

Interview with Kay Christiansen  
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EEG: When did you first come to Carlsbad from Nebraska?

KC: We came in 1926 from Columbus, Nebraska when there were all of 700 people here and Highland was the edge of town. My younger sister and I had to finish our high school at Oceanside because there wasn't any but grammar school. That's the same town that Samuel Church Smith and Gerhard Schutte came from when they were looking for a place to start a town. And when they heard that there was mineral water out here, and that's what they were looking for, why they came out here too. You see [John A.] Frazier was a retired sea captain. He came up from San Diego and bought 400 acres and wanted to farm. Well you have to have water to farm so he dug three wells, and after he drank the water from two of them he found that his stomach trouble was gone and so was his rheumatism. So they each [well] had the same minerals but in different proportions so they worked in different ways. And that's how these people [Smith and Schutte] happened to hear about the mineral properties that were out here because he came. Frazier was a very astute man. Actually, the big house that sets way back at the end of the street, I think at least part he built himself and was probably added on to later on, because I think I remember it was there when we came.

My Dad rented a little house over on Normandy Lane and he stayed there four or five months until he bought this little one right across the street on Christiansen Way. He kept that until he built the house up on Highland. Then he built the house on the ocean and that was better. They were home all the time. Then we built this one in 1964. It was sort of a creeping sea passage.

We were back and forth all the time because we went up to a Los Angeles school. Dad said, "Well now, you may have maids and people to wait on you, but if you don't,

are you going to get along?" So he sent us to a beauty-operators school, and that's what we did as a business for quite a long time. I had two shops; Margie had one. We worked together for a while. We were right downtown [LA] at Seventh and Broadway. Not a bad place to be working. I had two of them on Wiltshire Boulevard. Before we came down here I was very interested in Real Estate, and I took a course up in Los Angeles. So that when I came down here, I came into the office with Dad. It was C. J. Fennel Real Estate, but little old me was there too. His first office was over on State Street, rented a little place. Then he got this one over here and continued there. It is now the bike shop.

It's an interesting thing to look back over the years and see the changes. You know, the Lagoon over here is a freshwater lagoon. It's very rare because almost all of them are salty. Maxton Brown and his family lived next door to us up on Highland. The park at the lagoon was named for him because he was the one who discovered it was fresh and told people they could get fish out of there. They did some boating, little paddleboats, for a while. The Marron Springs way back up in the countryside are the ones that feed it. Of course, being close to these people and interested in what was going on, my Dad got more interested and so he bought Hosp Grove. We had that for quite a while. There are some wonderful caverns in there and they did plays and things of that sort from the schools.

SSG: They had plays in the caverns in Hosp Grove?

KC: The caverns were the background for the plays. We have so many photographs of various events; sometimes the caverns were part of it and sometimes they weren't. There were some wells in there, close to the lagoon. People had stock in Hosp Grove and they would come and get some of their water from the wells rather than let stock get into the lagoon.

SSG: What year was it when they were doing the plays?

KC: Probably after we left high school in Oceanside. The principal that was there when we were doing half-years was a real rat: "Girls you don't walk down the aisles with your arms around each other." They got rid of him. Professor Landsberry came and he was just wonderful. He started the first football team! Before that you had to do nothing but keep your nose in the books. I just recently saw a photograph of our class on the steps of the

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Home School and I think there were about 25-26 people. Let's see, we came in 1925, it would have been about 1927-28. I've got my graduation certificate downstairs.

SSG: Was it the high school that was putting the plays on?

KC: I think it was the high school because it was really the prime place to go for something like that.

SSG: Which side of the street that now goes through Hosp Grove would the caverns be on? Are they more behind the lagoon or behind the mall?

KC: I think they are probably over in the lagoon; you can still almost see some of the dips. In some places they've probably done some fill. Of course, that grove was planted because the railway was just coming through. They thought that those wonderful trunks would make valuable timber. I think they used them for the rail tracks for a time, and then found other trees that were less damaged by vibration. Of course, the trains come by here now. I hear them tooting all the night but it doesn't wake me up.

SSG: When you first came here from Nebraska, did you come here by train?

KC: No. We came in the fourth new car in Columbus, Nebraska, a Lincoln Page and my Dad drove it all the way to Carlsbad. It was one of those with the glass shutters all around, a big sedan.

SSG: It must have been a long trip.

KC: It was but we saw lots of things.

SSG: What drew your father here?

KC: I really don't know. It's silly; lots of people have asked me that. He was a photographer for many years. He was born in Jewelsbury, Colorado, but he had traveled way over to Florida for his photographic work. His curiosity. He was a portrait photographer. I don't think that particularly drew him out here. He was young; he was looking for new quarters.

SSG: And your Mom came also.

KC: Oh yes, and my sister, Margie, and then Helen and Dean were both born out here. Margie was 13 months younger than I. My brother Dean died of a brain tumor during the war. He was an artist too. Helen is 9 years younger than I am; she lives in Beverly Hills. Margie's is in south Los Angeles; her husband passed away about 8 years ago. She and I

didn't have any children. Helen had one daughter. So we were pretty free to do what we wanted to do.

SSG: Was that a big consideration, not having children and being able to do what you wanted to do?

KC: Oh, I don't think so. Some people were fortunate enough to have one or two or whatever they wanted. This was farming country so most of the families liked to have big families because they could work on the farm. We had a lovely big back garden and my Dad planted avocados right away on the east side of Highland. The grove went over the hill and almost all the way down to the valley. Then Mother had her rose garden and her own nice garden by the back of the house. I was married in her Gazebo. Bob Baird started a lumberyard here and my Dad bought all his material from him. Mr. Baird built side-by-side our house, and the two garages were adjacent with one driveway. They didn't have any children but Grandma Moses, Mrs. Baird's mother, was with them.

SSG: You said you were married at your parent's home. How did you meet your husband?

KC: Well, I was in Los Angeles after high school here. My sister, Margie, was going with a young man named Leo Holly who was a printer. He was in one of the big buildings down on Second. He lived with Chris, and that's how I met Chris. I spent all of six years chasing him before I could flatten him out. Boy! He wasn't easy to catch, but he sure was a good catch. He had more ideas than anyone I'd ever known. He was a straight out-and-out inventor. He had soda fountains. He started Foster Freeze years ago. We were still *can*  
down in Los Angeles. He had two soda fountains down on Hill Street and Second. And *vanilla*  
he had two or three others all around the Los Angeles area.

SSG: So, did he encourage you to start your own beauty shop?

KC: No, we were already there. Later on, when he started making the toppings and vanillas and flavors and things of that sort, he went to work for Nesbitt who built their own locations to sell the ice cream.

SSG: You were talking about your Mom and her garden. She had a rose garden. Did she have a vegetable garden? Did she need to have that?

KC: That was just natural for those times whether you were in Nebraska, or Kansas, or Ohio.

SSG: If you didn't have a vegetable garden, you had to buy them at the store. Did they have grocery shops in Carlsbad or did you buy from farmers?

KC: There were several markets on State Street.

SSG: How about meat and fish and things like that.

KC: We bought that at the market. Fishing was easy from the ocean. Food was easy to come by.

SSG: It's hard to find fresh fish now, but it was easy then?

KC: Well, yes they didn't have the technique of curing and canning that they do now.

SSG: Did you have a refrigerator or an icebox?

KC: We had an icebox.

SSG: Where did you get the ice?

KC: The iceman came around. I think over in Oceanside they had an icebox business, because you couldn't freeze things here unless you did it mechanically.

SSG: How often did you have to change the ice?

KC: I think about every ten days. The ice chest was in the top, and then a section below and on the side for food. They were made of oak.

SSG: Did you have electricity or gas lighting when you first got here?

KC: I don't remember.

SSG: How about bathrooms?

KC: We had an inside bathroom. I think we had electricity, maybe through Bob Baird's lumberyard, or maybe it was that Oceanside electrical company. But we had a nice big living room with a fire place and a great big dining room so you could put a huge table in there, kitchen, back porch, and two bedrooms on that floor. Upstairs there was an attic, and when my brother came along he had his room upstairs.

SSG: When you were first here what kind of celebrations did they have for holidays, for example, Christmas?

KC: I'm sure we had a tree, probably brought in by train.

SSG: Did you visit people at Christmas time?

KC: There was visiting, but a lot of it was through the church.

SSG: Did people in Carlsbad dine out often?

KC: Most people ate at home but there was Twin Inns. Eddie Kentner came down and bought that whole block. There were also some little restaurants on State Street.

(Points to picture on wall out of camera's view). Now, those on the left are Frazier, his wife and daughter. Those on the right are the men from Nebraska. They ran a pipe to the railroad platform and people could drink the water from their tin cups. The water had no taste or odor. Both wells had the same mineral content but in different proportions. The one by the curb had the heavier content and it was good for stomach, kidney and bladder problems. The other well water was bathed in and relieved arthritis, rheumatism and bursitis.

SSG: Were there any doctors or a hospital around at that time?

KC: Yes, there were doctors around. There was a shabby hospital in Oceanside. There was a decent one in Escondido. Dad had kidney trouble and we had to drive him over there. It was a long way and that's why he started Tri-City Hospital. *(Handwritten: CPD...)*

SSG: So he worked with Gladys Vance then?

KC: Yes, lovely woman.

SSG: What was it like during the depression?

KC: We were probably better off here because it was an agricultural area. Food was easier to come by.

I'm just a month away from 87 so I can't remember so many names.

SSG: How old were you when you married?

(KC reminisces about meeting her husband and her life in Los Angeles.)

SSG: Tell us about Chris starting the Carlsbad Historical Society.

KC: Well, Chris said, "You know there are a lot of old timers around. I wonder how many have told their stories and if a record has been made? He started a little book to keep a record and that's how it started. It's going wonderfully over there (Magee House). The first history book written was the little green one (by Friends of the Library), then Marje Howard-Jones and then Orton's book. So many places don't have a grasp on how things got started and the nuances of it.

SSG: What can you tell us about Mrs. Magee?

KC: she was an only child and a wonderful horsewoman. She used to ride in the back country. That's where she met her husband. Her parents weren't very happy about that. They wanted her to stay an old maid. She went to school down in San Diego. When she moved back here she had chickens and horses. After she died they were going to tear the barn down. Chris said, "You're not going to tear that barn down!"

SSG: Is that where she kept her horse?

KC: Yes.

SSG: What was she like?

KC: She was rather quiet but I wouldn't say she was bashful. I think in a way that she thought she was better than others.

SSG: What was Hugh Magee like?

KC: I never knew him, apparently they were happy together. They didn't have any children but I think he was a very good husband to her.

SSG: Were there any organized sports when you were in high school?

KC: Oh I guess only tennis, football, and ping-pong.

(Unintelligible questions and Kay ends by stating that she has had a wonderful life)

SSG: Thank you.

KC: You're very welcome.