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The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Madi Bacon

MUSICIAN, EDUCATOR, MOUNTAINEER

With Introductions by
Ernst Bacon
Mary Lins
William Duncan Allen
Jules Eichorn

An Interview Conducted by
Janet G. Harris
1985-1987

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BACON, Madi (1906-)

Choral conductor

Musician, Educator, Mountaineer, 1989, xii, 236 pp.

Chicago: family background; music training; Hull House, art assistant, 1922; evolving a theory of teaching voice; MA, Univ. of Chicago; music school director, Central YMCA College/Roosevelt Univ., 1941-1946. UC Berkeley: summer session, 1946; Extension music program, and chorus, 1948-1959; building a home. San Francisco Boys Chorus: beginnings; music camp and Sunday vespers; auditions; performances with Opera and Symphony; finances; individuals; repertoire. Sierra Club: high trips, 1939-1950; leaders. Comments on women in conducting, Calvin Simmons, Ernst Bacon, Albert Elkus, Kurt Herbert Adler, and others.

Introductions by Ernst Bacon, Mary Lins, William Duncan Allen, and Jules Eichorn,

Interviewed 1985-1987 by Janet G. Harris

Acknowledgments

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Brockenbrough S. and Diana W. L. Allen
Joyce and Stephen S. Arnon, M.D.
Alfons R. Bacon, M. D. and Dorothy Bacon
Frank and Ann-Liv Bacon
Caroline and Chuck Bacon
William C. Balch
Mr. and Mrs. Rainer F. Baldauf
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Baldwin, Jr.
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Ernst Weber

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INTRODUCTION by Ernst Bacon

"A Musician and Sister Observed"

The arrival on the scene of Madi Bacon fulfilled my mother's long hope for a daughter after she had borne four sons, one of whom died in infancy. My mother spared no effort to educate her daughter in her early years and later sent her to the famous Francis Parker School which was located near our Chicago home. Here Madi's quick enthusiasm, sociability, and diverse interests and talents found ample scope. She revealed a vitality that threaded throughout her life and persists today in her old age. Later, she devoted serious study to piano and singing, also to foreign languages, apart from her other academic pursuits.

Her hospitable and handsomely planned Berkeley home has long been a center for music-making, learning, and sociability for interesting, diverse people. Loneliness would seem to be the lot of many single people of older years living alone, but Madi will have less of it than most. Her many friends and students are constant visitors, while she, in turn, cultivates them and forms new bonds naturally as a matter of temperament. Besides, she is an avid reader.

Others may name her accomplishments in detail. I shall recite only the most visible points. As a choral conductor, America has to date produced no superior among women. Better known yes, but not of higher standard and style. I estimate a leader in ratio to his or her given circumstances. With slender means, limited rehearsal time and instrumental support, makeshift rehearsal space, and the pressure to raise funds to support her work, Madi created the Elizabethan Madrigalists of Chicago, the Winnetka Mixed Chorus, the Roosevelt College Chorus, the University of California Extension Chorus, and the San Francisco Boys Chorus (SFBC). She directed the SFBC for twenty-five years and their performances won high respect in the East and subsequently abroad.

Madi was an administrator at Chicago YMCA College (later Roosevelt University) and the University of California Extension Division. Her policy in building a staff was to favor real achievement or ability over the customary paper credentials. As would be expected, her adversaries invariably became noisier than her adherents, providing her a lesson in politics. Her camp for the SFBC was an ideal summer school where work and play, music and athletics, the fine and the rugged, were skillfully balanced in an atmosphere which encouraged good conduct and morality.

As an athlete, Madi may have had few women rivals: an excellent swimmer, diver, baseball, soccer, basketball and tennis player, good in all track events, clever at virtually any given bodily challenge. Her mountaineering was fortunately more than a sport. She worshipped the beauty of all high country, sometimes touring alone for days, enjoying dangers, but not courting them, revelling in the wilderness. She loathed the insolent intrusion of the gas engine in the areas beyond habitations.

Although not herself a singer, Madi became an impressive teacher of singing. She is as frank as she is knowledgeable. Nothing in diction, language, attitude, breath control, vocal technique or taste ever escapes her. And she is not one to let well enough alone. All must improve. Students leave her after a lesson almost invariably in high spirits. She has made them outdo themselves, and they feel they must keep up that momentum.

Versatility such as my sister has does have its own price; yet it leads to a rounding out of personality which is, in itself, a notable human accomplishment. There comes a time when to be is no less than to do. Were I asked what is Madi's greatest gift to her fellow travellers old or young, I would say it is more than just music, or instruction, or even friendship. It is the gift of "worthwhileness."

Ernst Bacon
Composer

June 1988
Orinda, California

INTRODUCTION by Mary Lins

Madi, A Passionate Pilgrim

Based on my forty years of involvement in education, teacher training and supervision, I believe I can state with confidence that Madi Bacon is both an inspired and inspiring teacher. She has so finely tuned her instrument--the art of teaching--that she is able to elicit, develop, and strengthen talents her students did not even realize they possessed. This is a factual statement, not a supposition, for it is based on the innumerable hours I have spent observing her "create" a singer. Her patience, knowledge, wisdom, and vision, all converge to create the perfect prototype of the ideal teacher. Even her own body language conveys the depth of her commitment to produce a singer whether her student is old or young, amateur or professional. Through the many techniques she uses, she opens the mystery of music for students.

I find my assignment to write about Madi as a teacher to be limiting. She is an amazing and impressive woman, almost bigger than life itself. So much so that she would have been an ideal and delightful fellow traveller to accompany those pilgrims who march through the pages of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. What fun Chaucer would have had in describing this particular pilgrim! Would that I had his skills to do justice to this many faceted individual who so thoroughly enjoys life and all it has to offer. She is no saint nor would Chaucer have portrayed her as such. I am of the belief that Chaucer found little of interest in saints, for both his portrayal of the clerk of Oxenford, saintly as he is ("But al be that he was a philosophre, Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre") and the nun ("Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne") results in two very real human beings.

Madi possesses the two traits of flavor and character that Chaucer used to perfection in making his pilgrims come alive. I think his portrait of Madi might well have included a touch of the robust Wife of Bath for, like Madi, this good matron knew how to enjoy life and took a broad, compassionate, and very realistic view of the fortunate or unfortunate events of life. Madi has the same resilience. Chaucer would have extolled Madi's warmth and generosity, her determination (Indeed, she can be stubborn!), her vitality, her pleasure and enjoyment of the little things of life. He would have loved her intriguing mixture of old and new world backgrounds which has resulted in her worldwide outlook. She would never be described as provincial. Again, these characteristics have colored and enhanced her teaching. She is never a dull teacher or companion!

A list of Madi's interests would have to include travel (an avocation of all pilgrims), languages, sports, tennis (She is devoted to this particular activity.), camping, books, nature in every form, Chinese checkers (Ask any friend or acquaintance. He will assert that she is a wicked and determined player.),

provocative conversations, games of any kind, challenges (Unlimited!), gardening, political, philosophic and environmental issues or ideas, and, of course, music and teaching, both major parts of her life.

Madi has a genuine love of and interest in people. This is an honest love, not a soft or sentimental thing; a love tempered by a tolerance that allows her to accept people as they are with all their virtues, faults and foibles. This love of people extends to and through her teaching. Her students know that she cares not only about the quality of their singing, but about them personally. They join her ever-increasing circle of friends.

As one of her friends and fellow teachers, I am greatly honored to have been invited to pay tribute to this remarkable woman. Lacking Chaucer's talents, I can only hope that these few comments will in some small way portray all the humor, zest, integrity, and stubbornness (a good quality) that mark her pilgrimage through life and that they will make clear how she has enriched the lives of those who know and love her.

Finally, I can think of no greater tribute to pay Madi or to depict the true essence of her being than to conclude this short biographical sketch by paraphrasing Chaucer's lovely poignant lines--"And gladly wolde she learne, and gladly teche."

Mary Lins
Educator

June 1988
Berkeley, California

INTRODUCTION by William Duncan Allen

"Working with Madi"

Meeting Madi Bacon a few years after I came to live in the Bay Area in 1953 altered my life in an unforeseen way. I attended a concert by the Junior Bach Festival at the Florence Schwimley Theater in Berkeley. Included in the program was a performance by the San Francisco Boys Chorus (SFBC). Shortly thereafter, I attended an affair presented by the Music Teachers' Association of California. Again a group from the San Francisco Boys Chorus sang under the direction of Madi Bacon. This time I went back stage to speak with Miss Bacon and congratulate her.

In her inimitable Baconian way, she insisted upon knowing who I was. After we had talked for awhile, she asked for my phone number saying that I was just the kind of person she needed as a counselor at her summer music camp. I had never attended a summer camp in my life and disagreed with her judgment. However, Madi persuaded me to come to a two week summer session at a camp on the Peninsula. There I met Margaret Fahrner and her husband who were the camp directors and Tirza Malkoff, founder and music director of the Junior Bach Festival. I also worked with Dorothy Durr and Nancy Harvie. I spent six summers as a camp counselor. Madi is a persuasive lady!

At summer camp, all the counselors agreed that the song, "Anything you can do, I can do better," might well have been inspired by Madi Bacon. She was a fine swimmer and an excellent tennis player. She was knowledgeable about the outdoors, having hiked extensively in this country and in Europe. And, of course, she was a superb musician.

My association with the SFBC continued in the winter. I was an accompanist in many concerts. In 1958, I persuaded my friend Leontyne Price to sing a salon concert for the benefit of the San Francisco Boys Chorus in the home of Police Commissioner and Mrs. Paul Bissinger. There I had the honor of accompanying the soprano and the chorus in her final number, "Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley."

Madi is a remarkable person as her friends, pupils, and alumni members of the San Francisco Boys Chorus will agree. She has been an inspiration to many boys, some of whom have gone on to become illustrious musicians. Alumnus Calvin Simmons rose to great heights before his tragic death. We mourn our loss; he was destined to become one of the world's finest conductors.

Madi has touched many lives. I am happy to have met her and value her continued friendship.

William Duncan Allen
Musician and Critic

September 1988
Richmond, California

INTRODUCTION by Jules M. Eichorn

"Mountains and Music with Madi"

To know Madi Bacon is to become part of her life. It may be through music, mountains, tennis, or some other activity she is involved with, but one inevitably discovers true warmth, extraordinary energy, and demonstrated ability. In a variation of the old adage, many may have tried, but few have been able to keep up with her exuberance, drive, versatility, and accomplishment.

Time spent with Madi in the mountains, particularly in the Sierra Nevada on Sierra Club High Trips provides memorable experiences. I remember vividly one trip we made to Milestone Mountain. The High Trip camp was some distance from our destination, so very little lingering was advisable. Getting up early, about four in the morning, we shared a quick breakfast and then gathered dry lunch materials: hardtack, cheese, dried fruit, and a piece of chocolate, and set off. Since we were camped within sight of the Milestone, we did not need a compass, but did carry a map and the inevitable rain gear valuable in afternoon, mountain thunder showers.

There is no trail to Milestone Mountain as there is to the summit of Mt. Whitney, but our stalking and scrambling over endless ascending talus piles gradually led us closer and closer to the summit. As the terrain slowly fell below us, the views of the surrounding sea of peaks became more wonderfully defined. The climb became a bit more demanding as we approached the summit blocks. A few short pitches and there we were -- on top! Then a quick embrace accented, once more, a beautiful mountain experience for the two of us. Madi's excitement at having won the Milestone was contagious; I could see the wondrous radiance in her face and share her joy in having reached the summit.

The descent was uneventful except for an invigorating dip in one of the shallow lakes followed by a few moments of lying in the caressing rays of the sun to dry off. At the evening campfire, Madi recounted the highlights of our day's activity. She is an enthralling story teller and has a real sense of drama. Her narrative wrapped up one of the most delightful experiences I have ever enjoyed in the Sierra.

I have been fortunate to share mountain experiences with Madi and musical ones as well. I sang with the University of California Extension Chorus under Madi's direction. Madi always conducted with great understanding of the score. Initially, conductor and singers were mutually new to one another, but she never was daunted by any problems this may have caused. The singers quickly realized that she was a most special person and able director. The nucleus of the chorus was composed of a few

Sierra Club friends dedicated to music and ultimately to Madi. As the chorus developed, the Bay Area musical community began to appreciate their potential; Madi and her singers found an increasingly higher place on the ladder of musical acknowledgement and success. At last, when the chorus lost its University financial support and was obliged to disband, it was one of the finest choruses on the West Coast, largely as a result of the talent, drive, and dedication of Madi Bacon.

Jules M. Eichorn
Musician and Mountaineer

August 1988
Redwood City, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Madi Bacon, founder and director of the renowned San Francisco Boys Chorus, had been recommended over the years by many University of California faculty members and Bay Area community leaders as a proper subject for an oral history. Her independence, in a time when few women created careers, built houses, travelled extensively, and established lasting musical institutions, identified her as someone whose memories should be preserved.

It was a visit in 1985 to the Regional Oral History Office by Dr. Stephen Arnon of the California State Department of Public Health that brought the Madi Bacon oral history from wish to reality. Stephen Arnon remembered Madi's exuberance and sense of fun from the Sierra Club high trips he took with his parents when Madi made the campfires memorable. Working with a Friends of Madi Bacon group, Dr. Arnon spearheaded the task of collecting the necessary funds to get the oral history underway. Four years later, to finish the fund raising effort, Mary Lins, Madi's longtime neighbor, friend, and confidant took command. Mary Lins taught for many years in the San Francisco school system and was vice principal of Lowell High School. She is currently a member of the board of directors of the San Francisco Boys Chorus and a diligent volunteer for Children's Hospital. Donations from generous individuals who had known Madi as a teacher, neighbor, friend, and inspiration assured the completion of the work.

The interviewing began in December 1985 and continued through February 1987, widely spaced due to Madi's schedule of work and travel.

Our interview sessions were scheduled for mornings on which Madi did not have any voice students. We settled on ten o'clock as a convenient hour because Madi wished to be sure that nothing but bad weather interfered with her daily game of tennis. One sunny morning, she had played tennis and mowed the lawn before I arrived ready to put her memory to work.

We met in Madi's airy, redwood and glass house, especially designed for her by distinguished architect Robert Ratcliff for musical presentations. Two grand pianos dominate the living room. Long, custom-designed couches face each other. Her home is full of books and memorabilia of her travels and of the triumphs of the various musical organizations she has directed. A cluttered bulletin board beside the table/desk contains awards, notes from friends, and reminders of appointments. A handsome bust of her brother Ernst Bacon sits on a table near the pianos.

I had the opportunity to observe how well the house functions for musical performances when I was invited to a recital given by one of

Madi's students. At least thirty of us were entertained with music and refreshments in her ample living room.

For the interviews, we sat facing each other at the unusual custom built table-desk which Madi describes in the interview. While we talked, we could admire the trees and glimpse some of the panoramic view which existed when she bought the lot in 1946. Our sessions were informal with a stop for tea while I changed the tape midway through our two-hour meetings.

During the seven interviews, Madi discussed her aristocratic Austrian mother and her fiercely independent father who was a pioneer obstetrician/gynecologist. She talked lovingly about her talented older brothers who insisted on competence in sports from their kid sister. She did not disappoint them. She recalls her tutoring by her mother and her early education at the progressive Francis Parker School in Chicago. Her memories are crisp and class room experiences and personalities come alive.

Madi's devotion to her talented mother is obvious in her interview as is her determination to achieve her independence. She describes her multiple jobs as chorus director and piano teacher which enabled her to maintain her own independence first in Chicago and then in the Bay Area.

Always acutely aware of the world around her, Madi remembers incidents which illustrate the mood of Chicago during World War I. She recounts for us her visit to her Austrian relatives after the war was over and in a few aptly told anecdotes sums up the mood of the times and the suffering of one representative family.

Her love of the outdoors and her ability to take care of herself is amply illustrated. In addition, her lifelong devotion to the camp movement and the well-being of children recurs throughout her memories. She is equally at home on a mountain top, conducting Sunday vesper services at SFBC camp, or teaching some non-swimmer to forget his fear.

Insights into the life of the Bay Area in the late twenties are found when Madi records her two years of study in San Francisco and her introduction to the leading cultural and conservation leaders of the time.

In Chicago, she founded and directed the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers and led them to community acclaim. She built the music program at YMCA College later known as Roosevelt University. There she started to develop her skills as an administrator, training which served her well when she was called upon to head the University of California Extension Music Division right after the second World War. With her usual energy and ingenuity, she found practice studios, pianos, and established courses for the community as well as the returning GIs.

Her work with the San Francisco Boys Chorus started as a adjunct to her work at the University, but became a twenty-five year mission to

bring music to young boys and to provide a community resource for the San Francisco Opera and symphony. Marie Zeller, one of the original founding members of SFBC, says of her forty-year-old son that, "His face still lights up when Madi's name is mentioned." Madi has the ability to inspire, amuse, and energize. She remains a Pied Piper who leads youngsters to an appreciation for music, good sportsmanship, the quest for excellence, and a deep and abiding interest in the well-being of one's fellow man.

Upon receiving the lightly-edited transcript of her interviews, Madi went over it carefully and made extensive corrections and revisions. She added material about her family, her achievements in Chicago, and her work with the University of California Extension Division. No tape guide is included with this interview because her additions were numerous and the editor was forced to rearrange material to avoid repetition and afford clarity.

Madi's memory is extraordinarily clear. She is a good story teller and delights in anecdotes which give color and informality to the interview. She spoke openly and sometimes with considerable emotion. However, on review, she was dissatisfied with her informal speech and insisted on some changes. The flavor of her vivacious personality still comes through even though she altered some of her unguarded responses.

During a rich life in which she has accepted many challenges, she has met many significant figures in the arts, government, and conservation. In the section in which she discusses her experiences with leaders of the Sierra Club, she mentions many people who are themselves the subjects of oral histories conducted by the Regional Oral History Office and the Sierra Club History Committee. To minimize the number of footnotes, I have not included separate references. A list of Sierra Club interviewees accompanies this volume.

Four introductions are included in this volume. The first, by composer Ernst Bacon, is a graceful tribute to a younger sister and distinguished musician by an older brother who has loomed large in Madi's life. Mary Lins writes the second introduction concerning Madi's skills as a teacher and friend. Mary herself is a witty and generous woman, a friend of equal stature with Madi.

William Duncan Allen, musician and critic, recalls Madi's drive and impetuous but sound judgment of people as he relates his introduction to Madi's sphere and his role in organizing the San Francisco Boys Chorus camp.

The final introduction by Jules Eichorn, another musician and mountaineer, provides insight into Madi as a choral conductor and as a vigorous hiker and enthusiastic participant in mountain climbing adventures. All four of these people reflect the respect and admiration which prompted the suggestion that Madi's experiences should be recorded and preserved by the Regional Oral History Office.

I am particularly grateful to Jim Kantor, retired University Archivist, for his review of the manuscript. His intimate knowledge of the University of California illuminated many references.

Madi's memoir cannot be complete. At an age when many of us require the care of others, Madi continues to serve. She has been instrumental in the fight to get the Berkeley City Council to approve a law regulating the height of trees in order to preserve views in the Berkeley hills. She has coached the chorus for the Christmas Revels for two years helping to bring an East Coast tradition to the West Coast. She continues to give voice lessons. Within the last year she taught at a college in Nicaragua. Disturbed by the lack of supplies and equipment she found there, she has organized a campaign to ship goods to the college and is busy sorting and packing useful items. Given her vitality and generous spirit, I am sure that she will continue to add to her accomplishments and her host of friends and admirers.

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Janet G. Harris, Interviewer/Editor

August 1989
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Maria Helena Bacon (Madi Bacon)
birth certificate only

Date of birth 2/15/06 Place of birth Chicago

Father's full name Charles Sumner Bacon

Birthplace Spring Prairie, Wisconsin

Occupation Doctor of medicine

Mother's full name Marie Franciscia Emilie von Rosthorn

Birthplace Vienna, Austria

Occupation mother and housewife

Where did you grow up? Chicago

Present community Berkeley

Education PhB, M.A. Un. of Chicago

Occupation(s) Conductor, Musician, Educator

Special interests or activities Musical, camping, sports,
mountains, languages, travel, other cultures.

Founder of S.F. Boys Chorus, Madi Bacon, dies in Berkeley

FROM STAFF REPORTS

BERKELEY — Madi Bacon, founder of the San Francisco Boys Chorus and a longtime Bay Area music instructor, died Jan. 10 in her Berkeley home. She was 94.

Now in its 33rd year, the Boys Chorus performs in San Francisco Opera productions and at San Francisco Giants games. The group also holds concerts twice a year. Miss Bacon served as the Boys Chorus conductor and music director until 1979.

The group was the nation's first boys' repertoire chorus and rapidly expanded under Miss Bacon's direction from an initial 25 members to more than 100. The Boys Chorus also included a summer camp that intertwined music, athletics and art.

Born in Chicago in 1906,

Miss Bacon was a graduate of the University of Chicago.

In 1946 Miss Bacon took a position at the University of California, Berkeley, heading the Music Extension Division. She held the position for eight years, then became conductor for the Extension Chorus.

Taught conducting

She also taught conducting at Holy Names College in Oakland and was a frequent lecturer and board member for many local music organizations.

Known for fostering talent among her pupils, Miss Bacon is also remembered for arranging the purchase of UC Berkeley's first piano for its practice studios. She also solicited funds to purchase music and keyboards for students in Nicaragua.

An accomplished mountaineer, Miss Bacon was a member of the Sierra Club and a frequent participant in its hikes in the Sierra Nevada.

Miss Bacon is survived by nieces, nephews, friends and former students. She was preceded in death by her parents and four brothers. Brother Ernst Bacon was a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and pianist who lived in San Francisco.

Memorial concert

A memorial concert will be held Feb. 24 at 8 p.m. Calvary Presbyterian Church, 2515 Fillmore St., San Francisco.

Donations in Miss Bacon's memory may be made to the Ernst Bacon Society at 6 Malverna Road, Roslindale, MA 02131.

Oakland Tribune 23 2001

FAMILY AND EARLY EDUCATION

von Rosthorn Relatives

Harris: Your birth name was Maria Helena Bacon, but you're known as Madi. How did you come to be called Madi?

Bacon: Madi is a nickname which my mother gave me. It means "little girl" in German, from the word Madchen, and usually it's kind of a pet name, like "dear little girl." In Austria, children who are called Madi, when they grow up, are not called Madi usually. But in America, growing up in Chicago as I did, everybody knew me as Madi and Madi Bacon is euphonious, short and brief, and good on a movie house marquee in Joliet, Illinois where Eugenie Ham, soprano, and Madi Bacon, pianist, gave a concert in 1927. I use Madi for my passport and on my bank account.

Harris: You don't think of yourself as Maria Helena?

Bacon: No.

Harris: Your mother chose the name?

Bacon: My mother chose the name. My father wanted her name in my name, which is the Marie. The Helena comes from my mother's sister, Helene von Rosthorn, from Vienna, whom we adored and worshiped.

Harris: Your mother came from Vienna?

Bacon: Yes.

Harris: Can you tell me something about her family?

Bacon: Oh, yes. My mother has a very interesting heritage. Her mother was Baronin Mandorf, MANDORF [Spells name out]. Her grandmother belonged to the famous Esterhazy family which owned great lands in Austria-Hungary. There is still an Esterhazy castle on the edge of Austria and Hungary now. The Esterhazys were the patrons of Haydn and Schubert.

In those days, a good musician had to have his patron. It would be a prince or a count, someone with means and property. A composer would write

instrumental music in various combinations often dedicated to the patron.

Harris: So your mother had what you might term an aristocratic upbringing in Vienna?

Bacon: Oh, yes. She was a child in Vienna, but when her father died, her mother moved to their Hungarian country estate. Many peasants worked the land and lived on the estate. The seven children were educated at home by tutors, chief of whom was Adolf Lorenz, father of Konrad Lorenz. In the 1880's, besides the 3Rs, music, drawing, painting, and deportment were stressed. The Austrian nobility was trained to speak languages, usually French, German, Italian, and English. All my mother's family speak English fluently. My mother had a very definite sense of status and with this, the complementary sense of responsibility toward the peasants and less educated. The estate was called Gurahonz in the Arrad Komitat. After my mother's father died, my mother's mother lived on this estate for twelve to fourteen years with maybe 90 or 100 peasants to manage the fields. She used to tell me about them, about how superstitious they were. They were afraid of witches and wouldn't walk by a graveyard at night. She used to tell about the wild boar that roamed around the estate.

Several of the seven children died, I think of tuberculosis. The four who lived a longer life were Alfons, the oldest, Arthur, the ambassador, my mother, Marie, and Helene.

Harris: Did you know them during your childhood?

Bacon: I knew three of them. I didn't know Uncle Alfons. He died about three years after I was born. He was an eminent obstetrician and gynecologist, first in Prague and ultimately in Vienna. My mother's parents died when they were pretty young, so my mother and her sister, Helene, moved to Uncle Alfons' home in Prague. Since it was the custom for the oldest son to take care of his younger sisters, they kept house for Uncle Alfons, and they, and Arthur too, looked up to him as an advisor.

Harris: He was unmarried at the time?

Bacon: Well, he must have been unmarried at that time. He married later. He married an opera singer, actually.

Harris: What about your Uncle Arthur?

Bacon: Uncle Arthur was sent to Oxford. He spoke nine languages according to my mother. I knew him well. He was sent to Persia and China. He was ambassador for the Austrian government for twenty years in Peking, China. We used to see pictures of him taken at the legation. His wife supposedly saved the legation for two hours during the Boxer Rebellion by organizing the ladies to dip rags, curtains, etc. in gasoline, ignite them, and throw them out the windows keeping the Boxers away until the troops arrived. My Uncle Arthur was important in my life. He sent me books for Christmas in German and in English, and sent me his own book of French love poems. He represented the epitome of culture, aristocracy, and learning to his worshipful niece.

Harris: Did he come to visit you in Chicago?

Bacon: Oh, yes, yes. This is a little ahead of the game in terms of chronology, but in 1917, Austria and China broke diplomatic relations and Uncle Arthur had to return to Austria. He came via the United States. I was eleven years old at the time. I remember he landed in San Francisco, and the American secret police took care of him all the time because he was under safe conduct while travelling in the United States. He came to Chicago by train and was allowed to spend a night or so with us in our family home. I remember him getting off the train with a black box in his hand. There were three men dressed in business suits around him all the time. We had a car, and we brought him home, and he always carried this black box. Of course, I was curious about it. Well, what he had done, realizing that the revolution was coming, he had transferred all his wealth into gold. This box actually contained pure gold, his whole earnings, his fortune from China.

When he went back to Vienna, the government gave him two rooms in the Hofburg, the castle in Vienna that housed government offices. He kept on writing about China and Chinese culture and died in 1946 of starvation caused by the terrible food shortage at the end of the Second World War. At

eighty-six, he simply could not swallow enough potato soup to keep himself alive. I think he didn't really care to live.

Harris: Tell me about your Aunt Helene.

Bacon: She was tall and regal looking, high spirited, possessed of a great sense of humor. She sang and played the guitar with gusto. Her nephews and nieces worshipped her. I think my mother was a bit envious of her younger sister's height and dignity. Helene married Ernst Lecher, a professor of physics at the University of Vienna, a brilliant man who wrote some books that are still, I think, in print. Again, this is really not within the chronology, but, in 1919, when I was thirteen, my Uncle Arthur von Rosthorn and Tante Helene Lecher, together with my mother and father, and with the cooperation of the Austrian consul, organized the American Committee for Vienna Relief. This was right after the First World War. It shows something about my family and about politics at the time. At that time, peasants working the land, laborers, government workers, etc. fared well with food and housing, but artists, teachers, musicians, and the intelligentsia in general had no money, little work or food, and suffered great hardship. Therefore, in Vienna, Arthur and Helene collected and shipped huge zinc lined crates of art works: etchings, inlaid boxes, needlepoint, carvings, embroidered linens, clothing, etc., which were sold in our Chicago home between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our friends volunteered help, selling and cataloguing. Collectively we sent more than \$5,000 to feed the hungry and save lives. This went on for four or five years. Father was later rewarded with the highest honor from the Austrian government. I have always thought it pleasant that a Wisconsin farm boy should have been active in helping slaves escape during the Civil War and then, as a man, my father helped feed Austrian children and keep alive the last of the genteel aristocrats who had lost everything.

I should review here that my Austrian relatives lived through two world wars. Vienna, a world center of medicine and music and culture in the early decades of this century, suffered a decline with the destruction of the Austrian Empire and the ensuing events: Naziism, Russian harassment, and thousands of refugees clamoring to enter a free zone. And remember too, the American "friends"

bombed Vienna to get rid of the German Nazis in World War II.

At any rate, Helene's husband, Ernst Lecher also stands out in my mind because he could play two games of chess simultaneously while blindfolded and still beat his opponents.

Tante Helene became our favorite aunt. Uncle Arthur and Tante Helene figured largely in my childhood because when my mother married my father, he promised to take her back to Vienna frequently, and we went back to Vienna many times before and after World War I, and we always stayed with relatives.

Harris: How did your mother and your father, Charles Sumner Bacon, meet?

Bacon: As I said, my mother and her sister, Tante Helene were living with their brother, Dr. Alfons von Rosthorn, in Prague. There was a medical convention of some sort in Prague, and my father went to Europe to participate, and then to study in Vienna later. The European doctors invited the Americans to dinner. So father met Marie and Helene von Rosthorn at their brother's house in Prague in the 1890s. Father must have fallen in love abruptly. He brought "Misa" red roses on his second visit. She and her sister thought this was uncivilized, almost fresh, because red roses signified love and, on the second encounter! "Well, one doesn't do such a thing." I think he must have proposed to her at the end of a week, this dashing and handsome American doctor. She laughed at the idea for America was so far away by boat and it was a land filled with Indians. -- James Fenimore Cooper's books were well known in Austria -- But my father said, "I will go to Vienna to do some work and I will come back to Prague to get you and take you to Chicago with me." And he did!

Harris: That must have been a brave act on her part.

Bacon: It was a brave act.

Harris: Did the courtship carry on over a period of time?

Bacon: Well, not too long. I think they were married twice, both at court and later in a church in Munich because her family were Catholics.

She had gone to church until she was seventeen, and then she had an unhappy experience. She was in Hungary at the time, I think, and she went to confession. Apparently, some priest misunderstood her confession and thought that she had perhaps had an affair with a man or something like that. She felt highly insulted by what he said. I don't know just what he said, but she was adamant that was the end.

She wouldn't go to church anymore and her mother didn't make her go. My feeling is that she was a religious woman in feeling, but not a church-goer.

Speaking of religion, my father was brought up a strict Baptist. He had to break away, too, later on, in his college days.

Harris: I wanted to ask you, before we go on to your father, a little bit more about your mother's life in Vienna, about her education.

Bacon: Well, she studied music and languages. And after she died, I found a little album where there were some charming sketches that she had made -- drawings in pencil -- that she had never talked about.

I would say that my mother would have certainly belonged to "women's lib" if she had been here in America. But I don't know that there was any movement of that sort in Austria at that time. She wanted to become a nurse when she was a young woman. Her brother, Uncle Alfons, the doctor, said, "If you become a nurse, I leave town." It was strictly a Victorian attitude.

Harris: And she was then living with him and dependent on him?

Bacon: Yes. My parents were an interesting combination. My mother wasn't really supposed to have to earn a living. But she married an American farm boy who had worked his way up from scratch. Both my parents were very healthy and had exceptional energy and endurance. Just think, mother with four children (a fifth child died in infancy) running a large house, giving us special attention in music -- we had two pianos in two rooms -- and in languages. And father, a horse and buggy doctor until shortly after I was born! We had a cook who

learned everything from mother, and a coachman to drive father out to see his patients. Henry Ford changed that!

Mother always carried with her a little feeling of the nobility, of the Austrian aristocracy. I remember it as a child. Once when I was in school, and was going to a party, my brother was to come and pick me up at 10:00 P.M. I said, "But my friends can stay until 11:00; why do I have to come at 10:00?" "Well, you're a Bacon." It was almost, as I would now say, a snooty attitude, a little bit. She had a feeling of status, that she wasn't just anybody.

Harris: And that was formed from her heritage.

Bacon: Absolutely.

Harris: Did she have experience at court, do you recall?

Bacon: Yes, I think so. She met Kaiser Franz Joseph probably at court, but I don't remember how or when. I have a spoon and one or two little things from way back when -- an Esterhazy spoon which had a crown on it with nine prongs. Mother's name was Marie von Rosthorn. The v-o-n is the lowest rank in the aristocracy, she told me. Her silverware all had a crown on it with five prongs. Then the next step up was the Baroness who had a crown with seven prongs and then came the Countess who had a crown with nine prongs. And the Countess could be at court any time whereas a Baroness or a Marie von Rosthorn had to wait to be invited to court. Remember Marie Theresa and the Austrian Empire! It was a great empire and the aristocracy reigned supreme. I often compare the Austrian aristocracy with our southern aristocracy. Certainly George Washington was an aristocrat.

Harris: Did she carry this sense of formality throughout her life?

Bacon: I wouldn't call it formality. She could be elegant and formal at a ball or at a dinner party, but in our bringing up she wanted to emphasize top quality -- no comparisons with anything average. Actually, she preached simplicity and naturalness. However, on her side, beside the Austro-Hungarian, I understand there was a little gypsy ancestry. Whether true or not, I've been told that Attila the Hun was one of our ancestors. And, of course, it's

such a glamorous thought that I say that it must be true. But, you know, what you hear from your relatives might or might not be true. Besides the Attila the Hun ancestry, my mother's grandfather came from England. He was brought over by Maria Theresa, the Empress of Austria, to build up the metallurgy industry in Austria. The name might have been Rowthorne, which I would spell R-O-W-T-H-O-R-N-E -- I'm not sure if that's quite right. It was changed to Rosthorn which means "rusty horn." And my mother's father continued, I think, in this work. We still have a large tray which looks like silver and is an alloy of silver which my mother's father invented. It is a silver alloy which is hard enough that it is good for use in large silver trays.

My mother was short, a small person with a very erect posture. Her brothers and sisters were all tall, and elegant and aristocratic looking. So the only way she could look aristocratic, in her opinion, was to stand up very straight. And she was always pounding my father and the rest of us on the back to make us stand up straight. I think that my mother had much to do with my father's success. He was a great student, just a natural student of medicine. But he was humble and modest. My mother set the tone in our family household definitely and with his whole-hearted approval. I mean beauty was important in our household. The curtains were just right and the custom built furniture was just so. She was a very romantic, highly nervous, constantly moving person. She could be very high and also very low, so depressed and easily emotionally disturbed -- a very emotional person.

Harris: She had a high degree of energy as well?

Bacon: Yes, a high degree of energy runs through my entire family as well as longevity.

Harris: Well, that's a good characteristic!

Bacon: She was interested in languages and music and culture. My father was all scientist. He had no sense of art, but he dutifully would go to every new exhibition at the Art Institute in Chicago with my mother, and say, "Now, Misa, tell me what is beautiful about this picture? What should I look at?" All his life, right up until he died, he was educating himself. -- He admired my mother

enormously. -- He was a self-made man in every way, always reaching for more understanding.

With my father's whole hearted approval, my mother was my chief educator. The whole process of my education stems from my mother. Where she got her ideas, I don't know. But she certainly was a progressive educator in the early 1900s. And her whole life was lived for her children. I always felt that everything she gave us was what she herself would have wanted.

Charles Sumner Bacon

Harris: You said that your father was born in Wisconsin.

Bacon: He was born in Spring Prairie, a little village -- well, it's four corners -- it isn't even a village! It's in Wisconsin, near Janesville. He was born on a farm, a poor farm, not large acreage. I don't know too much about his family because my mother's family was dominant in all our lives. My father was fourteen, I think, when his father died. He had to run the farm for his mother. They even took in an adopted, orphaned girl, Harriet Mapes. He had a brother, Bertie, and a brother Vinton; I think there were three boys and an adopted sister. But we knew very little of my father's family except for the one brother because all the focus in our household was on my mother's family. And my mother's family was interested in my father.

Father looked like a European professor; he had a beard and a moustache. He learned to speak German and all of us would alternate between German and English without thinking. And my father just fitted into my mother's family very naturally. In my father's family, one brother became a doctor. But from the age of fourteen, my father had to make his own way. At the age of sixteen, he was teaching in a military school; he was totally inexperienced. I think the school was in Whitewater, Wisconsin.

Harris: What did he teach?

Bacon: Probably math and science. He told a story in his autobiography how the headmaster, a military man, thought my father's discipline wasn't good enough and scolded him for it. So one day about six months or a year after my father had arrived, and

the children were playing outside, the headmaster came to see what was going on. My father blew his whistle and ordered all the children to stop their games for no real reason just to show that he had the proper authority. He was highly praised by the headmaster and told that his discipline had improved. He wrote about that when he was eighty-seven and began to write his autobiography.

Harris: How did he get from school teaching to medical school?

Bacon: Well, I don't know just how long his life on the farm lasted, but I do know he got into Beloit College about 1874. At Beloit, he had to work his way through. He had no money. He had to help his mother too so he worked all year round. He was always on scholarships and always working. He was very ambitious.

Harris: When do you suppose he got his medical degree?

Bacon: Well let's see. My father was born in 1856, and he graduated from Beloit in '78. He must have earned the M.D. between 1881 and 1883. You see my life memories really cover more than three generations. My mother was about forty-three or forty-four when I was born. My father, born in 1856, ought to have been my grandfather really. And I was born in 1906, so there is a big 131 year span between his birth date and my oral history!

Harris: He was born before the Civil War.

Bacon: Right, nine years before the end of it. In his farmhouse, there was a trap door which he once showed me. It was in the living room, under the rug, and you could get through the trap door into the basement. In his farmhouse, they hid escaping slaves that were coming north to become free men.

Harris: His family was part of the underground railroad.

Bacon: I think it probably was. When you think of that -- what a heritage I have!

Harris: It's a part of American history right there.

Bacon: It really is. Of course, there are many Bacon genealogies. I understand that my father's mother was Chloenne Bacon. I don't know too much about

the previous ancestry. I've been told that we're descendants of the Roger Bacons from England. It was mostly English ancestry on my father's side. However, we never knew any of our grandparents, not on either side.

Harris: They had all died before you were old enough to really know them?

Bacon: All of them had died, yes. At one time, my father was the oldest living graduate of Beloit College. The oldest alumnus was honored, and he went back to speak at the college. It must have been in 1944 or '45, somewhere in there. When he died in '46, he was over ninety by a few months.

My mother never told her age; she refused to tell us, always hid it. But I think she was eighty-eight when she died. Even her entry in Who's Who doesn't give her birth date. We used to be very curious about it.

At Home in Chicago

Harris: You were born in Chicago?

Bacon: Yes.

Harris: And your father delivered you, is that right?

Bacon: I think so. But I was delivered in a hospital, I was told. My brothers, I think, were delivered at home. It's interesting how we're reverting to people being delivered at home, by choice now. Of course, in those days, it was customary.

Harris: And you had three older brothers?

Bacon: There were five of us all together. One little boy died as a baby from, I think, infected milk. That's interesting because my father helped to bring pasteurized milk in Chicago. But I had three older brothers. Do you want me to tell you about them?

Harris: Yes, please.

Bacon: The oldest is Alfons with an F-O-N-S. The second one is Ernst and the third one was Charles. The oldest was named after my mother's brother, Dr. Alfons von Rosthorn. He had some other middle name in the early days, but we all admired the Rosthorn

family, so Alfons now calls himself Alfons Rosthorn Bacon because he wanted to preserve that name. He is a very friendly, outgoing person, quite a mechanical genius. I always thought he should have been an inventor. As a teenager, he built a racing car. Later he marketed a home-style bowling game. While practicing medicine, he invented a new obstetrical instrument. Anyway, he became a doctor and ultimately inherited my father's practice. After his second marriage, he moved to Florida. He is ninety-one now, living in Florida, and still seeing old patients. He gave up his personal practice about ten years ago. Then Alcoholics Anonymous and the nursing homes got him because most doctors don't particularly want to do those things: they don't pay as well and maybe they're confining. He gave up his work with Alcoholics Anonymous last year, but he still has patients in several nursing homes. He has a wonderful bedside manner, and all his patients think he's their personal friend.

His great hobby is trains. Our basement in Chicago was full of model trains, O-gauge. He was so attached to those trains that I think his wife didn't see him quite so much evenings as she might have, if he hadn't been a train buff.

Harris: Please tell me about your brother Ernst.

Bacon: Ernst became a musician very early in life. Ernst always seemed older than Alfons. Alfons had a sunny, radiant disposition; he was very handsome and all the girls adored him. He had blue eyes and blonde hair. Ernst was more somber and serious. When he was a little boy, he had very curly hair, dark brown eyes and a very intense look. If I look at his old pictures, I remember this even though I was little. He seemed to have an inner poise, a self confidence, a kind of direction, a way of being Ernst, being an important individual. Ernst knew his direction. He was quite good in math and science, but he became very adept at piano playing and gave his first professional piano concert at age eighteen. He began to compose when he was eleven or twelve.

Harris: I wanted to ask you if there was anything visible in your brother Ernst's early days that perhaps your parents recognized and talked about that indicated that he would follow a musical career.

Bacon: Well, there wasn't a precedent for a musical career in our heritage. Everyone studied music, but that didn't mean we were headed for a musical career.

My mother studied piano, and she went to musical events as every cultured Viennese did in those days.

Ernst had a couple of years of study in Vienna. He found that in America, the students get an excellent theoretical background and had more harmony, analysis, and counterpoint training. But the Europeans knew more music. They knew the Beethoven symphonies; they knew the string quartets; they knew operas, perhaps better than Ernst did as a young professional musician coming over there.

Upon his return to the states, he had an interesting and varied career beginning as a pianist and coach at Eastman in Rochester, New York. He married Mary Prentice Lillie in Chicago and had two children and moved to San Francisco in the mid-twenties. Here he concentrated on composition and taught piano privately at the conservatory. His studio on Montgomery Street was a lively center for musicians and painters like Cedric Wright, Ansel Adams, Piazzoni and others. In the thirties, he founded the Carmel Bach Festival with Dene and Hazel Watrons, and conducted the concerts. Then he became completely involved with the administration of the Federal Music Project in San Francisco. He developed and conducted an orchestra, putting unemployed performers to work -- singers, pianists, composers, copyists, music librarians -- all musicians without jobs were put to work in some way to help both themselves and the community via W.P.A. projects.

After California, Ernst went next to Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where he had a splendid opportunity to use his many talents. As dean and department chairman, he was able to guide the curriculum to include a considerable amount of performance: solo, chamber music, opera! He established a festival and attracted numerous good musicians from the area into the chorus and orchestra. Ernst gave the first performance of his opera, The Tree on the Plains, composed to Paul Horgan's text coaching and conducting all the forces himself. He and his second wife, Analee Camp, formerly principal cellist of the Federal

Works Project orchestra in San Francisco, also initiated chamber music concerts in the area. Later, when Ernst became department chairman and then composer-in-residence at Syracuse University in New York, he often looked back on his happy fruitful days at the small intimate Converse College.

Harris: And what can you tell me about your brother Charles?

Bacon: Charles, the youngest of my brothers, became a geologist. He had a hot temper and was small as a little boy, so cruelly, we called him "Insect." I was large as a little girl and was called "Elefantenweib," or "Elephant Woman." [Chuckles] At any rate, I had three older brothers and I was the youngest. Charlie grew up rather late, and I, so they tell me, a little bit early. Alfons and Ernst had gone away, out of the house, by the time that Charlie and I were growing up so Charlie and I were playmates.

Harris: What sort of games do you remember playing?

Bacon: Well, we children played everything. In those days, we played cards like Bunko and 500. We didn't play bridge at that time, and it was before pinochle became popular. And then we played geography games with cards and questions. Everybody had a stamp collection. Geography was interesting. I remember learning where Tasmania was because of stamps.

When my parents were out of the house, we would make up some of our own games. We would get hold of a pair of my father's heavy wool socks and hold the socks together with a rubber band. We had four bedrooms all in a row, in the big three story house which I grew up in, on Sedgewick and Webster in Chicago. So here were four bedrooms in a row, a long adjoining hallway, and then the bathroom and guest room, and many doors opening into the hallway. I remember a grand staircase going downstairs, too. We would open all the doors and play sock tag, having to hit each other with this soft pair of wool socks. We would run barefoot though the whole upstairs. It was a favorite game.

We played a lot of athletic games. We went ice skating. We were near the park. We played baseball. Our back yard was the center for the

neighborhood. We had the garage entrance which was concrete, and then we had a grass area which we flooded in winter to ice skate on and to play "kick the can."

Our back yard was big enough for soccer games. I remember one day very clearly. There were about twelve or fourteen of us who were going to play soccer. I always played with the neighborhood boys who were twelve to fifteen years old when I was eight. Ernst was captain of one team and a neighbor boy of the other team. Ernst had first choice; he chose one player.

Then the other man chose one. And then Ernst chose me! I was eight and there were twelve and thirteen year olds waiting to be chosen. But he had taught me how to dribble a ball. I was clever with my feet and toes. It wasn't until I was grown up, long afterwards, that I recognized that he had chosen me because I was able to dribble the ball on the outside as a wing, and when we got anywhere near the goal, I was to kick it to the center to him, to kick a goal, because he was playing center. So you see, whether that was very conscious on his part, I don't know. It might have been just clever. Anyway, it was my great joy as a little girl to be chosen by my older brother.

Harris: Didn't your mother object to your playing with the neighborhood boys?

Bacon: On the contrary, she thought it was good exercise.

Harris: Her sense of status did not extend to a division of the sexes or insisting on traditional female roles.

Bacon: No, not at all. As a matter of fact, I remember I didn't have many dolls, either. I preferred playing with the boys. My mother was very free in some ways. When I was twelve, she would allow me and my brother to go birding at 6:00 in the morning. She would allow me and Charlie to go on our bicycles through the heart of the Chicago loop. We would ride our bicycles to 123rd Street because we had found some big birds there. We saw water birds and some big land birds that we couldn't find in Lincoln Park. She would let me do that when I was twelve. Think of the difference today. Who would let a twelve year old do that now? When I was a child, I went ice skating; I went everywhere

alone. Then I went travelling alone later. The freedom I had as a child influenced my whole life.

Harris: It doesn't sound as if you had a governess or a nanny waiting in the wings to supervise you.

Bacon: No, but we had servants when I was growing up. We had a cook. And when I was very, very young, we had a cook and her husband, Irma and Robert. Irma did the cooking and Robert drove the horses.

In the early days, when my father was a horse and buggy doctor, he used the brougham which I remember was sitting in our garage, with brass lights with candles inside, and with two prongs to harness to the horse. It sat in our garage all through my early childhood until a fire burned it up. At any rate, my father had this coachman who drove him.

In those days, an obstetrician went to all the patients' houses. He went everywhere. Robert was the driver and he did chores around the house and Irma did the cooking and other chores. Then later, when we graduated to automobiles, we dropped the driver, but we still had a cook. Then World War I came along and changed everything. Former servants went into factories and war work.

Harris: What about your musical education at home?

Bacon: All four of us had to practice the piano. My mother taught us -- this is the amazing thing -- she taught all four of us to play the piano herself! She sat and practiced with us. We had two pianos in the house, an upright in the dining room, and a grand in the parlor. You were supposed to practice on the upright first, but Ernst, being older and more advanced, would just sit down at the grand. He got away with it too. We were very angry with him, but what could we do? I couldn't displace him from the grand piano, nor could Charlie.

Harris: Did you have regular hours for practice?

Bacon: We certainly did. We had regular eating hours, regular bedtime hours, and regular practice hours.

My mother kept me home from school until seventh grade. I was eleven when I went to school first. She taught me reading, writing, and arithmetic; I can't remember how or when. She taught me piano

and French. And she brushed my teeth every day! This is very important. She brushed Charlie's teeth too; they were her jewels.

My mother's attitude toward health -- let me go into that; it is very interesting. I don't know where she got these ideas. She told us to be outdoors for two hours every day. We would get home from school at 3:30; from 3:30 'til 5:30 we would play outdoors. We played soccer; we played baseball; we went ice skating. We had a wonderful time. Then at 5:30, we would come in and would practice the piano from 5:30 to 6:30, one hour.

That was my regular schedule from the time I went to school. Then at 6:30 supper. The whole family sat down together. Breakfast was at 7:30 in the morning, again the whole family together. Breakfast and supper, the same hour, the same time, the whole family. Think how things have changed. Think how children today can go to television and have their supper away from the table and the family. We were always a family.

My father would ask, "Well, how was school today?" And we would be grumpy about our answers often. "What is it your business?" Or "So what." But, there was a family feeling.

We were expected to eat everything on our plates. We could have seconds, all you wanted; there was always enough. But you ate what was on your plate; that was expected. I remember, speaking of family feeling at the table, Charlie with a dessert, a rice pudding with raisins in it. He took all the raisins out and put them along the edge of his plate. Then he ate the rice pudding. My father noticed this and said, "What are you doing that for, Charlie?" Charlie said, "To save the best for last." So my father said, "Well now that's interesting. Well, then, why don't you eat the raisins first, and then you've got the rice part, and that's still the best. So you have the best all the time." That's the way my father's mind worked, you see. That was typical of my father.

Harris: So he was definitely a participant in your upbringing?

Bacon: Oh, yes. At the supper table, we always spoke German. My mother insisted. She said, "Hier wird Deutsch gesprochen." My father's German wasn't

fluent; it was studied, medical schoolboy, you know. But with proximity and my mother's encouragement, he learned German. And he cooperated. So, of course, at supper time, my father was the first to break into English. And we were delighted! You know why? Because you didn't get any dessert if you spoke English. So he got no dessert.

You have no idea what our upbringing meant to all four of us later. I think we all appreciated it. It sounds like a military regimen, but it wasn't. You were expected to do certain things; you did them at certain times in certain ways, but we didn't have a constant feeling of "must" or "have to."

There was some kind of rightness to it. My mother's attitude educationally, I think was so sound. If you establish habits, you don't fight a thing. If you are expected to do a thing regularly, you stop fighting it, unless it's unreasonable.

So all four of us learned to play the piano. My mother introduced four-hand playing. Alfons sight-read pretty well, and he loved playing duets. We grew up playing Haydn and Beethoven symphonies with four hands. In Europe, that was a method of teaching. In America, that was unknown at the time. So Alfons and Ernst would play together, and Charlie and I, and then Alfons and I, and then Ernst and Charlie. We made a game out of the Military March of Schubert. You may know the piece. [Hums a few bars] At any rate, there would be the four of us. And two would sit at the piano. Say Alfons and Ernst were sitting down, playing the Military March. [Hums again] Ernst would play the top and Alfons the bottom part. Then Charlie and I would stand behind the piano bench, and when the piece ended, I had to quickly take Ernst's place, and Charlie quickly take Alfons's, without missing a beat. That was the idea. Well, of course, these things made it fun.

Mother enjoyed showing us off to friends. We had music lessons, and were expected to perform when requested. We had lots of company in the house, so we were always performing.

Harris: Do you remember your mother and father taking you to musical events?

Bacon: Oh, heavens, yes. We lived on the North Side about four miles from downtown. We went to Sunday afternoon concerts in the Auditorium theater, and also to lectures at the Academy of Sciences. Our home was a hospitable place, and we were allowed to bring guests home. We would go to the concerts, see our friends, and say, "Come on home to dinner." We would stop at the delicatessen store -- markets were not open in Chicago on Sundays, at all, only delicatessen stores here and there -- so we would have to pick up a little cold ham or something. We would have supper and then we would make music. That was the normal thing to do, make music together, and play games.

Harris: You mentioned a fire. Was there a fire in the house?

Bacon: Well, there were three fires, I remember, in my lifetime. One when I was four and a half. That's the earliest thing I do remember. It was in a little country house that we had rented at Lake Beulah in Wisconsin. The whole house burned up, just the chimney was left. We all went outdoors in our nightgowns and pajamas, half of us having been sick with the flu or a cold. Nearby farm neighbors took us in.

The second fire was in our home in Chicago. We used to burn coal in a furnace. My father's was one of the first houses that acquired an oil burner in about 1912 or 1913. It was better because the old coal burners had flues that had to be cleaned. The boys hated that job; that was the job of the two oldest. You poked long rods through the pipes and collected the dirt on the far end. After the oil burner was set up, there was a pit left into which the coal had been shovelled formerly. This coal bin was about three feet deep below the opening of the burner. One night, this pit filled up with oil which had leaked from a great big barrel containing hundreds of gallons of oil. Now when the thermostat goes on, there is a spark, and this spark must have ignited the oil in the pit. My father was deathly sick at the time. They never knew whether it was a thrombosis or what, but the doctors had given up hope for him, and my mother was at his bedside all the time. The cook came and knocked on my bedroom door. This was six o'clock in the morning! The cook said, "The house is on fire!" And we ran down to the basement together

and here was the whole pit burning. We had a hot water heater which still used coal and there were five or six buckets of ashes around that heater. I think I must have been about twelve years old. At any rate, I knew that you didn't put water on an oil fire, and I went and got those buckets and threw the ashes around the edges of the pit where the flames might touch wood.

I was afraid to call the fire department because I thought that my father would be alarmed by all the clanging noises. It didn't occur to me that the fire engines might come quietly. So the cook and I decided to let the oil in the pit burn out. She was very nervous about that. We just stayed there and watched the ceiling to see how high the flames were going. If it would get too hot, we would call the fire department. We never did call the fire department. We let it burn out because the tank had emptied itself, finally. It was a harrowing experience. I was the only child at home with my parents at that time; no brothers were around. That was the second fire.

The third fire I'll never forget either. It was when I was at the University of Chicago. It was in a large rooming house two or three houses away, across backyards, from the one in which I had rented a room. I was sleeping outside on the porch which I like to do as much as possible although I had a bedroom inside the house too. Suddenly, in the night, I woke up hearing all kinds of noise. There was the red glow of a big fire just behind the International House of the university. Well, I got up, put on my knickers and my tennis shoes, and got dressed fast, and went through the house and called, "Fire!" People woke up. We made coffee for the firemen who came tramping through the snow, took care of people with burns, and called for doctors and ambulances. One woman started to have a miscarriage -- we never knew if the ambulance reached the hospital in time. Seven people died in that fire. I certainly had no idea then that in 1985, the Superior Court would turn me down as a juror in a case related to a large warehouse fire because of my previous fire experiences!

Harris: After being tutored at home by your mother, where did you go to school?

Bacon: I started school at age eleven and went into the seventh grade at the Francis W. Parker School in

Chicago, a progressive school. Col. Parker founded it in 1901 as an experimental teaching institution based on his and, I think, John Dewey's philosophies of education. Music and art, and foreign languages, and athletics, all these were very much a part of the curriculum.

There were daily morning assemblies in that school. Famous people would come to talk to us during those assemblies.

It was a private school with a fine attitude about each individual's responsibility to society. A large scholarship fund was established to balance the more or less upper-crust and middle income families with those from lower incomes. My brothers all went to public school, but this was a block and a half away from the house and I wanted to go there. It was very attractive and my parents liked the principal, Flora J. Cooke.

When Albert Einstein came to America for the first time, our principal invited him to talk to the school children. He came! Great people do these things! He spoke in German and I think his wife translated. He spoke to seventh through twelfth grades for twenty-five minutes describing two words: "unendlich" and "unbegrenzt," "infinite" and "unbounded." Now, I spoke German at home, and here I was in the seventh grade, and I had some experience of speaking German outside my home, and I was fascinated by Albert Einstein and understood everything he said. Even though I was only in the seventh grade, my imagination reached out to "What is infinite?" and "What is unbounded?" And I could see a fence is not "unbounded." And "infinite" was different; there never was a fence, and it was definitely related to the stars.

Naturally, I had great admiration for him. I was to have future occasions with him. But this thinking of how I understood everything, makes me realize how a great person, in talking to children, can get them to use their imaginations each in his own direction. And for me, this thought of the infinite and the unbounded lingered with me for weeks, I would say without exaggeration. I kept thinking about it. But what does a seventh grade child know about infinite and unbounded, or a twelfth grade child? And why did Einstein choose those words to say to us? This is what is interesting to me now.

This wonderful principal selected one child from each of the six grades, four high school grades and the seventh and eighth to host Mr. Einstein at lunch in the cafeteria. I was chosen by my class. So I had lunch with Mr. Einstein along with five other students and a couple of faculty members, including my favorite seventh grade teacher who spoke beautiful German. We hosted him!

Harris: You were raised to be completely bilingual?

Bacon: I was absolutely bilingual. My mother spoke German to me at home and instinctively, my father would speak English to me. Unconsciously, I would write German letters to my mother and English to my father. My mother recited poetry to us in German.

There was a wonderful seventh grade teacher in my school, Elsa Miller, who initiated something which started my love of incunabula for my lifetime. Each child in art class learned to hand print alphabets, calligraphy. And Elsa Miller let each child in her grade choose his or her favorite poem to illustrate. I happened to choose a Goethe poem. I chose "Edel sei der Mensch" [Continues to recite poem in German] To translate: "Noble be man, helpful and good." This was one of the poems my mother would say to us when she came to our beds to say good night. She would say a poem in German or English, or sing a song.

It was very childlike worship of a great poem. And Elsa Miller, knowing German and French, let me choose that poem. Nobody else in class chose a German poem. That began to set me apart a little bit. I hand-printed this poem and illustrated it on parchment. This was lots of work; we worked three months drawing the letters of a Gothic or Roman alphabet with India ink under the supervision of the art department and Miss Miller.

A sample was made first on paper, then on parchment, with a big initial letter which each child drew himself after much thought and exploration of old manuscripts. I remember that once we had all finished with the initial letter, Elsa Miller would lock the door of the seventh grade room at three-thirty each day and show us how to lay gold leaf. She took one child each day and locked the door so that nobody could interrupt! That was the kind of school I went to! I would say

that between Francis Parker School and my parents' teaching, it's only natural that I developed a great interest in education.

Harris: Did you find it difficult, after having been taught at home, to go into a school situation?

Bacon: No, I was terribly eager to go because I felt isolated at home. I wanted to be in a group. I mean, I was eleven years old and I was still taking naps! My mother always made me take a nap after lunch. And I thought I was supposed to sleep, but I always read during that time. Imagine my life with all those naps until I was eleven! In the hottest weather, I would have a sheet over me, so that I could have a book, and, if I heard my mother coming, I could hide it under my belly, under the sheet. And, all the time, she knew I was reading and I never knew she did. I felt guilty because I was reading. But think of how much I read. An hour nap every day after lunch devoted to reading!

Harris: You played sports at Francis Parker School.

Bacon: Oh, yes. I was athletic because I had three older brothers to teach me. If I didn't play soccer well, or if I didn't play baseball, or ice skate and play "stingo" -- which you don't hear much about out here -- if I didn't do it well, they wouldn't let me play with them. So I had to be good, you see. I was captain of my athletic teams quite a lot. I had one world-famous opponent in high school days when I played basketball and field hockey. Sybil Bauer was a world champion back crawl swimmer at Carl Schurz Public High School. We played the Schurz' teams and she was always my opponent. If I was center forward, she was center halfback. If I was center halfback, she was center forward. In field hockey, she would go steaming up the field swearing which to me was way out of bounds. We Francis Parker kids thought it was terrible the way she swore. She wasn't the cream of society, but she was a beautiful swimmer.

Harris: You graduated from the Francis Parker School -- you stayed from seventh through twelfth grades?

Bacon: Yes, right. I skipped my junior year because I found that I had extra credits. I don't know why except that I had both German and French language credits. In order to skip a year, I had to do five mathematics problems and write eight or ten themes

in the summer. We were going to Europe that summer, in 1921; and I thought, "Well, why not do it? I'll get to college earlier." I completed three of the math problems that were given to me, and I did about five or six of the themes, not all ten, and I was excused from the rest. I was Madi Bacon, a pretty good student; they liked me in school. And, I got away with murder. I didn't finish the math and I didn't finish all the themes, and the teachers let me get away with it. I don't agree with this leniency in retrospect. With my present knowledge of children and education, that's not being kind-hearted. I don't think so. But, at any rate, I skipped from sophomore to senior year, and I graduated from high school in 1922.

That senior year at Parker School was always a wonderful year. Everybody looked forward to it. At that school of 350 students, almost everybody knew everybody. We loved the faculty members. The first and second graders all had their big brothers and sisters in the senior class. And every first and second grader made some kind of gift for a graduating senior. In fact, I think all the grades did it, because, in seventh grade, we made the parchments and gave them to the seniors.

And we loved our parchments, but we gave them away, because you gave something you loved to a graduating senior.

So naturally, I wanted to be a senior. And the seniors were much in demand. We operated a Christmas toy shop for two or three weeks in December at which time all classes stopped at 1:00 and the whole school turned into a big Santa Claus' workshop. Parents, alumni and friends came to work with the students and teachers and we built and painted hundreds of little red wagons. Dozens of sewing machines were brought to school and doll dresses and dolls were produced in assembly line fashion. Imaginative gifts were invented and produced. The seniors were heads of committees, and worked with the younger children and with parents and teachers. We didn't have athletics at that time; we just had our important four hours of classes until 1:00 and the workshop lasted often until 6:00.

Harris: Were these toys made for less fortunate children?

Bacon: Exactly. We took whole truck loads to Hull House, to the Chicago Commons, and to some families. The whole philosophy behind Francis Parker School was service. Because we came from middle-class and maybe upper-class families, the toy shop and giving service to the community was stressed by our teachers. It was a very happy time. You went in blue jeans and everybody was active in painting, or drawing, or making things. It gave a wonderful feeling of togetherness. It also brought the alumni and parents into the school with the teachers and the students.

Harris: You were telling me off the tape that this school was a model for schools throughout the country.

Bacon: Yes. Colonel Parker and John Dewey, I think, were friends. Our principal, Flora J. Cooke, was one of Parker's students. The other progressive schools of note in the early decades of this century led by Colonel Parker's students were: Shady Hill in Boston, Katherine Taylor, North Shore Country Day, Winnetka, Illinois, Perry Dunlop Smith, Putney, Vermont, Carmelita Hinton, and the Ojai Valley School in California. That one was founded, I believe, by the Yeomans family with Gudrin Thorne-Thompson as principal. In the thirties, three of these schools invited me to teach music for them, and in retrospect, I regret that I didn't accept.

These were model schools. Children were taken out to watch railroad tracks being laid. I was taken to the stock yards to see how the animals were brought in and taken care of, and how the clean meat was stored. We had first hand experiences in small enough groups so that there was always a family feeling about the school.

Harris: It sounds like a very informal place to go to school. You even mentioned wearing blue jeans which must have been unusual at the time.

Bacon: But I remember as a high school senior, in a United States history class, a very young member of my class came in jodhpur pants to go riding after class, and Arthur Detmers sent her home! A girl does not come to class in pants in 1922! That was only for toy shop time.

I was very active in high school. I was in all the sports and stayed after school until 6:00. I would work in the print shop and I was the sports editor

for the Parker Weekly, which we printed ourselves. I founded the German club in our forum which held meetings once a month.

Harris: There was strong anti-German feeling during World War I, wasn't there?

Bacon: Yes. In World War I, every concert in Chicago began with the Star Spangled Banner. There was great hysteria. Frederick Stock who was of German descent and conductor of the symphony was really hounded. My mother became "the niece of the Kaiser," according to some people. And in war time, in the seventh grade, someone called me a "lousy Hun." Our family was watched by the Secret Service for over a year. Because my mother was born in Vienna, we would pull our shades down and speak cautiously when discussing world affairs. In the Second World War, that sort of thing didn't happen. That First World War hysteria was something! In 1917, my mother was called before the Justice of the Peace in Chicago. She was accused of anti-American talk by one of my friends, a few years older than I. My mother was sitting in a hammock with the mother of this girl, and they were talking about things, and this girl overheard my mother say something -- I don't know what. At any rate, she thought it was unpatriotic and reported my mother. My friend reported my mother. So, my mother was called before Justice Fisher. He happened to know her; he was very polite to her.

With her aristocratic nose in the air, this little, short woman said, "Judge Fisher, I will never have that man with the nose in my house again." Two detectives had come, and one had a broken nose. He was a vulgar type of person. And she would not stand vulgarity. She answered all the questions Judge Fisher asked her, of course, and he knew her and knew that this was just war hysteria and not disloyalty.

There is a very interesting experience concerning my father. He had office hours every afternoon; his office was in our home. At the end of the afternoon, if the secretary had gone, we children would answer the doorbell. Well the secretary left early one day, and I answered the doorbell. There were two men standing on the doorstep, and one opened his lapel and showed a star. I was scared. "Dr. Bacon's residence?" "Yes," I answered and let

them into the waiting room. I ran and knocked on my father's door and said, "There's somebody here from the police." Then I left the room. At any rate, he ushered the two men into his private office and closed the door. These men asked my father, "Have you bought any war bonds?" And he said, "No." "Oh, oh, but I do have a couple. A patient of mine who didn't have any money gave me some bonds. But I've never bought any." "Well, why not?" "Well, I agree with President Wilson in his attitude that future generations should not have to pay for the wars of present generations. I'm not in favor of our entering this war. I don't believe in war bonds; I don't believe we should make our children pay for our wars." Well, that was a pretty severe answer and it was just like my father, terribly honest and stubborn. More questions were asked so my father then took out of his files a speech of President Wilson. My father was always reading, always interested in politics and education. So he brought out this speech of President Wilson and hands it to these men to read, and shows them the President's own words. They could not argue with father after that because here was a loyal supporter of President Wilson!

Harris: Did you find among your friends, particularly among your contemporaries, that there was animosity other than the "lousy Hun" comment?

Bacon: A little perhaps, but not among my friends. Well, there is one more incident that I can tell you. The Francis Parker School, such a progressive and liberal school, held regular parents' meeting. My mother and father attended them faithfully.

Mr. Packard, a wealthy industrialist, was chairman of the Parents Committee. He made a motion to dismiss a child in seventh grade with anti-American sentiments because this child could be a danger to the school! The hysteria went to that extent! Discussion followed. My father was getting "furiouser and furiouser" with Packard, and was about to get up and remonstrate with Packard, when Miss Flora Cooke stood up, and said quietly, "If you put this eleven year old child out of the school, I resign." And that just settled a long harangue among "America Firsters!"

My father was an ardent pacifist, and I too, at eleven, was a strong pacifist in the seventh grade. I remember being deeply impressed by a book called

The Backwash of War written by a nurse. And our friend, Brent Allison went to jail because he refused to take up arms! He was a pacifist. Somehow, even at age eleven, I thought war never solved any problems but created new problems!

When the Armistice was signed, I remember weeping and being terribly excited and terribly upset and happy. All the bells in Chicago began to ring, and all the children and the faculty in the whole school came out at noon on the steps of the school to listen to the teachers and to celebrate. Chicago went wild! It was wonderful!

Harris: Were such issues as pacifism frequently discussed at your dinner table?

Bacon: They certainly were. Politics and pacifism were discussed at the table. In fact to such an extent that we got bored with it. My father was very much politically interested. After my college days, when my men friends came around, he would talk politics with them and want to know their opinions. I often got bored waiting around and felt that he monopolized them. Yes, politics and education were constantly talked about and music, and philosophy, and world affairs.

Trip to Europe, Summer of 1921

Harris: You have mentioned your trips to Europe particularly one in the summer of 1921.

Bacon: We usually went for almost two months. I was taken as a baby, and then I remember people and incidents when I was about five and a half, and then I was over in Europe with my parents right after World War I. We were there in 1921 so I must have been fifteen. My aunt, Tante Helene, was to come to visit us in 1914. She was already in Hamburg or Cherbourg and she cabled that war had been declared and that the boat could not leave.

In the summer of 1921, we sailed on the Stockholm and landed at Goteborg in Sweden. Then via ferry to north Germany to visit Otto and Kathe Grunert who later became Nazis, en route to Vienna. Of course, in 1921, Hitler was unknown, but in 1936 when I travelled alone, I visited in their Munich home. There Otto, a banker and landowner, was an early Hitlerite because he was prejudiced against

the Jews. He and his gifted and beautiful wife showed me the new housing projects, the Hitlerjugend, in action, the fine new roads. They, two highly cultivated people, tried to convince me of the need for a strong leadership in Germany at that time. These were the only people I knew who became Nazis. Looking through their eyes, I could understand how some Germans could think of Hitler (in the mid-thirties) as a great organizer putting people to work, promoting social projects and popularizing healthy bodies and ardent nationalism.

Just after the war, I wanted to see the Grunerts again. They had disappeared. Rumor had it that they had been treated brutally and had everything taken away from them. It was presumed that they were dead. Probably they had become disillusioned and changed their views. I will never know. I loved Kathe Grunert. -- You know, she and her husband had been in detention camp in Vancouver, Canada during World War I just because they were German citizens?

Harris: Visiting them must have been a moving experience for you.

Bacon: Yes, it was.

Harris: Would you like to talk some more about your trip in 1921?

Bacon: We were met at the railroad station in Vienna by my uncle, Ernst Lecher, the physics professor. And he had on pajamas! And my cousin Gretl had on a paper coat! We had come with our baggage, my father, my mother, and I, and so there were five of us to transport to my aunt's house, uphill, and quite far away from the railroad station.

My father wanted to hire a taxi to get to the house, but Uncle Ernst said, "Oh, no, Bacon, Nur die Schieber tun das!" Only "Schieber -- the "pushers" would take a taxi. And the "pushers" were the Jews. Now, unlike the Grunerts, he was not anti-Semitic, but he was using the current language in Vienna at that time. So father hired a horse and buggy and Gretl and I walked long stretches uphill to spare the poor horse! My father couldn't argue with Uncle Ernst's attitude. It shows the general feeling in 1921 that people had. The Jews owned the stores; they had money; and they always found their way. Even without a

strong personal prejudice against them, a university professor in Austria was ashamed of being compared with the wealthy Jews.

Harris: You mentioned that Gretl was wearing a paper coat. They had obviously suffered during the war.

Bacon: Oh yes. People in Austria in the first World War suffered very much. Everything was strictly rationed. I remember we bought meat which was very expensive for our relatives. And Gretl, my cousin, who was five years older than I, said when she saw this meat coming to the table, "I wanted to go and grab it in my fingers and just eat it like a tiger." She hadn't seen any meat for so long. Meat was difficult to get and was very expensive. One dollar in American money was exchanged for 70,000 Austrian crowns in 1921.

And these same Austrian relatives had yet another war to live through. Cousin Gretl's first letter to reach me after the war in May of 1946, described her experience: "We lived in the catacombs for five weeks, my three children and I, sleeping on the thin mattresses on dirt floors with little to eat, sharing candles and depending on handouts. Then the news: War's Over! We emerged from underground darkness and walked through the streets. The sun was shining, the fragrance of lilacs in bloom brushed on my awareness; overturned streetcars lay on their sides; dead horses lay in the streets; screams of women raped by Russian soldiers (our saviors from the Nazis!) mingled with the smells as I walked the many miles to Grinzing holding the hands of the little girls and urging them forward. We didn't know whether our house would be invaded or not..."

But that summer of 1921 was a wonderful summer for me. The First World War was over; we went down to Karnten and to Viktring.

We stayed two months and travelled widely in Austria, went south to the Austro-Hungarian castle in Viktring where some of my mother's Hungarian relatives lived. It had many, many rooms. There were numerous servants and we were guests. I remember at 11:00 at night, my Tante Helene came with her long flowing white robe and a candle in her hand. She wore an elegant crown-like cap with a black band following the edge and a little piece of lace hanging down in back. She was very

beautiful, tall, and regal. She came with a candle in her hand and woke me up and said, "Madi, we're going to the chapel." The castle had its own private chapel. Here we were, in rooms on the second floor, a high second floor with a loggia. The loggia was a kind of veranda with arches, big arches, that encircled the courtyard on the second or maybe third floor. So we went in our nightgowns, each carrying lighted candles, following Tante Helene. We were up on a higher level looking down into the chapel. Tante Helene had lit candles inside the chapel. Then we went down into it. It wasn't a prayerful thing; there wasn't any service or anything, but everything was mysterious; everything was beautiful, and if you felt like praying, you prayed. But this incident of seeing the chapel at night, in candlelight, stays in my mind. We were all like ghosts in white nightgowns, you know. It was typical of my Tante Helene who dramatized things.

My mother dramatized things too. Father might ask about the soup at the dinner table and Misa would say, "Oh, that is my Soupe a la Rouchefoucauld," or perhaps, "Soupe Tettrazini."

We would go into every church when we travelled and look at it and admire it. I would say that my mother had deep religious instinct, and my father deep ethical feeling. My mother always kept a beautiful aesthetic feeling. All our Austrian relatives were Catholics, but they didn't go to church on Sundays. It was an inherited ethical and moral commitment.

Would you like me to tell you about the kayak trip I took on the Danube with Konrad Lorenz?

Harris: Please do.

Bacon: Konrad Lorenz, Herbert Magg, and Walter Bernatzig were three very interesting young men, all of whom were wooing my cousin Gretl Lecher.

Konrad rode a motorcycle when he was eighteen, was very active, curly-haired, blond chap, and an excellent swimmer. His father was a world-famous doctor, Adolf Lorenz. Konrad is the famous biologist, a Nobel prize winner, still living today. He is about three years older than I am, and I still see him whenever I go to Vienna.

Konrad was, in a way, the most dramatic of the three.

Walter Bernatzig was interested in architecture, and his family was well-known in Vienna in cultural circles. I liked him very much myself. He married a Hungarian girl later, and he became a Rosicrucian. The latest I heard about him; he went through the war, and he must have died -- I don't know sometime in the sixties. We heard that he wanted to leave the Rosicrucian order, and he just disappeared. A gardener told Konrad Lorenz that he thought maybe he was done away with. It's a mysterious story. We never knew the end and probably never will. It was a tragic end for a brilliant man.

The third wooer of Gretl was Herbert Magg, a cellist of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, a tall, gentle person, whom she ultimately married. Konrad later married Gretl Gebhardt, also a doctor of medicine.

Well, I was talking about our kayak trip in 1921. We took the night train from Vienna to Linz, third class, sitting up. Since it was pretty empty, the boys got up in the v-shaped baggage rack and slept up there. Gretl and I slept on the seats, the hard board seats, with our knapsacks under our heads. We got out of the train at Linz and put our kayaks together. These kayaks are collapsible; we had two of them. We had camping gear with us too. So we floated down the Danube in kayaks for three days, stopping at every wonderful site, like the great monasteries or castles at Melk and Durnstein, where some of my mother's relatives lived. Of course, the castle was pretty old and dilapidated, but interesting. When we got to Durnstein, my imagination went wild. There is a great cliff of rocks that comes down on the opposite side of the Danube. I think it would probably be the south side. And on the north, sits the castle of Durnstein, near another outcropping of rocks. The story goes that King Richard the Lion-Hearted was captured on his return from the Third Crusade by Leopold of Austria in 1192. He was secretly imprisoned at Durnstein unbeknownst to the British. Richard's favorite troubadour, Blondel, was the only man who knew a song which Richard had composed.

So Blondel travelled through many lands singing Richard's song. Finally at Durnstein, Blondel heard a faint answer to his song, and after two years of incarceration, the British paid a huge ransom for King Richard's release.

In later centuries, robber barons used to put a chain across the Danube between the rock outcroppings. So you had this rock wall on each side, and the chain across the Danube, just under the water level, so any boats that came would be caught by the chain. Then the robbers would swoop down and invade the boats.

We camped on a sandbar near the rocks. Crisscrossing our double paddles that we'd stood on end, making a crotch, we hung our tent to form a wigwam-like structure. We mused over twelfth century dangers and criminals. Now our crime wave -- Somehow when I think of our kind of crime, it seems so much less interesting than the robber barons who at least had to ride a horse and brave cold weather. There's no romance in our kind of crime, is there?

Harris: No, I'm afraid not.

Bacon: On this trip, we lived in bathing suits except when we went into villages and churches. You didn't wear pants in those days, skirts and dresses in town, and knickers for mountain climbing. Pants weren't proper.

The Danube is a fast flowing river which in flood time overflows its banks and leaves numerous ponds and some deep pools of water near the river. Gretl would throw hard-boiled eggs into a pool and Konrad and Walter would dive for them. Konrad could go very deep and he would make a glamorous dive, and come up, always the winner in egg-diving contests.

Harris: They were trying to impress the ladies, I guess.

Bacon: Well, sure. At any rate, we arrived in Vienna at the end of that trip. I'll never forget it. That was my first real introduction to Konrad Lorenz. Now, what is also of interest is that his father, Adolf Lorenz, had been the tutor of my mother and her brothers and sisters in Hungary. I think I mentioned that before.

Adolf Lorenz came to New York in 1930, I think. He was the discoverer of what we called the "silver nail" operation. In hip operations, they inserted a silver nail so that you wouldn't have to be on crutches for months and months. The hip healed more rapidly with the "nail" support. Dr. Lorenz was quite lionized by New York society!

Later by accident, because of Gretl's friendship with Konrad, the second generation children of both families became friends. Walter, Herbert, and Gretl are dead, but I still visit Konrad when I go to Austria. And for many years, Monika Kickert, Gretl's daughter, has been Konrad's secretary and personal assistant.

Adolf Lorenz built a lovely -- well, we call it a "Schloss," a castle in Altenberg, by Greifenstein, outside of Vienna. A grand staircase winds upward to a high second floor in an expansive hallway. Baroque angels are painted on the walls and domed ceiling. Konrad still lives there, near the Danube, surrounded by three or four dogs and many bird cages. He built a separate house for a room-sized aquarium across Adolf Lorenz Street. The behavior of some twenty-five different species of fish is continuously being observed by young biologists working with Konrad. Geese, dogs, birds, fish -- the most modern behavioristic observations and conclusions are being explored in a unique old world atmosphere. Now confined to a wheelchair, Konrad Lorenz, at eighty-four or eighty-five, still spends hours daily writing and dictating. He has written so many books that are famous. First Man Meets Dog. He writes in English or German, both. He's fluent in English. He is a controversial character, a pioneering animal biologist. And he put forth ideas that many scientists thought weren't really scientific, didn't prove things enough. But he kept on going, and after all, you don't get the Nobel Prize unless you've done some pretty wonderful work. And Konrad got the Nobel Prize a long time ago. We love him, of course.

Harris: Well that's a very interesting insight into a brilliant career.

Bacon: But, you see, Austria, Vienna, the Lorenzes -- well, when I think of all the famous people who have influenced me -- people like Konrad Lorenz and Albert Einstein. He was a deep influence on me in

his peace work, his love of music (he played the violin), and his radiating personality and search for infinity. I don't think I told you that I translated a couple of his lectures for him, did I?

Harris: No, you didn't. You told me you had lunch with him when you were still at Francis Parker School.

Bacon: Ah, in the seventh grade, as a child.

Harris: Yes. And then you met him again?

Bacon: Well then, as a senior in high school, my best friend and I -- my best friend was a brilliant woman who became a doctor, a pathologist. She was very much interested scientifically in Einstein. And I went with her to lectures that Mr. Einstein gave at the University of Chicago. I was pretty floored; I mean, I didn't understand much. But she was interested, and we went to two or three lectures. That was the beginning of college days, I think.

Then, just after I was through with the university, after I had my bachelor's degree, I was asked by the Covenant Club in Chicago to translate several lectures that Mr. Einstein gave on peace. He did much lecturing on peace before he retired, finally, to Princeton and stayed there. I was very honored to be asked to translate. Well, by that time, his English was excellent. He didn't need a translator. He looked at me during the lecture about two or three times, groping for just the right word. And I had this feeling of tremendous responsibility to get just the right word for a man like that. I can remember I felt extremely humble about it. But it was a thrilling experience. Reading his Out of My Later Years deeply impressed me.

And then, the final moment with Mr. Einstein, for me, was when I was on the faculty at the University of California, and had developed the University Extension Chorus. The chorus met in San Francisco on Powell Street for eight or ten years of the chorus' existence. And at 10:00, at the end of the chorus rehearsal or a little after, I walked out on the street, on Powell Street, and there were notices in the paper, "EXTRA! EXTRA! EINSTEIN DEAD!" And it still gets me. I was so touched by it, and what he had done, that it really affected me. And I came home and wrote my reactions, and

the Chronicle printed them. You remember, when I was in the seventh grade, he discussed the infinite and unbounded. And then when you think of peace, and how small our world is now. But his concepts were broad; they touched you.

Hull House

Harris: Was 1922-23 the year that you worked at Hull House?

Bacon: Oh, yes. I went and got myself a job assisting in the art department at Hull House, one day a week. I think it was Tuesday. Jane Addams was living there. Mrs. Robert Morse Lovett, Jane Addams, and Ellen Starr were three wonderful women in Chicago in social service work. Robert Morse Lovett became governor of the Virgin Islands. He had been an English professor at the University of Chicago. And his daughters, Beatrice Lovett and her sister were friends of mine. I taught their children piano.

Harris: You didn't teach music at Hull House?

Bacon: No, I was an art assistant. Halstead Street was a poverty area. There were primarily Italians and Greeks in this part of the city. These art classes had nineteen or twenty children in a group, and an older sister would frequently bring a little brother to class. One day, a girl brought a five year old brother along. Well, what's the five year old going to do while the others are working? The little guy started to roller skate on the floor. It was a wonderful smooth surface! So I would take care of that, minor problems, as the art assistant. And then everywhere in that area were vending machines dispensing pumpkin seeds. You put a penny in the slot and you got a whole handful of pumpkin seeds. And you would chew them and spit the shells out on the floor. So my first art work was taking care of children spitting and roller skating! But it got me interested. The teacher was Dorothy Loeb. If my memory is right, she was the aunt of the Loeb who went to prison, the famous Loeb-Leopold case.

I had done some sculpting and clay modelling at Francis Parker and had fixed up our garage so that during my senior year, the classes were held in our garage. But I didn't feel I could draw because I couldn't make things look like anything. And I

didn't think much of myself in art. But it was an opening; they needed an assistant. And these children were just natural. They hadn't been taught art. So I handed out paper and crayons and pens and pencils and whatnot. And I began to learn. What I learned very early was how to motivate them. They were already motivated, but I learned to ask questions or to draw them out and say, "I like that." So that was very excellent training for me.

I remember one time when I took the whole class to Lincoln Park, to the zoo. I remember carrying three hundred pieces of paper. I gave them all crayons or pencils. -- There were a couple of children who had never been on the streetcar before; they were that poor. Most of them brought streetcar fare, but I had to pay several fares. -- We went to the zoo and walked around the outdoor cages and saw the elephant. The peacock nearby squawked and opened his feathers wide. The peacock, with all the blue and purple and those iridescent colors in his tail, looked right at the children. And they went wild. Three hundred pieces of paper weren't enough for their drawings. I ran out before our trip was over. There were nineteen children and they used paper after paper, even using the backs!

Then we sat down for lunch on the grass somewhere. One girl said that somebody had stolen fifty cents from her purse; she had no money. Her name was Tripolina Partipilio -- I'll always remember that. It was a delicate situation for me to handle because I didn't know whether she was lying or telling the truth.

Harris: Or she had lost it.

Bacon: Or she had lost it. She was in tears. At any rate, it's a long story, but that zoo experience was memorable.

Harris: Did you attend some of the evening dinners at Hull House?

Bacon: Oh, yes. I often stayed for dinner. I made friends there. One of my friends was Helen Tipps, a graduate of Vassar, who was in social service work and was trying to become a garment worker because she wanted to enter the union. She was a labor lawyer later in Washington after earning her

J.D. at U.C. Berkeley. We had what we called Socratic discussions every Tuesday evening. One of the people involved was Ralph Gerard, later the head of the physics or biological sciences department at the University of Chicago. At any rate, he was Socrates. His wife Peg Gerard became a psychiatrist, a Chicago psychiatrist in the Alexander and Horney days. Alexander and Horney had come over from Europe. At any rate, there were about six of us at these Socratic discussions. We would talk about anything, and Ralph would keep the subject on track as much as possible.

Peg would play guitar later, and we would sing some songs. Those Tuesdays were wonderful for me, the afternoon with the children, teaching, supper with Jane Addams, at a big refectory table with Ellen Starr, Mrs. Lovett, and faculty members and guests and all the people who lived at Hull House; I feel privileged, in retrospect, because I was the youngest. I was about seventeen, and my friends, Tippy and Gerard, were college graduates and interesting conversationalists. One thing I remember -- we made a trip to the sand dunes of Indiana which was my great recreation area. I knew the hikes and the plants since I went there a lot on weekends. So I introduced them to my area. We all went swimming naked, I remember. I was very shy about going in naked, but because everyone else did it, I did it too. That was an experience, that first time! In the mountains, our family would go in streams and lakes, but to do this in public was shocking. Remember, my mother hailed from the Victorian era.

Harris: This isn't a story you would tell your mother?

Bacon: But my mother might have loved it! My mother did go swimming, never naked; she was always modest in person. And one of my brothers inherited that modesty from her, because it was a question of good taste; it's good taste. But she was really very free in many ways.

There were wonderful people at Hull House, and an atmosphere of social consciousness. Jane Addams was an unsentimental woman, but she had a warm face, a great lady. Recently, I have been trying to think who are the five or six great people in my life, that I remember. Certainly Jane Addams is one of them. Then the one I immediately think of in connection with Jane Addams is Marianne

Hainisch, from Vienna. She, I think, was a founder of The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom. Her son Michael became the very first president of Austria in 1919 when Austria first became a democratic country. I remember her house in Vienna and also the summer home in the Semmering where President Hainisch and I played on mouth harmonicas while seated on the kitchen table!

I had heard about the Women's International League when I was a child. My mother was an early member. It started in The Hague, if I'm not mistaken. I remember Frau Hainisch well as an old lady with penetrating eyes and a little black cap on her head. A lot of these early memories stem from my teens.

The Hainisches, the Adolf Lorenzes, and then there were the famous doctors that my mother always mentioned like Dr. Chiari and Dr. Billroth. One of these, Dr. Billroth, was an intimate friend of Brahms. Another friend of Brahms was Ottilie von Balassa. We used to go to her house in the Oed, the countryside south of Vienna. Ottilie von Balassa lived in this house where Brahms was a visitor on many occasions with Ottilie's mother. Ottilie's nickname was Madi, Madi von Balassa, a Hungarian name. We loved her very much. We played on her excellent piano which Brahms had played on many times. She wrote a book called Die Brahms Freundin, telling the story about her mother and her friendship with Brahms. Many letters in this book were published for the first time. It was dedicated to my brother Ernst. This book should be translated! However, my memory has carried me far afield. Let's come back to Hull House.

Harris: Did you spend more than one year at Hull House?

Bacon: Not really for teaching. I kept going to Hull House for pleasure even when I was at the university the following year.

Harris: You entered the university in 1922.

Bacon: Yes. In high school, I was a better classroom student than an exam taker. I got nervous in exams. As a senior in high school, I began to think, "Well, this is getting kind of ridiculous; I'd better get all the exam taking experience that I can." And I had heard about some exams at the University of Chicago being given in German. Well

I wasn't studying German particularly at the time, but I thought, "All right, I'll take the exam." I took this exam at the university before Christmas. There were three parts. One was translating German into English; then English into German, both of which were easy for me; and then there was one grammar question. I never felt confident on grammar. But I had an excellent French teacher at Francis Parker School in my freshman and sophomore years, and she drilled us on verbs and grammar. So in reading this third German question, I thought about the answer in French and then translated it in my mind into German. If you had asked me about past participles or this or that, technically, in German, I might not have known the answer. But, from my French training, I was able to handle that grammar question, and I happened to win the scholarship. It was very exciting because there were over 300 hundred in the competition.

My father was pretty proud of me. Of course, I wanted to go to college right away, in the fall of 1922. My mother wanted me to concentrate on piano and French and live at home. But staying at home and doing piano and French did not appeal to me. Besides, I had been at home until I was eleven anyway. I wanted to go to college. I was really unhappy. My mother just insisted that I was too young to go to college.

Harris: Do you think she might have felt differently if it had been one of your brothers? Did she feel this way because you were a girl, or because you were the youngest and the only one left at home?

Bacon: Possibly, possibly, and I was the apple of her eye. After four boys -- she had one that died -- she always wanted a girl. She showered me with affection. My brothers ought really to have hated me, but they didn't, strangely enough. I always felt that my mother was awfully good with children until they were about twelve, until adolescence. But after adolescence, I don't think she was such a good educator.

Harris: She really wanted to spend that year with you.

Bacon: Oh, I'm sure, yes. And then, later, she always wanted me with her. And she also wanted me to get married, but no man was ever good enough. So she always ran down everybody I brought home.

University of Chicago, Undergraduate Years

Harris: But you finally did go to the university in 1923. You mentioned that you lived in rooms, you did not live at home.

Bacon: Well, the first year at college, I lived at home, but I had to get away from my mother who over-loved me and was possessive of me. I would have had no college life. So I found a room near the university as many other people did. I paid about a dollar a day at that time. And I got my ten dollars a week from my father and that had to include everything. My oldest brother Alfons, also got his ten dollars a week as did my other brothers get their ten dollars a week. And, of course, with nine years of inflation between Alfons' and my college days, ten dollars didn't go as far. I was much too proud to ask my father for help, so I accompanied dance classes, and I had a couple of private students to whom I taught piano. So I kept up with music a little bit, but I did not get enough practice. I always felt guilty that I didn't practice more.

Harris: And you continued your interest in art at the university?

Bacon: Oh, yes, I minored in art. I studied art history and also had a wonderful course in color from a man by the name of Sargent, and I think that his first name was Walter John like the great painter, I don't remember for sure. At any rate, I also worked at clay modelling with Elizabeth Hazeltine. She was excellent especially with animal sculpture. The only thing I have left is that little baby's head over there [Points to sculpture] that I can show you.

I always felt that I couldn't draw. Sculpture, working in clay, felt better to me. But I never really pursued it. I always thought I would take it up when I was older. I felt the same way about the cello, that I would pick up cello when I retired. But somehow, in retirement, I seem to be still teaching singing! I haven't really retired.

You know something important happened when I was a freshman at the University of Chicago. There was a big garment strike in 1923. I was a member of the Liberal Club, and eight or ten of us went to

observe the garment strike. There we saw Ellen Starr from Hull House, who in her sixties or seventies, was walking the streets, watching the strikers and carefully observing how the police handled the situation. Here we were from the university interested in social conditions and strike control methods. As I walked with Thorstein Veblen's stepdaughters, we were picked up by the "Black Maria," the police van, and taken to jail. I wasn't booked. Only two Jewish law students from our group were razed and jailed. We bailed them out for \$25, and at their court trial later, they were scolded in a most patronizing manner by the judge and then released.

My father, you see, was so involved with politics and world affairs that it rubbed off on me. The president of the Liberal Club was Ira Terbush who had been a student at Amherst, under Alexander Meiklejohn. Meiklejohn was removed from Amherst because he was too much of an outspoken liberal for the Ivy League schools. He spent his later years in Berkeley and his wife and friends established a Meiklejohn Library.

Also in the Liberal Club was a woman who came into my life later, Katherine Lillie, daughter of Frank Lillie who became head of the biological sciences division at the University of Chicago. He was also one of the chief founders and developers of Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory.

At any rate, this garment worker's strike was the first big strike of its kind in Chicago. It was 1923; I don't remember if the strike started in Chicago or New York. I know that there were intolerable working conditions: "piecework," in which work was sent home to be sewn by a woman who might get twenty-five or fifty cents an hour for her work when she brought it back. Sometimes an eight or ten year old girl would be putting in her work, too. There were very bad conditions. The garment workers' union struck. A group of us from the Liberal Club walked up and down the street to observe how the city police handled the strike.

I had made friends at Hull House with Frieda Reicher who was a labor organizer in the garment union. I walked with her for several days and learned much about union organization. This strike lasted quite awhile and there was much newspaper publicity. The activities of university students

are always picked up by journalists; they wanted to know what we were doing there.

First of all I must tell you that, walking up and down one day with Frieda -- we would get up at 5:00 in the morning to be downtown in the working area at 6:00 -- anyway, we were walking along Van Duren Street, I think. There was a very high curb stone. A woman got off the elevated, ran across the street, and stumbled at the curb, and fell on the street. I instinctively went to help her get up. Frieda Reicher walked on, didn't wait for me. Then, this woman got up and dashed like a scared rabbit into a doorway. Well, she was a "scab." She was a woman who was still working when the rest of her buddies had struck. Well, I caught up with Frieda, and Frieda said, "What did you do that for?" It was my first inkling -- see it hadn't occurred to me that a dear friend of mine, Frieda, could have some cruel motive or other. And then it occurred to me, maybe Frieda had tripped her and made her fall. I don't know. I'm just pointing out that she was a labor organizer and naturally didn't like a scab. Frieda is still living; I have meant to ask her whether she tripped the scab. She might not have, but, why her irritation with me?

Anyway she went on, but she was annoyed with me. That surprised me. At any rate, we walked into shops. I had my eyes opened when I saw a very small shop with just two or three people working. Here was a big table and a man cutting 200 pieces of silk, one on top of the other. He was cutting 200 dresses at one time! The slightest slip of his very sharp scissors would wreck 200 dresses, you see. Here we were, about six of us from the Liberal Club, standing around watching him and talking to him. And I said, "Do you mind telling us how much you get paid?" "\$2.50 an hour." Well, I thought, that's very good, isn't it? That's excellent pay at that time. But I think I remember asking, "How many months a year do you work?" "About five months." "Oh, that's all in this industry? You mean the rest of the time you don't have any work?" "That's right." "Do you own your own shop?" "Yes." "What happens in a strike?" "We'll go under. A big firm can handle it, those with a hundred workers or more, but I can't last. A week is the most."

So that's when I learned that \$2.50 was not good pay considering only five months of work out of twelve. And I became interested in studying sociology and political economics. Through my friendships at Hull House, the previous year, I learned a little about the hardships and problems which you don't always learn about in books.

Harris: Did the Liberal Club get involved in the strike at all, other than as observers?

Bacon: No, but Ira Terbush, having had a lot of experience at Amherst, said, "We had better discuss this with the powers-that-be." There was publicity about university students picketing in the daily paper. There was a picture of me in the Chicago paper, talking to a mounted policeman on horseback, for instance. I was quoted. "The pretty co-ed said this," and so forth. So you feel kind of sardonic about that. Three of us went and had a session with the president of the university, Max Mason. He ushered us into his office, and said, "What can I do for you?" And Terbush said, "We just thought we should inform you about what the Liberal Club students are doing. We're observing a strike, and there is unpleasant newspaper publicity about it, and we thought it would get back to the university. We just thought you should know about this." He asked a few further questions, and said, "I'm very glad you came to me about this, and you can count on the support of the university." Now, in retrospect, having taught at Cal, having lived through the sixties and seen what's happening in uprisings here, I'll never forget Max Mason saying, "You can count on our support, the support of the university." For us green students, you see, in the Liberal Club, it was a wonderful feeling.

Harris: It was certainly very encouraging.

Bacon: Well, it also made us feel good that we had come and that Terbush had been wise enough to bring up the matter. I wonder what would have happened if the matter had come up at the University of California? I think Clark Kerr might have reacted similarly, maybe Robert Gordon Sproul, I don't know.

There were other people who were very important to me at the University of Chicago. We had a very active poetry club. The leader at the time I'm remembering was George Dillon, a poet in his own

right. And my friend Gladys Campbell in the humanities department. The reason I got interested in the poetry club goes back to Francis Parker School. We had morning exercises when people like -- oh, who is that Irishman? -- James Stephens, he came to Francis Parker School. And we had other poets. Rabindranath Tagore came and had lunch at our school, and then we met him again later, at a dinner in Oak Park. We had poetry during our morning exercises, and we learned to appreciate new literary directions.

So at the University of Chicago, I joined the poetry club. I wasn't a poet, but I wanted to grow in my reading and my friends were writing poetry.

Mrs. William Vaughn Moody had established a tea room in Chicago. On Sunday evenings, she invited poets to read their poems, and we went and had supper there, and met the poets. Many of us from the poetry club went. That was a wonderful experience. Carl Sandburg came, sat on the corner of a table, played his guitar, sang some of his ballads and recited his poems. Alfred Kreymborg came. I believe Vachel Lindsay was still living at the time, if I'm not mistaken. That must have been about 1926 or '27. Then we brought some of these men to the campus.

Harris: You were actually a Romance Language major, is that right?

Bacon: Yes. I began with botany and geology the first year, and of course, the required English. The second year, I went into social sciences: sociology, economics, anthropology. I was more scientifically interested. But, my friends, those with whom I lived and those I met outside of classes, were Italian-speaking and studying Italian, talking about Dante and so on. This aroused my interest. So I began to study Italian. And I continued with French which I had had in high school. My mother had started me in French. By junior year, I had to make a decision about a major. You know how these things go: a major and a minor. For a major in those days, you had to have twelve units. We were on a quarter system. A minor, you had to have, I think, nine units, or something like that. Well, I was allowed to have, a major of French and Italian combined, fourteen to eighteen units.

I spent a whole year studying Dante in my senior year, studying the Divina Commedia, reading it aloud, in Italian. I was the only undergraduate in the class, and by far the weakest in Italian; I had never studied Latin. It was a small class with, maybe six or seven students, with a wonderful teacher, Ernest Hatch Wilkins. He was dean of the college, later became president of Oberlin. But I'll never forget that man because he was such a broad-thinking humanist.

We loved our Dante classes, but it took me two hours to translate each Canto, whereas my friends could read through it, and then cogitate on the philosophy of it, and discuss it from every point of literature, music, the era of the 1300s, the time of Dante, which meant the great historical background of the early pre-Renaissance. Of course, I was pretty green, but I loved it.

Harris: What athletics did you participate in in college?

Bacon: All of them. In fall, hockey; winter, either swimming or basketball. I did a little more with basketball than with swimming, although I did some swimming. I was not a speed swimmer; I was more a form swimmer. Breast stroke was my best stroke, probably because my mother taught me the breast stroke as a five and a half year old. My brother Ernst, at Northwestern, was quite a champion breast stroke swimmer on the team. Then in spring we played baseball, and we had field meets.

We used to have to wear bloomers and middy blouses. Oh, the ironing! There was a time when you had to even wear a tie with the uniform! We played hockey outdoors in the midway so the passersby on the sidewalk could see us. By about junior year, which would be 1925 or '26, I was a leader in the Women's Athletic Association. I went to Ida Noyes Hall, our beautiful athletic hall, to Miss Dudley, a rare and understanding, wise athletic director for women. She believed in health education, not just physical education. I went to her and said, "This costume is really very difficult. Couldn't we wear shorts? Would you object?" We had discussed this at a committee meeting, and Miss Dudley gave in. I feel I had a hand in developing the use of shorts for women students at the University of Chicago.

Harris: They must have been much more comfortable than the bloomers.

Bacon: Very much. And then the middy blouses kind of went out the window.

In my senior year, freshmen and sophomores were required to take "phys ed." The juniors and seniors were excused from compulsory "phys ed" in 1926-7, so we were only nine seniors out for Field Day, and there were hundreds of freshmen and sophomores. Good heavens! We entered everything. (That was before they made rules that you could only enter three events.) So I played baseball; I went into field and track, high jumping, javelin, discus, etc.

Well now, since I was an ardent athlete, I would always be on the field before the coach was, and I would get bored waiting around for the coaches, so I just helped myself to a javelin and a discus and took them out to the field for fun. Suddenly there we were up against all these freshmen and sophomores on Field Day. So I volunteered to throw javelin and discus. I had never had training in it. And for some strange reason, I won in discus. I was written up in the newspaper, The Daily Maroon, as having broken an intercollegiate record in discus. [Laughter]

The athletic teachers were all very friendly to me, and they wanted me to go on and do graduate work. They really hadn't done much with me. My brothers made me a "tomboy" athlete. The university teachers suggested that I go out for the Olympics, but somehow, in my day, I didn't think that athletes were my kind of people. I remembered Sybil Bauer. She wasn't a girl I would want to invite to my house. And when I met Johnnie Weissmuller while teaching breast stroke and life saving at the Red Cross Institute at Lake Delavan, I was still further disillusioned. He was a world-champion swimmer and became the original Tarzan of the movies, but no girl wanted to go out with him a second time. So although I loved athletics, I didn't continue physical education training.

Summer Camp Experience

Harris: What were your summertime activities during those college years?

Bacon: Well, I was a camp counselor. I counselled for at least twelve years in three different camps. First came Milwaukee Girl Scout Camp: teaching nature study, driving the Ford truck to haul water, cleaning lanterns with the patrols. Then the Luther Gulick Camp Sebago-Wahelo, in Maine, teaching modern dance and chaperoning two Pullman cars of girls and little Camp Timanous boys from Chicago to Boston and on to Portland, Maine. My last camp, the one I stayed with, was the Ross' Camp Kechuwa at Michigamme, in upper Michigan. Helen Ross was a brilliant woman who understood adolescents. There were three sisters: Helen, Ella, and J.B. Ella Ross was a nutritionist and J.B. became a professor of history and literature at Vassar.

Helen Ross had founded this camp in 1914 with her sister, Ella. It was a very early private camp and a very important leader in camp programming. I think you want that date, 1914, because the American camping movement is something very dear to my heart. I think of private and public camp directors as the greatest contributors to the character, morale, and health of young people today. They are better than the schools, better than everybody else, because they include the outdoors in a group living situation. They are certainly character builders. I think the camp movement in America should be highly respected in foreign countries. I think they have learned from us. It is one of the great movements in America.

Harris: Was Kechuwa a co-ed camp?

Bacon: No. Kechuwa was a girl's camp, a large one. Girls from nine to sixteen. I was head of the waterfront and I had 115 people to take care of in three areas for swimming. We had an upper camp, a lower camp, the younger and the older, and then, there was a big peninsula with a diving platform. A number of Red Cross examiners were on our staff and we taught diving, lifesaving, sailing, and canoeing. My special hobby was teaching diving.

Lake Michigamme has many islands and we had a big canoeing program. It was a great experience. I worked with the Red Cross lifesaving, did much examining, and taught swimming for some ten years. At first, I also taught tennis there, then music. We put on two Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Rehearsals would be daily for ten days. Every day

I had the choruses and all soloists and on the eleventh day, I declared a day of rest. Then on the twelfth day, we had a morning run through and then in the evening we performed. We put on The Pirates one season and Pinafore another season. As a result of these operettas, the sailboats were named Pinafore, Pirate, Gondolier, and so on.

So I taught music first and tennis. I brought my Austrian cousin, Susi Leitmeier, to the camp staff. She came from Vienna, and did her master's in English literature at Vassar. She was the head tennis counselor when I became waterfront director.

I learned much about administration and child psychology at that excellent camp. Helen Ross, the head of the camp, was an exceptional psychologist with adolescents. She became the secretary at the Institute for Psychoanalysis in America, under Dr. Alexander when he was president.

I want to say something about the year after I left college, something that happened at that summer camp. J.B. Ross, the sister who later became a Vassar professor, and I read the whole Divina Commedia aloud, just the two of us after supper at camp, by candlelight. And I had received a C in Italian all those three quarters at college! But despite my C grade, it shows you what happens when you have a great teacher; my interest in Dante was sufficient to make me want to re-read the Commedia.

I mentioned psychology and psychoanalysis. Alexander was a big name in psychoanalysis, Alexander and Horney. Karen Horney also lived in Chicago. I knew her daughters, went to her home for dinner. One of her daughters became a doctor; I don't know about the other one. My sister-in-law, Katherine Lillie, whom I had met at the university and who married my oldest brother, became one of the pioneers in Chicago in the field of psychoanalysis.

Being surrounded by psychoanalysts in the early Freudian era of the '20s and '30s, I was somewhat confused by their concepts. When I was told that the spire of a Gothic cathedral was a sex symbol -- well! -- Too I observed the many personal problems of those psychiatrists whom I knew and I began to think that intelligent, insecure, problem-people went into psychiatry to solve their own human relationship problems!

Dr. Blitzen said to me, "You are the most normal member of the Bacon family!" To tell you the truth, I got tired of all the looking backward into childhood, wondering why mother didn't love me more, interpreting dreams. There seemed to be an in-depth grovelling and accusational questioning. Patients rarely seemed to finish an analysis process. Yes, I felt healthy and even conspicuously well-adjusted. Life was to be lived in the future. One could always "blow off steam" by going to the mountains, taking a walk, or by sitting in front of a fireplace with a friend and sharing one's feelings.

To this day, I give credit to my parents for instilling in us a respect for a broad education and community spirit, an independent and critical mentality, self-confidence, a healthy and agile body, and a warm and generous spirit. Work hard and you will always succeed was the motto.

Trip to Europe in 1927

Harris: You were telling me earlier that you had, by 1927, managed to save \$700 out of your hard-earned money and you went to Europe. Was that a solo trip?

Bacon: I went with Ella Ross, the nutritionist, the oldest of the Ross sisters. She was a dear friend of mine. I think we started out with my parents. Then Ella and I went to Italy. I was absolutely enchanted going to the Uffizi and the Pitti because I knew what I wanted to see from my art classes. I lived in the 1300s with Dante and Giotto. I remember, near Firenze, I went hiking on Monte Cecere. I had made friends with an English girl named Benni who spoke fluent Italian and was teaching at the British Institute in Florence. She introduced me to Guido Ferrando, the Byron scholar. Guido and Benni were the right companions for my adventurous spirit. When Mussolini held sway in Italy, Guido fled to the underground and ultimately to France. Later he became head of the Italian department at Vassar College and visited California on many occasions. He became a close friend of Dorothy Erskine, that great romantic and beautiful lady who gave so much inspiration and leadership to

Save the Bay and other organizations concerned with the greenbelt area around San Francisco.

One time Benni, Guido and I were walking on Monte Cecere at sunset, discussing Dante, when three Franciscan monks came on this little logging road, walking toward us in their Franciscan garb, with the cords around their robes and breviaries in their hands. I had the feeling of being in the early fourteenth century with Dante. Here I was in the environment of Dante; here were the Franciscans, and I had just fallen short of becoming a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis as a senior at college. At any rate, here came these three monks, Franciscans, down this road. And Guido and Benni were just the right people to be with because we all lived in the Divine Comedy mood.

And that sunset experience with the monks coming, we thought we were living in Dante's time.

Harris: You mentioned your interest in the Third Order of the Franciscans. Was this an intellectual or spiritual interest?

Bacon: Well, I wrote a paper in my senior year on the physical representations of Saint Francis in paintings. This was for one of my art classes and that got me very interested in Saint Francis. He was the man who had the first creche and the pope, at the time, didn't like it. Francis had been a very wealthy man. He gave up all his money and became a travelling priest or monk. In the village of Greccia, a little village not far from Florence, Saint Francis wanted to attract the public to come to church. They weren't coming enough. So the story goes that he brought in a live nativity scene at the altar to show the Virgin Mary and the baby, and an ox and an ass, and so forth. Did he bring live animals in? I can't remember about that. Anyway, he dramatized the nativity and people streamed in to church, so we read.

It helps to picture how, in European churches, you can walk around behind the altar. The altar isn't against the back wall as our churches have it. One theory of the origin of the word "carol" is that it was a ring dance in which people held hands and danced around the altar. So they held hands and danced around the nativity scene, singing, and that was the origin of our carols.

I'll never forget one evening about two years later, in 1929, when I was living in a little cottage in Almonte, in California, teaching at the Katherine Branson School. Guido and I sat by my fireplace discussing how Dante heard beautiful singing upon entering the Purgatorio, but for the entry to Paradiso, music was inadequate, but a great light shone! Then Guido recited favorite passages in Italian, and I remember, once again, that the sheer beauty of the Italian flow of words held my attention so completely that much of the meaning of the words escaped me.

Harris: How long were you away on that European trip?

Bacon: About five months. And after that I came to California for the first time.

MUSICAL EDUCATION

Introduction to California in 1928

Harris: What made you decide to make a change from Chicago?

Bacon: Well, I couldn't decide. I wasn't quite clear what I wanted to do with my life. When I was through college, I felt further along in music, really, than in other things. So I discussed it with my parents. My brother Ernst had moved to California. Ernest Bloch had just come to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He was a great musician and I had a lot of music studying to do because I had done primarily piano and practically no theory. So, in 1928, I came to California. My father still staked me to living expenses; he didn't object to this move. I got a little apartment on Mason Street, right below the Fairmont Hotel. I studied piano with my brother, singing and Gregorian chant with Guilio Silva at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and Beethoven sonatas with Ernest Bloch. Guilio Silva had come from Rome and was head of the voice department.

Those were the days of Ada Clement and Lillian Hodgehead. This might be of interest to Californians, because the San Francisco Conservatory is now one of the leading music schools in the country, and should be adequately recognized. I was a student in the early days

there (1928-30) under Ada Clement and Lillian Hodgehead. These two wonderful women had a little home in Mill Valley. They founded the conservatory on Sacramento Street. There was a main house there and a garage and several little buildings, one with an organ, that belonged to Lillian Hodgehead. Ada Clement taught piano and Lillian taught theory. Ernest Bloch was a world-famous composer, teaching in Cleveland. These two women got in their car, and they went to Cleveland and met Mr. Bloch, and talked with him, and got him to come out to California. They gave up their own bedroom and slept on the hillside in Mill Valley, so that Bloch could stay with them until a suitable apartment could be found. They hosted the Griller Quartet too when they brought the quartet to the conservatory.

It was primarily a piano school in the early days. They did teach a little voice, and they had a Mr. Ford, who taught, I think, violin; I don't know how early he was there. I studied Gregorian chant with Guilio Silva; that was one of my most interesting studies. I also studied voice with him. Being a student and living in San Francisco was very thrilling at that time. Montgomery Street was alive with activity. I went to concerts; I studied singing; I got into accompanying.

Harris: Was that how you supported yourself?

Bacon: My father still paid for expenses in '28, but then I began to get students.

Harris: Your brother was already established out here?

Bacon: My brother Ernst was here. He was studying and teaching at the same time. He lived on Edgehill Way in San Francisco during his first marriage to Penty Lillie.

Harris: Katherine's sister?

Bacon: Katherine's younger sister. My oldest brother Alfons married "Kiffie" Lillie, and Ernst married "Penty," Mary Prentice Lillie. She's still living, and she's a scholar in her own right. She made a beautiful translation of Dante's Divine Comedy which was published here. She got her doctorate here at Cal.

So I saw my brother and I had a wonderful time in San Francisco. I had two years here in California that were the happiest years of my life.

Now, my friend J.B. Ross, the youngest of the three Ross sisters from camp Kechuwa, was at the Katherine Branson School teaching English and history. She persuaded Miss Branson to have me come to teach tennis. So in February, I went to teach tennis at the Katherine Branson School. I remember I got \$4.00 an hour which, I think, was well paid for 1928.

Harris: Was the school out in Ross then?

Bacon: Yes.

Harris: How did you get there?

Bacon: I got there by ferry, the Golden Gate ferry -- there were no bridges. Then I took a train, a charming little train that went right near to the school. I loved the school. It's in a beautiful location in Marin County. Katherine Branson was an unusual leader; she had very high academic standards and was not too conservative -- well, from my point of view, just a little bit.

Out of that tennis connection came an invitation to be their first music teacher the following year. I had never had any pedagogy classes. Of course I had my mother as a teacher! So somehow I had to learn about pedagogy by experience. My first year at Branson, I'm sure some of the students suffered. I taught the whole school music and it was from first grade through twelfth. There were only girls at that time. Some came from early settler families like the Kent family. I think Elizabeth Kent was in seventh grade and she was one of my restless students.

I know I was trying to teach the seventh graders the seating of the orchestra along with the sound of the orchestra's instruments. Well, what does that matter to them? But I wanted them to know the instruments. I could get the children to sing and dance, but I felt I had to perpetrate "knowledge" too, and that was my problem. How and what and when? First and second graders I taught in the big gymnasium. I didn't realize that the gym meant playing games and running and shrieking. It took me some time to learn to divide up the long forty

or fifty minute period into singing, percussion instrument playing, dancing, and musical games. By the end of the year, I figure I became an acceptable teacher.

The high school presented no problem because choral singing was easy to lead. That was my first year of teaching concentrated on three days a week. It wasn't full time because I wanted to go on studying with Bloch and Silva at the Conservatory. I rented a house in Almonte which was near Mill Valley, above the railroad. This was a very thrilling year what with teaching and studying simultaneously.

Harris: You were not a Sierra Club member at that time?

Bacon: I think I joined the Sierra Club in 1939, coming out from Chicago to join a high trip.

Harris: Who were your friends when you were here in San Francisco in 1928-30?

Bacon: That was when I met Ansel Adams and heard him play piano. He became a world-famous photographer. His friend, Cedric Wright lived on Etna Street in Berkeley and hosted many musical evenings. He always made guests welcome overnight if one missed the last ferry to San Francisco. The ferry boats were few and far between late at night. He would pull out a large drawer and say, "Here is your bed, all ready for you." Then he would serve you breakfast in bed and you would choose a certain color of toast from samples numbered one through six! I remember hearing Ruth Slenczynska play an entire program at age four and a half at his studio.

Harris: Who else did you meet when you were out here?

Bacon: Cedric, Ansel Adams, and Ernst Bacon were close friends and all three were great magnets in the musical and artistic lives of San Francisco and Berkeley.

Ansel and Cedric were also early pioneers in environmental efforts working chiefly with the Sierra Club.

Elizabeth Wells, the headmistress at Katherine Branson School, was my closest companion. She played the lute and wrote poetry and together we went on many trips in her car, "Ahab." Her uncle

Chauncey Wells was an English professor at Berkeley, and at the Wells' social evenings, I used to play duets with Professor "Bull" [Willard] Durham, and Elizabeth and Professor "Bud" [Bertrand] Bronson would regale us with Elizabethan songs and lute music.

Dorothy Erskine was one of my earliest friends.

Harris: How did you meet her?

Bacon: Through my brother Ernst, I think. Dorothy Erskine and K.T. Wessels were the first two people that I remember well. Dorothy was a great walker, and a very literary woman. She wrote a beautiful biography of her mother, Dr. Ward, a very early woman doctor. Then Dorothy went to Russia and wrote a book for children about Russia. Then she explored the bay and deep sea diving in a program for the public schools. She wrote all kinds of pamphlets. She was a great environmentalist, one of the founders of Save the Bay. She was a great lady, one of the most beautiful people I've ever met in my life.

Harris: You sound as if you had thoroughly enjoyed your two years in California.

Bacon: They were glorious. I was exploring the world and had no pressure from home. I did my first teaching. I suffered with that because I never felt adequate.

Study in New York in 1929

Harris: But you decided to return to the east?

Bacon: Yes. At the end of that year, I had to make a decision. Am I going in for piano or am I going to be a teacher? What am I going to do? My mother had always pushed my becoming a pianist and I still played piano rather well. So I heard about the Julliard Fellowships. I decided to apply for a Julliard Fellowship in New York. That was the old school located in the nineties. And you could only get in on scholarship. They didn't take you otherwise, I don't think. Albert Elkus, who was already my friend through Ernst, recommended me. I was twenty-four. That was the last year you could apply. You had to be twenty-four or under. I remember that another San Franciscan, a pupil of

Albert's, Robert Turner, who was sixteen years old had applied.

I was afraid of the theory exams more than of the playing. I had paid for some lessons once, myself, in Chicago, so I had a little theory background. But I didn't have any college training. I studied harmony like mad, by myself because I had never had any courses in it. I had no teacher. I had given up my house. I practiced in Albert Elkus' apartment in San Francisco that summer. I taught myself sight reading going back and forth on ferries to Berkeley. I would take a pitch and then I would sing the notes and thus I taught myself sight singing. Then, at the end of the summer, I went to New York to audition. I stayed at the Barbizon-Plaza and was scared to death. The first audition I was frightened, of course. But they asked me to come back which was a good sign. Well, I went back to Julliard for my theory exams, and it looked hopeful, but I didn't make it. It was between me and another person. And who was the other person? Robert Turner, age sixteen, a brilliant pianist. Apparently the judges felt that he had more potential.

I had met Estelle Caen in San Francisco; she was one of Albert's pupils, and I knew her. And she was already in New York on a fellowship with Rosinna Lhevinne. I wanted to study with Alexander Siloti.

Well, at any rate, my father decided that I could stay in New York, but he didn't encourage it. Had I won the fellowship, he would have paid for my living expenses, but, since I lost, he did not offer this support.

But remember, he was a farm boy and a self-made man. Maybe he felt I wasn't worth it! But I was much too proud to go home. So I began to get myself students. Estelle Caen, Herb's sister, and I took an apartment together -- it was cheaper that way -- in Jackson Heights. I got the daughter of the janitor of the apartment building as a piano student. I got Morse Erskine's mother as a German student; we read Goethe out loud. Then, the wife of the minister of Puerto Rico studied piano with me. Finally, I became the accompanist for the dance classes at the Isadora Duncan Dance School and that was how I earned my living.

And so I went and studied with Siloti anyway. He insisted on a grand piano to practice on, so I had to rent a grand piano, not an upright. Estelle and I were in a little apartment with one grand piano in the bedroom, one grand piano in the living room, and a small kitchen with a little hall in between. So I studied in New York anyway for a year.

Harris: You did some work at a settlement house while you were in New York, didn't you?

Bacon: Oh, yes, Christadora House. And I went to Henry Street, also.

Harris: Were your experiences similar to those you had at Hull House?

Bacon: Henry Street and Hull House were somewhat similar, yes. Christadora House was an elegant settlement house. It was too "swell" for me, really. But it was my experience at Hull House that made me look into the New York settlement houses. I accompanied dance classes at Henry Street. I think I may have taught a little privately there too. Both places offered cultural opportunities for foreign born and indigents.

Return to Chicago

Harris: When did you return to Chicago?

Bacon: I came back to Chicago in 1931 and lived at home.

Harris: How did your parents feel about your career? Were they urging you to perform?

Bacon: Not exactly urging. I gave two concerts. I was invited to play at Swarthmore and at Yale, by faculty club invitation. I got \$100 for each concert! I was scared to death because I was pretty green and I hadn't had enough experience in performing. But after all, Ernst, being eight years older and having performed already, made me feel rather shy and inadequate, and I was very self-critical. I had grown up with my mother's critical attitude. Perhaps Ernst may have satisfied my mother's ambition. My father certainly recognized that I was many-sided and had many interests.

What I did when I came home was start teaching private piano. Other jobs were offered me. They wanted me to teach in a public school in Highland Park.

I could have gone into languages or I could have gone into teaching athletics. It was just hard to decide. It was sort of accidental. Small performance jobs were offered me and I took them. I got a lot of piano students and went around to some houses and taught them. I was living at home at the time, but as soon as I had enough piano students in Winnetka to earn my own living, I moved out there, to a little one room house which I found, just a summer cottage, on Elm Street. Moving was very difficult because my mother didn't want me to move away. But I had to get out from under her! So I earned my living entirely for a few years, teaching piano. Then I got the North Shore Choral Society which was a large community chorus.

My best friend was Florence Wieboldt Sieck, Mrs. Herbert Sieck. She was a member of the Wieboldt family in Chicago that was noted for its philanthropies. She recommended me for the position of conductor of the North Shore Choral Society and I accepted at once. I inherited the position from Mr. Larry Yingling.

And then the Glencoe Public Schools finally handed me a job.

Harris: This teaching and conducting was concurrent with your studies, wasn't it?

Bacon: In the sense that I was studying all the time, yes. If you mean while I was at Northwestern, and then at University of Chicago, that wasn't until 1938. But I realized, when I came back from New York, that I didn't know any music history. So I started to go to the [John] Crerar Library downtown. I began to read about the history of music. That's something you don't have to go to school to do. In the process of doing that, I read Volume I of the Oxford History of Music. It's certainly not a book you can just read, but I forced myself to read it. And I copied samples of music out of it. But I got bored just reading. I wanted to hear the music. I wasn't good enough at theory yet to read music by eye, as a composer has to do. I later learned to do it, but at that time I couldn't. So I had to

hear people. So it occurred to me -- why not make, and hear the music?

Harris: How did you recruit people to sing?

Bacon: I gathered eight friends who could sing and were interested. They came to my house every Monday night. That continued for ten or eleven years. I did old historical music with them at first. Then the English Singers came from England and gave a concert in Chicago. They so thrilled me with their music that I began to look up old English music. I became very excited about John Wilbye and Thomas Weelkes and the madrigal period of the late 1500s and early 1600s in England. And, of course, that led me into the Italian madrigal and so on. My group took the name Elizabethan Madrigal Singers, and it became a very important part of my study.

After just one year of existence, we were asked to perform informally. So we started to perform. Then we gave concerts every Christmas time and every spring, totally new programs each time. Pretty soon, I had a group of fifteen singers. I added only better singers to the initial eight so that finally I had a very good group of fifteen singers. They were absolutely dedicated. We did everything from memory. We would do a song like "Though Amaryllis Dance in Green" with five different rhythms on top of each other. I would perform the song once for the audience, and then I would ask the basses alone, the tenors alone, the altos and the seconds, and the firsts, each alone. And then we'd perform the whole five-part madrigal again. The audience loved it because they could really hear the intricate rhythms which you can't possibly differentiate at one hearing. I was so thrilled with what I was doing that I assumed everybody else had to be interested. Because of my enthusiasm, the listeners were interested. Then I gradually toned myself down a little, realizing that you don't have to teach, teach, all the time! You can do some performing!

I studied Canon Fellowes' book from cover to cover. Then, of course, later, I wanted to go to England to study with Canon Fellowes. He was the great historian of that period. But then the Second World War came along and I couldn't do it.

So that's how the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers were born. Their performances aroused my interest in

singing. The singers came for rehearsals on Mondays; their singing wasn't quite unified enough, so I developed the sectionals. First I had all the sopranos an extra time; then all the basses an extra time. Then I began to teach them. There were three on a part. I began to teach voice! That was the beginning of my voice teaching. We really developed some beautiful a cappella singing.

I think I learned the most about voice, not from teachers of voice, but from my observation of individuals in small groups like my madrigal group. And I have a pretty good ear and an inquiring mind. I think of myself as a cross between a performer and a critic. I was always very self-critical, perhaps too much so to be a straight performer, except in the field of conducting which is what I wanted to pursue. I wanted to be a woman conductor. But it was too early for women to be readily accepted in the field.

All this time, I was learning music and I was trying to educate myself in theory and in history. The process of listening carefully to madrigal singing, with two or three on a part -- sometimes one on a part -- sharpened my aural perceptions more than any kind of class teaching could have done. Studying the old music, reading the books of the era about performance, sharpened my skills. After those English Singers came and performed so beautifully, I wanted to make the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers outstanding performers. We travelled to Beloit, Wisconsin, to colleges; we sang at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago; we sang at Northwestern University when the new president was inaugurated. -- Here's a coincidence: Clifton Utley came and talked at the inauguration. He was a noted television reporter. Clifton Utley was the sports reporter of The Daily Maroon who wrote up my discus throwing at the University of Chicago. I met him the next time at Northwestern when my madrigal singers performed. That was a coincidence. -- Working with the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers taught me a lot about singing and about conducting too.

Harris: You mentioned that the Glencoe Public Schools hired you.

Bacon: Yes. I was the supervisor of music and teacher in the public schools for two years. Then I taught at Roycemore. Roycemore was a private girls school in

Evanston with twelve grades. I developed a glee club, conducted the chorus, and taught theory of music which gave credit for college in the high school. I taught the lower grades music also. During these years, I continued to conduct the North Shore Choral Society and the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers. They met on different nights. Oh, I also had a nurses' chorus.

Evolving a Theory of Teaching Voice

Now that I've mentioned Roycemore, I'm going to talk about Carolyn Kohlsaat. But before I talk about her, I want to talk about voice and singing a little bit.

Guilio Silva, from the Conservatory of Music in San Francisco, was an eminent bel canto voice teacher in Rome. He was a wonderful man who later did a lot of composing too. I had studied voice with him. He had a big heart and a wonderful spirit. But he couldn't answer my questions. I didn't know what kind of a tone he wanted me to produce with my voice. I had an intellectual and musical need to know. Do I want a bright tone? Do I want a lyric tone? What do I want? I didn't know. He would throw down the Concone exercises and give me a song and say, "You sing better when you sing a song than when you do an exercise. Let's forget the exercises." Many is the time I've felt that way with my students.

Then I studied with other teachers in Chicago. I had four or five voice teachers, different ones. But it was the final teacher, who was the least famous, who was the most important. This was Carolyn Kohlsaat. She began to answer questions. I must have been a nuisance as a student because I just couldn't accept, "Well, sing me this, sing me this." I was restless.

Carolyn Kohlsaat was a very wise old lady. When I had a little trouble speaking to classes; I had a husky voice; she said, "I will help you with singing and will teach you. But you must come to me every day for the next two weeks." The problem was that I was talking all day. There were twelve grades in this school; I was teaching and talking all day. I got a kind of laryngitis. I could hardly talk. My voice was in bad shape. I think, in retrospect, it was part of my personality and

excitement about teaching, giving out a great deal, not relaxing in between, and not being aware of how much energy I was putting into my work. It was my mother all over again.

So Carolyn cured me. She wouldn't let me sing at all. She had me hum very softly, without any energy. I had to relax my body and I had to hum with the tone coming from "nowhere," she said. I couldn't do it at first. But after two weeks of quiet, I could. She quieted me down and I stopped forcing anything. And I bless that woman every day because I've learned to teach this way myself now. I can now be very outgoing and motivating, but then I can sit back and relax my student.

Singing is so esoteric. And singing is the most difficult thing in the world to teach. You can't see it; you can feel it, and you can hear it. Now our most developed sense is sight. From childhood on, we are taught not to express our feelings too freely. We get inhibited after childhood. You've got to be polite in society. Now in order to sing well, as I now know, but didn't then, you have to have self-confidence. You have to stand up straight, put your hands out, and say, "I am I," and "I love the world and I feel like singing." You have to give your feeling and you have to shout it to the winds! Now, if one has a critical mind, something has to happen there. I didn't get a feeling of freedom in my singing from my voice teachers, any of them, until Carolyn Kohlsaas.

Without being an Eastern yoga expert, I've learned that if your body is completely quiet and calm, then you can find energy the way Isadora Duncan did. She stood half a day in one spot, trying to find where her energy originated. Where does the motivation come from? You put your hand on your diaphragm; you put it somewhere near your heart, somewhere there, and you stand still and you allow yourself to dream, to feel, to think. All right. What happened to me was that the tensions were released and with a relaxed body, I found that I could release the sound. The brain tells you the pitch and the sound that you want to make, and then your instrument does the work. You're dealing with breath, lips, tongue, and jaw. Those are your tools. If your body hangs loose and is free, your lips, tongue, and jaw form the words and you then summon the breath and energy to do what you want to do with your song. Not being a singer, this may

sound strange to you, but a singer will perhaps understand what I mean. I don't need laryngologists and physiologists to tell me how to teach singing now. It's a psychological thing; it's a physical thing; it's a mental thing; and it's an imaginative thing. If you teach singing via the imagination, you imagine yourself into your student's singing sensations. You observe the stiff jaw, the tongue which may inhibit the free flow of sound, and you work for sensory control of separate and individual muscles. I am afraid of the scientific singing teacher. William Vennan, in Los Angeles, was a leading expert, but my two musical and imaginative students didn't last with him.

It takes imagination and work in singing. The voice is a muscle. When you shoot baskets, you practice shooting a basket hundreds of times. You train your muscles to respond accurately. The same with your vocal musculature.

I have a concept of a tone I want to make for myself and for each student's voice, and what I've learned to do -- I'm eighty-one, now -- is to describe internal sensations. Sometimes you shouldn't analyze. Sometimes you should just let instinct take over and develop from there. But for the analytical student, you need answers. I didn't get to be a singer or a pianist because I was so self-critical and insecure. Now I know that I'm a born teacher, but I also know that I could have been a performer because I'm expressing myself all the time, and I'm fully aware of it. Just like now, sitting here, I'm expressing myself.
[Chuckles]

Harris: And you feel that your theory of teaching singing evolved from your early choral experiences.

Bacon: Absolutely. The Madrigal Singers taught me a lot. I learned by experimentation and teaching. The individual's voice in a chorus becomes a part of the group tone and merges with the glorious rich sound of the best singers' voices. The resulting choral sound gives an aural and body feeling of grandeur and beautiful harmony. Also a freedom of expression which few average singers could achieve alone!

I also, of course, learned from the Madrigal Singers about conducting. For example: choral

conductors hold their hands very high, a lot higher than instrumental conductors. That's because they want a vocal tone placed in the mask of the face and in front of the teeth and with high cheeks, not down in the glottis, in the throat area. Many conductors over-conduct and push the voice. When I teach conducting, I talk about the hand "touching a cloud" or "touching the air." You get sensitized with your fingers and you make small motions. A downbeat for a chorus should be a forward motion. My good friend Dr. Hans Leschke who is now long dead and who probably developed the first municipal chorus (in San Francisco) paid by city funds in the United States, was an eminent German musician with much knowledge. But Dr. Leschke would come down hard on the first beat of a measure. If I come right down, vertically, with my hands for a downbeat, looking at you as a singer, it makes you tense your throat. I'll show you. [Demonstrates] Down! Now, if I come with fingers and hand opening freely, like the leap of a dancer, flying, this motion propels the breath and lips, and thus the words, unconsciously forward. The instrumental downbeat has a physiological effect which frequently negates the volume and freedom of tone. Now I'm going to move my hands forward and downward and upward, to release the breath of the singers, like this [Demonstrates again] "Break forth" [Sings] You see, I shoot my hands out toward you. It's using that third dimension which is more effective than straight down. It also gives you a sense of blowing out your air to project when I do that.

Now these things are very important in choral conducting. There are a lot of little refinements; and not enough teachers work with fingers to affect the tone quality on vowel sounds. You have to hypnotize your singers. That's what a conductor is, a hypnotist of tone, rhythm, and spirit. I always had the image of the conductor at the fulcrum in the middle of an hourglass. Behind him, out toward the periphery, is the audience. In front of him is the chorus and, or, the orchestra. The motivation, the tempo, the mood, the feeling, everything comes from the conductor, starts with him. And I'm not only starting the quality of the music, I'm starting the speed of it; I'm starting the loud or softness, the dynamics. I'm activating 100 or 200 people from passive sitting or standing. I'm bringing to life the composer, Beethoven or Bach. Look what an obligation a

conductor has, really, if he is honest and thinks about it. So at the center, the fulcrum of the hourglass, there is the conductor. And the music flows from me to the chorus and orchestra in front of me and back around me and through me to the audience, to bind an entire auditorium of people into a union of joy or sorrow or beauty or cacophony. In short, we do become "one," and you can hear a pin drop.

I want to mention Calvin at this point, although this is out of chronological order, Calvin Simmons the former Oakland Symphony conductor. He was one of my little boys when I started the San Francisco Boys Chorus. He was such a smiling boy and I taught him to conduct. I gave him some fun rhythmic folksongs that were easy to conduct at first. But one day, I decided he was ready to do something serious. The whole chorus thought of him as being funny. So I gave him a very serious piece of music and said, "If you so much as walk out in front of that group smiling, I'll kill you!" I can remember saying it. And he never forgot it. You should have seen his serious face and walk when he entered the room to conduct Pergolesi's Stabat Mater.

Harris: How many choruses did you conduct in Chicago? There was the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers, The North Shore Choral Society, and then you also mentioned the Grant Hospital Nurses' Chorus and the Garment Workers' Union Chorus.

Bacon: That's right.

Harris: Did these all run concurrently?

Bacon: Mostly concurrent between 1933 and 1941. The Elizabethan Madrigal Singers went for eleven years; the North Shore Choral Society went for thirteen years, and the other two were about two years each. When I started to develop the Central YMCA College Music School, I gave up all the choruses except the North Shore Choral Society.

Harris: And you taught piano as well during this time.

Bacon: From 1922-30 I always had a few students. From 1931-35 I had many students and again between 1938 and 1941 to earn a living. From 1931 to 1941 I taught in the public schools for two years and then at Roycemore. I kept the North Shore Choral

Society and the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers; they met on different nights.

Graduate Study at the University of Chicago

Harris: And were you studying music at the time? You got your master's degree in 1941.

Bacon: Well, I studied seriously when I quit Roycemore and went back to the University of Chicago for a master's degree. I spent one or two semesters, I can't remember exactly at Northwestern, but I preferred to return to the University of Chicago to study in the new music department that Carl Bricken had started in the 30s. I was there for two years. I took serious counterpoint work then, and conducting, and analysis. I had lived in Winnetka for about nine years while I was teaching privately, or at Roycemore, or in the Glencoe schools. I was still living in Winnetka when I went to the University of Chicago. I drove my car to Chicago two or three days a week.

I remember that one Monday morning, at Lincoln Park, at what we call the Lower Bridge, a man waved me down to stop, so I turned off Sheridan Road, onto the bridge. This man was a fisherman. He said, "Call the police. A man is drowning." I was in the car with a friend and I almost started to drive on, but then I thought, "No, I'm a Red Cross life-saver." So I stopped the car and said to my friend, "You get the police; go to Fullerton Avenue and bring a policeman back." So I got out of the car and looked over the ramp on the side of the bridge. Sure enough, down there was a man in the water. It was very cold, late November. We had had a frost and I had a bad cold, but I took off my winter coat and my tight wool dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves, and I kicked my shoes off. I didn't even think about my minimal pink silk underwear. I ran off the edge of the bridge and dove into the lagoon, and swam over to the man. Steep vertical pilings lined the embankment about eight feet above the water. There was no way to climb out and I was worried about pulling him out. To my surprise, when I reached the body, the water was only about four feet deep, just above my waist; and I could stand up despite a slight current. He was a big man in a heavy overcoat with his face down in the water. I saw some papers floating out of the pocket of his coat, and I

remember reaching forward to grab them because I thought they would give his identity. -- My lifesaving had taught me a lot -- I turned him over. I remember inventing my own way of resuscitation at that moment. He was breathing when I got to him, but I had to hold his face out of the water with my left hand, and with my right elbow, I slapped my elbow against his waist as hard as I could for resuscitation. I was leaning over him as he was lying in the water. He stopped breathing. I called to the fisherman, "Please come down and help me!" A lot of people collected on the bridge staring down. -- I don't know how people collect so fast when there's an accident, but there must have been thirty or forty people at least. -- The policeman didn't come and didn't come. There I was; it was awfully cold; my right arm was exhausted trying to resuscitate with elbow slapping while holding the man up. -- Mouth to mouth resuscitation hadn't been learned at that time. -- I could in no way get him up the steep embankments. And there were these people watching and staring. Since my fingers were congealed, I couldn't open his tie, so I called, "Throw me a knife!" So the fisherman threw me a knife on a string and it fell off the string into the water. Finally, the policeman arrived and threw down a ring buoy. Well, what could I do with a small ring buoy except wrap the buoy around his body? You can't put a big man in a ring buoy. I wrapped it around him and tried to tie the rope so that they could pull him up. The rope broke. So I said, "Come down and help me!" I thought we could push him up from below if there were enough hands to push the body up over our heads. Finally, the policeman jumped into the shallow water. At that point, there were many willing hands, and since I was congealed, having been in the water probably seven to ten minutes, I went over to the embankment. Many hands were hanging over the embankment to pull me up. I remember running barefoot on the bridge to my car. The starter button was missing from the vertical spike. My feet were so cold that I couldn't get my shoes on; I put my hand in a shoe and pushed the starter button to start the engine. Then I drove to my family's house which wasn't far away from there on the north side of Chicago. I was dripping wet! [Chuckles] I walked over the concrete sidewalks into the house, and my mother gaped at me with an expression of disbelief.

I forgot to mention that the fire department had come with the pulmotor before I left when my job was over. My brother Alfons, the doctor, was a fire buff. He hung around the fire station near his hospital and often rode the fire engines. And he had heard the alarm and the fire engines go out. And when they came back, he said, "What kind of case was it?" "Oh, a drowning. A woman jumped in to save a suicide and they don't know who it was." "Well, that was my sister," said Alfons.

I didn't go to school that day. My father insisted that I get warm and go to bed. The warm tub which my mother prepared, I couldn't take; I was too cold. I had to have cold water first.

That night I conducted my Monday madrigal rehearsal. The next morning father's office was full of newspapermen. My family wouldn't wake me. So when I came down at about 8:30, my father said, "You'd better talk to them." The story was syndicated all over the country and I even had a notice from Canada about it. And the letters I got were amazing. But the most interesting one was from a man who was a friend of the dead man's family who wrote a letter and said, "Since you risked your life, you might like to know the kind of person you did it for. He was a Greek of high character. He had some kind of business problems, but he was a person of high character. He had three beautiful daughters." The friend gave me his blessings and quoted from a poem. I remember being very much moved by a person thinking about how I would feel after the experience. Well, at any rate, the man died. I remember I had letters from my professor at Northwestern and from a prisoner at the penitentiary at Joliet who had read the syndicated story. I was "An Unknown Heroine!" Hummm --

But we were talking about my work in music at the University of Chicago. I tried Northwestern first, but I wasn't happy with it.

Harris: Why was that? What was different about the musical education offered?

Bacon: Well, in the first place, I went to register, and I thought I would have to take history of music. But the registrar said, "Oh, Miss Bacon, you don't have to take that. You've had that background." I already had a reputation as a conductor, but

because I was performing Renaissance music with my Elizabethan Madrigal Singers, did not mean I had a sound historical background in music history. I didn't like being excused. It seemed too casual. My harmony teacher was very friendly to me, but I didn't feel I learned a great deal. The harmony exercises bore no relationship to music. I wasn't very happy with it.

Harris: The standards weren't high enough?

Bacon: Maybe. Then I eagerly took a course in old church music history because with my madrigal singers I had been doing very early music and I wanted to follow the development of choral music to modern time. The gentleman who taught that course did not impress me. I remember an assignment when I was going to give a talk on the modes, the Gregorian and the Greek modes; he didn't seem to know the difference between them. And that bothered me hugely when I was a young woman student. I thought, "Heavens, why should I study with him?" But this is past history. I just wasn't excited by my instructors.

So then I transferred back to my old alma mater where Carl Bricken was head of the department. The first thing I remember is my counterpoint class there. Five or six of us sat at a table with Bricken. Hilmar Luckhart who later taught at the University of Wisconsin and Ladislav Gamauf, a Hungarian who had been in a monastery for some ten or fifteen years were outstanding in the class. Gamauf could write a Crabbe Canon backwards and forwards in a few minutes, you know. Remarkable.

How Carl Bricken could handle a class of people of such a wide variety of experience! I was absolutely green in counterpoint. I didn't know anything about it. And here was this ex-monastic person from abroad with a huge knowledge. And here was Hilmar Luckhart and a couple of other students in the class with considerable theoretic experience. Carl Bricken was remarkable as a teacher; he interested all of us.

At any rate, we hardly used a piano at all. We sat at the table, and this was where I learned to hear music by looking at it. It taught me a great deal. We had to write counterpoint in four different clefs which isn't always done today. I learned to love counterpoint, but it was very difficult for

me. I had a whole year of it and having sung Gregorian chant in San Francisco made the canti fermi doubly meaningful.

Harris: So the University of Chicago was a good educational experience.

Bacon: Oh, yes! And the discipline in doing a thesis with Cecil Smith! He was about my age, a brilliant young man who became a music critic later.

Harris: Why had you decided to get a master's degree?

Bacon: Well, I just felt uneducated in the theory of music. Here I was conducting. I had a pretty good background in choral literature from my ten years work with my madrigal group and my large choral society. I studied the scores of Mozart, Brahms, Bach, and Schubert, and so on. But I didn't have a scholarly experience in analysis, and for symphonic conducting this seemed essential. My bachelor's degree was in Romance languages and so it took two years to do the work for the master's in music. My excellent piano training had involved me chiefly in classic literature, and, attending symphony concerts with my study scores, I learned to read and analyze scores fluently.

I'll never forget that master's degree examination! I was handed five pieces of music, a couple of pages each. "Discuss the composer and the period in which each piece was written and tell how and why you arrived at your conclusions." We had never been tested in this matter previously. But we were expected to know the difference between Byrd and Palestrina and Lassus by final cadences and general styles.

Harris: What was your master's thesis about?

Bacon: My thesis was on John Wilbye, one of the composers of the English madrigal period that appealed to me very much. I performed a lot of his music, and his lyrics and flowing melodic lines made me think of Brahms in a later era. Thomas Weelkes was an innovator whereas Wilbye was the great traditionalist.

Harris: It was the summer before you got your degree that you went to Tanglewood, is that right?

Bacon: I went to Tanglewood in 1940. Before that I went to the Concord Summer School. Tanglewood was an outgrowth of the Concord Summer School, I think.

Harris: Tell me about Concord.

Bacon: Dr. Archibald Davison of Harvard, Dr. Thomas Whitney Surette, the philosopher, and Augustus Zanzig, National Recreation Society Director, were the three great collaborators and editors of the Concord Music Series published by G. E. Schirmer. They were the initiators of the summer music and poetry school. Every day began with a half hour of Bach chorale singing and playing for all faculty, students, chorus and orchestra. Frank Lloyd Wright might have gotten the idea for his morning sing at Spring Green from Concord. Dr. Surette also read poetry frequently before we separated for classes. The teachers were all men who had a broad point of view. They inspired such a joy of singing. "Doc" Davison came to visit; and Wallace Woodworth from Harvard succeeded him. I think Woodworth was already at Concord before Tanglewood began.

When those Harvard Glee Club members became doctors or chemists or businessmen later on, they were the catalysts in developing community choruses in their home towns. Group singing was a necessary adjunct to good living. And to me, this is the crux of the matter, the purpose of my life and work, to instill that eclectic interest in the community, in the joy of performance so that one has a full rich life participating in a search for beauty.

Harris: In your work with the SFBC, you were not interested in turning out musical professionals.

Bacon: Not at first. Right. In fact, I used to advise my boys against becoming professionals if they wanted a decent life and family.

Harris: It's seems to me that I read in an interview with you that you called being a musician, "A heck of a life!"

Bacon: Well, an opera singer! It's hard to be a fine person sometimes. If I tell you the things that they say backstage, you wouldn't believe it.

Study at Tanglewood

Harris: I do want you to talk about the summer of 1940 that you spent at Tanglewood with Serge Koussevitsky.

Bacon: Oh, that was a great summer. The students I remember as outstanding at that time were Leonard Bernstein, Thor Johnson, and Lukas Foss. Bernstein and Foss are still living today. Foss was only about fifteen then, an Austrian refugee lad with a tremendous gift for playing the piano and conducting. He had a very arrogant, youthful approach as a youngster. The orchestra people didn't want to play under him, but Mr. Koussevitsky insisted. They made it very difficult for Lukas Foss. Of course, I can't blame a fifteen year old entirely for being what he is, when you think of the war years and a refugee coming to America and being on the defensive in a new country together with being the youngest student admitted to an almost professional conducting class with a master conductor!

Harris: Did you develop a friendship with him?

Bacon: Not with Lukas, no, but I did play tennis with Leonard Bernstein. He was a good tennis player. He was about twenty-two. I remember Bernstein, Foss, and Thor Johnson were with Mr. Koussevitsky every day working. The rest of us in the class worked with Stanley, Koussevitsky's assistant and we had Mr. Koussevitsky twice a week regularly.

Harris: How big was the class?

Bacon: I don't remember, maybe twelve or fifteen. But assignments were tough. I remember one Monday, I was assigned The London Symphony to study so that I could conduct it on Friday with the Tanglewood Orchestra. On Wednesday, one of my colleagues said to me. "Did you see your name on the bulletin board?" And I said, "No." She asked, "What were you supposed to conduct on Friday?" I said, "The London Symphony." She said, "No, you're not. There has been a change." So I went to the bulletin board, and sure enough, they had changed my assignment on Wednesday to do the Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto on Friday. The result is that I had only from Wednesday to Friday to prepare to conduct the orchestra. And that's the kind of professional pressure that is put on you at Tanglewood which is very good for a young dreamer.

I went to bed with the score. I had a little mansard room and there was a cow outside chewing its cud all the time. It was very good accompaniment for my thinking. But my method of studying was to be comfortable. I was lying on top of my bed there and I would look at the music and go through the whole score and then begin to analyze it and the changes of keys. I wasn't very experienced. I hadn't had an orchestra of my own, you see. These were early days. Today they wouldn't have admitted me. You can't attend conducting classes unless you have an orchestra to conduct, I believe.

Harris: What was the admissions process? Was it a competitive process?

Bacon: There were applications to fill out and letters of recommendation. We didn't have an audition in 1940. That was the first year of the school. It was a wonderful atmosphere. Koussevitsky was quite informal; and everybody was friendly. He had teas at his house with his wife and anyone could come. And [Paul] Hindemith was there. I used to go walking a lot in the hills and often ran into Mr. Hindemith. I observed him teaching a class in fugue. At any rate, it was a large class, forty or fifty students. And they were writing a fugue in class, on the blackboard. He just drew the music out of them, really remarkably. I remember that vividly; I was wishing I had been in that class.

I worshiped Mr. Koussevitsky and admired the tone he produced with his orchestra. When he rehearsed the orchestra at Tanglewood, I would sit in the front row in the empty outdoor shell, on his right, and I would watch his hand, and would copy his hand motion with my hands to see how he felt and communicated to the orchestra. I remember one wonderful performance of a C.P.E. Bach piece, but I couldn't understand Koussevitsky's strange tense hands shaking at hip level! He recreated great music despite hand motions that defied all rules of "good" conducting.

Harris: Were you the only woman in the conducting class?

Bacon: No, there was another woman, Dorothy Drake, from Boston, a very musical cellist. Of course, there were more men than women in the school, yes, but I

don't remember any other women in conducting classes.

I meant to tell you something. Koussevitsky was very kind in his leadership and at Tanglewood, one just flowered. There was an opera group with Boris Goldovsky. Then, was it Melville Smith who did some folk dancing? I think he was later the director of the New England Conservatory or the Boston, one of the big music conservatories in the east. At any rate, he was a great folk dancer and he inspired us to dance with him.

Harris: So you had more than one class Tanglewood.

Bacon: Oh, yes. We had conducting and I had chamber music with Rosario Mazzeo. He was a highly cultivated clarinetist, a stimulating teacher. He played with the Boston Symphony. I think he is a noted botanist. That was a wonderful summer of hard work.

Harris: And then you returned to complete your master's in music in 1941 at the University of Chicago.

CONDUCTING, TEACHING, AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Central YMCA College/Roosevelt University

Harris: When did your association with Central YMCA College begin?

Bacon: Edward Sparling, President of Central YMCA College, in Chicago, invited me to join his faculty as choral conductor in September, 1941. He was a Stanford graduate, by the way. Then in May, 1942, I was appointed Dean of the School of Music. You may not know that the YMCA had established five colleges in the United States. Our local Golden Gate University in San Francisco was originally started by the YMCA, I believe in 1901, as a night school. Then in 1923, it became an independent non-profit college. Central YMCA College in Chicago may have been the last of the "Y" colleges under the YMCA aegis because higher education is not a major function of the Y. Central YMCA College changed its name to Roosevelt University in 1945, when, with \$75,000 from Marshall Field and the same amount from the Roosevelt Foundation, Dr. Sparling and seventy-five percent of the old

faculty members bravely set out to build up a university.

I had always been interested in teaching. I had been assistant in art at Hull House, music supervisor of the Glencoe Public Schools, and theory and choral instructor at Roycemore, a girls' prep school in Evanston. Then Central YMCA brought me in for choral work. When they made me dean, I began to study the music curricula of day and night music schools in the country.

Harris: You had administrative responsibilities as Dean of Music?

Bacon: Yes, I was to be in charge of the music school of the College. In the old Y college, the main building was on La Salle Street, housing the arts, literature, and science school, and the school of commerce. The music school was in an entirely separate building on Wabash Avenue, six blocks away from the main college and the registrar's office. Students would come to me to ask about courses and so on. In my capacity as dean, I took it for granted that I would advise them. But you can't advise unless you have their records and know what they are doing. So the registrar set up duplicate records for me. Then I interviewed the students and was very much interested in every student that came in. I felt obligated to make some pretty large changes in the Y music faculty. There were a lot of names on the faculty listing that the students never saw. They were private teachers in effect who may have had several students in the school.

Harris: Were they guest teachers or master teachers?

Bacon: Few master teachers and several like the organist who owned the organ, so the school gave him a place to put the organ. Well, I made twelve changes in the catalogue in two years. It was rather difficult to do. It was necessary to establish a solid degree curriculum with a chorus, an orchestra, and chamber music classes. Also we needed a library, and most of all, faculty meetings were essential to develop an overall teaching philosophy.

I studied the catalogues of several of the best conservatories in the country, and two or three of the universities and colleges. Then I wrote my own

catalogue. The faculty didn't object at the time because no faculty meetings had ever been held, and they had no say in running the school until I established academic standards and held faculty meetings. We only gave a bachelor's degree in that college. In the last two years of my time there, I put in the master's degree in music. -- I might have been persona non grata because I required a foreign language. So we lost students, but we gained some too.

Harris: You were also a lecturer and then assistant professor of music at the University of Chicago in the mid-forties.

Bacon: That's right.

Harris: What were you teaching there?

Bacon: That was when Robert Maynard Hutchins was at Chicago. He had changed the whole system. He and Mortimer Adler classified all knowledge into departments: the humanities, the social sciences, the physical sciences, and the biological sciences. All entering freshmen took a humanities course. That included art, literature, and music. The faculty had to be trained because these teachers were not specialists in each field. You would have a painter teaching art, literature, and music. You would have an English professor teaching art, literature, and music, and you would have a music professor teaching music, art, and literature. So it would take a few years to train a faculty to do this adequately. So resource people were called upon on specifics in each field as needed. I went from 6:00-9:00 in the evening once or twice a week. No attendance was taken and no grades were given. I would go without any set program, and the students just asked me questions. Well, sometimes there were sixty students there and someone might ask about a fugue. "Will you explain the fugue?" So I would put some diagrams on the board and play a fugue for them and have them listen. And then other questions would be asked. I really enjoyed it tremendously because the students knew that they had examinations to take. They knew the general background of what the exam would include. So what they would do is try to prepare themselves. Much responsibility was on them to prepare themselves for their exams.

Harris: This material was not all being taught in regular classes, and therefore, they went to you for instruction.

Bacon: Yes. Those who wished could come to the classes of the specialists. They also had a specialist in English, and a specialist in art, and I happened to be the specialist in music. I was still teaching at Roosevelt at this time.

Harris: Did you enjoy your work at Roosevelt?

Bacon: Yes, because I learned so much about students and faculty members, about administration in college matters, about curriculum, about promotion, public relations, and even building planning and construction when we founded Roosevelt University. Also, I liked President Edward Sparling's rugged, democratic, liberal approach to education. And so many students struggled to get an education while working full time! -- Our competitor was De Paul University in downtown Chicago. -- We had classes until 10:00 at night. You could come three nights a week for classes and carry on regular courses from something like 7:00 to 10:00, or you could come two nights, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, over a longer period of time.

Performance is important and we had people like Nicolai Malko and Max Rudolf, fine conductors in the school. We also had the Schenker specialist, Oswald Jones, teaching our theory and analysis courses. Beside my administrative responsibilities, I conducted the chorus and taught a conducting class. What with curriculum planning, counseling students, teaching, supervising the remodeling of loft space into classrooms, establishing a library, planning joint music and art programs and classes with the Art Institute, raising funds to equip the recital hall -- this and more taxed me to the limit of my endurance. And I was a person who had trouble being on time. Well, if you're in administration, you have to be on time. So I learned to be on time. It was the hardest work I had ever done in my life.

Where the University of Chicago took the top fifteenth percentile of students, and Northwestern took the top twenty-fifth percentile, De Paul and Roosevelt University took them from the fiftieth percentile up. But we had a very intelligent

psychologist who realized that a lot of the problems students had in college were due to not having a good facility in reading. So, he organized classes of twenty to learn to understand the printed page. And students would often show 100-200 percent progress in a semester!

Harris: How did the salaries compare with the University of Chicago?

Bacon: Very low, very low. And then I remember we had our major "revolution" in 1945, when our president was fired, and eighty percent of our faculty resigned. We reorganized to start a new college called Thomas Jefferson University. (I would have liked to have Ben Franklin, myself, but Thomas Jefferson was a good man.) And then, [President] Roosevelt died. So at the last moment, we changed to Roosevelt University. We were the first school memorial dedicated to Mr. Roosevelt. And Mrs. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, came to dedicate the school. I remember her very well, with her very plain way, but with her sturdy inner character and elegance of spirit.

I must add one word about that administrative position at Roosevelt. I was the director of the school, but I preferred the title of dean to director because it was an academic title, and this was such a non-academic music school at first and it needed more structure and higher standards.

Harris: How many years would this cover?

Bacon: 1941-1946.

Harris: And then you returned to California.

Bacon: Yes. And that was through Albert Elkus.

Summer Session University of California, Berkeley

Harris: How did you meet Albert Elkus?

Bacon: Well, I think I must have met him through Ernst when I was in California in 1928 - '30. Elkus was chairman of the music department. I can't remember the first time I met him. At any rate, he wrote to me and invited me to come to the University of California to teach choral literature and conducting in a summer session. Well, I jumped at

that in '46. I had already accepted a job at the University of Chicago for fall and spring of '46-'47.

It was a job in the humanities, to teach the art, literature, and music course. And I would have had the university chorus to conduct. I wanted to be a conductor. I wanted to be an orchestral conductor. But even though I knew that the orchestra at Tanglewood rather enjoyed playing under my leadership, and a couple of male colleagues got big jobs, one in Louisville, one in Omaha, but I couldn't get one because I was a woman. So I turned toward the choral field entirely in which I had had the most experience. But, in doing big choral works, you frequently have an orchestra accompaniment. I had no problem with the orchestra. I selected Chicago Symphony men to accompany, and they were always very pleasant to me. Usually orchestra people will test a conductor, especially a woman conductor. The brasses are especially known to test conductors. But I never felt challenged. They always were cooperative; I was very grateful for that.

Harris: You said that it was Albert Elkus who brought you out to Berkeley.

Bacon: Yes. He invited me to come out to the summer session in 1946 and I jumped at it. I had been to California for two years, earlier, and I always wanted to live in California anyway because of the mountains, the proximity to the ocean and the mountains. It's a wonderful area. So I accepted. I had resigned from Roosevelt with the intention of teaching at the University of Chicago in October.

Well, I came to Cal and taught in the summer session and enjoyed it very much. And, in addition to teaching the class in the department, Professor Baldwin Woods, the director of the University Extension Division at the University of California, had been in communication with Albert Elkus. And he asked me to write a report for the Extension Division. He wanted to know what the University could do for the community in music, how much it would cost, how would you go about doing it, et cetera. I said, "Well, in six weeks, not living in this community, (although I'm somewhat familiar with it from years past,) I'll do the best I can, but I don't see how I can cover all that

thoroughly. But if you wish, I'll try to do this." So, he did want me to, and I proceeded.

University Extension Music Director and Music
Department Lecturer

One day, when I was back in my office at Roosevelt, probably in May of 1946, there was a knock on the door, and a little man came in, not very tall, with grayish white hair, without a hat, without a coat, just in his gray suit, and said, "I'm Baldwin Woods. Are you Madi Bacon?" [Laughter]

Harris: So you hadn't actually met him.

Bacon: Oh, no. No, he had just written briefly. So he came to see me and he took me to the university club for lunch. Well, I enjoyed him very much. He was the director of the Extension Division of the University of California. So what transpired -- to make a long story short, he offered me a position as Director of Music Extension, to build up the music program and to reach the community through the Extension Division. And Albert Elkus wanted me to teach a course in the department of music on campus.

Harris: What was the subject of that course?

Bacon: That year it was choral literature. Well, now that was in the summer session. Then in August, I went on a high trip with the Sierra Club. Dave Brower was the leader. I can remember the campfire, one hundred or some odd people sitting around the fire. And the ranger rode in on horseback at about 8:00 in the evening and went up to Dave. Dave said, "I have a telegram for you, Madi, that the ranger just brought." So I went up and looked at the telegram. And the telegram said, "Job offer, University of California, teach choral literature in the department, and direct music Extension activities, beginning fall 1946. Please answer at once." The ranger had been asked to bring a return answer.

So two telegrams went out. It didn't take long to decide. In retrospect, I sometimes regret not teaching at the University of Chicago because I liked the university and I would have been able to teach exactly what I wanted. I would have loved working with the humanities classes with the art and music. I had a minor in art anyway and had

done some sculpting. I would have loved to bone up on that. I would have had to study literature because I had concentrated on languages and social studies, you see.

At any rate, two telegrams went out, one to the University of Chicago, saying, "Deep regret. I am remaining in California to teach. Hope it does not inconvenience you too much." Something like that. In those days, you didn't have a written contract right away. You just had a word-of-mouth agreement. And the Chicago faculty of humanities had already given a party to greet me before I went to California for the summer. They gave me that warm feeling of "Come on, join us."

Well, the other telegram went to the University of California, accepting their offer. So I dashed home to Chicago, after the Sierra Club trip, and got my things and came out, and lived at the Women's Faculty Club for a year before I built my house.

Harris: What was it like coming to California this time?

Bacon: I had a great many surprises that year. I was shocked at the students' behavior, the dirty corduroys. Somehow at the University of Chicago, it seemed more as if the students were there to study, and the respect for knowledge and faculty members established an appropriate atmosphere. We had those Tudor Gothic buildings at Chicago. It's like an English quadrangle campus. Cal seemed to spread out without a plan. Very beautiful trees and things, of course. I became aware of the 1849 pioneer heritage, so different from our older eastern heritage.

The music department was in a tiny wooden building down by the creek. There were no practice pianos in 1946 when I came. Performed music was almost nonexistent except for a University chorus and orchestra and band. The department had no "laboratory" for the development of skills in performance. The doctorate and master's degrees were given for musicological studies. Even composition was not recognized as a fit subject for a Ph.D. From my point of view, the "art" of music, the creative stimulus and emotional expression, were neglected in favor of the "science," the intellectual and analytical processes. Strangely enough, even aesthetics, the history of the

Renaissance, and the discipline of orchestration were not required studies for the music degree. Much later, my niece graduated with a music major and still the above important studies were not in the curriculum!

Coming from Chicago and having lived in New York, I was well aware that a university student could seek piano or violin lessons at one of a number of private music conservatories if he wished, but in Berkeley, there were no organized music schools. Across the bay, the San Francisco Conservatory was still a sturdy infant, a small, unaccredited school. In 1946, the bay region had not caught up with the middle west and with the east coast in community music organizations. The only sizeable San Francisco choruses, except for church choirs, available were Hans Lescke's Municipal Chorus and Waldemar Jacobson's Bach Chorus. No symphony choruses and no major East Bay groups had been born, except for the emerging Oakland Symphony and Jessica Marcelli's youth orchestra in Berkeley. Amateur orchestral and chamber music opportunities were almost non-existent. This situation left an open field for the development of the University Extension Music Division.

Chief among its contributions to the community and the university were:

1. The performed music classes in piano, voice, cello, violin, flute, etc. given in groups of four students per class by carefully selected teachers such as Bernhard Abramowitsch, Margaret Rowell, Tanya Ury, Mary Groome Jones, etc.
2. The establishment of practice studios for on and off campus students.
3. The authorization for veterans to use government funds for Extension practice studios and piano class costs, by arrangement with music department examiners.
4. The introduction of chamber music classes: trios, quartets, and four-hand piano playing. The Griller Quartet, first brought by Music Extension, later became the campus quartet in residence.

5. The founding of the University Extension Chorus in San Francisco which gave concerts in San Francisco, with and without orchestra, of major choral works, also introducing first vocal performance of Beethoven, Schubert, Holst, and other works. (I was the conductor and Nathan Schwartz was the chief accompanist.)

6. The introduction of special opera and concert-going classes in San Francisco, preceded by a group dinner at which the students could often meet the performers. These were scheduled at 6 P.M. to accommodate working people. There were also oratorio and opera classes with leading directors like Kurt Herbert Adler and Hans Leschke.

7. With the assistance of military officials, the introduction of band and theory classes to army and navy posts nearby.

8. Courses urgently needed by advanced education majors preparing to teach in elementary or junior high schools who had only six clock hours of music training on campus! Albert Elkus, the chairman of the music department, appointed me lecturer in the department as Head of Music Extension, the official liaison between music and education departments. After considerable research, I established and taught Music 10 on campus which dealt with the rudiments of music, sight reading and how to teach songs in grades one through eight. Also I introduced string and brass classes in the professional, 400 number category for teachers. Just as I was leaving the University, George Kyme, music education specialist, came to the education department, and, I presume, filled in the gaps of the music education program for teachers.

9. The first introduction of master classes on campus with world-famous artists and teachers, beginning with Poula Frisch, the Danish soprano.

10. The establishment of an important relationship with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, whereby Music Extension set up University credit for eight-eleven harmony, counterpoint, history of music, sight

reading, chorus, orchestration, etc., classes at the conservatory, selecting campus, conservatory, and other faculty members. Ultimately, regular faculty meetings were held and the conservatory was advised to seek accreditation in Sacramento. It is a pleasure to record now, in 1987, that the San Francisco Conservatory has become a fully accredited center of music instruction at all levels. Particularly outstanding is the chamber music department.

11. Finally, an informal counseling and information service was developed by communicating with schools, churches, conferences, and military posts. Some graduate students were employed and given teaching experience. At one time, Music Extension had about fifty-five classes in progress if one included all the small performance groups.

Harris: Were you satisfied with your work at Extension?

Bacon: Yes, I was highly gratified with the cooperation of the leading Extension officers. Dr. Baldwin Woods, a Vice-President of the University, was director of the Extension Division, -- at that time a \$2,000,000 operation. He established a fine atmosphere and created an attitude of intelligent service to the community. We could move freely with only one condition: that classes must be fiscally independent.

Music Extension, indeed, became an informal liaison between the narrowly intellectual, scholarly atmosphere of the University campus and the community because it provided an available avenue of approach for the individual who sought enjoyment and rewarding growth in musical pursuits. In this regard, we carried out the desires of our University President, Dr. Sproul, and our director and friend, Dr. Woods.

Harris: What was the Extension program like when you joined it?

Bacon: I think it was a fairly small operation until Baldwin Woods took over. Baldwin Woods promoted the concept of "Lifelong Learning," the motto for all our course bulletins. Our society was changing. People retired earlier and many wanted

to join adult classes. And, of course, teachers wanted continuing education. When Baldwin Woods came, there were some science and education courses. Also, one week intensive conference-type classes were given for dentists and doctors. Language classes and what we think of as adult education classes were increasingly popular.

In music, only Alfred Frankenstein had given lectures and demonstrations in music literature several times. Al was our leading music critic in San Francisco, writing for the Chronicle ultimately. He had been a school-mate of mine in Chicago at the Francis W. Parker School and again at the University of Chicago. He and I used to talk about politics and prejudices back in Chicago. Sitting on the study hall desks, we talked about communism, muck-raking, Lincoln Steffens, dictators, and post World War I. Upheaval was on our minds. We discussed subjects very freely. His father was a doctor; my father was a doctor. Al was very much interested in recordings. He always had a huge record library and he understood the qualities of different recording equipment. I remember especially the Capehart, big beautiful floor models with walnut cases. Later, when we were both at the University of Chicago, he developed the first noon concerts in an informal way. He brought his own recordings and his own equipment and the University of Chicago gave him a classroom, and people ate sandwiches while listening to records that Al played on his equipment. He also gave some background about the music. He did this for us and for his own pleasure; he was always interested in improved record players. When he was about eighteen, he had a book published in Chicago called Syncopating Saxophones.

Then, he came to California and eventually became the Chronicle music critic. He was one of the notable music and art critics of my lifetime, a highly educated man. His successor at the Chronicle was Robert Commanday.

Al loved to share his knowledge and joy in understanding music with others. He was extremely factual and erudite in his lectures, and one could depend on the content, but his presentations were only moderately stimulating. Having reached a high level of musical knowledge, Al immersed himself in the study of art history, especially the American

painters. He wrote a book about American painters and ended up writing art criticism exclusively.

My usefulness to the Music Extension Division at Cal was really a result of my experience with Roosevelt College, Central YMCA College because that is where I explored community needs. What does the community need? Working people want to continue their education, -- continuing education. And "Lifelong Learning" for older people. In those days, the University of Chicago was outstanding in developing its extension division, but general adult education was in its infancy. So, because of my experience in the heart of the loop in Chicago with the day and night school, and my knowledge of the University of Chicago Extension Division, I had a pretty good background as to what to do in this community.

Harris: What was your plan to involve the community?

Bacon: Well, in the first place, let's remember, I came to Berkeley in 1946. The veterans were just coming back from the war. -- And when the veterans came onto the campus, by the way, the clothes got cleaner! -- I wanted to supplement the campus offerings by introducing music performance classes for everyone, including campus students. I studied the catalogue carefully. We had Music 27A which was a general music introduction course on campus for non-music majors.

Harris: This course was part of the regular music department.

Bacon: Yes, the regular department. But that was the only course. A physics student, or a chemistry student, couldn't get into history of music or a Bach or Beethoven course or an opera class because courses like that demanded a prerequisite. I felt that we should offer courses to students who want to have something to do with music, but can't take a lot of prerequisites to get the music courses designed for music majors. That was one of my thoughts.

Harris: And you would offer those classes through Music Extension rather than through the music department.

Bacon: Right. In the Music Extension Division, always, every class has to pay for itself. Therefore, you can announce a class, and if there aren't enough people to pay the cost, then it can be withdrawn.

Harris: What was the relationship between Music Extension Division and the conservatory?

Bacon: Well, that was a developing relationship. Eventually, Ada Clement and Lillian Hodgehead wanted to give the conservatory to the University when in their last years (c. 1950), they realized they wouldn't last much longer. They offered the conservatory to the University. But that's jumping ahead. That happened later; that didn't happen in '46.

In 1946, there were many piano teachers in the Bay Area whom I knew and respected personally. Piano was prominent in the area. Chamber music, however, was just beginning. A few voice teachers like Julia Monroe, Mrs. Beckman, Guilio Silva, at the San Francisco Conservatory, were developing students; choral music was in its infancy. But pianists were already established. In 1946, there were Alexander Raab and Egon Petri; then, Alexander Liebermann, Bernhard Abramowitsch, and Tanya Ury were the best known piano teachers. Unassuming, but productive, was Harold Logan. And let us not forget that Albert Elkus, chairman for many years of the U.C. music department, was a much-loved piano teacher in San Francisco and in the East Bay before taking up his academic duties. Alexander Raab, in fact, was someone I knew from Chicago. He was a world-famous pianist and piano teacher, and he had come to Chicago in 1917 directly from England. He was a favorite of the Princess of Cumberland. He came to my mother's house, having gotten her name somehow through relatives or friends in Austria. And he stayed with us. When he walked into the house, my mother used to say later, "I knew from the moment that I saw that man, when he crossed the threshold, that he was the piano teacher for my children." He became an American citizen and taught in Chicago. Later, he moved to Berkeley and had a home and a fine group of students. He was my brother's teacher, and, later, my teacher, and he taught many of the leading piano teachers, like Wanda Krasoff and Peter Jarrett in the East Bay.

In other words, there were opportunities for pianists, but I found it important to give the community an opportunity to sing great works with solo and orchestra accompaniment in concert halls and churches via the University Extension Chorus.

Now the other thing that interested me on campus is the relationship between the education and music departments. There was a large education department. I didn't feel that the music department and the education department had any connection that was potent or effective. At that time, teaching credentials were given in California for junior high, high school, or junior college. It was one credential for all three of those levels when I came, which later changed by necessity.

Now, the teacher going into grade schools had to do his own music. But he had only six clock hours of training. What is six clock hours? Not even one semester of training in music for the classroom teacher to teach second grade music! Six clock hours when I arrived in '46. Now that can be checked with the department to see that I'm accurate because my memory could fail me. But I know I was horrified at that. At any rate, I got acquainted with Mr. Michaelis [John U.], and with other professors in the ed department, and discussed matters with them and with Albert Elkus. And finally, Albert Elkus made me the liaison between the ed department and the music department.

Then I began to put in classes for the education students in Extension because they weren't given in the department. The music department still wasn't interested in doing anything for students in the education department. Music 10 which I developed and taught was to teach these people a little about sight reading, about music in general. And I took the music texts that were used in California in the public schools at that time and assigned them to look at the book and pick ten songs that they liked and to teach two in class. Now that was the beginning of Music 10. I found that the students didn't know very much music, most of them. So I had to teach them a few essentials of music, note reading and so on, so that they could pick a song. You can pick a song by the words, but if they can't read music, they can't tell what it sounds like. So I really got them interested. Music 10 was quite exciting. And it grew like Topsy. The first time we had it, there were maybe thirty, thirty-five students, and then it grew enormously.

I was chagrined that, when I left the University, it became a very different kind of course. It became a course for the general campus student to get a smattering of music reading and materials. Well, that's all right; I think the general campus student should have such a course available. But then the education major got neglected. They brought George Kyme [supervisor of teaching of music within the music department] in and education had a man trained in music. I wished I had been able to do this because it would have been dear to my heart with my attitude about education.

At any rate, then, I held classes outside of the campus. I brought Mary Groome Jones who stayed with the University for many years later to teach singing in Extension. Then I brought the Griller Quartet to teach chamber music. Then we had piano classes with people like Abramowitsch, Tanya Ury and, oh, others. Alma Harrington, I remember, came from San Francisco. We had to have quite a few teachers for piano. I set up a system of classes, four in a class. Students had to pay for these, of course, in Extension. Well, after you have fifteen weeks of four in a class with a teacher, then some student goes faster and others are slower. So then if you want to continue, I had to develop a kind of financial set-up with Mr. [Boyd] Rakestraw in the finances department of Extension Division. He was very cooperative. So we set up a fluid system. You paid so much; I think it was \$35 each with four in a class. Then if there were three in a class or even two in a class, you paid up to \$50 for two in a class. So you would cover the costs.

Harris: Where did you get the pianos? You said there were no pianos in the University.

Bacon: Talking about the pianos! Well, you see, Hertz Hall was in the process of being built. When Hertz Hall was completed, of course there were practice studios. But before then, I was given the assignment through Extension to find practice spaces. Albert Elkus talked to me and said, "How about you develop the piano studios?" I was offered two houses on, I think it was called Union Street. It's right there where the theater [Zellerbach Auditorium] is now, the old Union Street. I was offered either two private two-story houses to take over as practice studios or a quonset hut. I took a look at a quonset hut and I

saw that there is an open space along the entire ridge of the building so that sound carries from one sectioned off room to another. It was impossible. Fortunately, I chose the two buildings, old homes.

Then we put Cel-o-tex on the doors so the sound didn't carry. They were pretty well-built old houses. But, of course, the sound did carry a little bit from one room to another. So I don't know whether we had sixteen or how many practice studios we had. Anyway, it came to buying the pianos. Again, I went to Mr. Rakestraw, "How do we do this?" Well, he talked with the University comptroller, and they asked my advice. And I said I would be willing to select the pianos and then have a piano tuner check each one. And we would buy second-hand pianos for practice. They didn't have a lot of money in those days. They weren't going to go all out and get wonderful grands for practice.

So that's what I did. I took some days and went to several piano agencies and tested some pianos, and then we got a piano tuner to see that the pin block was in good shape and so on. Then the University bought them. I think I saved them a lot of money by buying pianos that way. And then we opened the practice studios and I had two or three student assistants that would come and check students in and out. It cost thirty cents an hour for the public.

Well, then, the problem of the veterans came up. Veterans had GI Bill. Well, why does a veteran have to pay for piano when he's on GI Bill? So I went to the Veterans Office and they said, "Well, arrange with the department that we have an absolute system to designate who can be on GI Bill for practice." Well, in reading the catalogue, there was in very small print, way at the bottom of the music section, "Piano playing ability required." And having written the catalogue at Roosevelt, I was aware of the little fine print. So I went to Elkus and asked him, "What does that mean? Do you test the students as they come in?" "No. That's just in there to encourage people." I said, "If you're willing to examine the students as they enter Cal and become music majors, we can get GI students in on the GI Bill for practice. He said, "Well sure, of course we can." So they established tests. The idea was, if you could play

a simple Bach chorale at the piano adequately, or an easy Haydn sonata, you didn't need further piano study to become a scholar. Well, they had never tested the students, and a lot of them had to practice to pass, and the Extension practice studios were full all the time.

Harris: The practice studios were under the supervision of Extension not the department.

Bacon: Oh, yes. And I developed a lot of courses: piano playing, flute, violin, cello. Margaret Rowell was brought to the campus to teach cello. And she remembers it well.

Harris: She does remember that very clearly. She says that you built Extension with your enthusiasm.^{1/}

Bacon: I sure did. I worked hard. Well, the hard thing, you see, is to have meetings -- I called them "organization meetings," and I was at every organization meeting myself. And here would be twenty students that want piano, or something. Now, how to assign them to teachers, or how to put classes together. I had to kind of organize all the performance classes. My training as a dean and interviewing students for Roosevelt College helped me in this process. I didn't realize how much I had learned. And we didn't have very much trouble. We developed quite a program on campus that students or outsiders could take.

Courses for the Community

Harris: I have heard about your courses for people who were going to attend the opera or the symphony. I understand that those were over-subscribed.

Bacon: Well, if you want to hear an amusing story -- yes. Al Frankenstein had done some lecturing. The Junior League hadn't become involved with the pre-symphony lectures as they are now. They do a good deal for the community. So, I thought about courses for a working student who is downtown after work and he's got to eat; she's got to eat; and

^{1/} Margaret Avery Rowell, Master Teacher of Cellists, and Humble Student of Nature, an oral history interview conducted in 1984 by the Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.

then they should go to a concert. Ok, so there was a lady I met somehow; I can't remember her name. She was quite a character. She had a big old Victorian in San Francisco and she fed people. She had dinners there for thirty-five people at a big, long table, with beautiful chandeliers. It was a lovely old Victorian. So I made an arrangement with her that we would eat there and then go to a concert. Well, I picked an opera, a symphony concert, a ballet, a debut recital and a string quartet.

So, I set a price which would cover the dinner and the tickets which I got in a group for the students. Then I would invite performers to the dinner -- for instance, I had the Griller Quartet for dinner, or at least Sydney. I can't remember whether we had all of them or just Sydney. So the students could meet the artists, and then they would be much more involved when they had met the artist and he would talk to them a few minutes.

Well, at one of my meetings and dinner, I gave a lecture. There was no music. I gave a lecture with illustrations of the concert and told them about the music of the concert. It might be Brahms or Mozart or something. I discussed the composer and the music. And then the next meeting, they went to the concert. But after about six sessions, I began to notice something very strange. I would sometimes come a little early and the door of the house would be locked. And I would have to ring the doorbell. And some of the students had that experience. I couldn't quite understand this. Then sometimes we saw some men going upstairs, up a big, nice old stairway. And the men were mostly Oriental and Filipino as were those waiting on us at the table. We had elegant service and good food. It was really remarkably cheap for what we were served. It was a good deal.

Well, suddenly I smelled a rat. This was just too wonderful; this is too good. What is with this? I went upstairs. It ends up, to make a long story short, we were in a whore house, having dinner there. And the locked door was the normal situation, and when we came, they unlocked the doors and let us in. And I didn't catch on to that. So I went to Baldwin Woods about this and said, "What am I going to do?" [Laughter] Well, the course was paid for; everything was arranged. "Well, we'll finish the course there," he said. So

we did. [Chuckles] But I think that must have been a funny one for him. He was such a perfectionist.

I think in this era we have come a long way to make music. When you think of the attendance at the symphony, at the opera, at the ballet, the thousands of people that are going now. If we just compared notes with twenty years ago, or thirty or forty years ago, America has become much more musical. In Europe, every child grew up with music, long ago. In Austria, where my mother came from, everybody knew the Beethoven symphonies; they knew the chamber music. It's a very interesting difference. The world has changed.

Harris: I understand you held courses at military bases.

Bacon: We went into army posts. I went to Camp Stoneman. And the I & E officers would have a dinner, and then I would talk with the men and organize a band class, or a harmony class, or an instrumentation class. And we went to the Naval Hospital. I went to Treasure Island. I went to the Presidio.

Harris: And you would have classes there? Those students didn't have to come to extension?

Bacon: No, well, these were military men, in service. I remember Norman Mealy who taught these classes, a vibrant young grad student at Cal. He was eager to give the service men a happy musical experience apart from the military discipline they were engaged in. After several years of graduate study at Cal, he transferred to the theological seminary and became a minister and also an outstanding church music instructor at the seminary.

Extension Division Chorus: Performance versus Theory

Harris: I would like you to talk about the chorus you developed as part of the Extension music program.

Bacon: There was no symphony chorus in existence when I came, at that time. This is San Francisco history. The Municipal Chorus in San Francisco, conducted by Dr. Hans Leschke, I think is one of the first municipal choruses in this country. I could be wrong, but I was told that way back, San Francisco paid the salary for musicians and founded a municipal chorus. Dr. Leschke was a fine musician

from Germany and did good music, but he had a very kind heart, and let everybody sing. That was his philosophy. If you let everybody sing in a community chorus, you had some pretty bad results sometimes. And that has kind of changed.

Well, now, when I started the chorus, Mr. Elkus advised me not to start it in Berkeley.

Harris: Why was that?

Bacon: Well, it's hard to be frank about this. He said there would be jealousy if I did. It was an absolute statement. Jealousy? What does that mean? From faculty members or what? Maybe I should leave it at that, but to me a university should be the organization, the place in the world that looks to the future of civilization and of development. And I don't think there's room for faculty members where jealousy keeps you from moving forward. I feel very strongly about it. That was one of my problems because I felt that some of my enthusiasm and my goals may not have agreed with some of the scholarly directions of the music department of my day. The chairman, Elkus, was a splendid pianist and piano teacher, and a natural scholar. I don't consider myself a scholar, but I think I'm a well-trained musician with a broad liberal arts background. I think my methods were scholarly enough for the courses I presumed to teach. And I feel that in scholarship there is too much jealousy between individual scholars working on a subject. Who is going to get there first? How is this going to be? I feel there are too many people in our undergraduate faculty who are more interested in research than in teaching. To me, a graduate faculty is very logically a research faculty, but I think, in an undergraduate situation, the faculty should be interested in teaching. Dr. Otto Struve of the astronomy department in my day -- what a wonderful teacher he was! And Dr. Hildebrand in chemistry -- how he was respected. Now these people cared about students; they cared about the courses. They were not restricting themselves to research. Beside, I feel that in an art, like music, especially music, performance cannot be too much separated from theory. I mean, if you think of our music faculty, what kind of concert could our music faculty give? Think about that.

Now what is it that touches us in art? What is it that spiritualizes us? What is it that makes us live a happier life because we participate in music? I'm just reading about Liszt and I'm very much interested in reading about him. But I must say, if I can get in there and play Liszt, and read about him, I'm better off. And the same thing applies to Bach.

Harris: So you were trying to give your students an opportunity to perform as well as study music.

Bacon: Right. And to me, the chorus on the Cal campus has never been an outstanding singing chorus. It's there for literature of music. That's why the students still get credit, two credits for chorus. Harvard Glee Club gets no credit. But it's always full. There are always enough people who want to sing. Whether they get credit or not is a minor factor for an orchestra or a chorus or a band, in my estimation. I'd rather have no credit for that, and let people participate. I think participation is necessary.

It's hard to put this on tape. There is an attitude, an ambience, that I think is necessary in any fine arts department. They have to be humanized in some way. You can't have these academic attitudes -- this feeling that it's more important to publish a book rather than teach. I feel very strongly about that. It always goes back to these academic attitudes: publication, jealousy, or insecurity. But not the love of teaching. I don't know; there's something I missed.

You know, in the end, I resigned from the University. I have had private students, now in my later years, who have been to the University of California for two years, a baritone and a soprano. The soprano is singing opera in Holland and doing very well. She left Cal after two years and came to me. She had had Music A, but she didn't know her keys. That's ridiculous! Music A is a good course for recognition of sounds and intervals, a skill subject. I can't imagine not knowing keys after Music A. It was a psychological thing. She was so turned off by it that she didn't know the signatures of her keys. And she was a good student, not an F student, but an A student, normally. The young man quit college after two years, went to work and proceeded to study singing

intensively. He's now back at school; he is older, in his late twenties, and wants to finish, recognizing the value of a degree. He is at a stage when actually he should probably be out there performing, singing in all the local opera, singing with the Pocket Opera and so on, to get ready to audition for Merola. But, being a professor's son and being an intelligent man, he also wants his degree, and he now enjoys studying at Cal.

All I am saying is that the young student that comes in for art or music has as much right to want to get the right direction as a nuclear physicist or a chemist who is working in the laboratory. To me performance in music is the laboratory. And there should be a laboratory in music at the University.

Harris: That's a very good analogy. So you started to form the chorus off campus.

Bacon: Yes. Well, I was advised to do it. So I did it in San Francisco. It began at the San Francisco Conservatory; they gave us space. Then we moved downtown to the Extension building on Powell Street.

Harris: Where did the University Extension Chorus perform?

Bacon: Well, we gave performances on campus. I never could have the University orchestra. That was not something where I had the department's cooperation. So I hired San Francisco Symphony people and had some very good ones. Then we had organists like Ludwig Altman or Newton Pashley or Bessie Woods, Baldwin Wood's wife. We performed in churches; we performed on the campus; we performed in San Francisco and in Marin. And Nathan Schwartz, who is a noted chamber music player with his wife, Bonnie Hampton, Nathan was my accompanist for six years, and what a beautiful accompanist he was. And then, the experience of my life was Robert Helps, for one year. The sensitivity of the man was so great, that with the chorus, if we were doing the Brahms Requiem or something like that, I always had him play all the introductions because everybody listened to him. He had that magnetic charm in his tone that you had to listen to him. It was wonderful.

Harris: Were the members of the chorus musicians primarily or were they interested students who happened to like to sing?

Bacon: Both, but mostly the latter. We have a chorus album. We've done some first performances. We did the Schubert E-flat Mass, a first performance here. I think I introduced the Hymn for Jesus of Gustav Holst for a first performance. Many performers were graduates of universities; they were anybody in the community, but I auditioned everybody myself. My principle was that they didn't have to all be good voices, but they had to sing in tune and they had to attend rehearsals regularly. Once I made a check to see who was in the chorus and we represented twenty-seven different universities. Twenty-seven different ones! Oh, Harvard and Vassar were represented, and Columbia, and Swarthmore, and, of course, Cal. Twenty-seven different schools!

We had some beautiful singers: Paul Walti, the tenor, Paul Jamaica, a bass, I remember. Page Swift was a graduate of the University of California and performed with Ed Lawton on campus. She became one of my leading soprano soloists. I had some splendid soloists, young people in office jobs. I would always work with them. We gave a concert in memory of Albert Einstein. His son Hans was here on campus. Among other works, we did the Elegischer Gesang of Beethoven in that concert. I had a wonderful time with that chorus because the singers were so dedicated and reflected their joy in singing.

Harris: I wonder if you would like to comment on Jules Eichorn who was the subject of another oral history and a member of your chorus.

Bacon: Oh Jules! Jules and Ollo Baldauf! Great cheerers-uppers. Jules has a Minaret named after him in the Sierras. And I went with him once when we used a rope, and I remember a little scree fell in my eye. Jules was a great mountaineer and a good teacher. He taught music in schools on the peninsula. He had seven children, I think. Oh, he came all the way up from the peninsula to sing in the chorus. And Ada Clement sang with us for awhile. That was something because we wanted to build the chorus and she helped. Then we developed our organization to divide our tasks -- a splendid organization.

Harris: Did you charge for these concerts? Is that how you raised funds? Or did the students pay tuition?

Bacon: Tuition and contributions. You know you couldn't perform in churches in our day if you charged admission. It was all contributions. But it paid for itself. My chorus members were always willing to contribute if necessary. They registered through Extension. They understood that the chorus had to pay for itself. They were very great about it. I always had an extra rehearsal when I used orchestra players. We would get the musician's fund but you only have one rehearsal that way. And I wanted two rehearsals with the orchestra so that the chorus would have a greater experience and there would be a better result.

So we did large works and small works a cappella, with organ or piano, and often with a selected orchestra. We had to buy our own music. I would say that the University was not very cooperative with the Extension chorus and I regret that deeply. The singers felt, I don't know why, it's as if Extension were something that the Department of Music didn't wish to recognize. I felt that the music department was a closed society, that we were not looking out at the community. It's a self-centered attitude.

Harris: What did you think was the cause of the tension? Was it that self-centeredness that caused the tension between the department and Extension? Was there a philosophical difference or were personalities in conflict?

Bacon: Well, I don't know. Albert Elkus and Baldwin Woods were community minded. Edgar Sparks was most cooperative. I don't think that David Boyden was cooperative with Extension. I'm sure some of the people I know, the composers -- Roger Sessions was very friendly. Manfred Bukofzer was totally removed. I don't know, I think that might have been personal. I had no understanding of it. He was an Austrian; I respected his work. I just couldn't understand his attitude.

But I don't think that women have been particularly successful on this campus. Remember that I had had an assistant professorship offered me from scratch at the University of Chicago. And they had three salary scales at the time I was there. One of the things that Hutchins had done was to say, "If you

are a full-time faculty member on our faculty, your time belongs to the university. If you're going to moonlight and give lectures, the money comes to the university." You see that was a very unpopular attitude and it didn't last; it couldn't last. People were just too negative to it. But, the result when he hired a person -- I was hired on the highest scale of three scales for an assistant professor because I was conducting two choruses at the time off campus. I didn't have to give them up, but the money was to go to the university and I was put on the highest salary scale.

Now at Roosevelt, of course, I was a professor. We had no titles at all in the beginning. Later, after I established an academic procedure, we recognized the music faculty with titles. I know I put in professorships for Oswald Jonas and Nicolai Malkoff if he had stayed with us.

But at U.C. Berkeley, I was never given tenure. After eight years, I was still a lecturer.

Harris: You started to comment on the relationship between Extension and the conservatory, and you did talk a little bit about the classes offered there. Is there anything else you want to say about that? Was that a happy relationship?

Bacon: A very happy relationship. And very good for the conservatory and I would say good for Extension. I had a colleague at Roosevelt University, Sol Joseph, whom I would like to mention. I suggested that he come out from Chicago. He was a very good counterpoint and theory teacher at Roosevelt. The conservatory needed someone in that capacity especially when Edgar Sparks left. Sol Joseph did come out, and taught three classes right away at the conservatory. Then he wrote a syllabus, Rudiments of Music, which we sold to the Extension students. It was very good for these beginners, very clear-cut. Sol became the leading theory teacher at the conservatory and he was honored with an honorary doctorate for excellence in teaching in [Milton] Salkind's day, in May 1977.

Let me summarize about the conservatory. I was a student there from '28 to '30. Ada Clement was co-director with Lillian Hodgehead, but when Bloch came, he was designated director. The ladies always stepped aside when they had a famous person. Guilio Silva from Rome was leading voice teacher

there. My brother was teaching piano while studying composition with Bloch. Lillian Hodgehead had developed an excellent theory program for the preparatory students. Ada Clement was the leading piano teacher and Herbert Jaffe was her assistant.

Then later, Albert Elkus became the director of the conservatory; then they had a man from Europe, Robin Laufer.

Harris: As I understand it the University Extension chorus was in existence from 1948-59. Does that sound right to you?

Bacon: Did I go eleven years? I didn't realize that. Well, that's fine. We had one year at the conservatory, then at the Powell Street building, and then I went back to the conservatory, I think at the end. That was when Laufer was the director. And he had promised me the conservatory orchestra to perform with the chorus, but he had problems and we ended up being independent of the conservatory.

Resignation from the University

Harris: What was the reason for your departure from the campus and Extension?

Bacon: Well, I kept the chorus I think a year after I left the University. I was a lecturer for eight years at Cal. I was a fairly well-known choral conductor in Chicago, and although I did establish myself here, both with the University chorus and on the San Francisco opera staff, the department never gave me an opportunity to conduct even a summer chorus at Cal. They used former students of Mr. Lawton's. Edward B. Lawton was a very good - conductor; I liked him. He was talented, an ex-Harvard man.

There wasn't an outgoing attitude toward the students. When I came, there was an excellent music club run by the students and they wanted a faculty advisor. And nobody particularly wanted to do this job, but I took it because I was a newcomer. And those students did all kinds of things! But I felt -- I don't know, I wasn't happy in the ambience. Let's put it that way. And maybe it was my own personality, my own fault; I don't know what it was. I had a wonderful relationship with my students, undergraduate and graduate

students. All the graduate students came and had coffee with me and would complain about their classes. I don't know whether this is normal, whether it's a universal thing. I do think that graduate students do gripe a lot. I think it's normal for students to gripe. But I think there's an atmosphere that could be developed in the music department of warmth and friendliness, and interest in the student, I don't care what age. You do find individual professors who had close relationships with their students. But there aren't many in the music department.

Now Roger Sessions, Andy Imbrie -- those men are loved and they have a continuity of relationship. Maybe I shouldn't mention names. But these are just people that I remember. I remember when I taught at the conservatory once; I taught Music 27. And I brought Roger over; I invited him to give a lecture to the students. Well, he did. And it took me the next lecture, on my part, to explain Roger to the students. He was off in a pretty advanced world for some of the more elementary survey students, you see. But there was an emotion to his work, a feeling of things. Now I have the greatest respect for the way Mr. [Michael C.] Senturia has developed, not only the orchestra, but also himself. He's got a definite broad attitude toward the student and the outside community.

SAN FRANCISCO BOYS CHORUS

Building a Chorus and a Home

Harris: Did you have other plans, or was this resignation a spur-of-the-moment decision?

Bacon: Well I was on the staff of the opera with my work with the SFBC which I had started while I was still teaching at Cal. I could see that that could be a full-time job. But I was nearing fifty, and the University was my bread and butter. And I was a bit of a fish out of water when I stopped teaching because I loved teaching. I also felt that the University needed me because I am a natural teacher. However, I think I've probably done more of permanent value with the SFBC, getting people like Calvin Simmons out into successful work, Philip Kelsey with the Portland Opera, Paul Tobias, a beautiful cellist in New York, and Einer Holm, one of the finest teachers at Ithaca College,

doing cello institutes in the east. He was Margaret Rowell's student later, after the chorus. These boys had a healthy environment.

I had been getting the chorus started while I was teaching at Cal -- I had a lot of energy in those days! So, when I resigned from Cal, I concentrated on the SFBC. This put me on the San Francisco Opera Company music staff. I put whatever energy was demanded into what I was doing whether there was money or not. My highest salary for any job, at any time, whether it was at the University or elsewhere, was \$10,000, a pathetic salary. My successor at the San Francisco Boys Chorus, a man, immediately got \$20,000. I guess there was a difference between men and women at that time.

Harris: You started building your house a year after you arrived in Berkeley. That was a brave thing to do.

Bacon: Oh, that's right. Well, I actually started when I first came from Chicago. I went to the Women's Faculty Club which I used to call the nunnery because they locked the doors at 9:00 P.M. We had door keys. The amusing thing -- I have to tell this story because it's unusual. You could entertain men in your bedroom upstairs and serve a drink, but you couldn't serve any alcoholic beverage, not even a glass of wine, in the living room downstairs or in the dining room. Those were the rules when I came in '46. We were pretty dry! I had a lovely bedroom, and I enjoyed myself. It was a very nice place. Not too many universities had women's faculty clubs at all. You have to recognize that.

Well, while I was there, it was very cheap, and I was saving money, even on my low salary. I had \$2,000 saved by the end of one year. I used to visit the Evanses, Herbert Evans and his wife, Marjorie, on Euclid Avenue. He was the famous U.C. man who discovered vitamin E. I used to go there all the time. Right above their house was an empty lot, on Keith Avenue, covered with poison oak and wild roses. I bought this lot, at 1120 Keith Avenue, and started to dig! If you've ever tried to dig out a wild rose bush, you'll know what I was up against with wild roses and poison oak. (Chuckles) I dug for two years to get rid of the roots.

I had a friend, Bob Ratcliff, an architect, who had been in the Sierras with me one summer hiking. He also sang in my chorus for two seasons, I think, in Chicago, in the North Shore Choral Society. And here was Bob, and here was this lot, and my friends were right down below, the Evanses and Dr. Miriam Simpson. So I bought that lot, very cheap, \$1500. I looked to the future. I didn't know what was going to happen, but I had faith.

The lot had a wonderful view. I could see the Campanile and I could see all of Mount Tamalpais and three bridges. I had a spot for an aerie in the Berkeley hills!

Well, I started to build in '47. I didn't have enough money. American Trust wouldn't lend me money for this. I hadn't been established enough; my salary wasn't big enough, and so on. But Bank of America would. So I changed my account from the American Trust to the "little man's" bank, Bank of America. The problem was that I was on the edge of what they called "slide area," right on the edge. But the Bank of America approved the loan of \$9,500. It wasn't quite enough to build the house. So I asked one or two of my friends at the Women's Faculty Club, "How would you like to make three or four percent" -- I can't remember which it was now -- "on \$1,000?" Well, that was better than the bank was doing at that time certainly. "Well, how?" "Well, I'll borrow it from you, give you an IOU, and I'll give you that percentage." So I raised about \$2,000 extra, and that covered the ongoing costs, until I had \$14,500 to build my house. Isn't that something? With Bob Ratcliff doing it!

Harris: You bought your lot in '47?

Bacon: The end of '46. Started to build in '47. Couldn't get everything as planned because of the war. There were some things -- my bathroom, I did not want plaster. But they couldn't get something or other, so later, of course, I had to redo my bathroom and tile it. I would have tiled it first had I known they would use plaster!

Harris: Was the concept for this wonderful living room with room for two grand pianos yours or Bob Ratcliff's?

Bacon: Oh, that was mine. Bob conceived a large spacious room, and since we both loved mountains and music,

he understood my needs. He fitted the design to the hillside and the view. He knew I wanted a large room with a high ceiling and a fireplace. I wanted a home with large enough open space in which I might live all the time. So I have this big living room with seven double windows, five of them looking out toward the ocean and three French doors to the garden on the east side. And on the far end, the two grand pianos and a large sofa -- incidentally, made by one of the last of the Romanoffs! Alexander Romanoff built my sofa here in 1947. It's sort of interesting.

I had figured that I could go up to about \$14,000, but not more. Bob's first plans were over \$20,000 -- something like \$12 a foot in those days. It was hard to get dried redwood after the war. He finally re-drew the plans, and now I have a tiny little kitchen alcove and a large living room. I've had sixty people here and we've even fed twenty-five or thirty people at one sitting. But it's the smallest kitchen you ever saw. But, it's perfect for a single person.

Harris: This must have been one of his first houses.

Bacon: It was Bob's first domestic house. He had built Fernwald dormitory on the campus before that. It's interesting, I think. His father, Walter Harris Ratcliff, was class of 1903 at U.C. Berkeley and started the Berkeley architectural firm, W.H. Ratcliff Jr. in 1906. The current president is Christopher "Kit" Ratcliff, who is the third generation.

At U.C. Berkeley, Bob remodeled Hilgard Hall in 1959, Giannini Hall in 1959, Agriculture Hall in 1963, Dwinelle Hall in 1978, International House in 1977, Tolman Hall in 1976, Acid House [sic] in 1974, Senior Men's Hall in 1983, and the Life Sciences Building in 1986. His new building here in Berkeley for the University include Fernwald dormitories, the Natural Resources Lab, and North Side Housing.

At U.C. Santa Cruz, he did the Chancellor's Residence in 1967 and the Married Student Housing in 1970. At U.C. San Francisco, he did the Animal Care Facility, the Hematology Lab, and the Radio Biology addition. He has also done work at U.C. Irvine and at U.C. San Diego. So you can see that with three generations in Berkeley, his firm has

contributed significantly to the environment of the University.

Harris: How long was the house under construction?

Bacon: Five months, something like that, five or six months.

Harris: And then you moved in and had furniture built for you?

Bacon: Yes, I had a friend, Mr. Fritz Baldauf, who was a well-known interior decorator and architect in San Francisco. His wife is one of my best friends. He built me the first free-form table I had seen anywhere. My dining room table is a two-legged affair; it can swing around 180 degrees because the third support is a peg on which it rotates. Most of the time I have it at right angles to the wall, but when I have a large party, it swings over the credenza and is flush against the wall. Fritz said, "I think I would like to work here, looking out the window on my left. I would like to eat here and if you have just finished carving the roast turkey, you don't want the carcass on the table. So I'll put the sideboard a little lower than the table. You'll put the carcass there, and also the vegetable platters, and right next to you will be the sideboard with cabinet space underneath."

Harris: It's obvious that a great deal of thought went into the way this house would actually be lived in.

Bacon: The French doors exit into the garden, so that if you have a recital at the piano in the summer, in warm weather, you can see the soloist. People like being out in the garden listening to music. Yes, I enjoyed planning this with Bob. I think Bob placed the house on the lot exactly right. My only difficulty, and this is something I've been working on for some years, along with the Northeast Berkeley Association Board, an ordinance for trees. Because I had a wonderful view, and for many years now, I have had no view at all. My neighbors, whom I loved very much, did not wish to let me cut any trees, even if I pay for it all! Two seasons ago, they thinned their oak trees that completely blocked my view, but now again, I have a solid wall of oaks! I love oaks on a hillside somewhere, but not here in town. I love the redwoods there, but these oak trees are only twenty feet away and they

completely block my view. One redwood tree has already fallen on my property. There's nothing I can do about it. My neighbors were my dearest friends, but I never see them any more because of the trees.

All of Berkeley has its problems now. If we had a city council with a little more interest in the future of Berkeley, I think it would recognize the total problem in the city, especially in the hill area. I personally collected 100 signatures of people who had serious view problems with trees! Not only view, but solar heating. You can't plant vegetables in your garden because there isn't enough sun; they won't grow. One hundred foot high redwoods with shallow roots become a hazard in a windstorm, not to mention the fire danger! On June 16, 1987, the city council accepted the tree ordinance and proposed a negotiation procedure.

The San Francisco Boys Chorus

Harris: As long as we are talking about building things, I suspect that the monument to Madi Bacon is the San Francisco Boys Chorus. Why don't you tell me about how you started SFBC?

Bacon: I am probably best known, and have been most honored for founding and developing the San Francisco Boys Chorus. The public exposure with the San Francisco Opera Company for twenty-five years; the trips to Los Angeles and Portland with the opera; the newspaper reviews of our public concerts and symphony and opera participation; the many trips concertizing in cities and schools around the state; the demonstrations at conferences and schools; the summer music camp program -- all these contributed to the solid establishment of the SFBC in the state of California.

In 1948, Kurt Herbert Adler was the chorus master of the San Francisco Opera Company. Everybody loved Mr. Merola, the director, who had brought this very capable young Austrian, Kurt Herbert Adler to San Francisco. There are two Kurt Adlers; the other Kurt Adler was chorus master at the Metropolitan Opera. They aren't related. At any rate, I knew Mr. Adler from Chicago because he had been brought there, interestingly enough, by Janet Fairbank whom my father, the obstetrician, had

brought into the world. Janet Fairbank had studied with Kurt Herbert Adler who was then a young coach in Salzburg. She liked him so much that she brought him to America in 1938. So I met Mr. Adler in Chicago. We performed a concert together in Winnetka with my choral society and his North Shore orchestra.

Harris: Was he with the Chicago Opera at that time?

Bacon: Yes, he became chorus master there. I had wanted him to come to the college when I was at Roosevelt, but Nicolai Malko had preceded him there.

In the private circle of our family, there were many musicians who came to our home. So I had the advantage of meeting wonderful people and many foreigners. When you have personal relationships you can sometimes achieve things that you can't through schools. For instance, it wasn't the salary that attracted Mr. Malko to Roosevelt. It was the opportunity to work with American students and to help a college orchestra.

Harris: Was Mr. Adler a member of this group which visited your family?

Bacon: No. He preceded me to California. He came in 1943 and became the chorus master of the San Francisco Opera. He was such a capable person that when Maestro Merola died, Adler was appointed acting director and later director.

Mr. Adler could be extremely severe and even rude to people, but there is nobody who could have done a better job than he did in building up our San Francisco Opera. He was always present at rehearsals; he noticed every tiny detail. I remember a funny incident one time when I was at the Opera House standing in the hallway. I can't remember which opera or which star it was, but a diva was about to go on stage at that moment. Mr. Adler came out of his room and looked at my neck. He came to me and took off my necklace, a Danish design, gold with diamonds in it, and he said, "If you don't mind, I'd like to put this on this diva who is about to go on stage to perform." So I thought, well, that would be fun. So she wore my necklace. I got it back later. But, he noticed every detail. To notice a necklace, you know, when he's got that whole stage and ballet and chorus, soloists, orchestra, all of that to worry about!

Artistic people, performers with an opera company are not easy to deal with. So maybe there is no other way than to be the way Mr. Adler was, severe and dictatorial.

Well, he asked me to form a boys chorus. I was teaching at the University at the time in 1948. Merola and Adler asked me how I proposed to go about it. Well, I suggested that the opera simply send notices to the schools and work through the public schools in San Francisco. At that time, there were still three music supervisors in San Francisco, and they selected 100 children from the San Francisco schools. I chose twenty-five out of the 100, and then I trained them for three or four months before the opera season, and then the chorus was to be dissolved. I was paid personally, I think \$340-400 for three or four months work.

Then the mothers of three boys, Edna Holm, Ilse Nehm, and Marie Zeller, got together and decided to incorporate the San Francisco Boys Chorus. They went to Sacramento and formed a non-profit corporation, the SFBC. We kept the chorus going; the mothers raised the money to pay me a small salary. I didn't ask for much because, at that time, I wasn't earning my living from the chorus, I was still at the University.

So I kept on with the SFBC and before the year was over, we were asked to sing here and there and everywhere. So concerts began. Then we planned for '49 and '50.

Harris: It all started with this nucleus of twenty-five boys.

Bacon: Right. By the end of the second year, we needed two groups. The chorus grew and grew. We eventually developed three groups in chorus. There was the Training Group, an Intermediate Group, and then the performing group, the Concert Group.

Later on, we developed even a fourth group because, in auditions, there were children who wanted very much to sing, but couldn't sing quite in tune, were too immature, or something. We developed "The Joy of Singing" preparatory group under Joellen Piskitel. She was my accompanist and an excellent assistant.

Harris: As I understand it, the first season your boys sang in Carmen and La Boheme.

Bacon: I can't remember, but if you say so -- it's in the annals. It was at least two operas. The maximum was one season when the boys were in nine operas between September and Thanksgiving. Each opera was performed three or four times! That was too much; it was hard.

Harris: At this time in '48, Mr. Merola was still the director and Mr. Adler was the chorus master?

Bacon: Yes, that's right.

Harris: Do you remember working with Mr. Merola?

Bacon: Yes, I can't remember just when Mr. Merola died. [1953] He was a very gentle person. My work was more with the chorus master, Mr. Adler, and the stage director, Mr. Agnini. But Merola used to sit out there, at rehearsals, and then he would conduct. We had a lot of guest conductors too. Much as we loved Merola, he could hardly have built up what Mr. Adler built up. I mean, with the Spring Opera, Western Opera, the Brown Bag Opera, and then the Merola teaching program -- these were Mr. Adler's achievements, along with making the San Francisco Opera into a major company of top singers, conductors, stage directors, orchestra players, and establishing permanent staff members.

Harris: Who were the original members of the SFBC board?

Bacon: The first one, Mrs. Edna Holm, had just been widowed in 1948. Her husband was a violinist in the San Francisco Symphony. Her son -- we called him Jeff -- his real name is Einar -- sang in the chorus. Marie Zeller, Mrs. Edward Zeller of Tiburon, is the only parent-founder still living in 1987. She had a boy in the chorus, now a physicist, who was one of my soloists, as was Jeff Holm. Then there was Ilse Nehm whose son Carl I remember very well. He was a sensitive, musical chap who later became a cellist. Jeff Holm became a cellist too. He studied with Margaret Rowell on a scholarship when he left the chorus.

But we'll talk about the alums later.

It is interesting to note that the three parent-founders of the permanent, year-round, non-profit,

incorporated chorus, were the mothers of exceptional boys: two musicians and a noted physicist. These three women did a marvelous job. They collected dues from the boys; they arranged costumes, rehearsal space, finances; they did everything.

The next person of outstanding importance that I remember is Marguerite Fahrner, Peggy Fahrner. Peggy worked with me for many years in many capacities. She was ideal as chorus counsellor. That meant she would get the boys assembled and take attendance at rehearsals. The boys would take their seats and be on time, ready for me. She knew just how to handle the boys. She wasn't on the original team that founded the chorus, but she was board chairman, and later on, a continual inspiration in the leadership of the chorus and the music camp for fifteen years or more.

Harris: She was a volunteer administrator.

Bacon: Oh, yes. And her husband too in the early days. Well, we started the music camp together. There was a short camp one summer when I went to Europe. That was either '51 or '52, I think. They had a week at Mrs. Duveneck's place, south of Palo Alto - - Hidden Villa, it was called. I know Jeff Holm was then sixteen years old and taught sight reading to the boys while Ted Beiness, my chorus accompanist conducted the singing rehearsals.

Harris: Before we get off on camp, you talked a little bit about the recruiting through the San Francisco public schools for that first group of boys.

Bacon: Right.

Harris: Then, thereafter, where did you concentrate your recruiting efforts?

Bacon: Well, we should mention Charlie Dennis who was supervisor of music in San Francisco. His cooperation was outstanding because he realized the value of the SFBC training for the singers and the example to the community, not to mention the San Francisco Opera experience for the boys.

Harris: Did he also serve on the board?

Bacon: Yes, he did for a short time. Then he moved to Sonora and he died there later, unfortunately. But

it was a very good way to start, through the schools. And there were three other supervisors who were helpful for many years. Almost half of the boys came from the East Bay. Parents of the boys in the operas really struggled to get their sons to performances.

Singing with San Francisco Opera in Los Angeles

It's unfortunate if private organizations don't work through or with the public schools. I found the cooperation valuable. I wrote letters to the principals. You see, we went to Los Angeles regularly with the opera. We had to take the boys out of school for the opera. Sometimes one week, sometimes two weeks. Any number from four boys to twenty-four. Sometimes a second group would come down for the second week. We always had parent volunteer chaperons, but we carefully selected people who knew how to handle children.

We stayed at the Figueroa Hotel mostly, and worked a program, a schedule. I would have the student treasurer do our finances at meals and when we needed transportation. The boys learned how to live in hotels and how to travel, you see. It wasn't just music. When we had breakfast, all the checks were collected, and then the boys added them up and they would bring the bill to me to look over. They were perfectly accurate. In a week's time they would discover at least two or three errors in the waitresses' additions. So I stopped checking the bills ultimately.

Harris: Did you have a school program for them?

Bacon: Yes, we did school work after breakfast at the Figueroa Hotel on the mezzanine. The boys first cleaned up their rooms, and we kind of helped in the hotel, so that the maids didn't have too difficult a time with our boys. A large group of boys isn't too desirable at most hotels! The first thing we did, of course, was to look for fire escapes. And the second thing was a reminder that you don't ride elevators for fun! [Laughter] You don't go zooming up and down. The third thing I discovered after a few years -- you don't discover everything at once -- is that you don't throw hotel pillows in pillow fights! Otherwise we have to pay for them. Oh dear, that was such fun and the boys had such a wonderful time.

Now after breakfast they would do homework for a little while. And they were very good at it. They always got everything done. In one hour a day, these children finished their homework. A certain pride developed about that.

Well, then we went and had a music rehearsal. I found a piano, and we could rehearse and work. They would know their operas by then, of course, so we would also work on Christmas music. And, of course, that group then could perform certain songs by themselves that the others who were at home didn't have to learn. Anyway, then, after rehearsal, my conscience gave me a real problem: Should I let them go swimming before lunch? There was a swimming pool at the hotel. And I thought, "Is this going to hurt?" I learned so many things. I don't think that anybody can be an adequate director of the SFBC in one year. It takes six to eight years to learn everything that there is to learn about choristers performing in operas away from home! It didn't hurt them to go swimming.

Sometimes we would go to a museum or go to the park and play games outdoors. I believe in exercise.

Then, of course, the boys were up late at night. At the Shrine Auditorium, we would warm up, go to the costume room, get make-up and wigs, and with everything done, go on stage. Those were the days when the San Francisco Opera performed only at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. We went to the Shrine on street cars. Sometimes we took cabs. I don't remember; maybe it was cheaper to take cabs than street cars if you crowded six into a cab. And, of course, the boys would get to bed late, so we would have a late morning rising. Well, I don't know how many years, but as long as the opera company went to Los Angeles between '48 and '72, no up into the sixties we went down there every year.

Harris: Did the opera pay for the chorus accommodations, or were you responsible for raising the money?

Bacon: No. The opera paid reasonable expenses. First we went on the train overnight. And the boys were all in one Pullman car. And all the adult opera people were on the train, too, going down to LA. That was wonderful. They loved the boys. "Here come our boys!" they would say. I can remember the concert master of the symphony, when we walked into the

Figueroa one year: "Here come our boys!: That always made me feel so good because the boys were really polite and very well-liked. They behaved well.

I must tell you an event that I think is of historical interest about Los Angeles trips. One year the boys were located in rooms on the fifth floor. We tried to be on adjoining floors, but we didn't always succeed. We would put two or three boys in a room, a regular hotel room. Then we had a chaperon on each floor. It worked very well. One day I came into the hotel in the afternoon, and the concert master came to me and said, "One of your boys has ruined my wife's dress. I'm very upset about it." I said, "What?" There was a news paper boy convention in our hotel too. And I said, "It couldn't have been one of my boys. It must be the news paper boys." He said, "No, I've checked at the desk. Some of your boys are in that room." A boy was leaning out of the window, and right below was the swimming pool surrounded by the patio area. And he was spitting to see how long it would take it to get down to the bottom. Well, it happened that the wife of the concert master was walking along and the spit hit her. It hit her dress. It must have been a good powerful spit! At any rate, she was very disturbed by this. It ruined her dress! [Laughter]

I called the boys together and said (I couldn't help but chuckle a little bit) -- "I'm in an embarrassing position. The concert master says one of you fellows ruined his wife's dress by spitting on it. Is anybody willing to tell me who did this so we can follow through with it?" A hand went right up. Gary Dahl, I'll never forget. I think he'll be famous for life for this. He put his hand up right away. "Well, I did it, Miss Bacon." I said, "Gary, let's see what we can do to remedy the situation." Gary said, "Well, I'll pay to have it cleaned." "That's a good idea. Are you willing to go to talk to Mrs. -- I can't remember the name of the concert master -- At any rate, I said, "Are you willing to go to apologize?" "Why certainly," he said. "That's a big load off my chest, Gary. Ok." So he did. True to form, he went to apologize. He was a charming boy, tall, thin and so straightforward. And I think he was mature enough to recognize this was a lot of fuss made over something really very minor. He was quite sincere and apologized and said he would like to

pay for having her dress cleaned. She said, " Oh, don't bother. That's alright." She just brushed it aside because, I'm sure -- I wasn't there -- but I'm sure he was so charming that she just melted. But it is a cute story, isn't it?

Harris: What kids will think of for entertainment!
[Chuckles]

Bacon: Well, the thing that I feel is -- I think Gary was rather typical of the boys in the chorus. We've had all kinds of adventures like a boy throwing a Coke bottle out of a moving bus on the way to Redwood City to a performance of Carmen. That was a pretty serious thing. A car chased the bus, a private car. And we were already late because the Greyhound bus driver had arrived late for some reason, or he had gone to the wrong place. And this was the Circle Star Theater in Redwood City. At any rate, the boys were to sing Carmen, and this car was following our bus. I got up in the bus and said, "Alright, boys, you follow me; we're late. Mrs. Kohout, you handle the gentleman in the car. Boys, just follow me; don't let anything stop you." So we streamed out of the bus and this man in the private car yelled, "Don't let anybody off!" to the driver when he opened the door. But we streamed out. I felt really like the Pied Piper of Hamelin there. And we barely got on stage on time, in costumes. But, in the meantime, Mrs. Kohout took care of the gentleman. He was, of course, absolutely right in upbraiding us. It was a terribly serious thing to throw a bottle out of a moving bus on the freeway!

I didn't want this incident to affect our performance so I said nothing further at the time. After our appearance, we returned in the evening and got off at the Opera House. The parents came to pick up the boys there. We got back fairly early because we were only in the second scene of Carmen and didn't have to stay for the end. So we got back, and I gathered the boys around me. Then we discussed the Coke bottle being thrown out the window. I said, "Is anybody sport enough to own up to having done this?" Absolute silence. [You learn to wait when you work with children.] I asked the question again. I added, of course, that I knew it was pretty hard to own up to a thing like that, but it would be pretty good sportsmanship if somebody had the courage to admit it. Finally a hand went up, and a boy admitted that he had done

it. Well, I knew I had to punish him in some way. I never know what I'm going to do in a case like this. But you have to do something!

So, I went over to him and shook hands with him and said, "Tommy, thanks for being honest. I appreciate that. Thank you. I won't see you at the next Carmen in Redwood City. Report to rehearsal a week from today. You're out of the next show, but come to rehearsal Monday following. I'll see you there." In other words, that was leaving him out of a performance which he didn't like, of course.

Harris: But you weren't being overly severe.

Bacon: Janet, Tom's mother was our chaperon on the bus and had witnessed the whole procedure. This made it especially brave of Tommy to admit his action.

Setting Up Summer Music Camp

Harris: All chorus' alumni always talk about summer camp.

Bacon: We spent twenty-one years at summer music camp in my day, and I had twelve years previous private camp experience. Up in the Feather River area, we rented the Piedmont Boy Scout Camp for many years. We rented some other camps first starting at Ben Lomond for two years in a broken down hotel. But that was fun too. The counsellors didn't get paid; they just got their room and board. They were as good counsellors as you could possibly find. Mr. and Mrs. Fahrner did the administrative work of the camp, and I did the staff selecting, programming and music.

We had a wonderful teacher in Tirza Mailkoff. Later, Tirza was the founder of the Berkeley Junior Bach Festival. She was a private piano teacher. She had developed a way of teaching theory, and I liked what Tirza was doing. We had her for several summers and she developed a fine music theory program. She gave names to graded achievement goals: Whole Note, Half Note, Quarter Note, Eighth Note -- on to the Sixty-Fourth Note -- these are all note values in Johann Sebastian Bach's music. There were fifteen or twenty items to pass, qualifications. Then you worked for a Half Note. To get into the intermediate singing group, you had to pass the Half Note which had its twenty

requirements or so. Then came the Quarter Note required for concert group status. The requirements had to do with ear training, sight singing, and what we called the "B.B.B.B." -- Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Bacon -- history and literature. My brother Ernst was the last composer. Well, Bartok figured too, of course, and then we found all the Bs we could, Berlioz, Bellini, etc. It was history and literature of music and enough terminology so that a certain understanding of the printed page was possible. So we developed these "degrees." They were actually well balanced musical goals and they are still in use. Over the years my leading camp assistants, besides the Fahrners, were William Duncan Allen, my leading administrator and music theory teacher after Tirza, pianist and music critic; Mell Carey, pianist and composer from Stanford; Carol Young, a splendid teacher and Fulbright recipient who is presently at the University as A.S.U.C. Chorus Director; Philip Kelsey, SFBC alumnus, pianist and conductor of the Portland Opera Company; Calvin Simmons, universal friend, SFBC alumnus, accompanist, overall music assistant and later Glyndbourne and San Francisco Opera conductor and finally Oakland Symphony conductor; David Ostwald, alumnus, drama and opera stage director, and producer; the Gamez family, Thom and Charlie, alumni, counsellors and office managers; Larry Maisel, composer of two SFBC operettas and all around splendid counsellor who is now a lawyer in Paris.

The last six men had grown up singing in the SFBC and were deeply concerned with all aspects of leadership and performance. Alumni were ideal counsellors, imbued with SFBC standards and pride in growth and achievement. A life-long friend of the SFBC, an Oakland school teacher, who has given continuous year-round service for some thirty years, mostly without remuneration is Richard Meyer, the counsellor in charge of the trainees at camp. Also Richard still functions through three administrations as musical and technical assistant with the SFBC training group.

Harris: Did the boys learn theory as well as music at camp?

Bacon: They studied theory intensively during camp and moderately during the winter. In camp it was thoroughly worked out. The theory program, you see, depended somewhat on my staff. Originally, I

developed a succinct sight reading, ear-training, and musical vocabulary program which was adapted to my boys who were nine to fourteen years old.

[Footnote by Madi Bacon: See the camp theory report by Philip Kelsey which has been offered for deposit in The Bancroft Library.] In camp every child had theory every day. At home, the concert group didn't have time for much theory.

You see, after a few years we expanded. We started with one group of twenty-five boys. Then the chorus grew and we took young boys in who didn't know anything, if they wanted to sing.

We had as many Berkeley and East Bay boys as we did from San Francisco. We had one boy come from Santa Rosa, and one boy each from Novato and Fairfield; we had boys from Walnut Creek and some from Palo Alto.

When the chorus was developing, in the early fifties, there was nothing else like it. Well, there was the Cathedral School for the choir boys, a church oriented group. Ours was non-church, secular, but we did sacred and secular music and opera, of course. And then we did all kinds of music shows and became an independent organization. During the opera season, we were called the "San Francisco Opera Boys Chorus." That was our official name. And then when we incorporated, in '49, we officially became the San Francisco Boys Chorus.

We did quite a bit of travelling in later years. My philosophy was to go to schools. I wanted to go all over the state of California and perform for school children to encourage them to better singing. I found that I had a very intelligent group of boys. They were usually excellent students. And if not, they got better in the chorus, not worse, perhaps because of the motivation that had to do with being an artist who cares about beauty in every sense. I carried out that philosophy in our summer camps. When the Boy Scouts called the toilets France and Italy, we covered those signs and called them Mars and Jupiter since the former identification implies that those countries are dirty. Our signs were made with elegant calligraphy by Elise Cosad, a multi-talented counsellor.

Harris: You felt that the boys couldn't think of anything derogatory about Mars and Jupiter.

Bacon: Right, it couldn't be. And I didn't want that implication. If the scouts used a garbage can for each of the cabins, and there were some twelve cabins around, we removed all the garbage cans. I furnished cardboard boxes from our food purchases for waste baskets because I just didn't like the idea of those garbage cans. Then, in the one house where the scouts had punched holes in the ceiling, we covered the ceiling with paper and put designs on it.

We had two camps on the Feather River. One was a little north of Keddie for two seasons and then we outgrew it because we only had room for fifty boys there. Later we had up to ninety boys and nineteen staff members in camp. After two years at the first camp, we went to Camp Wallace Alexander which was the Piedmont Boy Scout Camp. We rented it in the month of August.

Harris: How long did the camp last?

Bacon: It was one month. Well, it began with two weeks in Ben Lomond and then we went on to three and four weeks.

Five or six boys would live together in a cabin. And the counsellors lived with the boys. We had various arrangements; I experimented all the time. I suggested one year, "Wouldn't you counsellors like to live separately in cabins and just visit with each other?" "Why, yes, that's a good idea." So they tried it. And before you knew it, a couple of alumni counsellors who had graduated from SFBC like David Ostwald wanted to move back to the boys. So he did and soon others returned to live with their boys. They learned so much and enjoyed being with them. It's a very different attitude than if you have counsellors off in cabins by themselves!

Harris: You recruited your counsellors from chorus graduates?

Bacon: Many, yes. I had some University of California and state college counsellors, also a few foreigners. Almost every counsellor at our camp was involved with music. Certainly I used alumni whenever possible. They were wonderful because they had pride in the chorus; they were experienced with

singing; they cared about the music; and they learned about children.

Now, one of the interesting counsellors at camp that I think about often is Lawrence Maisel, Larry. His father was a professor of business administration, I think, at the University, and he was on the Federal Reserve Board later on. Larry was a little boy of maybe ten or nine when he came into SFBC. His mother, Lucy Maisel, was very active. She was secretary of the board, I think, for a long time, and extremely helpful to me. Larry, as a child, not only sang, but he got to composing his own music. And Larry wrote two operettas, both of which we performed. The Prince and the Pauper -- I suggested the text to him because it would make a good operetta for children. Larry wrote The Prince and the Pauper when he was ten years old. Then, later, he wrote music for The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg. You would be amazed at how delightful these two works are. The boys enjoyed doing them.

Harris: And he was only ten when he was composing these works?

Bacon: That's right. Now let me tell you a story about The Prince and the Pauper. We performed it at camp when he was ten. I think we may have given it a public performance later sometime; at least parts of it we did. But this was a half-hour show, or something like that. And Larry, after he graduated from high school, went to Harvard. He came from Harvard to be a counsellor at camp. We worked on The Prince and the Pauper another season, and Calvin Simmons who was younger, I think, took these melodies and accompanied the operetta improvising the harmony. Well, he was the only one who could do that. Calvin did this beautifully. So in the show Calvin played. He was about fifteen at that time. I said to him, "Calvin, nobody else can play this accompaniment. You've got to write this down for me." Well, he had never had that kind of training. But from the sight reading which we did, from the kind of music we sang, he went ahead, and did it by "feeling." But he procrastinated forever and ever because it was really hard without formal harmony and composition training. And it was amazing what he did. Larry and he put that show together by themselves. It would be used by the schools; it ought to be in print.

Now, James Moffett, a well-known educator in the country, another Harvard grad, who has published books on education, called on me at one time. And he took Larry's The Prince and the Pauper and put it into a school textbook, the songs and words as Larry Maisel had adapted them from Mark Twain. That was in Houghton Mifflin Company's textbooks for schools. So Larry as a little boy wrote The Prince and the Pauper, and as a Harvard junior, he revised it, didn't change the tunes, and Calvin wrote the music down. Then Houghton Mifflin put it in a textbook!

Harris: That's a wonderful story. I assume that all the counsellors at camp were not only musicians but were also athletes as well.

Bacon: We had six to eight counsellors teaching swimming. We had canoeing; we had an art studio; alternate summers we worked on dramatic performances. For two summers we had dance counsellors, did some dance and movement. The real purpose of camp was to unify the chorus; to have the boys live and work together and through daily rehearsals, to build up a repertoire and good singing habits. The older ones helped to teach the younger ones mostly in sight singing. They developed leadership. They liked helping the younger ones.

Harris: So everyone went to camp, not just the Concert Group.

Bacon: Yes, everyone went. And at camp, I put the children together according to their development in age groups and school grades not according to their singing ability so that their living situation was the right living combination.

My chief reason for having a camp, which had to be self-supporting, because we didn't have extra money for it, was to make a very closely-knit, almost a family organization out of the SFBC. It was my only opportunity to work with each boy every day to prepare the opera and concert repertoire, to improve singing habits, to observe individual boys, and to promote trainees according to their abilities. Also the live-in situation prepared the boys for travelling responsibilities.

I wanted unity of thinking, some unity of goals. I wanted to give boys an environment in which their own talent could grow. And in an outdoor

environment, where you are happy, and you have athletics, and you can balance music with good outdoor living and socialized activities, and play soccer and go on hikes and so on -- this is a perfect environment for creating good music.

You would have absolute beginners in music. Then you have all these different levels. The top boys usually ended about thirteen or fourteen years of age, sometimes a twelve year old. I turned over one cabin, "The Eagle's Nest," to the most advanced boys with a record player, orchestral and choral recordings and pocket scores. The older boys could go into this cabin without asking permission. They could take records off the shelf and follow orchestral scores. Nobody else was allowed, except by invitation, only these six or seven advanced boys who were Sixteenth Notes. I worked on the Jupiter Symphony with them one week. We were working on conducting in the advanced groups. Well, if I have a group alone in a beautiful place, you can accomplish so much. And you've got them interested, and they continue with their interests. I mean, because a boy sings in chorus doesn't mean he has to become a singer. He might become a pianist or a violinist or an organist, or just a parent who loves music who can carry music on to his children. I mean, these are the goals that are involved.

I found that the boys enjoyed me and I enjoyed them. The counsellors that I selected were camp people with imagination, people with taste, and spirit. One of my alums was a real Marine Corps chap. On a rainy day, he saved my life with the kids because we had no place to be in the rain except a big dining room. And to put eighty or ninety boys inside just doesn't work, you know. So my Marine Corps alumnus took all the hidden garbage cans which I mentioned before, piled them in a big stack in the middle of a big field, and then he put tarps over them, got everybody in his bathing suit, and organized obstacle relay races. Well, God bless the Marines! [Laughter] On a rainy day, you don't know what a blessing that was to give them exercise and keep them moving.

Harris: I can see what you mean by needing imagination to run a camp.

Bacon: Why camp? Camp was so that I could see every boy myself. I had the little ones too. The morning

period was divided into three periods. One group would be singing; another group would do theory; and another group would do sight reading. There might be two theory groups, or depending on how it worked, there might be an acting lesson if we needed acting. Then we would rotate so each child got the theory; each child got the chorus; and then the third period we combined the chorus and put them together. This was in the mornings, after breakfast.

Harris: So you conducted the whole group of ninety boys then?

Bacon: I had the whole group once a day. If we had something to do which needed many voices, we'd put the whole group together. But sometimes it would be only half of the group at once because the little ones might not have the background for the work so we might divide into two groups whatever was logical.

A real difficulty was to find a camp with the right set-up so that you could have two big rehearsal rooms. We would rent five or six pianos. We would put the two best ones where the big rehearsals were, and the others were for practice elsewhere. But you can see what kind of camp you needed.

Harris: You needed a lot of space.

Bacon: Yes, and you can't have pianos outdoors. We did have some sight reading classes outdoors, small ones, because I would send older boys out with two little ones and say, "Alright, now you take them on their Melodia sight reading." So they sing, "1-3-5-3-1." [Sings, demonstration] And now they'll take printed music and read it with numbers, in two parts, like soprano and alto. The older boys had passed the Melodia Book I and were way ahead of this. So they loved teaching the little ones. And then they would bring them to pass Whole or Half-Note tests for advancement.

Harris: And that helped unify the chorus.

Bacon: Yes, there is nothing better than to teach a younger boy. You will like him because you have helped him and he respects you and likes you.

Oh! We had a wonderful music chart, music and swimming charts, made by Elise Cosad, one of our

music and swimming counsellors. There every boy could see in different colors his progress on the chart. The purpose of the chart was to show them what the goals were, what you did for the Whole Note, for the Half Note, the Quarter Note. This chart had all those notes on it; it was a big chart. And every boy's name was on the chart. So they could watch their progress. For a little fellow, seeing a red line going on from his name, going into the next section, maybe a Quarter Note getting into Concert Group, that was stimulating! Now some counsellors thought it was too competitive. But you can't keep out all competition. If there are children in class in school, there's always some competition. But I do not believe in breeding competition. I believe in stimulating the boys to reach their goals. That was my goal. And I don't think, if teachers have an honest direction, and have the right relationship with their students, they will be misunderstood. It will not be competing against each other. We're competing with, with the goals. We're reaching for goals. And that's the whole attitude.

I have been in many camps. There are camps, private or others, where after taps at night, a counsellor has to go around and keep the children quiet. That didn't bother us much. This is one of the things I look back on with joy. We had gone on the Honor System to such an extent that we didn't have to worry. Sure, there were little misdemeanors here and there, but basically we didn't schedule counsellors to be on duty after taps. Most of the counsellors came up to the fireplace and the piano and we would close the doors and make music. We sang a lot, all the staff. And we played games up there when the children were in bed. We didn't worry about the kids because we didn't have to. Now that sounds too idyllic, I know, but it is really true. There were always older boys, student officers of the chorus, who would come and get assistance if things were too bad. It was an atmosphere and an environment that was beautiful, living together and enjoying each other, not taking advantage. If you don't make a lot of rules, you don't have a lot of rules to break.

I remember the arrival at camp. We had a flagpole, but we didn't have flag raising. We would gather around the flagpole when the busses arrived with

the children and their duffel bags. What a great mess that first day of arrival! It was very exciting. So I called their names out, and then I read who goes into which cabin with which counsellor. And they're all agog. And, of course, the older boys, I've told them at home already, "You write on a piece of paper and tell me who are your friends that you would like to live with. I'll try to arrange it, but I don't guarantee anything. It may not work. You may be in adjoining cabins. But give me a couple of choices." But then, I really knew whom they liked anyway because I knew every boy by name. I knew them as children and I knew a lot of their parents because we had occasional parents' meetings.

Harris: What did you tell them when they gathered at the flagpole?

Bacon: I would say, "We don't have any rules in this camp, except if you so much as step above your ankle in the river without permission, you're going home." Safety is an absolute. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. And that includes the best swimmer in camp. You had to have permission to go into the water.

Harris: So you really didn't have any disruptive elements in camp.

Bacon: If we had disruptive elements, we would handle them in different ways. A boy would come to me with a problem and I would frequently call on Richard Meyer. Richard has many, many years as a Scout counsellor. He comes from the Midwest, La Crosse, Wisconsin, I think. And he was an experienced counsellor with the Scouts. He loves little boys and he always helped with swimming. He would go into the water with the little ones and help the non-swimmers. He would build sand castles with them or he would play his flute and they would come and sing in his cabin. I gave his cabin a piano because he used it with the children so much. Well, he is just one of the great volunteers. He devoted many, many days of his life to the SFBC.

I would ask Richard Meyer to help because he was a man, because he was always kind, and he was a very good listener. If a boy were out of order, we would discuss his problems with him. Sometimes we would discuss them with another boy, his friend. We would try to bring everything out in the open.

If one boy didn't want to make his bed, or sweep under the bed, and they were getting bad inspections, I would encourage a counsellor to talk with that boy. By the way, we used to have the boys do all these things including inspection. Then there were times when we had to start our music and then the nurse did it. We explored different ways of doing things.

But I think camp definitely showed us who the leaders were. And we used the leaders a great deal. So that sometimes, at home, after a rehearsal, if a boy were really difficult or just gabbed too much during rehearsal, I would say, "Will the board please stay after rehearsal a few minutes? I have a problem." And then I would say, "Will you talk with so-and-so?" That would be five boys. I would let the student board handle the situation.

We would talk things over enough so that they didn't go way out, you know. It wasn't a power motive. But it was trying to be fair.

Harris: You were using peer pressure.

Bacon: Right, there was a lot of that. But you can only do that if you're not a dictator yourself. Although, let's tell the stories on me. I mean, if you ask some of the older boys, "How does Miss Bacon handle things?" "Oh, she's so darn democratic; she lets us vote on almost anything, darn near anything. But she always knows what the outcome is going to be." [Laughter]

Harris: You're a good politician.

Bacon: Well, that's true. I did know. I did know about who was going to be elected by the boys for their officers. But we kept a very formalized election process with a parliamentarian. Again, I would draw in the alumni. I remember Larry Maisel was an excellent parliamentarian because he was an ex-boy, you see. So if questions got out of line, or went off the beam, the parliamentarian could take care of things, could bring us back. So the boys were taught how to run a meeting.

One summer, I can't remember which one, we had elections at camp for president. It must have been during the Eisenhower campaign. The chairman of the camp Democrats was the cook. The chairman of

the Republicans was Mell Carey, a brilliant musician and top counsellor, program director. So, we had spent a long evening on elections. It took too long to count the ballots; it was long past bedtime. In the morning, at breakfast, we announced the outcome. We were about, I think, seventy-five percent Democrats. There was a boy from each party who gave a speech at the flagpole so we had political speeches. Mell Carey helped one speech and the cook helped with the other!

Harris: You really involved everybody at camp.

Bacon: Oh, by the way, the first full day at camp -- we arrived on a Sunday usually -- on Monday, we would have exams in the dining room at 9:00 or 9:30. And everybody would bring pencils and paper. We gave placement exams for music. All the counsellors took them and the cook took the exams; everybody took the exams. We all took them. It was kind of fun. You know, you don't let these things get too serious.

Then there were people helping -- alums are wonderful for this sort of thing because they've gone through it. They love to do this. "Now, if you finish sheet #1, you can start on #2. You don't have to do Sheet #1 if you're a Quarter Note. You start Sheet #4 for Quarter Note." So you go on. "What we really want to know is how much you know; you know so much, and we don't know how much you know." So that's the attitude of the exams, that's the placement.

Then we put them in all kinds of groups. We would have eight or more different groups. We would have ten or fifteen counsellors teaching music.

Harris: That was a pretty big staff and a lot of boys.

Bacon: Fifteen to twenty staff.

Harris: And about ninety boys.

Bacon: Yes. For my head swimming counsellor one year -- I wanted an alumnus -- Thom Gamez -- I remember very well. He was very dependable, reliable; I had taught him canoeing; I knew he could handle the waterfront beautifully; he was very well-organized. He said, "I don't particularly want to do this, but I will do it on one condition, Madi." I said, "What's that?" He said, "If I can also teach a

music class." And that's a true story. That's Thom Gamez-Brown, head waterfront director.

Harris: Well, how was this financed? This must have been quite an operation with that many people away for a month and six pianos rented.

Bacon: Well, I always underpaid the counsellors. I interviewed everybody, selected everybody myself because I've had a lot of camp experience, with the Camp Directors Association in the east and midwest and out here with my own camp. How did we finance it?

Harris: Did the boys pay tuition?

Bacon: Yes, they paid tuition. It was, I would say, slightly more than the Scout camp and less than most private camps.

Harris: Did you offer scholarships for those who couldn't afford it?

Bacon: Oh, yes. We never turned away a boy that had a good voice who couldn't pay. Never in the history of the chorus to my knowledge. I don't think Ballard, my successor, did either.

Harris: How did you raise the funds then to cover the costs?

Bacon: Well, in the earliest days, I just went to friends and begged it. That was the beginning. Then we tried to establish a scholarship fund.

We had a separate budget for camp, and we never lost money. We always broke even, pretty close because we lived on a shoestring. But we worked hard. I mean, the first two seasons the counsellors washed the dishes and I paid nobody except the cook. It was a labor of love and then we began to pay.

I learned a great deal from Mrs. Fahrner in that respect, Peggy Fahrner whom I mentioned before, who was very valuable in shaping camp. She taught me to stress in interviews with counsellors, "This is a privilege, to be a counsellor in this camp. It's the only time in your life that you are going to have the experience of working with an unusually superior group, intellectually, in a subject which they enjoy." Because our boys were -- I don't

think there were more than five percent C students in the chorus. Because they don't last. They're not the ones who can do SFBC work: twice a week two hour rehearsals, and then all the night work of opera and concerts, and going on the road. And you've got to have parents who support you. The parents wore themselves out bringing boys to rehearsal, and they had to be on time. Many boys had to train their parents to be on time because you cannot be late for the opera or for the symphony.

But, back to camp finances, we managed with very little. We got some government help with surplus foods: peanut butter, sometimes butter. We were a non-profit organization. The highest salary always went to the cook.

Harris: A cook is a very important person in a camp.

Bacon: And wonderful. My two cooks whom I remember, the black ladies I had -- one who is teaching, got her Master's degree later and teaches in San Diego to this day, I think. They were both exceptional women who were very musical themselves and sang well. June Hall and Charlotte Jackson, outstanding women.

Charlotte told me she wanted to go to Julliard but in those days, in her day, they just didn't take black students.

I asked June Hall to do a Sunday service one time when a Catholic and a Jewish boy were fighting with each other. And I asked her to do the Sunday service that time because June could walk into the dining room and everybody quieted down. Everybody looked at her. June was like Mother Earth to them. She was with us a good ten years. I remember she told the story of Noah and two animals and -- I can't remember the details, maybe there were two Catholics and two Jews coming on the Ark, I don't remember, but, at any rate, she gave a message. And it touched them because I talked to those boys later; they got the message.

Sunday Vesper Service

Harris: I have heard other graduates of camp mention the Sunday services.

Bacon: Good.

Harris: Would you like to talk a little bit about services?

Bacon: Oh, I would love to. We had members of the chorus who had minister fathers and they wanted to come up to camp and do Sunday service. I didn't go along with that because I feared a sectarian approach. I knew that I could talk on Sunday with the boys and they would follow with me. They wouldn't just sit there listening to doctrine.

First I picked the most beautiful place I could find in camp. It was not the place that the Scouts used for their Sunday service. We were up high above the river, on a cliff. And then, across the river, you could see pine trees on the ridge in the distance. A couple of boys and I cleared out underbrush there a little bit, and they came with tarps and sleeping bags. I had it as a Vesper service.

After breakfast on Sunday we had an hour Sunday sing. We did the great Schubert and Brahms songs and other religious music we knew and added some folk songs and things. The entire camp spent an hour just singing, not teaching. But during that hour, we sang English, German, Italian, Latin, French songs.

We had songs the children could choose. The Training Group could choose some songs. In that case, the Training Group would stand up and would sing, and the rest of us would all sight read because I believe in learning to read music by doing it. So those of us who didn't know the Training Group songs would sight read and sing with the Training Group, but the Training Group would stand up and they would be the important ones. Then the Concert Group would sing and the Training Group had music in hand to follow along. But half the time, they couldn't really read much, but they got to follow it by ear and they picked up the time. There's a lot of teaching done at camp which was not done at home because the Training Group picked up from the Intermediate and the Concert Group by ear, by osmosis. It comes through the pores. So, if you have the right leadership in your older boys and they help the little ones, the younger ones follow along. And they're better teachers than we adults as you may know.

Harris: What sort of things did you do on Sunday and at the Vesper service?

Bacon: Ah, coming back to Vespers. The Sunday sing in the morning, and then the rest of the day was free to play: baseball, swim, canoe, take a hike, make music -- we didn't "rehearse" on Sunday. Sometimes we had a little afternoon excursion. Then everybody had to take a shower before Sunday supper. Then at Sunday supper, you were clean, and you had your chorus T-shirt on so you were dressed up. Then after supper, we had Vespers. The campers and counsellors would lie on the ground -- Dick Meyer was surrounded by little friends, and other counsellors had their buddies near them. Everybody in camp came. I sat on a captain's chair so I was a little bit higher -- you know one of those canvas chairs -- And I tried to time the Vespers so that you could see the sun go down, daylight disappear, and the stars come out.

At any rate, the boys would assemble and they would have a good time together because they liked being together. First, in the early days, I started with the Lord's Prayer. I thought that meant church to them. I was pretty naive myself, you know? One time in the middle of the Lord's Prayer, I stopped dead because it was going, "Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name," and it was just like reciting the alphabet. I stopped dead and then I said, "A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I won't have it! If you're going to say the Lord's Prayer like that, I don't want to hear any more. If it doesn't mean anything to you, I've had it." So I stopped then and didn't continue and didn't do the Lord's Prayer after that.

Harris: That must have surprised them.

Bacon: It was extremely effective, very effective. I can be dramatic at moments. [Chuckles] I remember, I had fun myself because I didn't realize how effective it was until afterwards.

We would start, "Here we are, all together, black and white and green and red, Buddhists, Catholics, Jews, Moslems" -- I did have a Moslem once. I think it's wonderful -- "There are some trees here, but there isn't even a man-made roof over our heads. I don't know how you feel, but every time I think of God, I always find myself looking up. Why do I look up and not down?"

"You know, without a man-made roof over you, you can be nearer to your God, your God and my God. We all have our own God, the way God seems to us. I don't think there are any two of us that think of God exactly alike. Well, let's think about this. What does it mean to us?" We would just talk, you see, and then sometimes somebody would put up a hand and volunteer and want to say something. And then we would let him say it. I worked hard over Vespers. I made it seem as if it were absolutely casual and spontaneous. But I usually had some message from the week of problems in the camp. Maybe people living together were not getting along well, or they were getting egotistical or authoritarian, or had been impatient, irresponsible, or whatnot.

For me, our camp Vesper service offered a rare opportunity to bring us all together in a beautiful environment to share our innermost thoughts and feelings about friendship and togetherness, about love and kindness, responsibility, beauty, God and the quality of living. Since we cared about each other, trusted one another, our music making inevitably reflected our joy and confidence. At camp, I tried hard to establish an environment in which our music study was well balanced with outdoor freedom and with love and respect for each other.

At Sunday evening Vesper service, lying or sitting on a tarp, next to one's favorite friend or counsellor, watching the sun go down and the stars come out, was an ideal situation for intimate communication. "Somewhere There's a Place for Us" or "Let Every Hill and Valley Praise Thy Holy Name" became favorite songs. And Paul Gallico's Small Donkey story about the boy with the sick donkey in Assisi became an annual tradition. Essentially we met beauty and spiritual values head on and at universal levels sharing with eight to sixty year olds. (Now, at eight-one, I appreciate the ethical and community values handed down to me by my parents.)

Then, one or two counsellors became interested in doing Sunday service. We always had music among other things. We had a little electric piano some summers and sometimes we did without it. It was deemed an honor to prepare something for Vespers so some of the boys would prepare a quartet or duo for

Vespers. Dick Meyer was wonderfully cooperative in this. Consequently there would be beautifully prepared music at Vespers.

An interesting thing that I observed was that the first Sunday night at camp was very confusing, people terribly itchy, restless. They had just arrived at camp. I couldn't make them calm down. Finally, it was time to go to bed afterwards. The second Sunday was more relaxed. By the third Sunday, the boys didn't jump up immediately after Vespers and go to their cabins. They went leisurely and they kept on talking after Vespers was over. They would walk down the path with me to my cabin, or with a counsellor. Two boys were walking down the path in front of me one time and I said, "Hello. What are you doing?" "Just meditating." In other words, the city restlessness had fallen off; the tensions had disappeared. It took two weeks at camp to unravel, to settle in, to relax, and be ready to look at the stars. Some years we had a telescope in camp. One of the boys brought it. And we would discover constellations. During Vespers the boys would look across the river and they would "see" a cross in a pine tree -- an imaginary cross, of course.

So, you see, their minds were working on different things. To me, that also related to the dining room, to the meal time graces. I did not like proverbial graces, the kind that you've learned because when memorized, its meaning disappears. So the first day or two at camp, certain old counsellors and I would say grace, and then we turned it over to the children. Now, a dining room with a hundred people in it is a big room! It's open, just screens, so that it's hard to hear. So every little child who said grace had to climb up on the bench in order to be seen and heard. If he didn't project, I would ask him to do it over again. Sometimes we had a grace in Hebrew, or one in French, and then it would be translated into English. It had to be heard in order to be enjoyed. I remember the boy who said grace one time and said, "God bless my grandmother, and please take care of my dog." -- The dog was at home. What's the matter with that? I mean, I didn't like prepared graces as such. I wanted them spontaneous.

Along with that, I wanted the boys to be able to project, always project, project, project. And our

SFBC men, when they're grown up, many of them have commented to me on that. I don't know why you can't hear other people, but my alums know about a voice carrying through space.

Harris: I can see why you were awarded a citation from the American Camping Society. Shall we end the camp discussion with that?

Bacon: Right, although I hate to end camp anytime.

Harris: I can see that.

Bacon: To me, the camp was an essential part of the quality of thinking and the quality of singing of our SFBC. I could say in a rehearsal, "That wasn't a beautiful tone. I want a sweet tone." Nobody would snicker at that. Or I would say, "You're not an artist." There would be no snickering. Because that meant professionalism.

Harris: And that attitude was built up through the camp experience.

Bacon: Of course. There were traditions. Well, it was the total chorus tradition, and all the adults working with us. And what's more, it seeped into the homes, to the families. It seeped into the next generation. And when boys came back from camp, they had their responsibilities. They cleaned the table and did the dishes and all this sort of thing. Parents would say, "I can't believe it! What did you do to my boy at camp?" They were more helpful, more thoughtful, didn't throw papers on the ground, you know what I mean.

Harris: You had established discipline.

Bacon: Yes, if you call it that. I don't like the word "discipline." "Responsibility" is better. What I wanted was voluntary interest; that is very hard to get; in this generation, it's a little harder. But I didn't want the restraint that you get from some Chinese families where there is an absolute worship of the father and mother and their word is law. We're Americans after all; I'm an American and I want children's opinions. But if a child disagrees with me on something, I'm not going to knock him down. I might say, "Well, I don't agree with you, and I'll give you my reason. Now you give me your reason." I really treated the children, I think, like my friends and like adults, in a way. I

expected something from them and I got it. If you don't expect, you don't get; that's the big thing.

We had one counsellor who was hipped on Summerhill. He wanted to practice Summerhill principles at camp, Mell Carey. He just insisted on it. He had the oldest cabin of boys. He was the music theory director. Well, Mell Carey wanted to follow the Summerhill practices with his two top cabins by camping out across the river and cooking their own meals. But I said, "Look, Summerhill is fine, but you can't suddenly do it in four weeks. It's a wonderful philosophy to let a boy sit under a tree until he gets bored and wants to come into music call, but in four weeks, he might still be sitting under the tree! I don't see how I can let Charlotte, the cook, struggle with your going into the kitchen any time you please." I had to fight with him about this even though I am loose and free and open to new ideas. But I fought against a four week experimental Summerhill although I'm very much interested in Summerhill in the right place, under the right circumstances. That was an interesting problem to solve.

Harris: You wanted to encourage independent thought and action on the part of the boys and staff, but you also had to think of achievable goals for the group as a whole.

Bacon: I remember the day Lindsay Spiller was elected student president at camp and I helped him on his speech for the banquet. I didn't write the speech for him, but he asked me questions and I encouraged a good presentation. So Lindsay Spiller gave his speech -- "We must have better discipline ..."

Oh, we had a grand banquet at the end of camp. Everybody got an award. Everybody got the award of the "note" that he earned in music. So that even a Whole Note, maybe number ninety in the chorus, would have an award. He would get his Whole Note or his Half Note. And the notes got bigger as you got up to Eighth Notes and Sixteenths; they would be hanging on a wire across the head table at the banquet. And they were silver and gold cardboard notes, you know.

Well, at any rate, we had other awards too. Calvin Simmons got the Leontyne Price award. Another year, he got the Victor Borge award because Calvin

could play anything. There was some humor in the awards as well as indicated achievement.

Harris: Anything else outstanding? We have talked about Vespers and a little bit about the banquet and athletics and art program. Do you think of anything else?

Bacon: Well, we were interested in food habits. Originally, we weighed every boy, but I figured that in one month, we'll just weigh the underweights and the overweights at camp. The nurse cooperated. So we would try to encourage the overweights to lose and we did pretty well. We weighed them and the underweights once a week. We didn't bother about the rest anymore. We were trying to encourage a total picture of health and out door living for all singers.

Harris: Anything else you would like to add about camp?

Bacon: Well, it was a great day when alumni began to come by the droves to be counsellors. That made it a lot easier because they helped to carry on the goals and the quality of the goals which we had established. Once in a while, you might get one real jazzy boy. And I didn't want to get jazz started in a big way because it could take over, and the other music, the classic music that we were doing was supreme. We also sang a lot of folk music and I encouraged folk singing with guitar. Right now, in this era, it would be a little harder to run camp and the music without getting involved with jazz. I'm not against jazz; it's just that we are surfeited with it nowadays. We have so much pop music, so much rock and roll, that I'm at the stage where I'm ready to pay twenty-five cents for silence if I go to a restaurant. But along with the rock and roll era every where, we've also got much wider TV and radio listening to classical music. It goes both ways.

Harris: Well, it sounds as if camp was a delightful experience for boys and director.

Bacon: Yes, but we had mishaps and problems too. A boy fell off a cliff. I had to take him to the hospital for a week's stay! X-rays showed he had a previously undiscovered extra bone near his coccyx.

We had Christian Science boys too. I told the parents, in case of illness, I would take the boy

to the hospital whether they liked it or not, unless I immediately reached them on the phone. If they were available on the phone, they could come and get the boy and take him away from camp, fine. Otherwise he goes to the hospital. Otherwise I won't have him at camp. I mean, you had problems like that!

And then, for many years, I took the Catholics to church on Sunday morning. And that upset breakfast and getting morning sing going, until I found out that I could get dispensations for the boys.

Harris: Well, running a camp is a pretty complicated operation, it's obvious.

Bacon: I could do it now with my hands tied behind my back. [Laughter] I did the food buying, checked the infirmary, planned meals originally, because I had a pretty good nutrition background. I had been at camps with the finest food, with nutrition experts, that kind of thing for many years in four different camps.

Harris: You were drawing on your experiences in Michigan.

Bacon: Yes, at Camp Kechuwa. One of the directors was a nutritionist to begin with. Oh, we had home-baked scones and sweet rolls and bran muffins, the most marvelous breakfast rolls there.

Aims of Chorus Program

Harris: Did you have a model for the San Francisco Boys Chorus when you conceived of it?

Bacon: Well, the nearest thing to a model is the Vienna Choir Boys organization which I knew fairly well because I knew the director, Ferdinand Grossman.

But, you see, in the beginning, with Maestro Merola asking me to come in and develop a boys group for the opera in 1948, I wasn't thinking of a continuing group. In the beginning, I was just training those boys for that one season. But it seemed so wonderful to start a boys chorus out here on the west coast. I think it was the first major boy chorus on the west coast. The only well-known boys chorus that I knew of in existence at the time was the Texas Boys Choir. In Morelia, Mexico, a former Vienna choir boy teacher was training an

excellent group which inspired me. Later, that man came up to Tucson, I think, but I don't think he remained very long.

Harris: What were your aims, you and the other three women who started the SFBC?

Bacon: Well, as time went on, the aims developed, you see. The idea at first was to give the boys an opportunity to sing with other friends and to give them good music twice a week after school, from 4:00-5:30 or 4:00-6:00, teach them sight reading. It all started very simply. We began with rehearsals twice a week and in no time, the boys were asked to perform. So there came performance demands. I had to teach some songs by rote, because you have to teach in a great hurry if a club wants you and wants to pay you for performance! Then you have to quickly get the music ready until long traditions have been established and a repertoire built up. So that, in the early days, it was a kind of frantic haste to learn songs for club and church performances.

Given time, the ultimate aims were to give the boys the environment and the skills to develop their musical talents and to give them the desire to pursue music as a joyous hobby for all their lives. I didn't feel the public schools were adequately doing this. Many years ago the public schools did more for the children in certain areas of the country. But this was our private endeavor.

Most boys choruses originate through the Catholic and Episcopal churches. Our excellent Episcopal boys chorus at Grace Cathedral has been in existence a long time, but it remains a church choir, not a secular choir.

Training Young Voices

Harris: How did you select the music that was sung? You talked about having to learn something quickly for a specific occasion.

Bacon: Well, at Christmas time, you have Christmas music. In the spring, you can turn to any kind of music except Christmas. Obviously our first obligation was to the opera. So the opera music had to be learned for the fall season, absolutely perfectly, by memory of course, and with great self-confidence

and projection. For the first few years, Mr. Adler was never satisfied that we sang loud enough. So in order to sing well and to sing loud, you have to do a certain training of the voices. Otherwise you get a very breathy tone, if you ask for power. If you ask a child with an average voice to sing loud, it's not a beautiful tone.

Now I did have to teach them, of course, that on stage at the opera, any "piano" or "pianissimo" was a "forte." So they had to sing forte and fortissimo all the time on the stage in Carmen, in La Boheme, in Tosca, in all the operas in which they participated in order to be heard in such a large hall of 3,000 or more people. Voices of children from eight to fourteen years are very small.

Harris: They are pretty small boys.

Bacon: Some of them, yes, although the ones who performed in opera were usually ten and over with occasional exceptions.

Harris: In addition to learning the music for the opera and such seasonal things, I would assume that you had certain standards of quality that the music had to meet.

Bacon: Well, yes. You asked about how I selected the music -- well, I was trained originally as a pianist and then as a conductor, and I had access to all kinds of choral literature and was teaching choral literature at the University. I selected many great works of Schubert and Brahms, and Mozart and Haydn, and the English madrigal school and Henry Purcell. Then we sang Schutz and Scarlatti and Lassus and Vittoria songs from the great Classic and Baroque eras. After we were a solid organization and well-established, the boys could sing almost anything that college women would sing. We sang three and four-part music.

We sang motets by Lassus, William Byrd, and Morley along with folk songs from many countries.

Harris: So you didn't have to choose music especially for young voices?

Bacon: In the Training Group, yes, in Concert Group, no. In the Training Group, the goal was to learn to sing with ease and with a beautiful tone, and to

adapt quickly to rhythms, and to learn to read music.

I had a wonderful assistant in Training Group for so many years in Juell Gainey Hinman. Juell Hinman came to SFBC as a volunteer in 1959. She assisted me at a time when I was improving our sight reading, theory, and vocal repertoire program for the beginners. These boys ranged from eight to eleven years in age. She had a degree in music education and she had a dear, charming voice -- a good role model for the boys. After several years of experience with SFBC and repeated trips to study with Ferdinand Grossman, director of the Vienna choir, she became a dynamic and splendid director of the Training Group. She ultimately achieved a clarity of articulation with her young boys which was not surpassed by the Concert Group or by the Vienna Choir Boys.

She was so open to everything I believed in; it was a joy to work with her. One of the things I remember asking her to do was to put a rhythmic pattern on the blackboard, two patterns, each rehearsal, so that, as the boys walked into their rehearsal room, there on the blackboard was a rhythmic pattern for them to figure out. Not a melodic pattern. So if you had [Begins to hum a pattern, three times in a row] -- I always wanted three repetitions of the same pattern because you want it to sink into your feeling. You want it to bore into the child. So as the children walked in the room, they saw these patterns on the board and it immediately gave them something to figure out and look at. Most children are curious if you give them a chance. So if you learned two patterns, rhythmic patterns, in each rehearsal -- four patterns a week -- at the end of a year in Training Group, you would know your eighth notes and your dotted notes and your quarter notes and your sixteenth notes, wouldn't you, pretty well?

Now, none of this was in a forced situation. It was all trying to do it with enjoyment.

In the beginning, I had my own Training Group when I divided the two groups. The differences were too great between the advanced and the beginners. I took both groups myself in the beginning until we got assistants. But what you did then with the trainees was to sing with a nice tone folk songs in the patterns that you have already given them. I

mean, we would do the "Londonderry Air" or "The Turtle Dove" -- American or English folk songs, all kinds of things. The idea was to enjoy a beautiful line, quality of tone, and to understand the rhythm and to be sure of it. Then we sang in two-part harmony and also stressed sight reading.

Harris: What were your expectations for the Intermediate Group?

Bacon: Well, you're talking about a later time. First there were only two groups. Then we developed into three; you can call them what you will -- the beginners, the intermediates, and the advanced. They had other names, and they've changed these names periodically. The Intermediate Group was not a good name. The Intermediate Group was always a little bit difficult to handle because they weren't quite the top and they weren't the beginners. Now they call them the Repertoire Group. That's a good name for them, I think. It gives them a feeling of status. The Training Group is still called the Training Group, I think.

The Concert Group performs every way: unison, two-part, three-part, four-part, a cappella or with accompaniment. But that would be after a boy had been in the chorus a year or more.

Harris: How many years would you say it would take a boy to reach Concert Group?

Bacon: I planned the whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes each with specific goals for a normal four year stint in SFBC. A trainee who entered at eight might be ten before he made it into Concert Group and someone who entered at ten might be eleven before he made it. The longest I know of a boy being in chorus was seven years. A number of boys were in for seven years, and they were very proud of that. Such a boy would come in maybe just at the tail end of age seven and end at fourteen. There was an occasional fifteen year old, but I usually put the boys out of chorus when they got into high school. I felt that it was better for the boy. Singing a feminine part in high school could subject him to teasing by his peers. I must tell you a story about that though. There was a very intelligent black boy in chorus, and I referred him to the Athenian School out in Danville. He got a scholarship to the school and I think he entered the ninth grade. Just that year -

- I think I had left Cal by then -- Athenian asked me to teach music there. I went out twice a week and started a chorus and music theory class. And there, at the first rehearsal, was the boy from my SFBC; he had left the chorus by then. I asked the low voices, basses, to sit in one section, then the tenors, altos, and sopranos. And the girls sat down, sopranos and altos, and this boy goes to sit with the altos, the only boy of the whole group sitting with the altos, with the girls. Ninth grade remember! I wanted to give him a chance to change seats, so I said, "Has your voice changed since chorus?" -- I've forgotten his name. -- And he said, "No, I'm an alto, Miss Bacon." Very definitely, no shyness; a fact was a fact. Well, I was very proud of that because, of course, that was my whole attitude.

I did a lot of teaching by asking questions and having the boys answer them. I would sometimes put on the blackboard some music and maybe leave out a sharp or a flat purposely, and inevitably a hand would go up and a boy would say, "Miss Bacon, you made a mistake." And I tolerated it because I encourage sharp observation. I said, "What? That's impossible. I don't make mistakes."
[Chuckles] We were on a fun basis with each other, you see.

Harris: I bet the boys loved to catch you in a mistake.

Bacon: Yes, so I asked the boy who had noticed that a sharp or flat was missing to come up and correct the mistake on the blackboard. So he would put the sharp in where it belonged. We all praised him then. It was a constant game and a pleasure to keep the boys alert and on their toes. We had a beautiful relationship in our explorations of music.

Harris: To what do you attribute that ease, the comfortable relationship with the boys?

Bacon: Well the philosophy of this is a little hard to put into words on short notice. In the first place, I feel I had a wonderful education. I was very fortunate. And I just happened to like children, and I think the boys were my family. But, on the other hand, fortunately, I don't think I was possessive. I think I was fortunate in enjoying the children, but I don't think I used the chorus as an ego trip, primarily. Teachers have to watch

that. And that's one of the things I'm still thinking about. It's different, perhaps, with women than with men. Here I am, a conductor -- I should have been a conductor, but I couldn't get a job except in choral conducting because women couldn't get an orchestra. -- But, when it came to working with these boys, after, remember fourteen years of university teaching, I found myself stimulated by the bright, eager and adaptable minds and the malleable voices. In addition, the operas and concerts were such good outlets for our work together. I realized how much I could do for them.

Harris: Not only in music, but in their lives in general.

Bacon: Perhaps. A good boys chorus director should be a human being who is rounded out, and who has each individual boy's welfare at heart. I don't make a boy a second alto if he should be a first soprano just because the chorus needs a second alto. I don't do that. I've seen that happen in other choruses. I think it isn't fair to the individual child. I know of a case where a little child in another chorus is a second alto and that child, that little girl, thinks she cannot sing soprano because she thinks she's a second alto. She's no more a second alto than I am a contrabass. So I had to prove to her that she could sing high, you see.

You think of the music; I was interested in the music. I wanted to make good music. When we sang Cantata Domino or Otello or if we did "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones," which has such a strength in it at the end, I wanted a free tone coming out of them. I didn't want a tense tone. I wanted the boys, when they were on the stage, to be American boys. I wanted them to be very sensitive musically, refined and precise in diction, but somewhere in the program, I let them blow off. They would lustily sing "Old Joe Clark" or some very rugged American folk song with great energy but without yelling. Music has to touch the emotions for the singers to enjoy it.

To go back to philosophy, let's not think just of the children, but think of Luther. When he came in and he wanted people in the church to sing, instead of, as the Catholic church had, the priests and boys singing at the audience. Gregorian chant has no measure lines; it has no absolute beats. The rhythm goes with the words; it isn't measured

music. But Luther came in and brought the chorale, and all of a sudden, the people out there in the congregation feel the music. You start beating your toe because there's a regular rhythm. So your body is involved, it isn't just your soul. Gregorian chant is wonderful for the soul, but it doesn't touch your body quite as much. But Luther wanted the people to participate physically, rhythmically, grandly.

Now, I wanted the boys to feel music. Oh, we did strange things. We all lay on our backs on the floor, for instance. I let them lie in a radial circle, singing a four-part motet, "O Vos Omnes," looking up at the ceiling. They couldn't see each other, you see, they were flat on their backs. But what happens when you sing flat on your back? You have to listen to the other parts to keep together. You hear the harmony distantly and listen intently because you don't see each other. We tried all kinds of tricks; it was fun.

Performance Demands

Harris: You mentioned performances. I believe there is always tension between the needs of performance and the boys' personal lives and their educational needs. How did you solve those tensions?

Bacon: Well, one time, I made a survey, and it is quite true that one sixth of a boy's daytime hours was given to the SFBC in the year I made my survey. This was true only for the really advanced boys who sang in concerts and operas. More than two hours a day on the average.

Harris: That must have included rehearsal time too.

Bacon: That's when we had nine operas in a season! But every opera requires stage rehearsals and singing rehearsals after the music has been memorized. Every concert requires stage rehearsals after you've learned the material.

Of, course, my goal was to give concerts in California, primarily, and to develop a group that was so beautiful that we would influence our surrounding areas like Angels Camp and Fresno and Modesto. We went to all these places, and Bakersfield and Los Angeles. We went everywhere to sing. We had already planned a European trip, but

in my day, we didn't quite carry that out. My successor did that.

Now, performing at the opera house, that was primarily in the fall season, from September to Thanksgiving. Then later, Spring Opera developed too. We sang or acted with the San Francisco Opera Company and then for a few years, the Cosmopolitan Opera came in the springtime and we performed with this company too. Then the Symphony sometimes used the boys so we were the organization that was asked for by major companies. We developed quite a large repertoire over the years, but my problem was that boys' voices change and I always had to train younger boys to replace the changes!

Harris: Your boys had a number of performances to prepare for.

Bacon: Yes. At the opera, I told the boys to bring one homework book to the rehearsals because we had long waiting periods before and between acts of the operas. Of course, you have to be there ahead of time to be ready to go on stage. We were in hallways. For years we didn't even have a dressing room. But finally, towards the end, we got a dressing room. To those boys who had homework, I said, "I see a quiet spot over there at the end of the hall. You fellows can go over there and work until we have to go on stage." But I would always warm them up before they went on stage. For many, many years I was there with them, or, if not I, one of my music assistants, to warm them up before they went on stage so that they had a feeling of power and strength when they went on stage.

Harris: You were talking about the survey that you took that indicated that one sixth of a boy's waking hours was given to chorus. How did that affect the rest of a boy's life?

Bacon: SFBC became the dominant interest in the lives of Concert Group boys, like baseball or football or drama for others. And just think of the celebrities they met!

It was hard on the parents, of course, because they had to come, bring the boys to rehearsals and performances. A lot of this was done with carpooling. Also, I had Saturday Ensemble rehearsals. The Ensemble Group of about twelve

boys would meet extra times and they would perform in the concerts so that the total Concert Group wouldn't have to have quite so much music to memorize. You create an enthusiasm. The parents saw what was going on; they were very cooperative. We had wonderful parent volunteers.

I was aware -- it was more true at opera time -- when a boy got tired and worn out, and he wasn't keeping up with his homework -- I was in close touch with the parents -- I would try to substitute another boy for his role. Or I would say, "You'd better stay home and give your place up to Johnny." But the opera didn't always know it. I would substitute a boy and not tell the stage director. But in substituting a boy in the opera, you have to take one who can fit into the costume. And that boy has to know what he has to do. So the boy who won't be there has to teach his replacement what to do, and they have to become very clever at doing this because they haven't rehearsed it on stage. But everybody helped. So just before a boy would break down, we would excuse him from an opera and he felt generous about giving up his place to a substitute.

Harris: I'm sure he hated to go.

Bacon: No, no; they were great. Especially as they got older, when they were twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old and had more homework. No, they appreciated it sometimes. Some of them went both ways. But there was a nice spirit of giving another boy a chance, too. And they trusted me. I mean, we trusted each other. I told the parents I wanted them to tell me if their boy was slipping in his schoolwork. The schoolwork improved; it didn't go downhill when a boy joined chorus.

Harris: Why do you think that was true?

Bacon: A boy didn't last in chorus if he wasn't interested in the first place. So it was something that he loved. The opera was a thrilling experience. The opera and camp were the two things that the boys loved most. Any tours, of course, they liked, but those were the outstanding things. Let's face it, a lot of the boys that we had were not the outstanding athletes in their school. These were boys who had the musical interest, and they had something to do that they loved. And they received considerable recognition and praise.

Audition Requirements

Harris: You mentioned that the boys took pride in the chorus and found friends. I notice that right from the very beginning you had a distinctive uniform and an emblem of the chorus.

Bacon: Oh, yes.

Harris: And these symbols were used to identify the chorus members and increase the prestige?

Bacon: All this was evolutionary. The goal of every boy who entered the chorus was to be in Concert Group, of course, and to be in the operas. There were always some boys who couldn't make opera because their voices weren't big enough. I didn't take a boy because of the size of his voice. I took him because he could sing in tune. We had quite interesting auditions, you know.

Naturally, an incoming boy was frightened at auditions. So I'll tell you what happened. As he walked in, a boy in SFBC uniform, one of my student officers, would greet him. This was planned. He would greet him at the door, and tell him his name, and usher him in, and talk to him, tell him about chorus. Parents were greeted also by an adult, a volunteer parent. And I auditioned four boys at a time. So four boys were brought into the rehearsal room. There I sat at the piano. I put two boys on my left and two on my right. And over in the back of the room was a long table, a refectory table, and about four or five boys sat there with audition sheets that I had prepared with them and for them -- on what to grade, what to listen for. It was wonderful training. And the student audition committee never got tired after two and a half or three hours of listening; they loved it. They were so interested in this.

So, the boy came in and sang. I usually had them do a couple of "vo-vas" -- they teased me about "vo-va" -- to warm them up. Or they would sing "Glory Hallelujah!," all four of us together, to get them started, to get their blood going, and to put them at ease a little bit. And then, after we had gotten a rhythm going, I would point to one boy and say, "You sing it." And then another boy would sing it. Then, "Alright, I would like to hear your solo, Johnny." -- I had four cards in front of me

with their names. -- So, "Johnny, would you do your solo?" So Johnny would do his solo; he would bring me the music and I would play it for him, or his mother or somebody would play for him. And so he would sing it to our little audition committee of students over there. Then I would have the other boys do their solos.

I tried to put them at ease as much as possible. So we would kind of play back and forth. Then we asked them certain questions, and then the next group was ushered in.

Harris: What were you specifically listening for?

Bacon: I was listening for a boy singing in tune. It was always interesting what song they would sing; they could sing anything they wished. Occasionally a boy would come and sing a German song, trained by a German mother. And I would grin at him -- how delighted I was to hear something unusual! Or a French song. But I wanted to see if they were in tune. I would check the personality; some were shy; some were aggressive.

When Calvin Simmons came in, and I asked him to do his solo, he came and said, "Can I play the piano?" "Well, sure you sing and play together, wonderful, fine." So I got up and Calvin sat down at the piano and played and sang.

I asked them about piano. It was also in my questionnaire, if they had had previous music training, and if they were in other choruses. So I got information from the questionnaires. But the interest of the boy and the personality counted. When you see a boy singing, you can tell if he's going to be crazy about singing or if his mother wanted him in the chorus! You can just tell that. The interest is as important as the result.

There was one boy whose sense of pitch was not good, but he had a potentially lovely voice with ringing overtones. Now I mention his name because you might still meet him at the Opera House, Gary Levy. He's an inveterate usher at the Opera House. He's a grown man, of course, these days.

Harris: But you would take a boy like that.

Bacon: Well, his intonation was not good and I took him because he had a great interest and a good voice.

For a year or two he had trouble with his intonation and Mrs. Hinman and I helped him individually. We told him what the problem was; we told the parents. And that boy kept after it. He didn't want to quit. Finally, he got to the point in Concert Group of having a beautiful voice and he could sing almost everything in tune.

And he auditioned for the solo part as one of the three spirits in The Magic Flute for the opera. He almost won it. But a tiny shade, with the excitement, on the stage, a tiny shade in pitch made Mr. Adler prefer another boy. So he was the understudy. But it was a real victory because that boy's pitch was not good at the beginning, but he had a nice voice and loved to sing.

If a child came and was way out of tune, our committee was trained to be very kind. There was no running a boy down. Many times we would try matching pitches and then I would call the mother if the boy couldn't sing at all in tune and I would say to the mother, "It would be wonderful if you could get any help outside of school because he may never sing if he doesn't learn to sing in tune now." Matching pitches can be learned with patient effort and adequate guidance. If by the third grade a boy doesn't sing in tune, he'll be shunned and will never sing in tune.

Performances with San Francisco Opera and Symphony

Harris: The boys auditioned for you to get into the chorus; did they also audition to get opera parts?

Bacon: No, I usually assigned the boys for opera. Only Magic Flute, Tosca, and occasional solos were further auditioned by Mr. Adler. I preferred having Mr. Adler and the stage director designate the final trio and understudies so that no favoritism on my part could be suspected.

Harris: You always had to have understudies.

Bacon: With children you must have an understudy for the opera. And what a terrible thing for an understudy never to get a part, you know, if he does all the work. So I loved having them there and getting the attention.

Oh, we had some interesting things. For instance, on stage with Carmen in the early days, when Mr. Agnini, the stage director, was still there, I had been asked to bring in twenty-two boys for Carmen. And here we were, lined up in two rows, little soldiers. And there were too many people on the stage, and Mr. Agnini,-- a little short man, I think he was barely five feet tall -- said, "I can't have all these boys! There are too many people on the stage! Miss Bacon, take eight boys out." Well, that was harrowing.

There I was on the stage. I looked at the boys, each one, put my nose in the air, and said, "Ok, now don't anybody cry; this is terrible, but I'll see what I can do. Trust me." And I picked eight boys to go offstage. Then, when that happened, I left the stage and ran up to the fourth floor to Mr. Adler's office -- he wasn't down on the stage at that time. I had been told twenty-two boys, and this was pretty tough to take eight boys out after they had been chosen. Ok. I went up there; Mr. Adler, very sympathetic, comes down with me, but when we got on stage, Mr. Agnini had simply put one group of fourteen down on stage level and put the other eight on a higher level above the stage. He just re-placed them to make it less crowded below. I think Mr. Adler was just about to tell Mr. Agnini that we really must use all the boys.

There were some heartbreakers. But I had trained them in advance. I said, "This is a professional situation, and the stage director and the music director are always right. Whether they're right or not, they are right. You have to go with it. And if you're old enough to be in the opera and be a professional on stage, then you've got to take whatever they say. And sometimes it will hurt." But all this was character-building; it was wonderful. And they became so brave and understanding.

Harris: Well, while you mention Mr. Adler, are there any particular events that you remember with the boys, other than that Carmen? How did he interact with the boys?

Bacon: Well, Mr. Adler really loved the boys. He scolded them, and he scolded me. He wasn't always pleasant by any means. But we got better and better. And you see, Mr. Adler was always there, always caring and checking on details.

Now we were a little afraid of him; I was, too because he could be quite brutal. But one day backstage -- there was a famous artist on stage, I won't mention the name -- but Mr. Adler was fuming. The boys were with me backstage waiting to go on, and he said, "The only good thing about this is the San Francisco Boys Chorus. The only one in tune is the boys chorus."

Harris: I bet the boys liked that.

Bacon: Mr. Adler developed the opera to top rank as one of the best companies in the world. He developed Spring Opera, and the Western Opera so we owe him a great debt of gratitude.

Harris: You mentioned the chorus' relations with the symphony too.

Bacon: Well, singing the War Requiem, the Chichester Psalms, St. Matthew Passion and other works with the symphony was a wonderful experience for the boys. They sang with Maestro [Enrique] Jorda, with Mr. [Josef] Krips. They sang with Bruno Walter and did a concert version of Boris Gudonov with Stokowski, with eleven microphones on the stage! I'll never forget that Boris. Rossi-Lemini singing with Stokowski conducting. And Stokowski spent half an hour rehearsing with the boys alone, upstairs. He was over seventy at the time. I remembered him as a young, glamorous leader, conducting the Philadelphia orchestra in the east. The lights went out and the audience waited, and you waited, and then God appeared on stage! That's the way the Philadelphians felt about him. Extremely handsome, he was accused of being arrogant as a young man. Here was this mellowed older gentleman -- just charming with the boys. In no way was he dictatorial or treating them as children. He treated them with dignity and it was a great experience for them.

Harris: He conducted the rehearsal with the chorus alone.

Bacon: Yes. Well, he came to hear them first and worked with them before they went on stage.

On another occasion, at the opera house, we traipsed upstairs to warm up. I had reserved the chorus room, and there was Elisabeth Schwarzkopf practicing by herself, at the piano. When she saw

me at the door with a couple of boys behind me, she said, "Oh, you have the room; come in, come in." I said, "Oh, no, we don't want to disturb you." (One doesn't disturb Madame Schwarzkopf!) And she said, "Oh, please come in." So I said, "Boys, come in, take your seats." I spoke in German to her and said, "Would you be kind enough to say a few words to the boys? Do you have a few moments?" She stayed twenty minutes. She asked them to sing for her, and then she gave suggestions and encouragement. They had lots of experiences with great singers and conductors.

Then, when Madame [Kirsten] Flagstad came and sang in the early days, I arranged a special interview with the boys backstage in her dressing room. She gave them photographs with her signature. Sometimes the boys brought flowers or a date book or an SFBC photograph for the conductor or the soloist. When Mary Costa came, there was a box of candy from her for the boys for after the opera!

When you think of the people that these children have met and performed with! They learned to hold open the door at the Opera House for a lady.

I told them in advance that if there was any scolding from the stage director during a rehearsal because of noise, they would always be blamed because they were children. It was likely that the grown-ups would expect the children to make the noise. And I said, "If you are 'children' at the wrong moment, then you deserve to be scolded. If you're not 'children,' if you're young musicians on the stage, then let's scold the supers who are doing the talking! And I don't want you to fight and defend yourselves publicly, just be dignified about it if you're blamed for something you haven't done. But you're going to get it sometimes in the neck, and it won't be your fault, I know that."

Of course, the stage directors left a lot to me. In the early days, I'm sure the chorus master and the stage director thought they would have to train the boys. We would just bring the boys to them. But I wanted to keep control because I knew the boys better than the stage directors or the chorus masters, They don't really know children; they aren't used to them. For example, the stage director for Tosca once told twelve boys, " I want six of you to enter front stage right, just behind

the fire curtain, walk in a straight line to front center stage, meet your buddies from left stage, and walk up stage by twos until I tell you to stop. You will be leading a procession and the smallest boy will be swinging a censer." -- The smallest boy inevitably turned out to be Jewish, never Catholic! -- Knowing what he wanted, I divided the boys in two groups of six each, lining them up by size, and they took their places. Walking to the center of the large stage, their speed of walking and length of step were different. When we counted out how many steps to the exact center, and established a precise rhythm of walking speed, then the boys could meet in the middle, turn, and walk upstage with dignity and stage presence. The ability to follow explicit directions takes experience, trial and error. At summer camp the boys had already learned to kneel together smoothly in preparation for Tosca and Otello.

Now, rehearsals are so expensive -- if you realize that every minute at a big opera dress rehearsal costs hundreds of dollars or thousands, every minute! With the stars' time, with the chorus, the ballet, the symphony, the conductor, the stage director and all the many electricians, stage hands, prop men, make-up, costumes, wig and other staff people, a half minute wasted is lots of dollars! Just think of what the boys learned. No wonder they loved it. They felt very important. It gave them a feeling of value, too. And they were valuable.

In Los Angeles, Mr. Adler thought it might be a nice thing to use a local boys chorus that had developed, the Pasadena Boys Choir, together with our boys for Carmen. Well, the Pasadena Boys Choir came in. They were chewing gum. My boys were not allowed to chew gum in the Opera House because I just didn't want them to stick it on props! Also, I don't know, maybe my European heritage influenced me on chewing gum, it just didn't seem courteous. It seemed like a cow chewing its cud or something. At any rate, I was probably exaggerating, but the boys gallantly agreed with me. They could chew up until we came into the Opera House, but not inside. At any rate, here was this gum-chewing bunch of kids from Pasadena, completely lost, not knowing what to do, untrained for the backstage situation, not knowing how to keep from being underfoot. There is such a thing as knowing where not to be.

Their director, an older gentleman, was a very nice person. But the opera hadn't helped them. And they were at a great disadvantage. I asked our boys to take them in tow and help them, because they weren't trained on stage behavior and our boys were experienced. But it was the only performance in which there was a mistake in the entrance. And our boys, afterwards, were absolutely furious. They said, "We'll be blamed for that mistake, and it wasn't us!" They were absolutely furious about it.

Harris: Did the opera continue to use that chorus?

Bacon: No. It didn't work out. It was rather too bad, but the opera hasn't time to bother about the details that are needed. I took care of the details in our area, you know.

Harris: You really trained the boys.

Bacon: I had years of experience. It took me three years before the boys were really, really successful at the Opera House. You learn. You learn that you have to sing loud, first. Then I learned that we want two coat hangers for dressing -- there's a lot to all this. The first thing you do when you come backstage for dressing is you hang your own uniform on a hanger, and you put your shoes under your hanger. Ok. Then we put the shoes in bags, later. Then your costume is on another hanger with your name on it. That's the way it had to be for size. But first you just came in and there was your costume. They would throw their uniforms down anywhere, you know. I had to learn these things; the dresser had to learn these things. And we did learn them.

Harris: You were the chaperon at almost all of the performances.

Bacon: Most of the time. My successor, Dr. Ballard, was not as interested in the opera as I was. I think he was more interested in other phases of the work. But since I started the chorus with the opera, I had a very strong feeling of cooperation, and I wanted the SFBC unit to be at least as competent and interesting as other branches of the opera.

Harris: You felt loyalty to the opera.

Bacon: Yes, we all felt that. Later the [San Francisco] Girls Chorus was developed and they sing in the opera now, too, so the boys and girls have participated together in recent performances.

Harris: You mentioned that the boys sang with Geraint Evans.

Bacon: Oh, Geraint Evans, yes. Well, we were asked to sing at a Fol-de-Rol once and there we met Geraint. And then we sang at the Vineyards, at the Paul Masson Vineyard with him. The boys adored him and his sense of humor -- his Papageno! We had chorus concerts with guest artists, with Geraint Evans once, with Madame [Teresa] Kubian, I think, once. Opera artists gave their time to help us. Then some of them gave benefits for us, too. Leontyne Price gave a big benefit at Paul Bissinger's home, way back in the early days. William Duncan Allen arranged it for us. And the boys sang with Leontyne Price on her first visit to San Francisco, again thanks to Mr. Allen.

Harris: That was at that benefit concert.

Bacon: At that benefit concert, the boys sang a group of songs, then Leontyne sang. During her songs, the boys sat on the floor at her feet. Then in closing, Leontyne sang "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" with them. She did the solo and the boys gave her a harmonic accompaniment. It was a moving experience.

Mary Costa was very generous with our boys. Geraint Evans was wonderful with the boys. The artists loved the kids. Well, all the chorus people and the stage people loved the boys, because they really learned not to run around and horse around too much. They learned to be a part of the team.

Harris: You also mentioned Ezio Pinza in performance with the boys.

Bacon: Yes, in Boris, way back when. And in the early days, Madame Flagstad, too.

Harris: Marilyn Horne.

Bacon: Oh, well, Marilyn began her career in San Francisco with the boys participating in Wozzeck. And Philip Garay, the stage director who lives in Sacramento

and is now producing various light opera shows was the child. -- I think his father was an actor, too. -- We had to have a little tiny boy in Wozzeck, somebody that Marilyn Horne could lift up like a little child. Well, our smallest who could sing -- he had to sing, too -- was Philip Garay. He was the child, and, of course, he established a relationship with Marilyn Horne. Another time Philip Kelsey, now an opera conductor with Portland Opera in Oregon, was the child with Tourel, here in the Greek Theatre.

Harris: In Bloomfield's book ^{2/}, he talks about the use of boys as spirits in The Magic Flute sometime in the sixties. I assume those are San Francisco Boys Chorus' boys.

Bacon: That's right. Well, the SFBC was used during most of my time for everything, for singing or acting, whenever they needed children in an opera.

Harris: But the spirits were larger roles.

Bacon: Well, the three spirits in The Magic Flute have three very important scenes with a soloist. And they have to be heard. And it's trio, three-part music. And they have to act well. We had a number of groups of boys in different seasons.

I remember in Vienna, in The Magic Flute, the Vienna Choir Boys were the genii. They floated across the stage in a little gondola, somehow hanging from the ceiling. They were way high up in their snow-white satin costumes, and they sang up there like heavenly spirits. That was a tremendously impressive scene.

Now our three spirits did not float across the stage, and they weren't up in the heavenly spheres. They were right on stage and their singing and their words had to be very true and very clear and be heard adequately. We were very proud of them.

One year, the shepherd boy solo at the beginning of Act II in Tosca was sung by Jim Waring of Vallejo. As a result of this experience, Jimmie became an opera buff in adult life. Jim was a handsome, well-dressed fellow with unrealistic dreams who

^{2/}Arthur Bloomfield, The San Francisco Opera, 1922-1978, Comstock Editions, Sausalito, California, 1978

couldn't adapt to reality after his mother died. He ended his life most tragically by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge.

From my point of view, it's very, very rare to find a boy's voice that is loud enough, just totally untrained, on an opera stage with an audience of three thousand, especially when he sings from backstage as the shepherd does. The boy does need help in projection and in breathing. Few people realize how much training is needed to develop a boys choir to sing well in opera, concert, church, and for general entertainment.

Vienna Boys Choir and San Francisco Boys Chorus

Harris: We started off this session talking about the Vienna Boys Choir, a church and state funded institution. SFBC is a secular and privately funded chorus. Are there any similarities or differences that you feel you would like to point out?

Bacon: I'm glad that you asked that. The Vienna Choir Boys -- Americans don't always know this -- live in their own castle, the Augarten, in Vienna. They live together. They have their own school. Their parents may not see them at any old time; they see their parents only on weekends or periodically. Under the Imperial Majesty in the old days, they were wards of the court. You might call it singers of the court. Of course, with the First World War, the Vienna Choir Boy organization fell apart completely for I don't know how many years -- I would estimate eight or ten years -- and then it was reorganized.

Now they have all their schooling together; they have daily voice lessons and choral training. Our boys came twice a week, two hours each time after school. I encouraged them with theory and sight reading; we handed them work sheets and at camp we did quite a lot. In order to get up to Concert Group, they're required to have learned simple notation and sight reading. But it isn't like a daily school situation. I was tremendously impressed by how far we could go, how well the boys did on a purely voluntary basis.

When the Vienna Choir Boys came, we always entertained them. We took them to the Academy of

Sciences and made friends and had lunch. Some of them wrote to each other. Some of the Austrian boys spoke English, but only one or two in our group could speak German. We sang for them and they sang for us. There was one song that our boys really did as well or better, if I'm not prejudiced, if I can say it, and that was "This Little Babe" from the Benjamin Britten Ceremony of Carols. Our boys were so rugged and so marvelously rhythmic in it.

The Vienna Choir Boys were very neat and clean and very nice. They wore their sailor suits and they travelled with only twenty-two boys. The conductor sits at a little spinet piano, usually, and they stand in a circle or a V around him. Now, we had an accompanist on our stage, and I conducted normally, except in smaller situations.

You were asking about the differences in the tone and performance. The Vienna Choir Boys are not always the same. Each group of boys has a different conductor in Vienna and this man travels with them. So the groups differ very much in tone quality. They used to sing with what people call an angelic tone, a sweet head voice, like the English choir boys. But one group of Vienna Choir Boys came with a totally different tone quality. Their conductor, I found out, was a violist, a string player originally who got into the choral field. And he changed the tone color; his tone color was quite different, more resonant, using a more frontal tone, more like the French singers. The little French singers were very different -- they sounded more like women -- than the Vienna Choir Boys.

Now my philosophy of tone is that you must use some front resonance. I want the front, bright tone because that projects and is clean and bright. The sweet head voice for an American boy in secular music is inadequate to express lively emotion, as I see it. Think of a falsetto, for instance. Think of giving strong emotion in falsetto. It just doesn't feel right, does it? What I struggled for was that bright, what I call a "Bach" tone. But not brittle; the brittleness comes from tension. Then in a motet, when you come to a soft harmonic ending, then you can blend and cover your tone if you want to. Yes, it's much easier to sing with a covered tone. It's much easier to blend; it's much easier to be in tune with each other. It's

difficult to sing with a bright, free tone and harmonize perfectly. It's a more extroverted feeling.

After all, I was with them twenty-five years, so my tonal concepts developed and changed. I went to Spain and to England, Austria, and to Germany to hear other groups. I heard a wonderful group at Montserrat in Spain. They were boys who were all going into the priesthood, trained by the Church. But they had a ring, a point in their voice which was exciting. I went to King's College in Cambridge, and it was very interesting to hear Sir David Wilcox with his boys. There are about 120 in King's College Choir School and there are about sixteen who sing in church every day. Those sixteen are all scholarship students, and the other 104 or whatever, pay for the performing choir of sixteen. And I remember our poor boys chorus had to earn its own way and income from concerts only paid one-third of the costs. And, if tuition paid a third, the other third had to be raised.

Chorus Finances

Harris: How did you raise the money?

Bacon: The highest salary I ever had was \$10,000. True, my successor doubled that when he got here because he wouldn't take less. He was a man.

Harris: I think we've talked a little bit about the early finances, the dues and raffles. I read that you got some foundation support for camp from the Fleishhackers.

Bacon: We kept getting more and more foundation support as we grew, as the boys became known. We had beautiful reviews in the newspapers. I think, all I can say in retrospect of twenty-five years of work with them, it was a genuine product and we existed on a shoestring.

One year I had a graduate student from San Francisco State College. We arranged for credit for his Master's degree in staging because the camp planning and teaching was very good training experience. Financially we never had a debt. We had superb volunteer help. I'm sure the present chorus is having trouble getting sufficient volunteer help because too many women now are

working; it's much harder to get volunteers. You have to spend more money. The present situation is very difficult.

Harris: How did you use volunteers? How did they help you?

Bacon: I had a Chorus Counsellor and a Parent Council Chairman. If you knew what their tasks were, they were tremendous! Also, there was one woman, a volunteer mother, who always came and unlocked the church door and supervised the use of the space. We rehearsed in churches because they gave us space free or for minimal rent.

Then we had a uniform chairman. We also had an editor of our bulletin, our Chords and Discords, we called it, which gave all the data to the parents and to the boys and reviewed what the Board of Directors was doing.

Harris: Were many of the members of the board parents?

Bacon: We always insisted on having five or six parents on the board. We've had some real problems in my day, and there were worse problems after my day. The problems came with having authority. I'm well aware, for instance, that I was the Music Director and the Director. I was the boss. I started the thing, you see. Then we brought a board in and the board and all the volunteers helped me. It was a kind of a reverse situation from one where a board develops and then hires a director. I did everything in my day, and I didn't relinquish authority too readily, only when I felt that somebody had similar ideologies as mine. I mean, I didn't want children scolded. I wanted understanding. It's a different thing.

I had a parent volunteer, a man, a very nice person, who developed a system of points for a short time. We put up thermometers on attendance and all kinds of things. He developed a point system for a while. But it died very soon. I don't like the system. I don't think it develops a sense of responsibility. You're working for points. It's not that you're becoming aware of your position in the group and your own responsibility to the group. I wanted the pride in the chorus to be the reason for doing things. I didn't give prizes. But the prizes developed with parents and my volunteer leaders. I remember when Bill Kohout gave a football, finally to the boy who

sold the most tickets. I never pressured the children to sell raffle tickets to raise money. There are some who simply can't do it. And I don't believe in insisting on it.

My successors have been men. I don't know if there's a different ego involvement. I don't know what the reason is. I'm wistful if the chorus is not a happy organization where the children radiate from the stage and take pride in giving fine performances for the joy of it all.

Harris: What do you see as the role of the board of directors of the chorus organization?

Bacon: Well, gradually the board kept saying I was doing too much, and they kept wanting to help me, and ultimately they did. They brought in a Mrs. Middione who did a splendid report for us and tried to get me a Ford grant, but we didn't get it. That kind of help was wonderful.

Harris: Was that proposal for a grant to be used for salary?

Bacon: Well, it was for me to go and study other choruses. I wanted to get new ideas. You know, after fifteen years, even after ten years, one ought to take a short leave. Twenty-five years was a long time. Of course, I took vacations, went to Europe and did some visiting in summers.

Harris: Did the board do some fund raising?

Bacon: Yes. Well, now, for a group of a hundred boys like this, you've got to have a secretary; you've got to have a chaperon for the boys. If a boy doesn't show up at the opera, I couldn't handle it. I had to have a chaperon who would immediately telephone, "Johnny isn't here." My limit was ten minutes after arrival time given. If a boy wasn't there we telephone home because something's happened. We were at the Curran or Geary Theater and one boy didn't show. We telephoned home. "Well, he left! He took the bus." This was an older boy; he was allowed to take a bus. We required a written permission for boys to take public transportation. You have to protect yourself. And this boy was on the bus. The parents called the police. There was an old man on the bus who asked our boy to help him across the street to his hotel. And the boy being kind, thought this was an old man who needed him.

So he took him to the door of the hotel and took him inside. Then the man asked him, "Would you help me upstairs in the elevator?" The boy did. A bright bellboy noticed this and called the hotel guard or whoever; I don't remember the details. At any rate, the police came in; the police took the boy immediately to the hospital to check and see if he was all right. The boy said, "Please call my parents." But they took him directly to the hospital. And the parents didn't know 'til 9:30 or 10:00 that the boy was all right. He never showed up at the performance. Now, if we had not telephoned, the parents wouldn't have known about it. You have to be absolutely accurate about where children are. So you see, if you can't get volunteers, you've got to pay somebody. A staff member should handle this if you don't have volunteers. Now you can have volunteers for concerts and for operas easily because parents are always interested in those activities. But you see, they're not admitted; they don't get a free ticket or anything at the opera.

Harris: How did the Board of Directors help you? Did they supply volunteers as well as do fund raising?

Bacon: Yes, the board was wonderful. I mean, there were good boards and there were difficult boards. There were people who were critical of me. For instance, they said that I didn't vary my music enough. Now I would have to be ready for a breakfast program or something because concerts brought in money. And our renown kept getting bigger. We sang for the Kiwanis Club, for their big Christmas party, and got paid. I had a boy sing standing on his head! There were children there, and it was a Christmas party with the women and children. I don't know whether it was Calvin Simmons or who stood on his head and sang a song. Then two of them, Calvin and another boy went out into the audience and took little children three years old and carried them or brought them up to the stage, and then we sang with the little children.

We had to have songs ready, both secular and sacred because we also were asked to sing in churches. We sang in Howard Hughes' apartment in Los Angeles, in his attic, with 181 candle power, nothing but candles. A great big attic gable room with a good organ in the room and strawberries floating in a big dish, and the boys were given little swords to spear a strawberry.

Harris: What was the occasion? Was it a party?

Bacon: Yes, he hired us. You see, I had to have fun songs; I had to have entertainment songs; I had to have sacred songs. I had to have appropriate music for all occasions. Speaking of appropriate, let me tell you about the United Nations. We always sang for the United Nations in my day. I made it a principle, because, after all, I was preaching peace. We were at the Palace Hotel, Garden Court. Adlai Stevenson was there and U Thant. And I don't remember what the song was, whether it was "Let Every Hill and Valley Praise Thy Holy Name," I don't remember. Or maybe it was the "Ode to the United Nations" which my brother had written. "United world, the ages plead, present and past; Go put your creed into your deed," and so on. The words are by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Well, the result of this -- I was standing on the floor, next to an upright piano, and the boys had just finished singing. Then Adlai Stevenson wrote something. The note was passed down the front row of the guests up on the stage. It came to the piano, which was right at the edge of the stage and my accompanist handed me the note: "What was the name of that song, please? The words were beautiful. I'd like to know what that song was." So I answered the question and handed it back and Adlai Stevenson nodded his thanks. He praised the boys publicly for their singing and the appropriateness of the song.

Harris: You sang for him again at the Greek Theatre. It was the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the U.N.

Bacon: Right. And he came and talked to the boys for ten minutes afterward. He talked to the boys about the United States and about peace. And they had the feeling of communication back and forth. They had that feeling with Schwarzkopf. They also sang for Khrushchev.

Harris: Was that when he was on a trip to California?

Bacon: Yes. That was in a hotel; I can't remember which one. But you see, we were talking about the board and me and my relations -- I was criticized, but no one person could really know; no board member could really know what the demands were in music, to

always be ready with appropriate songs, well sung!

Now I think that the history of the SFBC is incomplete if you have only my twenty-five year era. Dr. Ballard worked for ten or more years after me. There was a one-year hiatus in between which you might want to know about when Edwin Flath had the chorus. An excellent musician, but he was a gentleman who didn't envisage all the needs of an organization of children. That was a problem. And Dr. Ballard did. He was a marvelous organizer for the chorus. He developed a larger board, and enlarged the chorus, and he took the boys to Europe and abroad each year. Now, I had planned to go abroad, and we had some money, not enough. We never borrowed money. I don't know how Dr. Ballard succeeded in making those European trips successful.

I felt a little hesitant because the European choruses were so good, and I had a great sense of obligation that if an American young chorus went abroad, it had better be good! They had these choruses in Europe for decades and centuries. They had their own schools with a great deal more training than we have had. I had a feeling of humility about it, I guess, perhaps beyond reason, I don't know. But, at any rate, my thought is that if the boys can go once in three or four years -- an average boy that comes into chorus, normally, if he comes in at nine which is a good age, could easily be in four years or five years. But I think the obligation of a fine organization for young boys like this is to go out to Angels Camp, to go to Fresno, to go to Modesto, to go all over California, to Redding, and to show the outlying communities what the possibilities are of fine music with young kids.

Harris: Would you say that the major issue confronting the board was funding?

Bacon: Yes, funding. Gradually, the chorus board, in my last couple of years, assumed administrative responsibilities. Mrs. Middione realized the need; many board members recognized it. It was just that we didn't spend a lot of money on it yet. But, when Dr. Ballard came, he organized this very logically, and he developed quite a good-sized staff. He had an accountant; he had secretaries and all that. That was definitely an improvement.

But I think he worked just as hard as I did working on the administrative side so much.

Harris: You concentrated on music education.

Bacon: In seeing the problems in the future, I think it's important that there be a strong music director, and I'd like to say what the music director ought to be for a group of boys, if I may. I think a music director should be a person of fine character, with strength of convictions. A person who is pretty mature, preferably. A person who is a fine musician, with respect for all kinds of music. A person who is well enough organized to work with a board of directors and to understand the needs of the chorus. It's too difficult for a disorganized person. That's sometimes a problem with musicians, good musicians. The chorus needs a good music educator. It's highly desirable that the person know languages because the music demands Italian, French, German, for opera and all this. Since we're one of the few organizations that is not connected with a school or a church, it's important that we do much fund raising. And it requires a music director who instills faith and whom parents trust. I think every music director for a boys chorus should be carefully screened as a role model.

Harris: It is the obligation of the board to find the music director, then.

Bacon: I think when the organization gets to be that large, the board should seek help from the Advisory Board or from leading professional musicians. I mean, if there were only twenty-five boys as there were in the beginning, then one person can handle the job. But when you grow to a certain size, and you have more personnel, it's inevitable. You have to have a board. I don't see any other way.

After about ten or fifteen years of SFBC existence, I went to the superintendent of schools in San Francisco because I always thought that SFBC should become a school, that our community was large enough for a music and art school like New York. And the superintendent smiled at me with a superior look and said, "You're way ahead of the times, Miss Bacon. We're not ready for that." Now whether I agree with that or not, I don't know. I think it's tragic that we didn't do it. I have heard rumors of a special school now in San Francisco. I don't

know what they're doing; I haven't kept up with it. But I always did want to start a school.

Harris: Did you envision this as a public school or a private school?

Bacon: Well, if you want the honest truth, I suppose it would have to be a private school. I wish it could be a public school because I believe in public schools. But it's just like believing in your government. I mean, if you want private industry to compete with itself, or if you want a government-run operation. Now my father, who was born in 1856, always believed in the government. He said that if the government isn't right, you have to make it right. It's your job as a citizen to make it clean, to make it what it should be in a democracy. We've lost faith in our government; we've lost faith.

Now the thing that's difficult in music education is that you get a good teacher in a music school and then the musicians are leery about "music education." It's not music; they say that's "school music." I'm sure I've been branded as a voice teacher by being SFBC director. I don't think I get credit as a voice teacher, the credit that I ought to get. Because of having been a boys chorus teacher, that puts me in the field of music education with children. That doesn't make me into a professional voice teacher -- do you see what I mean?

Working with Children and Adults

Harris: While we're on the subject of working with children, what do you see as the differences between dealing with a group of children and dealing with adults? You've had adult choruses and children's choruses. How do you go about working with different groups?

Bacon: I try to imagine myself into the child. Imagining yourself into the thinking and the feeling of the children and not talking down to children. I treated the children as my equals in a way. I'll accept the fact that I'm a kind of a missionary, sure.

There are some musicians who think you have to start with what you think a child likes, a popular

song or something. You've got to respect the child because you win the child with beauty; you win the child with action. You win the child by giving him responsibility and holding up a goal. You've got to start with the feelings of the children. Of course, if you inhibit them too much and give them just sacred music, for instance, and if there is no physical outlet, no emotional outlet, rhythmic outlet, that's unfortunate. They won't enjoy it enough. You've got to constantly vary your approach and keep them on their toes. I could talk to the boys and say, "I want a sweeter tone," and nobody would snicker. I didn't do it much, but I would say, "Listen." You can get a person to listen, to listen and feel. If the director doesn't do that, he's not going to get a beautiful chorus. But the director has to be self-confident about that.

It takes time to build up spirit in a group. At camp, we held an election of student officers on a formal basis. And I had an alumnus as the parliamentarian. Nobody was present in the room except myself and the boys and an alum. Alums could always be allowed, but no counsellors. This was a private SFBC affair; electing your own officers was very seriously done. And boys were chided if they were out of order, really, by the group. But you have to develop that spirit. You cannot develop in one year what we developed in twenty-five years. Therefore, if we allow the SFBC to go under because of financial debts or for any reason, it's a great tragedy because a heritage is lost. And it takes years to build that up. And my fear is that that heritage is not recognized. That is my fear. And I think in an oral history for the University of California, we must discuss the next ten years; we really must discuss my successors someday. It must be done if it's to be a historical record. We don't need comparisons; it's an evolution, but I feel as if it's a devolution now. Money is everything -- money, money, money. We move; we go into another building; we have to remodel. I'm unhappy about the name, Mary Martin theater. To name our new theater Mary Martin Theater when we've had Calvin Simmons, when there are people like Mr. Adler who have been our benefactors, and great people in the musical world. Why must we go into the entertainment world? I don't see it.

Well, there's a new director; there's a new board. They have a right to do it their way; they're doing the work; they're raising the money. But I'm unhappy about the way that it's going.

Harris: This direction does not fit your original conception.

Bacon: Not, it doesn't; no, it doesn't. No, I think that we're surfeited with popular music; we're surfeited with entertainment now. And I think it's a rather precious heritage that we built up.

Individual Choristers

Harris: Let's talk about some of the boys who benefited from that heritage, individual boys.

Bacon: Oh, that's interesting. Well, I used to tell the boys, "Do not go into music as a profession. I advise against it. If you want to get married and have a family, it's a difficult profession with which to earn a living. Keep it as your hobby." Of the musicians, the one what was known best perhaps was Calvin Simmons who became the conductor of the Oakland Symphony.

Harris: Why don't you talk about him?

Bacon: Mr. Adler gave him a job with the opera company as a very young man. He conducted in Glyndebourne. His favorite composer was Mozart. He was a tall, lanky black boy with a wonderful sense of humor. At camp he kept us amused in the evenings.

Harris: How did he come to the SFBC?

Bacon: Maybe Mr. Youngburg or one of the Oakland music teachers sent him. In those days, there were supervisors of music in all the districts. And they cooperated and sent boys to the SFBC.

Harris: He was obviously talented right from the very beginning.

Bacon: Oh, he had a dreadful voice.

Harris: Oh, did he?

Bacon: Dreadful voice! I mean, he couldn't sing it was breathy. He sang in tune. But he sat down and

played at the piano, and he was obviously creative, and he was such a strong personality. I mean, the chorus is many things; it isn't just good singers. It's made up of all kinds of people. And he was a person needed in the chorus that was clear.

Harris: What was his role? How do you see that he was needed?

Bacon: Well, he was an obvious leader. He had a great sense of humor, but it wasn't used at the wrong time. He was an excellent pianist. He could improvise. He could play in any key. There was always a cluster of boys around him when he was at the piano, and he always went to the piano. If he came into a party, he would make a beeline for the piano. And his voice got a little better in chorus. It never was beautiful; he never had any solos, except when he was the witch in The Hypnotist which Mel Carey wrote for us. As the witch, he uttered the most fantastic scream; it was bloodcurdling. So, when that scream came out, the whole auditorium gasped.

Well, there was Calvin and his contemporary Philip Kelsey who is now training the singers and conducting operas in Portland, Oregon. The reviews of his Figaro performances are superb. Philip went through Harvard, earning his way all the way, and teaching at Harvard as a graduate student, working toward his doctorate. He is a fine musician, fine pianist.

Harris: He got his start in SFBC?

Bacon: Oh, yes. I mean, some of these boys were with the chorus five, six years as boys, and then at camp as counsellors, and then as accompanists to the chorus. Calvin accompanied; Philip Kelsey accompanied; others accompanied. Well, then, there were other musical boys. An interesting one was Noah Griffin who was elected president by the boys. Noah also went to Harvard, went through law school there. He had trouble passing his bar exams here. At that point, Noah decided to do what he always wanted to do, get into television and radio, singing, and he does talk shows and he sings. He has a lovely adult voice.

Harris: So he didn't stay with the law.

Bacon: Well, he was doing that, I think, partly to satisfy his father's ambition for him. We loved Noah and he's still very much interested in the chorus.

Then you have a boy like Lindsay Spiller who was student president of SFBC, went to Cal, and as a senior, was student president of the entire Cal student body. I don't know what Lindsay is doing now. But it's not music. Paul Tobias, another musician, a world-famous cellist, lives in New York, is married and has a family. Paul started us off on recording. He was the first person to put me in touch with Richard Walberg and we made a record in the early '50s. Paul wrote out the contract at age thirteen. He's a fine cellist, another one of Margaret Rowell's successes.

There was Don Weilerstein, whose father is an eminent physician here in Berkeley. Donald is the first violinist of the Cleveland String Quartet. And, by the way, Don Weilerstein, Jeff Holm, Edgar Bogas, Roy Bogas's brother who was in chorus and another boy, were called the Little Griller String Quartet. And they played on the campus with the SFBC. They were coached by the Griller Quartet until they went away to different colleges. Jeff Holm is the head of the ensemble and cello work at Ithaca College and runs master classes every summer. For many years, he was the cellist for the Lenox Quartet. He's a superb teacher. He was a product of Margaret Rowell's teaching, and you know what a great teacher she is.

Harris: And it was through you that he went to Margaret Rowell, wasn't it?

Bacon: Yes, he studied with her when he graduated from SFBC. I brought Margaret to the campus through Music Extension.

Let's see, other graduates that you might like to know about. There was Larry Maisel. Larry was, to me, just the kind of person that I was happy to have in chorus. He is a brilliant lawyer now and he's a musician too. He hasn't kept up his music the way Stanley Ibler did who was just killed in an automobile accident at age forty-eight. Stan was a charter member of SFBC in 1948 and Stan was the one who gave concerts in Panama, both solo and with another pianist while serving in the intelligence corps of the army. He was an appellate court lawyer, deeply interested in reforming certain out

dated state laws. He kept up with the chorus all these years, playing for us and for Dr. Ballard's group of adult singers. He was a sensitive pianist.

Now, that's what I tried to build up. People who would keep music in their lives and use it, and then relay interest to their children. Like David Ostwald whose father, an ardent pianist, was an architect. David has a daughter who is a beautiful young musician, a pianist. I like it when I see my alums carrying on what they got in music, carrying it on to their own children. And David's a good example of that. He plays violin and viola.

Jonathan Fromer you know from television. He had an hour's program every Sunday morning for children on television, and he plays the guitar, and he sings, and he is a very musical person. His mother was the principal of the Presidio Hill School. Then there's Tim Erickson who worked on astronomy and is a scientist and who cares about how science is being taught. He has conducted choruses; he is a good musician, sings a lot, keeps it up in his life. Then, there are the Sagan boys, Bruce and Alan, in mathematics and physics. They couldn't live without music.

What else do you want to know? Peter Rubardt, I didn't mention, he and Alan Yamamoto are two young, present-day conductors. Alan is conducting the MIT orchestra, and I don't know what else. Peter Rubardt is just back from a Fulbright in Vienna and he went to Tanglewood and Julliard. We'll hear more from Peter and Alan when they realize their dreams of directing their own orchestras.

Compositions Created for the San Francisco Boys Chorus

Harris: Unless you have something more to add about the boys, would you like to talk about the music that was especially created for the San Francisco Boys Chorus?

Bacon: Oh, Ernst Bacon composed several songs and "The Animals Oratorio" for SFBC. John Edmunds composed some beautiful Christmas songs for them. We were going to do an early fourteenth-century kind of play. At any rate, quite important was Jonathan Elkus.

Harris: What was it he did specifically?

Bacon: Well, he wrote Treasure Island and Tom Sawyer specifically for us. Both have been published by Novello and performed in England. Mel Carey wrote The Hypnotist in one week after camp, choosing solo characters that he thought our boys would like; a policeman, a soldier, a sailor, a girl, and a witch. I think that's right.

Harris: He had been to camp and seen the boys.

Bacon: Yes, oh, he was a fine musician, a Stanford graduate. He'd been teaching in Canada somewhere. He is a very good French horn player and a good pianist. And he was wonderful with the boys. We had one roly-poly boy who never wanted to get up for breakfast. And Mel said, "Let me take him in my cabin." So everybody agreed. So Mel carried him into breakfast one morning in his pajamas. [Chuckles]

Harris: And he was an alum as well.

Bacon: No, he wasn't. No, he was just one of our fine counsellors, on the staff.

Then Giulio Silva wrote The Canticle of Three Youths, a sacred cantata. He was my voice teacher. He came originally from Rome, and he was the head of the Voice Department at the conservatory for some decades. Halsey Stevens from USC wrote a group of four songs, beginning with King Arthur which he dedicated to SFBC.

I encouraged every kind of music. I gave a composition prize. Then later, I got the alums to participate in judging and giving prizes. Various people helped. Little prizes, you know. Ten dollars, twenty-five dollars. But I always said my favorite Christmas or birthday present was a composition, a song. And we had some beautiful compositions from the boys. Scott Brookie wrote a piece which we have recorded, I think, with four part harmony and piano accompaniment. And he conducted it. It's immortalized on tape. A Novak boy wrote a beautiful song, got a prize, I remember. Then the Freihofer boy wrote some pieces as did Joel Wizansky who is now a professional pianist in San Francisco. It's amazing how, without real counterpoint and harmony

training, these boys could write as well as they did. But when you think of young Mozart and Beethoven, not all of them had the theoretic training that we now give our students. A lot of them learned from experience and from loving music, and from examples.

Calvin procrastinated in writing down the accompaniment which he played for Larry Maisal's operas. He put it off, and he put it off. I didn't give him much credit. Much later, it occurred to me that the boy hadn't really learned how to write down music. I hadn't trained him on that much, just a few little exercises to get to be a sixteenth or a thirty-second note.

Don Osborne, one of our alums, gave up university teaching, and is now an important manager of concert artists. I'm very glad because he must be such an honest manager and he knows music. And it's nice to have a man like that as a manager.

Harris: What was your relationship with the concert manager Spencer Barefoot in the early days?

Bacon: Oh! [Chuckles] Well, Spencer Barefoot took us right on his "Celebrity Series" and managed us. I think it was voluntary. I don't know if he got a commission or not. Maybe he did.

Harris: I think there is some financial arrangement in the records.

Bacon: There might be. It was modest anyway. But, at any rate, we sang with Donald Gramm. We had wonderful artists performing with us.

Harris: Were these performances to get publicity, to get known when you were just starting out?

Bacon: Well, partly that, and partly -- it's a great experience for the children to perform with a great artist, isn't it?

Harris: Right.

Bacon: I think so. And it fills the program, and you don't have to have quite so much, so that you can choose your better things for performance. I was always up against having a solid hour or more program for the children alone. I mean, you had to do duets or you had to do some solos, do something.

It's not easy. As Al Frankenstein said, "It's remarkable the way these children sing in six or seven languages by memory, everything."

Repertoire Sung from Memory

Harris: I've always been very impressed with the fact that the children do memorize every piece of music.

Bacon: Well, they memorize like lightning. That's not really a problem. But in a foreign language, compared to my adults that I'm teaching now, a child will learn in a third of the time, a fourth of the time.

Harris: You were telling me that it helped the performance, too, not to have music in the children's hands.

Bacon: Not only children, adults are exactly the same. Any psychologist can tell you, if you're looking at music, you do not sing as well. If you're not looking at music, you are listening to yourself better. Somehow to see and to listen equally, simultaneously, doesn't work as well. I would have to prove it to you; you might not quite visualize that or understand that.

Harris: Is it something about the singer's posture, with the head down, looking at the music that makes it harder to sing well?

Bacon: Well, for one thing, one must have eye contact with the conductor. Then there's more freedom of the body if you're not holding music to begin with. Then another thing is, if you know the music so well, inside of you, feel the meaning of the words, then you can really interpret it and be it. It's like an actor. You're not yourself; you are what you're acting. So the singer, if you're singing about love -- so much music is about love or pain or sorrow -- you must feel it, and live it. This is easier if you're not reading. Of course, children do it more unconsciously than adults.

Then there's another thing. Very few children's choruses are totally aware that the words come before the music. Usually the composer writes music to some words that intrigue him. Not always, but usually. And the music, we assume, is adapted to the words. But children go with the sound more

than they do with the words as do most adults. What I did was to train them to an awareness of the words. And then in singing, if you want to get technical about it, a beautiful singer lingers on vowels and is fully aware of an "Ah-Ee-Oh-Oo." The English language has a lot of "Uh" in it. "Shuck," "uh," a lot of sounds that aren't the pure vowels like in Italian, for instance. And I make my students aware of these vowels. I say, "You really aren't a good singer unless you fall in love with your vowels, with the tone that you make on your vowels. You have to fall in love with it. And then let the consonants dance with your tongue."

The great singers all have an image, a vision; they imagine the scene of what they are singing. Now, Dr. Venard, our great scientist of singing -- I consider him a great scholar of the voice, at USC. He knew every action of every muscle in the throat. But I can't teach others to sing via the science of the throat. It doesn't go that way. Because becoming conscious of each individual muscle isn't going to make you an artistic singer. First you have to be a certain kind of person that wants to emote. You have to gain freedom. You can't be a good singer and be an introvert. Have you ever thought of that?

Harris: No.

Bacon: A good singer is rarely an introvert. You have to be willing to stand with your chest high and open up your body and ride your breath freely to be a good singer. Well, I could go on about the philosophy of singing a long time, but that's not for oral history necessarily.

Harris: Well, we have covered a lot of SFBC history this morning. You did mention just in passing William Duncan Allen. Do you want to talk more about him?

Bacon: Oh, I definitely want to mention him. William Duncan Allen and Tirza Mailkoff were two of the early musicians that worked together with me, and I have the greatest respect for both of them. Tirza did a marvelous job in establishing a thorough theory program with work sheets. This was based on her experience as a private piano teacher, together with the experience of teaching our singing boys in groups at various levels of achievement. She adapted my ideas in connection with the special

chorister's needs. That's a real art, to do that. And her students loved her.

William Duncan Allen succeeded Tirze as director of the Berkeley Junior Bach Festival which Tirze had founded. He was her successor for many, many years. He played a big role in SFBC, both in the city as our accompanist for quite some time, and as camp director with me. I remember he suffered blood at camp in seeing that meals were on time. He would try to make everything easy for me.

SIERRA CLUB EXPERIENCES

High Trips, 1939-1950

Harris: I understand you became a member of the Sierra Club in 1939.

Bacon: That's right; I came out from Chicago for trips.

Harris: And these were high trips.

Bacon: Yes, on those high trips, we stayed a month at a time; two weeks, plus two weeks, because one group went out and another went in, but you could stay in for four weeks in those days. They weren't short trips like nowadays.

Harris: You were packed in.

Bacon: We were packed in. People like Ike Livermore would pack us in with six or more strings of mules. I came out from Chicago, flew out by airplane. It took eight hours to get to Reno, then. I got off at Reno, I think, and took a bus from there along the eastern highway, on the east side of the Sierras. I was picked up at Bishop by the glaciologist who died some years ago, Oliver Kehrlein. He was one of the leaders of the high trip. And on the way in to the Sierra Club group, he showed me a fault. I had studied geology and I was doubly interested in this. I looked forward to this adventure with the Sierra Club enormously because I loved the mountains. And being a Chicagoan, I was far from the mountains, there.

There were over a hundred people on a high trip then. I don't remember who all our leaders were, possibly Dick Leonard for one. But I remember Will Colby was on that trip and Francis Farquhar. Norman

Clyde was almost always on the trips that I took. We became good friends. I met Dave Brower on high trips and we are still friends.

Harris: Tell us a little about the high trips. What kind of equipment did you have?

Bacon: Well, you had a duffel bag, and you were allowed, I think, thirty pounds. So I wore blue jeans and had a change of clothes. Of course, you had to have warm, weatherproof clothes because you never knew whether you would be in snowy regions or what. I never used a tent; I just used a tarp and a poncho, a tarp underneath and a poncho above.

Harris: Did you have a regular sleeping bag?

Bacon: I had a down sleeping bag from Abercrombie, from 1933, and I still have it. The down has been taken out and cleaned and put back in, and some extra down put in, and now it serves as a blanket because the zippers are broken. Yes, you carried a sleeping bag and the tarps.

Now, with the tarps, maybe you would tie a long string around a tree trunk for a high end, or you might attach two strings, two corners to rocks, depending on how level the ground was.

But usually, in those days, you would try to find a pine tree because there's a better bed under a pine tree, if you could find a level spot. It depends on whether you were in a meadow or in the high mountains.

We would be awakened by Dick Leonard's wolf call about 5:00 A.M. for an early breakfast. Then we would be on our way, sometimes at 6:00, 6:15, 6:30.

Harris: With that many people, it must have been hard to get going.

Bacon: Well, you would start right after breakfast. The commissary, of course, the crew, had to clean up the place and pack up the stoves. They often didn't get started until 9:00 or 10:00. But they were young people and they were fast walkers.

We would go in groups. Everybody had his own friends and groups, you know. I used to go with Ollo Baldauf, or with Marge Evans and Miriam Simpson, professor of anatomy at Cal, and other

friends -- Caroline Coleman, Nora Evans. There was always a topographic map posted at the previous night's campfire, and you would be told where you were going to camp the next night. And then, you were on your way, and you could go on your own. You could go slow or fast. Nervous people who weren't used to the mountains could always be with a leader, but if you didn't need a leader, you didn't have to go with a leader. There were no rules about it. Some people would even try to cross-country sometimes.

Well, we would get pretty close to the next camp site, and then we would find a nice stream or a little mountain lake and go take a dip and a sun bath. Then we would read, or play games together, in our little group. We moved almost daily and would arrive at the next destination between 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon and choose our bed sites. There wasn't any point in getting to camp too early because you would be there the rest of the evening.

Harris: Did you have commissary responsibilities, or was that all organized by the crew?

Bacon: We helped a little bit. We used to peel potatoes or vegetables. They would ask us to help, but commissary did the major work. It was a pleasure to give a little help. Later, I think, the hikers helped quite a lot. In the early days, the commissary crew took awfully good care of us, and we had good food.

I didn't mention Charlotte Mauk. She was a very important person in the Sierra Club.

Harris: In what way?

Bacon: Well, she was on the trip staff. She was a staff member of the club and on High Trips she baked wonderful sweet rolls for breakfast! Charlotte was very heavy, but she always got there. She was a wonderful person, a great idealist. I always thought of Charlotte and Dave Brower together because they had a great love of the mountains and a wide understanding and thoughtfulness about the future and ecology. This was long ago when people really weren't aware of ecology as such. In those early days, people didn't talk much about it. The Sierra Club was unique; you didn't have all the many other organizations that you have now.

Harris: To get back to the high trips, what did you do after you had found your sleeping spot?

Bacon: Well, you would stand in line for dinner. It sounds pretty awful, maybe, to have over a hundred people on a trip together. But you would stand in line, and converse with the people around you. You would get your bowl of soup quickly. Everybody carried his own personal cup, and you put your name on it. You had your own cup and your own spoon. The other dishes, plates, and forks and knives, were washed daily and carried by commissary. But you carried your own cup.

So you would get your cup full of soup and you would stand up drinking your soup and talking to your friends about the day, or what you had been doing. You would have good company. You could take your soup over to a rock and sit down somewhere if you wanted to. The lines were pretty long. Then, after your soup, you would wait at the stoves, and the cooks would hand your plates out to serve you. They did that very well.

Waiting wasn't really boring. It was really very pleasant. Everything was beautiful; you were outdoors. Of course, in rainy weather, it wasn't so pleasant. But they would put up a big awning so you wouldn't really get rained on. They had to cover the cooking areas. But we didn't have too much rain. That's the wonderful thing about the Sierras in California. There isn't nearly as much rain in the summer as there is in Colorado or in any other mountains I know in other parts of the world, like Switzerland or Austria. The Sierras have the best weather.

Harris: This was before the era of freeze dried food. What kind of meals would you be served?

Bacon: Well, we always had a little lettuce in the early part of the trip. At the end, it was always cabbage. Cabbage lasts a little longer. [Chuckles] The nights were cold, almost always the nights were cold. Of course, they did have troubles with meat, but they would arrange to have meat brought in once a week. We had some dried foods and canned foods in the early days. That's when you love a canned peach or a canned pear for dessert; that was wonderful.

Harris: Did anybody do any fishing?

Bacon: Oh, yes. Bob Cutter was the great fisherman. He was President of Cutter Laboratories. He would supply us with fish. We would put them on a stick and put them right over a little campfire. In those days, you could have campfires. We even had our little private campfires.

We would get into camp in the evening and then we would have a little drink. If you carried your own whiskey, you would pour a little bit into a Sierra Club cup and you would go get some snow from some distant patch. That was your ice, and you would melt that in your drink. And then you would put some strawberry jam in it and mix it up with sugar and maybe a little lemon, if you had it and it made a wonderful drink.

Harris: I hadn't heard about a drink made with strawberry jam. I had heard about the Pennyroyal Society.

Bacon: Well, I'm a founder of that.

Harris: Are you?

Bacon: Joe Wampler and I started that. And I wrote a Pennyroyal song, and I've completely forgotten it. But I think Joe Wampler has it. It would be kind of fun if we could unearth that.

Harris: Do you want to tell us on the tape what the Pennyroyal Society was all about?

Bacon: Well, pennyroyal is a mint that grows in pretty high places. And you take that mint, and you put it in your cup with sugar, and maybe strawberry jam, and mess it around and it makes an interesting drink.

Harris: Do you add a little whiskey?

Bacon: Add a little whiskey, of course, you have to. If anybody offers you a drink, when you are hiking in the mountains, that's the most generous thing that can be done because you had to carry your whiskey, of course. In fact, in 1939 and 1940, Sierra Club officers frowned on anybody who carried whiskey, very much so. Charlotte Mauk was quite against anybody drinking liquor at all. There's something about the conviviality of a drink in the mountains where you go quite a distance to find some snow. It made it sort of a lark, you know. It didn't

seem like "drinking" the way you think of it in the city.

Harris: Why do you think Sierra Club officers objected to liquor?

Bacon: Well, I can't quite say. I think maybe some officers were afraid too much drinking would get started. Another person who was violently opposed to it was Al Schmitz who was an old-time leader of the Sierra Club, and later of Mountain Travel. But Al Schmitz changed, and he came around, and he accepted drinks very pleasantly later on. I remember that. I don't know about Charlotte, whether she ever did.

Harris: And then, after dinner, I understand there was entertainment sometimes.

Bacon: There were large campfires. And Dave Brower, of course, was especially good at that. Charlotte used to run them too. Will Colby would talk; Francis Farquhar would talk, and we would sing.

Harris: Would they talk about the mountains particularly? What sort of topics were discussed?

Bacon: They would talk about various things. Francis Farquhar had gone to Greece, I remember, with Marge, and he climbed Mount Olympus; I remember him telling us about Mount Olympus at campfire. Then we would all sing, and I led some singing. Ollo Baldauf and I did quite a bit with that. Of course, Dave Brower loves music, and he would play the accordion. He always carried a little accordion. Then there were guitar players. Ollo played the guitar. Ollo Baldauf was just the perfect person in the mountains. She had come from Munich, as her husband did. -- Fritz Baldauf was an architect and an interior decorator. In this country, he had a big interior decorating business. And I understand he worked on the building at Donner, at the Sierra Club Lodge. --

Ollo was wonderful at campfires. She was a kind of Mother Earth. She was a very warm person, a good skier, a good hiker, very hospitable. In fact, I think of Cedric Wright and Ollo as two of the most hospitable people I ever knew.

Cedric would set up hot water just before you got into camp. He would sit by the side of the trail

with a basin of warm water as some tired and footsore hikers walked by, he would call out, "How would you like a foot bath? Come and have a foot bath to rest your weary feet!" [Chuckles] Cedric would always do nice things for people. He played violin at campfire a good deal. He and Ansel Adams and Ernst, my brother, were very close friends. They were a very special group.

But the people who joined the Sierra Club in those early days were unusual people. It was a high-quality group, I would say. There were office workers and carpenters, all kinds of people, lots of university people, of course. Joel Hildebrand, we loved in the Sierra Club. At one campfire, he read a long poem which he had written. Campfire was a place where people could really share especially when Charlotte Mauk and Dave Brower were the hosts.

Harris: Even with big groups of a hundred you felt close to the people on the trip.

Bacon: Surprisingly, yes. We had large fires, really beautiful campfires. All that is changed now with the wood in short supply. They carry propane stoves; they don't burn wood fires any more. I don't know what they do about a campfire, whether they have it or not on the present high trips.

Harris: Before we leave the subject of campfires, I understand that Ansel Adams created plays for these occasions.

Bacon: The Greek tragedies.

Harris: Were you a participant in these?

Bacon: No, I missed that by one year. That was '38, I think, when he did that, '37 or '38. I just missed that, to my sorrow, because the words were very funny according to Cedric. Of course, Ansel also instigated the Ahwanee Christmas feast, Bracebridge dinner.

Harris: You mentioned Ansel Adams. I understand that he was sometimes a scout for campsites; he would go on ahead to find the site for camp. He always needed somebody to carry his photographic equipment because he was taking pictures while he was on the trip.

Bacon: Well, I suppose Cedric went with him sometimes. But Ansel didn't come much in my day. I think he was very active before 1940. I think after 1940 he wasn't active. Then, of course, the trips stopped with the war. They resumed after the war.

Harris: In 1946.

Bacon: In 1946, I came out to live here permanently. And I don't remember -- it seems to me that I went on nine or ten high trips before and after the war.

Mountain Climbing/Friendship with Norman Clyde

Harris: I believe I read that you were on ten trips. In addition to hiking, you also did some mountain climbing.

Bacon: Well, I used to love climbing. Jules Eichorn was on some of our trips. Jules was a good friend of Ollo Baldauf's too. I went up North Palisade with Dave Brower and Jim Harkins. There were six of us, I think, on that trip. I went up twice.

Harris: Were you the only woman on that trip?

Bacon: I don't think so. There was a girl by the name of Cutting who is still living in Seattle, a magazine editor, who used to go. She was good at climbing. And Eleanor Ginno did a lot of climbing. But I'm not sure whether Eleanor was on that trip. I just remember Jim Harkins and Dave, particularly, on that first trip.

Harris: Was Dave leading the trip?

Bacon: Dave was leading it. And I remember Jim lost a shoe on the way back. That was kind of a serious matter. I don't know how he lost it. We left before 6:00 in the morning, got back after 10:00 at night.

Harris: That's a long day.

Bacon: Going from Dusy Basin, I think. Well, I think we got on the other peak too, Thunderbolt, or whatever it is called.

Harris: Were you using ropes at that time?

Bacon: Yes, we used ropes for safety in a couple of places. I don't think they were needed very much if you were experienced, but the Sierra Club always takes the safe route.

Harris: Had you had previous climbing experience in Austria or elsewhere?

Bacon: Well, being a Chicagoan, I wouldn't say I had had climbing experience! I've done a great deal of hiking, and I have been in the Adirondacks and I went five times to the Smokey Mountains, hiked alone. I did the entire Big Smokey, seventy-two miles of it. I did that alone in April, during spring vacation when I was teaching school. I would take a week off and drive down. It was about 620 miles from Chicago, the nearest mountains to Chicago, the Smokies. So I had quite a lot of experience in finding my way, reading maps. I got hung up on one rock, I remember, in the Smokies; it was really frightening when I had to let myself down. I used my belt, a leather belt, for a little extra safety. I got torn up by the briar. It's pretty bad in the Smokies. But real mountain climbing with ropes and pitons, no, I never did piton work. I just got into third or fourth class.

I usually climbed with Norman Clyde. We climbed, for instance, Clyde's Minaret together. I went on many trips with Norman. Mount Russell I remember with great interest, Mount Humphrey also.

Harris: Why was Mount Russell special?

Bacon: Well, that was climbing with ropes, rock climbing. I enjoyed that very much. Actually Humphrey was scarier. I remember climbing up a corner of two walls being completely exposed.

Harris: You must have a great feeling of satisfaction to have accomplished a difficult climb.

Bacon: Well, I started pretty late in life with that kind of climbing, you know. I never did piton work.

Harris: Norman Clyde was older than you were. Wasn't he about twenty years your senior?

Bacon: Yes, about that I would say. I don't remember. Speaking of Norman -- well, you know he was such a scholar, really. You met him in the mountains with his khaki trousers, sort of hanging down, not very

neat. He didn't care how he looked. He looked like a bum, you know. But he was a sensitive, stubborn, and brilliant man in many ways. He knew all the plants. He was a Latin and Greek professor in a high school in Bishop. He could be very stubborn. There was a running feud between Norman and Oliver Kehrlein, I remember. Oliver just somehow happened to irritate Norman.

Harris: There was a personality conflict there.

Bacon: Yes, some kind of a personality conflict. We used to be amused and a little upset by it. Norman had an uncanny instinct in the mountains. It was always Norman who found a person, an aviator or a plane that was downed, or somebody that got lost or killed in the mountains. We called him "The Old Man of the Mountains." He's probably the finest mountaineer the Sierras have had, in many ways. He carried a very heavy pack, and I remember, he carried an anvil with him, one of the heavy metal anvils to fix his shoes.

Harris: His own shoes or horse shoes?

Bacon: His own shoes. Well, he was very proud of carrying a seventy-pound pack.

Harris: And he was not a tall man.

Bacon: No.

Harris: Someone commented that he was lacking a sense of humor. Did you find that true?

Bacon: Well, I think perhaps that's true. I think he was Scottish, a Scotsman. And I don't think he had very happy experiences in his life. He was certainly an individualist. He was not a person that you could put into any mold. When he came for the Sierra Club Diamond Jubilee in 1976, he stayed with me for a few days overnight. He took a bus from Lone Pine. I met him down at San Pablo and University in a little coffee shop there. I picked him up and brought him home here to my house and put him in my guest room. He had a suitcase with him. I don't know how I happened to unpack the suitcase for him.

Perhaps because he was already up in the eighties at that time and his vision wasn't good. I guess he asked me to do that. At any rate, I opened his

suitcase, and here were two pistols in it, and about five pairs of pants and a number of jackets. And everything had holes in it because his so-called good clothes, he would have on a shelf somewhere in a shack in the mountains, and the rats and the mice got at them. So I picked out the best pair of pants and the best jacket I could find. He had just dumped them all together, you know. Then I took him to Penney's and bought a clean white shirt for him. He really didn't have any. But what he was interested in at Penney's -- all the time that I tried to get him to try on this shirt and get the right size, he was ogling the shoe section. There were some leather booties that are fleece-lined. They're really quite cheap, you know, but they looked so warm. And that's what he had his eye on, I could see that. So I bought him a pair of those because he had cold feet in the early mornings in the mountains. He still lived in a very primitive way up in the mountains somewhere.

Harris: All by himself?

Bacon: Yes. And he had a few friends, and they tolerated having him on their property. Well, at any rate, he spent some days here. And he was a bit grouchy at times. But it didn't bother me very much because I appreciated him. And he did kind of like me. On Saturday morning, I had some of my SFBC boys here rehearsing. And I introduced them to Norman, and Norman sat in that chair over there with these boys around on the floor, telling them stories about the mountains. And that was really a picture. I wish I had -- somewhere we might find a picture, I don't know. But that old man talking to this young generation, some of whom would be ecologists -- We always had nature study in our boys chorus summer camp.

Harris: He must have been an inspiration to the boys.

Bacon: He was.

Oh, about the Diamond Jubilee Celebration. You have to wear a tie for this thing. He got all dressed up. Oh, my bathtub, of course, was a great luxury. And I said, "You can fill the tub with hot water."

Harris: He didn't even have indoor plumbing in his cabin.

Bacon: Oh, no, I guess not, very primitive. He didn't care. Before the dinner, I took his jacket and pants to a cleaner that did work in six hours, and got it back. So he really was spruced up. and I said, "Norman, you don't have to wear a tie. Everybody knows you; you're fine. All you need to do is get over there." So we went over to the Sierra Club dinner in San Francisco. He was being honored that night but didn't know it in advance. I don't remember which award, but it was a big occasion. I feel very privileged that I had the chance to know Norman a little bit. We wrote; he wrote some letters to me; I wrote a few to him. He was an unusual person.

Harris: He went along on these high trips?

Bacon: I don't know if he ever got paid. He was always a guest on the trip. Dave Brower took care of Norm, and everybody appreciated Norman. He loved the companionship of it. I don't think he got anything out of it. Maybe he got paid later. I don't know.

Harris: But he didn't object to being with a hundred or more people.

Bacon: No, he liked taking us up in the mountains. And he would set a slow, steady pace and teach us how to pace ourselves. He would tell you the names of the flowers and he wanted to interest you in the mountains, oh yes.

Harris: I remembered when you were discussing the Jubilee that I had been asked to ask you about the Polemonium Club.

Bacon: Oh. Well the Polemonium is a flower that you see at high altitudes, you see it at 12,000, 13,000, 14,000 feet. There is a deep blue and then a paler blue shade. And there used to be quite a few polemoniums, but people would pick them. So a group of Sierra Clubbers established what we called the Polemonium Club. We decided that if you climbed a 14,000 foot peak, you were allowed to pick one flower. But unless you were over 13,000 or 14,000 feet, you weren't ever to pick them. Because we were afraid they were all going to be destroyed. It was a kind of a humorous thing. But it was a way of preservation. In the Sierras, the polemonium is for us what the edelweiss is in Switzerland or Austria in the mountains.

Harris: You mentioned the packers. They carried all of your equipment except your personal clothing.

Bacon: Yes. Undoubtedly you know about Norman Livermore's activities. Norman Livermore comes from an old California family. He was a very tall, good-looking chap. He went to Harvard, and he did his Master's thesis, I think, on backpacking in the Sierras. And Norman organized the packers on the east side of the Sierras. They would be there in the summer to help tourists pack in and then they would go all winter without work. There was no regular salary; there was no union; nothing to protect them. So Norman organized the packers. It astonished many people because he came from a conservative household, a well-to-do family in Marin, and here he was deeply interested in the welfare of these men. It was a fine thing he did, I think. So Norman picked the packers. I remember Tommy, who had, I think, Mexican heritage. Tommy would sing at campfires. Ollo enjoyed Tommy very much. He was kind of special.

There would be six strings of mules, five or six on a string. The packer would ride a horse and have a string of mules behind him. One mule would carry - - oh, I think, six of our duffel bags. Six times thirty pounds is 180 pounds, I guess, to a mule. A burro, I guess, was only allowed to have about 100 pounds at the most. But the mules could do 180 easily, I think. Then there were the commissary mules who carried cooking stoves and utensils. But they were very carefully packed. It was quite an art to pack these mules well.

Ike was our favorite. There was another man, I can't remember his name now, but Ike would show us his rope tricks at campfire. He could throw a rope like the best of the cowboys, you know. He would twirl it and keep it from touching the ground and do wonderful things with the rope. That was very interesting. The packers didn't mix with the trippers much. They had their own separate campsite, a little bit away. They would take care of the animals. The animals, of course, attracted flies and so on, so they were usually pretty far away from our campsite.

Our camping was always done at the edge of a river or a lake. You always ended up at a river or a lake because you needed water. We used that fresh water for everything. The single men were upstream.

The married couples were in the middle and the women downstream of commissary. Do you know why? Because the women always were washing their clothes so much, and you weren't allowed to wash above commissary, and commissary was in the middle. So the men had to go downstream to wash their clothes, below the women! [Laughter]

Harris: So the arrangement was based on water purity, not segregation of the sexes.

Bacon: Right, to prevent water pollution with soap. Well, it was pretty important. If you are going to drink that water, it had better be clear. Actually, you were supposed to wash in the plastic pan which we were supposed to carry for a wash basin and throw the soapy water way out on land. But most people didn't do that. Most people did wash in the stream in the early days. Later on we had to develop the other ethic.

Harris: Because there were more people, there was more pressure on the environment.

Bacon: Right, more people, right.

Harris: You might like to comment on this. In an interview with Bernice Hubbard May, she says, "When Madi was along, campfire music became distinguished -- Monteverdi and Gluck through Mozart and Bach to Milhaud." But she says that you didn't object to old pioneer songs, to frivolous music. Were you usually the song leader when you went on these trips?

Bacon: Well, yes, I did some leading. Ollo and I did duets too. Then Johnny Shagan, and I mentioned Dave, of course, was always interested in music. There was some pretty good music on high trips.

Those high trips were a happy way to spend the summer. You got into wonderful condition. You had all the beauty of the mountains. You came back aired out, you know. You made new friends. It's really too bad that those days are over, because they are over. You can't have campfires like that any more. Such large groups in the mountains do tear down the sod. I think we'll have to go up to Alaska and Canada. The world is changing.

Harris: You talked a little bit about Francis Farquhar, or really more about Marge.

Bacon: I remember hiking with Francis in the Kern River area. We were talking about the Kaweahs. I went up the Black and the Red Kaweah, I guess. And Francis was warning me because the rock is so bad in the Kaweahs for climbing. He was a cautious person and very careful. I was younger and a little more impatient about being careful, but I never had any bad experiences myself. The worst thing was when I went with Jules once. Jules was behind me at a high level. I had roped down. And I was looking up. Jules was climbing down and a piece of granite had been loosened by the rope above and fell in my eye. So for a day or more, I was miserable with this; I couldn't get it out.

Harris: It must have been very painful.

Bacon: One doesn't think of such things, but there was discomfort, yes.

Harris: Would there be a doctor on the trip?

Bacon: Sierra Club always had a doctor along on every trip. Stu Kimball was the chief doctor. That's how I got to know Stu Kimball. He became my private doctor after a while because I knew him from the mountains. Then, when I joined the Kaiser Health Plan, I left Stu.

Harris: He would be a regular member of the trip but combine business with pleasure.

Bacon: Well, the doctor always was invited on the trip. He didn't have to pay because he did a lot of work. He had regular clinic hours every day before supper or after breakfast.

Harris: I imagine he dealt with a lot of blisters.

Bacon: Blisters! I never had a blister -- I don't know, blisters are a disgrace because they're just carelessness, as far as I'm concerned. I suppose there are exceptions, very sensitive skin.

Harris: Did you have special hiking boots?

Bacon: Oh, we had hobnailed boots in the early days. And they were heavy. I think I gave away my last hobnails, but I still have a pair of handmade mountain boots, made in Austria for me. But I don't wear them much because I've got recent

lightweight ones that are wonderful. You don't need very heavy shoes.

Harris: But they were part of your equipment in the early days.

Bacon: Right.

Harris: Did you carry a backpack?

Bacon: Yes, everybody carried a little backpack. Not a very big one, but one big enough for your rain gear, your camera, and your lunch. You always carried your own lunch. I usually carried a book and dark glasses and maps too.

Foreign Travel with the Sierra Club

Harris: Was Lewis Clark on any of these trips?

Bacon: Yes, he was on many trips. And I went into the French Alps with Lewis as a leader. I remember he said that he spoke French. And, well, my French isn't wonderful, but it's better than Lewis's. I helped him out. You know the worst thing in travelling is telephoning in a foreign language. On the telephone, there is nobody to help you in any way. You don't see the expression on the face and you have to respond quickly. So telephoning is difficult. But I remember once we had to change our plans for our ensuing night's lodging because the previous group, I think, had found that they were lodged in a whorehouse! [Laughter] I'm not sure if that was in France with Lewis or whether that was in South America on a trip. I took trips everywhere: South America, French Alps, and the length of the Sierras.

The only thing I was sorry about was Stu Kimball's attitude as head of the outing committee. The philosophy of the Sierra Club was very important to me. I decided to plan a trip in Austria which I knew well, and where I had done hiking and climbing and kayaking. I had planned a very nice trip which I thought I would like to lead in Austria: ten days climbing in the Wildspitze area, one week bicycling from Genunden into the lake area of the Salzkammergut, and four or more days kayaking on the Danube from Linz to Vienna and possibly on to Budapest. And I remember being very hurt because Stu Kimball said, "What's that got to do with the

Sierra Club?" I had planned a trip with the most famous Austrian guide who knew a certain area very well. He volunteered to lead us, would have enjoyed doing it. We would have had a week or ten days of climbing, hiking, from hut to hut in the mountains, a couple of the highest mountains in Austria. And then I had planned a one-week bicycle trip in the Hallstadt-Gosau area from lake to lake with beautiful scenery. You could take the bicycle onto a boat, cross a lake and get off on the other side. And then I planned a four-day kayak trip on the Danube. I thought that would have been an interesting experience for some people combining hiking, kayaking, and bicycling. Stu just turned me down flat. He said, "That has nothing to do with the purpose of the Sierra Club." And when I think of all the Sierra Club trips in the later years! The club practically competes with some travel agencies.

Harris: Was this before the foreign trips programs?

Bacon: Well, no, we had begun foreign trips. Yes, I had been to France with Lewis. But I have the feeling that maybe women leaders at that time were not wanted too much. However, I don't understand those things. When you speak the native language, and know the history of the country, and you personally introduce the Americans to foreign people and castles and forest management groups, that's useful in our leadership and this I could have done.

Harris: Most of the leaders were men.

Bacon: Yes.

Harris: Do you remember any trip leaders who were women?

Bacon: I didn't know any at that time.

The first black person in the Sierra Club was a young chap, Noah Griffin, who was one of my SFBC boys. He joined when he was about sixteen. He was a beautiful chap. He's in broadcasting, on television and on the air all the time now. He did a law degree at Harvard. My nephew, Paul Bacon was an assistant leader in the Sierra Club. I suggested that he have Noah Griffin in commissary; I thought he would be a good man. They took them at fifteen, sixteen in those days. Paul hired him. He was the first black person I ever saw in the Sierra Club. It took a while to get black members.

I don't know why it took so long. Of course, if black people don't apply, they can't be members.

Harris: Do you remember Phil Berry? He must have been about sixteen when he started leading trips.

Bacon: Well, Phil was Dave Brower's protege. I went with him when he was sixteen, and he was a climbing leader. I was a little leery about that. That's pretty young. After all, in those mountains, he's got control of your life more or less. But, after half an hour of hiking with him after breakfast, he made the usual stop which you need half an hour after breakfast. Phil did everything right on that trip and I went on various trips with him afterwards and like him very much. Dave Brower had every reason to trust him. And, of course, he became a very important member and an officer of the Sierra Club. He has done a lot for the club.

Friendship with Dorothy Erskine

You don't see the kind of idealism of a Dave Brower very often any more in these organizations. There is one other person that I associate, though, with idealism and that's Dorothy Erskine.^{3/} I consider Dorothy Erskine along with Ollo Baldauf two of my very best friends. Dorothy as a young woman was a very romantic, very spiritual person. She hardly seemed to walk on earth.

Harris: How did you meet her?

Bacon: I met her in the late twenties when I came to California. She was a friend of my brother, Ernst. Ernst was living in San Francisco at that time, and I met Dorothy and her husband Morse Erskine at that time in the twenties. She loved to hike, and we took hikes together, went up Mount Tam and Diablo. Dorothy was an erudite reader of philosophy, poetry, travel, social welfare, etc. Well, I had been to Italy in 1927, and made friends with Guido Ferrando. He worked in the underground against Mussolini way back in the twenties, and his life

^{3/}Dorothy W. Erskine, "Environmental Quality and Planning: Continuity of Volunteer Leadership," Bay Area Foundation History Series, vol.III an oral history interview conducted in 1971 by the Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.

was in danger in Italy. I think he went to France and continued his underground activities. But he was an authority, I think, on Byron's days in Italy. He was a literary, university man. Guido Ferrando came to visit in San Francisco. I introduced him to Dorothy Erskine; Guido and Dorothy hit it off at once. They became very close friends. Guido was the kind who would sit in front of the fireplace and would start quoting Dante to you. Or you could bring up Byron or any name that had to do with literature or art.

Harris: And Dorothy Erskine had similar interests?

Bacon: Well, Dorothy wasn't so much an artist, but she read a great deal of philosophy and poetry. Charles Erskine Scott Wood was living in those days. He was the poet down in Los Gatos who had the house with "The Cats" guarding his driveway. His wife was Sara Bard Field also a well-known poet. They had kind of an outdoor theater. We used to go down there. Well, I brought both the SFBC and the University Extension Chorus to sing for the Woods. And Sara Bard Field and Erskine were always together. Dorothy Erskine was a good friend of theirs. So was my brother. And I think Cedric and Ansel were also involved with this group.

Harris: Did Dorothy Erskine go along on high trips, do you remember?

Bacon: Dorothy might have gone on one high trip, but she wasn't much of a high-tripper, no. Large groups did not appeal to her and her husband wasn't an outdoor person. No, we were friends more in town. She was a very spiritual person. The interesting thing to me was, in later years, Dorothy became very aware of community needs. She wrote booklets for school children about deep sea diving and the bay. She developed the Save the Bay organization. She and Mrs. McLaughlin worked very hard on that and the organization continues to be active even though Dorothy died several years ago. Her intelligence guided her. Her mother was a doctor of medicine. And Dorothy wrote a book about her mother. She practiced in the horse and buggy days, you see, way early. And Dorothy's husband Morse should be mentioned too, because he, like Dorothy was a great reader, a tremendous reader. He would walk from their home on Chestnut Street in San Francisco to Montgomery Street to his office and memorize a poem as he was walking. Theirs was the

house you went to if you wanted to communicate on a high level of thinking and feeling. It was a real center for literary people.

Harris: In the very short interview with Dorothy Erskine about her work in the creation of People for Open Space and SPUR, she seems to be a very modest person about all her achievements.

Bacon: She was very modest.

Harris: She gives credit to other people.

Bacon: Always. She always made you feel you were the most important person, whoever you were. I just never knew anyone like her. She was a very rare person.

Harris: How do you think she went about persuading people to her point of view?

Bacon: By knowing her facts. She had a sheer intelligent understanding of any situation and she looked to the future. I mean, the green belt around the city was so obviously important to her. She had grown up in this area; and she saw the changes. She developed a remarkably practical sense which she applied in her later life to aid society. In developing the organizations she worked for, she learned how to approach foundations, how to get money. She learned how to interest people. That's a very unusual thing to see in a person, that development, that constant growth.

She was totally uninterested in society as such. She promoted certain people, like Bernhard Abramowitsch, a fine musician, when he was a young man and had just come from abroad after hard war experiences. She had a concert in her house and invited us. That's how we met the Abramowitsches. She really didn't know music or wasn't particularly close to music, but she was very close to social conditions of our society. She was aware of the hardships and the problems.

Harris: In the interview, she says she got interested in regional planning as a result of her research in slum housing in the 1930s. Was the plight of the poor a continuing interest for her?

Bacon: Oh, yes, definitely. Her family was fairly well-to-do, and Morse Erskine's family were lawyers for several generations. I remember she had a

beautiful house on Divisadero Street, right on the hill overlooking the bay. But the older she got, the simpler she got. For instance, when she left the house on Divisadero and got an apartment on Chestnut Street which had a beautiful view of the bay and Mount Tam, she sold all her furniture. She got rid of all the beautiful things. She always had a beautiful apartment, but she simplified and bought simple chairs with leather basketweave seats, lightweight, almost peasant type of furniture. She wanted to simplify, simplify her life and simplify food. She was practically a vegetarian. It was the spiritual things that counted and doing things for the community. She could never be inactive.

Harris: Did you continue to see her regularly?

Bacon: I didn't see nearly enough of her in later years. She used to go to St. Helena, where she had a little house, on weekends a good deal. I took her up there a couple of times when she was older and didn't drive any more. But I didn't see her enough; it was my loss. She was a great lady. I think of her as one of the great ladies of San Francisco.

Harris: You mentioned hiking with Jules Eichorn.

Bacon: Well, Jules sang with me when I had my University Extension Chorus. He and Ollo were two of my favorite people for years. He had taught music on the peninsula in the public schools and he was an avid mountaineer. We have a minaret named after Jules, the Eichorn Minaret in the Sierras. He had a tremendous amount of energy. He was a real fun person, always very youthful in approach, and still is. He had many children and he's influenced them all toward a healthy attitude about nature and ecology. He's a valuable person for the Sierra Club. And as a teacher, he's undoubtedly had a great influence on many young people, not just in music, but in ecology, and in the joy of living.

Benefits of Sierra Club Membership

Harris: How do you sum up your own Sierra Club experience? What satisfactions did you derive from Sierra Club membership?

Bacon: Well, I made many friends in the Sierra Club. It was a wonderful way to spend my vacations, going on these trips. When I was younger, I always thought that in old age I would work for the Sierra Club as a volunteer. It happens that my old age seems to be put off continuously. Now at eighty-one, I'm still teaching thirteen students each week privately in singing, and cooperating on my oral history. So I haven't offered my time to the Sierra Club yet. But to me, the United Nations and the Sierra Club are two meaningful organizations to belong to. They are obligations, one for the world, and the other for the environment. Then, when you are asked to give money to this and to that and to that organization -- I still think that the World Federalists, American Civil Liberties Union, and Common Cause have done solid practical work in our world and local communities. And I think one should look at charity and giving in the broad sense of the world as nations and peoples living together in peace and in the more local sense, too. But you've got to pick and choose. Of course, I still think that music is important and I think the lack of musical education in the schools is so serious that one has to work to improve this situation.

Harris: What were your own personal satisfactions derived from the trips in addition to your friends?

Bacon: Well, my participation in the Sierra Club isn't as great now as it used to be. The personal pleasure isn't the same because there are other groups -- from a travel point of view, Mountain Travel, Richard Goodman's Good Travel, etc. These other organizations are doing those things that the Sierra Club did so well originally. And the Sierra Club started trips into wilderness areas. But now there are other groups doing this. The big thing about the Sierra Club is it's still fighting; it's still lobbying in Congress; it's still working on educating society to take care of the forests and the rivers for the future generations. Now, in evaluating all this, I think back to what my father said when, in the First World War the secret police came to him and wondered why he didn't buy Liberty Bonds. He said that this generation should not pile up debts which future generations have to pay off. Well, the same thing applies to using up the forests, to polluting our water. -- I'm going to Vienna this summer again. In the country, I used to go swimming in a stream, in Austria. I can't

swim there any more; it's all polluted. This is world-wide; it isn't just the United States; it's everywhere. It's a terrible situation. Many young people today don't want to bring children into the world because the world is degenerating -- Or is it just people who can't live together?

Harris: In addition to the trips and the outdoor experiences, you are definitely a disciple of Sierra Club philosophy.

Bacon: Oh, yes. And I have the greatest respect for the people who have built it up that I can think of, like Will Colby and Francis Farquhar and Ansel Adams and Cedric Wright and Dave Brower and Dick Leonard and Dr. Crowe in the Los Angeles area and all their wives! Then those brave women like Nora Evans who up in their eighties went on high trips and always took care of themselves and never were a burden for other people because they knew so well how to take care of themselves. Oh, the Sierra Club is a wonderful organization. Of course, the Sierra Club's function is changing with society. Now it seems as if lobbying is very important. Of course, that's not longer tax-deductible, the way it used to be.

AN ACTIVE RETIREMENT

International Travel

Harris: You retired from the chorus in 1973. What were your plans at that point? What did you want to do?

Bacon: Well, my first plans were nil. I wanted to get away and take a vacation.

Harris: Did you travel at that point?

Bacon: Well, I have travelled every summer since. I've been to Australia with Marge Farquhar. We went on sail boats at the Great Barrier Reef and we went snorkeling. Others went scuba diving, but we were a little too old for that.

Harris: That was relatively recently that you made that trip, just a couple of years ago.

Bacon: That's right. Oh, and I went back to Austria to see my relatives. I took a trip driving and hiking in Austria and Switzerland and France. I've been

to Holland in recent years. And then, I went to Norway four years ago, took a wonderful trip up there, visiting Doctor Kvamme, the health director in Finnmark, the most northerly section of Norway.

Harris: Is that in Lapland?

Bacon: Lapland is just south of Finnmark and extends from Sweden across Finland. If you look at the map, you'll see that Norway which we think of as generally running north-southerly adjoining Sweden as an east-westerly arm above Lapland and Finland which even touches Russia.

Harris: What was your interest there?

Bacon: Well, my friends, the Kvammes spent a year in Berkeley and they aroused my interest in Norway. The doctor has a charming family, and they represent Norway as no other Norwegians I know. They're patriotic; they're energetic; they're outdoor people; they speak other languages; they live a well-rounded life. I loved Norway. I also enjoyed Holland very much.

Harris: And last summer you were in Italy?

Bacon: Last summer, I went travelling with an old college classmate, Janet Wallace Ullman, whose aunt was the dean at the University of Chicago when I was there. We went to Corsica, flew to Paris, and then down to Ajaccio. We spent nine days exploring Corsica, on little roads, in a rented car. We went to a Corsican wedding. It was really very thrilling because there aren't too many tourists there yet. It's a beautiful island, 112 miles long, surrounded by water. And it has quite a bit of Italian heritage although it belongs to France and the people speak French.

From there we took a ferry across to Livorno in Italy. There we rented a car, spent a day or two looking around Pisa; a day in Florence with a former voice student of mine who had just married an Italian. Then we went on through Ravenna to Austria, and took that beautiful Grossglockner route, the route of the highest mountain in Austria. It's a very scenic road. Then we went to the Oetztal where I've been many times before, to my good friend, Dr. Ernst Weber. He's an Austrian; his wife was an Austrian. She died a couple of years ago. Dr. Weber was the president

of the Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn, New York. He has a research institute, and although he's eighty-six years old, he still loves to hike with me. We hiked for a week in the Oetz Valley.

Harris: Were you knapsacking in the mountains?

Bacon: No, he has a house there and a little guest house. So I had my own little house on the hillside, looking down over the valley. And we walked from there. Then I went to Munich to pick up my nephew, David, a thirteen-year-old who had never been to Austria. I wanted to be sure that he would know my Austrian relatives. We went to Vienna and to the Oed where the Rosthorns and the Pichler relatives summered for over a hundred years.

Teaching Voice Students

Harris: When you weren't traveling in the fourteen years since you disassociated yourself from the chorus, you were teaching. Would you tell me something about your work with your voice students?

Bacon: Well, after teaching at the University where there were large classes, and after teaching SFBC, forty in a group, and running camp with SFBC, getting back to teaching on a one-to-one basis was a real joy to me. Ever since I retired from SFBC, I've been teaching voice. And I've had some delightful students. One of my students, Bill Berges, who has been a student at Cal, is now in Vienna, and is performing and studying. He plans to finish his degree at Cal in the coming year. He had been to school for two years, and then he went out and worked for four or five years and studied singing. Studying singing didn't seem to go along with studying on the campus. But now that he has gone back to the campus, he tells me he enjoys it very much.

Harris: Are most of your voice students adults?

Bacon: Oh, yes. Almost all. My youngest are two high-school students, sixteen years old. I have another soprano who just gave a concert in Auburn, in the library. Then I have some adults who are working two together in a class, two groups of two. One is a former student. Most of these are in the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. They love to sing. They are mothers and have families and don't have

much time to practice, but they love to sing. And they care about improving their voices, and they care about fine literature. And that's what I enjoy.

Harris: And how do you go about actually teaching singing, or working with a student's voice?

Bacon: Well, the first thing you have to do is give a singing student self-confidence. Because the really great singer is someone who, besides having the skill required to sing a song, it is someone who wants to give out and share his or her own feeling about a piece of music. It might be very sad, or it might be about love, or it might be idealistic, or it could be on a very ordinary subject, too, like some of Poulenc's or some of Sam Barber's songs.

The main thing with middle-aged or married people is that they want to sing for their pleasure. You teach them to become aware of their bodies, how a good tone feels; you make them fall in love with vowels; you find that certain mouth positions help; breath control is important. It's very simple. You just have to keep motivating them.

And, in my own case, I have taught myself to always be musical and not let many students and much teaching wear me down to be just ordinary. If I put my feeling into my accompanying and into my teaching, it always radiates to the student. And I think that's the secret. It's actually a kind of hypnosis. I have one or two psychiatrists or psychologists studying with me and we have long discussions about this. They're delighted that I make them hang loose.

Bacon: Then, you have to be free with your lips and your tongue and your jaw; especially your jaw and the back of your tongue, so that you don't get tied up in knots. We tense muscles unconsciously, you know.

Harris: Are you a believer in vocal exercises to achieve this relaxation?

Bacon: Oh, yes, vocal, and sometimes physical exercises. People who have had yoga and meditation or studied dancing are usually a little easier to teach, if they've had some disciplines with their bodies in

advance and with their minds, too. It makes it a little easier.

Harris: That's an interesting comparison, yoga and relaxation in singing.

Bacon: Oh, well, they're disciplines that relate to the body.

Harris: Do you assist your students in selecting literature?

bacon: Oh, I always throw literature at them. And I don't teach the same way to two people. I'm not always logical. If the mood seems right, I'll throw an Irish folk song at a student who has been working on Vaccai exercises, and say, "Sing me this," and we'll go into sight reading. And then we'll find out on a higher D that the tone isn't very good, so then we have to go do some exercises to make that tone better. So then the exercise is an outgrowth of the piece of music. You see what I mean?

Harris: Yes.

Bacon: And I keep changing the approach. Then I do a lot with ensemble singing. All my students are now singing duets. And I'm giving a number of them the same duet, so that any two of them that can get together will know enough, can sight read or will already know the songs so that they can do descants and two-part harmony quickly. That's lots of fun.

Harris: How do you feel about working with adults rather than with children? Do you find any differences?

Bacon: Well, now I prefer adults on the whole. I enjoy teaching Schubert and Brahms and Purcell and Hugo Wolf songs. I enjoy teaching great literature. I enjoy Handel and Bach and Mozart and some operas, not too many. But basically developing the sensitivity to tone, listening and phrasing is what I'm particularly good at teaching, I think.

Harris: And this is not something that was possible with the young boys?

Bacon: Oh, well, occasionally with an individual boy that has a beautiful voice or is a sensitive boy -- and you do get very sensitive children at eleven and twelve -- anything goes with them. Oh, yes. I think, in fact, with the SFBC one of the things I

did achieve with the advanced boys was an awareness of beauty, a concept of beauty. They really had learned to listen to their tone quality. But I gave them a chance to blow off steam, too. Yes, I would give a rugged folk song after working -- I could work for forty-five minutes on one motet with the boys. That depends on how you teach. You're always involved. Somehow, if you stop and you wait and figure out what you're going to do next, it's already too late.

Harris: There is a lot of spontaneity in your whole approach, then.

Bacon: Well, I think there has to be imagination and spontaneity, yes.

Harris: Do you wish to make any comments about your current students?

Bacon: Well, the main thing that I kind of harp on all the time, I think -- they might be bored with it by now -- is that singers should keep up with ensemble singing until they're eighty, just as the cello and violin and viola players keep up their instrumental quartets. I have one student right now who is a lady of seventy. She has a charming voice. If she gets up here and sings, "I Know that my Redeemer Liveth" for you, you will be touched by it, and it will be beautiful. She sings absolutely in tune; there is a great deal of charm and knowledge behind it. She's a music teacher who is retired, and she's keeping up with her singing, and she wants to learn new things. Sam Barber's "Song of Pangué" is very difficult rhythmically, and she just is fighting with it and loving it and struggling with it. And she's going to perform it beautifully. It's a pleasure to find a seventy-year-old that is so deeply involved. Music should be shared. Singing duets or trios is not a difficult matter. It can be done. You can set aside one night a week. People come to each other; they come for supper, and they sing.

Harris: For the joy of it.

Bacon: That's right. But it isn't done much. Of course, we have developed a lot of choruses; it's true. We have a lot of choruses in the bay region now. When I started the University Extension Chorus, there wasn't anything except Waldemar Jacobson's Bach Choir and Hans Leschke's Municipal Chorus. Singers

didn't exist; Sacred and Profane didn't exist; the Gay Men's Chorus didn't exist; the Symphony Chorus didn't exist; the Oakland Symphony Chorus didn't exist!

Harris: There are a lot of opportunities for singers now.

Bacon: The University Extension chorus did a good job for ten years. And we performed some music that had never been done before in the area at all. I'm sorry those courses went under.

Opportunities for Women Conductors

Harris: You talked a little bit about your desire to become a conductor, something which simply was not possible in the thirties and forties when you were completing your studies. How do you view the opportunities for women now, in the eighties?

Bacon: Well, it's easier. It's easier than it was. Antonia Brico is known in this country. Then Sarah Caldwell in Boston who directs the opera, built up her work. Of course, I built up my own choruses: The Elizabethan Madrigal Singers in Chicago and the North Shore Choral Society in Winnetka. Those were my two main groups there. Others, like the Grant Hospital Nurses Chorus and the Boot and Shoemakers Chorus, never continued when I left them. Maybe they had to build those up themselves, you see. They did as a matter of fact. Antonia, I know, is a frustrated woman conductor, too. She has guest-conducted here at Cal, but her only permanent group is the Businessmen's Orchestra in Denver, I think.

There's one thing I care about, and that is if a woman conducts, I'm glad if she's just herself and maintains her femininity. I hate to see women imitate men. I like to see them be just what they are.

Well, doing this oral history makes me survey my whole life.

I realize that I began with teaching private piano, partly in order to earn enough money to move away from home because my mother was very eager to have me stay home and was rather possessive. So, in the late twenties and early thirties, I taught piano and moved to Winnetka, Illinois. Then, I got into public school teaching and music supervision for a

couple of years. Then private school teaching, twelve grades at the Roycemore School. All the time going on with a few private piano students. Then, at the end of the thirties, I started to work on my masters degree in music. My undergraduate degree was in another field, in Romance languages. I felt the need of more theoretic background.

So, then, in the forties, just after getting my masters in '41, I was asked by Central YMCA College in Chicago to develop a chorus there. I did that and then, in May of that year, they asked me to be dean of the school and take over the leadership. I did that. Later, we had a major revolution and it became Roosevelt University which is now pretty well-known. It's a day and a night school. It was an undergraduate college at that time. We established the masters degree in the Music School.

So, in the forties, I was involved with Roosevelt University, and then, came in '46 to Berkeley to teach here until '54. I brought in Music 10. Through Music Extension I did a lot of work and developed a lot of courses. I also was responsible for bringing the Griller Quartet to the University for a master class. I had planned to continue with Lotte Lehmann and Marshall Singher in singing, and also to develop instrumental master classes.

But, then, I resigned. I didn't feel that I could do anything with conducting here. I liked my classes; I always liked teaching. But, after all these years, I was still a lecturer and didn't have an appointment with tenure as I would have had at the University of Chicago, or as I had at Roosevelt. And it seemed to me maybe Cal wasn't the best place for me.

While I was at Cal, I started the SFBC with Adler and the opera, as you've read earlier. So, after that, I worked full-time for the SFBC which was from about '54 to '73. That was my full-time work with a very small salary. \$10,000 was the most I ever got. And the man that came after me got double that amount upon arrival! And although I wasn't a women's libber, I'm well aware now that having been a woman, conducting was out of the question in those days. And, I think now, in answer to your question, really, I think, an excellent, a superb woman conductor will probably get an orchestra, now, in this generation. But she has to be awfully good.

Harris: And she will benefit from the fact that the way has been paved by people like you and others who have been in the field working with choruses and other organizations.

Bacon: Well, there are people like Katherine Cathcart who is at the conservatory now. She is doing work in opera coaching. She's a very capable woman. There's a fine woman who is conducting in St. Louis. -- I've forgotten her name. We have a number of local woman conductors. I'm very pleased with one lady in Oakland, Elizabeth Min, who is conducting the Oakland Youth Chorus. She founded the Women's Philharmonic Orchestra in San Francisco about six years ago. She resigned from the orchestra to do this. Oh, she may conduct it occasionally, but she turned the leadership over to someone else. But she has become an excellent choral conductor with a unique chorus called the Oakland Youth Chorus. And what is unique about it is that the ages represented are fourteen to twenty-one years of age. It takes in the adolescent who has outgrown the SFBC or the San Francisco Girls Chorus and those who are in high school and in college. In fact, a few college sophomores or juniors have stayed with her. Two men I know who are at the University of California are still singing in the Oakland Youth Chorus because they are so devoted to the quality of the music and the type of direction.

Harris: That's interesting.

Bacon: It is interesting. It's the most encouraging group to me now, this and the San Francisco Girls Chorus.

Harris: You've given a review of your life, and it's a very independent life, I must say. Certainly building this house on your own --

Bacon: in 1946, when I first came!

Harris: -- and financing it pretty much on your own was not typical of women of your generation. To what do you attribute your independence?

Bacon: Well, I had a very independent father and a very original mother, so much of it came naturally. My father was persona non grata with the American Medical Association because he looked ahead to socialized medicine way back in the twenties. He

also was extremely independent in his political views. He voted the Socialist Party, Republican Party, and Democratic Party, he told me once. I don't remember just when. In fact, he was very much interested in the economic theory of communism. He went to Russia in 1933. I think my oldest brother went with him. He was deeply interested in communism as an economic experiment, but he died just when the purges were at their worst. I think he would have changed some of his ideas had he lived to see what happened to Russian communism. I know he turned over in his grave when I signed the loyalty oath at Cal, that stupid piece of paper.

Harris: That caused a great deal of controversy.

Bacon: Well, some people resigned just out of sheer anger. I mean, it didn't seem important enough to me. But, if a mailman doesn't have to take an oath that he isn't a communist, why should I as a professor at the University?

Harris: There's not only independence I think you've indicated, but also a great deal of self-reliance? How do you think that has been nurtured?

Bacon: Well, besides heritage, I would say hard work. I worked awfully hard, I think. I burned the candle at both ends for many, many years. But I balanced it, fortunately, by a lot of outdoor athletic exercise. And summers were precious for trips. Most of my summers were outdoors: ten high trips with the Sierra Club, others with Mountain Travel, but always walking or exploring new areas and cultures both alone and with friends.

Harris: I'm glad you mentioned the outdoors because a couple of times when we have been scheduling a session, we've had to make sure that your tennis game was not interrupted. You're still playing tennis in good weather?

Bacon: Well, I try to play every morning. We have a group that gets out there at daylight. And that, of course, at this time is 6:45 A.M. And I try to play -- well, I'm sure I play about five times a week, on the average. But, whenever the weather's good, I try to be out there. I play with Eleanor Thune who is a Sierra Clubber, and Richard Muller of the engineering faculty at Cal. These are good

partners. Then we have an attorney with the state who plays with us.

Harris: Roberta Ghertner.

Bacon: Roberta, you know her? Yes, she's one of the early birds.

Harris: This group has been playing for some years now, isn't that right?

Bacon: Yes. We change slightly, but there are a few old-times. Eleanor, Richard, and I are some of the oldest. Roberta joined us a couple of years ago.

Harris: How long have you been playing tennis?

Bacon: Oh, well, there was a long time when I didn't play. I played in college. And that showed, I think, in the oral history. I think I mentioned there that I was the champion and I bragged about it because I had exactly one opponent. [Chuckles] Of course, isn't it more fun when you're talking than reading it!

Reflections on Getting Older

Harris: In May of 1983, you served on a symposium on aging in America. And I wondered just what advice you would have for those who were getting older in this country.

Bacon: Well, the main thing I can say is always have something interesting to do. And, if you haven't got something on your own, you can go and find it. Our civilization has changed. There are senior centers and opportunities in university extensions and in evening courses. They are so great. You can sing in a chorus; you can paint; you can do mechanics; you can do volunteer work. But there's no excuse for anyone to just sit at home anymore.

I think that's one of the big changes since I was a child. When my mother was an old lady and we had left home, it wasn't like that. She couldn't just go to classes. She would have done that, I think, but there were no opportunities at that time. It gives me another chance to boost our Extension Division. The University of Chicago had developed a splendid extension program, and I think ours was so great under Dr. Baldwin Woods' leadership.

But, to go back to old people -- anybody can exercise a little, and it's important. You've got to keep your muscles fit. I have a little -- well, it's not a rowing machine, but it's something similar. It really stretches the body. If it's rainy and I can't play tennis, I use that and I do push ups. I think your body has to keep up with your mind. And if your body gets old, your mind will get old. If your mind is old, your body is going to get old. I want to keep them both alive and fresh.

Harris: I think you certainly have done that.

Bacon: And having some responsibility, of course, is important.

Harris: For others?

Bacon: Yes.

Harris: What are the most rewarding things you're doing now.

Bacon: Well, my immediate activity is teaching and getting outdoors. And somewhat being with people. We haven't mentioned the Christmas Revels, have we?

Harris: No. No, we should talk about that.

Bacon: Well, this is the second year I've been involved with Jack Langstaff's project which has been going on for eighteen years in Boston.

Harris: Why don't you tell us a little bit about the Christmas Revels?

Bacon: Well, Jack Langstaff came out here and found Lisby Mayer who is an amazing woman to organize the Revels. He persuaded Madi Bacon to develop a chorus, and then he got other people. He has a way of making you do things, on a volunteer basis, almost entirely. So for the first time last year we had what we called the West Coast Christmas Revels, five performances in a row, performed at Mills College last December. We had a chorus of twenty-seven singers, dancers, two or three kinds of wonderful old dances, old instrument players: shawms, recorders, a brass quintet. And the spirit that Jack has infused into these organizations is remarkable. He came out from Boston to stage and

direct the show. And now he has people that are going to do it for succeeding years because the Revels go on. Once they start, they never stop. New local drama, dance, and music leaders prepare the actors and singers. Now what led me to the Revels?

Harris: We were talking about things you find rewarding now.

Bacon: Oh! That performance involved the community in a big way. The Revels are staged, by the way, with costumes and some scenery. It's a very joyous occasion, singing and dancing and acting, celebrating the solstice and the return of more sunlight.

Harris: And that particular experience with that group occupied a lot of your time and was a revitalizing experience.

Bacon: Well, I rehearsed the chorus once a week for about two and a half months. Because everything is done by memory, sixteen songs, with Jack as a soloist and other voices. Three of my present voice pupils came from the Revels. They are new friends because they're interesting young people. I'm surrounded by young people.

By the way, that's a factor in aging well. I'm surrounded by young people. My pupils are my friends. And we have dinner together; we walk together; we think together; we talk; we read; we make music together. It's fun. So I don't have time to get lonely. I'm not really a loner; I like company. In fact, I've told my friends now, anybody who wants to come see me about 5:30 in the afternoon, I love to have a happy hour and have people just drop in, just to visit. The person who got me started on that is Ansel Adams. He had that policy; he worked all day, then, in the late afternoon, people could come and have a happy hour with him.

Harris: A time for good conversation.

Bacon: Yes. I can't work in the evening anymore. I used to be a night owl. But I've become a morning person. One can change completely. I'm much more of a morning person not.

Harris: In looking back over the record of your achievements, both in Chicago at Roosevelt and at Extension, through the SFBC and now with your private teaching, is there anything that you think you would do differently, that you would like to point out to others who might be coming along?

Bacon: That's hard to say. I can frankly say I haven't felt the need to be married perhaps since the age of fifty or sixty. I used to think in my late forties and early fifties that I might. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't marry. I mean, I thought I might marry at seventy. But somehow -- I don't know -- I've always been busy. I've always enjoyed what I was doing. And I've had enough people around me that I love and that love me.

And I'm quite sure I've missed out by not being a mother; I'm quite sure. And I like children, to wit, I've worked with them so long. But I can't say that, as I see my friends, I don't think they're any happier than I am. I'm not a lonesome old woman. I don't feel my age. What is today, the thirteenth? I'll be eighty-two on February 15, 1988. And I don't feel eighty-one any more than you feel a hundred, I don't think. I think I probably am about comparable to many women at fifty because I swim or I do all these things with pleasure, and I still travel. I'll tell you what I don't like. I don't like to go over that bridge to San Francisco anymore to musicals. That's what's getting me down now.

Harris: I don't think anybody likes driving across the Bay Bridge. What plans do you have for the future? Anything coming up in the way of travel?

Bacon: Well, I haven't been to China or Tibet and I haven't been to Patagonia. The Durrells got me interested with their books on Patagonia. My uncle liked the Chinese people and their culture in the old days of Peking. Observing the enormous changes in our lifetime and since Mao would undoubtedly be an important experience. How well I remember the changes that took place in Austria when it became a republic! The rise of the unions and the disappearance of the aristocracy!

Recently, my oldest brother, the ninety-one-year-old doctor and his wife from Florida, and Ernst, age eighty-nine, and my crippled niece who is in a wheelchair and I rented two cabins at Death Valley

for three nights. We shared the magnificent views over the desert at sunset; we walked around Bad Water below sea level; and drove through Titus Canyon from the top of the plateau down to the desert floor. It was easy to visualize the raging torrent that once plunged downward cutting through the rocks to reach its destination. At mealtime we talked about the long, long time it takes to bring about geologic changes and evolutionary developments in plants and animals, and how exciting it is for us to be alive and to participate in such rapid changes in our world society! I am amazed at my daily new discoveries: in thinking, in teaching, in understanding. I look forward to going on as I am, going on teaching, playing tennis, and travelling.

Harris: And enjoying life.

Bacon: I hope so.

Harris: Well, it certainly looks as if you're going to. Now this is the last question, unless you have something you would like to say.

Bacon: I'll probably think of it after you leave!
[Chuckles]

Summing Up a Lifetime

Harris: How would you like to be remembered at the end of an oral history and a very full life?

Bacon: Well, I think I'd like to be remembered as a pleasant human being that has contributed something to society. Plato used to say that the purpose of all education is to develop a good citizen. And, I think, basically, I've been a pretty good citizen.

Harris: You've certainly contributed to the cultural life of the Bay Area as well as that of Chicago.

Bacon: Well, my students have been very gratifying. Many of them return to see me. And they make me feel good because they tell me that they learned some discipline in SFBC. Or they'll tell me I have a totally new concept about this. Just this week, a voice student who is in counselling, said, "I come to my voice lesson and I find I use what you teach me and I teach it to my students." So what is it? It's an interesting thing to puzzle over.

I'd like to be remembered as a friend and teacher who cares. I believe I am a natural teacher. I like to open doors of perception and understanding; to help students to perceive beauty; to develop an awareness and freedom of expression; to float with a tone, not to push it; to maintain a long phrase and musical line with inner poise; to smooth out the wrinkles of tension and haste with both quiet sharing of beautiful harmonies together with alert energy and rhythmic freedom of expression. The mere production of a singing tone can be a kinesthetic experience.

I would like to be remembered for some of the music I made in the thirties and forties, early Renaissance music for voices and instruments with the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers in Chicago, and the great choral classics with the North Shore Choral Society in Winnetka, Illinois.

Also, in California, in the forties and fifties, the University Extension Chorus and the San Francisco Boys Chorus presented new and classic choral and dramatic works, filling a considerable void for community participation in the bay region at that time. After thirty-nine years, the SFBC continues to serve the opera and symphony when boys voices are needed.

In travelling around the state in the fifties and sixties, the SFBC became a strong motivating force in the development of the many junior choruses now thriving on the west coast. With the influence of television and radio, the active participation in group singing has become most important.

Perhaps I'll be remembered by some students for enticing them into the musical and/or teaching professions. By others, for sharing my pleasure in studying foreign languages and travelling in distant lands.

My parents fostered my love of nature, camping, hiking, and music. They cheered me on in athletics, developed my sense of responsibility to society, to ethnic injustice, to honest government, and international relations. Without church affiliations the family of man, the Golden Rule, and the kindness and power of human choices were instilled in us.

If I have influenced many young lives and led others to experience beauty and self-confidence and a joy of living, I am only passing on what was given to me.

As I review my life, I think I have used my excellent education and manifold opportunities wisely and usefully. My many interests covered a wide range of activities: athletics, nature study, geology, languages, sculpture and art history, music, and people. This made it difficult to choose and to pursue a single direction. My mother steered me toward piano performance, but I wasn't sufficiently motivated to strive for a concert career. However, my piano and vocal studies prepared me well for teaching and conducting which became my ultimate profession. I would have liked to have had my own orchestra!

[End of interview]

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Janet G. Harris

Received her Bachelor's of Art in English Literature from Wellesley College, Wellesley Massachusetts, in 1956 and was granted a Master's in English Literature degree by Holy Names College, Oakland, in 1976. She has been a volunteer in the Oakland public schools and a history docent at the Oakland Museum. Mrs. Harris served as business manager of the San Francisco Girls Chorus and is currently the president of the board of directors of the Ladies' Home Society of Oakland which operates the Matilda E. Brown Home for older women.

Mrs. Harris is married to San Francisco attorney H. Donald Harris, Jr. They have two children, Jonathan and Catherine.

