

"Early History of the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project"

JESS GRAVES

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Early Chatsworth and the San Fernando Valley

14 December 1978

Interview conducted by

Ava Kahn, Student

Transcript prepared by

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Oral History Program
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INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

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the historical and scholarly value of the information contained in
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12/14/78
Date

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JESS GRAVES

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

The oral history interview with Jess Graves was conducted by Ava Kahn, a student at California State University, Northridge on December 14, 1978 at Graves' home. The interview features Graves' reminiscences of his family and Chatsworth. The final transcript of the interview was completed by Rebecca R. Berger, Grant Project Typist, in July 1995.

Jess Graves grew up in the Chatsworth area of the San Fernando Valley. Born in 1896, he was the grandson of Ann Willden Johnson, who, along with her husband Niels, are thought to be the first English-speaking people to homestead in the Valley. Jess' father was part owner of Graves & Hill General Store, that served travelers along the Santa Susana Pass in the early 20th century.

More about the Johnson/Graves family and early life in Chatsworth can be found in: Watson, Virginia. *A Child's History of Chatsworth*. Chatsworth [Calif.]: Chatsworth Historical Society, 1978, c. 1967.

Interviewee: Jess Graves [JG]
Inverviewer: Ava Kahn [AK]
Date: December 14, 1978
Subject: Early Chatsworth and the San Fernando Valley

[Note: This interview with Jess Graves is a continuation of an interview conducted by Ava Kahn with Anna "Queenie" Graves Billings. The interview begins at the end of this earlier interview and begins on...]

[Tape 1, Side B]

AK: ... 1978, and I'm at the home of Jess Graves.

JG: That's right.

AK: How are you?

JG: Fine, thank you.

AK: Okay. Can you talk about some of your earliest memories? What do you first remember about Chatsworth and about your family?

JG: Well, I can remember back when we lived up on the homestead, west of my grandmother's place. And I can remember up there Dad worked out, come home. One thing I very distinctly remember, there was an awful squawlin' up on the peak there behind us, and Dad went up there and there was a bunch of bobcats fightin'. I can remember that very distinctly.

AK: What did he do about it?

JG: Well, he... they left. He come on down. He thought they were mountain lions, to start with... screaming. He thought they were mountain lions, but they weren't. So he come on back.

But anyway, then... thing I remembered... another thing before we moved from up there, I had a brother next to me, younger. He was a little toddler, just walking, and my mother and my grandmother went someplace and my aunt was there and she was taking care of the two kids. And we... kid and I was down below the two-story house, now we were down in the yard playin'. And my aunt called me from upstairs and wanted me to do something, and I run up there and did it for her, and then I went back down to be with my brother again and he was gone. And I looked around, and there was a reservoir there and there he was standing on his

head in the reservoir. So I began to scream. And, of course my aunt come down; she jumped in and got him. And ... oh, they rolled him on a barrel and everything else, but they didn't save him. He died.

That's two things that I remember, very distinctly. One was the wild cat and the other was my brother getting drowned.

AK: And then you moved down into Chatsworth?

JG: Yes, and Dad traded his property up there for some property down in the Valley.

AK: Who did he trade it with? Do you know?

JG: He traded it with Mr. Gray, G-r-a-y, Gray.

AK: He wanted the property up on the hill?

JG: He wanted the property up on the hill for the water. There was a big spring on the place and he wanted to move that water down to Chatsworth, which he did. He run a pipeline from the homestead, clear down to his property there where the old school used to be just across the street. He had a reservoir there and with this spring, the pressure, he drove a beltin' wheel and that pumped the water out of this well so he didn't have to have a pump or anything.

AK: Did he use the water for irrigation?

JG: Yes, he did. Yes, he did. He grew a garden and stuff down below.

AK: But not for farming, but just for his own house?

JG: Well, he sold some of it, yes. He sold some of it. But anyway...

AK: You were down on the...

JG: And I can remember when I was a kid we was going to school and we decided to go swimming in this reservoir.

AK: The one up on the hill or the one...

JG: No, the one down in the Valley.

AK: Um-hum.

JG: So, we had quite a swim. And while we were swimming there was one of the boys, he didn't come up. We got all excited and, by George, he drowned. So that was, you know, kind of tough on us as kids havin' him being drowned. Anyway...

AK: Where...

JG: I don't know whether that reservoir is still there or not. I don't... I don't...

AK: Where was it located? Do you remember the street?

JG: Well, down there where the schoolhouse is now.

AK: Um-hum.

JG: The school was originally there... that isn't the original building... the school was originally there, and it was down west and across the street about, oh, three or four hundred yards, that's where the reservoir was.

AK: Where did you start school?

JG: In Chatsworth.

AK: At the school that was called the Santa Susanna school? Yeah, I think that was the name of it. It was the Chatsworth...and I saw a picture of the school in Chatsworth and it was called Santa Susanna, but it was in Chatsworth.

JG: Yeah, well that's what it was, then.

AK: You went through all your elementary grades there?

JG: Yes.

AK: How... you walked to school?

JG: Oh yeah, sure. Sure.

AK: And then where did you go on to school?

JG: My cousin Kelly and I, we drove to high school over to San Fernando.

AK: On horse?

JG: Horse and buggy. Oh sometimes we rode saddle horses, sometimes we rode bicycles, but most of the time horse and buggy.

AK: How long did it take you to get there?

JG: Well, it was twelve miles. It took us about an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes. We used to

train for track; one was to drive and the other would run along side the buggy.

AK: Well, that was a good way to do it.

JG: And then we'd change off. I didn't finish school. I went two years.

AK: To San Fernando?

JG: To San Fernando High. And Kelly finished but I didn't. I decided I had enough education. I was going to go make the almighty dollar for myself.

AK: So what did you do?

JG: Huh?

AK: So what did you go on to do?

JG: Well, I worked around there at various jobs and one thing and another; just grew up. **[pause]** Yeah. There was a bunch of us, a bunch of relatives. See, I had at one time fifty-two relatives in Chatsworth.

AK: That made some family gathering.

JG: Well, if we'd all got together, yeah. You know, all the children and...

AK: Did you all ever get together?

JG: Once in a while on a picnic we'd get together. We all lived around, you know. We played together all the time, kids...Kelly's family and Uncle Will's family. Well, we had quite a time there. I remember when we was kids going to school, the one guy had a little orchard right next to him. We used to step over there and get the apples and one thing and another. He used to give us a bad time. But, we gradually grew up, and I went to work for the forestry, and eventually stayed in it.

AK: What do you remember of your grandparents?

JG: Well, my grandfather on my mother's side, he was a big Dane. And he had religion, or thought he did anyway, and he was away preaching most of the time. And Grandmother and her children run the ranch. And he finally died, but she run the ranch. She was one of those hard-working women, and she raised her family right there on the ranch.

AK: What do you remember about your times up on the ranch?

JG: Oh, we used to go up there quite often. After we moved we'd go up there. She had grapes and fruit, and we'd go up there; go swimming in the reservoir and have a big day, you know. I

hunted quite a bit in those days when I was a kid, hunted on the ranch.

AK: For what?

JG: Quail, mostly; quail and rabbits. After she got along in years, the ranch was sold. And they kept twenty acres out of it, and each one of her children was given a couple of acres out of it. I think one uncle got two because he was administering the thing. He got two segments. But the way those things go, you know.

AK: Yeah. Everything got... everything must have been sold, most of it.

JG: But, you know, it's... we grew up... as kids, we grew up; we had a good life. We had a lot of fun; worked hard. We worked hard on the ranch all the time.

AK: Now, when you came home from school, you had to work on the ranch?

JG: Oh yeah, we worked hard on the ranch.

AK: Doing... doing what?

JG: Oh, anything a farmer did. We plowed and we...

AK: This was when your father had the ranch down in Chatsworth, right?

JG: Yeah. And he farmed on the outside, too, or rented land and farmed it.

AK: What were the main crops?

JG: Hay, mostly hay. Then we took some more orchards... we dried apricots and sold 'em. We did everything to be done on the ranch: driving horses and ...

AK: From what age did you start helping on the ranch?

JG: Oh well, I was milkin' cows when I was seven years old. I just grew up on the ranch, that's all.

AK: Now all that's development houses, I guess.

JG: Oh yeah. Wouldn't know the place. Wouldn't know the place. You see, we... that was in the days of the old Capital Farming and Milling Company.

AK: What was that?

JG: Well, they owned practically the whole of the San Fernando Valley. And more towards San Fernando there was Hubbard and Wright owned a ranch in there, south of what is now... Granada?

AK: Granada Hills or something?

JG: Yeah.

AK: They owned that land.

JG: They owned a bunch in there, but... and they finally broke up; they began selling it out the Farming and Milling Company. It was all... bought them up by, well, Reseda [**Boulevard**] on up to Owensmouth... what do they call it? Used to be called...I guess it's called Owensmouth now.

AK: Yeah.

JG: It used to be called Canoga.

AK: Oh, that's right.

JG: And all around the Valley there, clear on down to Lankershim.

AK: Was owned by...

JG: Capital Farming and Milling Company.

AK: Now how... what was your father's dealings with them?

JG: Well, none particularly. Later when they began breaking it up, they rented one of the ranches from him... they were breaking it up. And then they put in the PGE line, or Pacific Electric Line out there. And when they put that in, it went through the ranch. I raked the hay off the right-of-way for them.

AK: To put in the line?

JG: Yeah. And then they just began splitting it up then.

AK: So where did your father sell the crops and things?

JG: Mostly right there at Chatsworth. The buyers would come around. There was a little railroad come up there that took rock out for the San Pedro Harbor. [**This was during construction of the harbor.**]

AK: Um-hum.

JG: And so that... we'd ship the hay in there. And when I was a little tyke I can remember going with my dad; he'd haul something into Los Angeles and sell it.

AK: He'd haul it in by horse and buggy, or...

JG: Horse and wagon.

AK: Horse and wagon.

JG: Four horses and a wagon.

AK: He'd haul the hay in?

JG: And sell it and come back. It didn't too much... most of it we sold right there.

AK: What about when he had his store with Mr. Hill? When they had Hill and Grave... Graves and Hill?

JG: That was a... when they broke up on the west ranch and quit that, then they bought the store and run the store.

AK: They still had... were farming, though, when they had the store?

JG: Yes. Some, yeah.

AK: Did you ever work in the store, or you stayed on the ranch?

JG: Not very much. No. No, not at all, not very much. Once in awhile I drank the coffee or something like that.

AK: But you'd rather stay out of the way.

JG: No. I never worked much in the store.

AK: You liked being outside much better?

JG: Yeah. Well, I was pretty young. I was pretty young.

AK: Do you remember anything about the tunnel... when the tunnel was built? You were very young then.

JG: Yes, I remember. The surveyors that surveyed through the tunnel, the big tunnel, boarded a room with Mother and Dad. They had a big tent for sleeping and then some of them slept in the house. And I was a little tyke then. In fact, Queenie was born while they were...

AK: Yeah. She was telling me that's how she got her name.

JG: Yeah. That's right.

AK: It was from the surveyor.

JG: Yeah. They stayed there until they finished their work.

AK: Can you describe the Chatsworth, how it used to look? How did... what... what were the different shops and things you remember as a child?

JG: Shops?

AK: Yeah. What type of stores were they?

JG: There was just one store, and that was the store that my Dad later...

AK: Bought.

JG: ... took over and bought. Old man Phillips had that store. And that was the only store in there. And post office was there. That was the only store that was there.

AK: What did you do when you weren't going to school or working on the ranch? Were there any athletic activities or anything like that?

JG: Oh, no, not when we were little kids, no. No, no, we didn't have any. Oh, after we got up, uh ... well, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old, well, we had a ball team there that we had out of school... from the school, and we used to play the ranchers. We didn't have no bats; we had a pick handle for a bat. That's about all. There wasn't much, much to do. Well, maybe a little social, you know, at the church or something like that we'd be involved in, but that's about all.

AK: But the church had just been started or had been... hadn't been... they had the old building there then; right? Or was...

JG: Yes. Uh ...

AK: That was the meeting place of the community or...

JG: Well, it was about the only place. In fact that church... I don't remember when the church was built. I think it was... it must have been built about... sometime about time I was born because I remember when I was... got up, the church was there. When it was built, I don't know.

AK: And your school, grammar school was across the street; right?

JG: No.

AK: No?

JG: No.

AK: Oh, okay. That was in a different one.

JG: The church was down south on... I don't know what they call that street there, but on the four corners there.

AK: Oh, yeah. I'm not sure what the name of it is.

JG: Where the school is, right south.

AK: South of that was ... is the school.

JG: Yeah, and it's about...well, it was... the church was down there just about a half a mile.

AK: When you started school, how many other children were in the school? Do you remember?

JG: Well, there's...

AK: There were pretty many?

JG: There was quite a few in there. I don't remember when there was... oh, yeah, there was fifty, sixty kids there.

AK: And they... one teacher or ...

JG: Oh, no.

AK: Had more?

JG: Oh, we had three teachers.

AK: They divided... they divided them up by grades?

JG: Yeah.

AK: Do you have... do you remember anything, any special stories or anything that happened then in school or on the ranch?

JG: Not particularly, no.

AK: Okay. How long did you stay in Chatsworth?

JG: I left there in... oh, I don't know. I was about seventeen or eighteen, I guess.

[Note: Pause in interview.]

AK: When you left?

JG: Well, I took a... another kid and I took a trip up to San Luis Obispo and around, and then I went to... that was about, oh, I guess eighteen or twenty, somewhere around there, I went to Oklahoma; visited some friends back there. And, you know, there's lots of things that happened, you know. There was always something going on, you see. To pick any one thing out, why, it's hard to do.

AK: Just tell me some... anything. Some of the things that were going on. Queenie told me one story about how when they were filming the movies that you were sent to pick up some of the actresses or something... I think she said Lillian Gish... and you hadn't ridden... and you had to ride on a horse, and she hadn't ridden on a horse before.

JG: No, no.

AK: No?

JG: No. No, no, no. Yeah, Lillian Gish was there but she wasn't involved in the horse deal.

AK: Oh. That was somebody else.

JG: That was somebody else. That was a... that's a couple in the tunnel, when they stopped the train in Chatsworth, couldn't go through, see. I rode by there on my saddle horse, kid-like, you know? People come around admiring the horse, and this one lady wanted to ride the horse and I said, "No, he isn't broke yet," and I says, "I don't want you to ride him." And her husband was there. Oh, he said, "She's an old cow hand." He said, "She's ridden horses before you were born." They took me into it, see? Well, she got on the horse, and I don't think she'd ever ridden anything but maybe a bridle-trail horse or something like that, see, because she kind of kicked him in the ribs and he started to run. By God, he just took off for home. And she was hanging onto the saddle, see? She didn't try to stop him or anything. And it was over a mile.

AK: From home. And he stopped when he got there?

JG: And he come right up to the shop and he stopped, and she just...

AK: Fell off.

JG: Well, went right on over on her head. And the blacksmith was there, too. A little kinda off the subject; you can't put it... Well, I won't tell you, 'cuz...

AK: Why, is it that bad?

JG: If it wasn't on there, I'd tell it to you.

AK: Why, if it's nothing that bad.

JG: Okay. I'll tell you after we turn it off.

AK: Oh, okay.

JG: **[Heavy coughing]** ...Well anyway, the husband, he said, "Why did you just let her get on that horse for?" I said, "You told me to." I said, "You said she was a rider." And I said, "She's not a rider at all." So I said, "She'll be back." I said, "She goes... the horse'll go home and they'll bring her back." And they did. They brought her back.

AK: What did she have to say after that?

JG: Well, she didn't have nothing to say, 'cuz all the front of her dress... she had a grey dress on and it was all wet. And she was into that train, see? All the people from the train was there. They saw it all happen, you know. Dad said, "What happened?" I said, "Well, she wanted to ride the horse." I said, "I didn't want her to because the horse wasn't broke yet." And I said, "Her husband here had said she had ridden horses before I was born and was a horsewoman, I said. "So if she's a horsewoman she can ride the horse."

AK: But it didn't turn out that way.

JG: It didn't turn out that way. So we had quite a time over it, a lot of fun over it.

AK: What do you remember about your parents, about the ranch and stuff; how they ran it?

JG: Oh, I don't know. I don't remember very well, you know. Dad was a good rancher. Mother was a hard worker.

AK: What... how many people did you usually have boarding there?

JG: Well, there was always eight or ten around there, when they was farmin'. There was teamsters and stuff, blacksmith, everything, you know. Especially during the harvest season there was quite a bunch of 'em. Mother had a tough life because I had a brother who had the infantile paralysis. She took care of him all the time, too. It broke my folks. You know.

AK: Yeah, having to take care of him.

JG: Having to... doctors and one thing or another... he lived to be around fifty years old.

AK: Did you ever go back and live in Chatsworth?

JG: Yes. I married and was working on a ranch there.

AK: Which ranch?

JG: No, I wasn't working on the ranch; I was working in Los Angeles at a steel company and it was during the war. And then after ranchers... kids to work on the ranches because they as taking so many of them, see? Well, I'd only had one eye, and so I got married when I was in town there [heavy coughing] and then I come back out, was foreman on a ranch.

AK: On whose... whose ranch?

JG: Mr.[?] ...Davidson.

AK: This was out in Chatsworth or...

JG: Yes.

AK: Davison? What was his first name?

JG: Amstr.

AK: Amstr?

JG: A-m-s-t-r, Amstr.

AK: About what year was this? What, after the war?

JG: Well, it was during the war.

AK: Oh, during the war.

JG: Yeah and...

AK: What types of things did he have on the ranch, on his ranch?

JG: Well, I had... we had alfalfa, had beans, and orchards... oranges.

AK: Where was loc... where was this ranch located?

JG: Just east of Chatsworth a little bit. And then over on... he later moved from there over to... I can't name the street.

AK: That's okay.

JG: It was on further east there, right off of... down from Motholandin [garbled] Canyon.

AK: What did Chatsworth look like then?

JG: Well, it hadn't... it hadn't grown too much. Actually, it had not grown too much. There was... oh, there was another store there and...

AK: That was... when... were you still there when they started to divide up the ranches?

JG: Well, no. I was working for the forestry when they began breaking up, really breaking up. Of course, they broke up the ranches in the Valley before that, but then they... when the Big Deal came, why, they...

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

AK: A show for...

JG: A show for... for people on the train, see, and she did.

AK: Not the type of show she wanted.

JG: Oh God, her face was red.

AK: This is Tape 2, Jess Graves, who is... when you... how old were you when you moved down into Chatsworth from the place up on the mountain?

JG: I must have been about four or five.

AK: Oh, you were very young then.

JG: I was very young; very, very young.

AK: So you didn't... so you started school when you were down then.

JG: Oh, yes. Yes.

AK: You never had to go from up there?

JG: No. Mother used to go to school from up to Grandmother's place. When she was to take horses to break and rode to school, 'cuz it was two and a half miles...

AK: So she'd break them on the way to school?

JG: Well, she'd break the horses for 'em, and when she had them well broke, then she'd get another one, see? That's the way she went to school.

AK: So she was working while she was going away to school.

JG: Yeah.

AK: What do you remember about some of your aunts and uncles? What were they doing?

JG: Well, I had a... an uncle that... that was Kelly's dad.

AK: His name was Charles, right?

JG: Yeah, Charlie Johnson, Ole Charlie. He stayed there on the ranch until he finally died. And then Uncle Will, he'd lived on a ranch down below. He'd worked around different places. He didn't ranch any, and I don't remember much about Uncle Will, when he died or anything.

AK: What about his children?

JG: Well, there was Grace and Marguerite[sp]... the girls; and there was Bill, he was near my age. Bill and I traveled around together quite a bit. Then Merrill, and Merrill went to work for the telephone company. Bill, he was a carpenter and one thing and another after he got bigger. And the girls married.

And then there was Uncle Norman and Uncle Eastman. Uncle Eastman was the youngest uncle. He stayed on the ranch, oh, I guess until about the time Grandmother died.

AK: He was helping her on the ranch?

JG: Yeah, he was the one what stayed on the ranch with her. He kept up the telephone from the ranch down to the Valley.

AK: How did the... the ranch had its own water, right?

JG: Huh?

AK: The ranch had its own water?

JG: Yes. Yes, springs. And Uncle Norman, he... when he worked out, then he worked for the forestry, same as I did. And then on my... that's all my mother's [side of the family?]. mother had then Christy, a sister; and Aunt Nellie, a sister; and Aunt Hannah a sister, but they lived out of town. I never knew them much.

AK: They had left Chatsworth by then?

JG: Yeah, yeah. Then my dad's brother, Uncle Harry, he moved in there later, bought a place. And he died.

AK: But he had come from Long Beach; is that right?

JG: Well, no. He was in... he was down around Pasadena some place there, when he came up there. He was a mechanic. There was a J.A. Graves... same initials as mine. He was head of a bank, Farmers and Merchants Bank there. And he was a chauffeur for that Graves for a long time... distant relative, way back. And then he was... he was a mechanic.

AK: And then he worked out in Chatsworth probably?

JG: No, he never did work... he was...

AK: Just moved out there?

JG: Just moved out there and retired.

AK: So you... but where were you... you never went back to live after... there after the forestry?

JG: No.

AK: You've been up here... up in Northern California since then?

JG: Well, I came up here in... I came up here in 1940, I think it was. Yeah, 1940.

AK: So you've been away from that area for a long time.

JG: Yeah.

AK: Do you ever go back?

JG: Oh, yeah. I go back.

AK: What do you think of all the changes?

JG: Oh, well, it's just changing, that's all; same as this country's changing.

AK: Yeah.

JG: This country's changed terribly. And Chatsworth, you know, it's growing. It's bound to

change. They... Oh, yes. I... my wife has a sister down there, a niece and a second niece... two nieces. So we go down quite often down there.

AK: Do you remember anything about the family picnics up on the ranch?

JG: The family what?

AK: Picnics up on the ranch?

JG: Oh, yeah. We used... you know, they had big lawns there, and we used to have picnics there. They had the reservoir where the kids could swim, you know. Yeah, we used to have picnics there all the time.

AK: Do you remember anything about the movie people when they came in? What was...

JG: Well, yes. When... I think I was telling you that story...

AK: Oh, yes. Yeah.

JG: ... about the ride, the movie people, they came in and the stars all come out in the big limousines and others come out on a train. We had nine flatbed wagons that we used to haul all these extras up there by... well, where...

AK: At the Iverson Ranch?

JG: No, no. It was where...

AK: Up in the mountains or down in the ¼

JG: Yeah, west of Chatsworth?

AK: Santa Susana? Simi?

JG: No, no, no, no, no; right west of Chatsworth.

AK: Topanga Canyon?

JG: No, no, no, no, no. That's way off south. This is only just several miles out there. He's... Roy Rogers.

AK: Oh.

JG: He was one of the... we were hauling them up there at that place and they took the pictures there. And then we'd haul them back and be out there the next day and get 'em. And then they... they took a lot of pictures around there. And the Iversons was in the picture.

I remember one time I was standing out watching them, you know, and they had somebody riding off in the hills... some cowboy riding up a hill and he couldn't... he wasn't much of a cowboy. And I went down there and I said to the director, I said, "Do you want me to go up there and show him how to come off there?" He looked at me and said, "Can you do any better than that?" I says, "You're damn right." Well, I climb there, whipped the horse up and away we come down, just big jumps right off that thing, you know. And the director says to the actor, he says, "Now that's the way I want you to come off of there." I got a big kick out of it.

AK: Yeah. They should have let you do it.

JG: I don't know, maybe they did. I don't know if they were taking pictures or not.

AK: You don't know if the back of you was in the movie or not?

JG: Yeah. I don't know.

And there's a fellow by the name of H. H. Knibbs wrote western stories. He come in here and he wrote a story... and I can't think of it. I used to have the book... it disappeared... with his name in it. But friend of ours, Jack Sparks and I, was the two leading...

AK: Characters?

JG: ...characters in the book, see.

AK: Oh, he came up and lived there for awhile wrote about you?

JG: Oh, yeah, lived there and wrote the story. I lost that book somewhere or another.

[Note: **Henry Herbert Knibbs, *Overland Red: A Romance of the Moonstone Canyon Trail*. Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1914 (Special Collections, PS 3521 .N5 084 1914)]**

AK: What does he have you doing in it? Was it true?

JG: Huh?

AK: Did it... was it true what he wrote that you had done?

JG: Well, he took incidents, you know, and built 'em up into a story. Yeah, a lot of it was true, you know. Of course, a lot of it was his imagination, too, you know.

AK: Like what kind of things did you do that he wrote about?

JG: Well, we took... being a cowboy, cowboy. It was a cowboy picture, like these westerns.

AK: Trying to think of... do you have any special things you'd like to describe of early Chatsworth?

JG: The rock that sits up on top of the hill up there. People got all excited. They was going to go up there and roll that rock off. They packed a bunch of crowbars and stuff up there, you know. Well, that thing is sunk in the ground, you know.

AK: Why'd they want to do it?

JG: They just wanted to roll it off to see it roll. We just laughed at them. The one thing we knew they couldn't roll it off a there. They had... well, I don't think... I doubt whether there's a crane that could handle that thing.

AK: So what happened? They just tried?

JG: Well, they got up there, they got to looking and it, and they... it was a lot bigger than they thought it was going to be, I'll tell you. They thought it was just tipped there and they could pry it up a little bit and roll it off.

AK: That didn't work that way.

JG: No. One time when we was kids, there was two Dutchmen owned the old hotel down across from where the store was. And this Dutchman, he wanted a crow.

AK: A crow?

JG: A crow. So we knew where some crows nested on the face of that cliff there by the Stoney Point, you know?

AK: Um-hum.

JG: So we watched them pretty carefully. We figured these crows was about ready to fly from the nest there. And by God we got a rope fastening up on top and we went down that crevice and we got that young crow, and we took it down and gave it to the Dutchman. Now, he even called him "Bismark." And, oh, that crow was around in the kitchen and right on his shoulder and everything, you know. And he was just a pest.

So, he wanted a wildcat then. So I caught a wildcat. And I thought I had killed him. I hit him over the head and I thought he was dead, and I was carrying him over my shoulder and he come to and grabbed me by the heel. Well, anyway I took him down and, by gosh, he was pretty much alive, so tied him up and brung him down to the Dutchman. He was a big wildcat; mean, oh God, he was mean.

So anyway, the Dutchman had this wildcat, you know, and the damned wildcat was always grabbing at the little chickens, you know. They'd come around and they'd go in the pen and eat... grab it, you know.

So... and the darn crow was always doing something, you know. And by God... I don't know, the crow done something to make the Dutchman mad and he said, well, "I'll throw you in there with that wildcat!" He grabbed the crow and he threwed him in there [**slaps his hands**] and the wildcat got him, just like that, you know. He couldn't get him out then, see. Then he felt bad about it, you know. So he went and had the cat killed. He said, "I'll fix you, I'll throw you in there with that wildcat!" The wildcat finished him.

AK: Queenie was saying something about the... you caught a wildcat once and they had it for stew.

[**Note: See "Queenie" Graves Billings oral history interview.**]

JG: Yeah. Oh, that was... I was trappin' them there at home. Mother was going to take a bunch of the school teachers up to Oat Mountain to the snow. So, I told her, I said, "While your out, I'll have supper ready for you when you get home." I had caught a wildcat and they'd saw it. So after they'd left I was out there skinning this wildcat and my dad was there watching me. I said, "You know, I'd like to feed this wildcat to those school teachers." And Dad said, "Well go ahead, but you got to set down and eat with 'em." I said, "All right."

So, by George, I got the wildcat all cut up; put him on to make a stew. I had to parboil that darn thing three times to get the cat smell out of it, see. Oh, it was strong! But, finally, it tasted all right... the meat tasted all right. So I put in the vegetables and everything; made a big pot of stew, you know. Was quite a bunch of them went up there. Made enough for all of 'em. So anyway, everything come along fine. They came down to have supper, and I had to eat there. Dad wouldn't eat. But I had to sit down and I ate with 'em.

AK: Your mother ate with them, too?

JG: Oh, yeah. So one of the teachers said, "Hey Jess, what'd you do with that wildcat that you had this morning?" I said, "I skinned him." And Mother says, "Well, if I know anything about it, we're eating it now!" Oh, she said, "Mrs. Graves, don't say that!" She said, "That... that makes me sick!" she said. Mother didn't say anything more, see?

And so the next day they were all in church... this is on a Saturday... and next day we were all in church. One of the teachers was sittin' there with her... I don't know... a little break in the sermon or something. Mother says, "You know last night," she says, "that was wildcat we were eating!" She says, "Oh Mrs. Graves..." [**Makes the sounds and laughs.**] She got sick right there. Oh, we laughed about that.

AK: How was it living in the same house with your school teacher?

JG: Huh?

AK: You had to live in the house with your school teacher?

JG: Well, we had... there was one teacher boarded with us, see? But there was two or three of the school teachers that was... oh, there was bunch of others, you know.

AK: Bunch of people?

JG: Yeah, bunch of people went up to the snow. But, anyway...

AK: You fed them.

JG: I fed them. [Laughs.] Yep. We had a lot of fun over that. That school teacher got sick; she went outside; ooh, she was sick, just thinkin' about it, see?

AK: Uh-huh.

JG: Lord, it shouldn't have made her sick then.

AK: It was all over by then.

JG: It was all over.

AK: If she was going to be sick it should have been the night before.

JG: Yeah. We had a... we had kept school teachers there for a long time. One of them finally left; she left. It was great. She says, "I never had a place that I enjoyed any more than being here." But she says, "Those boys drive me crazy."

Harold Johnson, he came down. He was kind of sparkin' this one school teacher. Well, we all went down to the store and we was comin' back, you know, and they went by, and I said, "I'm gonna ride with 'em." And I run on my tiptoes and I get in the back end of the buggy. Sit down in there and...

AK: And they didn't know you got in.

JG: They didn't know I got in. I rode around with them for two or three hours. Then the next morning at breakfast I begin to tell them what happened. And that teacher was embarrassed. God, she was embarrassed. They didn't do anything wrong or anything. I think the thing that embarrassed her was to think I was riding there all the time. Oh, Lord.

AK: And she didn't know it.

JG: No. But anyway, by George, she finally moved out. She said " Mrs. Graves, I never enjoyed a place..." She says, "Those boys would do anything in the world I wanted for me." She says, "I think they all love me," she says. We did, you know. We all thought a lot of her, you know. But she says, "They can think up the darnest things to do." **[Laughs.]** So anyway, she moved down... there was another big house down... the Grey's... she moved down to the Grey's because all three teachers stayed there together.

AK: A little bit quieter?

JG: Yeah. We had a lot of fun.

AK: Well, when there isn't entertainment, you make your own.

JG: Well, that's right. We had to... we had to figure out things like that for ourselves, you know. There was nothing to do, any place to go, anything except your own deals. Fixed up... and we fixed them up. Yep.

AK: Well?

JG: Well. Oh, I could probably tell you stories all day, you see.

AK: Tell me one or two more.

JG: Hell, I don't know. It's just something that comes to you. I was going to tell you something more about those movies. **[Pause.]** No. I can't think what it was now.

AK: That's okay.

JG: So, they put in some oil wells up there, north of Chatsworth up toward where the old cow ranch used to be. We hauled oil up there... the oil for the fuel, you already know.

AK: Um-hum. Where'd you get the oil from?

JG: Well, they shipped... shipped it up on the train, got it into the tank wagons and then hauled it in by horse and buggy... or the teams, so they could use it for the fuel. It was quite a project. They never got any oil there, but later up on the big mountain they got... there are quite a few oil wells up there now.

AK: When the first cars came in, were they used around the ranch?

JG: Well, yeah. I think... well, Dad never did learn how to drive; he never did. I had the first car that we had. It was an old Ford. But, it just kept building up, you know, until there was more and more and more of 'em. When I was a kid we didn't have no cars at all.

AK: Did everything on horseback or walk?

JG: Yeah. Horseback, horse and buggy, walk, bicycle.

AK: Did you ever have to work at your grandmother's ranch or she was... by the time you were working she was down in the Valley?

JG: Well no, I never worked on her ranch at all. I was just a kid when she was up there. Then they finally moved down in the Valley, that's when they sold the ranch. But, I... oh no. I was... Well, I wasn't too old when they sold that ranch. That was before I was married.

AK: What year were you born in?

JG: '96. I'm 82 now last past. 12th of November was my birthday.

AK: Your birthday?

JG: Yep. Now how are you gonna... how are you planning on using this information you're getting?

AK: Okay, but let me turn this off and I'll tell y....

[Note: Tape machine is turned off. Turned on an interview continues.]

AK: ...one for this, you know, 'cuz people would be interested in these names. Frank... Frank Ruiz. Um...

JG: Yeah, Frank Ruiz, and Bill Miranda.

AK: Minnie Palmer.

JG: Minnie Palmer.

AK: These are people who were growing up in Chatsworth with you.

JG: They were people that were there in Chatsworth. The Mirandas and Ruizes, we went to school together. Minnie Palmer is older than we are, but she was doing very good the last I heard.

AK: Yeah.

JG: Facilities were...

AK: Were good.

JG: ... were good. Outside of that I can't think of any tie-in that would know where those people were at. As I say, Theodore was in Fresno. Now I haven't seen him for several years. We used to stop there every time I went up and down the Valley. You know, we were awful close friends together.

AK: In Chatsworth there are a lot of people from all different backgrounds, weren't there? What? Spanish, and Ir...

JG: Oh, yes.

AK: ... and you said Irish?

JG: Yeah. Well, her dad was, I think, a locomotive engineer.

AK: This is Frank Ruiz's wife; right?

JG: No...

AK: I mean, uh, Bill...Wait. Ted, uh... Ted Miranda's wife. Or Bill Miranda?

JG: No, Ted Miranda's wife...

AK: Yeah.

JG: ... Julia, it was her dad.

AK: I see, who was the locomotive...

JG: Yeah. He was an engineer. And he was a nice guy.

AK: So did they live in Chatsworth or did they... they just took the train through?

JG: Uh, I think he lived in Chatsworth. I don't know. This, I don't know. I don't remember.

AK: Do you have anything else you'd like to say about the history of Chatsworth?

JG: No. There's probably a lot of things that I could tell you if they just remind me of 'em.

AK: Of anything. Let's see. The church or the school or movies or the ranch? I'm trying to think of any subjects that would bring out stuff. Twin Lakes? Um, tunnel...

JG: Well, the tunnel...

AK: We talked...

JG: We talked about the tunnel.

AK: How many... you had a lot of horses on the ranch?

JG: Yeah, at one time we had about fifty, sixty head there.

AK: Did you... you broke them to sell them or...

JG: Well, Dad and Treksler, Hill and dad were partners one year on the west ranch.

AK: Which is a ranch they leased?

JG: Yeah, on the west ranch... not the west...yeah. Was it the west ranch? Yeah, I guess it was the west ranch. Well, they had a lot of stock, see. They had to have a lot of stock. They didn't have too much in the way of machinery in those days, you know, the folks... to everything was handled by horses. So, they had a lot of horses.

AK: How many people did they have working on the ranch?

JG: Oh Lord, one year I have an idea they probably had thirty, forty men working.

AK: About how many acres?

JG: Well, there was almost 3,000 on the ranch they was farming.

AK: Now, had they bought this land? Leased it?

JG: No, just leased it. That's when the Farming and Milling Company broke up, and they leased it out for a... well, the folks leased it for a year. And then they began subdividing. You see they built that Pacific Electric Line out there; transportation and...

AK: What... were the stage coaches still going through?

JG: No. No.

AK: They stopped by the time you were born?

JG: Yeah.

AK: 'Cuz the train was there.

JG: Yeah. The train was there and then the stage coach didn't run anymore.

AK: How did they deliver mail to you?

JG: Well, as far as I know, from what I remember about the mail, it came on the train. Before that, I don't know.

AK: Did you ever have to go into Los Angeles for any...

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

AK: ... but didn't you have to make any purchases in LA? You had everything you needed in Chatsworth?

JG: Well, they... they did a lot of shopping. My grandmother went once a week to San Fernando. She took her eggs and her butter and produce, whatever she had; she'd trade it in and then she'd bring stuff back, see.

AK: Dry goods and...

JG: Yeah, anything that she wanted she got at this one store in San Fernando.

AK: What about your mother and your parents when they needed things? Did they also go into San Fernando?

JG: Well, actually when we were down there, they had the little store down there and I... I don't even... the food come from the store. The rest of it, I don't know anything about.

AK: Your clothes and stuff?

JG: Oh, we got clothes there too.

AK: That... those things came in by train... right?... to the store?

JG: Yep.

AK: Your father just ordered them from some place in L.A. or San Fernando?

JG: Well, usually the store man ordered them. I just don't remember anything about...

AK: You weren't interested in that.

JG: Well, no. The store was down there. Phillips' Store was there, and that's where all our stuff come from; groceries and everything came from there. And later Dad bought the store, Dad and Hill.

AK: And Hill was also doing some farming; right?

JG: Well, he and dad were partners.

AK: Yeah. But before he had the store did he... he was a partner in the farming?

JG: Yes.

AK: Okay.

JG: Yeah.

AK: What... had Hill been in the area a long time?

JG: Yes.

AK: He... had he grown up there or he came in as... you really don't remember.

JG: Well, I think he must have grown up there. I don't know. I remember his mother. She was an old, old lady. She chewed tobacco, and she'd spit, you know. And she raised geese, and she plucked those geese, sold the feathers, had a big garden.

AK: Where was her house? Do you remember?

JG: Well, right where her place was now. It was due west of our house.

AK: By where the Chatsworth Park is now. They've got a park back there.

JG: Well, our place was right beside the park..

AK: Uh-huh.

JG: ... now, see. The main ranch, it's a little bit south and right west of there was the hills there... right over next to the hills, on the other side of that stuff there... that big subdivision stuck in there.

AK: Oh, yeah.

JG: Right west of them was the Hill property. It's 160 acres, I think, in there. And, uh...

AK: You don't know where they came from originally?

JG: No, I don't. No, I actually don't. Don't think I ever heard or it didn't register. No, they were there when we moved down when I was a kid; four or five years old when we moved down there.

AK: Now, how many children were there then? Lovell, Hill had what... Minnie Palmer?

JG: There was Minnie and Lovell. There was Glenn... he's the one that had the arm broke, the arm off. And he wasn't... he was a cousin or something of theirs; I don't know. And he studied law; an attorney.

AK: Now there was a... it's here... Mr. Grey was the first judge, or something? Something about a court being in his house?

JG: Well, Tetzlaff, Tetzlaff used to be the judge. I don't know whether Grey was ever the judge or not. I don't know.

AK: Tutzlaf?

JG: Tetzlaff, T-e-t-z-l-a double f.

AK: And he lived... he was a judge who lived out there or he just came in in case you needed a judge?

JG: Well, he was there when we moved down there.

AK: Um-hum.

JG: And I don't know where he came from or anything.

AK: Did you have the court... he have a court there?

JK: Well, he had a... just like a judge...

AK: Like a chamber?

JG: No, no, no, just his house.

AK: And if there were any problems people came to him?

JG: Yep. When Dad was the constable, he had the jail on his place.

AK: Oh, on your place?

JG: Yeah.

AK: You had the jail?

JG: Yeah.

AK: What was that like?

JG: Well, it was made out of 2 x 6's [lumber] laid like this, you know; two big doors on it; two cells in it.

AK: Did you have many people in there?

JG: Oh, once in a while, they... Dad had old Jim Bannon in there one time. He was drunk and raisin' hell and Dad put him... locked him up, you know, to sober him up. So anyway he decided he was going to burn his way out, see. You know, it was smoking down there. Well, anyway someone told Tetzlaff, the judge, about it so Tetzlaff goes up there and sits there awhile with his shotgun. Finally he said to Dan... he called him by name... he says, "When you get that hole big enough to stick your head out, I'm sitting here with a shotgun." The guy put it out, you see. And, well then my dad turned him loose the next day.

AK: What was his job as being the constable? What did he have to do?

JG: Well, served papers and... you know. Any disorderly stuff he was supposed to straighten it out.

The old hotel which was down there close to where the store was, the Phillips Store, was run by old Kate.

AK: Kate... Kate Phillips?

JG: I can't think of her last name. Anyway, everybody knew her by Kate.

AK: She ran the hotel?

JG: Yeah. And she was a tough old cookie. When Dad was running the store and one time he was going over to the depot to pick up some freight coming in, and here was old Kate laying along the side of the road, all of her dresses pulled up and tied up on top of her head. So Dad stopped, you know, of course, cut the string on top of her head and got her clothes down, and she just cussed Dad up one side and down the other, you know. She'd exposed herself, see. [Laughs.]

AK: How did she get like that?

JG: Somebody did it. Somebody did it to her, see. Dad never did find out who it was. She wouldn't tell him anything. Dad used to laugh about it. Oh, Kate cussed him out.

AK: Who were the people who stayed in the hotel? Who would come out there?

JG: Oh, drummers and one thing and another, you know, would stay in there.

AK: Drummers for the...

JG: Traveling drummers, you know. Salesmen. And people boarded in there, some of them. Had a kitchen. A lot of things happened down there.

AK: When... what did the main... the center of Chatsworth was this... what?... this school, the church, the store, and the hotel. Those were the main things there?

JG: Yes, and they weren't quite close together. The school was up there at the four corners where the school is now, the church was halfway to the store, south; and, then there was Phillips Store, and then across was the hotel, and the railroad there that went up to the rock quarry, to get the rock out... Well, people gradually began moving in, you know, and...

AK: Building things up.

JG: Like what it is now.

AK: Not a ranch community anymore.

JG: No.

AK: A couple of horses and things, but not...

JG: Oh, yeah.

AK: People, I think, are even cutting... the few acres they have, they're cutting that down.

JG: Yep.

AK: Property gets expensive.

JG: Oh Lord, it's out of sight down there.

AK: Do you remember how much your father paid for his acres?

JG: He traded.

AK: Oh, that's right.

JG: Oh, you could buy ranches down there... you could buy ten dollars an acre.

AK: Yeah. This was in... what?... about 1910 or something, it was about ten dollars an acre, or when was that?

JG: No. I'd say it was around 1904, '05, '06.

AK: You'd get a ranch for ten dollars an acre?

JG: Yeah.

AK: So you didn't need that much capital to get started?

JG: If you had the money, yes. All that ranch there belonged to the Porter Estate.

AK: Um-hum.

JG: That run clearly to the road that runs to San Fernando. From that it went to the top of the Oat Mountain someplace. You coulda bought that for \$2.00 a acre.

AK: What... what did they... did they...was that a ranching? That was ranching not farming they used there.

JG: Well, it was ranching, farming. What is the difference?

AK: No, I mean they had cattle. It was... they didn't grow that many crops.

JG: Oh, yeah.

AK: They were growing crops?

JG: Crops down below, sure.

AK: Oh, and in the hills is... they grazed... grazed the cattle.

JG: We run that cattle up there, and they run lots of sheep. We run cattle up there on top of the mountain, and sheep used to get across and we was a-fightin' all the time.

AK: What? You were fighting about whose land or whose cattle?

JG: No. We was fighting to keep the sheep off, you know.

AK: Oh.

JG: They'd come over across the fence, you know. Nobody got... shootin' or anything like that, but we was always chasing each others ... or chasing their sheep off.

AK: What? You... did you have them branded so you knew whose was whose?

JG: Well, they would... our brand was there. Our brand was the Circle G and the sheep... they, I don't know if they branded them or not; they probably did. I don't know. They were

altogether in a flock anyways. If there was any sheep, it was theirs. If there was any cattle, it was ours.

AK: Did you... what? You had the cattle for milking?

JG: No. Beef. Beef.

AK: And you sold it to...

JG: Oh, sometimes we sold it to cattle buyers who'd come around, sometimes we sold it to old Clem that had a slaughter house over to San Fernando, but usually to buyers that came around and bought our cattle. Paid nice for it and sell it.

Yep. Well I think that's about...

AK: That's about it?

JG: ... it. I'll probably think of a dozen things later on. There's my picture of when I was a little guy.

AK: How old were you then?

JG: Oh, about five or six.

AK: It's a nice picture. You look like you have on your Sunday-best suit.

JG: I did.

AK: Bows and everything. That's really nice.

JG: Yeah, that's the old man of the mountains.

AK: Well, you can't... any more old memories; any of Chatsworth; descriptions or anything? Anything you'd like to have recorded about the history of Chatsworth?

JG: No. Oh, there was an old character that lived there. His name was Beto[sp].

AK: Beto?

JG: Beto.

AK: A Spanish name.

JG: A Spanish name. The story on him was that he was... had a ranch in Mexico, and he was madly in love with some adjoining rancher's daughter and wanted to marry her. Anyway, his par... her parents was against it and they didn't get married, so he sold out. Now that's the

story that we had heard.

When we took our ranch, there was an old adobe house on this ranch; one room.

AK: This was when you took your ranch down in the...

JG: When we trad... when Dad traded. There was an old adobe house there. And this Betro lived there in that house. Then there was another house built there, this old old-timer, where that house is still standing. It's been added to and it's there in Chatsworth now; our place. Betro used to stand out in a certain place, you know, and every so often he'd go to the store... once a week, ten days, every two weeks... and had a little cart with a long handle on it; tugging on it. He'd buy what he wanted: groceries and stuff. He always used gold.

AK: Huh. Where'd he get the gold?

JG: He'd get silver in change but, you know, when he'd come back again he never brought any silver; it's always gold he paid with.

AK: Where did he... he had bought...

JG: Well, he had sold out his ranch in Mexico.

AK: He sold for gold.

JG: Evidently. Well, anyway when dad moved into the place down there, why, uh, old Betro used to stand out in a certain place he could see. And I was up there one day, and by this here base of this big oak tree was dugout and there was a pile of loose dirt there. And in the bottom there was... where there'd been a steel box lifted out. You could see the rust from the sides.

AK: Um-hum.

JG: And Betro was gone. He had moved up to another place. He used to come down there and stand and watch, you know. So he moved up to another place. He had a little shack up there. And, uh, he used to stand out on a little knoll; he'd just stand there for a long time. Watching.

The railroad come around and they moved him, you know. They were blasting right there and everything, and they just moved him out. Again, I found it again. The second time under this big oak tree, there was a hole. There's where the box was pulled out again, and Betro was gone.

Then he used to stand on a little knoll up on the grade, back up from the other side of the tracks, where they were blasting. Stood there for... oh, many times you'd go up there, you'd see old Betro standing out there.

Well, Dad used to talk to Betro. Says, "Betro why don't you come down and live down at the

house [we'll give you] in the old adobe? Tell me where your money is." "I don't have money."
"Yes," Dad said, "You've got money. You know you have. Every time you go to the store you take gold. Never any silver back, always gold. That's been going on for years." He says, "I'll give you a home so you won't have to cook for yourself, we'll feed you and everything. When you die, why, I'll take care of you."

But anyway, Dad used to drive by and see old Betro, you know. Well, one time he come by; it had been raining. Betro was dead. So, Dad was going to bury him; had the boys dig a grave, and they tried to get the priest to come from San Fernando but that was too far. So Dad went to our Methodist minister and told him, said, "You come up and say a few words." "Oh no," he says. "He's a Catholic. I can't say any words for him." Dad said, "Yeah. You're gonna say some words for him." He says, "I can't." He said, "Well now," he says, "you're going to because if you don't, when we bury Betro, I'll bury you with him! Betro is going to have a few words said for him. And you're gonna do it!" He did. He said a few words and Betro was buried.

AK: Upon where he'd lived or...

JG: Right where... just a little ways from where his cabin was, just a little ways from where he used to stand all the time. Well, I went up there with these guys that could locate stuff, you know, try to find that...

AK: What, with a stick or...

JG: Yeah, to pick out gold and everything, you know. Anyway, we never found it. And it's there some place. I know the place yet.

AK: There must be the silver there, too; the silver and the gold.

JG: Yeah. Yep, oh sure. He never had anything in the house, not anything. There was an old, old shot gun. It wasn't a shotgun; it was a rifle. He'd made the stock; whittled it out of a sycamore limb. And the hammer, he'd beat it out of iron. We had that for years around here, around home. And I don't know what Dad ever done with it.

AK: So somewhere buried up arou... in those hills is Betro's gold and silver.

JG: Yep. Yeah. It's got to be within... it's gotta be within a certain little area there. It's isn't too far away.

AK: Are there any oak trees there?

JG: No, there's not.

AK: So he couldn't have buried by a tree.

JG: No, no. But there's a lot of big rocks there and it could be buried right by a big rock.

AK: But what's with that... what's in that area today; do you know?

JG: Well, that's up where the Manson's were. It's on the property that the Manson's were on.

[Note: Charlie Manson and his followers before they were arrested for killing Sharon Tate. For more details see Vincent Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*. New York: Norton Publishers, 1974 - HV6533 .C2 B83 and David Edward Cooper, *The Manson Murders: A Philosophical Inquiry*. Cambridge, Mass: Schenkman, c. 1974 - HV6533 .C2 M355.]

AK: They might have found it.

JG: No...

AK: That just adds more intrigue to that area.

JG: Yeah. Yes, sir. I tell you what; that'll be found some day. I know it's there.

AK: If somebody is digging around, they'll find it.

JG: Well, I don't think anybody will dig there because there's very few who know the story.

AK: Yeah, but I mean, but if someone was just digging to, you know, build something.

JG: Oh, yeah. That's right. Somebody be excavatin' there to build something and... boom!... there it'll be. Yep.

AK: I don't know who owns that land now.

JG: Well, I don't either.

AK: After the Manson thing nobody wanted to have anything to do with it.

JG: Right in the big boulders in there, the big rocks.

AK: Well, that was near the Iverson place; wasn't it?

JG: Huh?

AK: That was near Iverson; wasn't it?

JG: Well, you know the road that used to go up... the old road.

AK: The old Santa Susanna Pass?

JG: The old Santa Susanna Pass before the... what run through the Iverson place, it was only, oh, a couple hundred yards across to where he used to stand. And Iverson's was... well, the road went here... and the Iverson place right over here over the hill.

[**Note: For a description of Santa Susanna Pass and its history see the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association Collection in the Urban Archives Center.**]

AK: So you should come back some day and look for it. You might find yourself some gold.

JG: Yeah. Get one of these gold finders; huh?

AK: Yeah. Get one of those electrical whatever... Geiger counters, whatever those things are.

JG: I'm not so sure but what it couldn't be found.

AK: It probably could, 'cuz you'd know where to go. You should get one of those electrical things and go down there.

JG: Ha! What would I do with the money?

AK: I don't know. It would be interesting to find gold. It's probably old Spanish gold.

JG: Well, I don't know. No, it was American gold.

AK: It was American gold?

JG: Yeah, it was American gold.

AK: In nuggets?

JG: No, gold dollars. Gold twenties.

AK: They're worth more than that now probably.

JG: A twenty is worth at least \$50.

AK: Not too many people trade in gold anymore.

JG: No, no.

AK: Most... but then it was accepted at the store. That was...

JG: Oh, yes. It was legal tender.

AK: What did they do with it?

JG: Well, it was just change.

AK: Change?

JG: It was just change, you know. It was gold. Everybody had some gold in their pocket, you know? It was just legal tender.

AK: But he only paid in gold. He didn't... he never used his silver change?

JG: We don't know why. We never did figure'd out why.

AK: He didn't like the silver for some reason. Either that or he liked it and didn't want to give it back.

JG: I don't know. I don't know.

AK: Something peculiar about him.

JG: Yep. Yeah.

About the old minister, Dad says, "You're going to preach at that, otherwise you're gonna be with Betro." [Laughs.]

AK: And he went.

JG: He preached. Yep.

AK: Are there any other people like Betro around?

JG: Huh?

AK: Any other interesting characters?

JG: ...[Garbled as he softly speaks to himself, remembering.] There was a Spanish man. His horse ran away. No one exciting.

AK: This was a Spanish man.

JG: Yeah. Anyway he said to Dad, he says, "You seen my *caballo* [unintelligible]? He said it in Spanish and English, you know, both.

AK: At the same time. Did you remember the story you were going to say, something about the movie you were trying to remember.

JG: Yeah. I think the Gish girl [Lillian Gish] rode with me on that... on that wagon.

AK: You drove them from the train up to the ...

JG: Yeah, up to the Roy Rogers place.

AK: Were you just... they hired you to drive the wagon?

JG: Drive the wagon up and haul 'em up there.

AK: Did the... did you usually just meet the train with your wagon and then anybody who wanted to could hire you to take them up there?

JG: No, I believe... the company was paying for that.

AK: Oh.

JG: The company was paying for that.

AK: The company told you to go meet the train.

JG: Yes, the company said, "Meet the train." And we had... at one time had nine wagons. They had a lot of people there, you know.

AK: That was, I guess, when D. W. Griffith was filming out there? Who... I don't remember the directors.

JG: I guess it was. I guess it was D. W. Griffith.

AK: I think Lillian Gish is still working in movies. I think a movie... she was... a movie just came out that she was in.

JG: Oh, well. She hasn't much... she's an old lady now.

AK: Yeah, but... No, she was... she just made some movie. She plays... where she plays an old lady.

JG: Well, she is an old lady, I'll tell you, because she is right close to my age, when she was young when I was young.

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

AK: This is... I'm continuing with Jess Graves. This is Side 1 of Tape 3. [4]

Okay.

JG: Okay, fine. Well, what were we talking about?

AK: About when you were hauling...

JG: Oh, hauling the...

AK: Lillian Gish and...

JG: Bud Jolis [sp]...

AK: ... and Dorothy Gish and Sweet, you said somebody...

JG: Lance Sweet.

AK: Lance Sweet.

JG: I think it was Lance Sweet. Anyway, it was quite a deal. They... I was trying to think about the... I... I... I can't remember the name of the picture. I think it was something like "Judith of Bethulia" or something like that. I can't remember. It was an old, old picture. Of course, it'd be old. But Jesus, it was...

AK: That sounds famil... that sounds like one of D. W. Griffith's early ones.

JG: It is. Ah, we... we hauled them there on two or three pictures. It got to be quite a chore. And then the automobiles finally get more, and so we didn't do it anymore.

AK: Didn't need to.

JG: No.

AK: How was Chatsworth governed in those days? Do you remember if there was a city council or how... just if any disputes, they went either to the constable, your father, or to the judge?

JG: Either to the county judge or the constable; that's all there was.

AK: Nobody even have like a mayor or anything?

JG: No, no. Never did have a mayor there. Of course, it joined the City of...

AK: Los Angeles.

JG: ... Los Angeles, finally, eventually.

AK: But before that there was no need to have any...

JG: No. The Board of Supervisors was the ruling deal.

AK: How many people were on the Board of Supervisors; do you remember? Five?

JG: Yeah. Same as it is now.

AK: Oh, for the County Board, you mean.

JG: Yeah, County Board.

AK: And they just did any... you went to them for anything.

JG: Yeah. They had a road commissioner, and that's the main people we worked with was the road commissioner. And Dad was road foreman there. He used to keep the grade up and haul gravel in the chuck holes, and one thing and another.

AK: What about if there were any medical problems? Where did you go? Where was the nearest doctor?

JG: Uh, San Fernando.

AK: You had to go there for everything?

JG: Yep. And if it was real serious, why the doctor would drive over to Chatsworth in a horse and buggy. I had an aunt; she used to throw tantrums. This is kind of funny. And she went into a tantrum, you know, and they couldn't do anything with her. And mother was down there and another one of the folks was there, and they was holding Lilly in bed and she was a raving and a caving and...

AK: This was one of your mother's sisters?

JG: No.

AK: An aunt or...

JG: My uncle's...

AK: Wife.

JG: ... wife. Uncle Bill's wife. So they phoned for the doctor, you know, and all the time she's just raisin' hell. So when doctor come, why, he walked into the room and he stood there and looked at her. He motioned the folks away, see? He got ahold of her in bed and he reached down and pulled her nightgown up and he just hauled off and hit her as hard as he could right on her cheek of her fanny. He said, "Roll over there, Lilly," and he said, "and behave yourself. Don't be pulling this stuff here." He went out, got in his horse and buggy and went back to San Fernando. [Laughs.]

AK: And she was okay?

JG: Oh, yeah. She was okay. She was just puttin' it all on. Mother used to laugh about that.

AK: She just got excited.

JG: No, she was...

AK: She wanted to...

JG: There was something that she wanted, she was throwing this tantrum to get it, see?

AK: Um-hum. They weren't going to let her get away with it.

JG: Nope. The doctor wouldn't. He knew what she was doing, see. He just hauled off and smacked her a good one. "Roll over there Lilly and behave yourself."

AK: After that she behaved herself.

JG: We didn't have anymore. She'd start it and I'd say, "Well, we'll call Doc back and that stopped it.

AK: She didn't want to go through that again.

JG: Yep. Yes, sir.

AK: You've had some very interesting times.

JG: One of my brothers, he was a little guy, and he had a cat, a big old tomcat. And around the ranch there, the fields come right up to your yard, right up to the road, see. And by gosh, one time he got lost. And his tomcat was gone. Called and called and called and couldn't find him.

So we figured he was in the grain field.

[Note: Interruption in interview.]

JG: This is the young lady. I don't know what we was talking about.

AK: The tomcat.

JG: Oh. So by gosh, we kept calling and calling, you know. And we kept lookin', see. Finally we see this tomcat jump up in the air like that, see. And we knew where he went.

AK: He was... he was...

JG: He was there with the tomcat... when we got to calling, I guess that tomcat knew we was calling for him. By George, he jumped up in the air and we saw him, and we went and got him.

AK: He didn't like that or...

JG: He was just a little guy. He couldn't hardly talk, see?

AK: He just kind of wandered away. But he had his guard cat with him.

JG: Yep. That was quite a cat.

AK: Some people have watchdogs, he had a watchcat to tell him where...

JG: There used to be a quarry up there, back up next to the railroad up there from the house, and a big Irishman, name of Bannon, superintendent of the quarry...

AK: Is he the one your father put in jail when he was drunk?

JG: No, it's his son.

AK: Ah.

JG: It was his son. And we had a big, old, white rooster and that white rooster hated old man Bannon. Every time he'd go up to the quarry, see... he'd walk up there up the road a mile; he'd walk back. He boarded there, roomed there at the ranch... that rooster would meet him and he was scared to death of that rooster. Well, the rooster was big, you know, and he'd hit him on the leg and those spurs would hurt, you know. He used to cuss that darned rooster, you know. He'd, "I'm gonna kill that rooster." Dad said, "Well, if you don't kill him, he'll kill you." You know, kidding, see? He wouldn't kill the rooster. Anyway, by gosh, we used to laugh at him. He'd sneak around. So he carried a club, you know. He beat the rooster off, you know.

AK: He didn't know why the rooster picked on him?

JG: Well, the rooster just didn't like him.

AK: The rooster got along okay with everybody else?

JG: Yep. We used to laugh... that rooster chasing old man Bannon.

AK: Well, I guess some animals don't care for some people.

JG: Well, it's just like a dog you know.

AK: Likes some people; other people he doesn't.

JG: Yep. That's right.

AK: I guess some dogs like other dogs and don't...

JG: Yep.

AK: Whatever. The rooster got along okay with the other roosters though, and the chickens?

JG: Oh, yeah. You see, he was boss of the ranch. [Laughs.]

AK: He didn't have to get along with them. They had to get along with him.

JG: They had to get along with him.

AK: He didn't have any worries. Oh, that's funny. [Pause.]

Let's see if I can jog any other memories. You were saying something about you played baseball earlier.

JG: Oh, yeah, yeah. We had a ball team there in school... Kelly and his brother, Eric Day, a bunch of us. We had a pretty good little ball team.

AK: Did you play other teams in the Valley?

JG: Yeah. Yeah. And we had a team to practice with, and Sundays the men would get together and out on the ranch we'd lay out a diamond... they had a diamond laid out there. We'd... they all had picks [pick handles] for bats because our bats wouldn't stand up to them, you know. They weren't strong enough. Anyway, we used to play a lot of baseball. We had red pants, red caps, white shirts.

AK: You had uniforms.

JG: Yep, we had uniforms. Oh, we were hotshots.

AK: About how old were you then?

JG: Oh, we was around fourteen, fifteen, sixteen in there.

AK: Did you team have a name?

JG: No, just the Chatsworth Ball Park... the ball team.

AK: And you played, like, other parts of the Valley.

JG: Yeah. We played, uh... oh, we used to go over and play over at Calabasas and we played over at Simi. We played... I don't know if we played San Fernando or not. No, I think San Fernando was too big for us... bigger teams. We finally broke up.

Well, I can't think of much more.

AK: All right. Well, then we'll just close this.

JG: Yeah. Well, if you go through Fresno going down, you might stop and look through the, uh, book there and see if Miranda is listed.

AK: Okay.

JG: ... and if it is, why, call 'em up.

AK: Yeah. Either that, or if I don't get a chance, maybe somebody else can.

JG: Yeah.

AK: Let's see...

JG: Well, as long as you 're going through.

AK: Well, I might go... I flew to Redding, so...

JG: Oh, you flew.

AK: Yeah, so... but I can probably find a Fresno phone book... you know, the libraries have them... and I'll look it up.

JG: Yeah.

AK: But, I'll see about that and I thank you very much for spending the time with me today.

JG: You're welcome. You're very welcome. Wish I could help you more.

AK: I think you've done quite a bit. I think you've done quite a bit.

[End of Interview.]