

AN INTERVIEW WITH GRACE MELISSA DANGBERG: A CONTRIBUTION TO A SURVEY OF LIFE IN CARSON VALLEY, FROM FIRST SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE 1950S

Interviewee: Grace Melissa Dangberg

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Description

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Grace Dangberg was born in 1896, the first child of H. F. Dangberg's second surviving son, John. Miss Dangberg's childhood was spent on family ranches and in the nascent community of Minden. She is a graduate of the University of California, where she studied under A. L. Kroeber and Robert Lowie; during a postgraduate year at Columbia she worked with Lowie and with Franz Boas. Upon returning to Carson Valley, Miss Dangberg used her anthropological training and wrote a linguistic and cultural study of the Washoe Indians: "Washo Texts" (University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1927).

Grace Dangberg developed an interest in the history of Carson Valley and in the history of the Dangberg family. She was one of the founders of the Carson Valley Historical Society, and she wrote or edited a number of works relating to the history of the area. Among her many publications are "Washo Tales" (1968), Carson Valley (1972), and Conflict on the Carson (1975).

In this 1984 interview Grace Dangberg draws upon personal observations and accounts handed down through her family as she addresses several topics that are important in the history of Carson Valley. Of particular interest are her discussions of Washoe Indians, water rights litigation, and the role of the Dangberg family in the creation of Minden.

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE
NEVADA DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ARCHEOLOGY

An Oral History Conducted by R. T. King,
with additional questions from Gene Hattori

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University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (OHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand descriptions of events, people and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned, verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the OHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the OHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as

possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable.

When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the OHP will, in preparing a text:

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;

b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered

but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

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INTRODUCTION

When Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg settled in Carson Valley in 1856 he was among a mere handful of people residing there who were engaged in commerce or agriculture. The valley first had been entered by a white man in 1848. In the intervening years its prehistoric qualities had been but little altered. The principal occupants of this fertile, well watered area remained Washo Indians and the plentiful game that they hunted.

Dangberg established himself between the east and west forks of the Carson River and set about improving the land and building a ranch. Ten years later he married Margaret Ferris, who had come with her family from Illinois in 1864. The Dangbergs prospered and multiplied. By early twentieth century their H. F. Dangberg Land and Livestock Company was the largest landowner in Carson Valley, and it was involved in diverse enterprises, some of them unrelated to ranching or agriculture.

Grace Dangberg was born in 1896, the first child of H. F. Dangberg's second surviving son, John. Miss Dangberg's childhood was

spent on family ranches and in the nascent community of Minden. She is a graduate of the University of California, where she studied under A. L. Kroeber and Robert Lowie; during a postgraduate year at Columbia she worked with Lowie and with Franz Boas. Upon returning to Carson Valley, Miss Dangberg used her anthropological training to good effect in a linguistic and cultural study of the Washo Indians. The product of this research was "Washo Texts" (*University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology*, 1927)

In recent years Miss Dangberg has developed an interest in the history of Carson Valley and in the history of the Dangberg family. She was one of the founders of the Carson Valley Historical Society, and she has written or edited a number of works relating to the history of the area. Among her many publications are "Washo Tales" (1968), *Carson Valley* (1972) and *Conflict on the Carson* (1975).

In this 1984 interview Grace Dangberg draws upon personal observations and

accounts handed down through her family as she addresses several topics that are important in the history of Carson Valley. Of particular interest are her discussions of Washo Indians, water rights litigation and the role of the Dangberg family in the creation of Minden. Miss Dangberg is an astute observer of life in the valley whose candid remarks make the interview both informative and lively.



GRACE DANBERG
1984

AN INTERVIEW WITH GRACE MELISSA DANGBERG

Gene Hattori: We'd like to know how your family came to America—why they left Germany and where they first came, when they came to this country.

Grace Dangberg: Well, it's only my grandfather, because all the rest of my family were British of one kind or another. Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg came from the little town of Halle in the Regierungsbezirk of Minden to this country in 1848, I believe. We've never been able to establish it definitely.

R. T. King: Was it in association with the revolutions that were occurring throughout Europe in 1848?

That's a question I've asked and I more or less think that I have the answer, but I don't know. There's nothing to prove it. But he was very aware of many things which would indicate that he was associated with political groups in Europe. In fact, in reading Carl Schurtz's autobiography, I figured that he was perhaps involved in some of the young

people's activities in the Rhineland. But that is pure speculation; I have no hard evidence of that sort of thing.

He was the first born and the second born was Heinrich August Dangberg. The third son was Heinrich Christoph. We always called him Uncle Chris and the German name, I think, is Christoph Dangberg. He has the most descendants of any of the brothers. He has a very large family. In fact, we had a family reunion a few years ago and we had over 100 people coming from all over the United States; I think 75 percent of them came from his branch of the family. That was the last of the brothers. One brother stayed in Germany, and his son came to this country and he is the father of Norma Ellis and Gladys Brinkman. The son who came here married a Danish girl from Schleswig-Holstein.

H: Do you recall the name of the fourth brother that stayed in Germany?

Herman was the name of the fourth brother. They all had long names; most

of them had the name Heinrich. Of the 4 brothers, each had the name Heinrich incorporated—a German custom.*

H: Did the other 2 brothers that came to the United States besides your grandfather settle in the Carson Valley?

Yes, they did. He got land for them and got them settled. And then he had a fourth half-brother who came. Oh, he was a very sentimental man. He was devoted to my grandfather and to Germany. But the morning that the armistice was declared in World War I, who was the first man in the park out here to raise the American flag? It was Uncle William. He was right out there with the children of the town. He was deeply hurt and crushed by all the things that were said about the Germans, but when it came to his loyalty to America there was no question.

During World War II we had a German gardener who for years distributed the vegetables from our garden hither and yon for a bottle of liquor. He got very high on liquor one day in the town of Gardnerville and he stood out in front of the French Hotel—or one of the French-Basque hotels, anyway—and heiled Hitler. [laughter] The first thing we knew, we had the FBI in here; they wanted to interview us because we were the employer. And I never will forget: my uncle—who was a very charming man, among other things true of him—brought the FBI men into the office and went into his private office and told them that old Klaus was perfectly incapable of doing anything that related to the war or anything else. He was just high, in his quite usual way, and this is what created the incident.

K: Was any discrimination directed toward your family during either the first or second world wars because of their German ancestry?

Well, we were in a German community, a good many German people in the community.... No. But [when] I was at the University of California there was an undercurrent of discrimination.

I remember one story that was perhaps typical. My grandmother, my German grandfather's wife, had a great many cousins—people from the Middle West living in southern California. One of them came to her during the First World War and suggested that she change her name, and my grandmother told her never would she do it. So cousin Eva, who represented the current American opinion, was silenced. I was outraged. I never forgave this cousin Eva for suggesting such a thing.

K: I've talked with several other families here in the valley who are of German extraction, who were in school during the First World War. The feeling seems to be that even though the valley was dominated by Germans, there was prejudice and discrimination directed against German children in the schools during the First World War. Obviously, you didn't experience any of that because you were in California at the time. Was there anything similar—let's say discrimination against those who might have spoken German in the home, or maintained any sort of German cultural identity—during the Second World War?

*In an unrecorded conversation several weeks after this interview, Miss Dangberg provided additional information on naming. At the baptismal ceremony in Westphalia it was customary for the boy to take the name of the sponsoring uncle. Apparently Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg and his brothers were all sponsored by the same uncle; hence the recurrence of the name Heinrich.

No. There was a feeling among the older people which I thought was very regrettable: they stopped singing the German songs or speaking German as much as they could. I remember bringing tears to the eyes of some of the old people when my sister and I and a German maid that we had went out singing German Christmas carols and called on some of these people. This was one night between the wars. I thought it was tragic that anything so valuable as a foreign language should be lost for such reasons.

Well, that was my reaction to whatever was going on. I don't remember ever being discriminated against or thought of in terms of my German name or ancestry.

Another instance of discrimination, as you might call it, of some interest to me was the fact that for years after the Basques came into the valley there was a prejudice in the German community against marrying into Basque families. It was very interesting because I recall when a cousin of mine, Fred Dangberg, Jr. they call him—he was not junior but he was a younger Fred Dangberg—married a Basque girl. He said that was the first linking of the 2 ethnic groups. After that there were a good many. The Basque girls make lovely wives, and so all the prejudice died down.

K: About when did that marriage take place?

Well, I think in the 1930s. Then my cousin George, whose father was my father's brother, married a Basque girl, and that ended that type of discrimination.

The church was always in the background in some of these things. I think the Lutheran church had something to do with this type of thing. It's interesting to me that the people in the Lutheran church who were the most devoted Lutherans, and the most devoted to church activities, were especially the families

in which the women came from Hanover. But the families who came from Westphalia were not so [involved]. My own grandfather never would bother with church at all.. .it was all right for the women. And I think that was pretty much true in the Dressler family. But the people from Hanover were devoted to their church, and all their public interest was in the church. The people who were from Westphalia—my grandfather and the Hussmans—would get into politics, which took the place of the church, apparently, in their lives and families. My grandfather married an American girl, which put us a generation farther back on the intermarriages of Germans and Americans. As I recall these things perhaps they mean something, but they haven't interested me in the past. I've noted something about them.

K: This is an interesting observation that you've made about the fact that there was so much intermarriage going on, although the valley seems to have a reputation for being a German valley. It appears, from a lot of other conversations that I've had, that marriage between Germans and non-German people began very early on, and by the third generation it would be difficult to identify any family as German.

That's very true. I think the German people always, in all the communities they went into, very quickly adapted. They and the British shared a great deal, and I think the Germans, the Irish, the Welsh and the Scotch intermarried very freely. I never felt that there was very much resistance to intermarriage or to sharing different cultural life, that sort of thing.

K: Your grandfather came to this country, you believe, in 1848, so there's a period when he's

not residing in Carson Valley after having arrived in the United States. Where did he go?

He was either on the plains coming this way, or.... I got some testimony in a court case just the other day. He was first in the valley in 1853.

K: That early? Well, that's remarkable.

He took up land here and settled on land in 1855, I think. He was driven from that property by a highway man, and then the next time he settled, he settled on land which is still part of the Dangberg Ranch. And that was in 1856, the records show.

K: Wasn't he associated with the Klauber Ranch when he came here?

That was the first ranch. Bill Thorrrington hijacked him out of it.

K: What about that 5 year interval between 1848 and 1853? Did the family ever talk about where he was during that period?

No, because they didn't know and I was too small. was only 8 when my grandfather died. I didn't become interested in local history until half a century or more later.

H: What are your recollections of your grandfather?

I was very fond of him. He was a very dour sort of man, and I could see him now sitting in his Turkish arm chair beside his smoking table with a cigar. We had to be very respectful of him. If Grandfather wanted to sleep or anything I think we had to be quiet. And that's perfectly natural. I admired him very much, and have continued to. He was

a builder and a man with imagination; very vigorous, very industrious, and he only slept 4 hours a night just like Edison.

H: Your grandmother, what was her name?

She was Margaret Gale Ferris. She was an emigrant. She came with her family from Illinois in 1864.

I knew my grandmother very well. My grandmother had a peculiar trait. She always had a great fondness for the eldest child, and her eldest son—H. F. Dangberg, Jr.—was the first treasure in the family. Then I came along; I was the first grandchild, so I think I was favored in some respects.

My grandmother was married when she was 17 and her husband was twice her age, and she went to live in an.... Oh, there's so much to tell it's almost impossible to. I think I'll put something in here about my great-grandfather teaching his youngest daughter about the stars in the evening and how she said, "Oh, how quiet it was! It was very lonely and very quiet out in the middle of the valley here with very, very few people around, and only horse transportation. It was so quiet and lonely." This impressed her very much.

Well, my grandmother went as a bride to the ranch. Grandfather had built a house. He did a great deal of building in the year before he was married and for 2 or 3 years afterwards, and established a real headquarters at what is the Home Ranch. He built barns and added on to the house. Then, my grandmother was such a young girl that he always had help for her, so that she didn't have to take on any heavy responsibility. I guess I hope that all of these men out here on the frontier who married these young girls treated them as well as he did her. But gradually, she said, after she was older and became more capable of handling things he would just unload a little bit more

on her so that finally she was running half the ranch, almost. Well, it's wrong to say half the ranch, but she certainly ran the household.

In those days they did all their butchering, cured all the meat, on the ranch and she was the head of that. They made candles and she had to do that. She always had either Chinese help or German girls in the house to help with all of these things. But the things that they did were just astonishing. Then, of course, every year you had to have a seamstress come and do all the sewing that was needed for a family.

My grandmother had her first son. They were married in 1866 and he was born in 1867—that was H. F., Jr. Then the second son died; he was named for my grandmother's favorite brother—Albert. And then my father came along, born in 1871. After that there was a daughter, Eva Katrina, and after that George Dangberg, and then Clarence Dangberg and that's the whole family. So she had all of these children to look after and had to run the kitchen for the family and the ranch.

When I was a child they still were using machines to cut apples to be dried. I can remember the trays of freshly cut apples that were put out in the garden to dry. And of course they were working under the trees.

I suppose you've been to the Home Ranch? Well, I haven't seen it for years. But in those trees, at the back of the house under the trees, they had a cider press, and they took care of all the apples this way—dried them and made cider of them and so forth. These were very hardworking days; all the women were very busy.

K: I believe you were born on the Home Ranch.

Yes.

K: Was the entire extended family living on the Home Ranch at that time?

My father was the only married son then and no one else was married until H. F., Jr. was married. They had this plan of bringing the married sons home and them all living with the mother and father. Well, my mother decided that it would be better to be in her own home, so she and my Lather moved to one of the other ranches when I was about 2 years old. Then the next growth in the family living at the Home Ranch was when the youngest son, Clarence, married and brought his wife home. This wasn't a very good arrangement. There were just too many in-laws in the household. It just didn't work out; there's no use going into it. It's quite obvious that this is not the way Americans adapt to family life. They like to have their own homes, I think. This did not work out very well, but that was the end of the bringing the wives home. And that was the last marriage.

When my aunt married, she married the Methodist minister here in the valley. They were married and then they went to live in Virginia City. That was a horrible place to go to take a bride in those days. Virginia City, in the late 1890s, was on the way downhill. I can remember as a little girl going to visit her, and my mother taking me. I created almost a riot on the V & T [Virginia and Truckee] Railroad when we were going into the old town. There were just rows and rows of the most dismal looking cabins before you came into the station. I don't remember anything but those dismal looking cabins, and I asked my mother why there were so many woodsheds. It was a very derogatory, but rather descriptive name that I called them, and people never got over mentioning that.

H: What was your uncle's name?

George H. Greenfield.

Methodist ministers, if you know anything about the Methodist church, they're always moving them around. They were getting ready to move him again, and my aunt was very strong minded about this and she got him to change to the Presbyterian church. [laughter] So then he became a Presbyterian minister, and finally—it's a long story—he became a Congregational minister and he was that when he passed away. They lived in Elko County for a number of years as Presbyterian minister.

I had a brother who was drowned in 1910 when he was 12 years old, and I had a sister who died when she was only 40. My brother's name was Gale H. and my sister's name was Doris.

H: One thing I'm very interested in is your educational background when you were at the University of California and also at Columbia University; particularly the anthropologists that you were associated with.

At the University of California I took a course with [Alfred L.] Kroeber before I was graduated, but the work in anthropology I did in a graduate year there. And I worked with [Robert H.] Lowie when he was there. And when I went to Columbia I worked with Lowie and with Dr. [Franz] Boas. Of course at Cal I knew [Edward W.] Gifford.

H: When you were at Berkeley studying under Lowie—and also you mentioned Kroeber—how does that relate to your interest in the Washo?

I've forgotten just exactly the detail, but Lowie was giving a course on the Ghost Dance, and I was interested in the fact that people in the university—the very great university—were interested in such homely things as the natives in Nevada. Then they

did encourage me. They wanted somebody in the field up here, and I'm sure they did a lot of encouraging. So I came home and....

After I graduated they had some fellowships that they were passing out, and I always thought that the fellowship came to me not because I was the most promising student but because I was the only student around. The men had all gone. It was in 1917 and '18; the men were all taken into the army and gone into war. So I got a fellowship.

I felt that it was very foolish of me to use the fellowship for study. My family could take care of that. So I decided I'd spend it on doing some work with the Washo. I had a course in linguistics with Kroeber, and so I decided that I'd come up here and record some Washo tales, which I did. Then I did quite a bit of ethnography. I've turned all of my notes and my unpublished material over to Warren d'Azevedo at the University of Nevada. I think he's a very reliable person, and he makes good use of material.

So that's the anthropology. When I was in New York they tried to recruit me at the American Museum of Natural History and I was given work in the attic there with potsherds from the Southwest. I delivered a paper there on the different patterns that were used on different pots, and some way of grading them. I don't remember anything about it now; I never followed up on it.

I think I was working under Lowie's general guidance there because I'd known him at Cal, you see. He was there in New York then, and of course Dr. Boas. It was quite a privilege to know him. I guess I was taking a course with him, but I really can't remember. I suppose it's on the record someplace.

[Lowie] was a very conscientious, very serious man, but he was very dull. It's not the kind of person who would interest you. Kroeber was full of all sorts of notions. He

was a very lively character. But Dr. Lowie was very plodding and precise and totally conventional.

K: You mentioned earlier that Professor Gifford had done much of the work, but wasn't given [full] credit for it.

Gifford didn't have his degrees and they really sort of put him down. He did do an awful lot of the grubby work that had to be done for the other men. He himself was not sparkling at all, but I think he was a hard worker and a very sincere, earnest person.

The man that was exciting there—he's the man I must have taken the first course with—was Waterman. He gave courses in comparative religion. He was a very interesting man. I think my interest would really go back to Waterman. But then Kroeber saw a chance to use me up here for some of this work and he promoted it and I guess he got me the fellowship. So that is the story back of the interest in the Indians.

H: How about your fellow classmates?

Oh, my goodness! I wouldn't know where to begin or what. Those big classes, you didn't feel as though you had any classmates. You weren't particularly interested. I don't suppose I knew. I lived with my grandmother. I didn't live in any student residence and that limited my.... I was much more interested in study and scholarship than in other girls, and living with my grandmother I didn't have any wide connections at all.

H: I was wondering if there were any of your contemporaries that later became anthropologists that you kept in touch with?

No, nothing of that kind.

K: You were talking about beginning fieldwork here in 1917 or 1918, I believe.

Nineteen-eighteen, it would be.

K: Can you recall how you went about gaining access to the Washo tribe?

No difficulty about that. I lived here and these Washos were all around us. That was before they began setting up colonies for them. It brought them together and they left the ranches where they were living and where they had seasonal work and their permanent homes. They would have a sort of campground, for instance, in the Pine Nut Hills and live on the ranch; and then when the heavy work was over, why, they'd go out to the Pine Nut Hills and gather their pine nuts and store them there. Usually, when children were to be born they'd go out too, so they were born in Pine Nut. I never knew just why they did that, but that's one of the things I recorded in my field notes.

Of course, we knew these families very well. Women would work for us in the house and the men were fine ranch hands until California set up their outrageous hourly pay for roadwork, and then the Indians all left the ranches. It was under Roosevelt.

The Indians who had lived on the ranches in the winter, if they ran out of food or anything could always borrow on their next year's work, you see. And they were persuaded to leave the ranches, and they gave them very high pay. They got drunk on the money and then welfare took care of them in the winter. If they had left the adjustment that came about as they worked into our work plans, they would have been far better protected. They wouldn't have had this dreadful problem of dope and liquor that is impoverishing and making them so miserable in the present. Of

course, some of them are coming out of it; the best people resisted this influence. But I felt that it was deplorable.

I have made a study of our own records from our time books on the ranch. I have a practically definite date of when they left the employment of the ranches and went to work on the highway and had all this lovely money per hour, which was supposed to make them equal to everybody else, and really deep down degraded them. I have someplace in my store rooms a preliminary study, and you can identify the Indian names very easily. I made a chart showing how many months they worked and what their pay was, and what happened when the change occurred—when they raised the salaries in California for roadwork. Also somebody back in Washington decided that these poor benighted Indians needed colonies or something—some kind of a reservation. This brought them all together and off the ranches and just undermined their security, you see.

K: In 1917-1918, when you began your fieldwork, you were living in this house here in Minden?

Yes.

K: Which families of Indians were you working with? Were they associated with this household or with the Home Ranch out in the middle of the valley, or Buckeye, or where were they?

Oh, no. They weren't associated with this house. It was only on the ranches that the Indians lived.

K: You never had any Indian help in this house?

Oh, yes. Always, up to a few years ago. We had help here, yes, but not steadily. A

laundress and a cleaning woman and then finally we did have a...but this help was more appropriate for the ranches. We had them do window washing, cleaning, scrubbing.

Another phase of this, they set up the Stewart [Indian] School. That was to help the Indians, and it did help them in many ways when they were trying to teach them how to do housework and all that sort of thing. Well, the girls naturally learned that pretty well—those that never went to school—but those who went to school really learned a great deal about it and they were good little girls if you could get them sort of stabilized so that they would stay on the job. When they came out they were always....

Well, there were a great many things about them that were sort of interesting. They have had the same experience with them in the schools: for the most part they are very lackadaisical—daydreaming—and they didn't accomplish much of anything. They were nice girls; you couldn't help liking them, but they daydreamed a great deal. Once they were married and had children, then they became very good workers. They had a motive, I guess. Otherwise, they were dreaming about the boys or something. [laughter] They weren't so different from our own girls, but our own girls came from families where they were disciplined and they don't goof off quite as much as the Indian girls. Of course the Indian girls, in their culture, were accustomed to being married very early in their teens. And our own girls are usually tided over until they're in their twenties. This is the custom. [laughter]

K: Who were the principal sources of your information?

The principal source of my amusing stories and my understanding of them was

Susie Dick. I also talked to Sara Mayo, Mabel Fillmore, Manta Smokey and Hank Pete and his wife.

K: We have a fair amount of information about Susie Dick from other sources.

I'm interested to know who else would know about her.

K: Apparently everybody in the valley does. Whenever I bring the name up...

Oh, surely. She was a character. Nobody could miss Susie. She had such a sense of humor, and she could tell the most delightful stories and she knew she had a talent for it. She was a character for years after she was unable to work any more. She carried a big sack around with her and went from house to house picking up everything that was loose and anybody wanted to give her, you know.

Then she lived out on the ranch in a little old cabin out there just east of Minden. She lived on the Home Ranch for a while and then she lived on the East Ranch here, or on the Sage Ranch as we called it then, in a cabin. And she lived out near the Klauber Ranch—not right on the Home Ranch.

K: What's your recollection of first having met Susie Dick and how did that relationship between the 2 of you develop over the years?

She was around doing housework for us—laundry, particularly. Then, when I got this inspiration that I was going to do some fieldwork with the Washos, why, I just simply went...she was here and she was in the laundry when she was ironing. It was a wonderful time to go down and talk to her. So I'd go down and talk to her while she was ironing and I'd get all of these stories about her son

and how he was becoming a doctor. And all the other; all the gossip. She was a dreadful gossip...or a delightful gossip. [laughter] Anyway, gossip. That's the name of the game with anthropology. Are there any people you know who won't gossip?

One of the things about the Indian help was that you never could be absolutely sure that they would do anything because if there was any sickness or any disturbance of any kind or if they had too big a weekend, why, they wouldn't turn up. They wouldn't show up, and they always had such good reasons for not coming.

Sammy Dick was [Susie's] son. He was a medicine man. I was very interested in Sammy, and Susie told me all sorts of things about him and I jotted them down. I had planned to turn these all over to a man who was doing an article on shamanism. Sammy was becoming a doctor; he had dreams and I had been interested. I had been doing some work on Wovoka and I was interested in shamanism and so I got Susie to tell me all that she knew. I also was working with my interpreter, who was Henry Moses Rupert.

I knew what their practice was because I had gotten this from Henry Moses Rupert in great detail—how many months, how many times, how many weeks, how many they had to do certain things to become a shaman. I was filling in on Sammy and without taxing Susie's ability to generalize or anything, I was able to fit these things in rather well. When he had identified an object that was related to his dreams and to his power, then he would have to go off in the hills, or stay home and fast for a few days.. .do certain other things. I have it all down in my notes, but I don't recall it all offhand.

Anyway, one time [Sammy Dick] was working at the Klauber Ranch for my Uncle George, and he got fired. Susie was outraged

about it, and I said, “What was the matter, Susie?”

“Oh,” she said, “Sammy had to go to the hills and that George fired him because he wasn’t there to do his work.”

Well, now, this is the type of thing that was happening often. You had to be patient and you had to appreciate them when they did come. They were so good when they did, you had to put up with all these things. But it is not in our nature to put up with too much of that type of thing. Those of us who lived back at that time were well aware of this and we didn’t fuss about it; we accepted it. We looked for the good and forgave the variations.

K: Was Susie Dick, then, your principal source of information?

No, I had half a dozen of them. I don’t remember all of them. I had Susie’s enemies—that was always interesting. I had Sara Mayo and 2 or 3 others; I can’t recall their names. They’re all in my notes that Warren d’Azevedo has.

K: Beyond the information that’s in the notes, though, I’m very much interested in having from you a first-hand account of how the information was acquired. You’ve already mentioned that you would go down into the basement while Susie Dick was ironing and gossip, although I believe you called anthropology an elevated form of gossip. [laughter] Beyond that rather informal association with her, did you actively go out into the field and seek information from other people? How did you come into contact with the people you were getting information from, and how did you initiate...?

Well, it was easy. For instance, in getting the Washo tales I told them that I wanted to get some of their legends. I talked to several of

the men; I can’t remember their names now. They had said, “Well, Blind Mike knows all the stories.”

Blind Mike was a very amusing informant. He had a great dog that led him around, and a cane, and he would come. I got a room at the courthouse to interview him in, because between the dog and his living in the camps and sagebrush fire and everything my mother wasn’t exactly pleased with the idea that I should bring him into the house. But there was no trouble about that. All I had to do to get him to come was to give him a little money, which was really unwise because that all went into liquor and then he wouldn’t turn up for a few days. But I bought him long underwear—long johns—and food and other things and rewarded him in that way, and he’d come in and sit.

Then after I got Henry Moses Rupert to act as my interpreter, Henry would read these stories and listen to them and he’d say, no, he wouldn’t translate that one. And then he said, “Well, he must have gone to sleep, anyway.” He’d sit there and if I didn’t recognize the fact that he’d had too much booze the night before, why, he’d wander, you see.

I was not a very expert person in taking these things down phonetically. All the training I had was one semester with Kroeber. I managed to get quite a bit of it down so that I could read it back and it sounded more or less like Washo. But I don’t think it was a very wonderful job.

I got Henry Moses Rupert to come and be my interpreter. He was a delightful man; a very sort of scholarly person. He wanted to help me get it right—which was fine. He was a graduate typesetter; he set type on the Reno Gazette for several years and he had a good education.

Bill Fillmore was my other informant on the tales, and he told me the tales about the

women who married stars and the story of the creation. He went with me when I was recording them, so we got some very good texts and those were 2 of the stories in Washo Tales. The Fillmore family of Indians, I don't know where they got their name. They lived on the ranch when I was a girl and then the [Washo] Dangbergs, who became the Smokeys, lived there earlier and into the time that I was a child. So there were 2 families that lived on our ranch. The Snooks family lived on the Heise Ranch.

K: Mr. Rupert, I take it, was a Washo Indian himself?

Yes.

K: You said that he was rather well-educated.

Yes. He went to the school and then I don't know where he went for further training. But he became a typesetter for the Reno Evening Gazette. Then he began having dreams and prophesying a storm or 2, and he became a shaman. He's very interesting from that point of view.

I was turning over all of my notes to a young man by the name of Don Handelman, who did some work with him some years ago and published a paper. He wanted to do further work on him, and he found out that I knew him when he was much younger than he was when he got to him. So he was trying to put this together. But he's back in Tel-Aviv now.

K: Was Rupert a member of a family that lived in Carson Valley?

He lived there at the Carson City Indian Colony as an adult. He had a beautiful little orchard and garden, and he dreamed all sorts

of dreams. He went to Honolulu and visited a shaman over there, and I think there was a Hindu. And a Kanaka or some other people had visited him; he was connected with occultism and shamanism all the way around the world.

K: Was that family resident in Carson City at the time that you knew Mr. Rupert, or were they residing here in the Carson Valley?

Well, he was born in the valley. He lived in Genoa, I think, through childhood.

K: About how old was he when he was interpreting for you?

About 35, I think.

K: Can you tell me the age of Blind Mike when you learned.. .?

About the same.

K: A young man, then. What about Bill Fillmore?

Oh, he was very ancient. He was nearing 100, I think. He was about 18 years old when the white man first came here. They were smart, those Fillmores—all of them. He adapted himself very readily. He became a trusted teamster and he hauled produce and machinery and everything at Lake Tahoe, and then when he was an old man he came down here and his sons or grandsons were working in our machine shop. They were excellent mechanics. I don't know where they went to school—they were just natural mechanics. They were very capable men, all of them.

K: Did you interview Mr. Fillmore in that courthouse room as well?

Oh, no. Mr. Fillmore was on his death bed, really. We went out to the camp and he was lying under a rabbit skin blanket. I don't remember that he even sat up. I think he was lying down, and he would tell me his tales and they were well told. Of course, Henry was right there to help whenever he would falter at all. I thought they were very precious because they came directly from the pre-white community of Washo or primitive bands.

I always felt that Blind Mike, who was brought up by his grandparents, represented the same tradition, you see, because his grandparents were here before the white man came. And then Blind Mike learned all these stories, and, of course, being a blind man he probably had a better memory of them than he would have had if he'd had his sight. So I thought that both of my informants were rather unique.

K: The history of the tribe, even after white contact, has not been well-recorded.

Well, I don't see how you could talk about the history of the tribe. You'd have some biographical material, but the tribe was not in any way concentrated or organized. These bands had settled down and now the Fillmores lived out on the ranch there. They had about an acre of land that they had their wickiups on and their cabin. I don't know how many of them congregated there; it'd be a lot of them. And they stayed there until.. I guess after World War II. Then they just sort of disappeared. If you want to know more about them, Mabel Fillmore is the person to consult. I told you the other day about her. She lives in Oxoby's trailer park between Minden and Gardnerville.

K: It may be difficult even to conceive of something such as a tribe when we talk about

the Washo. Obviously, it's a collection of bands rather than a single political entity, or even a social entity for that matter.

Oh, no, no. I can't say that there could be any entity involved. As for the history of the tribe, there wouldn't be anything.

K: But there's a certain shared experience. I hope you would agree that although they may be very loosely related to one another in a political sense, there is a....

There's no political life among these people! They are pre-political. This is the key to the whole thing. When you get political life, then you get all sorts of things going on. You get civilization. But these people were prepolitical. They were never organized. They simply clustered around a family in which there would be a shaman or something of the kind.

H: One of the things that occurred with contact with the white people is the emergence of a mouthpiece which later became a politically identifiable spokesman for the tribe. We see this with the Northern Paiutes as well as with the Washo.

Well, the white man always wanted to deal with an individual. But that's what he imposes. It hasn't anything....

H: Did you ever come into contact with any of these sorts of people—the so-called leaders of the tribe?

Oh, my goodness, yes. There's Hank Pete, supposed to be, or credited with being, the head Washo person. The Washos wouldn't admit it, but when they had a sort of spokesman, why, they got Hank. I think I've got a picture of him

in here. Hank could speak very well. He would get up on the platform with the governor, and he got a lot of acclaim from the white people. The Washos despised him. They didn't want to have anything to do with him.

The only thing that they had that was ever a rallying point for them was their pine nut festival in the spring, their pine nut dance. I think that went on for a good many years. The Northern Paiute and Washo met out here at Double Springs on U.S. Highway 395 for their annual pine nut dance. I've heard something of that and I've known people who went to that. Now, that was something that they did as a group.

Of course, whenever they had one of these girl's dances [rite of passage associated with puberty], then everybody would come together. And there would be the men who could sing and the men who were doctors, and I've been to that sort of thing when they'd all come from far and near and have a big banquet—cook-out, you'd call it. Each family would have one of those whenever there was a girl the right age. That's when they would get together, and that was the main thing.

Then, the other time in which a small group of them [would get] together was when they were gambling. They gathered someplace to gamble. And that would be the Washos. But as far as history is concerned, I can't think of any legitimate way in which you could say there would be a history of the Washos.

K: Could any of the older Indians with whom you had contact when you were young recall any of the events associated with non-Indians coming into the Carson Valley? That about the Washo response to that non-Indian intrusion in the middle to late nineteenth century?

Well, I can't think that there would be anything. There would be individual Washos

that would have responded, but as for anything that would involve....

K: You're talking about collective action. I understand that fully; but not even individual response or response on the part of a single family, or...?

No. I've asked different Indians about the first white man and some of them will tell something, but usually you draw a blank. I think that's rather strange, because it should have been somewhat of a shock to them. All the evidence points to the fact that it was a tremendous shock, and maybe that's why they don't remember. In just 10 years time they had stepped from naked savages into our clothes, and from living off the land into living off the ranches and towns. You can't think of anything that could be much more dramatic than that. But I've never heard anybody mention anything about it.

I did hear one thing that I thought was very amusing. I think it was maybe Mabel Fillmore. Now there's a woman that could.. .if there was anything in their tradition, you could get it through her, perhaps. And she... some Indian told me once that they just hated the white man because he smelled so bad. And I thought this was simply delightful. [laughter] He smelled like bread.

H: Do you have any records or recollections of your grandfather's early encounters with Washo?

Well, no. But a great many of the Washo Indians attended his funeral, and I have a theory about that which is going into my biography of my grandfather—about his relations with the Indians. They liked him; he was always very friendly toward them. In fact, all of the ranchers that I have known

anything of in the valley, the men who were really ranchers, were friendly toward them. I've never heard anything other than that.

K: Did your grandfather, or perhaps your father, ever talk about the use that your grandfather may have put Washos to in clearing the land here initially?

No, but I have 3 or 4 of the contracts in Chinese that my grandfather had with Chinese laborers—with their leader, you know. These were for 1882, 1883 and 1884. And then there were Chinese shepherders.

H: Were the Washo ever used as shepherders by the Dangberg Company?

No. You see, you couldn't. Indians wouldn't do it; they wouldn't be reliable enough. And, of course, they never were used as milkers. It wouldn't bother them if they missed milking the cow for 3 or 4 days. They weren't worried about anything like that. But the Chinese were absolutely reliable. So there's a great difference between primitive man and civilized man.

K: I am interested in a couple of other things that relate to the Washo presence in this valley: principal gathering places and principal spots for foraging for food or other sources of raw material that they may have used.

The people coming together—well, I've been told that there was a place down on the Carson River and then there's Hot Spring Mountain out here. These are places that you already identified. And then there is Double Spring Flat up here to the left of 395 as you go south. Those were places that I know.

Then, the dump. I attended a rabbit drive out there where the Washos all came together. Now, there's a time when they would come

together. They'd come together and make a net and then they'd send beaters out in the bushes to drive the rabbits in and they'd catch them. Of course, when I went there they had guns, so I don't remember how they were killing them. I went out there one night and I had some pictures. I don't know what's happened to the pictures.

K: Were there any prominent gathering spots in either Minden or Gardnerville that you can recall from your own personal experience where Indians would get together?

No, not in the towns, except those gambling spots. Never in Minden. Those older places in Gardnerville where they gathered, but I've never seen any of them gathering in Minden. There's really [no] very good place for them here.

K: What sort of a place is required?

They want a place that's a bit sheltered, like the place back of the French Hotel that you were speaking about that I said I'd never heard of. And then the place by the Krummes blacksmith shop across the street from it. Those were the only places that I know.

K: Would a gathering such as that have been permitted here in Minden—to get together behind someone's building and gamble, in the 1920s or 1930s?

I don't know. The only people who could have forbidden them to do it would have been the county commissioners. I doubt very much if there was ever any attempt to do it because there wasn't a sufficiently dilapidated place. [laughter] There is now next to the Pioneer, but the Hellwinkels would see that they didn't congregate there. [laughter] But they don't do

that sort of thing any more. You know, they've grown away from that a great deal.

They've really been absorbed into the current American culture pretty much. You don't see many of them as Washos any more. I'm always amazed that somebody comes into the museum over there in Genoa and says that he's a Washo; he comes in with a nice car and a very well-dressed, interesting family and says he's a Washo. This has happened 2 or 3 times, and I'm sure there are just as many able people among the Washos as there are among any other group of people. It's the training that is different. There's some very smart Washos. Those who have gotten away from the tribal difficulties have done very well in the world, I'm happy to say.

H: Did you do any studies of material culture of the Washo?

Yes. I gave all of those notes to John Price and [Warren] d'Azevedo. There's a transcript of them in the Douglas County Library's Van Sickle collection. I turned over my Washo material—all that I didn't give to the university. John Price took my field notes and transcribed them, put them together nicely and gave me a copy. I put that copy over there.

K: Now I would like to direct our attention to what might be termed urban Carson Valley: the 2 small communities that are located here in the central part of the valley, Minden and Gardnerville. We need to work our way through the foundation of Minden and some of the things that occurred here early in its development. There was considerable controversy over the terminus of the V & T. In your book, Carson Valley, you mention that after the V & T determined that it was going to terminate in what is now Minden, the

Dangberg family or the Dangberg Company offered lots in the immediate vicinity...

Well, there's really not too much difference because for a number of years the company was the family and the family was the company. And that was so at the time Minden was founded, I'd say.

K: Minden was founded in 1906, and your book does not treat the foundation in any depth. It mentions that the Dangberg Company did suggest to several merchants in Gardnerville that they relocate or open new facilities here and offered to provide the land free of charge. Beyond that it does not go into any detail. Is there a written record of that offer or is that family history?

Well, you could get a lot of it in the newspapers. It's such a long time since I've looked at it. I know a good deal about the feeling and the talk that was going on, but it's so mixed up with all sorts of things. They said that H. F. Dangberg, Jr., who was really the [public relations] man, threatened the railroad with something (I've forgotten what it was) if they didn't make the terminal in Minden. The truth of the matter was there wasn't any available land in Gardnerville for it. Since the Dangberg Company had given the right-of-way to the railroad I guess they thought it wouldn't make any difference, so they gave a little bit more. He loved to promote things. The idea of founding a town was just the sort of thing he'd like to do. So out of that sort of muddled situation...and it was muddled, because I think you can find 2 or 3 different points of view in the newspaper accounts at the time when people were writing these things up with an idea of proving somebody's point. Anyway, the town was founded here, and then in order not to do

injury to the businesses in Gardnerville, why, they were offered a chance to come and build or transfer their business to Minden. That didn't set well with those to whom the offer was made. So it was 10 years of backbiting.

K: You suggested that H. F. Dangberg, Jr., was the driving force behind the creation of Minden.

Yes, he was.

K: Do you know whether or not he had a grand plan in mind? Did he have a planned community in mind?

What are you referring to when you say planned community?

K: You see, I'm asking you. There are several different types of planned community that I can think of. There is a community that is planned in a physical sense, such as our own national capitol, Washington, D.C., in which there is a physical plan for the arrangement of the structures and the major arteries of transportation within the community. There are other types of planned communities. Utopian communities are the most common socially planned communities with which I am familiar. Did he have any social or physical plans for the arrangement of...?

No, not any social at all. The way the town is laid out.. .that was a survey made by the Dangberg Company on their land, and then the whole town—the streets and so forth and the parks—were dedicated to the town of Minden. The town of Minden was a nonentity; there was no organization, you see. I don't know how much it was characteristic of my family, but there were so many things done without any thought of how they might turn out. Everything was fresh and new, so you just

started out and you did it. I know I have that tendency in myself. I want to do something—I start out and do it. And it doesn't always work out well.

Anyway, the town wasn't 5 years old before they began Carson Valley Day. He [H. F. Dangberg, Jr.] wanted to invite people to the valley and give them a good time, so they began barbecuing beef and pork and so forth and inviting people to come and have a free meal. This went on for years until the people began to drop it a little bit [laughter] and the world began to come in on them. That was as much of a plan as there was. It was a chance to be Lord Bountiful, I guess, instead of Lady Bountiful. The first time they did it they brought the people in by train—ran special V & T trains out here and brought people in and served them beautiful valley-grown strawberries and cream and barbecued beef; everything you could think of. It was written up in the papers. It was very elaborate. That happened while I was in Europe with my grandmother, so I wasn't here to see it actually, but I heard about it. Well, that set a precedent, you see.

This reminds me of something about the Washos. The Washo, if you know anything about the Indian allotments, there were grants of land by the government: first the reservations and then the allotments and then colonies. The Indian allotments were individual allotments to pine nut land. They were surveyed and given to the individual Washo families. Every year, then, the ranchers who were running livestock out in that country (sheep or cattle) in order to keep the Washos in good humor—it was another one of my uncle's ideas—they would kill a beef and give the Washos a big barbecue, and the Washos would come together for that.

K: Where would that barbecue be held?

It was held in Dresslerville after the Dresslers gave 40 acres of land to the Washo tribe out there. Now Dresslerville, that was a colony idea. And before that I just wouldn't know.

K: This was an idea of your uncle H. F., Jr.?

Yes.

K: Well, did Minden proceed according to whatever loose organizational plan he had in mind for it?

Then we began giving lots away to people to build houses on. We had a great way of giving things away. We gave the railroad right-of-way, the town site, and then we gave lots to all sorts of people. And that went on until we were in great financial difficulties in the 1930s. Then we stopped it and began charging a little bit for the lots. Some people who have bought them recently thought we charged a lot, but we still were very modest in our charges.

K: I guess what I'm getting at here is wondering what sort of guiding philosophy there was behind the development of Minden. Minden apparently developed according to a plan established by your uncle. Was that plan to create a viable community by giving away property in order to attract people who would then develop...?

That's the part; I suppose you could state it that way. It was never anything that I saw or heard in my experience, but that would describe what happenethis way of giving lots away. Of course, then he'd organize these cooperatives. The creamery and the flour mill and the mercantile company were all cooperatives. And on all the boards, H. F., Jr. was a prominent member. So the thing was

just building up and building up all the time. Well, there's a lot of history there that's just as well not spoken, I guess.

And then the Minden Inn [was built], and then we went even farther and built the CVIC Hall, and we established the town water plant. So that all went into the plan; and what he envisioned the end was, I don't know. But these things... just as long as there was money, why, we just went on doing them.

K: And the money was all being put up by the corporation?

The money was all being put up by the ranch. And my father ran the ranch.

K: I gather the ranch was part of the corporation, as well?

Oh, the ranch was the whole corporation. Yes. It was the money-maker.

K: Perhaps now is the time to spend a little bit of time talking about that. I do need, if I can get it from you some clarification of the organization of the corporation itself.

[It was formed in 1902.]

K: What is your understanding of why the corporation was established?

Oh, it's very clear in the minutes of the first meeting. It was done to establish the ownership and the distribution of the property. After the corporation was formed my grandfather made a will in which one-half of the stock went to his widow and the other half was divided in fifths among his 5 children. For purposes of inheritance it was much better to have a corporation than to have all these members of the family living

off the ranch without any base from which to regulate the distribution of the property or the income or anything else.

K: The property itself was not divided, was it?

No. It was never divided. The property wasn't divided; the stock in the company that formed the corporation was.

K: That means dividing income, as well, then?

Well, if it's carried out that way it does, but this wasn't. So, the thing about trouble in the family... there was no particular trouble until we had to take the checkbook away from H. F. Dangberg, Jr., and everything followed from that. That's all I want to say about it.

K: Oh, I see. I'm still not entirely clear as to how H. F. Dangberg, Jr. could have... well, what was the power that enabled him to spend the corporation money on the development of Minden? Did he have some position within the corporation that permitted him to do this?

No. It was always done through meetings which he dominated. He was a very clever man in some respects, and he could talk people into almost anything. There would be meetings, but if there were any objections there were consequences. So he was really the power in the corporation. That was just all there was to it.

K: About when did the family decide that it was no longer a good idea to allow him to invest in some of these schemes of his?

I don't know that the family ever decided against these investments. This was only part of the story, because the main part of the income from the property and from the sale

of 4 or 5 nice pieces of property went for his personal debts, which he often incurred in the name of the corporation. This was when it became necessary to make some decisions about the checkbook and a few other things.

K: I've heard it rumored—it's only a rumor, but I'd like to corroborate it or have it denied if I can right now—that the Minden Inn was lost in that fashion.

Exactly.

K: So it is true?

Yes.

K: Can you tell me anything about that? Can you give me any details?

No more than that we had to dispose of it. Of course, to begin with we weren't hotel people. The Laxalts—as well as the Dangbergs—have had to give up in the hotel business, but I don't think they gave up for the same reason. No, we had to give it up because it was just a great nice organization with plenty of fine linen and silver and fine cooks to entertain all kinds of people. I heard, just a few years ago, from a person who knew us and heard of us in some meeting or other in Berlin, that H. F., Jr., before he had the Inn, would rent a whole floor in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco and entertain his friends for a week or 2. So it's easy to see where the money was going—not only into these cooperative organizations. Most of them were supposed to make money, but they really didn't under the management.

K: Was the Minden Inn lost in a...?

In a suit, no. We were forced to sell it.

K: In order to pay off debts, then?

I am really at a loss to know whether we got very much for it.

K: In the case of the Minden Inn we're dealing with an important subject if, as I understand it, it practically dominated the society of the Carson Valley for some time. The Minden Inn was where everything happened. What do you recall from your youth about what went on at the Minden Inn? What sort of a hotel was it, what kind of people did it attract, what activities occurred there?

Well, I have a very compressed idea. We had to let it go in the 1930s. There was a nice dining room, and if we had a good manager the Inn itself was usually pretty well managed. It was the finances that were ragged.

People would entertain there. Ladies had their card parties and what is now the bar was a ladies' room and was used for card parties. It was a place for dances. I remember the dances they used to have there—the Christmas and New Year's dances and parties of that kind. It was sort of a center and some people liked it, but I don't think it had too much to do with everybody in the valley. It was just a group of people—you might say the young people, politicians, et cetera—that would be interested in it. I don't think that it meant that much to everybody. It was owned by the Dangberg Company from only about 1918 until about 1930.

It was just a certain group of people in the valley who could really function in that environment. And then people came in from the outside. It was known as the "little St. Francis." It was really a very lovely hotel in its heyday. But how much it meant to the people of the valley...I think you've been talking to

people to whom it meant a good deal and not the general public in the valley.

K: Perhaps I have. What families would have frequented the Minden Inn?

Aside from the H. F. Dangberg family, I just don't know. Probably some of the William Dressler family and some of the Park family to an extent. I wouldn't really be able to say anyone else. Oh, anybody who happened to be in the bank and in public offices, both state and county and in politics in any way. But I wouldn't think that it extended to the general community to any great extent at all. The Lutheran church is really the key.

K: What's the key? What are we talking about?

That's the key to the life of the valley. The Lutheran church was very important because there were quite a number of German families here. These German families came to the country in the 1870s, and their center of gravity and activity was the Lutheran church. That persisted right down to the present.

I think I've said enough about the Minden Inn.

K: There are several other buildings that I was interested in. One of them is the C.O.D. Garage, which I think was constructed by your uncle, Clarence O. Dangberg.

Yes.

K: What can you tell me about the decision to put up the C.O.D. Garage?

I can't tell you anything about that, except that it was after the town was founded. I don't remember the year. The 3 brothers—Fred, John and George—decided to buy out

Clarence and Eva, the sister and the youngest brother. It was when they bought Clarence out that he put his money into the C.O.D. Garage.

K: They bought him out of the Dangberg corporation?

Yes.

K: And then he took in as a partner Fred Hellwinkel?

Mr. Hellwinkel was in charge of the shop initially, I believe. He was a genius, just as Danny [Hellwinkel] is today, who could just fix anything. Clarence was a fine salesman. Oh, he could sell things! So they had the Buick agency and they just went places with it. It was very fine until.. .Clarence's marriage broke up. When his wife left him he sort of went to pieces.

K: And it later passed into the hands of the Hellwinkels?

In the 1940s, I believe.

K: Another establishment about which you may have some knowledge was Papa Starke's. Frank Yparraguirre mentioned the fact that it was a popular gathering place for many of the German families.

Oh, yes; very much so.

K: How did that develop? Obviously the Basques had certain places they would go to: the French Hotel and a couple other places. The Washos had their own favorite places, apparently. How did Papa Starke's become the favorite gathering place of the German families here in the valley?

Well, Papa Starke was a very good cook. Norma [Ellis, see Dangberg] could tell you much more about that than I can. She lived in the town and she would know about that. He was quite a character. All my childhood I'd hear about things going on at Papa Starke's, but as for personal observation or experience, I have none.

K: You never went?

Oh, no. In those days no woman went into a bar. Don't you know that?

K: Well, now, I've heard that was true for some bars and I've heard that it was not for others; and I have heard it was true for some women and not for others.

At that time I don't know of any women who went. But all of my young days, after the Minden Inn was opened up women would go into that bar. But some of us were very much against that. So this women in bars is something that's happened since I was young.

K: Rather than spend any more time on some of the establishments here in Minden... it appears that Mrs. Ellis is going to be the one that I ought to talk to about some of these things. But there's one other topic that I'm interested in and I think you can help me with; that's the 1949 reopening of the United States v. The Alpine Land and Reser voir Company. It had been lying dormant for many years prior to that. There is a rich written record of what happened, but I doubt that it tells the whole story. What were the consequences of the 1949 decision to vigorously prosecute the suit?

Let us leave out the word "vigorously." Because it never was vigorous. It dragged

on and dragged on. And maybe that helped, because eventually the customary practices, historical record is what the suit was decided on. That was satisfactory to the upper users and to everybody on the river. But they spent many years getting to that.

Well, the consequence of this 1949 intervention by Mr. Herbig.... He didn't quite understand...and the people of the valley have always thought that because the Dangberg Company took one-third of the water in the river when the flow fell that the other people were cheated. And also because we had a system of holding water in reservoirs we could irrigate later than some of them. This was a very complicated thing historically, but after they found out what it was all about opposition always subsided. Anyway Mr. Herbig brought it up, and the thing that happened that we had always hoped would not happen was that the administration of the distribution of the water was thrown into the courts, and we had a water master. It was costly compared to what had been the cost of it before. So the suit brought on by Mr. Herbig invited punishment, really, on all of the people of the whole river valley. It was all due to Mr. Herbig's trying to fight the one-third agreement.

K: Yet the ratio of distribution of the water was not appreciably changed, as I understand it.

No, it wasn't changed and the distribution of the water remained as it had been. The Dangberg Company had rights to, I think, 87 percent of the water in the river when the water drops back to a certain flow. Then the Dangberg Company takes one-third of the river in a steady stream and the two-thirds is divided between all the other users no matter what their historical priority. So it always

looks to people as though the Dangberg Company had taken something away from them. But when we would say, "All right, we'll take back our 87 percent and you can have the 20 percent that's left," they always decide that they don't want that. They realized then that the one-third agreement favors everybody, and certainly the development of the valley.

At the time this one-third agreement was made in the late 1890s my grandfather was wanting to develop a great deal of sagebrush land. When you stand at a certain place on the levee of the Allerman ditch and look north over the valley you can see this great expanse of almost level land, all under cultivation now. Well, Grandfather stood there with my father (this is a bit of reconstruction on my part) and they saw a vision of what could be done with developing this land and went ahead doing it. In consequence of that vision they extended the Allerman ditch and they built reservoirs to store surplus water so that they could use it late in the season. They opened up that expanse of land that you can see from up there. The day that I realized that it was quite a thrill to me. Suddenly I could see what they had envisioned.

PHOTOGRAPHS



The butcher shop on the Dangberg Home Ranch, ca. 1910.
This facility served all the Dangberg ranches, families and employees.



The Minden Flour Mill and grain storage tanks, ca. 1925. The Dangberg family had an interest in the mill, as they did in many early Minden enterprises.

Photographs courtesy of Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library:
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