

In 1997 I was contacted by Rita Richardson Radeleff, a retired bank executive who had done considerable research into her Mexican and Scottish family background. Rita met with me and shared her writings, many photos, and countless memories on and off the record, but it was her donation of photos that inspired me to create a photo archive to accompany these volumes and to establish a permanent public collection for now and the future.

Her family story provided insights into the depth and diversity of Mexican settlement in Redlands. Up to the time Rita and I spoke, all of my interviews included people primarily of Mexican descent, most of whom lived, worked, or spent some point of their life in the barrio of north Redlands. With her interview, my efforts to gather stories and history widened in scope and geography to include information about 19th and early 20th century settlement in south Redlands by working class Mexicans and people of European descent like her father, Palmer Leland Richardson, a chauffeur and a small business owner.

Rita's story as well as that of her mother Tomasita, whose strength and determination first as a young widow, then in an interracial marriage, and finally as a working single mother are fascinating to read. They also contribute to an emerging multi-faceted historical portrait of Mexican women in and out of their homes, a subject this series only begins to touch upon. I had several conversations with Rita about her family and her experiences and in this interview she reads sections from her self-authored family history.

Robert Gonzales: *My name is Robert Gonzales. It is June 14, 1997. Today I am at Smiley Library in Redlands, California interviewing Mrs. Rita Radeleff from San Bernardino, California. Mrs. Radeleff is a Redlands native. First of all I would like, Mrs. Radeleff, if you would please give me your full name and spell your last name.*

Rita Radeleff: My name is Rita M., previously Richardson, and currently Radeleff.

R-A-D-E-L-E-F-F, as in Frank Frank.

Robert Gonzales: *Could you tell me a little bit about your family connections to the Redlands area?*

Rita Radeleff: During my interviews with the Docent from the Mormon Library in San Bernardino by the name of Wanda Jones, she has found information from the 1880 census and from the voter registration records showing that my grandmother, Mercedes Frederico, came to Redlands in 1879. She was born in 1864 in Colton, California as far as we know. As soon as the Docent is through with all of the information of course, we will know better on that. My brother states that she came from New Mexico, but we're a little leery on that yet.

My grandmother, Mercedes Frederico, came to Redlands in 1879 and she married Quintin Velarde who was a native of California but living in the Colton area on October 15, 1888, by Father R.J. Stockman, a Catholic Priest. And the marriage was witnessed by an Augustin and Patrice Acuña, Petra Acuña, I beg your pardon. The marriage license was recorded on October 22, 1888.

Quintin Velarde and Mercedes Frederico Velarde came to Redlands and made their home here about 1892. Their one and only child was Tomasita Edith Velarde who became my mother in 1913 when she married Palmer Leland Richardson, married the man who was to become my father in August, 1913. We find a discrepancy in the name Velarde with 'V' and the name Bellarde with a 'B'. It is known that some of the Belardes, B-E-L-A-R-D-E, came Rita Radelef from France apparently into New Mexico and then on into California. That is being researched right now. Quintin and Mercedes moved into Redlands, building the family home at 61 East Crescent now, which currently has had a change of numbers, and it's 103 East Crescent and the home is still there. A Mrs. Carrol owns the home. We lost it in the Depression years in 1934. Mom was an only child and she married at the age of seventeen or eighteen to a Mateo Guzman, one of six brothers who were born in Los Angeles. She and Mateo were married for about three years. Her first child, whose name was Mercedes, was born May 11, 1910, but she was stillborn. My brother, half-brother, Matthew Moses Guzman, was born July 13, 1911, about ten days after his father died. Quintin Velarde died of asthma working in one of the orange groves as a Foreman here in Redlands. Unfortunately my mother's first husband also died of asthma working in an orange grove in Redlands. We have yet to find the records of his, Mateo's death or his burial so we're looking in the Los Angeles records, since all of the boys, all of the six Guzman brothers were born in Los Angeles. The body may have been shipped there, it could have been buried in one of the orange groves, too, because the family didn't have money at that time. A lot of them don't, yet. [Laughs] Ok, where do you want me to go from there?

Robert Gonzales: *Well, you were telling me about your Guzman relations, what do you know about the Guzman family?*

Rita Radeleff: What do I know about the Guzman family? One of the Federicos, two of the Federicos married, no, back up. Jesusita Federico married Epimenio Guzman. My mother's first husband was Epimenio's brother. Therefore her Aunt became her sister-in-law and also was still her Aunt. The children from those two marriages became nieces and nephews and also first cousins, due to the dual relationship.

Again, the Guzmans, one of the oldest Guzmans still lives in Redlands, Richard E. Delfonso Guzman, he still lives at 1221 Clay Street in Redlands, and is ninety three-and-a-half years old. He was born in Redlands at 536 East Stuart Street on January 23, 1904, one of two sons born to Epimenio Guzman and Jesusita Federico. The brother died in 19-, Carlos Guzman, the only other son, died in January 8, 1985. And Richard is the last of the older Guzmans that we know of.

Robert Gonzales: *Now let's see, you had mentioned that your Velarde relation came to the area in, to the San Bernardino area, not just Redlands, it was 18-*

Rita Radeleff: We have records that were just obtained from, through the Mormon Library, Wanda Jones, that show that one of the Belardes came from France and became a naturalized citizen in 1871 in San Francisco.

Robert Gonzales: *Do you know what, and in particular, any of your family that might have come from Mexico, do you know what the reasons were that they came to this area?*

Rita Radeleff: I don't have too much information on that, now my brother, who is going to be eighty-three next month, has more information on that because Nana and Tata were living when he was just a little boy. Tata died in 1920, prior to my birth, and Nana died in 1926, only when I was two-and-a-half years old. So I know very little of the family history by word-of-mouth. My brother and my oldest sister know a little bit more than I do, and I think you're going to be interviewing my brother, also.

Robert Gonzales: *Well then let's talk a little about your mother and father. Tell me first about your mother.*

Rita Radeleff: Okay. Mom was the only child, Tomasita Edith Velarde of Quintin Velarde and Mercedes Federico Velarde. She was born October

17, 1891 in Colton, California. The family moved to Redlands, as we now know, just as of Thursday of this week, in 1892. We had always thought that they hadn't moved here until about 1897.

The family home, apparently the piece of property at 61 East Crescent was purchased, it runs from 61 East Crescent up a little ditch, and it was kind of a pie-shaped piece of property. And that was purchased by Quintin, he built the family home there in the late 1890's.

Mom, having been born in Colton, moved to Redlands with them, of course. She went to Kingsbury Elementary School and Redlands Junior High School. Rita Radeleff: She married at the age of sixteen or eighteen years old, I still don't know about that. Again, she married Mateo Guzman, who was one of the six Guzman brothers, they had one, they had two children, again, I've said that before, the one who was stillborn and then my brother, Mateo, who was born about ten days after his father died. Being that both her father died in I believe 1920, 1919 or 1920, and her mother became a widow, mom also a widow, they worked for the Sterlings and the Burgesses as domestics.

Robert Gonzales: *Are you familiar with that? Tell me a little about that.*

Rita Radeleff: I'm a little familiar with it. Trying to keep the family together and keep the home and all was a little difficult. I guess Tata wasn't dead yet, because Mom married, okay. At the Burgess mansion she met the Chauffeur, who was Palmer Leland Richardson. He had come here in 1910, migrating from South Dakota, where he was born on the Plains in April 8, 1885. He came into California through Illinois, Indiana, Estes Park, Colorado, where Dad lived with Enos A. Mills, the author, for a number of years before migrating to California. He was a self-taught electrician and self-taught chauffeur. He became the chauffeur, as I stated, for the Burgess and the Sterling families, going back and forth between the two, whomever needed him the most at the time. He was platinum-haired, blue-eyed and a Scotsman-Englishman and his mother's maiden name was Hughson, H-U-G-H-S-O-N. And she was also living here in Redlands at that time, as was the two other sisters of my father, Ethelyne Richardson Grant Smith and Edla Richardson MacNeill, M-A-C-N-E-I-L-L, not MC.

Robert Gonzales: *So his whole family lived out here, also?*

Rita Radeleff: The three remaining, there were nine children, they all died of Tuberculosis, except the three that came out here, there were six of

them died of Tuberculosis, from age two months up to age fourteen years of age.

Robert Gonzales: *Any speculation as to why? It almost sounds like it was for their health?*

Rita Radeleff: I believe so, I believe it was, migrated here for their health. We have papers showing that my grandfather on my dad's side served in the Civil War as a Sergeant in 1865 and we have the awards, we have their discharge papers, we have their enlistment papers, we have all of those. My sister has most of that, my brother may have some of it. But apparently because of the health.

My father was a gypsy-type person, he didn't stay too long in one place at any time. I don't know who came here first, whether it was my grandmother Richardson, we called her Mongie, M-O-N-G-I-E. And the reason we called her Mongie was when she lived here on State Street, she and the lady next door would go out every morning and say, "Good morning." And my brother picked it up as Mongie, so all of us called Grandma 'Mongie'. As I say, I have no idea who came here first, whether it was Mongie, her two daughters, or my brother, I mean my father, or just who it was I don't know. But we will find that out from, again, the Mormon Library.

Robert Gonzales: *You had mentioned that your father was a chauffeur? Tell me a little about that, about his work.*

Rita Radeleff: He came to California from Tulare, South Dakota via Estes Park and Longmont, Colorado, traveling through various states to eventually arrive in California. His father was Horace Landon Richardson, related to the Landon that ran for President, and his mother was Julia Hughson Richardson. And Horace was a Civil War Veteran and had a small pension, he brought his wife to Redlands. Palmer Leland and his two sisters also eventually got to Redlands again, who came first, we don't know.

Palmer enjoyed driving race cars, he raced with Eddie Rickenbacker, Barney Oldfield and Pete Depaolo, the old, great big old cars that had the enormous solid rubber tires and so on. And oh, just everything like that. And they had the brake on the outside of the car rather than on the inside and so on and so forth.

Robert Gonzales: *Do you have any photos of your father with his cars?*

Rita Radeleff: Yes, we do. We have one in front of the old Casa Loma Hotel, where Stater Brother's on Orange and Colton now stands. We have a picture of my father on July 10th I think, 1910 or -11 for the July fourth celebration. So we do have that in our file someplace.

Being an excellent driver, he became a chauffeur for the Sterlings or the Burgesses, this is 1910 or 1911. Now Tommie, or Tomasita Velarde was a very attractive but unhappy young widow. She had jet black hair and dark brown eyes and dark olive skin. She was an immaculate housekeeper and undoubtedly was a very good domestic and she probably had been taught very strictly by her mother Mercedes.

Tommie and Palmer, Richie as we called him, met while both were working for the Sterlings. And as I stated before, Palmer was blond hair, blue eyed, English Scotsman and was quite a contrast to my mother's dark hair and dark eyes and so on. They were married on August 27, 1913. She was a widow with a small child, my brother, Matt, having been born July 13, 1911. And I still have the thick gold ring, which bears the engraving. P to T, August 27, 1913.

After their marriage they continued to live with Quintin and Mercedes at the family home on East Crescent. Then there were the first four of the Richardson children, who was Leland Horace Richardson, born July 20, 1914 and along came my sister Lorraine Mercedes Richardson on June 28, 1916.

My mother's dad then died while working in an orange grove of the same dreaded asthma that had taken her first husband, no relationship but they all had asthma, apparently allergic to, they could have been allergic to the blossoms, they could have been allergic to the fertilizer, it could have been allergic to any one of some things, we don't know that. Quintin, my grandfather, died in 1919, and he's buried in Hillside Memorial Park in Redlands in the family plot.

Tommy and her mother, my mother and my mother continued living in the old home with Palmer Leland Richardson. Then my other brother, Frederick Dean Richardson, was born on January 20, 1920, all of these births occurring in the old hospital on Nordina Street, which is now some kind of a retreat or some such thing, okay?

During this period of time my dad, Palmer, Richie, whatever, tried out working in San Diego and moved his wife and three children with him to San Diego, Matt was staying with the Guzman family Jesusita and

Epimenio, we don't know why. Apparently part of a family tradition that the Guzmans would all stay together, we don't know. Uncle Goose, or Epimenio, was a very strict disciplinarian and my brother Matt hated every minute he lived there, because Matt did not like discipline, either from his mother, his grandparents or his aunt and uncle, he did not like it.

Dad became ill with tuberculosis, Richie, which six of his siblings had died from years earlier, prior to coming to California. The family moved to El Centro from San Diego because of the dry weather and the heat and everything else, to where the air was very dry and hot. While in El Centro they gave birth to me, Muriel Rita Richardson. I was not born in Redlands but I came here when I was six months old. The family calls me Millie.

The whole family moved back to Redlands again when I was about six months old so I, too, say that I was born in Redlands, just to get over any confusion. Dad's TB became arrested so they moved back, as he was no danger to anyone at that time. I continually have tuberculin tests because of having been conceived while he had tuberculosis and being born then, too. I think that's about all I've got on him.

Robert Gonzales: *Why don't you tell me about, you said, I'm interested in, you'd mentioned in one of our earlier conversations that he had run a garage.*

Rita Radeleff: Yes. My brother, again, will know more of this than I do. However, from what I remember as a child growing up in Redlands, my dad worked for Willard Storage Battery for a number of years. And he worked for other, he worked for Eddie Meyer's Garage. Then he bought his own garage on Redlands Boulevard, which was Central Avenue at the time. And on the corner of Orange and Central, Redlands Boulevard, was the Curie's Ice Cream Parlor, as I remember. Behind Curie's Ice Cream Corner was a little bar called Pinky's. This was going West on Redlands Boulevard. And behind that was a little place called the Bluebird Cafe, which was owned by the Elliots. Right next door to that, which is now the North side of Harris' parking lot was my dad's garage, Richie's garage, it was a twenty-four hour garage.

Dad did all of the servicing and the storage of guests of the La Posada Hotel. He did all the cars, not the servicing of the guests, but all the servicing of the guests' cars of the La Posada Hotel. And one of the funny things that I remember is I would come down after school, from Kingsbury School, and I would go help my dad clean spark plugs. He had a thing that had a little foot-operated thing that had sand in it, and I'd put the spark

plugs down into it and I'd clean all the dirt and corruption off of the spark plugs and I would tap them down and make them what the span should be. He had a gauge for me to gauge them and I would tap them down until they fit that gauge.

Apparently I became bored doing that so I would go out in the alley and behind the garage, between the garage and the La Posada Hotel and the alley was the City Jail. It didn't have anything in there but drunks, they just didn't have any major crimes or anything, but I would go out there and talk to these guys and would have no idea who they were.

I don't think dad even knew I was back there but I'd go out and talk to all of the people that had been locked up for the night in the City Jail. It was just a little tiny place, probably no more than fifteen by fifteen with just a toilet and shower and that's about all it was. And then they were locked up in there, the police came over there to check on them, bring them breakfast, lunch and dinner and so on, but that's about all that they got.

Dad's garage was twenty-four hours. When he wasn't there my two brothers were there, Mateo Guzman and Leland Richardson. And they would kind of let Dad have some rest and so on and so forth while dad went home to eat and sleep or he slept right there in the garage many times, too. But being twenty-four hours, it was miserable. He got all of the accidents from all over the area. He had a great big Maxwell touring car that was a tow truck. Again, my brother will know more about that than I do.

Robert Gonzales: *Now let's see, your mother lived, before she married your father, she lived up on Crescent?*

Rita Radeleff: In the old family home at 61 East Crescent.

Robert Gonzales: *And she moved in there with her first husband, Mateo Guzman?*

Rita Radeleff: Yes, the Guzmans and the Velardes all lived together. It was the only way that they did, the mothers and in-laws and everyone had to get along because the times were so bad that if they didn't share the expenses, if they didn't share the food and all this and that and the other, they wouldn't have made it.

Robert Gonzales: *Did your parents ever have any sort of a problem with attitudes because she was darker, she was Mexican? Tell me a little about that.*

Rita Radeleff: Oh, yes. The Richardsons were very, very English, very, very Scottish. They did not approve of, Mongie and her two daughters, didn't approve of Richie marrying a Hispanic lady. At that time there was very much prejudice to any dark-skinned people, I believe. This is the way I've gathered it, I don't know. I didn't see it as a child. I was a very happy child because I got to go here, there and everywhere. But mom didn't, mom didn't visit with the Richardson family very often. They resented the fact I guess, that dad did not find a blond-haired, blue-eyed English-Scotsman or a Swede or something like that. There were a lot of Dutch people here and I think they'd prefer to have him marry a Dutch person at the time. But he did, and we are the product, the four of us are the product of the Richardson and Velarde young lady.

Robert Gonzales: *Did they see anything within the community, outside of their own family? Your family already had the advantage of having property in a certain area, in south Redlands, but people not being able to purchase property because they had dark skin or whatever? But did your family ever, or did your parents to your knowledge, ever experience any kind of community prejudice or problem?*

Rita Radeleff: No. I don't remember it in school, I don't remember it in Kingsbury or Redlands High School, or high school. The only thing I remember is one of the Clem girls called me a Chinaman one time because my eyes have always been a little slanted, and it hurt my feelings terribly. But that was the only thing that I remember. I was always accepted. I don't care where I was, I was always accepted.

I know in one of your interviews it said that the Redlands Plunge, the Mexican families could only go in on Monday, I believe it was. I was never excepted that way, I went to the Redlands Plunge every day of my life in the summertime. My Godmother was Violet Kirby who lived out at Live Oak Canyon, she always gave me a complete summer pass, all of five dollars for the whole summer so that I was assured of going into the pool because she was a swimmer and she wanted me to also be a swimmer. I had no prejudice there, even though I was the darkest of the family, other than my brother, Mateo. I was always, I still am to this day very, very olive-skinned.

But I have found no prejudice towards being dark, towards having, I never had a Hispanic last name, it was always Richardson. And I think that may have thought, well she's a Richardson, she's not a Velarde, she's not a Federico or she's not a Guzman or something like this, which were connected with the Hispanic side of the family. Even though, well mom was a very dynamic person, I don't think she would have let anybody have any prejudice. Mom was a very, very strong woman.

My brother tells a story about my brother Mateo, or Matt, going to the Redlands Plunge other than on Monday and they wouldn't let him in. So Mom went down there and just plain raised hell with them and said, "He is German, that's all there is to it, he's from this part of Germany. And that's it and you're gonna let him in." And by golly, they let him in. So he never had any problems after that. My brother knows more about that than I do. But mom, mom was a very strong-willed woman and she got her way. She was a very spoiled child, as I understand it from her cousin who, Juanita Mendoza, that mom was an extremely strong-willed and spoiled only child and Juanita also was a spoiled only child, also. Her mother died in childbirth and her father had her in the St. Bernardine's Convent for years until she raised hell and got out of there.

Robert Gonzales: *Is Juanita still alive?*

Rita Radeleff: Juanita died and she was ninety-seven when she died and that's been about eight years ago.

Robert Gonzales: *Let's see, let's move along with this a little bit. What are some of your earliest memories of Redlands, or citrus in Redlands?*

Rita Radeleff: We had as I said, this pie-shaped piece of property on East Crescent Avenue. We had very few Oranges but they lined Crescent Avenue from just to the West of our property to where the Sankee, the ditch came in. And the people across the street from us were the Wilcoxens. And Johnny and his, I went to school with John. Johnny and his family were very, very wealthy. We lived on the right side of town but Crescent Avenue wasn't known as the right street at that time, that was about one of the only prejudices.

All along the street were, let me think of some of the names, a lot of the Portuguese people settled in that particular area of Highland and of Crescent Avenue. There were the Bragas, the Dutros, the Figueretos, and down the street from us were the Hispanic families. There were more of the Federicos, my mother's uncle his whole family, there were the

Andrades which again, were part of the Federico family. Leonore Federico married Arturo Andrade. So we were all related, all up and down the street.

I'm trying to think of some of the other names that were on the street. Again, my brother Lee'll know more than I do. There was a family by the name of Laird which were friends of my sister's, there were the Mulligan, and Doyle Malujian still lives up in the Morro Bay area, he might be able to provide you with some more information.

Robert Gonzales: *Who is this?*

Rita Radeleff: Doyle Mulligan, M-U-L-L-I-G-A-N, sounds like Mulligan, but Mulligan. I don't know if I'm spelling it correctly, but he lives in Morro Bay. At least he did five years ago. And there were the Rennes, and I think Frances Renne still lives in the house there on Highland Avenue. The house looks like its going to fall down, it's being held up by termites holding hands. And that's about, oh it just looks terrible! But I think Frances Renne still lives there, I don't think she ever married. No, Frances? Frances was her brother, what in the world is her name? I don't know. I don't know how to spell the name, either.

Robert Gonzales: *This was around Crescent Street and Highland Avenue?*

Rita Radeleff: That was on, we backed up each other. Their home backed up ours, we were on 61 East Crescent and they were just right behind us on Highland, a ditch separating us.

Robert Gonzales: *So do we want to assume or did you know for sure that a lot of the people that lived in this area, did they work for the people who owned the larger homes that were immediately around? So they were domestics?*

Rita Radeleff: Yes, uh-huh. Well the Figueredos and a lot of the other people had beehives. I got stung every time I went through there. Mrs. Figueredo would come out and grab a great... [pause in tape] Where did we leave off?

Robert Gonzales: *We were talking about your neighborhood on Crescent Street and I'd like to hear more about that.*

Rita Radeleff: Okay. There was a man in town by the name of Mr. Biggon. That's all I ever knew the man by. And he was a Realtor. And he purchased some of the property across the street from where we were. But directly across the street from us were the Wilcoxens, that was on, just off Summit Drive there, Bow 'C' road, Bow 'B' road and all of those different roads up there. And that was where the very wealthy people started buying their homes and so on and so forth.

Mr. Biggon was making his investments in real estate and I can remember a picture of, it was a cartoon in the paper, I don't know what year it was or anything about... "This is a picture of a man who did not invest in real estate" and here he was a bum begging for food on the street. And I think this is what Mr. Biggon decided, Wwhatever little money that I got selling real estate I'm going to put into land." Well right across the street he bought these two little houses, and they're still there. They were probably nine hundred square feet, but cozy little old places. And the Alvarado family moved across the street from us and there was Maria Alvarado and lordy, I can't remember his name but they had a daughter who was one day older than me. And she came across the street when they first moved in, "Oh, here's someone to play with."

And she has never let me forget the comment, my mother had a temper like a top sergeant, whenever she got mad at something you got out of her way. So I was out in the front yard playing and Marie wanted to play, she says, "Let's go inside and play." And she'll never let me forget, my reply was, "We can't go in the house. Mom is cleaning house and she's mad."

And that's just the way mom did, she was a neat, neat, she wanted everything just so, my job was dusting. And I had the habit of not lifting the doilies up and taking everything off the top of the radio, the top of the dining table or anything like that. And I would just lift the doily up and go underneath it. Well mom was like as I say, a top sergeant, she'd come over and she'd say, "Uh-huh," give it the white glove inspection and I'd get whopped for it.

My sister did the washing and the ironing mostly. I remember mom had a day for everything. Monday was wash day, Tuesday was ironing, Wednesday and Thursday were cleaning house and Friday, Lord only knows. I don't know what it was. But Saturday, it was always shopping day. Mom would always have me when she'd go shopping, she'd bring

this enormous box home with maybe five dollars' worth of groceries in it and we'd help her put it away and everything had to be exactly in the place that she wanted it. If you had a place for it, you'd put it there.

My job was to fold the paper bags and I had to fold them just so on the creases that were already there and so on. And to this day I fold paper bags. That is something that I learned and I don't care if it's a plastic bag, I still fold it on the creases and put it all down, fold it exactly as mom taught me. It just really stuck with me because I got whopped for not doing it. It wasn't child abuse then, it was making us mind, and that's all there was to it.

Some more about mom. Mom, even though she was an only child, a very spoiled child growing up, she learned to do a lot of things. Mom was a gardener, she loved to garden. To the West of the house there on Crescent we had two fish ponds and she built them all herself. We had a lawn, she mowed it, or turned the goat loose and let the goat chew some of it up, too.

She had a big truck garden. I have pictures of me in front of that truck garden and I have to be the ugliest kid on the block. And she always had every vegetable known to man out there, she had artichokes, she had asparagus she had whatever there was to grow. Kentucky wonder beans, zucchini, crookneck squash, patty pan squash, anything and everything that would feed the family because we didn't actually have cash, but she would use her own seeds from year to year to year. She never bought seeds. She bought them once I guess, or borrowed them from somebody or stole them. And she would grow this big garden. Where she got the time and energy, because she was a nurse and she worked at Redlands Community Hospital ten, twelve, eighteen hours a day. But she still would grow the garden.

We had two horses. Where they came from, lord only knows, nobody can remember, Blondie and Polly. They were little buckskin Indian ponies. We had a cow, we had a goat, three kids, the kids were mine. And that's a story that I have in my portfolio here. And we had rabbits and she had the original rabbit condominiums. She built tri-level condominiums for the rabbits, built them all herself, well with my two brothers' help. Fred got the brunt of that. Lee and Matt very conveniently would disappear. But she had these tri-levels and she built a thatched palm roof over the top of them and then she'd put one of these whirly-bird sprinklers over the top of it, or a little owl sprinkler up on top and during the hot, hot weather would turn that on and mist the rabbits so they wouldn't die of the heat.

She also put solid pieces on the two lower levels, she would put solid pieces of aluminum or anything she would get her hands on so that the droppings from the two up above wouldn't get on the ones down below. She was very, very ingenious but I had to go out there with a great big stick and scrape all this rabbit doo-doo over to the side and then rake it up and then that would be to fertilize the vegetables. The same with the chickens, we had to rake up the chicken yard. Even though the chickens were messy and everything, mom wanted that clean so we cleaned it.

We had pigeons, we had squab every Sunday, which is a delicacy. But we didn't know it was a delicacy. We ate very, very well because of the animals that we kept and all the vegetables that we had, even potatoes she grew, yams she grew, just everything, corn.

Mom always had a, she had a five gallon pressure cooker and she would go out to the chicken yard or to the rabbits and she would up-end the chicken and put two fingers in its rear and say, "Well this one's not laying anymore." And she would wring its neck or chop its neck off, dip it in hot water, pull all the feathers off and eviscerate it. And lo and behold here was a whole egg factory in that chicken from little tiny yolks on down to eggs ready to be laid. She always made a mistake on the chickens not laying. But that's one of the things I remember. And I got all the yolks, that was my delicacy, was to get all those little tiny yolks up to the bigger ones that hadn't had the white around the head and I would get those and boil them up and eat every darn one of them.

And then the rabbits, mom killed her own rabbits. To me that was a horrible thing to see because she would hit them over the head and they'd squeal, and then she would take a knife around the feet, cut the fur off and then rip the fur right smack off of it, head and all, and that wasn't very pleasant.

Then she would put that, they were the older ones and she would put those in this great big pressure-cooker and cooked them until the meat fell off the bones. And then we would de-bone them all and cut all the meat up and make Chile Con Carne and everything else. We were eating very, very healthfully and didn't know it at that time because chicken and rabbit are the least cholesterol meats there are. We couldn't afford beef. So we were eating very, very well.

Goat, that's a very sad story that I remember. Impy was my goat's name and Impy had three kids. Usually goats have one and she had triplets.

And no one told me that they were going to be used for food. So those goats would follow me all around. For fifty cents my sister bought a little pump wagon from Goodwill and had somebody paint it for me at Christmas one time. Someone built on the back of this little dumptruck, they built a cage out of laths and also built a trailer. I have pictures of this, built a trailer of this. And I would take two goats in the one trailer, the dumptruck and one in the little trailer and I would haul up and down Crescent Street pumping as fast as my little legs would go with these goats. They would follow me all over, they were just like dogs, they were my pets.

One day I came home, no goats, no kids. The neighbor, Mr. Archuleta had come over and butchered them while I was at school. And I hated my mother for a long, long time after that because they hadn't told me that, "Hey, these are being raised for food." And it was, it took me a long because it was my mother is the one that had to butcher them. Nobody gave a darn what I thought. But it was very difficult for a little six or seven year old child to take into being. But I think that did have quite an affect on me because still to this day, I don't like to see animals hurt. I just can't stand it.

But mom also raised many chickens. Oh, that's another story that I've got in my archives. We would go to feed the horses and the cow. We would go to the cemetery. The lawns were mowed twice a week at Hillside Cemetery and they were all mowed by hand. There was this Arnold Schwarzenegger-type of guy that was the head of it. He had the biggest arms on him and I kind of had a crush on him or I just loved to go out and talk to him. And he had one bad leg as I remember it, but he pushed that lawnmower back and forth and he would always let mom know where the clippings were going to be, so we'd take a trailer on up to the cemetery.

Sometimes I got to go, sometimes I didn't. And we'd fill it full of lawn clippings. And every once in a while he'd come back with a snake or two for me. I had gopher snakes, I had king snakes, I had all kinds of snakes as pets.

One time from I don't know where, came this opossum, a baby opossum. It could have come from the cemetery. Well that was my pet, too. And I fed it, so it wouldn't snap and snarl and bite me, but it would anybody else who came near it. So this, I wouldn't let it out of its cage too often. But once in a while I'd let it out. Well I forgot to put it away one night. Mom went out the next day to look under one of her Brayma hens that had eighteen eggs ready to hatch. And here lay that little fat opossum, he had eaten every doggone egg and he didn't have sense enough, or was too

tired to move and he was still in the cage, so guess where the opossum went? She gave it to one of her black lady friends and they cooked it up and fixed it all up.

Robert Gonzales: *Had a little dinner?*

Rita Radeleff: Had a little dinner with it. But that's some of the stories that I've written about my animal friends and so on and so forth. But as I say, we had no idea where these horses came from but there they were. Even my brothers can't remember where they came from. But we didn't buy hay, we fed them lawn clippings and lord only knows, you wouldn't do that today to a horse because people say that it would make them ill and so on and so forth. These horses never suffered at all.

Mom went to Kingsbury School, I went to Kingsbury School and my oldest son Jeff, who is going to fifty-five also went to school at Kingsbury School. I do have the pictures of the three generations with the Doctor Hill family and a few other families. I'll locate those, we can get the archives here. Some of the things I don't have with me.

Robert Gonzales: *Tell me a bit more, speaking about Kingsbury, about your education.*

Rita Radeleff: Okay. I went to Kingsbury School, I didn't start until I was in First Grade. I was a shrimp and I still am a shrimp. At the age of seven I was only the size of about a three or four year old child. So mom didn't want me to go to school until I grew a little bit, which I never did. My first grade teacher was Mrs. Jesse Simpson, and Mrs. Simpson was the sweetest lady that you ever saw in your life. And her husband was a great big roly-poly Santa Claus type of man but about six feet four, at least he looked it from my little old being. He was big. I can remember that we had Fels Naptha soap and graham crackers and we would make a graham cracker house. Then we would carve all of this Fels Naptha soap, which was a very soft, soft soap into the furniture, into the playground equipment. And all of these things she taught us to do, which gave us our manual dexterity at least, still teaching us that you need this in addition to the education in your head. You needed to know how to do something. I went on to second grade and my second grade teacher I can't remember. But third grade was Miss Ridley, Fourth Grade was Miss Pilcher.

Oh, that's something that I wanted to bring up to you. In fourth grade I got Scarlet Fever, very, very ill. I was out of school, you were quarantined for

thirty days when you had Scarlet Fever. I still have the letters that the kids wrote to me when I had Scarlet Fever. I just hung onto them and they're in the children's' fourth grade handwriting, printing, and some cursive writing and I meant to bring those over.

But I have all of those letters, some are still living, some are not. Peter Lewis and Peter Phelps I believe are dead but Jack Huntley I believe is still living up in Santa Barbara, Jack Richardson lives in Hawaii. Oh, golly, Gwen Elliot, Florence Mosso, Florence Kingsbury Mosso, all of these kids. I still have these so during our fifty-fifth class reunion on September twenty-seventh at the Redlands Country Club, I am going to take that book with me and show them.

Oh, there's a John O'Dell. Oh, John was so funny. I'm going to take that with me and show them, that's what you were like in fourth grade at Kingsbury School. Okay, my fourth grade, my fifth and sixth grade teacher was Mrs. Bragg and she, I was her favorite. I was this little tiny, homely, toothless kid and she took pity on me. She would have me to her home, Mrs. Bragg didn't have children and they had been married a number of years. She was almost a little bit of a redhead as I recall but she was so sweet, just the nicest, nicest person.

They adopted Gloria and adoptions weren't heard of too much in those days. This was in the late thirties, no, mid-thirties. But they had adopted this young girl that some young lady had had out of wedlock and they raised Gloria. Two years after adopting Gloria they had their own child, which happens quite frequently.

Many, many years later, I lost track of Mrs. Bragg, many, many years later in 1955 I was working at Bank of America at Third and Long Beach Boulevard in Long Beach. I was a Teller, my first beginning of my thirty-five years in Banking. And a lady came up to my window to cash a check and her name was Alice M. Bragg. So I took a look at her and I said, "Mrs. Bragg, were you a teacher at Kingsbury School in Redlands?" She says, "I certainly was." So I said, "Well I am Rita Richardson." Well we had a very, very tearful reunion. But here so many years later in Long Beach, where I had no idea that I would ever move to, and she came in there. And I saw her frequently after that. She died shortly after that, though. So I didn't know where Gloria was or anyone else. So anyway, she was that teacher.

Then I went onto Redlands Junior High School, which is now known as the North Campus of Redlands High School. There were, some of the teachers that I can remember, there was Mr. Hagerman who taught Math, everybody was in love with him, he was such a handsome guy. And I had

a Miss Moon who was my Sewing Teacher. And that's about all I remember there.

I went to Redlands High School. In tenth grade I had a very, very sad part of my life. Mom and dad divorced. We lost our home in Redlands and mom and I had been living in a little house up here on, or a little apartment on Fern Avenue. Now I realize that mom was going through menopause and she ran away with a man, left me with relatives. Well I went from, bounced from here, there and everywhere for about three years. And so I had to go to Santa Monica to live with my sister and her husband. So I went for one year to schools in the Santa Monica and West L.A. area. Then I came back to Redlands High School in eleventh grade.

I still keep track of all of the people, I am on the committee for our fifty-fifth class reunion. And all of these people who at that time, were the very poor, the mediocre families and the very wealthy, and there was a class distinction at that period because we were a bunch of snobs, I think. I think these kids were a bunch of snobs. I didn't know what snob meant at that time, but now I can see it, what people did. However, now, as people in our seventies, seventy-one, seventy-two, seventy-three, seventy-four, we're all one. We have no differentiating between whether we were poor then, whether we're poor now, and so on and so forth. We all grew up.

And it's nice to know that the people on the North side of town and the people on the south side of town there was a demarcation line, certainly. But I lived on the South side of town so I didn't know about it. As I say, I lived on the right side of town but on the wrong street. And all of the people, we've just come in as one now, and it's really nice the way things are happening.

Now I could go to the Redlands Country Club and play golf, whereas before, my brothers were Caddies there And I can go places that I only dreamed of when I was a child. And that I have to attribute to Miss Lang who is the storyteller here. Do you want me to go on with that?

We had no radio, we had no television, we had no telephone, being of, very poor. So our greatest thing to do as a child, my greatest thing to do as a child was every Saturday morning at ten o'clock I would come here to the Smiley Library and Miss Lang, Zora Lang told the story hour. She taught me to read, I would read five, six, seven, eight books a week just to show her I could do it. I don't read much, now, but I write a lot now.

She taught me that you could always be someone. You could always make your life, no matter what you were born into or anything, you could

always make a bitter life out there. She was a spinster, never married. She came here, I think I have in the story when she came here, I'll give that to you. And this, let's see, I would be seven, eight, nine, ten years old. It would be about 1933, 1934. As I understand it she retired from here in the fifties and again, it's in my story of her.

And she taught me that, so many things you could read of all of those countries, of Hawaii, of South America, of North America, of Australia, New Zealand and so on, and Europe and we read all of these things. And little did I know at that time that I would to have all of the trips that I was to take later in my life, and all of those stories that she told us would actually come into being.

I toured Europe, I've been to Alaska, Alaska wasn't a state at that time but it was a foreign country, really. I've been to Canada, I've been to Hawaii, I haven't gone much else but I've gone to Mexico and things like that. But all of these places that I read about as a child and Miss Lang told stories about as a child came to fruition later on in my life. Who would have ever thought that here I was reading about Hawaii and all of the things that were supposed to be so beautiful over there and here I got to go three different times.

Robert Gonzales: *What other kind of social activities were available here, or did you participate in?*

Rita Radeleff: Nothing. The Redlands Bowl. Every Tuesday and Friday evenings we would go to the Redlands Bowl, whatever they had on it was of interest to us, whether it was ballet, I love Ballet, I love Classical music so everything of that just fit right in. And one of the things I did when I went to Kingsbury School, Miss Lang teaching me to read, I read about all of the composers, Brahms, Haydn, San Sans, Bach, Beethoven, all of them. And Miss Kingsbury was our Principal. No, Miss Pillsbury was our Principal at Kingsbury. And I did a book, doing all of the illustrations from the books that I got at the library of all of the authors, then I wrote their history out of the composers, and then I wrote a history of it and they had it for years and years and years and it got destroyed when they building burned down, and the new Kingsbury School built.

I like to do artwork and I like Classical Music and Ballet, anything like that. So the Redlands Bowl is our Tuesdays and Fridays in the summertime. Swimming at the Redlands pool was the other recreation, riding the horses. Reading, reading and reading, what other things? I had a vivid imagination as a child. I could imagine that I was on a sailing ship if I was up in a tree and the wind was blowing and things of that sort, I was on a

sailing ship and the sails were billowing in the wind and things of this sort. I don't know, I can't think right now. Oh! Going to the Lincoln Memorial and just going through it and just sitting there. My favorite thing to do in the world, it has been ever since I was a child, are zoos. I love to go to a zoo. I can go to the San Diego Zoo or the Griffith Park Zoo and get lost for hours and hours and hours with my affinity for animals because I saw the cruelty that my mother had to do. It was a necessity because it was food in our mouth by killing the animals and so on. So I don't like to see an animal hurt even though it was for our benefit.

Robert Gonzales: *You mentioned that you went to the old Kingsbury School. Was it located on the same site?*

Rita Radeleff: It was located on the same side of the school but very, very close. It only stood back about six feet off of Cajon Street and off of Cypress.

Robert Gonzales: *Where they have all of the playgrounds now?*

Rita Radeleff: Where all the playgrounds, and it was a two-story school and it was in the shape of an 'L'. The Kindergarten was the farthest South and it was across from Cajon Street, closest to Cajon Street and then it extended I don't know how many feet on and then the other building hooked onto it and that building went North. And then another portion of that building went West as you got closer to Cypress Avenue. The Kindergarten was on the farthest South side. Then we had a big covered area and it was all Spanish tile and so on and so forth where the kids would play jacks and play whatever games they wanted to, sitting on those steps at their lunch hour or recess or whatever. And then the Principal's Office was in the main building. Miss Simpson and Miss Nielson were the two First Grade Teachers. And their rooms were on the lower floor. First, let's see, First Grade through Third Grade were on the lower floor. Fourth, Fifth and Sixth were on the second floor.

Robert Gonzales: *Let's see, you had talked a little bit about going to high school, Redlands High School. Could you tell me a little more about that?*

Rita Radeleff: Redlands High School. I went there in the Eleventh and Twelfth Grade only. I became a Majorette. Being that I was very, very small and I was very, very active I became a majorette in 1941, well 1940 and '41 and '41 and '42. And I am the first person you see when you open the 1942 Makio up, right smack inside under your left thumb will be me and

I'm in front of the band. Mr. Showalter was the Band teacher and Peter Amott was the Drum Major.

Betty Huffman was one of the other Majorettes, that was in '42 because the other three Majorettes had graduated in '41. And they were Anna Wilson and oh, golly. I can see her face but I can't remember her name right now. But Anna Wilson still lives in town, the other two Majorettes have since passed away. Betty Huffman still lives in town someplace right in this area. High school wasn't the happiest time of my life because my mother having left me with this one and that one and the other one. And until I was ready to graduate until about June, about May of 1942 and then my mother came back into town. So I was kind of a little ragamuffin there for awhile. But I made the most of it.

Robert Gonzales: *And so you graduated in 1942?*

Rita Radeleff: June 1942. We're having our fifty-fifth class reunion September 27th at the Redlands Country Club. I didn't graduate with the class. I very foolishly got married in January 1942. I was pregnant and the night of graduation I was in the hospital having my appendix out and very, very pregnant. I was told I would lose my son shortly after the surgery however, he's fifty-five years old. He's going to be fifty-five on Halloween. So I didn't march down the aisle here at the Prosellis with the rest of the class, I was at the hospital.

Robert Gonzales: *What did you do right after high school?*

Rita Radeleff: Right after high school I moved, my sister and her husband had moved to Riverside at that time and I lived with them. The father of my child was in the service and I never saw him after that. I lived with them in Riverside and I did part-time work at the Postal Service. Then I went to work for McMahan's Furniture Store and was with them for seven years, no. I went to work at March Field. Not March Air Force Base, March Field. I started out as a Clerk and became a Purchasing Agent for the Post Exchanges, not PX's as they are now known.

I was there about seven years and I became very discouraged with the way I was being treated and so on because women were kind of peons then, especially on a military base. So I went to work for McMahan's Furniture Store and was with them for six years, went to my tenth year class reunion, I was divorced by this time from my first husband. And I met Lee and Leora Radeleff, who were twins that lived here in town, and you might talk to Leora also because they were all born here in town and they

lived up on 103 West Colton Avenue, the house is still there. The house was built in the mid-1920's, I guess.

And anyway, Leora brought her bachelor brother with her to the class reunion with her, we started dating and we married in 1953, January '53. I have one son from that marriage, Dale Radeleff, who will be forty-four this year. The kids are eleven years apart. And he lives in Yucaipa. He's doing the history of the Radeleff family as far as the Masons go is all. He's doing that. But he could probably talk to about when the Radeleffs came here.

Robert Gonzales: *A very, very literary family?*

Rita Radeleff: If you want to call it that.

Robert Gonzales: *Well it's not everyone, it's tough enough for one person in a family to keep track. But for several members of your family to have records of their own family's past, it's a very unusual...*

Rita Radeleff: We didn't really get interested in it until we were in our later years, though. We were doing our own thing, working and raising children and going here and there and everywhere. My brother started the soonest, of course he's the oldest. And my other brother, Mateo, Matt Guzman, he was in the military and retired from the military so he had no interest in anything that the family were doing, really because he was interested in his own military career and his, oh that's a story, his children. And Lee married and he moved to Santa Monica and worked for Douglas Aircraft for forty-four, forty-five years. So he lived in the Fullerton area and Santa Monica area and down through there. Betty married a military man that my brother brought home on leave one time, my brother Matt. And she was married for sixty years and two days when he died, her husband died.

We didn't get interested in this until oh, goodness. Mine has just been recently, since I was in my mid-sixties. And Lee probably started in his mid-sixties, also. Now he's going to be eighty-three. He probably started collecting the stuff, he was closer to my dad than we were, my sister and my other brother and I. We didn't have the friendship with dad that my oldest brother did. And why? I don't know, except he worked with him at the garage. But Lee has a lot of things that were in Dad's things when Dad died.

And he also was very, very close to my dad's two sisters, Aunt Ethlyne and Aunt Edla. So he has more of the information on those two, which he can give you. Oh, an interesting thing about Ethlyne Grant Richardson Smith was that she was the first Realtor in California, first woman Realtor in California, and Lee can tell you more about that. Aunt Edla married a man, how they got from where they were born to New Brunswick and up into, what is that island off New Brunswick? I can't think of it.

Anyway, she got up there off of Nova Scotia and she married a man there by the name of MacNeil. And she left him with her little child and traveled all the way out here to California, how she got here I'll never know. But her son became an officer with Bank of Italy here in Redlands, retired after 47-some years with Bank of Italy, Bank of America, Colin MacNeil. And I'm in touch with his great-grandchildren, his grandson's wife and her children. I'm in touch with them, also. I've got them in here, too.

You had asked earlier about the differences between the Richardson-Hughson family and the Velarde-Federico family. My memories were kind of pleasant of some of those things because Auntie Smith was a writer, Ethlyne Grant Smith was a writer for the Redlands Daily Facts. She had no children, never did have any children that we know of and she was very, very spinsterish but she would come and take my brother and me. Now I've told this story a lot of, lot of times, she would come and take my brother Fred and me, get us out of mom's hair for a ride in her old Chandler Oldsmobile, old Chandler car, whatever it was. And she would take us up into Valley of the Falls and up through there and I told the story over and over and over again, nobody would believe me. Anyway, she would take us up there. She would have us gather sticks and she would have this tent made out of these sticks, put an old blanket over of it and make a teepee. Then she would have my brother and I go down to the stream that ran from Forest Falls, Valley of the Falls area and she'd have us go down there and pick up pine cones and we'd put those around as decorations around the little teepee.

Then she would have us collect these enormous leaves off the Oak trees and she would put those on us by tying strings around our waists, and around our necks, and around our wrists and she would loop these leaves up into that and make a hat like Peter Pan with pins on our heads. And we would take an old bent pole with a line on it and a safety pin and go down and pretend we were fishing, of course we never caught fish in that river.

But then she would bring out peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and A&W Root Beer because it was right down here where the police station is. And

we would have bottles, no cans, it was all bottles of root beer then. We'd put them in the stream to keep them cold and so on. And we would pretend like we were elves out in the forest, and nobody believed me.

At Christmas one year, we were eating Christmas Dinner, Christmas Brunch up at Reuben's and my brother handed me this very thin eight and a half by eleven package. And he says, "Here. Look at this."
(Reads from text) "And to the surprise of everyone it was a reproduction of a picture Auntie Smith had taken of Fred and me next to the little tents which we had pitched in the Valley of the Falls. We had our Elf costumes on, just as I had remembered made out of the giant oak leaves from the trees in the forest. I, standing there next to the tent, my hands on my hips with a frown on my face, my legs askew as the owner of my domain and Fred standing next to me with his walking stick in his hand. This was one of the most wonderful gifts that I have ever received in my life. Apparently Lee had gone through the old photographs, which had been our dad's, and found a small black and white print. He had laser prints made for both Fred and me. The photograph now verified my tales of our adventures with Auntie Smith. I was then redeemed in everyone's eyes. It had not been my imagination."

Robert Gonzales: *This is a neat picture. When was this taken, do you know?*

Rita Radeleff: That has to be, I'm only about seven years old, it had to be about 1930. So she was a writer in the 1930's for the Redlands Daily Facts.

Robert Gonzales: *And her name was Ethleen?*

Rita Radeleff: Ethleen, E-T-H-L-E-E-N, Richardson, Ethleen Grant Richardson Smith.

Robert Gonzales: *Well let's see. After you left Redlands High School and you said that you had worked at March, you remarried in 1950...*

Rita Radeleff: 1953 to Lee Radeleff, who was also a graduate of Redlands High School in 1942, he and his twin sister.

Robert Gonzales: *Okay. And what did Mr. Radeleff do?*

Rita Radeleff: He worked for IBM in Long Beach. We moved to Long Beach and we bought a home there and it was being built, we bought a

home at 2148 Studebaker Road down there. He retired from, we divorced after five and a half years and had one son of that marriage but he remarried and then he retired after about 32 or 33 years from IBM, he is since deceased.

Robert Gonzales: *Now let's see, you moved to Long Beach, you mentioned earlier that you worked for Bank of America.*

Rita Radeleff: I worked for Bank of America. I started there in 1955 in Long Beach and then I was transferred to North Hollywood, well I was transferred to Hollywood and lived in North Hollywood with them and I taught in the Training and Development Department for Bank of America.

I became, then I didn't like where I was so I came back to Bixby-Knowles. Well I quit them and worked for Security Pacific Bank. It was Security First National Bank then. I became disenchanted because the things they had promised me didn't come through. So my cousin, Colin MacNeil, who worked for Security First National Bank was with the Trust Department in Los Angeles so I called him and was hired the next day because of my background with Bank of America.

I feel very fortunate in that I was, I learned a lot while I worked for Bank of America and it all followed me through my years. I retired in April 1, 1986 as an Assistant Vice President with Security Pacific Bank at the time.

Robert Gonzales: *Okay. All right, now that wasn't a really traditional occupation when you started, for a woman, or was it?*

Rita Radeleff: No. You became a teller. You were a teller and the Training and Development Department after I had been with Third and Long Beach Boulevard for about three or four years one of their Trainers came through and she liked my mannerisms with the customers and the way I spoke to employees, and I was training employees on the line at the time, so she felt that I would be a good teacher. So she asked me to move to, and open a school in Hollywood. And I moved up there and I was promised an increase in salary and I was promised all my moving expenses and nothing came through. So I said I can't work for a Bank that doesn't live up to their promises, quit and went to work for Security.

Robert Gonzales: *What did you do for Security?*

Rita Radeleff: I worked as a Note Department Manager. I was on a floating staff for awhile because I moved from the L.A. area, I moved to

Riverside where my sister lived. And so I became what they call a floater because I could work in just about any department that there was due to my previous occupations. Then I became Note Department Manager of old Third and 'E' Street in San Bernardino. And from there I was promoted to Assistant Operations Officer and Assistant Manager until Fourth and 'D' Street was built and then from there I traveled, being a single it was easier to transfer me than it was to transfer a couple that were married. So I transferred to Rubidoux, Palm Desert, Yucaipa, Bishop and Montebello. I was all around. I retired out of Montebello.

Robert Gonzales: *Bishop, that's quite a hop.*

Rita Radeleff: Bishop would have been very, very nice area to have stayed all my life. I figured that I was going to retire there. It's such a gorgeous area and there's really a lot to do if you're an outside person. However, being a single lady up there, a lot of the little ladies that have retired up there didn't like me one bit because they thought I was trying to infringe on their territories because there were so few men up there and I was not interested at all. But so I was up there only about two and a half years and I came down to Montebello and retired out of Montebello. After having twelve robberies in a twelve month period I just decided, I turned sixty two, forget it. I'm not going to work anymore.

Robert Gonzales: *Well that's quite a journey, I mean to be single, to be female and to get to the position...*

Rita Radeleff: And to become, I was one of the first women officers.

Robert Gonzales: *That's very impressive. Did you have any sort of post-high school training for this, any college?*

Rita Radeleff: No. Out of High School, getting married right away and so on, I had the opportunities but I didn't take the opportunities. After twenty-eight years of being out of school I went to Valley College and I took courses that were relevant to where I wanted to go with the bank. I took Written and Oral Communication, I took Econ 1A and I took Supervision. It was a Supervision class taught by Frank Cooley over there. And when I entered the class I sat down in his class and he said, "You must be Rita Radeleff."

And I said, "How did you know that?"

He said, "You're the only woman that signed up for the class." So I never was absent one day, I was never late one day and I was always there, I got straight A's because I didn't want to be known as, that woman who's gonna fall out of the class. I wanted to show them, 'Hey I'm going someplace', and I did. I didn't get my AA, though. I should have gone for my AA. But I progressed with the Bank because of the classes that I took on my own.

Robert Gonzales: *How did they treat you relative to the male employees? Was the pay different?*

Rita Radeleff: Salaries, let me tell you about when I was hired for Bank of America. I was hired in 1955 for Bank of America. They had two different lists of salaries. One was men being hired as a Teller and one was a woman being hired as a Teller. And there was a differential of about two dollars an hour. If you had children you had to guarantee them that you had substantial care for the child, that you would not be absent because of your child's health or anything like that. You also had to take a complete physical with their doctor. If you were more than ten pounds overweight from the actuary tables you had to lose weight.

You had to tell them who your car was, how much you owed on your car, who it was financed by, how you were making the payments. You had to tell them who your home was financed by and how much the payments were. You had to tell them anything that you were in debt and so on and so forth. So I am very, very glad that that is no longer in existence, There is more equity to hiring and firing and this and that and the other. It should always be the most qualified.

I progressed because I think I was stubborn as my mother was. I was going to make it and that's all there was to it. At one time my name was Richardson, my name was Radeleff. I didn't feel that I was Hispanic. But because we had to have a ratio of Hispanic to White they said, [whispers] "Why don't you put down you're Spanish?" And I said, "Okay. If it helps." So this one time one of the officers came up to me and said, "Rita, would you like to go to a class at Marina Del Rey?" And I said, "What in the world for?" He said, "Well it's a Hispanics in Management class." And I said, "I don't speak Spanish, I am Scotch-English in addition to being Spanish. Why do you want me to go?"

"Because it will do better for our equalization, you know? Besides that, everything is free. You get all of your expenses paid." I said, "I'll go." [laughs] So I didn't really garner anything from it, though because it

was things that I had already been into, things that I was far more advanced than the classes and things that were being taught. But it was just one of those things that were being put on that was an absolute necessity and so on. So I did feel then, that there was discrimination within the ranks, very definitely.

Robert Gonzales: *Were you ever active politically, in any kind of religious organizations, clubs, anything like that?*

Rita Radeleff: I belonged to the American Institute of Banking which was a Banking group for all banks, not just B of A, not just Security, it was all banks, UCB, Wells Fargo, all of them. I also became very active when I moved back go Riverside in the Inland Division Officers Group with Security Pacific Bank. I also became very active in the Spellbinders Public Speaking Club. So I did a few things there. I enjoyed public speaking, as you can tell. And I enjoy writing, also.

I became President of the Inland Division Officers Group. And it's a funny story, any time I got up to public speak there were two people in the audience, Ruth Messinger and her husband. And anytime I got up to speak they'd say, "Stand up, Rita!" Because here I am not even five feet tall, four feet nine. And so as my swan song as President of the Inland Division Officers Group, I had the President of the Bank as my guest. He and his chauffeur were at my table, he was on my left and the chauffeur was down at the end and so on and so forth. And I looked out and here's Mel and Ruth sitting out there, and I thought to myself, "Please, Mel and Ruth, don't holler, 'Stand up, Rita.'" I'm taking a deep breath and I get up to speak. The President of the Bank shoves his chair over, lifts me up, stands me up on the chair and says, "Stand up, Rita." They had put him up to it. But it was an icebreaker to say the least.

Robert Gonzales: *So you moved back after you retired in '86, did you move back to San Bernardino, or have you been living in San Bernardino? What brought you back to the area?*

Rita Radeleff: I moved back to San Bernardino, I own property and my family, it's just a tug at the heart that says, "Hey. You are in familiar territory." I lived in Sunnymead, I lived in Sun City and so on and so forth, but it wasn't, there was not the feeling that I got here, and I have always come back to this area. I would much rather live in Redlands than San Bernardino, however I do have my home there, my brother is there, my son is there, my other son is in Yucaipa. So it's just a feeling you get, it's just like going into any territory in déjà vu, more or less. You think, I've been

here before. And that's the way I feel about Redlands, I have been here before. San Bernardino, the same, I have been here before and I want to stay. I really don't, I'm not comfortable except for a very short period of time anywhere else.

Robert Gonzales: *I think that pretty much wraps up my questions. Is there anything that you would like to add, is there anything that you feel we didn't cover so far?*

Rita Radeleff: No, only that I will give you copies of the stories I have written. And if you could critique them, even, for me and you know, give me some viewpoints, or if I am on the right track. And they are as I say, things as I remember them as a child, very unhappy times but now they're funnier than the devil, some of them. And just seeing them in a different viewpoint.

Robert Gonzales: *What got you started writing this, what got you interested in tracing your family background?*

Rita Radeleff: I was visiting with my sister up in the little town of Winters up by Vacaville and UC Davis. She wanted, Betty is 80, this month is 81 and my brother will be 83 in July and I am currently a little over 73. I was visiting with her and she had read in the Vacaville Express that there was going to be a Creative Writing Class at the Senior Center in Vacaville. And since I was visiting with her she said, "Would you go with me?" So I did. Oh, I've got some other interesting things to tell you. So I went with her. And this lady that was the moderator was telling just as I have said to you, "You tell the stories as you remember them." But before that, she went around, had us each introduce ourselves, who we were, where we were from and so on and so forth. And being a guest I didn't think that, I was just going to be there for a day or two, you know and being a guest of my sister I didn't think that it was necessary for me to say anything. When she got around to me she says, "Oh, yes. You are part of this." So I told who I was, where I was born and I was the youngest of the four Richardsons and so on and so forth.

And they said, "What are you doing now?" Well I said I had retired, retired in 1986 from Security Bank and that I had just recently become a professional clown. So in December of 1987 I had been to a parade in Yucaipa where my grandson, my step-grandson and step-granddaughter were going to be in a parade and they wanted me to come out and see it. So I saw the clowns and they were clomp, clomping down, not intermingling or interfacing with anyone. So I went down to my son's

house and the rest of the family hadn't arrived yet because they were still in the parade. I said, "You know, Dale, I was so disgusted with those clowns because they were such dull, dull individuals and their costuming wasn't right and their makeup wasn't right.

He said, "Well mother, if you think you can do any better, why don't you do it yourself?" So it was a dare. So my best friend Bella Dusett and I became professional clowns in the beginning of 1988. We learned how to do makeup, we learned how to costume, we learned what type of face goes with what type of costume. We did a few paying jobs but we didn't like them and we preferred to do things for the Crippled Children's Society, the Mental Health Association, the Foster Children's programs, and things like that. So most all of our time, the Neonatal Intensive Care Reunion at St. Bernardine's, we do that, we have done it every year. But we're tired now. So I gave that information at the age of sixty-some years old, I started to be a professional clown.

Robert Gonzales: *I'll be darned.*

Rita Radeleff: And then I got interested in writing, my sister's writing was going so well I said, "Well I'm going to start telling some little stories about things as I remember them, too." And that's what got me started, was visiting with my sister in Vacaville. And on my seventieth birthday I went skydiving.

Robert Gonzales: *Well as a matter of fact, I was going to ask you what got you started on clowning, but you told me, so thank you very much. Let's see, there was something I didn't ask too much about but I'll probably ask your brother. Was anybody in your family actively involved in citrus at any time while you were growing up?*

Rita Radeleff: Yes, they were. My grandfather, Quintin Velarde was a Foreman and a laborer with all of the orange groves around here and he did die of asthma. And then mom's first husband, Mateo Guzman were involved in it. Now Richard Guzman, the ninety-three year old that I take care of, his father was the first Blacksmith here in Redlands.

They were married in 19-, I have their marriage license someplace, I can get all of these things to you. They were married in 1903, January 1, 1903 by Father Fitzgerald of Sacred Heart Church.

Robert Gonzales: *Was your family a member of Sacred Heart?*

The Other Side of the Road
Rita Radeleff

Rita Radeleff: Yes. My mother was Catholic, my dad was not. My dad was we don't know, we have no idea. But mom, I was baptized Catholic, I am still a Catholic. My brother was baptized but he is not a Catholic. The rest went their own way. But Father Fitzgerald was the Priest at Sacred Heart. I have their marriage license, which I just got recently.