

ANDREAS BROWN

Interviewee: Andreas Brown (Month, 00, 1933 -)

Interviewer: Susan Resnik with Jayne Meyers

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SUSAN RESNIK (SR): Today is Monday, May 1, 2017. This is Susan Resnik at San Diego State University, about to record the oral history of Andreas Brown for Special Collections. This project is supported by a John and Jane Adams Mini-grant for the Humanities.

Good morning, Andreas.

ANDREAS BROWN (AB): Good morning, Susan.

[End Day 1, Part 1; Begin Part 2]

SR: We are thrilled that you have come home to San Diego, and to San Diego State University. You are an alumnus, graduating with honors in 1955, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics. You were a member of the national and regional champion debating team, the honorary speech fraternity, Pi Kappa Delta, and also president of Sigma Chi Fraternity. After attending Stanford Law School, you served in the U.S. Army Staff Judge Advocate [Office], and returned to San Diego State for three years to teach speech and coach debate teams. As a life-long bibliophile, you have promoted the appreciation and cultural significance of 20th century American literature and the arts throughout your adult life. You are nationally and internationally recognized as a prominent bookseller and literary estate consultant. You owned and operated the most important independent

bookstore in the United States, the Gotham Book Mart, for forty years, which you have described as “sort of a literary club.”

When I asked you which of the myriad of roles you have played you value the most, you replied, “mentor.” From your teenage years on, you have mentored and nurtured others. Rather than continue to introduce you and to begin to describe you, I’d rather you tell your story.

This interview will take the form of a conversational narrative. Let’s begin at the beginning. Tell me about your early family, coming to California. Where did your family come from, what have you found out?

AB: My family, to the best of my knowledge, landed in Boston in around 1631 or '32, and migrated down the eastern coast in Connecticut, and worked their way across to Kent, Connecticut, on the western border of the state. There were two young sons who would not inherit anything upon the death of their father. The older son would receive the entire estate. So the two younger ones, who were schoolteachers, decided to cross the state of New York by foot, which was to the west, and when they reached the Ohio River, they constructed a flatbed boat, you would call it, I guess, because they were familiar with the rivers of Connecticut. They went down to a promising area north of Cincinnati and settled in and started farming. The older of the two was injured in a farming accident, and he had to switch to the legal profession, so one of them was doing the farming, and the other was handling business matters. They eventually migrated over to Ohio, going west, as many people were doing, and they settled in Marshall County, in a little town called Lincoln, Illinois, which was right on one of the major rivers

there—the name escapes me. It happened to be in Abraham Lincoln's congressional district. And because the older brother among the Fenns, F-E-N-N, became acquainted with Lincoln and involved with his political aspirations, what he wanted to do. And there is correspondence in the historical society in Springfield, Illinois, that documents some of their communications and their relationship.

[00:04:14] The only son that evolved from these three brothers was sent to school in the East. He was very bright, and managed to get into Yale University where he was Phi Beta Kappa and several distinguished honorariums. And then suddenly the family pulled him out of Yale in his second or third year, and brought him back to Illinois. From what we can speculate, they decided that they wanted to send him as far away from the pending Civil War as they possibly could, because he was the last male in the family line. So his father went out to California to investigate. He went to San Francisco and made some friends, and they found out that there was a very outstanding medical school in San Francisco called the Toland Medical School/Medical College, and they sent the son out there—my great-grandfather—and enrolled him in the Toland School. He was the number one student in the second class to graduate from that school, which later became the University of California Medical School at San Francisco. And he remained after he graduated, and became Dr. Toland's assistant. Dr. Toland was an expert in surgery and my great-grandfather became a very skilled surgeon, which was a very rare thing to have anywhere west of the Mississippi.

[00:06:00] My great-grandfather heard about.... After about six or seven years, he got a little restless and he wanted to branch out on his own, and he heard that down in San Diego a township was just beginning to be formed, and they would need doctors and lawyers and entrepreneurs and farmers—anybody they could get to come down there. So evidently he went down and looked it over, and he bought up about twenty or thirty acres below what is now the Balboa Park area, and he went down there and established a medical practice, and helped to form the medical society in San Diego County. He was one of the charter members of the medical society in San Diego. And he was very concerned and interested in the development of the community. He had his own horse and buggy. He was just about the only doctor in San Diego that was willing to make house calls. He managed to establish a lot of friendships. He was evidently a very generous and kind person. He ended up being the director of the county hospital. He held a lot of other prestigious positions in the city. He signed the later city charter that was published in the 1870s or 1880s. So he was a major figure, and he is really kind of my inspiration in the genealogical tree of our family, because he was a very small man, but very devoted and very hard-working, and greatly respected in the community. He died in, I think, 1907. His widow lived until about 1920. There's a lot of complicated history about that marriage, but I don't know if this is the appropriate time to get into all of that.

[00:08:02] Anyway, they had a daughter, who they sent off to a finishing school in Oakland, California. It was a very prestigious school for children mostly from wealthy families, and I think just for women. She graduated from

that, and word has it through the family tree that she became a kind of self-important ... oriented to wanting to be a higher class than she really was. Her father was a doctor, and her mother was a very bright lady, but she caused problems. Let's see now, that's my grandmother, which would be my mother's mother.

SR: [00:08:52] Mother's mother. I was going to [ask].

AB: So I'm bringing you down to my mother's mother.

SR: Right.

AB: And that story is, I guess, an interesting one. According to the family rumors, my mother was one of four children, and they didn't anticipate having any more children, but at the age of forty, her mother became pregnant. Her mother was also a very small woman. They were like five-feet-two. Her husband was like five-foot-six. Her first baby was Ralph, and he was a twelve-pound baby, and almost killed her. But he was born and very healthy. He later died in an automobile accident, so he was out of the family at a reasonably young age. But she had a very wealthy brother—Uncle Fenn, we called him. He lived in Bellaire, above Los Angeles, in a very famous movie star's home that he bought. My much-beloved aunt, Aunt Lois, was my mother's sister. She was about eighteen when my mother was born. And there's many pictures in the family, showing my Aunt Lois holding my mother, appearing for all purposes to be the mother with her child. My mother carried kind of a grudge most of her life that her sister was always bossing her around and telling her what she should and shouldn't do. But obviously she was a mother figure.

[00:10:26] Anyway, the story is—and it may be apocryphal—but the story is that my mother, when she was a teenager she was rather rebellious, because her parents were very religious, very conservative, religious, church-goers three and four nights a week and so forth. She ran around with a gang of other teenage girls, and they decided they were all going to run away and go down to San Diego and live in Tent City at the El Coronado Hotel, because that's where the family traditionally went for vacations—the older people, you know—and they would stay at the hotel. So these three or four girls allegedly went down to San Diego, and of course the reason was, there were a lot of men there, with all the military bases. And they were very excited to be on their own. They were teenage girls. And my mother evidently—I'm going to assume this—you had the army base there, you had the navy base there, and you had the marine base there. That's a lot of men. So they're obviously drawn by that.

My mother supposedly went to see a baseball game played by the army baseball team against somebody else, and my father was on the baseball team, and she met him, and they became very interested in each other. They were like seventeen and nineteen, or eighteen and twenty. They were young. And they did get married, and they immediately had three children: my older brother by a year, myself, and then my sister by about a year and a half. So here is a twenty-two-year-old woman, married to a twenty-three-year-old man, with three children, and they're not the people they were when they met. My mother was very bright, very attractive, a rebellious person by tradition from the family. And my father was a party boy. I mean, he was a jock athlete in the army, and he had a lot of

pals who were a wild and racy crowd. And I think my father just decided he didn't want to be tied down, because the marriage just did not work.

SR: [00:12:48] They were young.

AB: And that led to a lot of heartache.

SR: It's hard.

AB: Here are three children, with a mother who doesn't have a full education—although my mother read a lot and my mother.... Something interesting about DNA here: my mother was a very skilled artist, and when we got into grammar school—my brother would be a year ahead of me, and then myself, and then my sister a year behind me—and we were all A-1 artists. We all could draw and paint, so there's something in the DNA. That doesn't happen very often. So we lived in a rather poor area of San Diego, eventually, in the back country. When I say the back country, I mean we lived on a kind of a plateau on a cul-de-sac, way at the end of a dead-end road—a very isolated area. And my sister and brother and I would sit in a giant pepper tree out in the back yard of the house. It was huge, and it extended out over the canyon. I mean, you were up high. My mother was not happy about it, but we really liked to sit in the tree. And as far as we could see, looking south and southeast, not a house, not a building, not a road or anything. At night there were no lights down there. So we were looking at Mexico before any of that land had been developed.

SR: Oh my.

AB: And in the springtime, we lived in the canyons. The canyons were our playground. And we knew how to get to our school by going through the canyons and short-cutting.

SR: [00:14:28] Where is this in San Diego?

AB: East San Diego, south of University Avenue. The Number 7 trolley car ended at Fairmount, I think, and we had to walk to the house from there. It was quite a little walk. Anyway, in the springtime, that was the best, because the rains would fill up all the pools, and you could go swimming in the canyons, and you could catch pollywogs, which turned into frogs. We lived in a very uniquely natural environment as children, down in these canyons. My mother would pack us lunches and send us on our way. She didn't care how far we went, as long as we were home for dinner at five or six. And my mother had a whistle—a natural whistle, not a machine whistle—and she could stand out on the end of the property and whistle, and we would hear that from maybe a half a mile away, and we knew we were late for dinner. That's how she got us to come.

[00:15:30] That grammar school, by the way, I fell in love with my fourth-grade teacher, Norma Brower. She was so beautiful, absolutely stunning. And I remember she had dark hair and a beautiful face, and a nice figure. I was a fourth grader, but I really.... And she said to me more than once, "You know, you Brown children, you're all such wonderful artists. Your brother was here last year, and he really was a very good artist. Are you a good artist?" And so I drew her some pictures and she said, "Wow. Your sister's one grade behind you. Is she an artist?" I said, "Yes, she's very good too, but my mother is the best artist."

And her name was Norma Brower, and the thing I remember about Norma Brower was, in the morning she looked wonderful. Her hair was nice, her makeup was great. She was just beautiful. By the end of the day, all her makeup was gone, her hair was a mess, she looked exhausted, because she was teaching. But it was her attempt to try to be attractive. And I used to feel so sorry for her at the end of the day, because she looked so tired. But I never forgot her.

SR: [00:16:46] That's wonderful. What school was this?

AB: Hamilton Grammar School. It was way off in the boondocks. We could go straight west and then straight south, and then loop in to go to Hamilton. But if we went through the canyons, we could get there quicker.

SR: When did you start liking reading and liking books?

AB: Well, as soon as I could get my hands on books.

SR: As you were very young?

AB: We had a tiny, tiny, little branch library of the Carnegie Library in East San Diego. I mean, you could touch the four walls practically. But I enjoyed the summer program, and you were allowed to check out six books or eight books, and I took them all home and read them in week and brought them back, and took more. I was back and forth with books constantly. And one thing was, this library—like, say, this was the library—they cut it in half and there was a desk where the librarian sat, and those were the adult books, and these were what children could read. And I was always sneaking behind her or around her when she was busy, because I wanted to read D. H. Lawrence, or Henry Miller, or somebody like that, and they didn't want me reading it. So I was very aggressive.

And I remember my parents were reading a novel by Aldous Huxley—and I don't remember the title now—but they both loved it. It was something they talked about a lot. So when they were done, I took it out into the pepper tree, and I climbed up there, and I read that entire book, and I could tell you honestly I did not understand one single word! It was a very serious adult novel, very complex. It was like a Victorian novel with all these [unclear 00:18:25]. But, you know, that's the first time I realized that some books are not for children. You have to pick and choose and you have to grow. But I started collecting books probably in the sixth or seventh grade, and I would go into any used bookstore, I would go to the Salvation Army, and everywhere I went from, I would say, from Wilson to Hoover, I was dragging along five or ten boxes of books. I just wouldn't let go. My fraternity brothers, when I moved into the Sigma Chi fraternity house, said, "What are all these boxes in your room?" I said, "They're books." "You mean you carry twelve boxes of books everywhere you go?!" I said, "Well, I don't have any place to put them."

SR: I was going to say, when you were small and you first started doing this, where did you keep the books in your home, what did you do?

AB: Well, I'm sure I was a precocious reader. I mean, I always got "A's" in grammar school and junior high school. I had one teacher, Miss Minson, at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, and she had a notorious reputation for being very, very difficult. She's where you learned to conjugate verbs. She's where you learned to construct a sentence with a subject and predicate. And, I want to give great credit to the educational system of San Diego now, that I didn't know it, but

they filtered out the more promising students in the first year, and then they had an entire structure of specialized courses for us. The first place they put me was in architectural drawing and wood cutting, making things out of wood—but architecture mostly. And I thought I was fascinated by it, but I didn't let it distract me. Then they assigned me to a class for classical music. They didn't even.... “You're going to have to take a music course.” So we went down to the room and sat down, and they started playing the “Peer Gynt Suite,” and all of us kids—some of us kids probably came from families that knew music, but I didn't know anything, but I never forgot the “Peer Gynt Suite,” because the teacher said, “If you listen closely to the classical music, you can imagine a wonderful story. It may not be the story that the musician intended, but you can create one out of it. And the “Peer Gynt Suite” is (hums), and it was a parade of people marching and playing flutes or whatever they were, and I never, ever forgot that. That could have something to do with my approach to decoding—I never put this together, until right now—that there was a meaning sometimes behind things, and that music had a story very often. And consequently, when I became curious about what Mr. [Gourd? 00:21:17] was up to, that could have come from that music class. That could have come from that music class. I'd never thought about that. [unclear, same time as SR] music class they put us in. They just said, “You're going to do these classes.” There was a math class with a no-nonsense teacher, but I caught on to math—other than when I got bored with math—very quickly. And what she did was, she had us go into the local community bank and get a check book, and we were taught how to write a check. We had to create our own

bank where we put the money in. By the time we were out of that class, I had a savings account at Bank of America, which had about \$12.00 in it. I was so excited to have my own bank account!

SR: [00:21:58] That's wonderful!

AB: It was wonderful. This was an accelerated class for kids that were showing.... And I got up to ... not trigonometry, but it was calculus. I got so bored with hard math, I said, "I will never, ever need this. I do not want this, and I don't care if I can't get into San Diego State or Berkeley or wherever I want to go, but I'm not taking any more of these silly classes with mathematics." So I walked away from math. Science wasn't so bad. I'll never forget science, because it was one of the sports coaches that taught some of the minor sports, and I had gotten to know him just through being.... Because you know, the coaches for the athletics are much more friendly with the students, informal. So he announced one day that a training teacher out at San Diego State is going to come in and give us a lecture on smoking. And in through the door came the most beautiful woman I had ever seen in my life. And later I found out all about her. Her brother happened to be a Sigma Chi, so that tied-in. Her name was Rose something. And what she did was just astonishing! She gave us a film to look at, a short one, about the horrors of smoking. And then she brought into the room a pair of sheep's lungs, that actually were lungs. And they were hanging on hooks, and everybody was just.... It was disgusting! And she very quietly, this delicate, pretty girl—she was probably a junior or senior in the education program at San Diego State, and she probably got credits for doing this. And she proceeded to slice open these lungs!

But before she did that, one lung stayed over here, the other one she pumped cigarette smoke into. And when she cut that one open, all of the inner tissue was black. Boy, did she make her point! I never intended to smoke. My parents had smoked around me, and I just was horrified. But that made it for sure. I will never forget that experience, of those two lungs hanging there, and this pretty young lady. It didn't bother her at all, but people were moaning and groaning and turning away in the class. It was a hoot!

SR: [00:24:30] It's memorable—clearly!

AB: And that's a great experience I had. Well, first of all, I'll back up. It was traditional at Hamilton Grammar School that when you graduated that you got an autograph book, and you got all your classmates to sign it. But I decided I wanted Miss Cross, who was the principal, to sign mine. And Miss Cross was another small woman, very compact, and no-nonsense, but friendly. And I asked her and she said, "Of course, Andreas, I'll be glad to sign your book." What she wrote in it was, "In order to have friends, you must be a friend." I have never, ever forgotten that. That was a grammar school teacher. That's wonderful, isn't it?

SR: These things really stay with you. And as you and I were talking, I said this to you a couple of days ago, it emerged that you clearly have been a mentor throughout your life, but you've also been a friend.

AB: I had a lot of friends in grammar school. I had no problem with that. I picked and chose, but I've never forgotten what she said—in order to have friends you must be a friend, you must reach out to people.

SR: And that was good, and you have.

AB: [00:25:42] But she probably wrote that in every kid's book, but it certainly stuck with me. Now I've got to tell you about something else in junior high school and high school. I was assigned a counselor. Every student had a counselor in high school. Mine was Miss Ingebrigtsen, and she was about five-foot-two. We had taken a lot of tests in junior high school and high school so she knew that I was going to be an "A" student, unless I fooled around. And she called me in her office one day. In those days you got six grades every semester. The sixth grade was for penmanship. How do they do that to a left-handed person, where every single desk is cut this way so the right handers [unclear 00:26:30] and our arms are all hanging out in the air?! And it was in the senior year they put in one row of left-handed desks—my senior year. And that was in the class where all the debaters were, and the really smart, smart students. And we complained so much about it, because there were a lot of left-handers in my group. I remember Miss Ingebrigtsen came to me and said, "Andreas, you are going to take the typing class. When you get to college and law school and the world, your handwriting is never going to be good, so you're going to take typing." I said, "I'm not going to take typing." "Yes you are. Why won't you?" I said, "That's where all the girls are going who want to be secretaries. I'm not going in there with twenty-five girls and taking typing." I knew that I would be ridiculed for doing it. And she said, "I am not budging. I'll tell you what you do, you get to class and go early and sit in the front row, and they're all behind you, you won't even see them." She was a smart lady.

SR: Oh, that was smart!

AB: [00:27:30] Well, when I finished that class, I could type 103 words a minute, without error. I mean sometimes an error, but that was my high score. So when I got to State, and I was taking lots of heavy loads of classes with papers, I was just (tat, tat, tat, tat, tat). I mean, I'm knocking them off with no trouble at all. But I got to Fort Ord, when I went into the army for eight weeks of basic training, they wanted to know: can you repair a car, can you cook food, can you manicure lawns and flowerbeds? What can you do? Then they would take you and put you in that department. You're repairing the trucks, or you're in the kitchen cooking. So on my [typing] test I made 103 words a minute. So they called me in immediately, and they said, "Mr. Brown, we're in great need of clerical help right now. We have a young man who was a master sergeant in Korea, and his commanding officer was killed in the field, and we had to take him and make him a second lieutenant because we didn't have enough manpower. But he doesn't write a very good letter, so we're going to put you in his office." This used to be a one bedroom, living room, kitchen kind of a setup, but they converted it into a military office. So I can't remember his last name, but when he knew I could type and do business, sort things out and everything, he gave me a lot of grunt work. But when he got ready to write a letter to his C.O., the next guy up, he wasn't very secure about it, so he called me in and he said, "Private Brown, would you look at what I've written here and see if you can maybe make some improvements in it?" So what I did was I typed it up exactly the way he did it, which was terrible, and then I wrote the revised edition, and he looked at the two and he said, "Oh, this is much better. Do this one." From that day on, I edited all of his mail,

including his weekend passes! And he called me in one day—they didn't like to have college kids who were coming into the army, mix with kids who were dropping out of high school. We could cause trouble. They figured that we would turn everybody against them or something. So they took the college people and they mixed us in with—we had some Indian students that came from the Aleutian Islands out in Alaska, we had a mixture of people. But I had about eight or nine friends from Stanford in the same class with me. So when he spread out the three-day passes, he didn't look at them, he just signed them. So I made out three-day passes for all my friends, and we went three days every time we had a chance, eight-day weekends. Then we were moved over to the officers' quarters where they had converted a place into a legal office, and that's where the colonel, who was the head of staff judge advocate for the Western United States, like the chief justice of the appellate court for the army. We had two secretaries who sat out in the living room. The colonel had the large bedroom. And I had like a small room—I don't know what it was at one time. But I was his clerk, and we got along very well, and very, very interesting cases. I won't go into all that, but I mean really unusual legal cases: a peeping Tom, a general who was accused of undue influence. Then they had court martials. He would bring all of the court martial people into the auditorium, the potential he picked for the court martial, and he would give a rant and a rave about, "I'm sick and tired of people getting away with all these things! I want convictions and I want them now! So if you people get picked for these courts, I want convictions!" Well, that's undue influence, that's illegal. So the defense attorneys on the campus, they brought in

their secretaries to sit in the back row and take down everything he said, and he got kicked out and sent to Korea. It was juicy stuff, but it wasn't a boring experience for me.

SR: [00:31:44] No, it sounds interesting.

AB: It almost convinced me to go back to law school [unclear].

SR: I was wondering. Well, can we backtrack a little to high school?

AB: Sure. Absolutely.

SR: Let's go back to high school, because you clearly, from the yearbook that we've been looking at, you had lots of friends and you were very involved. Talk a little bit about high school.

AB: Well, I had a big problem, my brother was not a very good student. So he came in there and he was fooling around and getting poor grades and stuff, and a lot of people ridiculed him, and that was hard for me to take, but there wasn't much I could do about it. My brother just was lazy and didn't want to study. And then I had my sister. And the separation and the divorce between my father and my mother took a terrible toll on her—terrible. And she lost all self-confidence. Here she goes from this scrawny.... She's five-eight or something, and freckles, strawberry blond, reddish hair, and she was an attractive girl growing up, but snap your finger and wow, she just, within six months to a year.... And I think what it did, it caused some jealousy on my mother's part. She saw how attractive my sister was, and that a lot of men were interested in her. Boy, she's going to get all the breaks, and look at me, I'm stuck with three kids. There were some things I don't want to talk about.

SR: [0033:16] That's okay.

AB: What do you mean it's okay?

SR: Just don't talk about it then.

AB: Can we take things out later?

SR: Yes.

AB: Okay, then I will tell you a story.

SR: Except that if it's something you don't want to talk about, I can put it on pause.

Let's do that. Just one moment. We're going to pause. (recording turned off and on) Let's record this, because this is.... So continue telling me about jobs that you did.

AB: Right. Well, it started off in a very simple way. On hot summer days my brother and sister and I didn't even have enough to buy a five-cent root beer float, so we would ring doorbells until we could collect enough pop bottles and cash them in so that we could go and get something. That then expanded into my wanting to make more money to maybe buy a pair of shoes or some clothes I needed, or whatever it was. So I started volunteering to mow people's lawns and clip their hedges and plant their flower beds and stuff. And because I was a good gardener, I made steady customers, and that was very helpful to me financially—for just nickels and dimes. In those days, everything was.... You could go to a movie for 15¢ or 10¢.

SR: So is this the 1940s? I'm trying to picture when you were in junior high school.

AB: I should have brought my chart. I have a chart.

SR: I can figure it out, because you were born in 1933.

AB: [00:34:45] Well let me back up a minute. I think I remember [unclear]. I should have talked about [unclear].

SR: Well, you can.

AB: Here are three little kids living on the Island of Coronado, which had a lot of retired military people there, but we had a little house, and my mother liked to pack us a brown paper bag lunch—this is times when we weren't in school, summertime—and send us on our way. Parents obviously felt secure about children. I look back on it now, and we were allowed to roam all over the place.

SR: It was different.

AB: I think it was because two older boys and a younger sister, my mother felt.... In the meantime, she's working hard at home, trying to make a house out of it. When we left Coronado.... Well, first of all, in Coronado, our favorite thing was to take our brown paper bag lunches and sneak on the boats that went back and forth to get to the island. And it was a car boat that they'd load all the cars on and drove off, and then the other ones drove on. And we would hide behind the cars and play Hide And Go Seek. And I remember we would take the crusts off of our sandwiches and feed it to what I want to say are dolphins or something. I don't know what they were, but whatever they were, they were swimming in the Coronado and San Diego waterway there. That was a big thing with us. But eventually we got caught every time, and then they kicked us off and we'd go play somewhere else. We did a lot of that sneaking on.

[00:36:16] But the two stories that I remember in my earliest childhood—and this is a tricky thing, because if you have an amusing event or an unusual

event, it gets talked about, and then you think you remember it. So I don't swear that I remember this first hand, but these are two stories that are very clear in my mind. We knew our mother and father liked to read the Sunday paper—that was ritual. I'm sure black coffee and cigarettes were too. But they would read the paper in bed. So my brother and I decided one day to go get them the newspapers. Now, we're really little, probably three and four, or four and five or something, and my brother was running the show. So we got our wagon out, and we went down to the place that sold the newspapers, a block and a half away. The newspapers and magazines were all out on racks in front of the store. So we loaded up our wagon with every newspaper and magazine on the stand, and took it home to our parents. So when they woke up, and we said, "We have a surprise for you Mommy and Daddy, we went and got your papers and magazines for you." "What are you talking about?" "Well look here." And they looked out the window and said, "Oh my God! Where did they come from?" "Well we went down to the store and got them." "Well, you turn right around and take them back!" Of course they were trying not to laugh, but I'm sure the guy at the.... Maybe he didn't even know, because she sent us right back immediately. But it was a very funny story that got passed around, how enterprising we were.

[00:37:55] The other one was—and this I don't remember at all, so it had to have been told to me—my brother found.... Now again, three and four, or four and five, and we're on our own a lot, we got to go out and play a lot. My mother wanted us out from under, you know. He found a can of green car paint, and he painted me and took me into the house to show what he had done. And my

mother knew that it was dangerous, because that paint solidifies and you can suffocate. So my mother was horrified. They got something to clean it off of me, and I lived, anyway. But that was the other story that got told over the dinner tables more than once, that my brother painted me with green automobile paint. He thought that was really cool.

[00:38:48] But I do remember the boats and feeding the animals.

Coronado was very limited because we moved.... I wonder if you know about this. Have you ever heard of the Brick Row in National City? It's a famous architectural building.

SR: Know it.

AB: It runs a whole block, and it's copied from old New England and Great Britain. It's a connection of apartments that are two stories high, and it's an entire block. And now it's turned out to be one of the great architectural phenomena in California. I mean, it's famous. It wasn't when we lived there. We lived in the last one, at the end. But it had a back yard, so I know we had a back yard to play in. This is really a sad story. We were right across the street. I remember Pearl Harbor because we were sitting in front of the radio. We had a standing radio, and it had a big screen, and I was sitting on the floor, listening, and so was my brother, and they interrupted to announce the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

SR: And you remember that?

AB: Oh, I do remember that, it was so shocking. Well, everybody was just.... You could imagine. My mother had a favorite slogan. My mother had a sense of humor ... sometimes. Every time there was a loud explosion, like a crash or a

bang, you know, where it came from, my mother said, “The Japs are taking the harbor!” She would just shout that out, any time. “The Japs are taking the harbor, I guess!” It was a joke, but I mean it was....

SR: You were eight years old then.

AB: No, because I went to the first and second grade in National City, so I would have been five or six, depending upon what the school rules were at the time. And I remember we took our lunches in a brown paper bag, and we walked, my sister and my brother and I, and the further [i.e., closer] we got to the school, the more people were walking with us, we'd pick up. To me, we were a mile away, but we were probably three blocks away, because I don't remember.

What else was there about that? Oh, we were one block away from the movie theater in National City, so we always saved our nickels, because for ten or fifteen cents we could see two full features, a sports film, a report film, and a cartoon. And my mother loved it because we were gone for four or five hours. And we bought popcorn for a nickel, and maybe a Hershey bar for another nickel. But that was the big event, to go to the movies. We loved it. And I sat through more very complicated adult films, not understanding anything. And if the film was scary, my little sister—she wasn't so little—but she would go under her chair, she was terrified, and I'd have to coax her out and say, “It's only a movie, Lois. Come on now.” My nickname for her obviously came from the word “sister.” My nickname for her was Sou-Sou, because that sounds like “sister” to a three-year-old. “Be nice to your sister.” And I was very protective of her because she was so vulnerable and shy. Great sadness in this story.

SR: [00:42:00] And you got pleasure out of books, too. You got pleasure out of reading, right?

AB: I want to tell you the sad story. Right across the street from the big row, which was going into countryside, it wasn't developed, was a giant vegetable and fruit garden, five or ten acres, owned by a Japanese family, that had about three or four children. And within a week, we got up and went out, and there were no children, there was no family. They came and took them all away, and my mother had a terrible time trying to tell us. I said, "What are they doing with them?" She said, "Well, they're protecting them, they're putting them in a safer place." She tried to calm us down, but these were kids that we really played with every day. And to see their house dark and nobody taking care of the land anymore, the vegetables were all kind of.... That was a blow. I didn't realize at the time the historical significance of it. But when I later saw the documentaries of these horrible internment camps they put them in, I realized what had happened.

SR: You know, the relevancy of the historical context to your experience as a child, you always remember these things.

AB: Okay. And also, instead of putting us in the children's home, because my mother might have had some complaints from my sister and brother and me that we didn't like it very much, isn't there anything else we can do? So she went to the city and she found a family, a church-going family, which made her comfortable because she had a church background—although she rebelled—in La Jolla. And it was a block and a half from the beach, and we could walk to the school, and it just looked ideal. And my brother and sister and I could stay together in this

family. They had a big two-story house, they had a couple of children, but it turned out not to be so good. We could walk to school, by the way. I remember many, many times we would go down, if it was warm enough, and we would walk along the beach all the way to the school, and then back up, so that we never walked in the neighborhood, we walked on the beach as much as we could, because we loved being near the beach. I mean that was a joy. But then we had a problem. The family turned out to be holy rollers. They spoke in tongues. Do you know anything about this? (SR: A little.) This is the most extreme—people who interpret the Bible literally.

SR: Right, fundamentalists.

AB: Fundamentalists. And my mother didn't know it. First of all, my brother and I started laughing, because they would start preaching, and then they'd start wailing and jabbering and actually get down on the floor. And finally we were told that it's not supposed to be funny, it's supposed to be serious. So I managed to get ahold of my mother somehow. I must have written her a letter in care of my uncle.

SR: And told her?

AB: And said, "Mother, do you know what you've put us into?" Well, she came down in a flash. (SK: Oh good.) She came down and yanked us out of there. But we were there for quite a while, at least a year, because I went to school in La Jolla. And I remember that because it had a typical Spanish garden built inside of the school. It was a grammar school. But in that garden inside of the school was a garden of cactus plants, and we were fooling around one day, probably before

class started, and I backed into one of the cactus plants. My whole rear end was filled with these horrible thorns, and they had to take me in the nurse's office and down with my pants. They took pliers and pulled these things out. That's something you remember.

SR: [00:45:48] Oh yes.

AB: But that's the most distinctive thing I remember about my school in La Jolla. If it hadn't happened, I might not remember the school at all, except I would remember walking along the beach to go to it.

SR: It's beautiful.

AB: But you could see where children's home at least twice, holy rollers, Mother disappearing into L.A. two or three times—no wonder my sister felt insecure. And where was our father? God only knows. He was a notorious card player. He was a notorious partier. He was a notorious womanizer. So he was just very irresponsible. Once in a while he would show up in a brand new fancy car with all kinds of presents in the back seat, because he'd won the horses—won probably \$20,000 or something. So he thought, "I'll go home, visit the kids and Helene." My mother's name was Helene. "And stick around for a while and see if I like it." And of course the minute they had a fight about something, he was gone.

SR: What was your mother's name?

AB: Helene Celeste Kimball.

SR: I see. And your father's name?

AB: Harvey Brown. He had the most wonderful mother in the world. She realized what he was doing, abandoning his children and his wife, so she came to my

mother and she said, "I will come and live with you, and I will get a job." She was, to me, elderly—she was probably fifty. And she said, "I'll get a job downtown somewhere, I can take the Number 7 trolley car and go to work every morning, and I'll bring the money home to you." So we gave her the front bedroom, I remember, in the Woodrow Wilson-Hoover house, and she had that room. We adored her. She was just very special.

SR: [00:47:54] That's such a good thing.

AB: And she liked to play solitaire, and she read her Bible every night. And she was very affectionate to us. So we got something we didn't even get from our mother. My mother was a very cool, detached lady, and very bitter—very bitter. I think she—and sometimes I almost looked at this like a chain around her neck, because she had three kids and she was trying to feed us. Are we recording now?

SR: Yes.

AB: Well, turn it off again, because I've got another story to tell you.

SR: Okay. One second.

[End Day 1, Part 2; Begin Part 3]

AB: Perhaps the most important element in our childhood, once we moved to—well, even when we were in grammar school—my mother would let us take the Number 7 trolley, which ended at Fairmount, and take it down to the zoo. And she would give us a brown paper bag lunch, and we would get off, and we were allowed to stay until 4:30, be home for dinner by 5 or something. We lived in that zoo.

SR: Oh, that's great!

AB: [00:00:32] We loved that zoo. We became so bonded to animals, that that has affected my life. This charitable trust I operate now is an animal [unclear]. We always had pets. My brother and I had white rats, we had mice, we had birds that had fallen out of their nests. We had injured rabbits, and any animal that came onto the grounds that had been in a fight or was too young and the mother had probably been killed or something, we would nurture them back to health. And we had a great problems with the cats we loved and the birds we loved, and the cats loved the birds, so my brother and I designed these metal screens that you put around the branch of a tree, so the cat could go up, but he couldn't get past the [screen]. So all the trees around the house had these metal screens from them, so that the birds could come. We loved watching the birds, first of all romancing: the guy's following her around, and she's ignoring him. Then suddenly they decide to settle down, and they're out bringing back twigs and leaves and stuff to make the nest. And we would put out little piles of things they could use. And they'd go up, and they'd build this nest, and then she would lay the eggs, and then we would watch the eggs hatch. [It was] like a nature lesson that you couldn't possibly have in the center of the city.

SR: That's right.

AB: [00:01:59] Oh, I've got to tell you, the trick of the week, my brother and I—it was not nice. But there were lots of snakes, and we'd even had pictures of rattlesnakes, and we knew it was dangerous. There weren't too many dangerous snakes, but there were rattlesnakes down in the canyons. But garter snakes were another matter. Garter snakes are constrictors, they crush the mouse and then take

it. So they can't hurt a person because they're not big enough. We had a giant boulder in our front yard in Shangri-La, and it was like a sunbath. These garter snakes would crawl out on there and lie in the sun and go into a coma, and some of these snakes were five and six feet long. So my brother and I would go out there and we would see which ones were really in a coma, and we would wrap them around our waist three or four times, and then we'd go in the house and ask our mother to make lemonade. And she'd be cutting the lemons and she's getting the ice, and suddenly she's looking down. Here are these snakes wrapped around our waists, and she starts screaming, "Get those snakes out of my house, and don't ever do that again! I'll never make you lemonade!" That, and climbing the wrong trees. She said, "If you fall out of a ten-foot tree, you'll sprain your ankle. If you fall out of a thirty-foot tree, you'll break your neck. You are not to climb tall, tall trees. And why do you want to climb tall trees?" One time we were like twenty-five feet off [the ground], "Why are you way up there?!" "Because we can see more." That was our simple answer. [unclear 00:03:44] It made a lot of sense to us. We wanted to see what we couldn't see from the ground.

Oh, and I forgot to tell you about my garden. When we lived in Shangri-La, I discovered underneath the dirt and the soil, that somebody had once had a beautiful home there, with a big garden—all these rock things that they designed on the ground. And I cleaned all that out and I discovered it. And we found out from neighbors that the people that lived there raised chickens and had big vegetable gardens and all kinds of stuff, and they said, "It's all hidden now." The old wreck that was on the edge of the campus before you went on the grounds,

went into the wilderness, had been a chicken coop. So I decided these damned foxes and birds and everybody, the E.R. of my [growings?], I'm going to plant them inside the screened chicken coop. And of course it was very fertile soil, and my mother just went crazy. She said, "We can't eat all of these watermelons, we can't eat all this squash, we can't eat all this corn, we can't eat all these string beans." I said, "Well, we'll give them to the neighbors." She said, "Well that would be nice probably. Some of them probably could use them." Because I was cranking out enough vegetables for five families. I mean, I had fantastic stuff, because the soil was good. And I watered them every night, and I checked the fence to be sure nobody could get in, because if I hadn't had the fence around it, the rabbits and the animals would have devoured everything.

One day I'm out watering at the end of the day, and suddenly my string beans started disappearing—just coming down the pole slowly and going into the ground. And I ran in the house, I was terrified! I said, "Mama, you have to come see this immediately!" She thought someone had been hurt. She comes around, and she saw this string bean plant going down, and she started laughing. She said, "It's the gophers, you fool! They're underneath, where they lived, and they took a little nibble on the roots of your string bean plant and found out it really tastes good. 'Let's go get all of them.'" So I started running all my hoses underground, trying to drown them out, and it's impossible, you can't do that with gophers. But I'll never forget the shock of seeing these plants disappear. It made no sense! My mother thought it was very funny.

[00:06:07] But I want to emphasize the zoo. It cost us maybe a nickel if it cost us anything, because we were children, and we just loved the zoo.

SR: What did you like in particular, do you remember?

AB: Well, we never took the bus, we walked. Sometimes we'd say, "Let's go visit the antelopes and the deer and that." We would pick a section. It also had a merry-go-round. Maybe it was a nickel a ride. And if you got the gold ring, you could get like five free rides, and we were very good at getting the gold ring. After you do it enough, you know how to do it. But we loved it!

[00:06:42] And to tell a good story about Connie Dowell, Connie asked me the first time she went away to Vanderbilt, or I went away from San Diego, and I came back, she said, "Where now would you like to go?" And I said, "Well, I'd like to have a nice lunch, and then could we go to the zoo?" She said, "They have a lovely lunch place in the zoo." I said, "Really?" And it's like you're eating up in a treehouse. Have you been there?

SR: Yeah [yes].

AB: Oh, it was wonderful!

SR: It's great.

AB: And then she said, "Well now what would you like to see?" I said, "Something I know you have not seen in this zoo." And she said, "Really?! Are you going to tell me what it is?" I said, "Well, I think I'd like to surprise you, but then again maybe I should tell you." Anyway, I had to go double-check where they were. So I take her to this place, and it's a round cage, and then it's like a shower curtain. It was on rings, and it's all blocked off where you can go inside to look.

It's where they have the smallest marsupial—they're monkeys, really—in the world. The mother is this big, and when she's holding the child, he's this big. And I was just fascinated by them. But they had to be sheltered, and you couldn't have rapid movement. You never knocked on the glass, because they were very sensitive. And when I took Connie in there, she was just overwhelmed. She said, "I didn't know such a thing even existed!" I said, "Well, I discovered them...." They have them off in a corner where it's quiet, and they don't advertise it. They don't want a lot of kids going in there, banging on the glass. That, and the big giant turtles and some of those things that we always visit. But anyway, the zoo was a wonderful freebie—not that I didn't start going to the art museums, and the historical societies and those things. I evolved into those things.

SR: [00:08:30] You paint a picture of having a childhood that although there were some difficulties, was rich.

AB: You don't say "some," because to a child, they're traumatic. I can hardly talk about my grandmother.

SR: Yeah.

AB: What she went through, trying to make up for her son, was really awful to watch.
(taps table) So where are we?

SR: We are about to talk about.... What I was trying to say was you went to the zoo, and you bought your.... Really, your brother and your sister and you had adventures.

AB: Well, I could have helped my brother, but he didn't want any help. So that kind of helped me focus on my sister. But I could tell she was just emotionally fragile,

really. Scared of her own shadow—even when she started dating. Later, when she was an adult, she showed very poor judgement in the men she picked. She wanted very strong, very tough, very protective people. And she got some lulus. (whew!) They did protect her. One of them didn't want her talking to me on the phone so much. He was jealous of her own brother talking to her long distance. She kind of laughed at that. I said, "I don't think that's funny. I think that he's got problems." He was Hispanic, and "I am the man of the house." He did take very good care of my sister. They moved out to the beach area, they had a lovely apartment and everything. Then he got sick and died, and she had to nurse him until he died. Then I moved her out to the La Mesa area, put her in an enclosed area, very nice units, and very expensive, but her kids just wouldn't respond and go and see her as much as I wanted them to. I did that because they said, "We don't want to drive all the way out to the beach to hear Mother complain about things that she could tell us on the phone." You know, teenage attitude in young kids. Because she'd been not an easy woman to live with. I put her out there in a really nice apartment, but her health was failing. She had rheumatoid arthritis. It killed her.

SR: Hard.

AB: [00:10:58] Well, I think what happened was they got her out to the best doctors at the hospital in La Jolla, the medical hospital out there, and I think they experimented, because they could see this rheumatoid arthritis was moving rapidly through her body, and they didn't have any cure, but they had some things

that they'd experimented with. And I think by the time they tried all their experiments, they made it even worse.

SR: [00:11:22] That's sad.

AB: Because I had to fly to San Diego for a very painful.... The kids called me finally and said, "She's in terrible, terrible shape, and they don't know what to do." And I flew out there, we decided we should let her go. That was tough.

SR: That is very tough. Can you backtrack a little to high school, and to the club [unclear].

AB: I think I skipped over that. I had to hurry home every day because I was working from 3:30 to 6:30 or something, uncrating washing machines and TV sets and electrical equipment and stuff—and that was my job. So I was really good with a screwdriver and a hammer and a wedge. But it was out on the street. They had all these crates out on the street, waiting for me. And if I didn't show up, they couldn't put it in the store the next day, they weren't happy. But I took jobs in any place I could: a couple of little bookstores that would hire me temporarily, but they weren't making any money, so they couldn't keep me on—just little places running around. Herwig and Wilmite [phonetic] was the best bookstore—well, I won't say that—in San Diego, because the Val Verde store, Worbooks [phonetic], was a good store too. And I lived in those stores when I could get downtown. That's where I had my Bank of America account. I was so proud of that. Sixteen dollars one month, twelve dollars the next month, but it was my bank account. And when I would find a rare book, I would go searching, and I would find a book that was worth \$50 or \$100, which was a lot of money then. I

would put that in the Bank of America little vault thing that I had, until I could find a buyer, pinching nickels and dimes. But later, with the skills that I had developed, I became really.... I wanted to be the best rare book, bibliographical searcher on the West Coast, and I became that. I found fantastic things. I was living in South Mission Beach when I was teaching, because I loved the beach. So I got a couple of fraternity brothers, we rented a three-bedroom, two-bedroom place, on South Mission. Now, don't let me lose my thought here.

SR: [00:14:08] You were talking about finding rare books.

AB: Oh yes! So I started going to auctions and to bookstores all over the county. There was a woman in Pacific Beach who ran an ad, a Mrs. Porter, and she said, "I've inherited from my family a lot of stuff from the estate of my great-aunt," or something, "and they shipped it all to me, and I live in a little beach cottage, and I've got to sell it. So if you're interested, come." So she said she had a desk, and I really needed a desk to work at. So I got on the bicycle, I went over to Pacific Beach from South Mission, and she had a carpet that would be too big for this floor, and they sent it to her. And she's in a little cottage! It was just what other people didn't want back east. Obviously it was a very wealthy family. She had a little antique French desk, which was of absolutely no value to me at all. But when I opened the drawers just to look at it, the drawers were filled with letters from the early Arizona Territory, in the north where they discovered the silver mines. And these were original letters. And I said, "Well, I don't really want the desk, but I'd be happy to buy [the contents]." "Oh, I was going to throw all those out before I sold the desk." And I said, "Well, what do you want for them?" And

she said, “\$25.” So I was very happy. I took them and I catalogued them and I researched them, and I sold them to Warren Howard in San Francisco for like \$2,000.

SR: [00:15:38] Fantastic!

AB: With the history of the first discovery of the silver mines of Arizona! And they had these wonderful headlines that showed coaches with horses, and it would give the name of the silver mine company. And these were all business letters that talked about the values. It was very important historical stuff.

But then I found, in that same desk, a letter written by a woman who had studied to be a schoolteacher, but she also was very religious. She lived on the Eastern Seaboard. And she was going to go and teach the savages out on the West Coast. So she went with a party of pioneers who were crossing the country, and she stopped in Indiana for a while and became involved teaching there—probably needed the money—and she had with her letters all the history of a very important cultural organization that the historical society in Indiana knew existed, but had no records at all of anything about it—and she had all the records. And I sold those for maybe a thousand dollars. But what she really had was her Overland Narrative letter. And what she did was, because paper was so scarce, she would write a letter here, and she would keep writing. She would give the dates of where they were as they crossed. And then she would write over here, and then start on the next one. Then when all those pages were filled, she turned it upside down, and she would write between the lines, upside down. And when those were all filled up, she wrote across, and it was almost impossible to copy it,

but we were able to do so. And it turned out to be 1844, the only known woman Overland Narrative extant. That's how rare the letter was.

SR: [00:17:29] Wow.

AB: And when they reached the eastern seaboard of the Rockies, they tore the wagon down to the bed, the wheels, and the steering mechanism, because it was the first basic wagon vehicle to get over the Rockies. I mean it had great historical significance. And she was traveling with a very important Catholic priest who had been back and forth, preaching, and he was in the party that she was in. Well, she finally reached Washington, which is where she was going, and then she signs on and gets a teaching job and kind of disappears. But this six-page letter, written on twenty-four pages [i.e., the equivalent of twenty-four pages], I sold to the Coke Collection at Yale, through Warren Howard being the rare book dealer on the West Coast, for something like two or three or four thousand dollars. These were all stuffed in the drawers of this desk.

SR: Amazing!

AB: And that's the kind of thing that got me started, because I learned my skills. And San Diego State gave me a research grant one summer, when I was teaching, and I used it to go out to Yale because the leading authority of 20th century bibliography was Donald Gallup at the Beinecke Library. And I wrote him a letter and told him how much I admired his—he created a new system—how much I admired it, and I wondered if I could come and spend some time with him. He said, "Let's do an independent study. My basement is down underneath the ground of the Beinecke, nobody will bother us, and you can come back and spend

a couple of weeks or a month or whatever." And so I got to know him very well. I found a major error in his very famous bibliography on Ezra Pound, and he never forgot me after that.

SR: [00:19:14] I'm sure.

AB: I was sitting there one day in the office, and I said, "Donald, why did you indent the subtext of the contributions to books in your Pound bibliography?", which was part of the Solo [phonetic] Series, a very, very prestigious series. He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, you've done something that doesn't fit any of the patterns of what you do." He said, "Give me that book! What are you talking about?" I said, "Look how this is set in three spaces instead of two, this whole section. Am I supposed to do that when I work?" He said, "Oh my God! All the proofing, all my graduate students went through this, I went through this, and none of us saw that! Oh my God! Andreas, I'll have to get that into another printing. You have a good eye." See, I established a beachhead.

SR: That's right.

AB: That wasn't my purpose. I thought really he was doing something that had a reason. I wasn't trying to be a smarty-pants, I respected him too much. And it turned out that he was a very old close friend of Frances Steloff's, that as a student at Yale he had come to the Gotham Book Mart many, many times, and he had established a friendship with her. So when he found out I bought the Gotham Book Mart, then I really was in with him. You can see why this is going to be a.... (recording stopped and started) It's very stylized, and he's having some fun, but....

SR: Yeah, I think that would be really good.

[End Day 1, Part 3; Begin Part 4]

SR: Let's go back and have you tell more about your family coming to California.

AB: Yeah. The father of my great-grandfather evidently—I'm speculating a little bit now—but I think they wanted to get him away from the Civil War which was eminent to break out, and he would have been conscripted, and he was the only male in the inherited line of our family. So his father went out in 1851 to look over San Francisco, found out there was a very good medical school out there, and he came back and told his son he wanted him to go out there. We seem to have been able to trace that he went down to New Orleans, and the only reason he would go to New Orleans would be to cross the Isthmus of the canal [i.e., Panama]—that was one way to do it, rather than go all the way around Southern California [i.e., South America]. So I think that's how he got to San Francisco and met Dr. Toland and became his star pupil. (recording turned off and on)

SR: [00:01:18] So tell me more about your grandfather.

AB: Right. We're assuming from some evidence that we have, that the three brothers—his two uncles, and his father—decided that he should go down to New Orleans, and then go over to the Isthmus of Panama, before the canal, and went across the land, and took the ship up to San Francisco. That was the short route, and it got him there in time to get into school before the war broke out. They were terrified that he was going to get conscripted. And he was just too brilliant. He was a really, really smart guy. And he turned out to be a superb surgeon. I found medical papers that he wrote for various journals, and I copied the two or

three that I found, so those are in the records at the historical society, or here, I don't know which. The historical society, that's probably [where they are]. That's where I have all my genealogy stuff.

SR: [00:02:17] Okay. Well, your family is fascinating. It's really good to learn about it.

AB: I was so excited to hear about Dr. Toland and how he kept him after he graduated, to make him his assistant, that I went over to the archives of the University of California Medical School in San Francisco, and I went to the archivist and I said, "Do you retain any photographs of the early classes?" And he went off someplace and came back and said, "Yes, we have them all the way back." And I said, "I need the second year of graduating people." He brought out a little fat photo album, and there's my great-grandfather in there, with his name written underneath his picture. The family had never seen it, didn't know it existed, and it established clearly that he was graduated from the University of California Medical School.

SR: That's wonderful.

AB: [00:03:11] It was called Toland Medical School, then it changed its name the third year, I think, became the university's. It was the most advanced, sophisticated medical school in the West.

SR: University of California-San Francisco? It's still that way.

AB: Toland started his medical school—I think the University of California was watching Toland and realized he was doing very advanced surgical procedures, so they just absorbed him into their system.

SR: [00:03:39] It's a wonderful medical school.

AB: It's supposed to be the best in the West.

SR: Absolutely.

AB: Yeah.

SR: Probably even more than the West.

AB: Well, for my great-grandfather to go down to San Diego and start the medical society down there, and be the leading doctor in the community, long enough that they gave him the county hospital—he ran the county hospital for years—and then he signed the city charter after that. I mean, he was a major player in the city.

SR: Absolutely.

AB: Most beloved.

SR: And you are going to now get back to junior high school.

AB: Okay, but before I do that, I'm going to surprise you. I don't know if we're going to use it or not.

SR: That's okay.

AB: Dr. Fenn had a patient in the Bay Area, a mother who had three boys. Two of them were fine, and one of them had some medical problem. And she brought him into San Francisco and took him to Dr. Fenn before he came down to San Diego. And Dr. Fenn evidently treated him. She was married at the time, but I think separated from her husband, who was an Irishman. McNutt was his name, and he was an alcoholic. And he owned a ranch outside of Santa Barbara. She fled him because I think he beat her—ran away. She was one-quarter Choctaw,

25 percent French-Canadian who was a fur trapper, and 50 percent probably English. I'd have to straighten that out now. But I like to make jokes about if you are a certified member of almost any of the Indian tribes, and you have at least one-eighth blood in your DNA, you can collect money.

SR: [00:05:35] I know.

AB: And so I told my sister and friends, I'm one-sixteenth, so I'm cut out of the deal, but I take great pride in being—we're almost certain it's Choctaw, because of where they ended up in Oklahoma. And when you see a photograph of Dr. Fenn's wife, he looks like he's five-foot-five, he's a little guy, and she looks like she's six feet tall, and she's frowning, and she is a big woman. But I think a lot of the family thought that she was probably some border-illiterate Indian squaw that he found someplace. Well it turns out she published beautiful poems in literary magazines in San Francisco, and she wrote excellent letters and stuff. I was desperate to find out what happened, how they got together, and what happened to her former husband. And I went to the historical society during the summer, and the librarian that I always worked with was not there. So they had a volunteer woman who comes in and helps when they need help. And so I explained what I wanted very carefully to her, with no hopes that she would find anything that they hadn't already found. And I'm sitting out in the research room working on something else, and she's back in the stacks, she disappeared. And then she calls out to me—it was a very quiet day, there was almost nobody there. She said, "Mr. Brown, I'm looking at a bunch of documents here. Does Harshaw Bowe [phonetic] mean anything to you?" And I said, "Harshaw Bowe? What are

you looking at?" "Oh, these are the divorce papers of a Dr. Fenn for his wife that wanted to marry him, and it's all the divorce records." I mean, it was like money fell out of the sky! I leaped over the counter, and went back there, and she had the complete divorce records of my great-grandfather, and how he helped his former husband,¹ who was not a nice man—he was a wild Irishman. And what they did was, they got attorneys, and they filed divorce papers in San Diego, and they were required by California law that he had to have ninety days or something to respond. And when he didn't respond—they had his address—then they proceeded with the divorce, and it was finalized in San Diego—he was able to marry this Indian woman.

SR: That's a great story!

AB: I mean, the whole thing is a giant melodrama!

SR: That's terrific.

AB: And wait until you see the picture of her! He was a 33rd-degree Mason. He didn't go to 34th, got to 33rd. I'm surprised the Masons even let him in with a woman of mixed blood, because they were very snooty people.

SR: Yeah.

AB: They were the high-end, conservative businessmen.

SR: I know, yeah.

AB: I probably fouled up your procedure.

SR: No, we didn't, because that's a very.... We're getting back to your historical roots, and that's good. But now we're coming into junior high school, where in addition to your ongoing, continuous book collecting and doing jobs outside of

¹ Oh, that's what he said, but it's not what he meant. Suzi, can you clarify? (Tr.)

school and all, you were in, I believe, clubs. And of course you were a good student. You mentioned something about a club where you had a story to tell about a young man who you helped to get into a club or group.

AB: [00:09:13] Oh, the black boy. Well, at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, it was very socially structured. And poor kids, even if they were good students, and nice people, were kind of pushed aside. And of course sports is everything to kids in junior high school. And so all the athletes and the friends of the athletes and the “in” guys with the girls, were in this sports club. But they left out the most outstanding athlete in the entire school by a country mile, who was black. He could run faster, and throw further, and hit harder, and do whatever you needed to do, and it was very clear they didn’t take him in because he was black. So I, as a blind jury, went to three or four of my friends—Lee was one of them, Robert Lee. Not Robert Lee, but a guy whose last name was Lee; and the fellow that we can’t find, but we might find his wife.

SR: Donald Ward?

AB: Donald Ward. Now we’re tracking his wife, we hope to find her, *compes metit* [phonetic]—and tucked away her *Tiger*, because she may have the only copy in the world.

SR: *The Tiger*, Jane.

AB: So we formed a club—I think it was about six or seven of us—our photograph was taken. Every club in the junior high school had a page, and so here was a picture of us all grinning and smiling, youthful happy people, and this black kid.

And it was the most satisfying thing I.... I can't say "ever did." But one of the most.

SR: [00:10:56]

SR: That's terrific.

AB: Because when he went home to tell his family, you could imagine.

SR: Right. They must have been so delighted.

AB: They couldn't believe it, probably. They found it unbelievable.

SR: Right.

AB: And to have his picture in the yearbook?!

SR: That was great. That was a terrific thing.

AB: I'm going to find one of those if it's the last thing I do!

SR: Well, we're going to work at it.

AB: What I'd like to do is go on the Internet and offer \$50. Somebody's liable to steal it out of a library. Has anybody ever checked in San Diego, at SDSU, for it? Did you actually process that? Because I might have given my copy to them. I just think a lot of things are buried here.

SR: That's probably true.

AB: Remember, you were standing here when I asked you if you had the photographs of Jacqueline Onassis and other people.

SR: Right.

AB: I told my sister, "I only have one or two pictures with Jacqueline Onassis." She said, "You're dead wrong." I said, "Why didn't you tell me that?!" "You sent me thirty-six cartons of genealogy, and they were in there." And I said, "Well, give

me copies, then. I don't believe you." So she did. I was in a couple of magazines that I didn't even remember.

SR: [00:12:09] I want to see them!

AB: I might have even brought them with me, but I don't have them with me right now.

SR: Well, is there anything else you want to discuss about junior high school before we get into Hoover High School?

AB: About what now? Get me back on track.

SR: Anything else about junior high, before we proceed to high school?

AB: Well, I was very concerned about my sister still. My brother was on his own pretty much. I ran into Miss Minson. That's that one I wanted to talk about.

SR: Yes.

AB: I thought it was just another English class. Boy, was I wrong! This was obviously the twenty-five or thirty best students at Woodrow Wilson to take a dunk into the La Brea Tar Pits of American English grammar. She was terrifying! She'd get up there on the board, and she'd do all these conjugations and sentence structures and stuff, and then she'd start calling names, and nobody knew what she was talking about. She obviously knew that, but she wanted everybody to know that, "I'm in charge, and you are going to learn this, or I'm going to flunk you!" And it's the closest I ever came to getting a "B." She had me on the "B+" list for half the course, and I was just very unhappy about it. But I finally [unclear 00:13:34] final test. But she just beat it into us. And she repeated it, she called on people. She was terrifying. So she was the one we hated, and now I have to say I

respect her, because she taught me everything I needed to know about writing a declarative sentence. And I catch kids in graduate school now that can't write a declarative sentence. It's shocking! In my fraternity, I was bombarded with pre-meds, the guys who were going to be doctors. They could study science and all of that, but they couldn't write. They absolutely couldn't write a declarative sentence. The engineers had a pretty tough time with it too. I was doing a lot of counseling in college with my fraternity brothers.

SR: [00:14:20] So let's go from junior high school to high school, and talk about your high school experiences, your friendships, et cetera.

AB: Well, the nice thing about high school was that it was bigger, we met more people, it had a more diversified curriculum, and it was more of a challenge, and more interesting, and I made a lot of very good friends there. We certainly weren't accepted socially—none of the three of us in my family—we were just too poor. We just lived below the University line, you might say. It was just structured. And it had a great deal to do with the woman at Woodrow Wilson that ran the student paper, and then she passed along all of her attitudes about the kids coming in at Hoover. And there was a woman at Hoover who taught a social studies class, or something that was kind of vague, and she gathered all the vicious kids in Tallmadge and Kensington into that class. She was just running a party, and moving people like pieces on a chessboard.

SR: That's terrible.

AB: Just a despicable woman.

SR: That's awful.

AB: [00:15:30] Well, they had a club called the Achievers, which was the honor club your junior year at Hoover. And Sally Kay [phonetic] and I would put in more service hours than anybody in the school. We didn't take study classes, we gave that to the offices, got to back up the clerical work and stuff. We organized entertainment programs, we did a lot of stuff. We certainly should have been in the Achievers—ten men and ten women. Neither one of us got in. So we sat down, absolutely astonished that this woman would have that kind of control. There were people on that list who were second-string football players, but they were popular with the girls, so she put them in Achievers. So Sally and I—she had a wonderful heart. She was the apple of my eye in high school. That's another great story. But anyway, she and I decided to throw in a formal complaint. So we sat down and we wrote a memorandum to the principal, showing all of our service hours, which were astronomical, because we did it, and it was all documented. And one of [student's] mother was a secretary, and her son was in Achievers, and she knew what was going on. When she saw our memorandum, she told me, "You're absolutely right. There's no excuse for you and Sally not being in. This letter is going to cause quite a turmoil." So at the end of the year, in the graduation ceremony, they announced the five outstanding students in the class. Now you've got ten boys and ten girls in Achievers, and Sally and I were two of the five, and only one girl who was in Achievers got in. Her name was something Gleeson [phonetic], and she was a superstar. She was just beautiful and smart and did things without bragging—and I've forgotten [her name]. But there they are, the five names—two girls and three guys, I think it

was. And so the principal obviously took charge and gave us that honor, which was very important to us, because it was time they cleaned up this Kensington-Tallmadge clique that they had going. And it was very, very apparent.

SR: [00:18:03] And weren't you the valedictorian?

AB: Yes, I was. It says that in the program too.

SR: Yeah.

AB: You know, when you look up the valedictory definition.... Because I said I wasn't first in the class, I didn't have straight "A's" on every course. My penmanships were "B's" and "C's." It was very annoying. So I went and asked them about this, and they said, "Well, we pick the valedictorian speaker who has a combination of what we think is the well-rounded person in the class who can also speak." Because you could bring in somebody who was a superstar, and they're shy, and they would make a disaster out of the commencement. It was right here in this little.... What's the old name for that little bowl that I pointed out to you?

SR: What is it? You'd know better than me, Jane.

AB: It's now the outdoor theater. It used to have a name. That's way, way back. Doesn't matter anyway. But that's where we had our commencement program, and that's where I had my commencement address, "Robes of Responsibility." Is that corny?! I remember it well. My mother was living in L.A. with my younger sister. She sent me a Hamilton watch. She didn't come down for it.

SR: Oh yes, I know Hamilton watches.

AB: She didn't come down for the ceremony. My father didn't show up.

SR: [00:19:22] Oh boy.

AB: My sister and brother certainly came. And all the girls in our neighborhood over where we lived, South of University, they were just ecstatic. They were jumping up and down and screaming, like I'd won [i.e., caught] the final pass to win the football game. I was embarrassed by it. I said, "Calm down." Anyway....

SR: It's terrific.

AB: I told you about the company that I worked for during junior high school, high school, de-crating all the things so they could be sold. That was a block away from home, so that was convenient for me. But I had to rush home every day, be home by 3:30 to quarter of four, to get these things done before the store closed at 5:30 or 6, and sometimes it was a close call. But I was a hard worker. (SR: Clearly.) But I didn't mind hard work, because the things I did, I liked.

We had two old ladies in the neighborhood who would drive a car that must have been issued in 1928. They were still driving this beautiful old car. And they lived about three blocks away, and they used to chug along past our house so they could wave at my sister and brother and me. They were old, really old—seventy, seventy-five. And I turned their front yard into a paradise garden, and they were so thrilled. They probably gave me five dollars, instead of three dollars or something. But they stuck with me for four or five years, six years maybe.

SR: That's great.

AB: But I had other people in the neighborhood who did that too. But I loved doing that. That horrible cutting the brush in the summer, that was awful—really was.

But \$1 an hour was a lot of money. At the end of the day we earned \$6 or \$7 each. We'd go home and give my mother \$12 or \$14 dollars. That was important, so we had to do it. We had terrible sunburns and sprains and scratches, and it was rough. There's some kind of a.... There's a name for the bush, and it's got a lot of prickly things on it. And it grows so that it comes up from the ground about two or three feet, so you can slide under it and cut it off at the ground. So we were down there in this dirt on this steep hill, cutting the base of these bushes, because they all had to be taken out, or all the houses above would have been burned out if there was a fire.

SR: Are there any friends or other teachers in your high school that you want to talk about?

AB: Well, my counselor was my guardian angel, Miss Ingebrigtsen. Miss Emile, she was the debate coach—very proper lady, very formal, very pleasant. And the school clearly did something for her. They gave her the classroom at the end of the hall on the second floor, so we had all windows, beautiful views, and the room was bigger than most classrooms, and we were the pick of the school. All the debaters and the super-smart people were in that class—maybe twenty-five to thirty-five people. And we had a big outdoor area. You could step out of the room, and there was a big cul-de-sac there, kind of a dead end. It was about half the size of this room. So we could have somebody outside working on their debates, and people inside too. And she was very careful, very persistent, and coached us very well, and we just beat everybody. It was wonderful.

SR: That's terrific.

AB: [00:22:46] And the kids at Hoover were very respectful about that. They loved things like.... It wasn't as exciting as the football team winning, but to say that we knocked off all seven schools that participated in a tournament in San Diego County, was pretty impressive to them.

SR: That is!

AB: And then the reason that I really, really wanted to go San Diego State was because they had the most renowned and respected debate and forensics coach in the country—John Ackley, A-C-K-L-E-Y. And John was the sweetest, gentlest, kindest, soft-spoken person. You would never believe that he would be a good debate coach, because it's all verbal punching, you know. We'd bring in the top senior women's debate team, and the top senior men, and throw them into the pit, and they would give their latest cases. And John would sit there taking voluminous notes, and then in the sweetest, kindest way, he would take us apart. “You can't say this. And you're contradicting yourself there. And this is not a complete thought.” But he didn't say it that way--[unclear 00:24:00] sweet-oh [phonetic]. He taught Sunday school—he was that kind of a person, very, very nice guy. I think he was having an affair with the unmarried history teacher that we all loved too, but we can't put that in there. Because they were always together. They went to church together, they went to movies together.

Anyway, John Ackley was, in my opinion, the finest public speakers', debate, forensics coach in the country at the time—or close to it, I mean. We did not bump UCLA and USC and COP was a big school at the time, and Stanford and Berkeley and other people along the way, you've got to be good [i.e., without

being good]. We had, what, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000 students at the time? It's amazing. And there were a lot of kids that had the same talents, but there was nobody to coach them, nobody to teach them. It's like look what happened to that black girl. If she hadn't had me for speech, and she had one of the really unpleasant people, she would have left every day crying. So this is just a roll of the dice in life, you know: Some people get a break and some don't.

SR: [00:25:20] Well, the other thing.... You had a scholarship to San Diego State?

AB: I had a debate scholarship. After winning all those tournaments, they were chasing after me.

SR: That's great.

AB: I also applied at three or four other schools, but I ignored them, I wanted to go to State. I wanted John Ackley—probably more than he wanted me, because I was determined to be top of the heap at least by my junior or senior year. I told you I jumped Tony McPeek out of the lower division and moved him up to the senior division so he could be my debate partner my senior year. And the greatest.... Eighteen western states, and we went through about nine debate rounds, and it was tied at that point between USC and San Diego State, and we won it 5 to 4, nine judges—5 to 4.

SR: Tell me about Tony McPeek and who he was in your life.

AB: Well, Tony was an absolute phenomenon. He was soft spoken, he had kind of a hoarse voice. He didn't have a commanding voice. He was tall and lean and sort of had a Lincoln look to him. He knew he was good, but he didn't show it. He was very careful about laying low. But he was at El Cajon High School. There

wasn't anybody at El Cajon High School that could coach—we would have known about it. But he would enter poetry interpretation, impromptu, extemporaneous speaking, oratory, and maybe one other [category] that I can't remember. He would enter all of them and win all of them, first place, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. He was two years behind me. And of course we were having the all-county forensics competition at San Diego State, which is how we got a lot of good debaters, because we did a lot of research and we found out who were the smartest kids at the school, who got straight "A's," who was politically aware, all those things. And we were hosting the competition, so we were listening to these kids from the high schools, and when we found somebody that was good, we went after them. I mean we pushed, we were like we were soliciting them to be in a fraternity or a sorority—only we want their brains, not the social graces or anything.

And Aida Picisin was another famous one. Aida was our strongest female speaker for quite a few years, and she's now Aida Picisin Sands, S-A-N-D-S, and she and her husband formed a fairly successful prominent law firm in L.A. I talked to her maybe three years ago, and I did call her and tell her that we had found some pictures in the *Aztec*, which I have not had the privilege of seeing yet, had digitally copied the *Aztec* paper. I actually saw those. Somebody showed them to me once when I was here—pictures of the debate teams the junior year that we won so many other tournaments. They did a whole feature on us, and I'd love to see that.

SR: Well, I think they're working on it.

AB: And I told Aida that if I found the pictures that I would send them to her. She was very excited about that. And they had Tony in there, and [Elder?] Moskowitz, and other people.

SR: [00:29:06] And also I think you mentioned the student council and John Baldosari.

AB: Well, when I got out to San Diego State, I wanted to get into politics and the student government right away. The structure was the student council—that's what ran everything, especially if you could form a political bloc. It was very political. So the Sigma Chis had gotten together with Zeta Beta Tau, the Jewish fraternity, who had a lot of smart guys in there, and we said, “Whenever an issue’s coming up on the agenda, let’s sit down and see if we can have a meeting of the minds, because if we can, we want to form a bloc, to be sure it gets through on maturity.” So we really kind of ran the place, to a large extent. And, ah....

What was the question you just asked me?

SR: Well, I just said that.... John Baldosari.

AB: Baldosari was two years ahead of me, and he was the senior representative. I was the freshman, sophomore, junior, senior—I got all four years. I ran on a ballot. I’m not sure I came in first every time. Well, I would have to have come in first, or I wouldn’t have been on the board. But I was on it all four years. Joe Rosen from Point Loma was the president the last year, Sigma Chi, and one or two others on the board. But we didn’t run it for our own benefit, we wanted it like the money had to be divided to go to the right people. And if you had the wrong people on that, it would all go to football or basketball or volleyball or something.

It's alright if they get some of that, but not all of it. And the dean became our best friend because he saw what we were doing. We were bringing democracy to the student government. And we fought for it when we were having problems. The other fraternities detested Sigma Chi because we so dominated the campus. We really didn't get along. Like we had our annual Hawaii party where we all wore the same Hawaiian shirt all over campus.

SR: [00:31:13] I heard about that.

AB: And we had about a hundred members, so you saw these 100 guys who were usually looking better than average—they weren't hoboes or anything—and they were all wearing the same shirts. We had it at the Hotel Del Coronado. We had a lot of trouble with the Kappa Sigs. They were out to make trouble with us whenever they could. So we formed a committee to go over and meet with the people at the hotel, and with the Coronado Police Department, and anybody else we thought.... We got some Coronado Police to come and police the party that night, not in uniform, but just standing around. Well, everything went fine for about two or three hours, and then the Kappa Sigs, somebody blew a whistle or hit a gong, and they took all of the pool furniture and threw it in the pool. They poured bottles of beer and wine into the water. They did everything they could to wreck the party, and they wrecked it, the hotel closed it down. We got called before the authorities at school: it was very, very scary. But I was smart enough to do all this preliminary work, and I had all the records, because I expected they might try something that we couldn't.... And I showed how we hired—we met with the Coronado Police Department, we hired them in plain clothes, we met

with the authorities at the hotel. We had people working just guard duty, they didn't bring dates. We tried everything we could, but we couldn't control these seventy-five drunk lunatics from Kappa Sig who wanted to wreck our party and get us kicked off campus. So we were put on probation, but we got compliments from the administration that we had put up a concerted effort to try to maintain civil conduct. But we weren't able to control it, so they had to do something. So they said, "We're going to put you on one semester of probation," but then [unclear 00:33:04] right away.

SR: Oh good.

AB: But that kind of thing I don't want put in there. [Editing alert.] That's retribution with the Kappa Sigs. They were a bunch of bastards.

SR: Well, we'll....

AB: But I don't want to get it in there, I'm sorry. It shows that we were a conscientious group. We did nominate the political machine [unclear 00:33:26], Zeta Beta Tau, but I don't want to brag about that.

SR: Okay. Well, when you were at San Diego State and you were so active and involved between the fraternities and debate—what about literature? That's always been part of your life.

AB: Literature? Well, I took the courses and the best teachers. I mean, there were a couple of teachers that were kind of dullards, and I avoided them. My freshman year.... You never saw the Quonset huts, did you ever? (no audible response) Okay, they had these metal roofs. They were created in World War II, and they're rounded like that, and they were between the old theater in the Quad—we

called it the Quad—it was that little square there in front of the library—between the theater—which we had a small theater, it faced right on the Quad—and the library over here. And between that, they had set up three Quonset huts, about six back, and that's where they held the freshman English classes, and it was like being boiled in oil. It was so goddamn hot in those things! And who did I have? He was an Englishman, and he turned out to be a published poet, and a good one. His first assignment, we were all scared to death, we had to write an essay in a college class—we'll all get killed. But I had Miss Minson in my background. He said, "You have to pick a word and write an essay about it." And I chose "curiosity."

SR: [00:34:53] Oh great!

AB: Because that's really where my head was. And I used an introductory story, which I had read somewhere, that there was an island someplace in the Pacific where they liked to catch the monkeys—probably for pets or something, who knows—I don't want to think beyond that, so we'll say pets. And what they did was, they would take a coconut and they would hollow it out, and then they would put a stone in there, that would fit through the hole, and the monkeys were so curious, that they heard that rattling around, and they would reach through the hole and grab ahold of whatever that was, which they didn't know what they had in their hand—could be food—and they were so persistent, they wouldn't let go, and the coconut was attached to a chain, and that's how they caught them. Their curiosity was so fundamental to them, that they had to know what that was. Maybe it's food, maybe it isn't, maybe it's pretty glass or something. And I used

that as my opening [unclear 00:35:57]. Well, the professor was ecstatic over my essay, and to my extreme embarrassment, he read it to the class. And I got away from him.

SR: I know that feeling!

AB: [00:36:07] But I wish I could remember his name, because he was a well-published poet.

SR: We can find it.

AB: English and American. He published a couple of books. I didn't realize he was, but he was English, he had an English accent. And we sat in that Quonset hut, boiling together.

SR: Wow. So it's a varied experience, like every other [unclear 00:36:29].

AB: Well, debating and public speaking dominated everything.

SR: Yes, it sounds like that.

AB: I wanted to take a serious philosophy class. What was her name? Mindenhorst? Mendenhoff? She'd been teaching philosophy there for years, and she was very good. I had to hurry to keep up with her. She was very sophisticated on that. [unclear 00:36:54] football coach teaching me, and the girl bringing in—gee I wish I could remember. Her first name was Rose. Maybe that was her last name. She was so beautiful. Wow.

Anyway, the light of my life.... I don't want [unclear 00:37:11].

SR: Okay.

AB: It's the girl that I spent most of my time.... The one that got cut off on the award thing in the junior year. Her name was Sally Kay, and she and Pat Buchman

[phonetic] and a couple of people were good friends of mine—the people you walk home with—that's the kind of thing it was. We all had a long ways to go. And we could stop and get a cherry Coke. If we hurried, we could grab a taco and eat it on the way. Most of us had jobs, so we would head out. Sally and I were very into the music of the day. Nat King Cole, Anita Simone. I could get some that are wrong that are earlier or later. What's the one that's still alive that's so wonderful? He lives right off Central Park. He's the most important male singer alive today in America.

SR: [00:38:08] Tony Bennett?

AB: Tony Bennett!, who I adored.

SR: I've seen him at the Rainbow Room, actually.

AB: I adored Tony Bennett. He can still sing! Not everything, and not as well, but he's ninety-two or something. And people say his favorite pastime—he lives on Central Park South, which faces the park. He takes his paintbrushes and his paints and his board, and he goes and sits in the park and paints!

SR: He's supposed to be a good artist.

AB: And the only time he doesn't do it is because too many people crowd around him—because he's not anonymous exactly. He is adored by the entertainment world. Well, he was a very important singer way back then. Of course Frank Sinatra dominated everything.

SR: All that music of the forties [unclear 00:38:50].

AB: Who was the famous singer that retired and lived on Point Loma? "That old cowpoke goes ridin' along his way. Yippie yi yay, yippie yi yo."

JANE MEYERS (JM): Frankie Laine?

SR: Frankie Laine, yeah.

AB: Frankie Laine, when he retired, he moved to San Diego and lived on Point Loma.

SR: Yeah.

AB: And Sally Kay and I were huge fans of his. And we had a call-in radio program here where you could call in and request songs. They didn't always play them that night, but they would play them the next night. But we got to know the disc jockey, she and I, and we actually met him a couple of times—went down to the station. So when we called in, we got what we wanted. Well, little did I know, but he took a liking to Sally Kay, and I didn't know about it. So when it came time to pick colleges, she said, "I think I'm going to go to UCLA." And I said, "Oh, come on, Sally, you've got to come to San Diego State. I'm going to need you there." And she said, "Well, I can get programs at UCLA that I can't get at San Diego State, and I think I need to get away from family." She had all these.... Well, that wasn't it at all—it was the disc jockey had been transferred to L.A., and he was on a radio station there, and they ended up getting married! I was heartbroken! It was very sad—for about six months, I guess.

[00:40:16] The only other [unclear 00:40:16]. Marjorie Lee was her name in grammar school. I was madly in love with Marjorie Lee in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, but it didn't go beyond that. And I had a friend who also liked her. He was furious that I was getting more attention than he was.

Anyway, my whole problem with getting involved too much was I could take the teaching job, and I could eventually get a Ph.D., and I'll have just enough

money to maybe cover the cost of being married with one child, and that's not going to happen until I'm thirty-five or forty. Is that what I want to do with my life? And supposing, just supposing, the thing doesn't work out. I've been there, I've seen that, I don't want to go down that road. And that was a shield—especially after Sally ran off with the disc jockey. She was very close to me.

[00:41:19] I got to college, and the fraternity always had parties, there were plenty of women around, and they were interesting women. The top fraternity got the top sorority, so we had really classy gals. We did some pretty terrible things to them. The Kappa Alpha Thetas were right next door to us—right next door to us. And we found out that if we crawled out on our roof in the evening—they had to be in by eleven o'clock on certain Friday and Saturday nights. There was a tree that hung over our property, over their front porch. If we took a water balloon and we threw it into the tree, it would break and it would rain right on the front door. So all these girls were being brought home by their boyfriends, all dressed up to the nines, and they're just about to have their first goodnight kiss, and it suddenly rains from a clear sky. They were livid, and they couldn't see where it came from. We were hiding on our roof, which was right over theirs.

[00:42:16] Oh! Now I'm really remembering. We had sorority parties in the fraternity house. We had a nice house, a really nice house. It was right there on Montezuma Road, next door to the Kappa Alpha Thetas. And it was a very attractive old Norman design house. It was beautiful. And we were having a party with one of the more rowdy sororities, and we decided that we wanted to

play a trick on them. So we had a women's powder room that we set up whenever we had a party with women coming in, and we recorded everything they said when they went into the powder room. And then when they left, we pulled it out and played it. And I've got to tell you, everybody but the victim never had such a hard life. These girls would be sweet and nice to somebody who was just boring or dull or said stupid things, or something that annoyed her. And so she'd get in there and just rip him from one end to the other.

SR: [00:43:19] And you had it recorded.

AB: [unclear] all this. Well, it wasn't very nice, and we had to stop it, because the sorority really got mad. I mean, there were girls that were chasing a guy, but they got mad at him because he wasn't responding, so she tore into him, but she really wanted him. And now we're playing her tearing into him, and he's not going to have anything to do with her. We were breaking hearts all over. I think we only did it two or three times, but it was hysterical. Things like that come flashing back to me.

SR: Well, college, yeah.

AB: The other one was Tony McPeek and I were the dishwashers. We set up the dining room table at 5:30 or 6 in the morning. We ate our meal then, and then we brought out the food for everybody. They would rotate, and then they would dash off to their eight o'clock or nine o'clock class. And they would get in food fights, and we'd have to clean all this food that would slip down the walls and was on the floors. It was not very often, but somebody would say something, and another

one would pretend to be mad. But then they went off to class and Tony and I had to clean up the mess.

[00:44:28] And then we invented a song because we had to wake up the eight o'clocks. That was the first class. So we would open the door—it's a great big room in the front of the house—so we had like six people in there sleeping. So we sang a song, “Good morning, morning glory. Good morning now to you. You wake up with the birdies, like all good birdies do.” And we would sing this off key, in the most horrible way, and these people were all dead asleep. We collected more shoes thrown at us. We shut the door quickly, but you hear this “bang! bang!” [unclear 00:45:01] all grabbed their shoes and started throwing them, because we woke them up. But we had to wake them up. And we played other tricks on them too. Tony and I had a lot of fun doing that.

SR: It sounds like you had a lot of fun.

AB: My fraternity only had a couple of bad eggs in it. You know, you're never going to score every time—people that were problems, they started bringing drugs in, or they were bringing alcohol in when they weren't supposed to or something. And we didn't kick people out, but we let them know that they weren't welcome if they were going to misbehave. But we were a very serious fraternity—maybe because we wanted to be first in grades. The university computed the grade average for each fraternity, and we absolutely wanted to be number one, because we were trying to get a lot of athletes to join. And the best athletes in the high schools, that was important to them—“Well, I won't flunk out if I join Sigma Chi.” I gave the last two speeches at our nominating party. We invited the final

group to a dinner party at a hotel, the El Cortez. We used places that were nice. And I gave a speech telling why they shouldn't join any fraternity but Sigma Chi. But I had all the records. We had the highest grades, we had the most athletes, we won intramurals every year. We had the most politicians. I said, "Why would you want to join anybody else?" Now one or two of them would have a cousin or maybe a brother that was in another fraternity, and they would have to go. But anyway, it was a great fraternity. And then about ten years later, a bunch of drunkards got ahold of it in a couple of years of rushing, and they destroyed it. So it's gone.

SR: [00:46:45] Now as you've thought about being in college—I know that you said when you were younger—and I don't think we did it in this session, but when we were talking, about how Clarence Darrow was your hero, and you thought about going on to law school. So from what I understand, you [unclear 00:47:03].

AB: My heroes were Clarence Darrow and Eugene Debs, which is dangerous territory, because he was a socialist. So I didn't push that very hard. But he was really out for the common man, and the poverty stricken, and the down-and-out. He planted the seed, shall we say. And Clarence Darrow, toward the end of his life he took on some cases for very wealthy people, only because he didn't believe in the death penalty, and there was one terrible murder case, a three-point love affair in Hawaii. The family had great wealth, and they hired him and paid him. He was retired, but they offered him like \$100,000 to fly to Hawaii and keep their son from being executed. And because he didn't believe in the death sentence, he prevailed. And what was the famous one where the two teenage boys killed a

child? Not Sacco and Vanzetti [phonetic]. Anyway, it doesn't matter. He protected them. They came from very rich families in Chicago.

SR: [00:48:02] I remember that, yeah.

AB: They ended up, one of them died in prison, and the other one eventually got out. Anyway, it was a very famous case. That was Clarence Darrow's most famous case. And I followed everything about Clarence Darrow. It's annoying when you can't.... But it's easy to find. You put in Clarence Darrow, and that case will come up first. But I wanted to be the lawyer for the downtrodden. I mean it was very melodramatic. I said, "There's a lot of people that can't afford lawyers." In those days, not very many people paid attention. Now they do. The law firms and schools are teaching it. They give them all kinds of privileges too, if they'll sign up for three to five years of taking in people who can't afford a lawyer. They get perks and things. Anyway, that was really me, and that's one reason why I quit, really, at the end of the first year. The problem was, about 40 percent of our class were Korean veterans.

SR: So we have to make this transition now from college to [law school]. So you decided to go to Stanford?

AB: Well, it's the most prestigious. Do you know, the year that I went, four of the Supreme Court justices graduated from Stanford Law School. Never happened [before] in history, and probably never will again. It's always Yale and Harvard, with rare exceptions. But to have four different.... It was the woman from Arizona....

SR: Sandra Day O'Connor.

AB: [00:49:35] Right. And the guy that was chief of staff of the things was—I don't know if he was a Mormon or what—he had connections. Anyway, [unclear].

SR: Manwitz [phonetic].

AB: No question about it, you can check it out. And of course the few kids from San Diego State, they went out of the law school and went to Bolt Hall at Berkeley. But I was so taken with.... Well, first of all, I applied to five schools—nothing back east, because I couldn't afford to travel—but I wanted to be sure I got in. And when Stanford accepted me, I don't think they'd ever accepted anybody from San Diego. They not only accepted me, they gave me a fellowship, the Stanley Pedder [phonetic] Law Fellowship. And they said, "Now this is a very wealthy lawyer from San Francisco who died, and his widow has set this thing up to honor him, and you're the first recipient. And because you're the first recipient, she lives down in Carmel-Monterey, we want you to go down and have tea with her, and charm her socks off. You can do it. She's a very lovely lady, but she's a society lady, she's not going to be zippy." I said, "Well of course I'll go down. I'm very grateful for this fellowship." So I went down and I had tea out on her terrace overlooking Carmel-Monterey—I mean, the [unclear 00:50:52]—and she and I struck it up.

By the end of the first year, I was miserable. Forty percent of my class were these mean Korean veterans who took one year of business school, and then they were headed straight for Wall Street. They were all right-wingers, and they had a very greedy attitude about the law. The law is to help you exploit things.

And I just got more and more bitter. We had three women in the class. Now this last year at Stanford is five more than half—the women are taking over the world!

SR: Oh, all over, yeah.

AB: They're not getting the jobs they should be getting, because I follow that closely with my lawyers. They should be hired by the top law firms, but it's very, very hard for them. If they're summa cum laude, number one in their class, they'll get a good deal; but just being in the 98th or 99th percentile, the men get the breaks. But that's going to change.

SR: Oh, it's changing.

AB: It will change. Sanders—wasn't that his name?—the third guy that ran for president? Sanders?

JM: Right.

AB: Yeah. Sanders is a perfect example of what I think America will be ten to fifteen years from now. He's just too early, but he's planted the seeds. He had a lot of influence on Hillary to compromise some of her standings. He certainly was used as a bludgeon by Donald Trump—he called him a communist and a socialist and all these terrible things—and he called himself a socialist. But you wait 'til these next three or four generations come up. There won't be any more Donald Trumps, I'll tell you that. Anyway, I don't want to get into politics, it's too painful right now.

SR: Right. So at Stanford you discovered, as you said, that it was kind of disillusioning. So then you got into an army situation.

AB: Well, let me tell you what I did. The dean fought me tooth and nail. He said, "Andreas, it isn't good for you to bail out as the first recipient." I said, "I'm so unhappy," and I told him why. And he said, "Well, we are overloaded with conservative students, there's no doubt about it, but they're very smart." I said, "Sure, they'll go to Wall Street and they'll all get rich. I don't like people like that." He said, "I'll tell you what, let's bargain. You didn't want to be on *Law Review*, that wasn't what you were looking for; but there's moot court, and that's your bailiwick." Moot court is all oral. So he said, "Why don't you stick around for the second half of the second year, at least, and do moot court, because I'm sure you'll enjoy it." Well, I felt so guilty about walking away after the first year, I came and told him I would do that. So I put my name on a list for moot court.

[00:53:41] Now there's a very famous bank family in San Francisco that I'm drawing a complete blank [on their name], but they had twin brothers who got into Stanford Law School, and they didn't have the swiftest oar in the water, but their family owned the bank chain, and that was enough to explain that. And they were very nice guys. They were identical twins. And I drew out of the hat one of these twins for my partner for moot court. And then they assigned you a case that has at least gone to the appellate court in California, or is about to, because one of the three judges that would hear moot court would be one of the actual judges on the appellate court in California. Then you've got a dean from Bolt, and you've got a dean from some other campus in the state—Hastings probably—and they come in and they hear your case and they pick the winner.

[00:54:38] Well let me tell you the case, because it's just too juicy. A vice-president of the Bank of America went on a convention to New York City, a social banking convention, a lot of drinking, a lot of gambling, a lot of womanizing, and a few meetings, and a few papers were read. So this guy picks up this gal—the one from San Francisco who's the vice-president of the bank in San Francisco, and he takes this woman back to his hotel, and their bed catches on fire, and they both die. He did not smoke, but the woman that went home—she didn't [unclear] be a prostitute, she could have been a lawyer, for all we know. Anyway, as far as we know, she's respectable. Everybody's drunk, and you go home and you go to bed. But she did smoke, so the question was, Does the widow of the San Francisco judge have the right to sue for workman's compensation when he was not the direct—when he was peripheral, it was her fault not his fault. The case had been heard by the appellate court in San Francisco, but it had not been released yet, nobody knew what the decision was. So one of the judges—the three judges I had when we presented our case—had heard that case, but he hadn't seen what happened, nor had their decision been applied.

[00:56:08] So we did what you do in law school, you look for cases that are what we call on point. You had to go through a lot of books. Now you just use a computer to try to find a case that was similar enough to this one, that would help you make a ruling, or argue a ruling. We could not find anything in California. But I remembered Dr. Hurlbit [phonetic], who was our tort professor—brilliant man, an alcoholic very clearly, but he was brilliant. He

taught a case in court [i.e., tort?] law, and he told us the history of the workmen's compensation law in California. It was based on Follett's brilliant doctrine that he established in Wisconsin fifty years ago or something, where they broadened the definition, and they looked for less exact points, or whatever it was. So I said, in desperation, to my partner, "I think we have to go to Wisconsin," on the records, not traveling.

SR: Right.

AB: [00:57:13] So we went, and we found a gamekeeper, who was supposed to go in the off season for hunting—out in the woods people would shoot deer—and his job was to go out and try to catch them. So he took his girlfriend with him, and he had one of these Dodges where you could lay the seat down and make a bed out of it. And so he had this car with a bed, and he turned on the music, and he turned on the heater, and they asphyxiated. So we had a case, and we had the way the court ruled, and it supported our side. So when we presented that, we sat in on the earlier case that was being heard, and then we were then with.... And Dr. Hurlbit came into the.... This is one of those like medical lecture halls where it's like round like that. I remember Dr. Hurlbit coming through the door down in the corner, very unobtrusively, and sitting down. Now this was in the evening, he had no reason to be in the law school. So he had read our paper and realized that we had taken his lecture and we had applied it in a very creative way. So he wanted to hear how the judges handled that. And the judges just fell out of their chairs complimenting us. And then the judge who had been on the appellate court said, "I want to tell you something. If you had presented the case with your

backup, your point cases, we might have decided otherwise.” Which is about as high a compliment as you could possibly get.

SR: [00:58:47] Right.

AB: And Dr. Hurlbit was thrilled.

SR: Wow. That’s a great story.

AB: So I still left, but I also stayed a little longer, because I opened the *Cargo* [phonetic], which is the student newspaper at Stanford, and it said, “The Oxford University debate team is making their annual stop and the tour that they do of America.” They stop at Harvard and Yale and Princeton and Stanford, and maybe someplace else, “and they will be coming in a month, and we need people to sign up to be considered to defend the virtues of Stanford.” So I wrote a letter with my resume, and they called me in and interviewed me, and said, “You’re going to be one. We’ve found another guy who’s got a very good record too.” And this is a hall that they have on campus that seats about 3,000 people, 2,000 people. They used to show crazy movies from the thirties in this place—all the students would come. So we went into that with the guys from Oxford, and they had wonderful wit. They were amusing themselves in a very British way, very sort of upper-class British, and droll, but charming and fun. So the whole thing turned out to be fun. We didn’t try to beat the hell out of them, but we felt that we beat them. And of course the audience was entirely on our side, whooping and hollering. So it was a huge success.

[01:00:14] And then one day shortly after that, I walked into the Wall [phonetic] Building, and on the bulletin board was this announcement that the

army was desperate to find somebody to come and enlist immediately and come into Staff Judge Advocate because the second lieutenant who had been the assistant to the colonel, who was the judge, had an emergency family matter or something—he had to drop out. And so suddenly at the last minute they don't have anybody to back up the colonel. They said, "We're going to Santa Clara Law School, Hastings, Bolt, Stanford," and I think there was one other. "Any student that's interested in dropping out right now, and coming in and filling in this emergency, we will give you an extended army reserve program," you didn't have to go in for three years or something. I think you got in for six months, I don't know. So I signed up for it, and I got it!

SR: Right.

AB: [01:01:11] So I went to the dean and I said, "My country is calling me. The army needs me!" Then I can hide behind that, which wasn't really the reason I went at all. And then when they found out I could type 103 words a minute, which I've already told you, they put me in an air conditioned room twice the size of this, with a good law library, and I got to do all this secret tracking of things that were going on, on the Fort Ord Base. You can't put that in the tape there. [Editing alert.] Well maybe we'll modify it. I might get some nasty letters from the army, I don't know. Anyway....

SR: How long were you in the army?

AB: Eight weeks of basic training. The only time I ever ordered coffee, and we were out at four o'clock in the morning, the coldest day almost in my life, to learn how to shoot rifles. Four or five in the morning! And they had this cauldron, this

gigantic bucket, of black coffee. And I said, "Give me one of those, fill it to the top." And I held it to keep my hands warm. Coffee smells good, I do like to smell coffee, but I didn't buy it to drink it, I bought it to keep warm. And I thought, well, this was handy. Anyway....

SR: [01:02:31] So the army turned out....

AB: How long?

SR: How long, yeah.

AB: I think it was six months that I was the colonel's aide—maybe longer. He had some real problems with undue influence by the general that ran the whole base, and it was very complex, and a big major scandal. And I had to stay and do a lot of the paperwork on that. So I could have been there for eight months, which means I was in the army for about a year. I was required to show up for two weeks of reserve for the next two years, and then they told me I didn't have to come anymore. That's when things were lightening up in Vietnam, and they didn't need as many people. At one time they were desperate.

[01:03:14] And that's when I came back to San Diego and talked two fraternity brothers into renting an apartment on South Mission Beach. If we split it up three ways, we could afford it. And they were driving out to campus every day to go to classes, and they drove me out there, and I went out for my teaching.

SR: Tell about that. You were teaching here and you were also a debate coach.

AB: Well, I was pressured to help the debate teams, and I liked doing that. And I was twiddling my fingers as to what I wanted to do with my life, so I was having a hard time deciding: do I want to go back to law school, do I really want to get a

Ph.D. in forensics and debate, do I just want to become a rare book dealer? I got some very good offers from some of the top rare book dealers, but they were only on the West Coast. Now, they had two of the leading rare book dealers in the country, one in L.A. and one in San Francisco. In New York they had about twelve—people that sold Gutenberg Bibles for millions of dollars. It was a different game. And I just knew I didn't want to live in New York, so I didn't pursue that, until Frances offered me her store.

SR: [01:04:25] Right. But meanwhile you.... I guess tomorrow we're going to be discussing the next steps that you took, but for today is there anything else that you can [unclear].

AB: Well, I would think that's where going over to Pacific Beach and finding those letters that were worth thousands of dollars in this little ugly French desk that she had there—which was probably worth thousands of dollars, I don't know—and this gigantic rug that she had sticking out of her garage. I remember she was such a sweet lady. She was completely overwhelmed. She probably had some very, very rich relatives, three times removed, because the stuff they sent her was just.... You know, a gigantic carpet that might have been worth a lot of money, three or four pieces of furniture, a lot of china dishes. You could tell they were wealthy. But she was bewildered. But anyway.... And finding those things opened doors to the rare book dealers on the highest level. I mean, that letter, the Overland Narrative, was sold to the Beinecke Library at Yale for the Coke Collection, which is the most famous western travel history collection in

America—strangely enough. It should have been in Bancroft, that's where it belonged. Bancroft had a good collection. Mr. Coke probably was a billionaire.

SR: [01:05:47] Well I think this has been a fascinating beginning of your journey, and tomorrow we're going to continue it.

AB: What are we going to focus on tomorrow?

SR: So tomorrow we're going to talk about Yale and Harry Ransom and all of that. Thank you. This is an exciting way to start.

AB: You guys are wonderful.

[End of Day 1, go to new doc for Day 2]