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Interview with Gladys Vance  
Date of Interview: July 10, 1995  
Venue: Mrs. Vance's home in Carlsbad  
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Transcriber: Dee Morning  
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SL: Why don't you start with your maiden name, where you were born and how you got to Carlsbad?

Vance: I was born in Longmont Colorado, which is 25 miles from Denver and is still a charming little town. I lived there until I was 2 years old and then in Billings, Montana for the next 12 years. So I grew up in Montana. The reason we eventually came to Carlsbad was my father had lived in Southern California from the time he was 2 years old and he loved it. He went to the University of California and was nice and warm all of his life. When he graduated from university he went to work for the Western Sugar Company and he was building sugar factories all through Wyoming, Colorado and Montana. As soon as he could retire he came back to California. His father was a Lutheran minister stationed in Escondido. One of Dad's early memories was coming to the coast with his father. They used to ride a little boat called the packet boat up and down the coast carrying the mail between San Diego and Oceanside.

SG: What was your dad's name?

Vance: Ogborn. He was 75 when he passed away in 1953. Even then they talked about the changes going on around here. My husband and I didn't really move here until 1938. My parents were here before that and according to them there were around 700 people here at that time and that included all the cats and dogs. That would have been around 1930. I suppose. I was married and living in Chicago and we would visit them all the time. I loved it here. It was very small, everyone knew you, was concerned about you. It was delightful, still is of course.

SG: What did you do in Carlsbad when you were visiting?

Vance: Went to the beach, ate out.

SG: Where did you eat?

Vance: Well there weren't too many places to eat – Twin Inns of course. We never really stayed in Carlsbad when we were visiting here. We stayed in San Diego, La Jolla or Oceanside if we were lucky. Oceanside had a series of old wooden hotels up and down the beach like the one in Coronado except not as large but the same idea. They've all burned down now. Eventually we put our child in the Army & Navy Academy so there was more incentive to come here. We finally came to live here in 1938. We lived in the Heisler House on Adams Street that was on a 10 acres avocado orchard. Mr. Heisler was a motion picture director and they rented it to us. It was sort of a hideaway for them. This was a summer resort, not a winter resort.

SL: Were there a lot of movie stars around?

Vance: A lot of them.

SG: I understand that Clark Gable was here in Carlsbad.

Vance: Well if he was, he didn't let me know.

SG: And John Wayne made movies here?

Vance: I expect some came to make movies and stayed at the Carlsbad Hotel. Eventually they made an officers club in the hotel during the war and they all hung out there from 5 p.m. on. There was a lot of activity here during the war. Camp Pendleton was the largest Marine base in the world and it was filled to capacity during that time.

SG: Did the influx of military cause a problem for Carlsbad?

Vance: I don't think so. They were intelligent, well educated people and were made to feel very welcome.

SL: Do you think that the war changed the town?

Vance: I think it changed it a lot because enlisted men and officers alike moved in after the war because they liked it here. So it was good for the town. We were building the

hospital at the time and that's when the doctors moved in. We had a paucity of hospital beds serving Carlsbad and Oceanside. It was sad. Zanhiser Hospital in Oceanside was all we had and it was antiquated. We were glad to see all those navy doctors. Pace was a naval officer, Twomy was a naval officer. So the town grew, there were more jobs. It's never going to be an industrial center but the planning commission has done a beautiful job – all these electronic plants coming in. As you know when you drive out El Camino Real all you see are the trees and shrubbery but back of all that are these plants employing hundreds of people. In Carlsbad you must landscape before you may build. So you know it's going to be very handsome before a building goes up. This was very smart and not many towns have been that bright. I think the war helped things, population wise. This was a little rural community before the war. We had agricultural people here and you could go down to their office and get a little sack of black bugs to put on your avocado trees to eat the bad bugs. Pretty soon they closed the office. They said Carlsbad is no longer a rural community. Homes were going up everywhere. This is why we have so many cul-de-sacs. My dad had 10 acres and when you sell ten acres for homes you build a road to go in and come out again. So there were cul-de-sacs all over town. Now they have started putting roads through which they really should have done long ago. Lots of people that came during the war are still here and are the biggest boosters that we have. Dr. Pace and Dr. Twomy are gone now but they left their mark. I think we have a very fine hospital. It's one of the 10 best in the United States. Can't get much better than that. What I wish we had done when we were growing up and becoming a big city is that we had saved some of the things that I remembered from down town. On the sidewalk right outside of what used to be a liquor store and is now a dress shop was an old fashioned drinking trough for horses and also a little trough for dogs to drink from. You know, they took that thing away and no one knows where it is. It's just a shame they didn't leave it where it was. In the middle of town there was a big flagpole and you had to drive around it to get anywhere. They took that away too and they didn't ask me a thing about it (laughs) The same thing has already happened in the hospital. There were pictures and plaques of all those people that worked so hard to get it built. When they did all this renovation and additions those things just disappeared. They say oh, it's all down in a storeroom some place. Not that it matters greatly but

that's just how fast it's grown. Out with the old and make room for the new. Someday long after I'm gone they'll unearth them and say, "Look what we found!"

SG: Were you instrumental in getting the hospital started?

Vance: Yes, partly I was. I worked on the Association for seven years to get the hospital built.

SG: Which hospital is this?

Vance: Tri-City. I should have said that right away. We worked very hard for a long time because we had to raise the money for all the elections. We had to vote on a hospital district and decide what the district would be. We decided it would be the three school districts of Vista, Carlsbad and Oceanside. You could claim to be out of the district for reason. Now the Zanhisers were in the district and they immediately put in a claim to be excluded. We said that's fair, you have your own hospital and you don't want to pay taxes to support another hospital so you're out. So we had these little isolated areas that were not in the district. It has since been remedied, but for a short while SDG & E asked to be excluded. Forgot what the reason was but it was good enough. When we put them back in it was very helpful because they had to pay a lot of taxes. Then we had to raise enough money to have a bond election. Some citizens were kind enough to donate money for that. We had some professional help on that election. The professionals said that was the only time they had worked on an election when the bond issue had passed higher than the district issue. I think it was almost unanimous. Emotion was running so high in favor of the hospital; it was a very uplifting experience.

SL: How long did it take?

Vance: We worked on it for seven years. Building took several years, not too long once we got started. We were going to have 120 beds and Fallbrook was also included. All at once they decided to have their own hospital so they petitioned for a hospital and they were given 20 beds. So we built for 100 beds. When you build with public funds you can only build for the immediate needs. Even though we knew the area was growing

of course. You tell them what you need and they tell you how reasonable or unreasonable your requests are.

SG: Tell us of your involvement with Saint Michael's.

Vance: I was on the building committee and that was about it. We had a young priest and he was very interested in getting a new church because we were certainly outgrowing the little one. We moved the little one. There was a Guild Hall connected to it so it had to be separated. The Guild Hall is still there though greatly enlarged. One time it was my turn to do the coffee. The priest only came 2 or 3 times a week and if he was there on Sunday we had coffee. Well, the little Ede boy, who you now know as a grown up man and the father of twins, said he'd help me. His parents were very active in the church. I said you can help me because I don't go to church often enough to know when they're getting near the end so I can get the coffee going. When it got near the end of the service he told me to do it now, they're ready to leave, they'll be coming in soon. Afterwards he said that was the best coffee we'd ever had! He was so proud of his contribution. He was a cute little boy, a rascal. Now he's a good-looking man.

SG: What was the churches reaction when Mrs. Magee donated the land?

Vance: They were happy about that. It was great of her to do it. I don't think anyone was too terribly surprised because as far as I'm concerned, she and the Ramsays were the Episcopal Church. They founded it; they gave every thing they had to it. They were such dear and vital people. See this little glass dish? I want you to take it when you go. This was Mrs. Magee's. She gave it to me one day for no reason. (holds up small glass pedestal dish) See those little strawberries on it and it has a gold rim around the top. It was very dear to her, an antique even then. She wanted me to have it so I accepted it with gratitude. I want to give it to the Historical Society to put back in her house.

SG: Thank you very much; it will be a lovely addition. Tell us more about Mrs. Magee.

Vance: She was very private, and very charming. She wouldn't take care of her health, wouldn't go to the doctor. I don't know why. She and her husband had an extremely happy marriage. She was very close to her parents and she loved to ride horseback. She

was very handsome, always had riding clothes and there was lots of room to ride in. She had cats, cats and dogs. Maybe that's why she liked me as I always had a dog and she would always ask me about my dog. She loved cats. Every stray that came by she would be giving it something good to eat. She was a good Republican, I shouldn't say good because all Republicans are good. She and I went to Los Angeles to hear President Eisenhower speak. We were together all day and she talked mostly about her father's very fine law library. I hope it's still intact.

SG: Don't know where it is.

Vance: Oh dear, you don't know where that library is? She wouldn't let anyone in the house, wanted everything to stay just as it was. She owned other little houses all around there and the property went to the church. She had rented them out. There was a little tearoom, an antique shop. When the church built the new building I think they tore down those little old buildings. She also owned the property where the firehouse is and on down to the corner. I also built the Woman's Club. (laughs) Little ole me and my hammer. We talked to Mrs. Magee about buying that lot as we thought that would be a good place for the Woman's Club. She said no, as long as the county wanted to keep fire apparatus there they could stay rent-free. It's still there. The second choice for a building site for the Woman's Club is where KoKo Beach Restaurant is now. That building is built on part of the old foundation of the wooden hotel that burned down. It was Pete's Steak House on Carlsbad Boulevard at that time. Pete said his building was for sale so Mary Pace, Mrs. Finis Johnson and I looked at it. Pete showed us the big boulders that were under the building which were the foundation of the old hotel. We didn't buy that building but I wanted to. He only wanted \$50,000 for it. It was a good solid building right on the highway. But it was messy as it had been a restaurant for a long time. Mary Pace said, "Gladys you and I both know who will be in there cleaning out that kitchen and I don't want to do it." I said I don't blame you I don't want to do it either. Mrs. Johnson said she didn't want to either so we gave that up. By the way, the restaurant that is there now is a good one. I had an excellent meal there.

SG: How did you finally decide on the property for the Woman's Club?

Vance: Kay Christiansen found that for us. We needed room for a clubhouse and parking. We had our place on Elm Street and \$17,500 cash. So we could afford to buy the property and build if we sold the Elm Street property.

SG: Where on Elm was the original clubhouse?

Vance: It was just along the road, a dear little building, one room with a kitchen in the back.

SL: Did you ever work for a salary?

Vance: No. I wasn't smart enough to be paid. I got paid what I was worth! I like to do volunteer work. I did volunteer work for the Red Cross for 19 years.

SL: Did you work for the Republican Party?

Yes, I still do. We've always been Republicans. My father built sugar factories and we've always lived in an area where sugar beets were grown. You see, the one big issue used to be the tariff. The Democrats took the tariff off so sugar came flooding in from the islands. The farmers who grew the beets in the United States had to stand in the bread lines until the Republicans got back in office and slapped the tariff back on again. You'll never run into anyone who has ever worked in the sugar beet industry who is not a Republican because it was their bread and butter. So I grew up in a Republican household. Let me tell you a story about my grandfather. His wife had died and he came to spend the holidays with us. He was sad and my mother suggested he might enjoy a picture show. So he trudged off to downtown Billings. He was back before you could say scat. When asked why he said, "You know who was playing down there? Will Rogers! Spend good money on a Democrat? I guess not!" That's how violent we were. (laughs) He was a funny man. I never really worked for the party, went door-to-door begging for money until Eisenhower ran. I don't think he was the best president we ever had but he was so popular and at the time when we really needed him he pulled this country together like on one else until Reagan was elected.

SL Is this the house you lived in with your mother?

Vance: No, I bought this one later. Mother's house was on Chinquapin in the middle of an orchard. After I lost my last big pit bulldog it became too dangerous to stay there. I never was robbed when I had the dog but was robbed over and over and finally got tired of it and I didn't sleep there anymore. I slept around and if someone was on a trip I stayed at their house. Once I walked in on a robber. My elderly uncle had come to town and said he insisted that he wasn't afraid to stay there so I took him over and when I went into the bedroom a hand reached out, grabbed me by the neck and threw us both to the floor. The intruder snatched the bag off my arm and ran away. I locked the door but I was so afraid that the robber would discover the loaded revolver that was in my bag. I always carried it as the police warned me not to stay there anymore. They told me that if you don't have at least \$100 on you they'll beat you. These were drug addicts who were doing this. The police never caught anyone. I just want to say that the first Chief of Police, Max Palkowski had a very fine department of very well trained men. He was very personable, he knew everyone. If anyone was arrested they took him or her to Oceanside or Vista because we didn't have a jail. I also remember the first mayor and the first fire chief.

SG: Are we done?

SL: Okay

Vance: Okay