

INTERVIEW WITH
Irene Miller Sacco

on

October 30, 1974

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of
Irene Miller Sacco

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44,
United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions
hereinafter set forth, I, Irene Miller Sacco (hereinafter
referred to as the donor), do hereby give, donate, and convey
to the United States of America all my rights, title, and
interest in the tape recording and transcript of a personal
interview conducted on October 30, 1974 and prepared for
deposit in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. This assignment
is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by
researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the
Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

(2) The tape recording shall not be available for use
by researchers during the donor's lifetime. After the donor's
death, access to the tape recording is to be for background
use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or
quote therefrom.

(3) The donor retains during the donor's lifetime all
literary property rights in the material given to the United

States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States Government. During the life of the donor, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcript (but not the tape recording) without the donor's express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the open portions of the interview transcript, but not the tape recording, may be provided by the library upon request to researchers.

(5) At the discretion of the Archivist of the United States, copies of the interview transcript, but not the tape recording, may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions. Upon death of donor, at the discretion of the Archivist of the United States, copies of the tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.



Alan Miller Teem
Donor

9/30/83
Date

Paul M. Kramer
Archivist of the United States

September 30, 1983
Date

21

5

This is an interview being conducted with Mrs. Irene Sacco, Hollywood Hills, California at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library on October 30, 1974. Present for the interview Mrs. Sacco, her husband and Mrs. Susan Traub, who is director of the Dickinson County Historical Society. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.



DR. BURG: Now, Mrs. Sacco, let me ask you, were you born here in Kansas yourself?

MRS. SACCO: I was born in Abilene, just across the street from the factory on South Second Street, I guess that's Second.

DR. BURG: From the Parker factory?

MRS. SACCO: Yes.

DR. BURG: What was the year, may I ask?

MRS. SACCO: 1903, I think.

DR. BURG: Now, as I understand it your father was associated with Mr. Parker in the--

MRS. SACCO: He and Mr. Parker started the factory by purchasing a merry-go-round for eighteen dollars. And they dismantled it and started making more.

Mrs. Irene Sacco, 10-30-74

Page 2



BURG: Learned how they were made.

MRS. SACCO: And my father improved upon it by inventing the jumping horse.

BURG: By jumping horse do you mean a horse that simulated the motion of a horse?

MRS. SACCO: Of those Lipizzaner horses, back and forth like those white jumping Lipizzaner horses.

BURG: Oh, I see. Instead of moving up and down which is the common thing this one had that sort of standing up motion.

MRS. SACCO: They were just like this. A little triangular shape at the bottom and at the top the rod that went around a little circle. One for each horse -- resulting in the jumping movement--

BURG: Now where did they buy that merry-go-round, was it here in Abilene or was it passing--

MRS. SACCO: I think they bought it here, locally.

BURG: Was there a show passing through?

MRS. SACCO: I really wouldn't know about that.

BURG: When did they open that business by the way?

MRS. SACCO: I really don't know that either. It was before I was born. But my father came from Pennsylvania, he was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, so he knew a little bit about those Spielman-Herschel merry-go-rounds that were made in Pennsylvania.

BURG: How do you spell that name, do you remember?

MRS. SACCO: S-p-i-e-l-m-a-n, Herschel, H-e-r-s-c-h-e-l, I would say.

BURG: And this was a prominent brand of merry-go-rounds.

MRS. SACCO: That's right, they were originally made from Germany I guess and then to Pennsylvania, probably from a German origin.

BURG: That's kind of interesting.

MRS. SACCO: My father was, his name was Harvey L. Miller,



but he was related to these people who came out here, River Brethren who came out from Pennsylvania and settled here in Abilene.

BURG: So he had come out as they had.



MRS. SACCO: With his family, his relatives. His father had died and he and his brother were supporting a mother and working their way through school, he worked his way through.

BURG: Did he farm here when he first came?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, no, he was never a farmer. And his brother became a CPA for the Kansas City stockyards and later came back to Abilene I think and passed away. His name was Will Miller.

BURG: So your father was more of a mechanic in the 19th century sense, a man who could work.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. And he knew how to finish wood the finest which told me, a piano or a judge's bench were the finest finished wood to be had. And he could finish like that. He was an artist and a craft's man, nothing he could not do or fix -- tune the piano, play the guitar, sing, cook -- go to the sewing machine and remake my gym bloomers, when the custom made ones did not fit. He made all the designs, patterns for the horses and decorations for the merry-go-rounds.

BURG: Had he done that kind of work like that in Pennsylvania?

MRS. SACCO: I don't know because he was young when he married.

MRS. TRAUB: Did he do most of the carving of the horses?

MRS. SACCO: He made all the designs, all the drawings and taught all the men that hand carved them. They first glued a big block together, then they turned that through a lathe for the body of the horse and they glued some other pieces for the jointed legs and for the neck and the head and those were all hand carved each of them, and he taught them all to do that. He didn't actually do it himself, but I used to see him teach them.

MRS. TRAUB: Did he work almost exclusively with the jumping horses?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes, they didn't make any that just stood still after they bought this first merry-go-round.

MRS. TRAUB: Didn't Parker make merry-go-rounds that went around on a track or was that prior to the ones that had jumping horses?



MRS. SACCO: No, the first one they bought just stood still, those that came from Pennsylvania. It was one where the horses just stood still and they had different kinds of animals too. But my father invented the jumping horse and they went from that just to horses and to chariots; they had two or three chariots and the horses, no animals.

BURG: Now you say the factory was on Second?



MRS. SACCO: South Second and my home is 216 (not so), I just came by it, I recognized it. 216, and 212 was the office building--a straight house next to it. The Parker home was just east of the house which was a two-story building and contained the offices. We lived opposite.

BURG: And that still stands?

MRS. SACCO: It's still over there.

BURG: And both of those are on South Second. Now the factory in relationship to their home and the office building, was the factory building across the street?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, no, it was all in that whole area. They had the land down to, well, it was to this church, Eisenhower's

called it United Brethren, all that land. They had some fruit trees in there and some huge buildings, a big tall building that they had all these things in and my father called it "Spiral Hall" because the birds flew in and around. And back of that and beyond that, I don't know which direction I'm talking about, they had all that land. They had a sawmill and they had a blacksmith shop and all kinds of buildings around there because I used to have to run around there when we bought it. And on, I don't know which way that is, they had a skating rink and they would set up the carnival in between their house and the skating rink. Before they would leave town, they'd set up and make a little money here so they would had some money to go on. And if they needed money sometimes my mother and my father would take a merry-go-round to some little town around here, Enterprise, Chapman and--I don't remember all the towns--and set it up. And my mother said it was nothing for her to take in a thousand dollars a night in nickels. The farmers came with all this--and that was doing business wasn't it? And she'd put me on a horse in a long dress and say, "Just hang on."



And I would sit there, oh, for hours and hours and just ride and ride and ride while she took in the nickels. And that's the way they got some money to carry on. Sometimes they needed money for, oh, you know, salaries and enlargements.

BURG: Do you remember how many people were employed in that factory?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, I don't know. I knew so many of them, blacksmiths, and there were two brothers of Brown, Tom Brown, Bill Brown and, oh, any number of men that they took with them to Leavenworth while they were working. A Mr. John Urie, who was an attorney, he was in the office and the bookkeeper. Mr. Dudley, was an Englishman, he was, oh, a wonderful artist. I watched him paint; he could paint a lion on a screen door and you'd think the lion was coming right at you. They had very fine workmen.

BURG: Would you say that that work force was, say, greater than twenty people?



MRS. SACCO: Well, it's kind of hard to know when you are that little. I suppose. It varied so because sometimes they had people there training horses. I remember an Essie Faye who had her beautiful Arabian horses there and she put them through their paces. And there were people coming and going and sometimes there were a lot of people there if the carnival was there and wintering. Different carnivals came here and they'd get a merry-go-round or they would be refurbished and redecorated right here before they would go out for the season again.

BURG: Now basically what your father and Mr. Parker were doing was manufacturing the merry-go-rounds.

MRS. SACCO: The merry-go-rounds. But in between they supplemented their income with carnivals that came here and were repainted and redecorated and maybe wintered or stayed for sometime to get some money to go on.

BURG: I see. So it wasn't unusual then in those days for small carnivals to come in here, maybe buy a merry-go-round while they were here or have theirs reworked and repainted



but to also stay here for the winter, that was also not unusual.

MRS. SACCO: That's right. To start out here and make a little money to get going on.

BURG: Now your own family then, your father, for example, one of the things that they did was to take a merry-go-round out into the countryside.

MRS. SACCO: Well, if they needed a little money or something extra I suppose, I guess they frequently took one to make some extra money.

BURG: But at that stage they themselves did not have a show that they took out, a carnival.

MRS. SACCO: No, no, no. They didn't have any shows, never had any shows, just manufactured the merry-go-rounds. And when they went to Leavenworth--and here's a picture of that new factory down there--it's still there in a very large building, still large. My father could sit in the office and



look on the second floor where they did the painting and had great huge beautiful organs from Germany with dancing girls on it swirling around on them and they were electric. I could play them--all the music folded and went up and around I don't know how to explain it really. But he could look up and see everything that was going on the second floor but also look down and see everything that was going on on the main floor. And it was large enough that they could bring in freight cars to load the merry-go-round and there would be as many as three in a row on one side of the track. One would be complete in every detail; it was ready to be dismantled and loaded on the boxcar and shipped to wherever it was being sent. The next one would be just half finished and then a third one would just have the platform on because I used to hop on different ones. That was on one side of the railroad track. On the other side all kinds of things were going on and machinery and then there was a basement that was full of a big lot of machinery and boilers and things too. So they had quite a large factory there all in one big building and then many acres outside.



Mrs. Irene Sacco, 10-30-74

Page 12

BURG: Do you know when it was that the factory moved from here to Leavenworth?

MRS. SACCO: 1910.



BURG: Do you remember why?

MRS. SACCO: Yes, because of the close proximity to Kansas City and all the railroads. Here it wasn't so accessible to the railroads. Frequently my father had to go to Kansas City to select a machine -- and it would be one day - each way and one there--too long for him to be away.

BURG: So probably a matter of rates, freight rates.

MRS. SACCO: They offered them the land in Leavenworth and gave them a nice offer to get them to come there.

BURG: Leavenworth did? I see.

MRS. SACCO: Because it was really a big thing in those days. It was the biggest entertainment there was.

BURG: As you point out, that's prior to movies, they are very uncommon in this country at that time.

MRS. SACCO: We did have little picture shows but they weren't very important at that time, you know they weren't. Had a little picture show here.



BURG: So the first 7 years of your life were spent here in Abilene.

MRS. SACCO: Yes. Because I remember our mailman's wife played the piano in the picture show so I know we did have a picture show here in Abilene at that time. But, the farmers came from miles around to ride the merry-go-round and put their children on. If my mother took in a thousand dollars in nickels in a night that was--she was pretty busy.

BURG: Pretty heavy usage. Now you attended which school here in Abilene?

MRS. SACCO: At Lincoln School, just the kindergarten and the first grade.

BURG: Kindergarten and first grade at the old Lincoln School, the one that the Eisenhowers had gone to.

MRS. SACCO: That's right. And the Eisenhowers worked at the factory for my father, the different boys had to work from time to time; I don't know what they did. They may have even carried water because my little brother did in Leavenworth. He carried a bucket of water out to the men out in the yards.

BURG: With a dipper in it to get their drink of water.

MRS. SACCO: That's right.



BURG: You don't happen to know of course which of the boys were doing this sort of thing while your family was here?

MRS. SACCO: Well, Dwight was because he was the main one, I mean the one that everybody knew, and he also worked at the creamery. I remember we went over there and we would ask him, "Please, may we have some buttermilk?" And he would be in his barefeet with his overalls rolled up and he would say, "Yes." And there was a big huge tank and my brother and I and the two little Engle children, who lived across the street. Next to the creamery, lived the Rumbargers, you probably have heard that name.

BURG: Yes, I know the name.

MRS. SACCO: The Rumbargers and then the next house was the Engles, and I think he had a clothing store, had a large family and a large house. So those two little children and my brother and I were well-behaved and said, "Please, may we have some buttermilk?" And Ike would say, "Yes." And we didn't take our eyes off of him and he didn't take his eyes off of us but we got the tin cup and turned the little spigot and took a drink and gave it to the next one and pass it around and then we'd hang it up and he watched us all the time and he would kind of smile, he was always smiling. And we'd say, "Thank you," and slip out.

BURG: He was watching you so you didn't get into any mischief while you were there.

MRS. SACCO: You bet, you bet! Because the Rumbargers were very bad children; we were frightened to death of them.

BURG: That sounds unusual; they were tough?



MRS. SACCO: Oh, were they! And they weren't well groomed.

BURG: Was there any particular reason why that set of kids turned out that way?

MRS. SACCO: I don't know, except I know we were very frightened of them. We were afraid; they just went around like bullies. And they were very unkept and they weren't well groomed or clean.

BURG: So they weren't kids that you played with?



MRS. SACCO: Oh, no.

BURG: You stayed clear of them.

MRS. SACCO: I don't know what they ever did.

BURG: Whatever happened to them.

MRS. SACCO: No, I don't know.

BURG: Now in the area where you lived on South Second, do you remember the families living near you, right in that area, including kids that you would have played with.

MRS. SACCO: Well, I remember a few in those pictures. There was a Thelma Tappan, I think her father had a variety store. And there was a Marian Patterson, her hair was all frizzy and curly, who lived across the street from the school; I guess that's on Buckeye. I don't know what they did. There was another little girl in there that was--her family were show people and she was with the carnival, but I don't remember her name. I felt so sorry for her. She sang a little song in school. But I remember Miss Mulguard and her nephew was in there.

BURG: And she was a teacher that you point out when we were looking at the photographs.



MRS. SACCO: Yes. Her sister had gone to Denver and married and brought back this little boy, Seymour Sexton was his name. He played with us. And I can't remember too many.

MRS. TRAUB: Do you remember, were the Eisenhowers living in the house that's now preserved over here?

MRS. SACCO: I think so.

MRS. TRAUB: Was there another house behind that at the time that you were--

MRS. SACCO: Well, I don't remember because we went to that school which was near and his house was near the school. But I don't remember whether there was another house or not.

BURG: So you were a couple of blocks further up?



MRS. SACCO: Well, my father built the house catty-cornered across the street from the United Brethren Church where the Eisenhower family attended. And it was a little white frame church. It's not the one that they have there now; they've remodeled and rebuilt it. It was a very quaint little chapel, almost like his chapel, a little white church--catty-cornered across the street my father built the house. There's one on the corner there now but we had the one with the round porch and had all that land in front of it. That's where we lived.

BURG: I think later the River Brethren moved up Buckeye and that church which has just been torn down I think in the

past year, Susan. At least I believe that's the one they said was the River Brethren Church. So I think they must have changed later on.

MRS. SACCO: No, it's United Brethren that the Eisenhower family went to, that little one over here on--

BURG: Well, we understood River Brethren.

MRS. SACCO: River Brethren is what all the people were called, my father's family, and the Shockeys, they were called River Brethren. But I'm pretty sure that the Eisenhowers attended this little church that was called United Brethren.

BURG: Now did your family attend that church too?



MRS. SACCO: No, we went to the Methodist Church over on the north side.

BURG: Now you are sure that they went to this United Brethren. Can you tell me what brings that back to mind?

MRS. SACCO: Well, I just remember all those things that my father talked about. And from that church on down to the factory were fruit trees on down to this big "Spiral Hall".

BURG: Out to the east on South Second?

MRS. SACCO: Is that east, yes.



BURG: I have to think how we're laid out here myself. Let me see, yes, that way.

MRS. SACCO: Right on that corner, I'm pretty sure that's where his family attended church. They were kind of poor people you know, the Eisenhowers.

BURG: You viewed them that way at the time.

MRS. SACCO: Yes. They had to take turns working. Well, they had gone to Texas I think that the general, Dwight was born there--

BURG: Yes, in Denison.

MRS. SACCO:--because they had had hard luck here, and then

they come back. But they all had to pitch in and work. Well I have something at home, I have quite a number of booklets and pamphlets and things that I've bought about him. And a picture of him wearing his--you probably have them--wearing his mother's shoes to school one winter. So you know we thought that they were poor people. And my father was always giving him something to do, some of the boys to help them supplement their income.

BURG: Now they would have lived at first, when they first moved here, closer to you than they ultimately were here on Fourth? They were up, is it on Third?

MRS. SACCO: Third or Second.



BURG: Second or Third. They had a small house up there on that first block off Buckeye, to the east of Buckeye, very small place.

MRS. SACCO: Well, I really don't remember that but I do know--

BURG: Well by the time you were born of course they had moved into the one here on Fourth.

MRS. SACCO: That's all I remember. But I know they did work; they always were looking for this work.

BURG: And your father discussed this in the places where you could overhear.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. He always told us interesting things at the dinner table: How all these tricks were worked and these magic shows and things; they had the statue turning to life and things--

BURG: Things he had learned from the carnival people.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. And he would tell us how somebody would get in a ball and slide down a ramp and a girl would get in this ball and roll down. And they had a statue with lights on it and then it would come to life and it was all done by lights and he'd tell us all those things at night.

BURG: So he also talked about the people here in town.



MRS. SACCO: And he talked about the Eisenhower boys; he was always talking about the Eisenhower boys.

BURG: Now why do you suppose that they stood out in his mind at that time?

MRS. SACCO: Well there were six of them and I imagine that most of the time one of them was working around the factory, carrying water or doing something.

BURG: Now, Dwight is one that you recollect--



MRS. SACCO: I remember him. He was our skate boy -- Saturday nights he put the skates on all who come to skate. We had our own skates and he got them down and on us.

BURG: Of course we can see why you would. Do any of the others stand out in your mind?

MRS. SACCO: No, that's the only one.

BURG: Milton would be the one closest to your own age, he would have been older than you.

MRS. SACCO: No, I just remember Dwight and working in the creamery.

BURG: Did you ever see the mother and father, do you remember anything about them?

MRS. SACCO: No. I just remember that she was a very tiny little lady. And as I said they were poor people at that time. I guess we had so much more. We always had everything we needed and wanted. And sometimes when the carnival would come in they'd be pressed for money, but we always had plenty.

BURG: Now were there other people in town that your father may have discussed at that time, names that have stayed with you? You've told us about the Rumbargers and their unfortunate children and the Engles.

MRS. SACCO: What did they ever do? I don't know.



BURG: I don't know either. There was another family here, I briefly confused them, Humbarger I think was the name, and one of that family ultimately wound up teaching at in the state of Washington, in my wife's home town. And after I came out here my uncle sent me a picture of that man, and they were a fairly old Abilene family, quite a clan of them

here in the 1880s and on for a while. But that name doesn't ring a bell with you.

MRS. SACCO: Well I think, no, I think the Rumbargers must have worked at the creamery, the fathers. Do you suppose?

BURG: I don't know, it's conceivable.

MRS. SACCO: I don't know. Oh, we knew the Tates and, of course, they were very good friends of ours. My father taught Guy Tate to carve, he worked there as a carver. And they had been farmers here.

BURG: Was that T-a-t-e?



MRS. SACCO: That's right. Guy Tate--my brother was named for him. And there was a Frank Seymour who worked in a blacksmith shop; he was a very good looking man. And there was a Bill Brown and a Tom Brown who were brothers; they worked at the factory as I don't know what; they followed us to Leavenworth. And Mr. Urie was a very well educated Englishman who was an attorney, but he did the book work.

BURG: How would that name be spelled?

MRS. SACCO: U-r-i-e. John Urie. He came from a very fine English family. You know how they fall from grace or something and get away from their families by drinking too much--some of the men drank too much.

BURG: Almost what they used to say a few years back a remittance man.

MRS. SACCO: But maybe it's unkind of me to say but I think Mr. Parker sort of encouraged that to keep them--he liked their knowledge and that sort of thing but he encouraged them to drink, I can see that now.

BURG: Oh, he did.

MRS. SACCO: That was to his advantage.

BURG: In the hopes that it would keep them dependent upon him.

MRS. SACCO: That's right.



BURG: He would be one who would always understand and always--

MRS. SACCO: Well he got it for them, make it more possible. He had five children, Barney, who never amounted to anything, mentally deficient, just amounted to nothing. Well even here in Abilene, they would take the car out and Mr. Parker told them they couldn't have it, and they would push it all the way home so it wouldn't make a noise and the father wouldn't know when they brought it back. And the father thought that was very cute and very funny. But Mr. Parker was very uncouth, uneducated man, really. He was, as I said, the janitor at the court house here making fifty cents a month when he married Lou Westrup who lived right across the street from the factory. I believe he repeatedly told me "he had fifty cents in his pocket when he got married. And he wasn't young at that time so he really didn't have any background, no education or family I guess. So he recognized the worth of all these men and I think he kept them that way. His oldest girl was named Gertrude and she had already been married in my earliest memory to someone in the carnival business --



she was married three times that I know of. Then there was Earl and he was a very nice young man. I liked him very much. But in Leavenworth he never had a nickel either. He'd come by and borrow a nickel from me to ride the streetcar out to the factory. And he married a girl across the street from the factory named Pearl Peat and they just served beer to these fellows when they'd come over there and get beer.

BURG: Out of their home?



MRS. SACCO: Yes.

BURG: Not running a saloon or anything just--

MRS. SACCO: No, but just kind of a, in the home. So Earl married this girl and he died shortly afterwards. But Earl was a very likeable person. But he never did anything. In order to fool the father they'd sometimes just sleep at the factory and then get up and ring the clock, punch the clock like they'd been there and then go back to sleep some place. They didn't amount to anything.

And the next one was Paul and I don't know what he ever did but he was on the Camel's radio show, about '55 I think, and he was bragging like his father, his father was a great one to brag, and he was bragging how many merry-go-rounds he was going to sell that year.

BURG: This was 1955?



MRS. SACCO: I think about 1955 and I haven't seen him since. Then the youngest one was Lucille and she and I were very close together because she was just a little younger than I about a year. And she just adored me and everything I had she wanted and we were very friendly. In Leavenworth she had to have an outfit just like I had all the time. She had to have everything I had. But I don't know what happened to her. My father said she married a very old man, much much older than she, and he was very upset about that and that's the last I knew about Lucille.

BURG: Well let me ask you if Parker's making this salary of fifty cents a month, where did the money come from to do any of the things that were later done?

MRS. SACCO: Well, that's what I mean. He and my father got together and had eighteen dollars between them -- I suppose my father had the most probably but I don't think he had much -- and bought this merry-go-round. And from that they made money, just like a thousand dollars a night.

BURG: Your father said later on that it was their intention to buy it with the idea of simply running it and taking the money from the rides?

MRS. SACCO: No, no, I think my father's idea was to expand and manufacture them.

BURG: They would use that as a model and manufacture them.

MRS. SACCO: That's right, that's right. That was his idea.



BURG: Did he ever talk to you about how they got the word out that they were manufacturing?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, I don't know how they first started, but I know later we sent circulars to people who were listed in Bradstreet and Dunn--you've heard of that--I don't know if it still exists or not.

BURG: Oh, yes, of course.



MRS. SACCO: To be in Bradstreet and Dunn you had to have fifteen thousand dollars. So they only sent it to people who had that much money cause the merry-go-rounds cost ten thousand dollars at that time or more. That's how they got started. That's how they advertised, by sending these great big circulars.

BURG: Presumably they sent those to people who were in some way connected with show business.

MRS. SACCO: No, no, no. If they were just listed in there they had fifteen thousand dollars and they could buy a merry-go-round worth ten thousand dollars.

BURG: The amazing thing it seems is that it worked.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, sure. They could own a rock crusher or sand dip they called them or something like that or they could be barbers or whatever just so they had, they were listed and had that much money. We folded these things all up into size and put them in an envelope and mailed them. That's how he advertised.

BURG: Let me ask this as long as we're on this theme, do you have any of the surviving records of that partnership?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, no, no. Mr. Parker gave my father no credit. He was, you know, he took it all himself.

BURG: Your father permitted that?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes, my father wasn't interested in glory. Big people aren't, are they? If you're really big you're not looking for credit. But we entertained all the people who came to buy a merry-go-round, in our home not in the Parker's home, with a dutch lunch, like a smorgasbord they



have today on our dining room table, and we had all kinds of a buffet instead of a bar. We set a buffet with all kinds of wine and champagne and things like that. But we entertained anybody. If it was the Shah from Persia, he had a dutch lunch. And all these other men who had carnivals, they were very wealthy men in those days. I remember a Mr. Brundage and there was a Mr. Kennedy and different ones who owned those carnivals, they were really wealthy in those days.

BURG: Well, I wanted to find out if any of those records might have survived.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, I don't think there were any. I doubt if there were.

BURG: Even pay books, you see, even rosters of who the workmen were, what their responsibilities were or what their pay was, anything of that sort. Today of course we're trying to look back and see what business history was and that's a most unusual business you see.

MRS. SACCO: Paul would be the one who was the last son and



I don't know what's happened even to him. I had thought of stopping by there and asking the police department or somebody, but I don't know.

BURG: When was the business functioning last so far as you know?

MRS. SACCO: Well, as I said when I heard about Paul on that radio program. I think my father died in '46. But Mr. Parker took all the credit you know. He gave none of these fine workmen any credit. He took it all. He was just a showman. He even put it in the paper in Leavenworth how much he was paying his children to go to Sunday school. And of course you know what my father thought about that.

BURG: Now you spoke a while ago of the kids pushing that car back silently.

MRS. SACCO: That was here in Abilene.

BURG: If that was here in Abilene that would mean that Parker at least was worth enough to own an automobile prior to 1910, which would be an unusual thing.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes, it was a REO.

BURG: Did the Millers have a car at that time?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes, oh, yes. I couldn't tell you how many cars Mr. Parker had. And a great huge White steamer with about, of course that was Mr. Parker's idea I know, with about six or eight or ten seats, the wide seats like a bus so he could take us all some place on a picnic or something. Oh, yes, he had a White steamer here.

BURG: And that too was here in Abilene. I should tell the transcriber, White meaning the name of the machine not the color.

MRS. SACCO: Yes, White steamer.



BURG: White and Stanley I think were probably the two big ones at that time. So that business in whatever period of time it took to build it from eighteen dollars by 1910 was going very well indeed.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, I should say if they would offer him land in

Leavenworth to bring the factory there, you know it was booming.

[Interruption]



MRS. SACCO: My father never owned a horse; my grandfather had a horse and buggy which my father drove occasionally, but my father always had a car. Reo was the first I remember with a little seat in back.

BURG: Well, that's really something, I'm quite surprised.

MR. SACCO: Did they rent out the merry-go-rounds sometimes, just rent them out to--

MRS. SACCO: No, I don't think so, not that I know of. They wanted the money; Mr. Parker wanted the money.

BURG: So it was a purchase arrangement.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes.

MRS. TRAUB: Did Parker build anything other than merry-go-rounds, did he build other parts of the carnival?

MRS. SACCO: Yes, they would repaint the fronts, or something like that.

MRS. TRAUB: But he wouldn't have anything to do with actually stocking a carnival or putting any kind of a carnival on the road?

MRS. SACCO: Yes -- "Al. G. Barnes Wild animal circus" was put together -- and others -- Of course I think the name said "Amusement Company" on the factory.

BURG: You spoke a while ago of organs, seeing these very ornate organs. Now what were they?

MRS. SACCO: Well to put in the center of the merry-go-round. Oh, were they beautiful!

MRS. TRAUB: Were the things run like a calliope or were they actual run like a regular organ.

MRS. SACCO: I don't think it was like a calliope; they were electric ones that I remember and just ornate and beautiful. Oh, they made some beautiful merry-go-rounds at the last, after we went to Leavenworth.



MRS. TRAUB: The merry-go-rounds you're talking about that he built were electric run then or were they steam powered? Did they have a steam engine that set out by the side?

MRS. SACCO: They had a little engine in the middle, somebody could run it. But these organs were, well, they got them from Haines in New York, because my father bought our piano from there and that's where they bought the organs.

BURG: That's H-a-y-n-e-s, isn't it?



MRS. SACCO: I think it's H-a-i-n-e-s on my piano; I still have one -- they were made to order. My first one -- in Leavenworth. Now I have the one made for Al Pearce of radio fame.

BURG: It could be. I think I've seen a Haines, but not for some time.

MRS. SACCO: But they made our organs, all the organs that we got. Oh, just simply beautiful. And I think they originally were made in Germany. And probably my father was of German-Swiss extraction; he had all of this inborn talent, he really did. He had a boxcar set out here in Abilene and in Leavenworth for his workshop, and, when he

wasn't doing something else, he was in there inventing something or making a whole library set of furniture for our house--my mother didn't like it--but he just had to be doing something all the time. But Mr. Parker was the showman. He was all for, you know, something spectacular. I have learned, it takes that combination for a successful business.

BURG: Let me ask you this, do you remember whether your father or any of the men, when they were going to do a merry-go-round, did they turn out a sketch of what it was going to look like or did they just sort of create it as they went along?

MRS. SACCO: My father designed the carousels -- the horses, et al. Well, they had certain designs. You could either buy a small one--I think they called three abreast, or four abreast. Four abreast was the largest one. That meant four horses in a row, the largest horse would be on the outside and these four were all alike. There might be four black horses with armor on like Sir Galahad's horse or something. And the largest one on the outside and they graduated to small on the inside. They had jewels and they were beautiful.



Maybe the other four would be brown and another four that would be tan and another four that would be white and it would be repeated and then about three chariots which you could sit in and ride around. But you bought them by the model, the large four abreast or the three abreast or the little tiny one.

BURG: So to your models there was no special ordering.

MRS. SACCO: No, it was just sort of standard like that.

BURG: All they had to do was to say I want one of the four abreast.



MRS. SACCO: Four abreast, that's right, that was the biggest.

BURG: And do you happen to recall what its price was then? Ten thousand--

MRS. SACCO: Oh, I don't know. Ten thousand dollars was an awful lot of money to me in those days when I think back.

BURG: You don't know whether they got that for a small one or whether that was the next in price.

MRS. SACCO: No, I don't know. More elaborate would cost more.

BURG: Let me leave that for a minute and ask you something else. What was life like for you here in this town as a small girl? Part of your time that you were here was before you went to school. Do you think back now to what did you do before you went to school? What was a day like for you?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, my father built us a tree house in a big tree we had. I don't find it around here any more but he built us a tree house, and I just remember Miss Mulgard coming over using our telephone and one of the--

BURG: Now she was a teacher there at Lincoln?



MRS. SACCO: Yes, in the first picture. We always had a telephone so they came over to borrow our telephone, some of the neighbors. And going to the grocery store and my mother would--was there Nuzz that way, on the street in front of the court house; would that be First Street? Not Second, but the one that way.

BURG: Closer toward town you mean?

MRS. SACCO: Yes, is that First?

BURG: Yes, that would be First.

MRS. SACCO: Then on west up on a rise, I think it was Nuzz Grocery Store.

BURG: Near the depot?



MRS. SACCO: Yes, beyond, going beyond to the side of it. Well my mother would tell my brother he couldn't ride with the delivery boy. And he wouldn't come home and pretty soon the delivery boy came and my mother looked out and about that time my brother raised his head up like a little turtle to see if she was looking, and of course she was; she went right out there and got him out of the wagon. Just little, you know, things like that. Just lived a very quiet simple life and the neighbors that we knew liked us.

BURG: What about an evening?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, well they were always at our house. There's one picture taken there taken in our living room, Mr. Parker

took the picture and his brother was in it and Mrs. Parker. Oh, they were always interesting because my father was a great raconteur; he could tell the--go to Kansas City and see a show and come home and do it over and over and over for everyone in the town or everyone you knew. We were always hearing, "Tell that story about so and so Harve," and he had to tell the story again and he got to tell it over and over, and, you know, have a little refreshments. At Christmas he had a big bowl of eggnog and everybody came in and had a drink out of the bowl, but he was very entertaining, a very entertaining person.

BURG: Was your major meal in the evening?



MRS. SACCO: Yes.

BURG: So you would have that meal. Now at, that time, you wouldn't have helped I suppose with any of the preparations for that meal?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, no, no. We usually had a hired girl, they called them.

BURG: Now she would do cooking and house cleaning and this kind of thing?



MRS. SACCO: Yes. Sometimes she had a little child of her own. And I would eat part of the egg and her youngster would have to eat the other part because I'd only want one, the white or something else. I know we had this help because we were doing all right. My father would go fishing with some of the men, his friends, and they'd have a good time. He'd bring the fish home and maybe bake it. He could do anything. My mother wouldn't be bothered with it so he stuffed the fish and baked it or he'd go hunting and bring home pheasants and prepare them. And he always did things like that. He enjoyed life.

BURG: Now after that meal was over, that might be when you father would tell some of these stories?

MRS. SACCO: Well he would talk at the dinner table, he'd tell us these things around the dinner table. We didn't talk you know. We weren't supposed to get the giggles and talk or anything. But the neighbors came in; they would

want him to tell these stories and he would.

BURG: You were permitted to sit by and listen to this?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, sure. Oh, yes. And one time they sent for oysters from Baltimore I think; they came by express in a box with ice. And in the factory he put them on something and slid them into this big boiler. And we had oysters on the half shell. Oh, we lived pretty good I think.

BURG: Yes, I think you did, very definitely you did.

MRS. SACCO: And in Leavenworth he had a cabin across the river on the Missouri side and he would go over there and prepare a big dinner of mulligan stew for Parkers and for us and maybe a few other friends, and we'd go over there and have that big feast. He just was always doing things.

BURG: Now these workmen, you've spoken of at least one who was doing accounting work as being English, and another man, Dudley, I think you said his name was, also English.

MRS. SACCO: He was an Englishman of fine background too, but he drank too much.



BURG: Had they recently come over from England, these two?

MRS. SACCO: I really wouldn't know that. They were educated men and came from good families.

BURG: Ever hear your father say how he and Parker had attracted these men in the first place? Had they found them here in Abilene for example?

MRS. SACCO: Well, I guess they had probably drifted around the country, I imagine. Left their families, they probably felt disgraced or something and don't you think that's the way they do?

BURG: Well, not always. Sometimes it's the fact that the youngest son under the English law is not going to inherit, if there's anything to inherit he will not get it. And so a lot of English younger sons were off to South Africa, Australia, Canada, America, trying to make their fortunes because they weren't going to share in whatever family fortune there might have been.



MRS. SACCO: I felt the fact that they took to drinking so much and didn't go back to their family, I really don't know, I really wouldn't know.

BURG: Were they bachelors?



MRS. SACCO: Yes, they were all unmarried men. All those men were unmarried.

BURG: And the same way that many people went to the merry-go-rounds, because there wasn't much else to do, those men may have gone to the liquor bottles because there wasn't much else for them to do.

MRS. SACCO: True, that's true.

BURG: I wonder what their wages were like, considering how much money one of those things sold for.

MRS. SACCO: I wouldn't know. Except that when my brother carried water in Leavenworth he got three dollars a week to carry this bucket of water.

BURG: I wonder if we could assume that if the Eisenhower boys did that sort of thing they probably got the same sort of pay.

MRS. SACCO: That's what I think.



BURG: Well, that's an intriguing thing too. Let me ask you this, do you remember what a Sunday would have been like for you as a little girl?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. Dressed all up in my very best clothes and went to Sunday school. In Leavenworth I was president of my class. Oh, yes, we went to Sunday School; we came home and we were very quiet. We could read the funny paper but that's it.

BURG: You were permitted to do that.

MRS. SACCO: Yes, but we didn't play games and didn't rip around and be noisy or anything like that. That was a day to be quiet and we always had a very special dinner.

BURG: You couldn't slip out of the house and go off and play noisily somewhere out of ear shot.

MRS. SACCO: No, no. We didn't. Sunday was a day to be quiet.

BURG: Were you asked to read uplifting books?



MRS. SACCO: No, no. No, we didn't. My father didn't believe in being overly religious either because he said that turns the children away. And he also believed in us tasting anything that the rest of them tasted. We had champagne, we were permitted to taste it because he said then you'll know what it tastes like and you won't be curious when you get away from home.

BURG: Mrs. Sacco, do you ever recollect your father or your mother describing the Eisenhowers mother and father as being overly religious, or did it ever come up for discussion to your knowledge?

MRS. SACCO: Well we felt that they were. As I say I knew

which church they went to and that they were religious. My father's mother and father had been overly religious with him, and he thought that was a mistake.



BURG: The reason that I ask you about the uplifting books is my mother-in-law was also raised at about the same time as a Methodist out in California, as a matter of fact, and she has told me of reading behind the cover of an uplifting book, Cosmopolitan or whatever the current magazine was, because in her family she was required after coming back from church to sit in a chair and think clean thoughts for as long as it took before the meal was served. And that was how she got around it by slipping the magazine inside--

MRS. SACCO: Well you see that's what my father said--it drives you to do things like that if you're too strict with them and he didn't believe in that. We were taught to be upright and honest and to tell the truth and not to be doing anything sneaky. And I agree, I think that's still important.

BURG: The Rumbargers stood out in your mind because they were not like that I assume.

MRS. SACCO: Well, as I said they weren't clean in their person, and they were always ready to act like they were bullies and they were going to hit us or something. They were just the mean ones in the school. Terrible to say about them but--let's see, one girl's name was May and one was Ruth and I don't know what the boy's name was, but we were frightened of them.

BURG: The girls were as tough as the boys.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes! They were just as unclean.

BURG: Do you remember much about that school and going there? You went to kindergarten there, which would have been I should think a little unusual.

MRS. SACCO: Well because my brother and I were in the same grade and there was a year's difference so I know we were right in the same class, Miss Mulguard's class.

BURG: He was ahead of you, he would have been the same--

MRS. SACCO: No, he was behind me.



BURG: He was behind you.

MRS. SACCO: Yes. We were both in the same grade in the same school.

BURG: Do you remember much about being there--



MRS. SACCO: Yes, I think that we had a very good school here in Kansas. I remember in that very first class, she said, "Now this is a question mark, you go home and ask your father another name for it." I did, and he said, "Interrogation point." And I never forgot it, and I mean that's the way, I think that's pretty good, to start you out, different things she would teach us and say, "Go home and ask your father and mother and you'll know." And it really impresses a person, I think it impresses it upon your mind.

BURG: Now that obviously is something that stands out even today in your mind. Does anything else from that classroom or that school, teachers or children, stand out in your mind as you look back on it?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. We sang and she had me direct the class in music and wave my hands around and lead them. I think they used to teach them the fundamentals very well. She was very serious.

BURG: That was a first grade class?

MRS. SACCO: Yes. And as I said, her sister brought her little boy back and was a friend of ours and she had another sister who kept house for her named Lillian, who passed away. And she marched the three of us, we had to go in and look at the body of this sister who had passed away, we had to look at her in the coffin, my brother and I and the little nephew, Seymour Sexton.

BURG: Miss Mulgard took you to do that.

MRS. SACCO: Yes.

BURG: The coffin was in the family home?

MRS. SACCO: Yes.



BURG: And this as far as you know was a common practice?

MRS. SACCO: Well I don't know, but they thought it was good for us, that we should go in and look at the body in the casket.

BURG: That's an interesting thing isn't it? For that period of time.

MRS. SACCO: That's what the teacher did.



MRS. TRAUB: Was this just selected children out of the school?

MRS. SACCO: Well, it was her nephew who played and we were very good friends so we--

MRS. TRAUB: Oh, it wasn't as a school function then?

MRS. SACCO: No, no, it was just we three.

BURG: It didn't take the place of an assembly. [Laughter]

MRS. SACCO: No, but we three--and the room was a little dark.

BURG: What was your reaction? Was it one of interest or terror?

MRS. SACCO: Well, just a tiny little bit of fear you know, but as long as the three were together I think we gave each other a little moral support.

BURG: A darkened and silent room.

MRS. SACCO: Yes.

BURG: Be quite an impact on someone. You were probably six years old at that time?

MRS. SACCO: That's right.

BURG: Well what was the last grade you completed in that school, Mrs. Sacco?

MRS. SACCO: Just the second.

BURG: You finished the second grade there. Do you remember who your instructor was that year?



MRS. SACCO: Well that's the other picture; her name was Louise, I don't remember.

BURG: So you went through the second grade there. It gives us a little picture of what it must have been like a few years earlier when Eisenhower was going through it.

MRS. SACCO: Some of those children came to school on a pony.

BURG: From out in the country a ways.

MRS. SACCO: A boy and his sister would ride a pony to school.

BURG: Now since you had a family automobile, let me ask, did you go for drives or trips?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes.

BURG: Where would a drive be typically in that time?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, we had some friends who had a farm out here, and, let's see his name was Higgs, he was an Englishman, Tadd Higgs. And we'd go out there and spend a Sunday with them or have dinner with them and they came in to see us.



BURG: Did they have a car?

MRS. SACCO: No, I don't think they did.

BURG: They'd come in by buggy.

MRS. SACCO: They were farming and I don't think they had a car. They came in by horse and buggy.

BURG: The roads were dirt, I presume, almost everywhere.

MRS. SACCO: Yes.

BURG: Let me ask you this, do you ever remember traveling in that car of your family's with the top up and side curtains up or are your recollections mainly--

MRS. SACCO: Oh sure.

BURG: They're not just summer time recollections. You remember being in it during the winter time.

MRS. SACCO: Yes. And in Leavenworth, my father rented a sleigh and took us all out for a sleigh ride with a big fur over our laps.



BURG: Which would have been a lot of fun.

MRS. SACCO: Sure. And then he had to get a big motorcycle. They had a big fire in Kansas City at the automobile show so he bought a Glide engine which later became a Chevrolet; he decided that was the best engine. So he got an engine and had it all fixed up at the factory with everything he had at his disposal, into a racing car. And at that time, you probably don't remember, but Wally Reid was a movie star and he had his cap on backwards I think.

BURG: That was R-e-i-d.



MRS. SACCO: Yes. And he was racing all over the place-- well that's what my father--had his painted red and he had a green polly parrot on the door. He had a polly at home. Mr. Parker had one polly and we had another polly, and Lucille and I tried to train them. We thought that we could train them because they had trained birds, you know, at the show, in carnivals.

BURG: Now was your father driving that car--

MRS. SACCO: So he drove that race car all--oh, boy--everybody knew him in town.

BURG: Not in competition, but just to drive it.



MRS. SACCO: Oh, no! And if he was going to take me to catch the train or the inter-urban, he would race with the train, and I would be frightened to death. And if he didn't make it across--well he would just ride along beside on the ties, you know, railroad ties, bumpity, bump, bump, bump. He didn't make it across in front of the train--he didn't win in other words. Oh, he was--

BURG: Was that prior to World War I? I'm trying to place Reid, but then Reid's career lapped into the 1920s too.

MRS. SACCO: Where I live now, he lived just around the corner really from me.

BURG: Oh, really, that's interesting.

MRS. SACCO: Well the Hollywood Hills were the original homes of the movie stars but Wally Reid's home was right around the corner, that pink house over there on Wood Haven.

BURG: Now I meant to ask you while we were talking about automobiles, a Sunday drive might be out to a farm, three or four miles away--

MRS. SACCO: And we had to stop and change tires in the dirt.

BURG: Right, the standard difficulties you would have with a car.

MRS. SACCO: Had to get out and change a tire.

BURG: Now do you remember while you were in Abilene trips to any of the towns, for example, as far as Junction City or to Salina?

MRS. SACCO: No, I don't remember that. I don't think that we went too far.

BURG: You may not have at that time.



MRS. TRAUB: How far did your father have to go to get one of these automobiles? Did he bring them back from Kansas City or would he have to--

Mrs. Irene Sacco, 10-30-74

Page 61

MRS. SACCO: Well, I really don't know.



MRS. TRAUB: There was certainly no place in Abilene to buy a car at that time.

BURG: I'm not too sure about that, Susie, because we have pictures at the library taken about 1908, I believe, that show, oh, perhaps ten or twelve automobiles grouped up there down by the Union Pacific depot. I think they represented the total automobile--

MRS. TRAUB: Was the Kansas Lumber Company here then?

BURG: I don't know. But this was the total automobile population I think of Abilene and a good bit of Dickinson County all ranked up there at one time. So I wonder if there wasn't at least one, maybe more, automobile agencies here in town. Of course it didn't take much to be an automobile agency here.

MRS. SACCO: But I don't think, I doubt if he got them here. I doubt if he got them here.

BURG: You think maybe shipped in perhaps from Kansas City or Topeka, some place like that.

MRS. SACCO: Yes. I don't think they got them here. But, oh, they had, one time they had a Frenchman here, I think they just called him Frenchie, who flew an airplane off the factory here for a spectacular stunt. That was, of course, Mr. Parker's idea, I know it wasn't my father's--because anything to get a lot of publicity, but he didn't fly very far.

BURG: And he flew it off the factory, you say, off the factory roof?

MRS. SACCO: Well some place around here I don't know where but it didn't go very far. It was about like Leonardo daVinci I think; he just went down.

BURG: Well, a Frenchman, and nicknamed Frenchie you say. Might not be too tough to find evidence of his travels too, I suppose, must have been barnstorming, prior to 1910.

MRS. SACCO: Then one of the animal trainers they called



Captain Cordova, I don't know where they got all these names, but he trained the animals, sometimes.

BURG: Did it winter here and train?



MRS. SACCO: Sometimes they wintered here. I would see them all winter, see them train or feed them, throw them the food. Yes, they often wintered here.

BURG: Now these would be, not just horses and animals of this sort, but wild animals, venomous animals would winter here too.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, lions, yes. Sometimes they died, we even had a, well then we would have the hide--what do you call it?

BURG: Tanned.

MRS. SACCO: And made into a rug. We had some of those rugs.

BURG: So out there at the factory site here in Abilene they had, I presume, accommodations for animals?

MRS. SACCO: For maybe one carnival or something at least would winter here.

BURG: Because they wouldn't keep the animals in their traveling cages.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, no, they didn't; they just had them in one building in cages.

BURG: And you would go down and see that too?



MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. And they put them through their paces every so often and we would sit around there and watch them, whole families would, Mrs. Parker and my mother.

BURG: People from town too, as far as you know, would come down?

MRS. SACCO: No, just our friends maybe; it wouldn't be a free show, not until they started out, because that would ruin the whole thing.

MRS. TRAUB: Were there accommodations for the people of the carnivals and so forth that would winter here, or would they stay in the local hotels, or did they have--

MRS. SACCO: No, no, they'd stay in cars, you know like train cars. There was a Mr. and Mrs. Wallace, an old couple here, and they would have their living quarters in a car like a train, you know, the big you took on a train. And they had a dog and pony show and birds, and they wintered here, but they all lived in that car.

MRS. TRAUB: Most all the people then lived in train cars; they just put them on a siding.

MRS. SACCO: Like they do in the cities today.



BURG: Was there room on the sidings for them or did you have a special spur running into the factory?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, they had all kinds of spurs and things. Down below, you say it's east, all that land, they had all that land down there, quite a lot of it; it was something like ten acres or more. And they had tracks down there where these cars were set out.

BURG: In your memory, would the whole circus train or carnival train be sided there?

MRS. SACCO: Yes.

BURG: So there wouldn't be just one, like a business car for the owner and his family to live in, but there might be a number of cars?

MRS. SACCO: That's right. Oh, yes. And they had a big sawmill down there. It caught on fire once and it looked like the whole world was on fire. They had any number of buildings and they had some elevators on them but they were very primitive, you had to operate them yourself, pull a rope to make the elevator go up and down. But they weren't just on one floor. As I say they had any number of buildings --they are all demolished and gone now. And a great big skating rink down there.

BURG: Indoor by the way?



MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. And we had parties and costume parties --my father went dressed as a baby. And we had the music and we had grand marches and he'd lead the grand march. We didn't skate on the sidewalks; we only skated down there in the rink.

MRS. TRAUB: Oh, you're thinking of roller skating as opposed to ice skating.

MRS. SACCO: Roller skating. He ice skated but I don't know where he ice skated.

BURG: Now it is your recollection that they were showing movies here, a kind of movie, prior to 1910 when you left. Do you remember where those were shown, by any chance?

MRS. SACCO: Well there was a little theater down town, but I don't remember where.

BURG: But you attended those as a child. Was that an evening thing, Mrs. Sacco?

MRS. SACCO: Yes, evening.



BURG: They didn't show for example on a Saturday afternoon.

MRS. SACCO: Oh, no, because I was so little we went with our family. As I said, they played the piano to bring out all the horses trotting and all the melodrama and everything

to music. She was the wife of our postman--Stanley was his name. But our entertainment, a great deal of it, was in the skating rink.

BURG: Now you move to Leavenworth, you finished your schooling there.

MRS. SACCO: No, I didn't. My mother left my father and took me to Topeka.

BURG: When did that happen may I ask?



MRS. SACCO: Probably 1914, '15.

BURG: Now your father stayed in Leavenworth. Did you visit back and forth?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes, yes.

BURG: So you kept in touch with him over time. Did your mother ever remarry?

MRS. SACCO: No, she didn't.

BURG: You spoke of having been on circus trains with, was it Mr. Ringling?

MRS. SACCO: John Ringling.

BURG: Now how did that come about?

MRS. SACCO: Well they were at the factory to have some show fronts repainted or whatever they happened to want. And, as I said, my father invented a wheel, a collapsible wheel, which they used for unloading their circus.

BURG: Was it like a retractable--



MRS. SACCO: I really don't know; I didn't see it; I just heard them talking about it. And Mr. Ringling asked me to go down on his private car, he had a niece with him, and he wanted me to be with her. I really was a well-behaved youngster and they always wanted me to be with their children because I behaved myself. I think that's why they wanted me, because I always acted lady-like.

BURG: Do you remember any impressions that you have of that man?

MRS. SACCO: John Ringling?

BURG: Yes, you were probably pretty young when that--

MRS. SACCO: Well, yes, and then when they came to the city we were over there and sat in his box.

BURG: To you watch the circus?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes. We could go in and out as we chose. And we always had plenty of money to buy a lot of little knick-knacks and things and we sat in John Ringling's box. All I had to say was who I was to the ticket taker or anybody else.

BURG: And that's all it took?

MRS. SACCO: That's all I had to say. And sometimes they'd tease me and say, "Who ever heard of that name?" And then I'd get so embarrassed and think they meant it. But sometimes Lucille Parker and I rode with the clown in the circus when Ringling Brothers came to town, a little old clown, had a



little two-wheel cart and a little donkey or something, and she and I would ride with him. Oh another time when Buffalo Bill came to town it was Lucille's birthday; so they had us ride in the stage coach around. After the circus, you probably don't know anything about this, after the circus they would have a wild west show and they would come out shooting the guns and yelling and chasing Indians--and you don't know who was chasing who because the Indians were going around and the cowboys after them and just around and around and around shooting and making all that noise. So we rode in this stage coach and the Indians would come up to the window and, Oooo-oo-oo-oo, and we didn't know whether to be frightened or not. And there was no air in those tires so you can imagine how we were bouncing around in there.

BURG: Now that was not here but that was in Leavenworth?

MRS. SACCO: That was in Leavenworth we rode in the stage coach.

MRS. TRAUB: The wild west show was connected then with Ringling?



MRS. SACCO: Yes. After the circus they had the wild west show; you paid extra to stay, we didn't have to pay but other people did, they paid something extra, seventy-five cents or something--

[Interruption]

MRS. SACCO: You asked me what else we did for entertainment. My father played the mandolin and guitar and sang whenever we had people in, besides having popcorn--make a dishpanful of popcorn--and apples, and he would play and sing and others would too.

BURG: Let me be sure I know, how many were in your family, your mother, father, you--

MRS. SACCO: And a brother.



BURG: And a brother. Four in that family. Now you were just saying that on these occasions when William Cody, Buffalo Bill Cody, was in the Leavenworth-Kansas City area at the wild west show, you were impressed by his size?

MRS. SACCO: Yes, he was very tall.

BURG: And the hair?

MRS. SACCO: And his white beard and long white hair on his shoulders.

BURG: Did he dress in a flamboyant style when you saw him?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes.

BURG: You also described the fact that he liked to talk to the kids.

MRS. SACCO: Yes, he loved to tell us stories.

BURG: Would he make himself available and--



MRS. SACCO: Well he did to us.

BURG: How would he do it, typically?

MRS. SACCO: Well, I was always with all of them because my father was there; we were just always right there. We weren't excluded ever.

BURG: No, I don't question that you were there, but how would Cody launch off on one of these stories? Would he just

notice that there were several of you there?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, in our home and, well, it was just the thing to do, people just talked, because, as I said before, there wasn't any radio or television, you just talked--there was conversation in those days.

BURG: What kind of tales would they be?



MRS. SACCO: Oh, he'd tell about buffalo or hunting and things like that and the buffaloes. It was just a totally different life really. And my father sometimes put on minstrel shows and he loved to dress up--I don't know, just had all kinds of things like that going all the time.

MRS. TRAUB: Could I ask you, also on this Buffalo Bill thing, when he came to town didn't he usually have several Indians that were traveling with his show?

MRS. SACCO: Oh, yes.

MRS. TRAUB: What did they do in between shows? I mean did they together or

MRS. SACCO: They didn't make themselves conspicuous at all.

MRS. TRAUB: They didn't mingle in the town or anything like that?

MRS. SACCO: No.

MRS. TRAUB: Did they live outside of town or--

MRS. SACCO: Oh, probably in the car that they came in, the train car. They just lived on those trains.

MRS. TRAUB: But they didn't associate with any of the people when they stopped at all?

MRS. SACCO: No. They stayed to themselves and they didn't even stay closely to Buffalo Bill; they didn't stay with him.

MRS. TRAUB: They didn't become story tellers or anything else like that?

MRS. SACCO: No, they had nothing to say, didn't say anything. We didn't say anything to them, they didn't say anything to us; they stayed strictly to themselves. It's kind of a



clannish bunch that travel with circuses anyway, each group stays with themselves.

BURG: So the animal people and the clowns, these people are groups.

MRS. SACCO: And the fellow that carries water to the elephants, nobody associates with him.

BURG: There's a pecking order.



MRS. SACCO: He's considered very, the very lowest--they called him "crumbs."

BURG: Well we know now where that put the Eisenhower boys who were carrying water to the elephants.

MRS. SACCO: No, they weren't in that class.

BURG: These are circus roustabouts.

MRS. SACCO: That's right, that's exactly right.

BURG: Not the kids that would be hired for the job.

Mrs. Irene Sacco, 10-30-74

Page 77

MRS. SACCO: No, no, the Eisenhower boys were likeable and he wanted to help them along I know. That was totally different. I think my father had great empathy for the Eisenhower boys -- he wasn't much older than they and he worked his way through school and college. He never said a critical or unkind word about anyone. He never said "Darn".

