

INTERVIEW WITH MARGARET BROWNLEY

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 7-7-95

INTERVIEWER STEPHANIE L'HEUREUX

TRANSCRIBER: DENICE SANDE

SL: Where were you born and how did you get to Carlsbad?

MB: Interesting thing, as matter of fact, I was born in Minneapolis and left there in 1931 when I was offered a job in New York (It was the middle of the depression). So, I went to New York, met the man that I married later, the first night I got there, so "Gold Feast" generally.

George had rheumatoid arthritis when I met him. The doctors said that if we stayed in New York, he would be bedridden and I told George "you are not going to bedridden."

So, he came out in 1940 and stayed in Arizona for a while. That is where everyone thought you should be if you had arthritis. Well, it did not agree with him, the big change between day and night was too much, so he and another friend who was at the same spot decided they would come on over to the beach to the ocean. Of course, George loved the ocean anyway, Both of his grandfathers were sea captains. So that was his background. He was born into it I guess. He came out here and where they were staying in Arizona, the owner said, "George, you don't want to go to Laguna Beach, you want to go to Carlsbad." "You and Ollie (who owned the Carlsbad Hotel at that time), would get along like a 'house on fire,' and they did, and

it pleased me so much. From then on, I was the breadwinner and I came out soon to see him, when we could scrape together \$100 and I came from New York to Carlsbad, sitting up all the way.”

Inter: On the train?

MB: On the train, oh yes. I had \$10. I went over to Pina’s in New York, (they had a sale on) and purchased a new dress, so when I arrived to meet George, I had my new dress on. George was at the depot and that was my first glimpse of Carlsbad, that was in 1940, and that was how we got to Carlsbad.

Inter: Did you work and live in New York the whole time, or did you go with him?

MB: No, I could not. We did not have the money. I kept right on working until I could retire in 1965, and that is when we came back here to live. So our lives in Carlsbad begin in 1965. That was 25 years after the first time I saw Carlsbad. I always had to be close to an airport because I worked for the Girl Scouts. I was on the National staff for the Girl Scouts all of those years, in every state, in every union, except Alaska, I did something. I was in the personnel department and “Oh, you don’t want to hear all this stuff about me?”

Inter: Yes, we do.

MB: Well I was hired to start a national training program for council members. I learned the hard way.

Inter: How did you do it?

MB: Well the first thing, we had a wonderful director of the personnel department so I had guidance. The first thing I did was to go through a number of states and get information on what the board members did and then I could draw up job descriptions, and then develop a training plan, after that, I had to get it in operation with volunteer trainers, so I did.

Inter: So you were in Girl Scouts. Were you a member?

MB: No, they almost did not hire me because my mother said, “no daughter of hers was going to work, no way, in 1928.”

Inter: So what did you do?

MB: I did not want to be just a “social butterfly” and mother came home one day and I had gone down to Munsingwear’s in Minneapolis, and applied for a job, and they were interested in me. Well, I had done a lot on the University of Minnesota campus, and they knew about it. I had done a great deal on campus, so that is why they were interested in me. I went home and told my mother and she cried all nite long. She stated two weeks later, saying she knew it was a position, it was never a job, and that she would not mind if I took it.

As you know, I was not a Girl Scout. I was into every sport that you could name. I had my own groups. Anyway, I was not going to make my mother that unhappy so within a year, I was executive director of Minneapolis and Hennipen Counties, and a couple of years later, it was when the National Organization offered me a job in New York in the personnel department. I was traveling all those years and I had to be close to an airport because my office was in New York.

Inter: So you always came back there as your base?

MB: Yes, but when George got out here and it looked to me like he would always like to go back to New York and work again, but I knew that he wouldn't, as the doctors had said. I told them I was going to come out here for a holiday or a vacation. I said that I would be looking for a job on the West Coast. It was then that they offered me the job of personnel representative and community representative on the West Coast. Well the West Coast to a New Yorker is anything west of the Mississippi, so I was still traveling much more than I wanted to. Well, it was money and we needed money and I said, "Sure that would be fine."

George needed me. He needed help, but we stuck it out, all those years from 1935 when we were married to 1965 on a little salary, after George's fairly good salary as an engineer. He did big projects and had a very good salary as an engineer. He did the Empire State Building, all the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and had this pumping business all through the depression. This helped us all through the depression with that job.

I kept on going back to New York with my work. The engineers would say, "Bring him (George) back. There is no one like him here." One of them said, "Did you know he was within 200 feet of piping for that entire building in his bid?" No, but I know that he is a very smart man, very intelligent.

George had many interests; all the pictures in the house are his pastels. I encouraged him to paint because he was alone a lot. He wrote a cookbook, too.

Did you know about that?

Inter: No I did not know that.

MB: Well, he was a gourmet, so I had to learn to cook and I did. He used to joke and say that I knew to boil water when he married me. We had a wonderful life. So we lived in LA for a year and then I became regional director of these five states. I first stopped and took graduate work and got a masters degree in community organization and social group work.

I was close to 50 then and most people would have thought that I had such an amazing experience with the Girl Scouts. I stayed with them because they challenged me practically every day like "How do you do that?" Well, then you do it. It was a wonderful experience and a wonderful organization and it was kept up to date. I still, of course, get a lot of material as an ex national staff member.

But then we had to move from Los Angeles to Los Altos because that was where the National branch office was and then I could be with George a

little more because there was a staff, 12 of us, covering five states, but none of the work was easy.

Inter: So, when you were traveling around, did the Girl Scouts provide a place for you to live?

MB: Do you mean when I was on the road? Yes, they give you travel expenses.

Inter: Did they provide a place for you to stay?

MB: A hotel or a motel?

Inter: Did you have a place you could kind of call your home?

MB: No, but I would keep getting back here as often as possible to be with George, and when I became regional director, then I could be here more, except I still had to travel. The national board mandated that we help the small councils consolidate so that's they would be able to take care of their own needs. What was happening, they were depending on us to train their leaders and giving camping experiences to their children. The national staff was growing so that was a mandate and this was from the National Board. It was hard because there were pros and cons and when Orange County became one Girl Scout Council, there were about 11 councils in that one county.

The John Birch society (I don't know whether I should put this in the record, but you can take it out if you think it is unwise), was underground as much as the communism that they were fighting, and we did not know who we were dealing with because they took us on. They felt that what we were doing was taking away local control and in a way we were. It was a county rather than 11 small councils that were inadequate and not doing their job. I was threatened and I received threatening letters and phone calls. When I had reached the climax, when we were going to finalize the consolidation to the county, I would not have let those volunteers down. They were wonderful. I got a phone call that if any of my staff went there, they would be physically harmed.

Inter: Were you able to get help from the police?

MB: No.

Inter: So what did you do?

MB: Well, I told our finance advisor that he could not go. I would not take responsibility for him as regional director. I would have to take responsibility, I would not do it. So I told the council that I would go.

This is just an example of some of the things I was called on to do.

Inter: So what happened when you were able to merge and consolidate?

MB: I got through without being physically harmed, but it was scary.

Some of the odd things, when I was a human relationship representative, back in those years the national director called me and said, “Margaret, get to Long Beach quickly.” You have to get the hotels to accept our blacks. It was for a national convention and we received a letter stating that none of the hotels would take our blacks, and you had to go in there and crack it and get them to accept them.

Inter: Were you able to?

MB: You have to. It is just another example of some of the things that you have to do, certainly my mother did not think I would be called on to do things like that she would not want me taking that on.

Inter: Approximately what time was that?

MB: Well I became regional director in the late 50’s and so it was about the mid-fifties.

Inter: Where the troops segregated at that time?

MB: No, they were definitely not. We didn’t have that many blacks but the Hilton finally gave in after we had gotten thrown out of a couple of hotels for what we were trying to do, and I would say to all of them, “You are going against the law that you cannot discriminate in public places,” but the Hilton said that they would accept our blacks but not all of them.

We had the Regional Committee members sit in the lobby of all the hotels so that when the blacks arrived, they went right to the desk with them and saw to it that they were accommodated. There are ways you know!

MB: I thought you wanted me to talk about Carlsbad, not about me.

Inter: There was so much other stuff that we wanted to cover.

MB: Well it was fortunate for George and for me that in 1965 an inheritance came my way so I was able to retire. We did buy a house in Los Altos. We had to put \$3000 down. We found \$2000 and that was all we could find.

Inter: Could you ask your parents?

MB: My mother was obviously opposed to a man who is ill, so I didn't want any help from my family, and I didn't get any.

My mother used to say that no daughter of hers was going to take out a second mortgage, so she gave me \$1000. This was a lucky break for us. I have been lucky all of my life, all of my life. For instance, I was so lucky to find George, someone that you could care that much about.

We sold the house for twice what we paid for it (\$18,000), and we sold it for \$36,000, so we moved down here. It is embarrassing to say what our house is worth now. We brought it for only \$32,000.

Inter: I have two more questions to ask you before we talk about Carlsbad.

MB: Yes, I am very anxious to talk about Carlsbad.

Inter: Did you feel that your education going to college in Minnesota and getting a master's degree helped you in the Girl Scouts or whether you learned most everything on the job?

MB: Well my job expected so much. I had not taken anything in adult education. I had to learn the hard way such as how you involved a group, that is the only way to interest them and help them to learn, but I learned the hard way and maybe that is the best way.

My major was psychology and personnel work in college and that was a tremendous help. I was very active in all sports. I was president of the Girls Athletic Association in high school. I was president of the Women's Athletic Association in college and I learned a lot in organizations and how to work with people in my extracurricular activities.

Inter: Did your mother ever find peace with you working?

MB: No, she was a person of great ability but wanted to control, and she sort of belittled what I was doing. She said, "You know Margaret, your job is not important in Girl Scouting, it's the leader that is important."

I said, "That is absolutely right. She never did quite accept it and never did accept George. George was very well informed. She (my mother) wanted to be the main one, but she was a wonderful person (maybe you will take this

part out). I had a marvelous childhood and there are so many people who don't have.

Inter: What did George think of all of this?

MB: I did not take things like that home with me. He had his own interests and I encouraged those, like painting, reading and writing a cookbook. In his cookbook, he has quotes relating to each of the recipes.

I would come home from the library with stacks of literature, that is how I got interested in the library, the Carlsbad Library. That was one of the first things I did, but why I cannot go back as far as most people my age is because from 1965 to 1975, while George was still living, he needed my help, so I did not get into community work until 1975. I am a latecomer.

Inter: Did the pool help George?

MB: Yes, it was marvelous. I think the pool really helped him. He was in pain all the time, but you would never know it. He was always the life of the party.

Inter: It was nice that you could spend that time together. Did you have many friends?

MB: George was very particular and we found a few, but a New Yorker born in New York, did not find that many people that interested him. If he were here now, it is so very different. There is a big difference in Carlsbad.

Inter: It was very small at that time.

MB: Yes and provincial.

Inter: How do you feel Carlsbad has changed?

MB: It's the people that have made the difference really. When people are as cultured as George was, the Otwells for instance, were a very fascinating couple. We were very interested in their travels.

The things that interested us in Carlsbad was the environment here, the lagoons, and thousands of acres of open spaces.

It was a wonderful community and we liked it from the start. We did travel a little although George was not able to travel very much. He was anxious to see the glaciers. We had to stop every 200 miles and he would stretch out, rest and then we would go on.

He would love the number of restaurants we have now because he was a gourmet, but we did go out for some meals.

Inter: What were some of the restaurants?

MB: There was the Twin Inns. There are so many more restaurants now.

Inter: Did a lot of people go to the Twin Inns?

MB: Yes. A lot of people stopped, people going from Los Angeles to Mexico.

Inter: So it was not just local people that went there?

MB: No.

Inter: Did you use the library?

MB: Oh yes, I was in and out of there all the time for George because he was an avid reader. Whenever he was a bit late for supper in New York, I knew exactly where he was, he was in a bookstore.

Inter: Were you with the Friends of the Library?

MB: Yes, I was on their Board of Trustees and with the Sierra System (Interlibrary Loan System). It was very interesting. My background made me do it. I realized I was just a fifth wheel; nobody was paying attention to the Advisory Board.

Inter: How come?

MB: Well they were perfectly able to take care of it themselves. They were all directors of different libraries in the area but I decided to ask the board what they thought of us. Why don't they ask the directors what they

expected of us? So we did, and they came up with real interesting ideas as to what they expected of us.

Inter: So you did have things to do?

MB: Well they told us, and the Advisory Board was an important part of the Sierra System. I get enjoyment from something that works out.

Inter: How long ago was the Carlsbad Hotel, and when did it change?

MB: Well I can't remember when it changed. It is as retirement home now and has been for many years. What year it changed, I do not know but when George was here, it was a hotel. The city was not incorporated at that time. I remember Ollie talking to us about the interest he had in helping to incorporate Carlsbad, and the fact that Oceanside was trying to get our shoreline. They were trying to annex us recognizing that it was a very poor area, but Carlsbad came through and kept that area as it was then.

Inter: I also heard that there was a lot of bickering going on about the irrigation systems and the water lines.

MB: Yes. We imported 99 per cent of our water and most of it is from the Colorado River (at least one half of it) and of course with the population growth in Arizona, legally they could claim part of the water that we were getting, so that was always iffy and we were at their mercy. You know the controversy! Right now, it is precarious, because if anything happened to

the pipes, say an earthquake came along, we would have to boil our water. We do not have a plant here in Carlsbad to take care of this.

I feel that Carlsbad is a very well-run city and, of course, I feel that way because I have a little bit to do with what has happened here.

I appreciate the opportunities that I have had. The League of Women Voters was also something that I was very active in as you know and I still am active in that organization. I feel that we do such an important thing. People have to know what they are voting on and we have to encourage people to participate and be involved in their communities. There are fewer now than there have been in the past that vote and the League is doing everything that it can to inform people and get them out to vote. This is what they do well. So I have always been interested in the League of Women Voters. In order to become a part of the community, you have to know what is going on so one of the first things I helped the League do was to get a Core of Observers, which is a part of our program anyway, but it has not been developed here as much. Once we had 20 observers going to all the public meetings so that we were one of the best informed groups in the community.

No one wanted to go the City Council meetings because there were too many of them and also they were held on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. (dinner time). So I was an observer at the City Council meetings for five years and I was pretty well informed and I appreciated the opportunity.

Inter: Is that how you got involved in water conservation?

MB: I was mostly in growth and how growth was handled and land use, so that the City Council appointed me to the Land Use Review Committee, that was a wonderful experienced at that time, the City Council was considered to be more interested in development and other aspects of their work and it showed in that committee that was formed because citizens like myself were in the minority. They were developers and realtors. So when it came time, it was a two-year study, which the city was counting on to come out of that group to help guide them.

So the chair, who was appointed by the City Council, was just lost, he didn't know how to handle it because of the controversy and the problems. I was accustomed to that, I had trained board members. I could handle it and get consensus. He realized that I could help so when it came time for the final report that we needed to give to the City Council, he appointed a very well known developer and a community activist and then he said, "I want Margaret Brownley to be the chair person." All the fellows looked at me and said, "How did you happened to get this? What have you done to deserve this?"

What I first told the three of us is that if we send a report to the City Council without a minority report, we will mislead them. So the three of us and, I encouraged them to believe this, we presented it to the committee and they accepted it. Our report included a minority report. Not much of a minority, two or three votes. Buddy delights to this day that the Growth Management Plan came out of our minority report from the committee council review.

Inter: When was this?

MB: How long have we had the growth management plan, it was before that.

Inter: You were a very lucky person.

MB: I would say so. Those were lovely opportunities. Look at the opportunities I have had. What a lucky person!

Inter: Do you think you just jumped in?

MB: Well I do not like to say no and if people think I can do something, I will say, "yes," I will surely try my best.

Inter: In what way have you been involved with city government?

MB: I think that it has been appointments such as the Sierra System and the Language Review. These stand out in my mind as the most important. I think my work in the League helped because there are more people participating now, more people going to council meetings and at times I was the only one in the audience.

One time, a committee member looked out and said, "We can go now, Margaret is here, and our public is here."

Inter: Can we see your photos?

MB: This is the first thing I saw in Carlsbad in 1940, the train station.

Inter: You transferred in Los Angeles and then came down here?

MB: Yes. It is quite a few years ago. That is a tall pine tree. I still have it out there, by keeping it bonsai, it makes a nice tree.

He (George) said he counted quail while Margaret hung laundry (picture of her husband).

Inter: Is that a view of your back yard?

MB: Yes, Skyline looking east.

Inter: Was that Carlsbad?

MB: This is definitely Carlsbad. In those days, we could drive into the flower fields. They were pulling up the bulbs of those flowers that did not quite match that particular area. They had to get rid of those because when they sold bulbs, they had to be sure they were all this color, so they were making big piles and they were beautiful. George and I said, "Could we have some of those and bring them home," and he said yes.

Inter: Did you plant them again in your own yard?

MB: No, because the bulbs were not mature enough. They were being grown for the bulbs, not for the flowers, but we used the flowers that deliverymen would come and see what we had. I said, "Here, take a bucket

full.” We had buckets full of flowers. They were urging us to take them because it would help them out. It got rid of what they were throwing out.

George loved the backcountry, so we always took a lot of rides.

Inter: Tell us about the snow.

MB: That was so fascinating. You can see that I ran right out and took pictures because it was so unusual. It was the only time it happened in the 30 years that I have been here. The snow, I believe, was in the late 60’s.

Inter: What month?

MB: It must have been December or January.

Inter: This top picture, is that looking left from your front door?

MB: South, and with this picture, this is looking south.

This of course is our patio.

Inter: This top picture?

MB: The top picture is the surf here in Carlsbad, possibly taken from Highland.

Inter: This one?

MB: There are beautiful sunsets here and this is one that I took right from our front area here, and you can see how beautiful it is.

When we first came here, there was nothing except up here and on Sunnyhill Drive, but from Sunnyhill to Highland, there was nothing. It was all flowers and I didn't know what it was. It was white blossoms, I thought. So I went down as soon as I got here and what they were were "Birds of Paradise," and those were white paper caps to shield the flowers from rain and so they would not be damaged, so they would be perfect. It was just gorgeous. They were all flowers and there was nothing else there and when I could retire in 1965, we came down here because George wanted to come right back here. We loved Los Altos and in those years, it was beautiful but he loved Carlsbad, so he wanted to come back here and we started looking for a home, and at first, we did not look here in Carlsbad. At that time, we did not know that there was anything like this.

I looked and when I found anything, like down in Del Mar, that might do, and I would come and get George and take him down because he could not stay in the car that long. The homes were alright, but one day I came back, I was getting a little discouraged, and he said that this paper was thrown at the door, at this motel where we were staying. George said something about Skyline, so he said "Why don't you go and look at that house?" I came up here and here it was built up. The only lot that was not built on was the one right across from us.

It looked right at the power plant. That did not appeal to me too much, and the house itself did not appeal to me. I was coming back north on Skyline and I saw a “For Sale” sign on this house. By the afternoon, we had brought this house.

Lucky, lucky me and I still am one of the luckiest people I know.

Inter: Is there anything that you would like to talk about that you have not talked about, anything you would like to share?

MB: That I love this place, every inch of it and that I am going to stay here as long as I can and I do have help, when I need help. As you see, I live alone and take care of myself and I am doing all right.

Inter: What is the biggest change that you have seen here in Carlsbad?

MB: The growth and the amenities. Of course, I think we have done well. Some people don't want any more people to come here, I don't feel that way, and you can't. It is not realistic. If people own land, you cannot legally keep them from using it. I cannot feel that way. This city is very well planned. We have an excellent planning department. We have a good growth management plan and the last thing that is wonderful is that's we have a habitat management plan and we are the only city on the coast that has such a plan. It has been worked out with Fieldstone, so that in time, half the population of Carlsbad will be south of Palomar Airport Road. This doesn't seem possible now but we have only about one half built up right now. We still have a long way to go, but it is being done well.

Inter: What is good planning?

MB: That we have the amenities when they are needed.

Inter: What time frame is more or less the most rapid change that you can remember here in Carlsbad?

MB: I would say around the early 1980's and then when the growth management plan came into effect, it was voted on .You know so that we cannot exceed a certain population without going back to the citizens to get permission. Some people do not realize that. These people that fight the growth are stupid. They do not understand and some do not realize how lucky we are to be here in Carlsbad.

Inter: You are for growth?

MB: With 50% of your land not used but is under control and there are pros and cons about getting larger because you have more good restaurants, you have more shopping opportunities, more people who bring something to the community. So I do not fight growth. I encourage us to go on the path that we are taking, and I am active enough so I am helping.

Gaus House Preservation: Gaus sisters, Irma and Fern; Brian Robertson, son of Virginia Mae Kelly Robertson (m. Everett Robertson), whose parents were Horace H. and Elsie M. Kelly; and one child referred to as Jennifer.

Date of Interview: unknown

Interviewer: Marj Howard-Jones

Transcriber: Phyllis Straw-Roszkiewicz

This interview is conducted around the fireplace of the Gaus House by the Carlsbad Historical Society. (This must be confirmed.)

BR: When I was about Jennifer's size, Louie Gaus and my grandfather, Horace Kelly, used to go fishing, and right out here in the backyard, they had albacore stacked like firewood, dumping it out of gunny sacks. When we heard they were going to take this house down to improve the church property here, we decided to set out and see if we could save it. I'd like to say that this is our first success, a real preservation. The house will not be preserved here: It is going to be moved and preserved. We are glad about that, and I think Louie's and Georgie's daughters are, too. I think this house is unique and has a lot of fine characteristics that Marj wants to talk about a little bit.

I'd like Fern and Irma to make some comments about their memories of this house: when they first remembered this house; some of the things they did here that they thought were fun, or sad, or joyous occasions. I don't care which one starts, but I'd like you to tell us your stories.

I.G.: We had some joyful occasions here, and we had some sad occasions in this house. I can remember that on holidays Mother and Dad would borrow an enormous table from the school auditorium and set it up in here with folding chairs of some sort.

We would all be gathered around from the end of the dining room all the way into the living room here. We'd all be just like one be happy family. I'm sure, Brian, that your grandparents were here on many of those occasions. I can remember the day that we received word that my brother was killed. Dad was out here in the driveway by my brother's truck, and he just fell in a heap. My brother was a corpsman in the Navy in the

South Pacific and Phillipines. This happened a short time after World War II. It was a very sad occasion.

MH-J: So the three of you grew up in this house?

IG: I was born in Rhode Island. When we moved to California, I was 16 months old.

MH-J: What brought you to California?

IG: Well, my Dad promised my Mother when they married that they would come to California. When they got ready to come, he was apprehensive and almost decided not to. At the last minute, they sold all their furniture, got into a brand new Nash touring car, and came across the United States.

MH-J: What year was that?

IG: That was 1923. That was quite a trip. We came direct to Carlsbad. I understand that they were driving along and my grandmother, just from feminine intuition, said, "I love this place, this is where I want to settle." So they bought a store building up on what is now the old highway up near the beach. They had a couple of gas pumps there. We all lived in the back of that building until they could get their feet on the ground and get homes started. My Dad built some buildings for my grandparents and then built our first house.

FG: He also built a house across the street from here.

MH-J: (MORE)