardrobe. That's when they were wearing mini-skirts and I couldn't find anything for me, so I wear pants a lot now. But I do have dresses for the summer. The dresses they've got now I don't like. I just don't like the styles.

Grocery shopping--of course, we have San Pablo Avenue, either El Cerrito or San Pablo.

Dunning: Do you go to Safeway, or Lucky's?

Clausen: We haven't got the stores. They're in San Pablo or El Cerrito. I think we do have the ones right up here on Macdonald, though. I think that is considered Richmond. But the others are San Pablo or El Cerrito you have to go to.

Like eating places too. For a fancy place--we don't have any in Richmond. Of course, in Point Richmond they have Point Orient and those places. We have these fast food places or sandwich places. We have no nice restaurants here.

Dunning: From listening to you, it seems like a lot has been lost in terms of convenience.

Clausen: Oh, a lot. They want you to save gas and keep the cars off the road. You used to be able to go uptown and you would park your car and go from one store to the other. Now if you want to go from one store to another, you have to take your car, because they're so far apart. No matter what you want, you have to take a car now. Everything was convenient then.

Richmond as an Historical Place

Dunning: Do you think Richmond is a historical place?

Clausen: I think it should be considered as such. Yes.

Dunning: For what reason?

Clausen: Well, it was here such a long time. Maybe I'm a little prejudiced. I think it's a nice little town. It was. And we had all those big, beautiful buildings uptown,

Clausen: some of which we no longer have. I don't know. Anything that has things so old I think should be considered historic.

Dunning: What about the events that happened here?

Clausen: Oh, I remember we used to have parades. They would make a big deal out of some things. Like the Fourth of July. And I remember there was one Labor Day, they had a parade. They used to have fireworks on the Fourth. Nothing grand, I guess. But everybody went. Oh, and they used to have the circuses on Macdonald Avenue at First Street. I remember they used to have the Chautaquas quite often.

Dunning: What was that?

Clausen: The Chautaquas where they had those great big tents.

Dunning: What are Chautaquas?

Clausen: It's a religious revival or something like that. A revival meeting? I remember the great big tent they used to have down there. And of course, all the organizations used to have their own doings.

Dunning: What were some of the organizations that you recall?

Clausen: The ones that I am most familiar with are the German ones, the Maennerchor, a men's chorus, and the Hermannsohns, a German lodge. They used to have their dances regularly. For a while we had them once a month.

Dunning: You felt connected to your German heritage?

Clausen: No, it wasn't necessarily that. It was just that we went to these different dances. My sister and her friend and I used to go to different dances. They always seemed to get drunk and have their fights and

Clausen: this and that and the other. Then we went to the Germans. As often as we went we never heard of a fight or a feud.

I don't know whether they got drunk or not. But if they did, they held it so that you couldn't tell. We kind of liked that. They had no fussing and fuming and fighting. So then my first husband joined them. And my second husband belonged to them. Of course, the dances were for socializing. They had doings often enough and their meetings that we just kept on with these same people all these years. We still keep up with a lot of them.

After my husband got sick, we quit going to the dances and dinners. We still have friends among them. I still write to some. We used to go visiting, but either somebody or other died, or the ones that are left are sick. So there's not that much visiting. But we do write and call once in a while.

Preservation of Old Buildings

Dunning: Back to the historical aspect of Richmond, are there things that you think should be preserved?

Clausen: The old buildings certainly. I think that they should be, because they are nice buildings. They were built in the days when they weren't just boxes. They were real pretty. That they tear them down--I think there ought to be law against it, myself, especially when there have been those that would like to have preserved them. I just can't understand why they insist on tearing everything down.

Clausen: But no matter how they fight--it seems like there was an awful lot of fighting and fuming trying to get them to change their minds--it goes down anyhow. They do what they want. They always say to vote and change things, but I don't see that it changes anything at all. They do what they please.

Dunning: They--you mean the politicians?

Clausen: Whoever has charge of it, yes. I don't know if it's the redevelopment, or the councilmen, or what it is. But whoever has charge of it, I think, is doing the wrong thing by letting everything get torn down. There seems to be so much bickering among themselves according to the paper that I don't think they know what they're doing, personally, except when it comes to tearing down, they all agree, I guess.

Dunning: It seems like you have very strong feelings. I'm kind of surprised that you haven't voiced them publicly.

Clausen: Well, I can't get up and say it to anybody else, but I can sure feel it myself. Because I don't think it does any good, because they've had so many of them that go to these meetings and object to things. They still get what they want, regardless of what the people say. So I don't even see any sense in going up there and getting high blood pressure and getting mad and all. I have to take care of myself. [laughs]

Dunning: What about all the building of the industrial plants? Has Richmond always had such heavy industry?

Clausen: Yes, it has always been industry. It's always been Standard Oil and the Santa Fe. But all these little companies--in fact, when the Progress Edition used to come out, and I saw all these new companies, I never even heard of them, didn't even know they were in existence. Yet they're all here in Richmond. I don't know where they all are. But they're all here in

Clausen: Richmond, because it was all about this particular area. I know there's that Hensley Park. It looked kind of empty to me, but it seems like there's an awful lot going up in there. That's industry.

Dunning: Now where is Hensley Park?

Clausen: It's up by Point Richmond on Cutting and Garrard I think it is. There seems to be a lot going on up there that you don't see. Then we've got this Petromark that's all those tanks that they want to expand. You see so much in the paper about these things. I don't know where they all are, but I have the clippings. I cut out articles for the Richmond Museum files, so I read all of this. I try to figure out where it is, and I can't always tell.

Dunning: I think that Petromark is almost directly across from the Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline.

Clausen: That's how I figure that, because they want to build underneath there and put some more tanks right there by the park, apparently. I don't know where the original tanks are, but they're somewhere right in the neighborhood.

Dunning: Petromark is right down the end near Ferry Point, before you take the turn to Brickyard Cove.

Clausen: Where the boats used to be? Oh. Because I know they've got Brickyard Cove there, and there's Brickyard Landing and the yacht harbor, and the old quarry. I didn't know exactly where the Petromark was. But I know they want to go underneath the road with a pipe and build right by the park there. I wonder where the other part of it was.

I don't get around very much anymore in town. We used to ride around and just look at all these things.

Clausen: But, now that I'm by myself, it's just no fun doing those things anymore.

Dunning: Do you ever go out to Point Richmond?

Clausen: Not very often. In fact, I went to Santa Rosa three or four months ago, and I saw the new freeway past Point Richmond for the first time. So that's how long it's been since I've been up that way. I didn't even know how to get on to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. I know what it used to be like. But I sure don't know it anymore.

Dunning: What do you feel about the repercussions of living in a town that has so many chemical plants?

Clausen: Every now and then you can sure smell them. But we always did smell Standard Oil once in a while if the wind is blowing just right.

Dunning: On those foggy days.

Clausen: Yes. It hasn't really been that bad lately. I don't smell it that much. Of course, you hear about all these--now, that liquid gold--I didn't even know we had a liquid gold industry here in Richmond. I used the stuff because I liked it. But I didn't know it was produced here in Richmond. Now I find they've got all this toxic waste left from it. We have these things, but we don't even know about them. Apparently there are quite a few, because these toxic wastes that they're trying to clean up, several of them are right here in town.

Dunning: There were quite a few on the list.

Clausen: Yes.

Dunning: I think I'll stop for today, if that's okay with you.

Clausen: Okay.

Dunning: And continue with perhaps one other short interview. Is your sister interested?

Clausen: She said she would rather not because she was only at the cannery one year. That was when it first started. She says no, she'd rather not.

Onsite at the Old Filice and Perrelli Canning Company Building

[Interview 2: February 25, 1985]##
[outdoor ambience, trucks and horns]

Dunning: We're just going to take a very informal walk around to see what it looks like.

Is this where you entered?

Clausen: No, we entered over there. This was the office.

Dunning: This little building?

Clausen: That wasn't there.

Dunning: It looks like there is somebody. Drivers are in here occasionally.

Clausen: Yes, because those two trucks did take off from here.

Dunning: What year did you start working here?
[tape stops]

Clausen: 1949 was the second time. I was here right in the beginning of it, too, sometime in the thirties. Before I even met my husband, I worked here.

Dunning: How did you first get your job?

Clausen: You stood at the gate and waited until they took you in. You would come many days in a row at wee hours of the morning.

All the machinery is gone. Everything looks so empty. Lockers and things were in this first door. They had a big round fountain, and the water came out. We all stood around in a circle there to wash our hands, instead of one waiting for the other. And those were the time clocks, the time cards.

Dunning: And you would enter up these stairs?

Clausen: Up these stairs, and you would go in here. Of course, there was machinery all lined up and down. You couldn't see the walls.

Dunning: What kind of machinery? How was this broken up inside?

Clausen: They had the belts, and the fruit. They dumped the fruit in here, and it went down the belt. We all stood in a row, with, oh, maybe a dozen cans in front of you. You had to put the different sizes in the different cans. What was left went into the machine at the end, the filler. It went round and round, and it had all the cans coming in underneath it. As it went around you just pushed the fruit into it. By then it was supposed to have been all one size, because you had picked out the big ones, the soft ones, the hard ones, the unripe and so forth.

Then you had a big pan on one side and another pan on the other side for the too big, or too sloppy, or too soft fruit.

Dunning: What particular fruits do you remember?

Clausen: The season started with the cherries. Then it worked into apricots and peaches, and ended with pears. And of course, they had fruit cocktail all the time. That was off in a corner. That's where I started, was on the fruit cocktail. They got pineapple in slices. I was at a machine where a metal spike was in the middle, and I put the pineapple slices on this metal piece, and then a boy pulled a lever that smashed it into chunks.

Then I got into the cherry line. It was little tiny cans of fruit cocktail, and you put a cherry in each one. With the bigger cans, you put so many more cherries. Then the next person put the pineapple and the next the grapes. And then the filler would put the pears and peaches.

Dunning: How many people were working here during the height of the season?

Clausen: Hundreds of them. They would have two or three shifts. There were times when it was so busy, one would step out from behind the machine and the next one would step in. You didn't even turn the motor off. That's at the height of the season.

Dunning: Which was what month?

Clausen: July and August, I think, were the biggest months. By September when school started, a lot of them got laid off.

Dunning: Where did most of the fruit come from?

Clausen: Gilroy, as I recall.

Dunning: Do you know anything about the history of the company?

Clausen: No. I know they were down there [Gilroy], and then they moved up here.

Dunning: Did Filice and Perrelli keep a branch down there?

Clausen: Oh, yes. They kept a branch in Gilroy.

Dunning: Did you get to meet the owners?

Clausen: I did. As I said, I worked here right in the beginning, and then I wasn't here for several years. In 1949 I came back again. And Mr. [Joseph] Perrelli recognized me after all those years. He was an awfully nice person. He'd go around and greet everybody, and he would talk to you. If you didn't know he was a boss--[laughs] He was very nice. Oh, yes, he was such a nice person. After all those years, to recognize me again, I was kind of surprised. But he did.

Dunning: Did he try to get to know the employees?

Clausen: Well, he just walked around and mingled among them. He did, more or less, yes. If he could recognize you several years later, he certainly did get to know you.

Dunning: Was it a family business?

Clausen: Yes. The bosses were all family members.

Dunning: Were they visible, the other family members?

Clausen: A lot of them were. A lot of them were even working among us.

Dunning: In terms of the people that worked here, were there men and women, or more women?

Clausen: The women worked on the lines, and the men lifted the boxes and worked the cookers and things like that. There were a lot of men and a lot of women. And of course, the clean-up men, they were all men.

Dunning: Stan Nystrom mentioned that the cannery was one of the few places that women could find work in Richmond.

Clausen: That's about it. The cannery and the cap works were about the only places you could find employment, yes.

Dunning: So you finally found employment here.

Clausen: I did, yes.

Dunning: Did you go through any training program?

Clausen: No, they just put you on the line and told you what to do, and you did it.

Dunning: What was your shift?

Clausen: Mostly days. When you first started, you might have to work nights. Then after you got into it for a couple of years, then you got on days.

Daily Schedule at the Cannery

Dunning: Could you recount for me an ordinary day's schedule, what time you came in?

Clausen: It depended on the season, six o'clock, six-thirty. Sometimes you worked ten, twelve hours. When they had two shifts, you worked decent hours. You came in and you put your things in your locker, and you got your apron on and your gloves and your hat. Of course, you had your uniform on.

Dunning: What was the uniform?

Clausen: They had green uniforms, with the white cuffs and white collar. You had your green hat with a knit top. The back was white knit; the front was a green, the same as the uniform.

Dunning: Was it a dress uniform?

Clausen: A dress. Oh yes, they all wore dresses. You had your big rubber apron and your rubber gloves. Your hair had to be in a net. No loose hair at all. You came in and you got into your place in line.

Dunning: Your uniform, you kept it in your locker?

Clausen: Oh, no. You put it on at home, before you came to work. Of course, if you were going somewhere you might have worn your uniform and brought another dress. But most of the time you just came and went in your uniform.

Dunning: You were responsible for keeping that uniform clean and--?

Clausen: Oh, you had to buy it yourself. They sold everything you needed right here. The dress, hat, apron, gloves, and all the knives and cutters you needed for your job. You bought them and paid for them and took care of them. That was all your own responsibility.

Dunning: Do you remember how much that cost?

Clausen: I think a dollar or two. I think for about five dollars you could buy the whole outfit.

Dunning: Would you get just one uniform or would you have an alternate?

Clausen: You had to have more than one, because you had to change them quite often. The fruit was sloppy, and in spite of the aprons, you still got dirty and wet. You

Clausen: had to have mighty good comfortable shoes because you stood all day in one position. The fruit would come at you from one side and you stood in that position all day long.

You had your ten minute breaks in the morning and afternoon, and a half an hour for lunch. But some of the days were mighty long. It depended on the fruit. When it was there, it had to go through. It had to be done. If it didn't, it spoiled. And they couldn't afford that.

Dunning: What about taking breaks to go to the bathroom?

Clausen: You didn't. It would have to be mighty necessary for you to take time, because that fruit kept going, and if you weren't there in that place there was that much more going through to the next person. Sometimes, if it was necessary, the floor lady would step in and let you go. Otherwise you stayed in your place. You were so busy, you didn't even think about that.

It never was very warm. Your hands were moving constantly, and your feet were generally wet, as you were standing in one spot. You stood on little boards to get up off the cement. The fruit was in running water constantly.

Dunning: This is a gigantic warehouse; I would think it could get pretty chilly, particularly being right on the bay.

Clausen: Yes, it got chilly. They had, I forgot how many rows of belts. At the end of each one was the filler, and then it ran right on into the cooker.

Dunning: Where was the cooker located?

Clausen: I don't know just how far back they would go, because there wasn't very much room between them and the walls.

Clausen: But we had no occasion to go down that way, so I really don't know just how far they went.

Dunning: Do you know what was in this little office?

Clausen: I was just trying to remember whether that office was there. I think it was. That might have been where they weighed the fruit. There might have been a scale there. I think that's what it was.

When I first started, of course, everything was done by hand. I was a cutter the first time. You would get a lug of fruit and a little token with it. Each token represented a box, and it was so much a box. It was piecework. The faster you worked, of course, the more you could make. When you started making pretty good money--"Oh, boy, maybe five dollars, today"--the next day you would come in, the price had been cut to such and such and you didn't make any more than before.

Some of the slow ones, I don't think earned their salt. My sister and one other and I--my supervisor said we were about the fastest ones in there. And we didn't make that much.

Dunning: Do you recall what you would make on an average day?

Clausen: That's why I say when we got to five dollars a day they cut the price.

Dunning: That was pretty good?

Clausen: Oh, that was excellent. But then they would cut the price, so you still weren't getting it. Then when I came back the second time, I was in the canning department. By then, the union had come in and you had a set wage. There was no more piecework.

Improvement with the Union, 1940s

Dunning: This was in 1948?

Clausen: Yes.

Dunning: Which union?

Clausen: The Teamsters. I don't remember the number, but it was the Teamsters Union. There was a Helen Mitchell who worked here. She is the one who got the union. She was a very strong union woman. She really did get a lot of improvements.

Dunning: Can you talk about some of the improvements?

Clausen: For one thing, you got decent wages. Every year we got a five cent an hour raise. One year we went on vacation, and we went back to North Dakota to see my husband's brothers. My husband got sick there and was in the hospital the whole time. When I came home, of course, I came in late. There was a Mr. Shields in the office. I explained the situation to him, because I had come in late. Well, I lost my seniority anyhow, and I got way down to the bottom of the list.

The following year I came in and Miss Mitchell took a look, and said, "Now, how come your number is so low?" I explained it to her. She said, "Did you tell him that your husband was sick?" But Mr. Shields had said, "Wasn't it supposed to be vacation?" And it was, so then he said that I lost my seniority.

So Miss Mitchell said that there were too many times that he was doing things like that. The following year Mr. Shields wasn't there.

Dunning: What was his full name?

Clausen: A Mr. Shields. I don't know what his first name was. She said, "He just did that to too many of them and took their seniority away." I know there were a lot of workers that had been there as long as I was, and they weren't any higher in seniority than I was. So they must have all lost it at sometime or other. But I don't think they had anymore of it after that. Miss Mitchell took care of it.

Dunning: Was she a Richmond person?

Clausen: I really don't know. I saw in the paper sometime later, where she died. I imagine maybe she was from Richmond, because it wouldn't have been in the Richmond paper otherwise.

Dunning: How old was she at the time she was organizing?

Clausen: She was not very old. She wasn't too much older than I was, and I was in my thirties. Of course, when you're younger they all looked old. Like our teachers that were so terribly old, good grief, some of them weren't more than five or six years older than I was. And I thought they were old.

This place looks so awfully big.

Recollections as We Walk Along the Perimeter of the Cannery

Dunning: Maybe we can walk around to the other side. You mentioned that the longer you were here, the earlier you were called to come into work?

Clausen: You only came in during the height of the season when you were new. But as you got up in seniority, they would call you in first for the cherries, and then for

Clausen: the apricots. Each year was a little earlier than the one before, and you would stay a little longer in the season. Around September when the biggest of it was over, then the newer ones all got laid off. The ones that were not so new got laid off after that. Then the longer you were there, the later it was. Most of the time, after you were here many years, you would work right to the end of the season.

Dunning: This section here looks pretty separate. What happened here?

Clausen: This is where the pear machines and belts were, in the front part of this. In the back were the cookers. But the front part was all the pear machines. There was some cutting down in there too. There were a lot of these women who had been here from the very start. They were like a bunch of little kids. They wanted to work in one place and one place only. And they got so aggravated if they had to be changed. I know the floor lady said they are just like a bunch of little kids the way they argued about their place and about what they had to do. It was funny. I was in there a few times, when there was no work in the peach section.

Now this, I have no idea what this is, or whether it was even here at the time. It looks kind of temporary. I bet that wasn't here. But this in the back was all boxes and boxes and boxes stacked up, where all these cars are. Those weren't there. They were all the boxes on pallets.

[outdoor ambience, birds]

Dunning: Where would the fruit be put after it was in cans?

Clausen: Then it was put in boxes and then stacked on the other side in the warehouse.

Dunning: How would they transport it out?

Clausen: Truck, I think, mainly. There were an awful lot of trucks coming and going. Of course, there was a railroad line there, too. So they might have put some on the railroad cars. But I know it was mostly trucks.

Dunning: Are you feeling brave enough to walk around the back of the building?

Clausen: Sure.

Dunning: We'll just look down to make sure we're not falling into any big holes. Let's walk around here.

Clausen: This part we never ever came to. I don't know what was back here, because we were in the front and we didn't roam around. Maybe we weren't even allowed to. I'm not even sure.

Dunning: You can see an old sink there. Can you see that? Next to the second pole.

Clausen: I have no idea what that was.

Dunning: That may have been an area where you washed your hands?

Clausen: It would have been for the men, I imagine. I don't think we got back that far. They drink a lot of Coors here. [on seeing stack of empty cans]

Dunning: When was the last time the cannery was open?

Clausen: I don't really remember when they sold it*. But I know it was Filice and Perrelli, and then it was the California Canners and Growers.

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*The Filice and Perrelli Canning Company was sold to California Canners and Growers on June 1, 1958.

Clausen: This all looks new. This I'm not acquainted with at all.

Dunning: It isn't the greatest area to be around either.

Clausen: There's a whole bag full of cans. Gee, for someone who collected cans, this would be a paradise, wouldn't it? There are even ferns growing underneath there.

Dunning: When we didn't have the tape on, you were talking about the lab.

Clausen: Yes. They had these girls--I was in the lab for a couple of seasons. They came and took a can here and there. They would take it in and count the cherries and count the pineapple and count the grapes, and then weigh the rest of it. They had to do that all day long, and just keep testing constantly. I don't remember where the lab was. On the other side is the office. I was there for a couple of seasons, too.

Dunning: What was your position in the office?

Clausen: I went to night school and took up IBM. So when they installed the IBM machines, I asked if I could go in there, and they gave me a chance. I went in for a couple of seasons, a couple of years, because that was an all-year job. The rest of it was seasonal, but that was permanent.

I don't know what that would have been. I don't know what any of this back here was, or even if it was there. The trucks had to come somewhere. Maybe that's what came back here. Yes, it looks like they might have been here and backed up to that, and then loaded from there. Maybe that's what it is, that they had storage back here where the boxes were stacked.

Dunning: And your sister just worked here one year?

Clausen: One or two. I had two sisters. The three of us worked here the first year. But the youngest sister got appendicitis, and she couldn't come back here. The second sister and I worked here for a year. We were gone for a number of years, and then I came back again.

Dunning: Of the sisters, you're the one that stayed the longest?

Clausen: Yes. I didn't intend to come back again the second time either. But, like I say, when the taxes came due, fifty dollars worth of taxes, we were so broke for the rest of the year. So that's when I came back. I thought one season and that was going to be it. Well, when they called me back again, of course, I came back.

Dunning: How does it feel, seeing it again?

Clausen: It looks so deserted, so sad. There was so much activity here all the time, when I came, of course, during the season. Even when they had their big layoffs it just seemed so deserted seeing half as many people here. Look at the tree.

Dunning: One of the things that strikes me, in this area you'll have all these buildings, old buildings, and there will be a tree, or something beautiful, growing up in the concrete.

Clausen: That's kind of late flowering, though, isn't it?

Dunning: Is that a quince?

Clausen: No, quince, I think, has deeper pink flowers.
[sirens]

This looks so sad with all the broken windows. They used to keep it up real well. I remember one year, they put a new roof on. We had a very unseasonable rain, heavy rain, and we all had to go home. We had papers over our heads for a while, and

Clausen: then they sent us home. The brand new roof leaked. I don't know what it did in the winter, but it had never leaked before in summer.
[sound of birds singing]

My two sisters and I were talking about you coming, and about the things we remembered. We all remembered one specific incident. You know, you got paid by the box. And there was one box that was only half full, and this lady was just determined she was going to get it. This was when we were cutters. She tried to empty her box into something else so she could grab that one before someone else got it. She shook it like this, and she had her knife in her hand, and she jabbed herself in the forehead. She sure made out real well because she spent half an hour getting all doctored up because she stabbed her head. But the fruit was divided among the rest of us to be done because it was the last box for the day.

Dunning: Do you remember other accidents?

Clausen: There were very, very few. They had a nurse all the time. That's the only accident I really remember. The three of us, we all remember that.

Dunning: Was there an industial nurse on?

Clausen: We had a nurse all the time. There was a nurse on duty constantly. If you had a blister even, you could go into the nurse.

Dunning: Do you remember her? Or him? Probably her.

Clausen: No, it was a her. Gee, she was here for the longest time, too. I can picture her, but I can't remember what her name was.

Dunning: The same one?

Clausen: The same one, yes.

Dunning: I wonder if she's still around.

Clausen: I don't know. We knew so few of them away from here. Of course, you got to know them quite well because there were the same ones year after year after year. But away from here, I didn't mix with any of them.

That was the cafeteria.

Dunning: Would you bring your lunch?

Clausen: We all brought our lunches. Then we would sit all around out here. A lot of us would sit right on the end there.
[siren]

Dunning: Did everyone have the same lunch break?

Clausen: Oh, yes. They blew a whistle,and then we would all go off at the same time. Then they blew a whistle and we all went back again. You only had a half an hour for lunch. You couldn't really go in and order and sit down and eat and get back again on time. It wasn't really big enough for all that many people, either. The regular, year-round people, it might have been all right. But for the rest of us, it was just too small a place. There were too many extra people.

It's sad though, when you see all the weeds growing up and the windows broken. It's so deserted. It's just pitiful.

Dunning: Do you have any idea if there are plans for this building?

Clausen: I haven't seen anything in the paper, no. In fact, I didn't even know that these--the trucks that are running in and out here--that they were in here.

Dunning: Do you know why Filice and Perrelli left?

Clausen: Oh, I think they just retired. They were old enough to retire, because they had the business for years in Gilroy. Then they came up here and had it for a lot of years. Some of them died. A couple of the older ones, the original ones, died. I guess the younger ones just got into something else. Some of them just worked on the floor, just like the rest of us.
[crickets or frogs]

Early Black Workers

Dunning: What about the ethnic composition of the people that worked there?

Clausen: When we first started, there was one table of black women. They had them segregated. But after that, I don't remember any black ones at all. And of course, we didn't have that many Chinese or Vietnamese, or anything like that, the Orientals. We didn't have that many then. But I don't remember any of the black women working here after that. And the first year they were segregated.

Dunning: What year was this, or what decade?

Clausen: This was in the thirties.

Dunning: Did you get to know any of them?

Clausen: No, I didn't, because they were off by themselves, and you didn't have time to socialize. In the ten-minute break, you would run to the bathroom, you washed your hands and you went back again. That's about all you had time for. When you got done, you went home. Even with the white ones, I didn't really get to know any of

Clausen: them, except that you saw them year after year, so you knew who they were. And sometimes, one would ride with the other. We kind of shared rides. If you were driving, you would find out where they lived and all. But other than that, no, there was no socializing. There just wasn't that much time.

When you worked those hours, by the time you got home, you were so pooped, you just wanted to eat and go to bed. And you were fortunate if you had somebody to take care of your house and take care of your family and all. I had my mother during that time, so I was lucky.

Dunning: She took care of your daughter.

Clausen: She took care of my family. She took care of the house, and she did the cooking and everything. So I had it easy. But some of the women had to go home and do all of that. That was all right when the days were short, but some of those days were awfully long.

Long Days at the Cannery

Dunning: Would you know when you went in there how long the day was going to be?

Clausen: No.

Dunning: So you couldn't really make plans for the evening?

Clausen: No. You could look and say, "Oh, there's a lot of fruit. We're going to work late today." But you had no idea just exactly how long it would be. If there wasn't as much, you'd figure it was a short day. Well,

Clausen: there could be a delivery or two, and your day would be just as long as if you had figured on it. You never knew just how long it was going to be.

During the height of the season, you knew it was going to be long. When the season was getting shorter, sometimes you would work a few hours; sometimes you would work a few extra hours. During the height of the season, when they had another shift, you knew it wasn't going to be longer then twelve hours or ten hours. Ten hours, I guess it was. Where there was one shift, it might have been twelve, but if there were two shifts, I think it was ten. That's where one would step out and the other would step in without turning the motors off. [birds singing]

Dunning: Were there many Italians working here?

Clausen: Yes, there were quite a few. At first especially. Then like I say, these little old ladies that were so childish, those were the original ones. They were mostly all the Italians. But they had been working here for so many years, I guess they felt that they should have what they wanted.

Dunning: It was probably like their little family.

Clausen: I remember there was a Mrs. Goularte, from Pinole. There's a Goularte councilman, now. I don't know if it's her son, or if it's related or not. I remember her name. Then there was another one that came with her from Pinole. She had a stroke while she was working. After that, anyone over sixty-five, they didn't let them work anymore.

Dunning: Before that, were there a number of women who were older?

Clausen: Yes. These two came together. That one, I can't remember her name. But I can picture her, too. I can still see her laying on the floor where she collapsed. That was the first time I had ever seen anything like that.

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Dunning: How about Hispanic workers?

Clausen: I don't know about that. There was one Mexican girl I worked with for several years. She and I worked side by side. I can't even think of her name, Adeline something. I know there were some of those, too. Like I say, if you didn't know them, they were all alike. You didn't really have a lot of time to go around asking names and things. You were just busy. And when you weren't, you were glad to get home a little early.

If you had an eight-hour day, it felt like you were playing hookey; it was so short. Eight-hour days were very rare. Especially during the height of the season, they were absolutely nil.

Dunning: How many days a week would you work?

Clausen: Six days. If it was real busy, you might even have to come in on a Sunday, because when the fruit was there, it had to be done.

Dunning: Before the union, was there any such thing as bonuses, or overtime?

Clausen: No, that was another thing the union got. We did get overtime. There was no such thing in the earlier days.

Dunning: Did the Filice and Perrelli family have trouble with the idea of the union?

Clausen: I wasn't here at the time. That was during the time between my first and second time. When I came back the second time, it was already well under way.

Dunning: The Teamsters Union?

Clausen: The Teamsters.

Dunning: Was this in the early forties, about? You came back in '48.

Clausen: About '49. We bought the house in '48, but it was in '49 when I came back the second time. By then the union was already well taken care of.

Dunning: Did you join immediately?

Clausen: Oh, yes; you had to. I don't remember what they charged or what you paid per month. I've still got my little book. I don't think it says how much you paid, just that you had paid.

Dunning: Well, is there anything else as we stand here?

Clausen: I don't know too much except what went on right under my nose. In fact, there was one time when we were working on a Sunday, and when we went in for break, one girl said, "Such carryings on." Right along side of me a couple were carrying on pretty well. I hadn't even seen it. I concentrated so hard on my work, I didn't even see it going on until they mentioned it at break time.

Dunning: How difficult was it to get advances in your position?

Clausen: You didn't really get any advances. As you stayed longer, you came in earlier and you stayed later.

Dunning: You would have the same job, though.

Clausen: It would be the same job, yes. It would be the same thing. Except that then I went into the lab. Some of those that were hired the same time I was, they got to be floor ladies. But I preferred the lab. I didn't want the floor lady job. Like I say, I was there for two years, and then I got my IBM job in the office for a couple more years. Then I left, and that was it.

Dunning: What made you leave?
[tape stops] [Mrs. Clausen told of her departure from the cannery. She asked that the story remain confidential.]

Post Cannery Work

Dunning: We're going back now to after the time you left the cannery.

Clausen: I worked in a bakery for a while. So many times, some of the workers would come in and I kind of kept up with things. But then after I left the bakery, I lost track of them too. So I have no idea what was going on after that.

Dunning: Anything else you would like to add?

Clausen: No. [tapes stops] [Mrs. Clausen and Judith Dunning have entered the vacant building]

A Walk Inside the Deserted Building

Clausen: The table used to be on the other side, and then down on the end is where the fillers were. Behind that were the cookers. And I don't know what went behind that.

Clausen: We got as far as the cookers and that was all I could see. We couldn't see behind them. This looks like a haven for owls and birds. There used to be some sparrows that flew in and out once in a while. But we never had owls and doves, not that I ever saw.

The clock was in this circle with the plug behind it. I don't remember that up there. Maybe it was there, but I never noticed it. We had no reason to look up there.

Dunning: Was there any kind of loudspeaker system?

Clausen: No. There might have been a loudspeaker for the warehouse, but not for us. But see all the lights? That's what we went by. There are only those side lights in here. There weren't any skylights.

Now, that little building was there. I think that is where they did the weighing. They weighed the boxes as they came in. That looks like a hammer and a claw on the side there.

Dunning: It's probably where they hung tools when the California Canners and Growers were here.

Clausen: There were mechanics constantly running around. I remember one time there was a guy working up above here for something, and his overalls got stuck in the machinery. And he ripped them off. Otherwise he would have gone right through it.

Dunning: Was he okay?

Clausen: He was okay, but he was sure shaken. That was the only time I ever saw an accident, except the lady that jabbed herself in the head.
[tape stops]

Dunning: Are those the catwalks?

Clausen: Yes, they walked on the catwalks because they were forever servicing the belts. I was young and healthy when I worked at the cannery. I could go home and do things. I remember one Saturday my husband got a load of dirt, and I helped him take that in the backyard and all, after I had worked all day.

I guess we have to go out the same way. I would never have dreamed of coming here alone.

Dunning: It's probably easier to remember here than sitting in your living room.

Clausen: Even being inside helps. From outside it looked different. From inside I could tell where the different things were, whereas just looking in, I couldn't. I can still see all those machines and the people all in a row.

[End of interview]

Transcriber and Final Typist: David Pollock

APPENDICES

Richmond Union High School

Richmond, California

This Certifies that

Marguerite Viola Lexon

has completed a Course of Study prescribed for this School and is awarded this Diploma

Given at Richmond, California this thirteenth day of December nineteen hundred and twenty-nine

B X Tucker
PRINCIPAL

Aubrey Wilson
PRESIDENT HIGH SCHOOL BOARD

W. L. Welles
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. CARLISLE & CO. SAN FRANCISCO

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

of the

RICHMOND UNION HIGH SCHOOL

DECEMBER CLASS, 1929

High School Auditorium

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1929

Graduates

John Alexander Abbay
Louis D. Accamazzo
Lillian Elaine Andrade
Helmer N. Andresen
Edwin Charles Axelson, Jr.
Juel Blanch Bedford
Coy Dolores Bethards
Richard Bonini
Lester David Bottom
Robert Julian Bundrick
Elkes Lillian Carpenter
Helen Carol Chase
Henry Lee Conn
Robert Raymond Cruchoff
Lloyd Stauffer Dicely
Roger John Douvres
Ollie Mae Ellison
Ida Marcia Engelking
Clifford Thomas Fallon, Jr.
Dave James Flynn
Claude Vernon Ford
Carin Margareta Forssel
Florence Evelyn Frank
Walter Ted Freeman
Henry Edward Gillan
Irene Katheryne Gilmore
Ila Irene Giovanini
Howard William Goldsworthy
Dorothy Winifred Hall
Eldon Leroy Hall
Pearcy Jackson
Eldred Jewell
Eleanor Marie Johnson
Philip Johnson
Allah P. Joyner, Jr.
Geraldine Mae King
Gail Kirchmaier
Mary Ann Kosinski
Clara Marie Larsen
Frank Leonetti
Marguerite Viola Lexon *
Edna Marie Logan
James Patrick Logan
Myron M. Loveless
Catherine Agnes Lyons
Daniel F. McCurdy
Margaret Elizabeth McIntyre
Robinson McKee
Clarence Oswald Mathews
Clifford Marlin Melrose
Elaine Charlotte Mueller
Gaston Pierre Muylle
Arthur Edwin Neckel
Corinne Frances Nesbitt
Walter I. Nicolaysen
George G. Page
Henry L. Page
Frances Marie Perricone
Donald James Pierce
Mildred Irene Pierini
Helen Pirie
John Pleich
Thelma Rainoldi
Roy Sakai
Henry Sauer
Helen Frances Scofield
Marion M. Snodgrass
Paula Katheryn Stark
Irwin Francis Stewart
George Burwell Stone
Bernice Anna Sullivan
Lawrence LeRoy Theis
Sidney Sylvester Thomasson
Elouise Ruth Tiller
Elizabeth Geniveive Todd
Carolyn Helen Turkovich
Oliver Putnam Upham
Mary Jean Vieira
Donna Gene Wilson
John C. Wunderlich

Graduating With Honors

Warren Allston Brown, Jr.
Viola Elnorah Coudyser
Wilda Marie Eby
Jack Gordon Hosmer
Virginia Louise Lee
Alberta E. McCormac
Meredith Walter Morgan, Jr.
Robert Edward Peters
Jennie Marie Pleich
Addie E. Ramey
Hilda Marie Smersfelt
Edith Teese
Vivian Eleanor Vaughan
Elizabeth Minna Willer

Program

American Legion ..... Parker

Overture "The Golden Dragon" ..... King
HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

Invocation .... Rev. Kenneth B. Wallace, Pastor
First Baptist Church

Clarinet Duet "Merriment Polka" .....
..... George D. Bernard
IDA ENGELKING, MEREDITH MORGAN

In the Garden of Tomorrow ..... Jessie Deppen
SENIOR DOUBLE QUARTETTE
Helen Scofield, Virginia Lee, Elkes Carpenter, Elouise Tiller, Claude Ford, John Pleich, Clifford Fallon, Louis Accamazzo
Accompanied by VIVIAN VAUGHAN

Student Speakers

Conservation of California Resources .....
..... WARREN BROWN

Peace—The Challenge of the Twentieth Century....
..... MEREDITH MORGAN

Presentation of December Class of 1929 .....
..... B. X. Tucker

Presentation of Diplomas ..... Aubrey Wilson

Presentation of Class Gift .....
..... Claude Ford, President

Class Songs

Exit March "Yellow Stone Trail" ..... King
High School Orchestra, GEORGE MORRIS, DIRECTOR

CLASS OF SERVICE
This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.

WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

1201

SYMBOLS
DL = Day Letter
NL = Night Letter
LT = International Letter Telegram

The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

FV130

1959 JUN 12 PM 8 44

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MRS MARGUERITE CLAUSEN =

CAMP CURRY YOSEMITE NATL PARK CALIF =

FOLLOWING WIRE RECEIVED FROM FILICE AND PERRELLLI: PLEASE
REPORT TO WORK SATURDAY JUNE 15TH 730AM =

MELVA ==

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THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

Judith K. Dunning

Interviewer/Editor Regional Oral History Office since 1982.
Specialty in community and labor history.
Project Director, "On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California."

Previous oral history projects: Three Generations of Italian Women in Boston's North End; World War I and II shipyard workers at the Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston; and Textile mill workers in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Photography exhibitions: "Lowell: A Community of Workers," Lowell, MA 1981-1984 (travelling).
Fishermen by Trade: On San Francisco Bay with the Ghio Brothers" Richmond Museum, 1988.

Play: "Boomtown" based on the oral histories of shipyard workers, produced by San Francisco Tale Spinners Theater, 1989.

Member Richmond Arts Commission, 1988-1990.

Currently adapting Richmond community oral histories into large print books for California adult literacy programs.