

*A series of conversations with Arda M. Haenszel, primarily concerning her 33 years of teaching in the San Bernardino City Schools. Taped in her home in Plymouth Village, Redlands January 1997.*

Payne: I'm interested in your experiences and what it was like teaching here in San Bernardino.

Arda: I know what I want - a chronological list which is just the thing. I told you that I was thinking of writing out reminiscences and so on. This is part of what I had written down. [Arda is referring to several handwritten pages, her list of subjects to discuss and an assortment of photos and memorabilia at her side.]

My father [Allen L. Haenszel, M. D.] didn't drive until the last two years of his life. So my mother drove for him, drove him to all his calls, drove him everywhere. And he did an awfully lot of maternity work. He was in charge of the [Santa Fe] emergency hospital which was the place where anybody that was hurt was taken for examination and decide what to do. If they were badly hurt and needed further help they were sent into the Los Angeles hospital, which was a real honest-to-goodness hospital. And this was under the direction of the big bucks there, they were my father's bosses.



Mother Arda C. Haenszel and auto, c. 1928

Payne: Where was the hospital located?

Well, that's one thing that is kind of interesting. It was located when we first came in 1924, it was located inside the gates, just inside the L Street

gate. It was a couple of rooms downstairs, and then there were some rooms upstairs, and we were told that the rooms upstairs were the bedrooms for the single apprentices who served on the fire department, the Santa Fe fire department. They had their own fire department as well as the city, the city helped too, and they had a method of indicating where the fire was with the number of toots on the whistle that you read about, so that the fellows that were off-duty could tell where the fire was. So anyway, it was there for a number of years, until they decided they wanted it outside the shops' area because it was not accessible to the people. You see, my father was not paid very much for this job. It was a responsible job, but he was only paid a pittance. It wasn't expected to be a living wage. He was expected to develop a private practice. And in return for his presence in the hospital he could use the hospital facilities for his private office, you see. So he developed a huge following among the families of the employees, and since a great many of them were Mexican - not all, by any means, there were many, many colored men, too, but since so many of them were Mexicans, they were having babies every nine months. So he had a tremendous practice in obstetrics. He was happy with it, he liked that kind of work. As he used to say, it's always a happy outcome. People are happy with their babies, instead of getting sick and dying, you know. And he was particularly successful because he treated them for months before the birth and for months after, very carefully and sanitarily. The women used to tell my mother how much they liked him, and how much they respected him, so he had a lot of practice that way. Of course, in those days he was a personal Medicare all by himself. It was no pay, some of the white people who had a little bit, who could pay, but not in money, would give him, and some of the others too, if they had chickens, they would give him a dozen eggs. Well, you've read about it other places. And one interesting thing was, that people who lived in Rialto I think it was, they had a small orange grove, and so they dedicated one tree to the doctor and his family. I got all the oranges from that tree [laugh], but that was the way he was paid. And of course they would pay him sometimes, too, as far as that was concerned. You can imagine the sum of money, and you can imagine the bills. Well, you can't get an office call with a bill for six or eight months' maternity case with the maternity in the home! Almost never was the maternity in the hospital. It just wasn't done. They couldn't afford it, sometimes but very seldom.

Payne: Were midwives common?

No, this was entirely medical. But he used to bring the children at home. As I said, my mother used to drive my father. They - babies - would always come at night. You know that. So I would go along in the car, and she

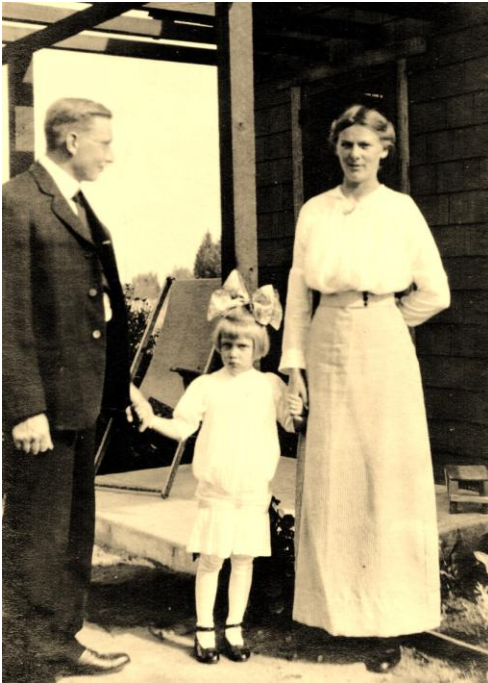


Arda at home/father's office 842 6th Street 1928

would drive him out to the place where the patient was, and we would of course talk and pass the time. It was usually all night. He couldn't count on clean sheets for the mother. He had a big suitcase in which he took supplies for this, sterile, and he had a whole case with clean newspapers. He used newspapers underneath the sheets there, you see. It had nothing to do but they had their kids every year. They were used to it, I guess, and he was very successful. Almost never did he have problems. They were used to it, I guess, about no beds. When he would go in the evening we'd see him ring the doorbell or rap on the door, and then it would open from within, just a crack, just wide enough for him to get in. And my mother once asked him, "Why don't they open the door when you come?" "Oh," he said, "the kids are there all over the floor. When they get sleepy, they just drop down and somebody throws a coat over them." Well, those were the kids I taught.

Since I taught in the district that he served primarily, they were families that he knew. He had a marvelous memory, he could remember the kids' names and who had had measles, all that sort of thing. And if I needed to know a little bit about the family, he would tell me about it. But the trouble was, we couldn't get acquainted too much because we'd change. This is a practice we had in the schools. We changed every semester instead of every year. The semester was divided into A and B. Maybe you remember that, but I don't think so, I think you're too young to remember that. So we only had the children in many cases for just half a year, and then we'd get a new class coming in. That was sort of difficult, too, and sometimes it was happy [chuckle]. You'd get an awful bunch that you couldn't do much with, and you'd pass them on.

Payne: Was it September to February?



The Haenszels in Altadena 1915

Yes, it was along about that time when the change came, but I can't remember exactly. It's so long ago. Well, I've just about exhausted that sort of thing.

Payne: Do you have any brothers or sisters, Arda?

No. That's why I'm so, kind of offish now, because I not only had no family, I had no relatives around. My mother and father were my only relatives this side of Buffalo, New York.

I lived in Altadena first of all, then Searchlight, Nevada, well, you know, that I wrote about, and then we came back.

We were sort of destitute, but we saved up a little bit while we were in Searchlight. He took a nine-months' refresher course at San Diego County Hospital. He had to stay there of course, and we had an apartment fairly close, my mother and I, and I went to junior high and that's where I caught trachoma. I would have gone blind if they hadn't caught it in time. I had surgery for that. I had surgery for everything. It was raging at that time, and they didn't have paper towels in the restrooms. They just had these cloth towels on a chain, and that's apparently how I got it. And there were many, many pupils there in the junior high that had it, and didn't know they had it, in many cases. Well, we were there for nine months in San Diego, and then they wanted to get into practice somewhere, start practice somewhere. We were destitute. We went to live with some friends of ours. We lived with them about nine months I guess. He was trying to get a place where he could get established. That was in Altadena, or Pasadena, I guess they lived. And then he opened an office in part of our apartment, our upstairs apartment on Colorado Street, right near Lake, where the Tournament of Roses goes through now. It was across from the high school. And he just got drop-in people occasionally, it wasn't enough to pay for our food. We were desperate. Then his connection with the Santa Fe from Searchlight - that's another story - when he left Searchlight they said, "well, now we'll keep an



Arda 1930

eye out to see if there's another place that you'd like to go." They realized that Searchlight was dying, that there was not enough practice there for him. They knew why he was leaving. So, we were just about to starve to death in Pasadena when the call came. We had a choice of Pioche or of San Bernardino. Well, he snapped up San Bernardino, 1924. He had to come here, and my mother and I stayed on until the school in Pasadena was out. I have a thing written out about the history of my father before the Searchlight period, and there's the book, and then I think there is something afterward. I've written up some of this stuff already, but not published it of course.

Payne: But you did publish a book on Searchlight?

Oh sure, sure. That's one of the Casebier books. In fact, it's the second one he published, the second one of that type. See, he's done a series of reminiscence-type books that give a picture of the East Mojave in the earlier days. Now, it's there in the library, there may be one to check out downstairs.

Payne: Your Dad must have been very proud of you going all the way to Berkeley.

Oh yes, but he was always disappointed that I didn't go ahead and get a doctorate. But how could I? I came out - I finished my credential, general secondary credential which in those days let me teach everything from kindergarten through junior college. And it was a good thing because it helped me later on. Well, anyway, where were we? Oh, he was disappointed I didn't go and get -- but I couldn't. Well, for one thing, the teaching got me down so, my health was poor and I couldn't work and study at the same time. I couldn't do that when I was in regular college.

They gave me \$500. They lost everything, all their savings, in the crash, and of course my father still had his job. They lost everything but a \$500 gold note. They gave that to me for that last year at Berkeley. I came home with a little of it.



Payne: Where did you live in Berkeley?

Well, as an undergraduate I lived in one of the boarding houses. They didn't have a regular dormitory at Berkeley at that time. I don't know if they do now or not. But they had a series of organized and controlled boarding houses, private ownership, and I lived in one of those. I was just there two years [1931-32]. My senior year I lived in one of those, and my graduate year I lived in another one of the private places but not under the supervision of the university.

Payne: Was your Dad still in practice when you came back to San Bernardino and started to teach?

Oh yes, of course, he had developed his practice. Most of it was the people that worked at the Santa Fe, but not entirely. And over the years, he had developed a relationship with the Southern Pacific and the Union Pacific. Since he was handy and on-the-spot and so on, and they didn't have a union, they didn't have enough of an establishment in San Bernardino, they had him do the examinations for employment for the other railroads, so he was connected with those, too.



Allen L. Haenszel, M.D.

Well, by that time he had started to drive for himself, and it was a bad thing because he was a horrible driver [chuckle]. But it freed us for a little bit. He was sort of kicked upstairs. It was one of those situations where they had somebody, a young fellow coming out who was a relative of the boss of the hospital association in Los Angeles. He was looking for a position and they decided to give the San Bernardino hospital to him. And kicked my Dad out. But they didn't quite dare to kick him out completely. This was a situation I never knew too much about. He was put into an advisory capacity. They had several specialists, had had all along, arrangements where my father could pass them on to a specialist if they needed that kind of work. So he was given a position of that type. He had to move out of the hospital of course, and that was when he took a court - not an auto court but a regular apartment court, on 5th Street, purposely close, as close as possi-

ble to his jobs. It worked out, and the foremen of the different departments knew his work and that the men liked him and so on. The workmen had to get permission from their foremen to go to my father instead of to the hospital. They were his patients. And they stayed that way. They took special trouble to get assigned to him because he was popular here. They did like his work. I think that probably developed into a more private practice, more people than he'd have had otherwise. And then he finally moved from that court to the Platt Building. Yeah, that's all of that story.

Payne: Did he know about Lyndon Johnson running the elevator? [1925]

No, it seems to me that came out in the paper sometime after he had died. He died December of '59. I'd have to look up when that was, but there was nothing said about that. I went there to get my hair done, for many, many years. Tommi Roberts - she remembered that political business because she was violently Republican [chuckle].

I didn't get a job the first year. But I kept busy, and I signed up for substitute, and I got to do work in all the grades. And I worked as a volunteer in the girls' dean's office in the high school just for practice. And I also made a little money reading papers for the English department [at Valley College]. That was my major, you know. English composition and literature.

Payne: Then the archeology, you took as a hobby?

That came up later. My father was interested in that, and got me interested. But, I worked then for the English department, and even a few of the people in the history and Latin departments needed readers, a reader there. On English composition they were simply deluged with homework, and reading all those compositions. All those composition courses were terrible.

Payne: Teachers don't have that kind of help anymore, I don't think.

Well, they have all kinds of help. I had no help with these tremendous classes. None of us did. So I taught, I read papers for them. One of them had been my teacher when I was in Valley College so she knew the kind of work I did. That's why she hired me for that. And incidentally, at the same time, Kay Beattie's husband [George] was just out of college and was looking for a teaching job, too. He had a masters, it was in astronomy I think, some kind

of science. He went a little bit to Valley College for that year. I worked for 35 cents an hour reading papers. It was just about enough to pay my folks for food. Of course they didn't ask me for money, and I had to use their car to get around. I couldn't buy a car. I finally bought the car when I got enough money to pay for it. But the whole year I didn't have a regular teaching job. There weren't any open, there were only five positions in the whole San Bernardino system the year I came out [1933].

The next year I got in. Well, that's a complicated deal about that, too. We had a series of putrid superintendents. The first one, when I first came out, and his successor, were both kicked out for sexual offenses. And they were nasty. The first interview I had was when I came back with my credential, the first interview I had with the superintendent, he greeted me with something like "You needn't think you're going to get a job here because your father's a Mason!" The first words he said to me - that was the attitude. Well, we didn't know it at the time, he didn't know it or I didn't know it, but my records - application and records - had been misfiled. They had been put in the file of a friend of mine who was a specialist in home economics, and it wasn't likely there'd be any job opening in home economics. But here was my stuff all in with hers. So I wasn't even considered. They didn't check anything. Of course at that time the Masons were, and I guess they still are to some extent, very much interested in the educational system in San Bernardino. They were personally interested at that time [in the superintendents' offenses]. And that was why he gave me that greeting when I walked into his office. Well, it just shattered me. I was so shy anyway. I wasn't used to that kind of thing. But the next year there was an opening in elementary school, in Mt Vernon School, 4th grade. Well, I had had practice teaching, a semester each in high school and [inaudible] grade, and nothing with the little kids. I had never had playmates of my own age. Strangely enough, wherever I was, there were never playmates of my own age. They were either older or little bitty kids. I wasn't used to that kind of thing, oh, it was dreadful. I started in the 4th grade, the next semester they put me down to 2nd grade. That was supposed to be easier.



Mt. Vernon School 1938



Payne: And you told me earlier that those classes were 60 kids in the class?

Well, at one time sometimes they were. There was a period when they were that way. But after things straightened out a little bit, some years afterward, when we got out of the depression - this was the depth of the depression.



Mt. Vernon School 1936

I was shifted without asking for a change. They shifted you around whether you wanted to or not. I was shifted over to Harding School [1942] after nine years at Mt. Vernon. I discovered that the same year they had extended the school district boundary which had been I Street over to, I think it was E Street. So, these kids, the families, from one school then went to Harding School. I think I told you before, I figured it was about time for me to leave Harding, and that was many years after, when the grandson of one of my kids from Mt. Vernon entered Harding kindergarten [chuckle]. I would meet the parents there once in a while of kids I had had in school, and one I could remember came for a conference, a parent conference. I recognized her of course, and we talked and so on, and she said so-and-so, the kid, I can't remember who it was, has no father, all kinds of things like that.

[Arda sorting through material on table]

I wrote an article fairly recently about F Street School. The old school was architecturally patterned after the World Fair thing, back in Chicago [Philadelphia Centennial in 1876]. And Harding was built just before I came out [opened 1924]. And it was built on F St. across from Pioneer Park. The F St. School was back in the middle of the full square block, between F and G, and 5th and 6th.

This is about the segregation in the school system. There was segregation because of language, and of course, incidentally, most of the families that were definitely just over from the old country, Mexico, and all of their habits and so on, and their language. Wherever they lived, they were made to go to Ramona School. Ramona was to the west - I forget what street it was on now [7th Street] - west of Mt. Vernon. They were the ones who couldn't speak English. The teachers there were noble. They were absolutely noble. They were much admired by all the other teachers in the system. And they did a marvelous job of teaching not only language but ways of living and so on.

Payne: Were there other minorities, or were they all Mexican?

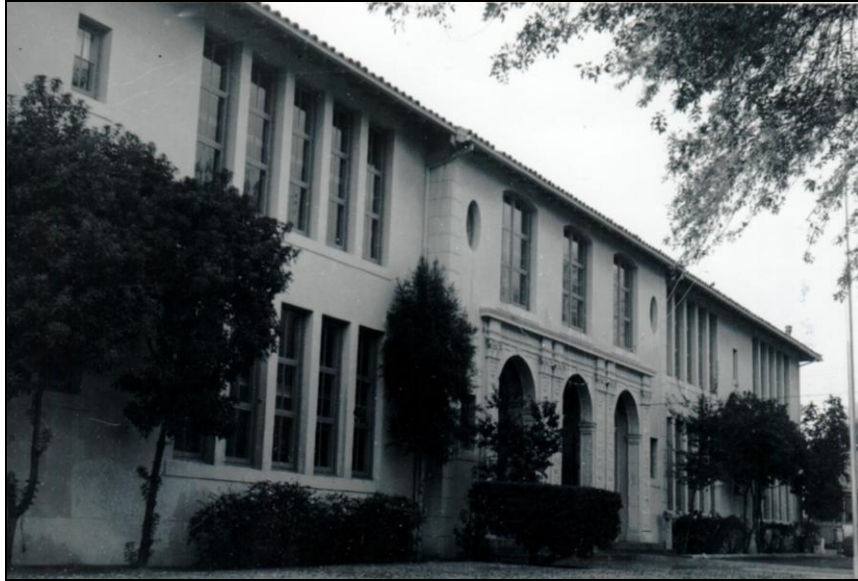
It was United Nations. It was everything. We had a few Japanese who, compared with the rest of them, seemed brilliant. But they had been brought up to concentrate and to obey the teacher and to concentrate on learning. They were well-behaved and they seemed bright. I don't think they were too much brighter than some of the Mexican children. Boy, they did their work. I had Chinese. I had several members over the years of a family, that ran as a family [Albert Poy Kwock]. They had the Palace Market in downtown San Bernardino. They had meat. I think they had groceries, too. And then, in a few years they opened up this big building which is still there on the northwest corner of Mill St. and Waterman. They had their market there for some years. Anyway, it was a going family, a successful Chinese family. Oh, they were cute kids, not only smart but awfully cute. I had several of them in the family, and a nice family to deal with. There was a whole neighborhood - and this had been written up and published in the annual, Heritage Tales [1994], about the Italian families, a history of the Italian families. There were a number of them. The one that I was familiar with, he and his brother

had a market - a grocery and meat market - both of them had markets on Mt. Vernon but not together. And I had the boy. He was bright and active and obstreperous and needed to be taken down, so I went to see father and said, "well, would you object if we gave him a little paddling"? "Oh, no," he said, "for goodness sakes, do it." They were an intelligent group and mostly business people. They had restaurants. Mother Massetti's was a famous one, very successful. And I had a kid whose mother and father had one on 5th St., very successful and well-known for many years. I don't know, they had other businesses around. They were commercial people in that area. There were many black children whose parents - many of them worked for the Santa Fe, or a lot of them - particularly lived in the eastern part of the barrio, just west of I St., that was sort of a center where they concentrated there. They were sort of a mixed bag. Some of them were troublesome and others were just - they didn't have much scholastic background. It didn't come to them through their families, because their fathers were just workmen, you know. Plus there were the Grapes of Wrath migrants from the dust bowl.

Payne: Were a lot of the families transient, or when they came did they stay?

Well, that's another story. I was talking about the permanent people. There was another group and it was a small group of them, kind of an interesting background. They were the pioneer families, some were I guess Mormons, though I don't know, anyway, they were well-known pioneer families. And I found out in a letter that - oh dear, what is his name, that had the famous hotel on 3<sup>rd</sup> and Arrowhead - you know, that big hotel [Starke's] that's so famous - Anyway, I was doing something about the hotel, publishing something about it, and he wrote me a letter. And he told me that the reason his father had lost, financially lost the hotel, I hadn't known that it was lost that way, was that he bought property like many other people, west of I St., when the Santa Fe shops were brought in. Mt. Vernon district. It was a district really, not exactly a geographical district. It was a separate school district. Mt. Vernon School was separate from the San Bernardino schools. Anyway, his people had bought land, and many others had bought land, over in the Mt. Vernon district because they felt that that was the way the city was going, and they lost everything, they financially lost. And then there was some, still some Santa Fe persons, families...they were the normal, in most cases the normal kids that you would find in other parts of the city...white children. The Harding district, after I got over there I had the daughter of the assistant superintendent of schools in my fourth grade. At

that time he was in World War II, and she was living with her grandmother. He is famous here in Redlands right now. He called me one day [chuckle].



Harding School 1958

And then, over a period of years, it was extremely important where they [migrant families] stayed. I don't know, they may have kept in the outskirts. They may have stayed with relatives. They may have rented a place and maybe not paid for it. I don't know how they got along, but there were also several local, they would call themselves residents, of San Bernardino, that went around for harvest, and when school started in September we would have, we would be assigned a regular-sized classroom of about 29 or 30 kids, the way the other schools had. Of course we knew that it wouldn't be like that for very long. We knew the families, this family was out in the nuts. Picking walnuts you know, picking stuff like that, these were in the oranges, these were in the grapes as the season progressed. And of course the whole family worked, the kids and everybody. They all had to. They didn't make enough, and still don't I guess. We knew these families that would be back and others that came in. Of course we had a continual moving trade too, that were going through to other areas that were not residents of San Bernardino but stopped over for a while, maybe to make a little money to get on.

They particularly were the ones that were the most difficult. I remember in one class, I think it was third grade, second or third grade, I had a girl who was thirteen years old, awfully nice girl, just as sweet as she could be. She couldn't read, she hadn't been to school. We would help those kids as much

as we could, but we didn't have them more than a few months. Nobody had them more than a few months, poor kids. And on some occasions the families were nice, too, but what could you do? That's when the classes often rose up to 60 or more and with that mix you had a level from less than first grade up through and perhaps there would be one or two in the class at grade level, not more than just a handful. And you had all the degrees in between. You try to figure, we had reading groups. You're supposed to have three groups [chuckle]. We didn't have enough text books in the school. What we had were sets of readers, and sometimes the sets didn't contain enough to go around the reading group. You had sets of readers, and you ordered them by the month or so, however long it took to use that set of books, that's a little bit impossible, we're all going along at the same level. And of course, you couldn't get enough to suit everybody, there were always some who just couldn't make it no matter what. Get in trouble. There was nothing they could do by themselves. That was a big problem I had. They didn't know how to use a crayon properly and constructively. They didn't know anything. And what were they to do? But touch somebody, and you know. I was no good at discipline.

Payne: Did they come to school with any socialization skills? How to get along with each other?

Heavens no! You fought your way through life! You had to. Yeah, and yet, with all that I had some delightful children. I had two that graduated cum laude from UCLA. One was a Mexican, very nice Mexican. I had his brother, too. I read in the paper that he came back to San Bernardino and went into social work. The other was a very interesting person. She was half Chinese [Iris Tan]. Her father [Edwin "Tom" Tan] had a restaurant in the Stewart Hotel for many years on the southeast corner of 3rd and E St. Her mother was Hispanic. She was brilliant. She wrote a play and directed it. Outstanding student, and a delightful little girl. She went on to UCLA and graduated with honors. She came back to see me, she came back and sat in one of my classes. I'm sure she was disappointed. I didn't have anything much in the way of a class when she came. I think that was the class, and this is something else, that was the class of mostly disturbed children at Harding. Why they kept these children together, I don't have the answer, they kept these children together in one class, and then progressed, from kindergarten up. They were notorious. The majority of the children were in some way psychologically disturbed. They were not normal children. They



needed help, most of them. And they were boys particularly, but not entirely, and physically violent too. You didn't dare turn to write on the blackboard for fear someone would hit somebody over the head. They were that kind of a class. They went on year by year. Well, I had them for one year. I didn't have preparation for this kind of thing, either in my personal life or in my education. I was a misfit at those two schools. I finally got into something, after I was so deaf that I couldn't work very well. I was having difficulty. I finally got a principal and classes that were something that I had longed for.

That was when I went to Sterling [1960]. That was where the kids were children of officers at Norton Air Base. They had lived all over the world and the parents were upset if the kids wouldn't follow through on everything. I hear, every Christmas I hear from some of the people. I think I told you, this one boy [Joseph Pia, Jr.] – I have his picture here – was out to see me this year. He came out to see his father who lives in San Bernardino. He and his wife came out to see his father, who turned out to be his stepfather. I hadn't known that. We were in correspondence at Christmastime and they came out to visit, and I think they've gone all over the world, in choir and churches - one of the Italian families. He had a lovely mother. She was very active with P.T.A. and helped a great deal. No wonder he turned out well.

Payne: What a difference a family makes.

That makes a big difference.



Mt. Vernon School 1938 City Unit

Some of this is what I told you about [shuffling papers and pictures on the table]. All about the units that were taught there [Mt. Vernon School]. The farm unit and the city unit. And of course we didn't have such things as bus transportation for trips. So we took walking trips around town. And in some cases that was the first

time that some of the second graders had ever been in a department store, like Harris's. And of course I didn't know anything about farms. In the third grade I always did a history of San Bernardino. California history we did in the fourth grade, but local "What was it like in San Bernardino?" walking tours of downtown, a schedule of historic sites. We'd walk around, and children have marvelous imaginations you know. I'd tell them first the background of what we were going to see. I'd say "now look here, this is such and such, and can you wipe out this in your mind, and see this"?, and they would. Well, we went all the way downtown, over to Arrowhead where the courthouse was, and I don't know whether we took in the cemetery or not. Well, 9th St. was too far for the kids to walk. We used to make those trips. Another trip that we did – I felt I knew the units in California history – you had to have some preparation, you should have some preparation in third grade, so I made it a point to try to teach the third graders what geography was, not in so many words, but I wrote a little booklet, "The Saints Around Us." It talks about the historic sites around us. Then we went on a field trip. For public school we went up on - so this time we had the freeway, so we went onto the 5th St. freeway overpass. Imagine taking a bunch of kids [laughter]. Well, I had some parents, too, who helped, and we went up on the sidewalk and we could see from there all around the area, all the saints. "How do you tell somebody else about this, who can't come here and see it"?

You show it on the map, and various suggestions and so on. We did a small project in arithmetic. We had a drive for marble bags for Santa Claus Incorporated and we made the bags, the kids sewed the bags and so on, and the boys brought their extra marbles, so I'd buy some extra marbles, and we'd fill them.

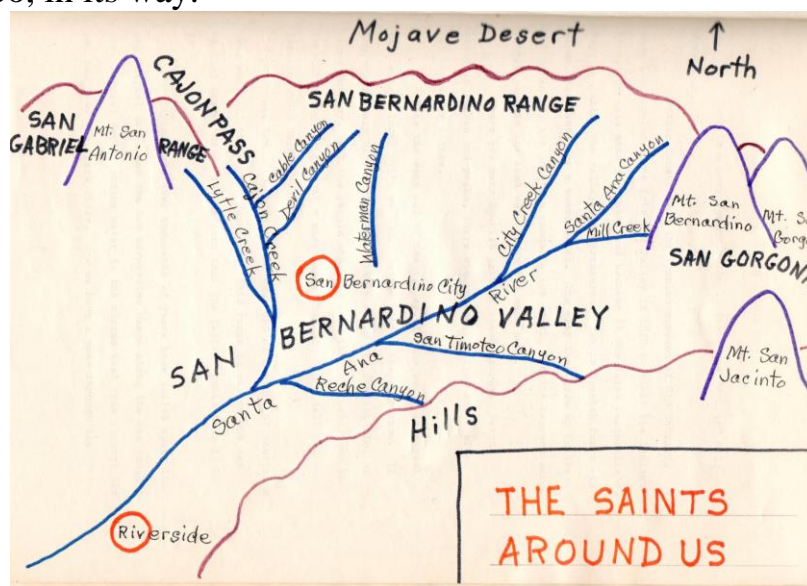
We had supervisors all through the time. There was a general supervisor in the elementary school and all the schools who was supposed to help, you see. And a music supervisor and an art supervisor. Well, I didn't know anything about music and not particularly about art. But they were not so important anyway. The important one was the general supervisor, our life or death professionally over us, and we were in terror of her. Although she didn't know it, she didn't mean to be that way, but we realized what the sit-



Harding School 1959

uation was. And we sent a kid around with a book into all the rooms in the building as a signal of her presence [laughter].

But I learned that I wasn't very good at teaching. I didn't know how to handle the problems. I did the best I could, and I worked *like a dog* [strongly stressed] thirteen hours a day, day and night I worked on it. But I found that I made a little headway with the powers that be because I could organize and write up things [chuckle]. That's what I did. When we took a trip after the days when the buses were available, one bus trip a year, so that many of us worked toward that bus trip and taught what we were going to see. It was all organized. Well, I was the organizer. That's one of my fortés, I couldn't teach but I could organize and write it up. Well, the supervisors felt that was ma-a-a-arvelous and also it saved them an awfully lot of work [chuckle]. Every day there was a lot of material to pass out which kind of helped their stock a little bit too. So I got by, I was a poor teacher, they knew I was but I needed the job so I did what I could do. And I think it was a valuable contribution too, in its way.



They gave me two or three classes together to fill the bus. Sometimes we took two buses. We had a trip that started when we left the school, and before, we made a little map of where we were going, and what streets we were going on and I had a bunch of cards made, with big print so the kids could read it in the bus. I'd blow the whistle, hold up the card [chuckle] and the card would say what it was we were supposed to look for, you see. We had a teaching situation from the time we left the school until the time we got back because there were things on the way back, too. We went one way and came back another, always, and that's the kind of thing I wrote up. In

fact, they [supervisors] went along with us a couple of times and they kept my stock a little bit. This was after I had learned a thing or two. I was helping teachers plan trips after I retired. There were a lot of teachers that I knew or their principals knew, or knew of me that were referred to me, and through the museum after I stopped teaching.

Payne: You never stop learning.

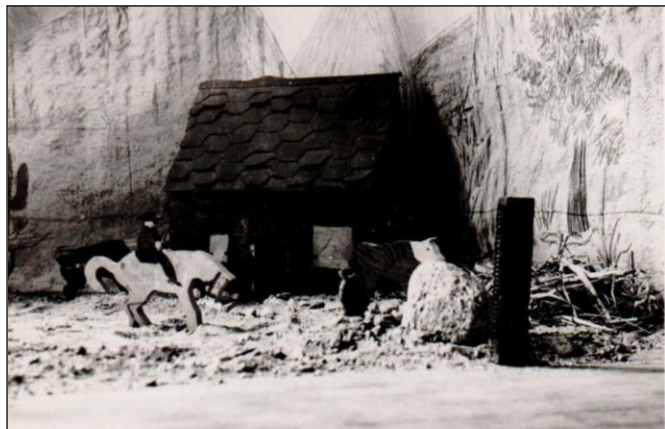
Oh no, one doesn't.

Payne: You were spending your summers up at Berkeley taking other classes?

Yes, every summer. I liked going where it was cool, and I liked taking one course in the summer session. Of all the things I didn't have time to get in because I had to take so much of this *stupid* [stressed] education that never did me any good.

One of the early units I did, I think in second grade, we started a little newspaper, a class newspaper, which we distributed around to the other rooms. We asked for contributions from the other rooms but didn't get much. But

anyway, in some cases they had to dictate and I wrote it down. I started a unit on cowboys. I think that was a third grade and wrote it up. I sent it in to the California Teachers Association, pictures. We had combined classes, even in the half-year. It didn't amount to anything, they didn't learn anything much about cowboys, it was



Cowboy unit 1935

just – we had to do that kind of thing, that was the thing to do. And if we didn't have something to show and write up, incidentally, why it was just too bad for us.

And songs, well, I can't read notes, never could. But we made up songs. The kids would hum them, I would write down simple notes on the staff, and by

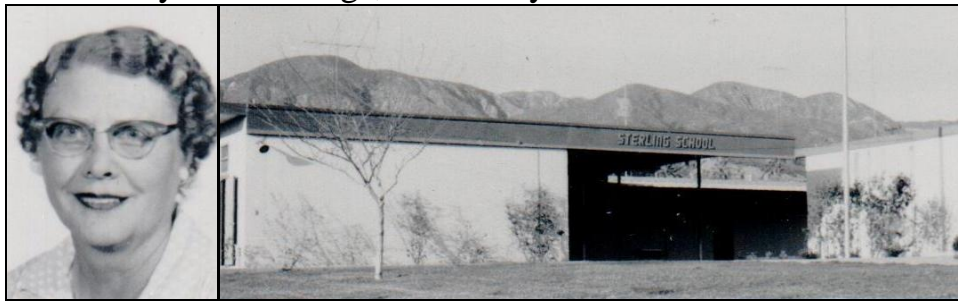


golly we got them published. I had a whole collection of those songs. I wrote it up big, I had to, I was in danger of being fired. I was a poor teacher. I was not prepared. I was not trained. I did the best I could. I had to. I needed the money. I had no money. We lost everything we had. They gave me their last \$500. During the depression they lost all their savings.

And when I went to retire, substituting at Mt. Vernon School in 1934, that counted a little bit, and also, to my greater surprise my work reading papers at Valley College counted towards my retirement, because I had to have a secondary credential in order to do that work at Valley College.

Payne: Did the schools back then serve meals? Lunches?

No, wait a minute. I remember now that I think they did at Sterling, by the last years, but there just were no facilities for meals, they weren't built for such. There was a teachers' room, and I think some kind of a guest room (?) but that was only for meetings, when they had refreshments.



Sterling School 1964

Payne: Were you aware of your kids being hungry?

I didn't know enough. They must have been, sometimes, some of them. I know that in many cases the teachers would bring something for the kids and I know also that I did myself. Brought clothes for the kids so they could come to school. Not too long after I started teaching the teachers in the city organized a child welfare group that took over that responsibility and we all gave to it of course. I remember, I had a Christmas card from a girl - this year – from a girl for whom I bought yardage material so her mother could make a dress so she could come to school. I don't think she ever knew it. I don't think her mother ever told her.



The fourth “R” - the rod – Well, I think there are occasionally places where they need that. Now, this one kid, I only spanked three kids in my whole



Mt. Vernon School 1941

term. But, this one, he was Italian. He was the one who had the market. It did wonders for this kid. He needed to know there was physical authority. He was a bright kid, and a nice kid. But he was just trying things out. There was a place occasionally, very occasionally, where that is - was the right answer. So I didn't know too much about it at the time, but now as I look back it was the right thing.

“She shall receive one thousand one hundred and eighty-seven dollars annually. I thought it was \$1500 but by golly it was \$1100 [chuckle]. In the classroom, we still have it I think where people come and visit classes. We dreaded it. So much of what you were doing doesn't show,

you know. Our P.T.A. was small, very eager and active. Apparently, when the school was opened, it was a fairly new school, because it was one of these stucco places. The earlier Mt. Vernon School - I have pictures of it - up on 11th where the Mexican park is now. But when the school was built [on 9th and Mt. Vernon] I think there were no electrical fixtures except in the office. There was no library of course. And when I went to teach there there were four outlets but only two had ceiling fixtures, and the other two were just ends of wires sticking up. Well, when we had a cloudy day like last week, the kids couldn't see what was on their desk. It was impossible for them. But I'd stand at the window, I couldn't see either, I'd stand at the window and so I could read to them. That kept them quiet, and well, they learned something.

Oh, I'd stand at the window there, my room faced Mt. Vernon Avenue, and we'd see the convoys going up Mt. Vernon to the basic training, early in World War II. Long convoys of troops and equipment heading up Mt. Vernon to the parks. Teachers and administrators were told to “volunteer” for registration and assignment of ration books. After days of teaching we spent long evenings until midnight issuing ration books to families with 10 or 15 children, plus all the cousins and aunts and grandparents.

Payne: question re: language difficulty

They were supposed to be able to speak English if they came to Mt. Vernon and that was supposedly a step up socially here among the families. But we found that they knew a few expressions - hello, goodbye, how are you, and not much else. I didn't know Spanish, but I had picked up from living in San Bernardino. And my father studied Spanish when he was convalescing after his long illness. He took a night class in Spanish because a lot of his patients didn't speak English. And I had picked up common phrases you know, but we got along all right, but it was one of the great difficulties. They didn't get the fine points of anything.

Observation summary – this is the principal. They all mention about the same thing.... Mel Feurer. This one man, I cannot remember his name now, it's probably in here somewhere, he became principal at Harding. He had been the janitor at Harding while he was in Valley College, and some of us had gotten acquainted with him there. I know some people were wondering what kind of reception he'd get, but we all liked him and respected him, and he respected us. Oh dear, what was his name?

Olmsted was the last principal I had. We still exchange Christmas cards with the Olmsteds.

Payne: He was the principal at North Park when my children were there.

Yes, well he was also out at Cajon [High School]. When he was at Cajon school I got involved through the museum , a teacher that was supposed to be a Serrano Indian , and she was teaching there, he knew me, and he suggested that they have me come and give a slide talk up at Cajon school. One of the things I wanted to work on - I started to work on something, and then I quit teaching and didn't continue with it. A series of little stories, of anecdotes, one for each school, each city school, of something that happened in their history, but I never did work that out.

PAYNE: Gosh, a lot of wonderful years here.

Hard years, very hard. They weren't wonderful for me. No, I suffered through it. I wasn't prepared for it in any way, and I was nailed down, I wasn't allowed to get out of the situation that I was put in. I was criticized for the things I did, not knowing this supervisor that wrote the letter also had other things to say.

Payne: Behind your back, you mean?

No, she said them to me, I'll give her that credit. I was in Harding School, the class had got me down, and I was laying them low, and I was talking loud, and it must have been hot weather and the windows were up, well, she came along and came in to the office and said something to the principal "we've got to do something about that woman." So I was called on the carpet and that's the same person.

Payne: You didn't have the options of going into another school?

Another school? Oh, anybody who was stuck in, and I don't know, there were seven or eight schools, of the same type in the city, the outskirts of the city, the south and west end were like that. It wasn't just Mt. Vernon and Harding. Anybody who found themselves stuck there was stuck - time after time after time, and this was well known, somebody would make an application to move out of the district, either that or they would go to another one of the same kind. It happened over and over and over until we got the idea, we finally got the idea you just didn't ask for a change. That was this series of superintendents, the first ones, I know the two first ones, whether there was a third one, I don't think was one of that kind, they were kicked out because of sexual harassment. Then there was another one following, he didn't know too much— he wasn't a very good superintendent. Then another one came along, that was fairly good, he was fair, and that was when I got changed to about 5 or 6 years at Sterling.

Payne: The superintendents, was that something made public in the newspapers?

I think there was some very carefully worded things in the papers. They had to explain that they were going, but not necessarily why I think. The Masons in those days in the 30s and 40s were very much interested in the school system. They supported it, and they also criticized it if there was

stuff. That's why I got that greeting from the first superintendent. They were very active behind the scenes. I know my father would come home and say or ask me "why hasn't my daughter been given a job"? And he did not push it, he would not do that but there were some who knew me, some of them had met me and knew me and knew that I was ready to teach, wondered and said something about it. And I think they were responsible, and also the way I got out of it was because one of my teachers at Valley College, who later became a very good friend of mine, she went on my behalf finally after a year of nothing. She went up to check on my file and they couldn't find it. It wasn't just the Masons, it was my own people in the education field that inquired about it and finally got me out of the wrong file. She's the one who left me her remainders. When she died she left her money, what little she had. She retired from Valley College, she was an instructor at Valley College. When she retired I think she got \$900 a month for her pension for that level. She taught many, many years. Marian Phillips.

I worked in the library summers. This was during the war, during World War II. I couldn't get up to Berkeley. For some reason I couldn't get up there so I worked in the library which was then in the old building, the old Carnegie building. I worked three summers there. Doing inventory and sub-



SBHS 1927

bing in for people on vacation, in various departments. And one summer I filled in for the Mt. Vernon branch librarian while she went on vacation and met a lot of my old students.. So I've been associated with the city library for many, many years. In fact, I almost never, I can't remember, I may have checked a book out or so, but I was afraid of the high school library when I went to San Bernardino High School. The librarian was a tyrant. I guess she needed to be, with those kids, and I was scared of her, and I didn't know my way around in the high school library. And I was so shy, I used the city library.

Payne: Can you remember your own teachers at San Bernardino?

That taught me? Oh yes, well, I didn't have her as a teacher, she was always very nice to me, her sister was the librarian for many years. [Carrie] Coddington. She taught in the high school, she was the head of the English

department. There was a man in mathematics. I won a prize in geometry! I don't know anything about figures. I guess I had a good memory or something. There again it was the organization I suspect why. Well anyway, there was a speech teacher in the English department that I worked with a lot, and she got me out - I was so terribly shy, and she got me into public speaking class with her. And she got me in the second year – the year after that - into debating. I was on the debate team believe it or not. And I debated once, school debater, my partner was Harold Barnum. You know Barnum & Flagg? His mother was a Sunday school teacher . But Harold was one of these very adult kind. Oh, he despised me. He was my partner. It was kind of a nerve-wracking experience but I defended and lost, at Redlands High School, in the old building in Redlands. That lady was one of the most helpful persons that I ever had. I used it a great deal as a teacher, and after I retired because I was called on to give talks all over.

Payne: Somehow that word “retired” just doesn't fit you at all. [laughter].

Payne: Your list among subjects to discuss includes “music appreciation with car radio.”

Well, about that music appreciation. There were no radios in the schools at all. At least not in our school, and I didn't have a portable one. I think the folks had a big one, a fairly big one, but nothing I could use. So, I had one in my car and I used to take my class out - they had a special program, I believe it was KFI, a program for children, a music appreciation program. I used to take my car out and drive it around on the edge of the lawn of the school, and then I'd take the kids out when this program was on, take the kids out and we'd sit out on the lawn, open the door of the car, listen to the program, and we got the music. That was what we had to do - that was music appreciation .

Payne: And the orange crate seating?

The school rooms had only some 45 – 50 seats per classroom – the kind fastened to board steps, one behind the other. We teachers went to the orange packing places and got the wooden orange boxes, with the two-compartment divisions in each crate, to serve the overflow.

Payne: Tell me about the books over 10 years old to be destroyed.



Oh yes, one of these stupid, stupid superintendents. I don't remember which one, but obviously was no scholar. Harding School was downtown you see, and it inherited the library of F St. School, or one of those downtown schools that went



Harding School 1958

way back to real historic times. So, in our library we had an Ingersoll, we had a historic children's magazine that was put out by the state. It was very good on history. We had other real early sets of books that we used. My teacher friend and I of course were in on it together, and luckily we had an intelligent principal, but then the edict came down that we were to get rid of all the books that were published over ten years ago, we were to burn the books! We just didn't pay any attention to it. And that was the time that I got my copy of Ingersoll. The principal said "we are not going to destroy these books." He sold the Ingersoll to my father and I inherited it of course. He sold it to my father and gave the money to the school. And some of these other things my friend and I put away back on the shelf and the cupboards, and we continued to use them occasionally, and in a few years the superintendent was replaced and we kept on using them. But that was the intelligence and the education and the preparation of the administrators.

[Sharing newspaper photo of Curtiss Allen and Redland's Fourth of July band.]

He was in my fourth grade class [Harding School, 1949]. I went to school with his mother and father. The iron works. I always liked him because for a while there when I lived on E St. just below 7th where the police building is now, he lived around the corner on 8th St.

Payne: Curtiss had the Morey Mansion [in Redlands] for a while, didn't he?

Yes, and I called on him there and took pictures of some of his stuff. Curtiss Allen was the only one who was allowed to take any of the junk from the Perris house. [Fred Perris died in 1916.] And the elder son – not the son who was located here, but the other son, he was the executor I guess. He got rid of all this stuff. He didn't give any of the stuff to the local people at all. He sold it to the movies. It was all such a mess, you can imagine, the Perris house. I had a chance to go through the house and see it before this happened. It was most interesting. Windows in the hallway – when it was hot the air would come through and the windows would take the hot air out. All kinds of stuff in the Perris house. And of course he had invaluable maps and library and so on. In the Perris barn there was the wagon in which he had gone all over the desert and done his surveys. Underneath a set of leather straps - underneath the seat of the wagon were suspended his delicate surveyor's stuff. He sold it to the movies. They made a little more money there. Lots of stuff, valuable stuff, and dumped it in a pile in the back yard. I was up in Berkeley when this happened. And in this pile of junk, Curtiss Allen, who lived up the block and around the corner, this kid, you know, I guess he was in the fourth or fifth grade. "Can I have this?" And sure enough, he was the only one that was given anything. And he brought it to the house - here to the Morey house, and he showed me some of the stuff he had stored out in the carriage house. He called me several months ago.

Payne: Tell me about the Flood of 1938 and teaching.

This next [the flood of 1938] is a little more complicated, and it's a demonstration of the type of administration we had. We started school as usual, on the day - I forget what day it was, and of course we had no lights in the rooms, so I was reading to them, and reading to them, standing at the window, and it got worse and worse. The water came down and it got in the gutters and then it came down so high all across Mt. Vernon Avenue. It was a torrent. The middle of the street was a wash. It was a torrent, and then it came up on the lawn. It was running across the school lawn, clear up to the building. Well, the principal several times - I forget which principal it was, several times went up to the superintendent's office to get the children home. No, no, they wanted, what is it, the ADA for them, I guess, and finally, I guess there were enough schools in the bad situation, enough schools,

they finally decided they'd better get the kids home. Well, how are they going to get them home? Most of them didn't have cars. They didn't have money for cars. They didn't have enough to eat sometimes. We called members of the P.T.A. They came with their cars. I called my mother. She came with the family car. I had no car at the time. And we ferried the kids home a few at a time.

Payne: Were their homes in danger?

Oh, I don't know of any particulars. That was 9<sup>th</sup> St. and Mt. Vernon which was not particularly a low area, and they lived on both sides. No, there wasn't a particular danger there, but we had a teacher who lived in Ontario. She'd just married and moved into a place in Ontario. She couldn't get home. We had her staying at our house for a couple of days. And of course you read about all sorts of things that happened in other parts of town. Lytle Creek crossed Mt. Vernon Avenue south of the railroad station, it was next to the fire station, it was on the east side, it came down this way, so the other side of the fire station wasn't washed out, but the gully that was formed there was tremendous, 10 or 12 feet. deep. There was just a stream to begin with. The bridge was not washed out as I remember. But the house that was across from the fire station, the whole house and lot and everything completely disappeared. That was nothing but air. That was washed out. And the people who lived down near the Orange Show, they had a rescue place at the Orange Show - what's the word I want - they were flooded out. But they couldn't get to it because the water was running like rivers in several places. They finally got a rope, a heavy rope, from the north side of Mill St. to the Orange Show. And the men helped ferry people along there. There are pictures in the *Sun* of course. And the motor court - where the road goes five different ways by the Orange Show, you know, the dirt was up clear to the roofs, washed in, and of course the water was terrific. Several people were killed. That's what I remember. From the school, of course, we had to ferry the kids home, shut the school. I guess it was closed the rest of the week, I don't remember, it must have been that long. It was clear up on the lawn running, rushing water on the lawns and on the house across the street.

Payne: Had it been raining for days?

Oh, yes, yes. And there was a big - this has nothing to do with school, but there was a big smog. It had been so cold for so long, and they'd been run-

ning smudge pots. A group of us teachers had season tickets to the concert series over in Pomona College, I think it was, and they had a dance group there, a famous dance group. This was in the middle of that time. And it was my turn to drive, so I drove along Foothill Blvd., keeping the back red light of the car in front of me, and we crawled along and we got there, and went up to our seats. The program went on, but the costumes were just all grimy [chuckle]. Yeah, that was a bad time, too.

Payne: Well, thank you for sharing all of this, our sessions with me.

Well, I had a lot left out, but I didn't have time to think about it and organize it. I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO ORGANIZE! [much hearty laughter].

*NOTES on Transcription:*

*This 2017 transcription has been edited from two audiocassette tapes, recorded in January 1997. In several instances, Arda requested certain interview material not be used for publication due to sensitivity of cultural matters. Accordingly, I have edited the narrative to reflect her wishes.*

*Photos are from the Arda Haenszel Collection, California Room, Feldheym Public Library.*

*Hopefully, the reader can sense the humor and vitality and verve of Arda's narrative, her frequent laughter and also her adamant declarations and projection of strong emotional feelings throughout.*

*Sue Payne, May 2017*



photo by Seshier May 1997