

Interview with
Ernie Carpenter

August 7, 2001

by Dick Nelson

for the

Oceanside Historical Society

P.O. Box 125

Oceanside CA 92049

Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

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Interview with Ernie Carpenter by Dick Nelson for the Oceanside Historical Society. August 7, 2001 at the home of Ernie Carpenter, Oceanside CA 92054. Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Dick: Okay, this is an interview with Ernie Carpenter at his home in Oceanside and this is the 7th of August, 2001. My name is Dick Nelson. Okay, Ernie, why don't you let us know where you were born -- what about your full name and where you were born and your parents and things like that.

Ernie: My name is Ernest. My middle name is Glenn. Carpenter. I was born on the north side of the river in Oceanside, north of the San Luis Rey River. That was when it was Rancho Santa Margarita, because Oceanside didn't annex it until later years and it became Oceanside.

Dick: What would be the location of that spot now? The home is probably not there.

Ernie: No, there's nothing there, as far as I know. I really can't say, because I don't know.

Dick: Well, would that be like Vandegrift?

Ernie: No, it would be west of I-5, across the river, north of the San Luis Rey River and it would be west of where I-5 is. About where, somewhere in the neighborhood of the interchange, where the interchange is now, to Harbor Drive. All of that stuff was moved south to make the interchange, so I'm not certain that it was the only thing out there.

Dick: It was a single home out there?

Ernie: Yes.

Dick: A farm house?

Ernie: No, it was a home and my dad had a business there, the garage business.

Dick: When was that?

Ernie: '26, 1926.

Dick: Who were your parents? What were their names?

Ernie: Rudolph Carpenter and Clara Carpenter. Her maiden name was Osuna.

Dick: That's a family that's been around.

Ernie: Quite a few years.

Dick: How many brothers were in your family?

Ernie: There were four boys and three girls.

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Dick: What were their names and in oldest to the youngest?

Ernie: Well, Evelyn was the oldest, then Eleanor, then Rudolph, Jr., then Lawrence, then I'm the next one, then Harold, and then Janelle. So, they're all deceased with the exception of Eleanor, who lives in Vista and Janelle lives in Florida.

Dick: You said your father had a business at that time?

Ernie: Yeah, Carpenter's Auto.

Dick: Which ended up towing?

Ernie: Yeah.

Dick: He was a mechanic?

Ernie: Yes.

Dick: When did your folks come to Oceanside?

Ernie: That, I can't say. I don't know of when, I can't tell you when they came. They were both born here in California. My mother was born, I believe, on Rancho Santa Fe and my dad, I don't know whether he was born in Southern California. I believe so, but I'm not sure.

Dick: Were all the kids born here in Oceanside?

Ernie: Yes.

Dick: Where did you go to school? Did you stay in the area, in that house for a number of years?

Ernie: No. We all went to school in Oceanside-Carlsbad Union High School. I think my older sister graduated from there in about 1936 and the last one was in the late '40s or even in the '50s.

Dick: Where did you live next?

Ernie: I lived in Oceanside, from the north end of town from the south end of town. I've been here for 46 years.

Dick: You said all the kids went through the Oceanside school system.

Ernie: Right.

Dick: How did you earn your spending money when you were growing up, going to school?

Ernie: I worked. I worked most of my time.

Dick: Where and what?

Ernie: Well, I probably started out at Van's Market. If you hadn't been here fifty years, you don't

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know where Van's Market was!

Dick: I have been here fifteen and I don't know where it is.

Ernie: It was one of the big markets here, the first large markets that I can remember, other than Safeway, as far as markets, there were a lot of small markets in town, scattered throughout the town. I used to clean vegetables and stuff like that before and after school.

Dick: Where was Van's located at?

Ernie: Van's was where city hall is. Right by it. Right before the building, where the fountains and all that stuff, well, that street and there was a parking lot and then there was Van's Market, then it was the theater and then there was the skating rink.

Dick: That was on Hill?

Ernie: It was Hill and Third.

Dick: Did you ever work with your father?

Ernie: A short time, just a short time.

Dick: When did you graduate from school?

Ernie: 1945. I left in '44, but my class was '45.

Dick: Did you get into the service?

Ernie: I was in the Navy during World War II.

Dick: You went in '44.

Ernie: There was three of us went in the Navy.

Dick: Three brothers?

Ernie: All four of us, but the younger, Harold, he was in the Seabees in Korea, but not in World War II.

Dick: What was Oceanside like in those years?

Ernie: Well, it was great, it was great. I feel that there's a lot of changes and some are good and some aren't so good. The town wasn't big, I can't tell you what the population of it, because I don't keep track of that stuff, but I think the population was small. It was good sized for the tourists. It was a great tourist town.

Dick: What did the tourists come for?

Ernie: You could never tell. People came to the beach. They had the whole end of the -- of course

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the harbor wasn't there, it came later -- but on this side, the south side of the river where that big condominiums and all, that stuff on Pacific Street, all of that was Tent City. That's what the name of it was. Believe me, there were tents out there, all over there.

Dick: People came for weekends and weeks.

Ernie: Weeks. Some all summer. In those days, people as close as Vista would come for the weekends maybe, and some people, some friends that we had down there that came from up around Alhambra, up around that way and the mother and three kids used to come down every summer and spend the summer. That was at Roberts' Cottages, it's still down there at the beach. And then there was Cottage City. The one that's still down there, the little pink places, Six Street goes down, I don't know what they renamed it. But where I lived Sixth Street was the main street to the beach and people used to come down right by there and they would turn right up and go up there and get their cabin.

Dick: Others would bring their own tents?

Ernie: Yeah, it was just like a big campground. It was great.

Dick: What did you do for facilities? Toilets, etc.?

Ernie: Well, I don't remember but I think they had facilities down there.

Dick: The city might have put something in.

Ernie: I just remember the bath house. They had a big bath house down there, of course, by the pier.

Dick: Was it a bath house with a swimming pool, the salt water swimming pool?

Ernie: Yeah.

Dick: We used to call it the Plunge.

Ernie: Yeah. That was a little before my time.

Dick: It was still there and operating in your memory?

Ernie: Barely. They had a lot of stuff going down there. They had the big swim down there, the rough water swim and all that stuff, that I remember. I wasn't much of a beach-goer, anyway.

Dick: You lived too close.

Ernie: I suppose so, I used to go there but I would never bathe on the beach. I worked all the time.

Dick: After school?

Ernie: After school and on Saturdays and Sundays.

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Dick: When did you start school?

Ernie: It was a rough time. It was the Depression time.

Dick: How old were you when you started working?

Ernie: Probably started about twelve years old.

Dick: That was at the market?

Ernie: I think that was my first job and then I worked for Gilmore.

Dick: Where and what was that?

Ernie: Gilmore? That was before General Petroleum and before Mobile Gas. It was Gilmore Oil with a lion. Then it worked up to Exxon Mobile. It was down on Fifth and Hill Street.

Dick: Was that a gas station?

Ernie: It was a gas station and Bob Sharpe ...

Dick: Who was it?

Ernie: Bob Sharpe. He went to school here and he came from down on South Hill Street. He had a station down there and they were going to move that station out for something else. He moved it to Fifth Street and built a new station and took it over. I used to wash cars there and help pump gas.

Dick: That's when you really had people who pumped gas.

Ernie: Right.

Dick: In the old days!

Ernie: Wipe windows, check tires and all that kind of stuff.

Dick: And the pumps were the old gravity.

Ernie: Well, no, they weren't, but I did work at a station at another time and he had one of the pumps.

Dick: Did he also repair cars, I guess most of them did.

Ernie: In later years. After the war. I came back, because I told him when I left that I would come back. So I came back and went to work for him for a short time.

Dick: When you were going to school, what were the young people doing in Oceanside? How did they amuse themselves?

Ernie: Well, there was a lot going on. There was a lot of people had different activities. A lot of

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people were working, a lot of the kids were working, I say kids, we were all kids. Everybody had their own activities. Some were after school activities, like sports, a lot of sports, football team, all that stuff.

Dick: Had some nice halls?

Ernie: Well, the first dances I remember were down underneath the pier. You know where the pier separates and wrap up and down? They had shuffleboard court down there and on Saturday nights Tiny's Toe Tappers would play. I had a brother-in-law, two brothers that were there from Vista, Del Rogers and Chet. Those were good days. People would fill that shuffleboard court. I was just a young kid, I liked to go down there and listen to the music, the Big Band and all that stuff. I loved that music.

Dick: What about the Marine influence. Camp Pendleton had just started up, in what '43?

Ernie: Yeah, well, you know, it was like any other service town. I didn't let it bother me too much. I was working. They had their problems because as far as I could see, in my way of thinking, it was an adjustment. They weren't here to ruin the town or anything like that, they were here because they had to be here.

Dick: Were there a lot of Marines in town?

Ernie: Oh sure.

Dick: I imagine during boot training they wouldn't let them out.

Ernie: No, but there were quite a few of them. It was just getting used to it, I think. There's personal things that I believe. I don't step on people's toes, if I can help it, unless I have a reason to.

Dick: What's your recollection of the major businesses that were in Oceanside at that time?

Ernie: There were a lot of major businesses. There were good businesses and then they started bringing in the military shops, you know, I don't think that was good, but this is going back to my personal, but it seemed to me anyway, when they started letting those people come in, the regular merchants that had the same kind of stores, it ruined it.

Dick: They took off.

Ernie: Well, they didn't take off but businesses weren't good. You know where they had the people standing out in front, "come in, come in. We'll give you the best deal" and all this kind, you know that kind of business.

Dick: Oh, hawkers.

Ernie: Yeah, military stuff. I don't blame the military, but I don't think the town should have let so many come in. That's my personal opinion. A lot of people don't agree with it.

Dick: These were stores that were selling like uniforms?

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Ernie: Tatoon parlors. I had a very good friend that had a tatoon parlor and they went to school there, but he was the only one.

Dick: It just got a little "honky tonk".

Ernie: Yeah, that kind of stuff. Cheap stuff. Anything to make a nickel or a dime. There was a few of those around, right on the main street.

Dick: Was that during the war and then after the war primarily?

Ernie: It was mainly during, I would say mid '40s maybe. Then when they moved in, more moved in and it changed the image of town. It did really, of course that's my opinion. Of course being here all my life and enjoying the town and I think it's a great place, I love this town but it just -- I got a lot of friends here and a lot of feel the same way. I won't say who, but there's a lot of us who feel the same way. The city fathers do what they have to do or what they think they have to do.

Dick: It usually goes back to dollars.

Ernie: Yes, it's money and it's political.

Dick: Driving into Oceanside was Coast Highway and then it became Hill. Where did it become Hill?

Ernie: Well, Hill Street started as far as I know, at the bridge, the San Luis Rey Bridge.

Dick: And then came down all the way south to Carlsbad, I guess?

Ernie: Right down to Vista Way.

Dick: And then it changed there and went back? It went back to Pacific Coast Highway?

Ernie: No, it was Hill Street all along but it was the main highway, the Highway 101 and it kept right on going down. That's what it actually was and of course it came all the way down the state. And it wasn't Pacific Coast Highway but it was the 101 Highway.

Dick: As you came into town, what were the first civilian type of businesses or what were the first businesses that you came by when you came into town.

Ernie: Well, when you came into town, of course, my folks' place was across the river, so that was the first place from San Onofre, where the county line is, up by Basilone Road. There was a gas station and a restaurant there right below Basilone Road is now, was a Texaco station. And I think at that time it could have been associated with a Flying A station, but that was there, the next thing was Atwood's had a Flying A service station and a restaurant at Las Flores. Then you came down and the next thing was my folks' place and then you crossed the river and came into town. The Bridge Cafe was right there, Ray Rogers had the Bridge Cafe.

Dick: Now was that about where the bridge is now?

Ernie: Yeah. Same location.

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Dick: Not a hotel or anything?

Ernie: They had cabins in the back, along the back side by the railroad. It would have been just overlooking the river. They had little cabins back in there. Then you came down a little further on that side of the street, where Chet Heltibridle, the Texaco plant was there, and they had a gas station. I think there was a little station just between the bridge and where Heltibridle's Texaco plant was. It was just a small, two pump. Jack Cassan had that later for a short time. That was the pump station that I worked with him for a short time. Just messing around. Then you come down to, across the street was where the road went down to Guidottville, down to the river.

Dick: To the what?

Ernie: Guidottville. That was where Lawrence Canyon was, well, from up above the Lawrence family was on the hill and they had that canyon and at the bottom right, by where the river, close to the river, we called it Guidottville. There was a few houses in there and the families were Guidotti, but that was Guidottville, because it had a little area there and they had a big family, Guidottville.

Dick: Now, this would have been about, right at the war or before the war in the '30s?

Ernie: Yeah, before the war. Right where the Chamber of Commerce building is, well that was Kepler's Auto Court. That was the location of Kepler's, the Welcome Center, it was right in that area, right there.

Dick: What kind of court?

Ernie: Auto court. They had cabins in the back there. And next was a home there, next to that, but there was a little store on the front side, between this home and Kepler's, there was a little stand where you could go in and get sodas and candy. I think they sold flowers, I'm not positive about that but I know there was that little store there. Then Clark's garage and towing was right to the south of that, the B? garage, I believe it was. They had a garage there. Across the street from there was, this is going to throw you, it was Red and Bill's 101 Cafe. That was when I was a little kid. I used to walk by there all the time.

Dick: So it was in the mid '30s.

Ernie: Early 30's. I knew both. Bill Hamilton was Bill and Red Swanson, I believe his last name was Swanson, I'm not sure of the last name. On Sundays they had baseball games, they had a baseball field on the backside of that.

Dick: That was on the ocean side?

Ernie: On the west side of the 101. And that was a big truck stop.

Dick: Where would that be today?

Ernie: That would be right about where that, south of Chet's was later a storage building and then a motorcycle shop. Right about where that motorcycle shop was, it isn't there anymore now they tore all that stuff down and put that Pure Platinum, purple building. Then south of that, there was a

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Union 76 station and another guy had it later on, they had a towing service there. That was Coast Motors Towing.

Dick: A lot of towing going on. Was this because of the cars in those days?

Ernie: It wasn't a big white highway and it was Slaughter Alley from north of town and up the coast, there was so many accidents.

Dick: Was it two lane or three lane?

Ernie: It was two and they widened to maybe three. I don't remember exactly.

Dick: But it was paved?

Ernie: Oh yeah. It probably got paved in the '20s. Then you came down to that place they're going to tear down, I think, that was the Traveler's Motel.

Dick: The one, the Coast Inn or something? The one that they had problems with prostitution.

Ernie: Yeah, and all that stuff came later.

Dick: What was there then?

Ernie: Well, it was a motor motel, because I knew the owners of it and they were very nice people.

Dick: What was the name of it?

Ernie: Travelers.

Dick: Travelers and what were the names of the owners?

Ernie: Bill Ogle and Genevieve Ogle. Then from there on that side of the street then it was Mack and Macys and then it went to the M&M and then the Mira Mar, it's all the same.

Dick: Then what was Mack and Macy's, a bar?

Ernie: A restaurant. I don't remember it, I just remember hearing the name. I was always told when I was a kid that that's what the M&M was. Anybody knows that's older than me. Across the street there was nothing. It was all vacant field. That was right on Hill street, which to the regular residents of Oceanside that are still here, it's still "Hill Street."

Dick: There's probably nothing worse than changing street names.

Ernie: And they want to change the image of the town. You can't do that by changing the names of the streets, that's my opinion. That's on record now!

Dick: I'd probably agree with that.

Ernie: Usually if somebody wants directions, "well, you go down to Second street" of course its

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Mission Avenue now. But you go to the post office you go to First Street, but not anymore. Then there was a service station on the corner by Mac and Macy's, or M&M, on one side and catty-corner across there was a store, Brantner's had a store. It was a store and a gas station and a little place where you could sit down and have a cold one. The Ranson family had a house next to that and there was nothing on the rest of the block. Across the street there was a big two story and another station, a lot of stations. You'd never run out of gas in Oceanside. I forget how many we counted one time, just going through town and counted and all the stations.

Dick: Was that because the next stop north was San Clemente?

Ernie: Yeah, you could get gas at my folks' place and then you go to Atwood's and then the next one was the Texaco station at San Onofre, and that was a pretty good stretch. Actually in those days, you didn't have big tanks of gas. But it was all nice open fields, you know, vegetables and stuff grown out there. Later in there they did have some farming out there. But anyway, getting back into town, then you came to Sixth and Hill, between Seventh and Sixth, there was Guy Woodward, who was the police chief and he lived in a big two-story there on that side. Then there was Dr. Crandall's home and office, it was a two-story building on Sixth and Hill. Across the street Harold Parks had a gas station there, a Shell gas station. I remember him because I used to do my homework when I was just a little kid, walk across and he'd help me with some of my math problems, if I ran into a problem!

Dick: Where were you living at that time?

Ernie: Sixth and Tremont. That's where my grandmother lived. From then I moved here, after I got married. That was quite a few years later. So then the next block there was two or three homes and then, that's on the east side, then on the west side, a couple or three houses, just residences, then the Gateway Hotel, which was between on the corner of Fifth and Hill. That was a hotel and it had a barber shop down in the bottom, then the Chicken Pie Shop. Then the next, just past that they had the Sunshine Hotel. Mr. Martin had the Sunshine Hotel, he was an old-timer here, some of the family is still around. They had Martin's Market, it was down on Tremont and Mission, which would have been Second street. Across the street a councilman had a service station over there on that side, Al Waibel, he was one of the councilmen at that time. At Third and Hill they had a car dealership, then they moved the car dealership across the street, there was a vacant area across the street. I think it was Ford and Mercury or Ford and Lincoln, they had it there. Then the next thing was the Palomar Theater. Shanks was on the other side of the street.

Dick: Now where is that now?

Ernie: We're looking at where city hall is, that block there.

Dick: Was Van's Market still around?

Ernie: Van's Market was right about, they had the theater, then they had a photo shop and then I think they had a real estate office and next to that was Van's Market. Then they had Mrs. Merritt, probably was only, well it looked like a small stand? and in there she sold popcorn and peanuts and magazines and newspapers. Just in that stand, sold news of the day. We'd go there and that was in the parking lot, behind her was the parking lot to Van's. It was great and she was quite a person, a really nice lady. Then they had Shanks, it was across the street.

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Dick: What was Shanks?

Ernie: It was a big hardware store. I always looked at that as the first drive-through in Oceanside. You could come and drive down the drive and then the drive went from Hill street to the alley behind it. Right there where Mary's Cafe is now, I think, right there in that area. That was Shank's store and the reason I say it was the first drive-thru because you drove down through the driveway because you could get chicken feed and hay and all on the right hand side but you could go in the store on the left side and you could go in and get whatever you needed. Then Wolmer's Music Store was right on the corner from that.

Dick: They sold instruments?

Ernie: It was a music store, sheet music and all that kind of stuff. They had a big statute and I can't remember, a dog, a big statute of a Dalmatian in the front. When I was a little kid I didn't want to walk on that side of the street because I was afraid of that dog! Course he never moved or barked at me! But then they had, across on that side of the street as you continued south, you had ? Drug Store and they had a fountain in there, you know, you could go sit and have a malt or whatever and the drug store was in the back side. Then they had the theater, the theater came a little bit later, which is now the Brooks, but it was the Margo Theater. They had two theaters, they had the Palomar and they had the Margo. Palomar was the first, they used to have the silent movies there and the lady played the organ down in the little pit there. I remember it vaguely. The big place was Sweetwood's. Sweetwood's was the Sweet Shop for malts and cokes and all that stuff right there next to the theater. That was always full. Sweetwood's was always full, a great place. Then the Margo Theater, downstairs they had a barber shop and shoe shine. Then up above the theater. They had a card room. The card room I guess was downstairs and they had a barber shop above. I don't remember, one or the other. Then after that was Finnell's Jewelers. Henzel's had that, it was the jewelry store. Then it became Finnell's. Then Elm Glaser came in. Ed Pogue had a clothing store. They all came here in '36, I think, right around there some time. Then they had a bank next to that, on the corner.

Dick: That would have been across from the sporting goods?

Ernie: Where Johnson's Sporting Goods is.

Dick: That was a bank, too?

Ernie: That was a Bank of America. First National was the one that went under, if I remember right and I think the Bank of Italy was across from it.

Dick: I think what I heard was that Johnson's Sporting Goods was where the Bank of Italy was.

Ernie: Yeah, well, the Bank of America was there also, after the Bank of Italy. Then Johnson's came later. I think there was something there before it became Johnson's, but I don't recall. But I think, there was something else there, like an A&W Root Beer place.

Dick: It was not a drive-in, it was a walk-in?

Ernie: Yeah, I think so. I'm not positive, but somebody will know.

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Dick: Well, right there in that Mission intersection, didn't they in the early days, have a little clock in the middle of the street?

Ernie: Yeah, it was in the middle of the street, that was early. They used to have that way in the early 30's. They had those bumps in the middle of the intersection ...

Dick: Speed bumps?

Ernie: Those little round things. I don't know why, but they had them there. But anyway, on the other side of the street, there was a restaurant that was across from the Margo Theater, a gas station and then Mr. White had the barber shop. Then they had the Oceanside Garage. Joe Giro had the Oceanside Garage. Later years they moved to South Hill Street near Michigan or one of those streets down there. After that the Highway Patrol Office was there, when I was a little. They had one policeman patrol the highways through here, maybe two or three, but they had different shifts, one was a motorcycle cop, the other one was in a car, but mostly motorcycle, I think. If you wanted a driver's license you'd go there.

Dick: That was simply paying money?

Ernie: Paying money and filling out forms.

Dick: But no driving test?

Ernie: I don't know, but then they moved up to the court house, where the Museum of Art, that's where you used to get your license. Then you went on down, where they had the bowling alley, but above that, the name of the place was, I can't remember now, but there was a restaurant there before Marty's. Marty [Schroder] started there.

Dick: Now the Valley Inn, Marty's Valley Inn?

Ernie: Yes. There was another restaurant right there and there was a bowling alley downstairs. I think they had four lanes. I used to set pins in the back, you know the ones you had to set by yourself.

Dick: Fear for your life sometimes.

Ernie: Yeah, you did. They'd try to hit the pin setter! Well, that pretty much takes care of that, that I can remember in those years.

Dick: But that's the way it was in the late '30s?

Ernie: Yeah, mid 30s, late 30's and early 40s.

Dick: So you pretty well covered Oceanside up to Mission.

Ernie: Then after that, they had on the corner of Mission and Hill, south, that was where Huckabay's was. I can't remember what was down on the lower level, but when I was in high school, they had a dance hall on the top. Saturday night dances for the kids, it was really great. Now that was in the '40s. That was the Silver Slipper. We used to go upstairs there. Wally Burton

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and my brother Rudy, they tried that and had a good thing going. Next door to that was Hagar's House of Flowers. It was a small flower shop at the bottom of the stairs there, next to it. Then the Episcopal Church was right next door to that and then another service station was on the corner. That corner had three [Coast Highway and Seagaze]. On the other side of the street was the Mission Drugstore and then later on they had the Casablanca. That was a nightclub. I think at the time it was a big place. Then they had a flower shop and something else between there and Mr. Evans had the hotel, on Hill, adjacent to those small buildings. I was told before my time that they had a gas pump right there by the sidewalk at one of the stores there. That was before my time. Then Burge Wallace, after Evan's Hotel, he had a tire shop, right next door on the corner of First and Hill. Gus and Lucy's was across the street, that was a restaurant. Across the street from that was a Shell Station and that's by where the post office is now. The post office wasn't there, but they had moved the post office from ... I was told that it was down by where the big USO building behind the drug store, in that area. That's where the post office was. There was three locations, I was told, before they built it. In later years, Weseloh had their, where the car lot is now, and then they had Weseloh's Garage in the late '30s or early '40s. Across from that, behind Gus and Lucy's they had the Greyhound Bus Depot, in later years. Going down as far as I can remember, down to Topeka and Hill, across the street, well there's a hotel there now still, it used to be the Dolphin [DeWitt Hotel] and to the north of that was Dr. Markey's optometry, and then a sewing place, where you could buy sewing machines. It was a small store there. Mr. Ramos had a grocery store on this side of the hotel, if you went straight up Topeka Street, you'd run into that store. Later Master's Auto came on the east side of Hill and then there was residences there on down, there were homes. Then there was a barber shop, Tico had a barber shop and then Mary Stewart, Tico's sister, had a beauty parlor. Across the way, I think later on Dixon Ford moved in, but that was later.

Dick: Well, then let's get off that. You went into the Navy. How long did you serve in the Navy?

Ernie: Just about two years.

Dick: You were demobilized after the war?

Ernie: I got out of that and went to work.

Dick: Back to the gas station?

Ernie: Back to the gas station because I told them I'd come back if I had a job. I had a fairly good time there and then they sold the station and different people had it. Then I went into construction for a short time.

Dick: Whereabouts?

Ernie: Right here.

Dick: Building houses?

Ernie: I was working for this guy who was building quite a few homes and he asked me if I wanted to go to work for him as an apprentice. So I said "sure". I worked as an apprentice for quite awhile.

Dick: What was the company's name?

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Ernie: Culberson. He and his partner, Culberson and Kettle. They were both Naval officers and they were out of the service and they went into the construction business.

Dick: Where did you work?

Ernie: They had homes down on Pacific and up in Plumosa Heights. That was the nice part of town. Really up-style. You could take West Street, or Stanley or any of those and go up to the top of the hill up there. That was all Plumosa Heights. It was a real nice neighborhood. They had some homes there. So then I left. He slowed down for some reason or another. So I had a chance to go over to the Gas and Electric Company.

Dick: How long were you in construction?

Ernie: Just a short time. Probably a year. Maybe a little over a year. From late '46, after I got out of the service, I worked at the station. Then I went into construction till December then I got a job with the Gas and Electric in '47.

Dick: What was your initial SDG&E job?

Ernie: Laborer.

Dick: Were you digging holes?

Ernie: Digging holes! That was my job. It was six guys, a foreman and a driver. They'd take you and leave you with the tools, and "we'll see you later".

Dick: Were you doing gas and electric?

Ernie: All electric. I never worked on the gas side.

Dick: That was digging holes for undergrounding?

Ernie: No, they were setting poles. Changing out poles that were rotted, new poles.

Dick: Were you working in this area, in North County?

Ernie: Yeah, in those years they went clear to Laguna Beach, or just this side of Laguna Beach, just past Dana Point, and south to the border. We used to go from Oceanside, leave in the morning and go up there. Somedays you'd go clear up to Laguna Beach or Capistrano and work and then come all the way back to Oceanside. But before they used to camp guys up there. Send them up for maybe a week or a few days. They would do it until they got finished with the job, room and board.

Dick: Put you up in a hotel or something?

Ernie: Yeah, a hotel up there. I missed out on that. I didn't get to do that. After that they were driving back and forth. When any trouble came up we had to get a crew and go up there to Capistrano or wherever. That was down on Tremont and Third [Pier View Way], we had our yard right down there on the corner.

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Dick: So in bad weather, I guess you were subject to trouble calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?

Ernie: Yeah, if you were a laborer, you were a groundman, you'd get on a crew and go do the laboring work and help with anything that needed to be done. I became a driver shortly after I started. I drove a truck quite a few years and then I got a patrolman job and did various things, anything that had to be done. Patrolman, you check poles and drill holes to see if they are old or rotten, or anything, if you have trouble on the lines, or you see a tree that needs trimming, all this kind of stuff, a broken insulator, stuff like that. You would call it in and they would put it down.

Dick: You were pretty much an independent operator.

Ernie: Well, later on, yeah.

Dick: You had your assigned area and handled it.

Ernie: Yeah. Later on I took care of the splicing of the ? cause it got away from the cables because that was against the rules, to use cables. We used to use cables to set poles and all that stuff. But they did it different, they had the ? trucks. I took care of that, and I took care of going out and shooting the line gun over trees and across rivers. It ended up being like anything they had to do that it just took one guy to do it, and a lot of people didn't want to mess with it. It was good, because I felt they trusted me. It didn't make any difference, if I could do it, I would attempt to do it.

Dick: Were you married at that time?

Ernie: Sure, I got married in 1954. Very happily married.

Dick: That was after you were with SDG&E?

Ernie: Yeah. Oh, yeah I was with SDG&E in 1947.

Dick: You've been married to the same one since?

Ernie: Yes.

Dick: What about children?

Ernie: I have three. I had a son, 45. And I have two daughters, one lives here and one lives in San Diego.

Dick: What are their names?

Ernie: Judy, Gregory, and Margaret.

Dick: You probably have grandchildren.

Ernie: Three boys, three grandsons. They're all great boys.

Dick: No greats yet?

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Ernie: No greats yet, my oldest grandson is twelve, thirteen. They're a lot of fun.

Dick: When did you move here?

Ernie: In '56. In '54 we got married. Right around June of '56.

Dick: This was a new house then?

Ernie: It was a year old. The park wasn't there, the swimming pool wasn't there. The old house was down on the corner over there and the end of the street was a culd-e-sac, which was a trail that went back to that old house, that's all that was back there.

Dick: What's your wife's name?

Ernie: Pat.

Dick: Middle name?

Ernie: Sue.

Dick: Is she a Patricia?

Ernie: Patsy. Patsy Sue.

Dick: What was her maiden name?

Ernie: Landers.

Dick: And she grew up around here?

Ernie: She's from Missouri. She moved out here and we met. We had to struggle and we made it.

Dick: You said out of your family, only you and a couple of sisters are still alive?

Ernie: Yeah.

Dick: Your folks, are they buried around here?

Ernie: Yeah, they're all around here up at Eternal Hills. Three brothers and a sister and my folks are all buried there. We had a family reunion in 1966 was the last big family reunion and that was quite a reunion. But still, when there's a big doing, my gosh, if there's a wedding, even a funeral, it's too bad to say that, but to get the whole family together, is a great accomplishment, in one way or another.

Dick: You spent your whole life in Oceanside?

Ernie: 74 1/2 years. I'll be 75 November ?

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Dick: I'll be 69 here in about two weeks.

Ernie: But it's fun, but you have to do what you have to do. I do as much as I can.

Dick: My wife says "you've got ten years ahead of you, you've got things planned for ten years." Well, if I don't them, I don't make them.

Ernie: You have to try and there's certain things you have to forget. Because you can't live yesterday. A lot of people dwell on the past.

Dick: You've been around here 74 years. Politically, or leadership in Oceanside, who's impressed you over the years?

Ernie: Well, I think there's a lot of them that probably did good. I can't outline just any certain one but there are a lot of them that I felt, really, politically speaking, the mayor or the council people, there's a lot of them that have kind of messed up in a way. I won't say, didn't do anything harming, they didn't harm anybody, but everybody makes mistakes. It used to be when I was a kid, you knew the mayor was the leader of the city, and you knew the mayor, it was great. You'd go down the street, like Mayor Hoegerman was here and John Landis was the treasurer, or city clerk. People like that, you respected those people because of who they were. Mr. Rich and like the Fire Chief Johnson and Paxton was the Chief of Police and Guy Woodward was the Chief of Police. Harold Davis was a policeman and L.C. Settle, he was tough cop. Those guys did the city justice. You came to respect those people because they were who they were. Mr. Waibel was another councilman, he was deputy mayor. So many were great, great people and they were regular people. You could go talk to them anytime. I'm not saying you can't go up and talk to these people now, or have been, but there was a few ...

Dick: Well, that's part of the eroding of our culture, I think it has eroded considerably.

Ernie: Oh definitely.

Dick: Now we give no respect and they don't get the respect.

Ernie: They don't. I was always told you have to earn respect and I've lived by that. The things that happened, happened, but still the things that are wrong you don't just let them pass. I still think that there's a lot ... I'm not politically inclined, you know what I mean. I don't get out.

Dick: Not an activist.

Ernie: No, I'm not. But I see something, I'll say something. The times that I've said things I didn't go along with. At one time, when there was one of the pier things going on, this is just an example that I was told by a certain person, which I won't say, but they said something about "isn't it great that all of this money is going to be spent to do certain things downtown" and it was rough time in town. Things weren't going exactly right downtown. And I said, "well, they're going to spend all this money trying to correct something, but would you take a walk on the pier in the evening?" "Why, no". Right there, he was promoting this. I don't go down there at night. We used to go down there when I was a young kid and just go fishing on the pier, it could be 2 o'clock in the morning or anytime, or if you just wanted to take a walk at midnight, you just walked right out on the pier. It was fun. This town was fun, it was great. There's a lot of things, catering to money, I don't know. I

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never have, maybe because I never had a lot of money, I don't know. The big thing now with people is the hotel and all this stuff that's going on. I agree with it, I think it's nice, but I don't think that they've taken too much time with this guy, when they had another person wanting to build a nice place and do nice things, similar, not as elaborate maybe. I think that the city is going too far, is bending too far. That's only my opinion. I think personally, they're letting the outfit do their thing down at the beach, they should stay on Pacific. Leave the beach alone, that's my way of thinking. Regardless if he's going to build a new bandshell and redo it with fountains, there's nothing wrong with the way that it is. It could be nicer to have a nice beach stadium, but to cut off that street and take people's property that personally didn't want to sell and now all of sudden, the city says "we're going to take it, sell it or give" but they're turning all of this over out here where they want to build a golf course. Now that's getting political, but that's just my opinion.

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Ernest Carpenter

Date

Witnessed

Date