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Interview no. 80

Madeline M. Gehring

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Madeline Mills Gehring
INTERVIEWER: Jo Ann Hovious
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Early El Paso; life around Las Vegas, New Mexico at the
turn of the century.

1 hour (3 3/4 tape speed); 32 pages.

H: I would like to begin by getting some biographical material from you. For example, where were you born?

G: I was born in New Haven, Connecticut.

H: Oh, you were? Is your family from the East, then?

G: Yes, my family is from the East. My parents lived in New Haven. They went on a wedding trip and my mother got a terrible cold. The doctors told her that she ought to come West after it was a while healing up, I guess. Her father was Wilson Wattingham, who owned the biggest cattle ranch in the country. He owned the Bell Ranch, if you've ever heard of it.

H: Yes, I certainly have.

G: Well, he owned that. She had heard a lot about Las Vegas, and so they went to Las Vegas. My father practiced law there. They lived there for about eight years. My mother recovered so they went back to New Haven. My brother was born in Las Vegas. He died a couple of years ago. They went back after about eight years. Then I was born in New Haven while they were there. My father had a ...I don't know how they did things in those days to get it through quickly, but McKinley asked him if he would take on as Chief Justice of New Mexico. So he came West. Besides, the West was best for my mother. So he came west and he was Chief Justice of New Mexico for 12 years. Then he came down to El Paso when Díaz and Taft met on the bridge. I can remember my father saying, "You know, I think I ought to go down to El Paso." Willie, who was his half brother, and President Taft were in the same class at Yale and very, very close friends. He said on account of Willie's association with Taft... My father was a Yale graduate, too. There were three boys and they all graduated from Yale. They lived in New Haven.

H: What was his name now?

G: Mills.

H: What was his first name?

G: William Jay.

H: Your father?

G: William Jay Mills. He came down here and met Taft. They became good friends. Taft asked him to go back to Las Vegas on the train with him in the presidential car. He did that and got off at Las Vegas. He said he had a very, very nice time down here and he had enjoyed President Taft. I think in a week's time he had a wire. That's the way things came through--quickly--in those days. President Taft had asked him if he'd accept the governorship of the Territory of New Mexico. That's how he happened to become the governor of New Mexico. He did not run for anything--he didn't run for the Chief Justice-ship, he did not run for the governorship.

H: He was appointed. How long did he serve as governor?

G: Only two years. Two years, a little over. He started working right away for statehood because he thought New Mexico should be a state. I can remember how many trips he made up to Washington about it. When he was in Santa Fe he had a wire from President Taft that they had appointed New Mexico now a state. They called me. It was the 6th of January. I don't know how I happened to be home unless it was a vacation from school. I don't know. But anyway, he called me and the executive mansion at that time--they've torn it down now--was right across the street from the capitol.

H: It was?

G: And I was right there. He called me and he said, "Madeline, I want you to come over here right away and raise the flag up in the capitol. I just heard from President Taft and we have been appointed a state. I want you

to raise the flag." So I went over there and I raised the flag. Then about a year ago a friend of mine, Frances Props...I don't know if you ever knew her; she was a friend of my daughter's. But anyway, she was up in Santa Fe and they were having a celebration up there. She was walking around a lot. Finally, Mr. Fitzpatrick said to her, "Is there anything I can help you with?" She said, "No, no. But do you know who raised the flag over this capitol when it was made a state?" He said, "No, I do not." She said, "I know her real well."

I had a letter from Mr. Fitzpatrick and he wanted to know if that was true. He hoped I'd come up to Albuquerque when they had their celebration. I wrote a letter to him. They had this celebration last November, I think it was. They asked me to come up. So Alice my daughter, Alice Misgimmons, and I went up for the celebration. They really treated me royally. They gave me this pin, and they gave me that red thing there, the red carpet. Then they gave me one of those dishes that are made in Santa Fe, black with silver. When I got off the plane I think there were at least 12 women there to meet me, which I think was quite a greeting. We went to the motel and left our things. We went out with Frances and to see her mother. Her mother, Mrs. Clark, was a school teacher there for many years. We went out with them that night for dinner. Then the next morning started things. They came for me. They had a luncheon out at the country club there. I thought it was kind of funny. I was at the head table. They didn't say anything about me. Finally, I heard that the luncheon was given for me.

H: Well, that's certainly a great honor. After all, your father was certainly an important individual. What year were you born in? I've neglected to ask you that.

G: 1895.

H: 1895.

G: I'm 78 years old.

H: Well, then, when you came back to New Mexico how old were you?

G: Three years old.

H: Three years old. And then from that time on you lived there.

G: I lived there. I lived in Las Vegas until a year after we were married. Then my husband decided that he didn't want to live there. He wanted a larger place. My brother was very active in Detroit. He knew lots of prominent people. I mean like Ford, head of the automobile business. He was a very personal friend; would come over a lot and see him. He'd go over to their house.

H: You say this was your brother?

G: My brother who lived in Detroit. He was a lawyer there.

H: He was?

G: My brother wanted us to come up there and live. My mother sold her house and moved her furniture. We weren't there very long. My husband said, "I don't want to live up here." So he came west and stopped in Denver, and he stopped in Las Vegas; came down here. I think the only reason he came here was because there was an awful lot of Las Vegas people here.

H: Yes, there are. In fact, that's one of the things I wanted to ask you about. What year did you come to El Paso?

G: We came here...I think it was 1920.

H: 1920. Yes, I've always been interested because people started coming down here from Las Vegas in the early 1880s right after the railroad came through. I've always wondered if there was some particular reason; whether they were

just following other people or...

G: I don't know. Well, my husband hadn't been here very long and he had decided...well, really what he wanted to do was go to California. That's what he had in his mind. But my mother was a widow and we had been living with her, and he just thought she'd like it here. She did.

H: What year did your father die in?

G: 1934 my mother died. He died before I was married, about 1913 or '14.

H: Not long after he was governor then.

G: It was a state then when he died. McDonald had taken over, the first state governor.

H: I see. He served just until New Mexico was admitted to the union. You went to school then in...?

G: Las Vegas.

H: In Las Vegas. You all did live then in Santa Fe.

G: We lived in Santa Fe.

H: When he was a governor. Did you remember much about Santa Fe?

G: Oh, yes. I was in high school. I got typhoid fever in Santa Fe. I was sick a great deal. For, oh, out of six or seven years I was sick most of the time.

H: What was the situation on doctors in Santa Fe?

G: I don't know. I remember we had a Dr. Roles when I had typhoid fever. I don't remember what it was that they used...I don't know what it was. But anyway, he refused to do it. He said he was afraid to do it. So my father had a Doctor Strong _____, I think his name was, from Santa Fe. He said he'd do it. He had a train engaged and everything to bring him up to Santa Fe to do it if it was necessary.

H: Some kind of a cure?

G: Yes. Well, something, but it was not necessary. It never came to that. But I don't think there were many doctors in Santa Fe at that time.

H: I don't know what the population might have been during those years.

G: I don't think more than 10,000 at the most. I doubt if it was that. Eight thousand probably.

H: In Las Vegas I guess it was about the same.

G: We were very jealous of Albuquerque. We were just as big as Albuquerque, we thought.

H: My gosh! Las Vegas was?

G: Of course Albuquerque has grown; Las Vegas hasn't.

H: That's what makes it so interesting. You wonder, location I'm sure, has something to do with it. The railroad, of course, runs through Albuquerque. I just wonder about the leadership. As I say, so many of the people came down here to El Paso.

G: Let's see. Dick was from Las Vegas.

H: Of A. B. Dick?

G: Not A. B. is it? James A. Dick.

H: Oh, James Dick. I didn't realize that. But I guess maybe he was.

G: I knew he was because he would just come out to our back door and knock on the door to get the orders of groceries.

H: For heaven's sake, He was a grocer up there.

G: He was a grocer up there and came down here. There was a Robertson. He was an engineer of some kind, very well known. He came down here. McNarry was down here, you know. He had the bank.

H: That's two bankers then--the McNarrys and the Reynolds brothers.

G: No. Reynolds was McNarry's wife's father.

H: There was a family tie then. I wasn't aware of that. Did the families keep their home in Las Vegas?

G: No.

H: I was under the impression that their bank in Las Vegas did. Do you have any idea approximately what year that was? That was sometime after they had established a bank here.

G: Oh, yes. I don't know the year at all.

H: Did they move?

G: They came down here. Say, Mrs. McNarry was a real good friend of my mother's. They used to go out. Mother had a car and a boy. I think she paid a dollar in the afternoon or something. I think they all called her Mrs. McNarry, and Mrs. Mills called her up and they'd go for a ride together. They were real good friends. Mother took her many times out to California because she didn't like to be alone.

H: Where did the McNarrys live? Wasn't theirs the big home...

G: Up on the hill.

H: It's now the monastery.

G: Yes.

H: Yes, that's right. Oh, for goodness sake. Now, which bank was it that they were...?

G: The First National.

H: The First National. I have a terrible time keeping the bank straight, which was the same one that Reynolds had started. Isn't that right?

G: Yes.

H: And then he must have left it in the hands of...

G: I don't know who he left it in the hands of when he left here, I really don't. But Martha's father...

H: Now, this is Martha Hardway?

G: Yes. There were these two brothers. I know that Hal Reynolds--that was their...they were twins, I think--he went up to New York and he was going to make a fortune there. He couldn't do it. I don't know if he came back here or not, or if he died out there. I forget what Martha's father's name was. Martha had these two brothers that she asked me if I remembered. I said, "No." They lived just one house between us.

H: Did they?

G: Yes.

H: In Las Vegas.

G: Yes.

H: Well, and then her grandfather was a grocer, T. B. McNarry.

G: I think he died long, long ago.

H: I know he came to El Paso in 1881 or '82. Obviously, you weren't even born then.

G: No.

H: They must have established their home down here and stayed.

G: I don't think Mrs. McNarry did. She lived up in Las Vegas. Maybe he died and she came up there.

H: No. Hadn't she moved back then?

G: I don't know.

H: So you went to grade school in Las Vegas. I suppose that there was only one grade school in the town at that time?

G: I believe there were two, one in the west side and one in the east side of town.

H: Would you say that the majority of the people were from any certain place? Were there many Southerners up there or were they mostly from the North?

G: I think they were mostly...well, they weren't Mexicans.

H: There weren't many Mexicans?

G: Not very many Mexicans. And there weren't Mexicans even in Santa Fe like there're Mexicans now.

H: Weren't there? I didn't realize that.

G: One nice thing, it was several years ago a friend of mine...I hadn't been back for any length of time, just maybe overnight or something like that, so we decided my husband and I were going to Las Vegas. I had this real good friend. I think her husband has about the only decent business in town. He's a druggist. So we went up there to see Ruth and Sceggy. They said if we'd come they'd meet us in Albuquerque. She had a brother in the hospital there. They'd meet us there and drive us up to Las Vegas. That was quite a temptation. We went up there. Then Sceggy took a week off. We went all around. Went up to Waterson, all around that part of the country. Beautiful country. Anyway, we got up to Morrow in I think it was 40 miles, 40 minutes or something like that. My father in the old days...a wagon or something would come for him with four horses. He went up to Morrow to hold court. He'd go stay two weeks at a time and then he'd come home. It was about six weeks court all together. It took him...I think he'd leave in the morning as I recall. I believe he used to go to church and then he left right after church. He'd get up there about dark maybe. We got up there in 40 minutes.

H: He must have been gone from home a great deal then.

G: I don't know about that. I don't know where he had to go to hold court really,

except Morrow's the only place I remember where he had to go and stay.

H: He must have gone down to Albuquerque.

G: No. He had another _____. But he was always the judge who was there, you see. But up around Clayton and so forth in New Mexico there wasn't another judge.

H: Oh, I see. So he had to take that?

G: He had to take that.

H: It's so interesting that your father was a governor those two years. I'd like to have you be thinking of interesting things that might have happened during that time to your father and to you and places that you two might have gone or anything like this. Maybe you can't think just on the spur of the moment.

G: No, I can't think of anything, really.

H: Just things like this business of your father travelling to Morrow and the type of thing that he did during those two years. Was he in Washington from time to time?

G: Yes. He went up there very, very often because he was just so anxious for New Mexico to become a state. He spent a great deal of time out there. I can remember that.

H: The other things that I am interested in are for example your school years. What the school was like?

G: My school years were very odd. In the first place, I was away and I grew up in New York. They discovered that I had thyroid; I had a tremendous thyroid. They came home and gave me some medicine to take and put on this thing. I don't know why we never noticed it but we didn't. I used to lie in the sun. Then I'd go to school. The teacher would always say, "A

diller a dollar, a ten o'clock scholar." (laughter) That's what they'd do, I remember. It made me so mad. I didn't appreciate it at all. But then I got this typhoid fever and I was very, very ill for a long time. About three months I was in bed. I had this high, high fever and it burned out the thyroid that troubled. So I was all right, I mean as far as the thyroid went.

H: That's interesting. Were you in Las Vegas when you caught it?

G: No, I was in Santa Fe. There was a great deal of typhoid.

H: There was?

G: We had a nurse for many months with me. Then I had to have my hair all cut off. (laughter) I didn't have any hair left.

H: Were the facilities in Santa Fe, was the water system pretty bad, do you think?

G: I guess it must have been. I don't know. There was an awful lot of illness in Santa Fe. Typhoid.

H: What were you doing in New York? You mentioned that you were in New York. Were you vacationing?

G: My brother was in school. He went to Yale.

H: He did?

G: My family had all been Yalites. My father...

H: Yes, you said that.

G: I think it's rather interesting. This goes back further than what you want to hear. My father was born in Yazoo, Mississippi, on a plantation. His father was a doctor. He and his brother were little chaps there. His mother came down. They were married. His mother came down from Philadelphia. I don't know where they were married. But anyway, she was from Philadelphia.

She was very lonesome and she had lots of company. She liked people like I do, I guess. So she stayed there. They were having a house party. I don't know how many friends they had from Philadelphia. And you know, the friends all got yellow fever; the plantation workers, the slaves, all got yellow fever. My grandmother and father and brother were the only three people left on that plantation, so she stayed there for about another year.

Then she just couldn't take it any longer. She sold the plantation and got on the train and started up to Philadelphia. She met this gentlemen on the train and he said, "May I help you with those boys. I'm so fond of children." She said, "Yes." Of course she had on her widow's weeds. So he helped her with the boys. Then he came to see her. I don't know where she was living. Oh, she lived in Philadelphia. He came to see her from New Haven. In several years they were married. My mother was born in Kingston, Canada. Her father, my grandfather, was also born there. But he was a wanderer, he liked to get around. They went on a wedding trip, I don't know how. But they went down to California.

H: Now, this is your...

G: That's my mother.

H: Your mother's father?

G: My mother's father's mother. The other was my father's mother.

H: How in the world that would have been. I wonder when that was, then.

G: It was during the Gold Rush because my aunt died a short time ago. When she was breaking up her home she sent me this gold buckle and she said, "This is the buckle that my father had made for my mother." It was the first gold that he got from the Gold Rush in California. They went out there. Then they finally moved. I say he moved--he liked to move. They moved down to northern California. They finally ended up in Victoria,

British Columbia. I've heard it said that she said, "Oh, hold on, Wilson. We can get along." "No. I have to go away. I have some business I have to attend to." I don't know if they were living in a log cabin or what, but I'm sure not very much. He left her with my mother and my aunt Emma. He went away. He was going to be back soon. One year passed and she never heard from him, not a word. She decided he had been killed, he had died or something. So she decided she'd go back home. He left her money to give to the Indians. He'd come into the house to see the white baby. She was the first white baby, the only white baby around there. But anyway, she sold my furniture, the house to get the transportation. They had to go clear around the horn to get up to Victoria. She went through Kingston.

H: To east Connecticut.

G: They went clear around there. She hardly no more than left when her husband turned up. He asked the Indians where his wife was, so they told him that she had gone up to her people. He got a boat and went up there, too.

H: That's really quite a story. So they stayed in eastern Canada then?

G: They stayed there. I don't know how he got this ranch out in New Mexico.

H: This is your mother's family. I wonder how he did. Now that's interesting.

G: I don't know how he got it.

H: Do you think it had something to do with his dealings when he was in...?

G: I don't know, I don't know. I've never been to the Bell Ranch. There are a lot of books written on the Bell Ranch.

H: Yes, now, what part of New Mexico is it in?

G: It's not far from Tucumcari.

H: Oh, yes, up there in the grasslands. Did the family live out here then? Did they come out after leaving Canada?

G: No, no. My mother came out here when she developed...I guess it was tuberculosis.

H: But I mean your mother's family owning this ranch. They ran it, evidently, in absentee.

G: Yes. He would come out here often.

H: Then he certainly must have been doing all right financially.

G: He had big poker games, I have heard.

H: Really? He'd come out and all the men I guess would get together. Have you heard any more stories about the ranch?

G: I can't think of any.

H: Did he do anything in the East then?

G: I don't know. But you know, after a time I guess my grandmother got sick and tired of this life. I wouldn't blame her. They were divorced.

H: They were?

G: A few years before he died. My mother then lived in the house that he owned on Romeroville. It was about six miles from Las Vegas. We used to love to go down there and have picnics. Everybody did. It was a beautiful house. It was a French-style house. He imagined building a French-style house /outside/ of Las Vegas. But that's what they did. That's where my brother was born. He married somebody who was very much younger than he, very, very much younger--almost my mother's age. It made the family very upset with my mother that she would let them be married in her residence, when she said, "Madeline, what could I do? It was his house."

H: That's right. (laughter)

G: But /she/ couldn't do anything else.

H: He sounds like he must have been quite a character.

G: He was married there. I don't know what he did. He was in New York. He was going upstairs to have a paper signed; running upstairs and he had a heart attack and died. They said if the paper had been signed he would have been a millionaire again. But the, the paper was not signed. He died a pauper.

H: He died a pauper! I wonder why. Was he a poor manager?

G: I guess everything was in this one sack that he was...one paper and it wasn't signed.

H: Did he own a ranch when he died?

G: I don't know if he did or not.

H: You say you used to go on picnics?

G: I mean, we'd go on picnics out to Romeroville. That was six miles from Las Vegas.

H: It's south I believe, isn't it?

G: Well, you pass it coming down, going to Albuquerque.

H: Did you find the winters out there awfully harsh?

G: Of course, I've never been there.

H: It's a different way of life than it is here.

G: I'd never been here, see.

H: I know you didn't know then. Looking back, I just wondered.

G: Yes. This weather seems almost like New Mexican winter.

H: More like Las Vegas than El Paso, that's for sure. I know Las Vegas seems more like an eastern town than it really does. Of course, being on the edge of the plains there, the houses and what not are so different than the rest of New Mexico. It's almost like it wasn't a part of New Mexico. It doesn't show the Mexican and the Spanish and Indian influence.

G: I remember my father, he'd always pull the blinds at night because he had these _____. He was all afraid there might be some shooting or something.

H: Was there a lot of lawlessness? You know, El Paso was such a wide-open place in those days. I wonder do you remember Las Vegas /as being/ that way?

G: I don't remember.

H: Did it have a boom town atmosphere or was it a little bit more stable?

G: I just don't know.

H: You were busy I guess with school. Was there much social life out there, Mrs. Gehring?

G: Well, we always had lots of fun. I was young, you know. Just a crowd of us. We had clubs and so forth.

/ PAUSE /

H: I was reading this article of something about Governor Otero. Do you remember any of the people in Santa Fe?

G: I remember Governor Otero real well. I remember he thought I ought to know how to type. I wish I knew how to type now. He brought an old typewriter over to me. I remember that real well.

H: Was he a nice man?

G: He was a nice man. He was kind of short. But he was a very nice man.

H: I wonder why he felt that you should have that experience. Did he say why? Do you have any idea?

G: No. He said, "You ought to know how to type, Madeline."

H: Did he have many children of his own?

G: I can only think of one, but he may have had more. I don't know.

H: Did you ever know his wife at all?

G: No. I don't know if she was dead or what. For some time he'd thought New Mexico would be a state. He had this flag made to be hoisted up at New Mexico when it was a state. It was ready and waiting. And it was ready and waiting. So they used that flag when they called me to go over there and hoist the flag. Then that night, why, there were bonfires all over the place, especially out in Ft. Marcie. Ft. Marcie was kind of up above Santa Fe. Right in Santa Fe, you might say, but kind of high. There were bonfires all over there, especially.

H: I didn't realize that Ft. Marcie was that close. Do you remember any of the other families that you all were friendly with during the two years that you were living in Santa Fe?

G: I remember the Lawthrons. They were not Republicans (laughter), they were Democrats. They had two daughters but I forget their names. I used to go around with Ralph Sparks. His father has a telephone company there. When we moved to Santa Fe, well, Ralph got on the telephone and talked to me for an hour, half an hour. Didn't cost him a dime. (laughter) When I'd been down here--I think he's died now--he and his wife had moved down to Pecos, I think it was. He'd call me once or twice when he came up here. I think he died. Mrs. Winters, she visited me in Las Vegas. I forget what her first name was. Winters was her last name.

H: Did you find that the people in Santa Fe were any different from the ones in Las Vegas?

G: No.

H: Did you like it just as well or perhaps better than Las Vegas?

G: I like it all right.

H: Were they friendly?

G: Yes, they were nice.

H: Were most of the people Republicans, then, or...?

G: I don't know if most of them were or not. But of course I've always been a Republican. (laughter) I knew the Republican people better.

H: Did you have a feeling of--you certainly must have with your father being who he was--of political loyalty to the Republicans and so forth? Do you remember much talk about it in the family?

G: No, I don't. Of course, the family was my mother and father and myself. My brother was away at college all the time, you see. We were there. He'd come home for summer vacation but he always got a job someplace and he was out on the road like in the engineering group. So he was never home much. It was really just my mother and my father and myself.

H: Were you able to spend much time with your father or did he have very much free time?

G: My father and I were very good friends.

H: Close?

G: Very close. I can remember when we went to Detroit, we went up there and I had these mastoids. I had three operations. The first one was down at the Las Vegas Hospital. The second one was done on our kitchen table. (laughter) The third one was done in St. Anthony's Sanitarium there. He didn't have much choice. The doctor was perfectly willing that I go away, and suggested that we go to this Dr. Pierce in Chicago. So we went to a Dr. Pierce in Chicago. He said it would be all right for me to go over to Detroit where my brother was. He recommended someone there. So we went to Dr. whatever his name was in Detroit and we were there until the 31st of October; we went in June. I was having treatment every day on these ears.

My father and I used to go to the football games. I remember that.

H: Oh, you did? Who was playing?

G: The big games.

H: You mean the college games?

G: Oh, no, I mean the big games. I don't know what you call them.

H: You mean in the East?

G: Yes.

H: I see, in the East. The Ivy League...well, not Ivy League. But this was when you were young.

G: This was when I was about 16 years old. He always took me. We went together. We were very close. He'd take me to the doctor every morning. We had an apartment not too far from the doctor's office. There was a park about two blocks away. My mother would sit there crocheting while we went to the doctor.

H: How wonderful! He was able to take the time to be with you.

G: Well, he wasn't busy then. He wasn't in any business then because after he was governor he retired.

H: He did? I see. He didn't do anything then. Was he retirement age?

G: I think he was. He was past sixty. I don't know if he was retirement age or not, but he was past sixty. I think he was 64 when he died. So he wasn't quite what we call retirement age.

H: Almost. He must have been a little bit older when you were born then.

G: Yes, he was.

H: What kind of man was he, Mrs. Gehring?

G: That's his picture right up there.

H: Is it? He's very distinguished looking.

G: A picture of my mother and father.

H: He looks like a governor, I would say. Very definitely. Was he rather quiet, or would you say a dynamic, forceful individual?

G: I think he had his own opinions.

H: Did he?

G: Yes.

H: What kind of lawyer was he? Was he very fiery or more on the conservative side?

G: I really don't know.

H: Did you ever see him in court?

G: No, I never did.

H: Do you think there was any reason for that or just you never happened to go?

G: No, I just don't know.

H: Never were interested in going. Did you hear him speak much when he was governor?

G: Now and then at school things he got up and talked.

H: After you graduated from high school did you go on to college?

G: No, I didn't. I was ill all the time. Really for about six or eight years I was sick all the time, I'd say the time I should have been out having a grand time.

H: You didn't have a great deal of social life then, I guess, really.

G: I went out but I didn't have a great deal of social life.

H: You mentioned that incident about the operation on the kitchen table. I wonder how they happened to do it there rather than in a hospital?

G: I think they were disgusted. At the Las Vegas Hospital I can remember that they gave me this...maybe it was ether, I don't know. They gave me something

at nine o'clock in the morning or 8:00. I didn't come out until 4:00 that afternoon. I heard people talking about it. They were pretty mad about it.

H: They were worried?

G: I think it was this ear. I don't hear very well in this ear even now. They were mad about it. I know then it went on for about two months. They were treating it all the time. In the first place, my father was in Santa Fe when I became ill. My mother phoned him. He said, "I'll be right home." He said to Dr. Losee, "I'm going to take Madeline up to Denver." He said, "Very well, do that. I'm washing my hands of the whole thing right now." "You know you're afraid to then." He let Dr. Losee do it in Las Vegas, the operation. I liked Dr. Losee. He'd call me all fancy names. I liked him. They brought my brother home, I remember. He was in Yale then and brought him home. I had the second operation. I can remember hearing the maid out there scrubbing that kitchen. She scrubbed it like nobody's business. I said, "Why are you doing that?" "Well, it just needs it, that's all." Then they told me I was going to be operated in the kitchen in my own house. But I couldn't imagine such a thing now.

H: Did they have someone come in to give you anesthesia?

G: Yes, I guess they did. I never thought about that.

H: That's very interesting. Perhaps the medical care was not what it might have been.

G: No, I don't think it was.

H: I guess the population of Las Vegas just sort of reached a point of... I can just imagine because it certainly has not been a successfully growing city.

- G: Yes. Grant Kelly was a boy doctor. Groz Kelly, a wholesale place, that was a big place. Ilflet's was a big place. That was really about the only two buildings in town, only two big businesses in town that I can think of. Of course, they're both gone now.
- H: I know at one time El Paso obtained their coal from Las Vegas. But the supply must have run out. That was during the '80s, of course.
- G: I remember that up the canyon every winter we'd supply Santa Fe with all their ice.
- H: That's right. It was the ice. I remember reading this about the '80s, too, that the trains, I guess, used to go up to Las Vegas and they got it from a canyon. Right?
- G: Yes, up the canyon--Gallinas Canyon. Of course, we used to love to go up there and skate.
- H: Was it just a huge pond?
- G: No. There were six dams, as they called them. They had lots of rain and snow. They used to supply to Santa Fe, I think, all the way from Chicago to California their ice.
- H: I wonder how late it lasted in the year.
- G: I don't know.
- H: I guess it's cold up there until what, April or May?
- G: I don't know.
- H: I have always wondered what they would do.
- G: I always used to think it was warm here in April. (laughter)
- H: This year we found out, haven't we?
- G: There used to be a train that ran up there, up to the dam that was open and ready to skate out. A whole crowd of us would go get our ice skates and we'd

go up there and skate. The train would bring us back.

H: Did they use the same train for carrying the ice?

G: I don't know. Probably did. Loaded it up from one of the other dams while we were skating.

H: Was that when you were perhaps in your teens?

G: In my teens.

H: I suppose that was perhaps one of the main economic...

G: Well, you know, in Las Vegas until they opened Grand Canyon it was quite a resort. They had a Montezuma Hotel about six miles up from Las Vegas up in the canyon, the Montezuma Canyon. There was swimming there in the summer. I think they had a /hockey/ place. I remember how beautiful the place was going up to the Montezuma. When they opened up Grand Canyon, why, that just kind of went dead. Santa Fe didn't advertise it anymore because /when/ they'd haul passengers from the East, they'd haul them further when they went to Grand Canyon.

H: I guess they must have taken them to Albuquerque to get to Las Vegas. They must have taken them to Albuquerque and then north.

G: No, I think the train came right through.

H: From the East did it?

G: Yes. Santa Fe did.

H: Yes, yes it was the Santa Fe, that's right. Went up to Las Vegas and then what, over to Tucumcari?

G: No, it went to Las Vegas right on and to Trinidad, Colorado. If you wanted to go to Denver you'd have to take another train. They'd pull off that car, one car to go to Denver, I guess. The rest of the train went on to Kansas.

H: Did you all ever go up into Colorado?

G: We'd used to go often.

H: Did you?

G: Yes.

H: On the train?

G: Yes.

H: To Denver?

G: To Denver. We used to like to go up to the stores and stay at the Brown Palace Hotel.

H: How marvelous! You did a lot of your shopping there then.

G: Yesterday I went out with a friend. She wanted to go out and eat. She took me down to eat at the Union Depot, you know, the Del Norte. We sat in the Del Norte there and she said, "You know, this reminds me of the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver." I said, "Yes, it certainly does."

H: The same atmosphere, I guess. The very quiet, elegant...

G: Very elegant, ornate.

H: That must have been terribly exciting for you, then. Was it usually just you and your mother or did your father go along?

G: Just mother and I. I think that was probably after my father died. I thought he'd live to be an old, old man. He was 64 when he died.

H: I didn't ask you. What did he die of?

G: He had a heart attack. One night he had pneumonia. He'd been in bed. I guess it was a heart attack. We had a nurse there. I don't know if she was there at night or not but my mother tiptoed in his room to get something and she came out and said, "Madeline, I can't hear your father breathing." So they looked into it and he had gone.

H: What a shame.

G: But I remember just that it was a Saturday night before Christmas; Christmas was the next day. But I remember the Sunday before that I had some friends. He dressed up and put on his cut-a-way, do you call it? His coat? He was quite dressy.

H: Did he like to wear lots of fancy clothes?

G: Yes.

H: What about you and your mother? Did your mother socialize a lot even though you were sick?

G: Yes, she did. We always had good help around the house.

H: Yes, that's one thing I wanted to ask. Was it Mexican help or Negro?

G: Well, some Negroes. I don't think we ever had any Mexicans.

H: I guess they're just weren't any in Las Vegas. And Anglo, did you have some Anglo, too.

G: Some Anglo. You see, I don't know anything about El Paso.

H: You don't need to. I should have made that clear that that's not all that we're interested in. You've led a very interesting life. You can throw so much light on things and give us an idea of other things that are important, too. All of history is important, not just El Paso.

G: We came here. We were married in August, 1919. Then we came here in 1920, in October of 1920. My husband was in World War I. I had ordered the invitations and my mother was so mad at me. She said, "I've never heard of ordering invitations before the husband-to-be comes back. Maybe he won't want to marry you." (laughter) I said, "Well, I'll take a chance on it." I ordered the invitations except for the date. Then they engraved the date in when he got back.

H: Where did you meet him, Mrs. Gehring?

G: He lived in Las Vegas. He lived just a block from us. He was a good friend of my brother's.

H: He was?

G: They played together all the time. So I had known him for many, many years. Before he went I had my diamond ring, before he went to Germany, before he went to the Army. He was sent to Germany. He was in four or five major battles; came out without a scratch. He was very fortunate. He was so mad. He wanted to go to school over there and everybody began coming home except him. They wouldn't let him out. They had to actually _____. He had to stay. He didn't get out until...he was discharged down in El Paso.

H: Had he gone to college at all before then?

G: Yes, he had gone to college. He had not finished though. He never did finish.

H: Where did he go to college?

G: He went to University of Indiana. He wasn't very well so he went to the University of Colorado. Then he went to the University of Toulouse in France while he was in the Army.

H: For just a short period of time?

G: For about a term or something.

H: What did he major in then?

G: I don't know.

H: What type of things did you all do when you were dating and what not for amusement?

G: I don't know. (laughter)

H: Besides skating on the ice?

G: Going to movies for ten cents a movie an evening.

H: You think there was much culture in Las Vegas? Did they have anything in

the way of concerts?

G: No.

H: I guess they were really kind of off the beaten path. I know El Paso had so many of those advantages. I wonder how many years it was a resort town then. That's something I certainly didn't know.

G: That was up in Montezuma Hotel. It was turned over...I think the Jesuits have it. First I remember going up there when Jack Johnson the fighter and Ed Flynn were going to fight. They were going to fight in Las Vegas. Jack Johnson engaged the Montezuma Hotel. I don't know if you call it engaged. But anyway, he practiced up there and we used to go up there and watch him. After that the Jesuits took it over. I don't know who has it. I think it's a school now but I couldn't be sure.

H: A lot of people from the East, then, came out.

G: They used to have swell dances up there, so I heard my mother say. I was really young, you know. But it's a beautiful place. I only have one friend left in Las Vegas, and that's my former rector's son who still lives there and has a drug store. He married my best friend and she's died. Nobody's there anymore. I don't even want to go out.

H: People have just really left. Were there very many churches in the days when you were there?

G: There's the Methodist...one of each kind, I guess.

H: Would you call it a church-going town or do you think people attend it very much?

G: I think they attended pretty well. But there are other things. There's Episcopal and a couple of Catholic churches, and Baptist, Methodist. I don't know what else there was.

H: I guess that just about covers the waterfront; not particularly church atmosphere. Were there many ranchers?

G: They opened up the mesa. I don't know how far above Las Vegas it was but I think it was to the east. They tried to make it a farming community. I know my husband, he was selling real estate at that time. He sold himself this place that they used to develop. I don't know if there was anybody that was really successful there or not.

H: That would have been in the '20s, then, right?

G: Yes.

H: After you all were married?

G: No, before we were married.

H: Before you were married. I wonder if there were very many people who participated in it.

G: I just don't know.

H: I didn't know about that. It should be good grazing land up there, shouldn't it?

G: Yes.

H: It's grassy, the grasslands in particular.

G: I don't know what they're doing with it now. I have no idea.

H: You don't remember then too many people, say, living in outlying ranches or anything and coming into town?

G: No.

H: I'm wondering what the main resource of the town was.

G: There really wasn't any main resource. There really wasn't anything.

H: Were there very many lawyers as you remember?

G: I don't know how many you would call many. I imagine as many as there were

doctors.

H: I wonder what the political situation was? Were there any political squabbles?

G: I think there are squabbles in every town, don't you?

H: Yes. (laughter) Some seem to be worse than others. El Paso has had such a rather wild political history at times.

G: I'm glad that last election is over.

H: Yes. I think we're all relieved. It took long enough to get it all taken care of. Well, I guess you all must have ridden the train just about every place that you went.

G: Yes. In those days I remember my father had a pass. Just because he was a judge they gave him a pass. Or I don't know if he ordered it for himself and for his family or what. But he didn't appreciate it, he didn't like it very much. He didn't think they ought to do it. I don't know how much he used it. But I remember one time going to Grand Canyon, going to the Altovar and we stayed there. I remember (laughter) my brother took off his trousers and put them under the mattress. He was going to press them that way. I was so mad. It's funny how you can remember these things.

H: Yes, that's right.

G: Because I was sleeping with my brother. It made me so mad that he put his trousers under there.

H: Were there very many people there when you went to the Grand Canyon?

G: Yes. It was very popular.

H: How many other places were there to stay there besides the Altovar? Was that the only one?

G: It's the only one I remember.

H: Was that the Harvey House at the time?

G: Yes.

H: I guess it still is.

G: See, the Casanada was a Harvey House in Las Vegas. All these people, I used to think how wealthy they must be to spend a whole dollar and go down there and get a Sunday dinner. (Laughter) I had a sandwich today downtown and it was \$1.50.

H: Yes. That really sends you back, doesn't it? Was that the main place to eat in Las Vegas?

G: That was the place to eat.

H: The only one more or less.

G: There were several other places. But there was one place where we could get a meal for 25 cents, I remember.

H: Did you all eat out very much?

G: Not very much because we always had cooks. We had a German one who went with us when we went to Santa Fe.

H: That's great! Were there very many Germans in Las Vegas?

G: I don't think too many.

H: I bet they make great cooks. And she moved with you. One thing I'm interested in was whether alcoholic beverages were served in your home, whether it was just wine with meals, or whether... For example, when your father would entertain.

G: We used to have liquor in the house.

H: You did? But the women didn't drink it, I guess.

G: I can't remember if they did or not. I remember they used to play cards and they'd have a drink. But I don't remember what the women did.

H: Did your parents entertain a great deal in the home?

G: They always entertained in the home when they entertained.

H: But I mean, did they entertain a lot?

G: I don't know if you'd say a lot, but they entertained.

H: Was there any kind of a country club in Las Vegas at all?

G: No. There was an Elk's Club. You could rent and go down there. That was quite nice.

H: Was it?

G: I think there was another club, too, because I remember they gave a big party for my father. What was it called? I forget. Commercial Club, I think it was. It was very fancy. That's when he went over to Santa Fe. They had a band come up the street. They sent a cab for him, or I don't know if it was drawn by horses.

H: Of course, they did have cars. I know in El Paso they did as early as, I think, 1907, '06 somewhere in there.

G: I think in about 1913, about around in there, three cars came into Santa Fe. My father bought one. I don't know who bought the other two but there were three cars in Santa Fe. Then Bronson Cutting came out for his health. He was a millionaire from New York. He brought a car and a chauffeur. So there were four cars in Santa Fe. You didn't have to worry too much about...

H: Getting run over.

G: No. (laughter)

H: Or automobile accidents. I imagine then there must not have been very much money in Las Vegas. It sounds like there weren't many families that had very much money.

G: I don't think there were.

H: That would certainly have affected the economy, kept it from really growing any more than it did. You say this man was Bronson Cutting?

G: He built a big house out there.

H: I wonder, did he stay, do you know?

G: He stayed a long time. I imagine by now he's died, of course. I have books with a lot of pictures. I wish I had them now. But last week my granddaughter was here. She goes to school in Lubbock, Texas Tech. She said she decided to write a family history.

H: That's a great idea.

G: She wanted to know when I could tell her. Well, I couldn't tell her too much.