THE BANNING FAMILY IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Hancock Banning, Jr.

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
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INTRODUCTION

Hancock Banning, Jr., was born on February 3, 1892. His parents were Anne Ophelia Smith and Hancock Banning, the youngest son of Phineas Banning. He attended the Los Angeles Public Schools (1899-1907), Thacher School (1907-1909), Virginia Military Institute (1909-1914) where he was awarded a bachelor's of science degree, and Cornell University (1914-1916) where he took a degree in Mechanical Engineering. From 1916 to 1917 he received factory technical training at the General Electric Company.

In 1917 Mr. Banning went to the U.S. Navy Officers School at Columbia University. He served as a lieutenant (j.g.) in the Navy (1917-18) aboard the U.S.S. New York and as engineering officer (1919) for the U.S. Navy Trial Board for new destroyers out of the Union Iron Works in South San Francisco.

Mr. Banning was employed as a sales engineer with the General Electric Company (1919-1922) and the Union Iron Works in Los Angeles (1923-1924). In 1925 he became the manager of the Banning family business affairs including the Los Angeles Harbor properties. He continued in that position until he retired in 1962.

Mr. Banning brought to the interviews his special knowledge of Santa Catalina Island, since the Banning

family owned the island from January 1892 to January 1919. He spent many summers and some winters at El Descanso (the family home near Avalon), at Avalon, and at the Isthmus. In the interviews, Mr. Banning also relied on his knowledge of the development of the Los Angeles Harbor that he gained through his father, Hancock Banning, and his uncle, Captain William Banning; and through his own responsibilities as manager of the family's harbor properties.

The following is a transcript of the tape-recorded interviews made by Mr. Banning with the Oral History Program. It includes his recollections of Santa Catalina Island, the other channel islands, the Los Angeles Harbor area, and the Banning family. These interviews were conducted at the suggestion of Dr. James Thorpe, the Director of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery where the Banning papers are located. A copy of this transcript will be included in that collection. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Mrs. Dellene M. Tweedale, Librarian-Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. Age, 32. B.A. with honors in History, UCLA, 1961; M.L.S., UCLA, 1964; Certificate in Archives Administration, The National Archives and American University, Washington, D.C., 1965; and graduate work in Archives Management at the London School of Librarianship and Archives, London, England, 1967-68.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEWS:

Place: The home of Hancock Banning, Jr., at 2233 Oak Knoll Drive, San Marino, California.

Dates: The first interview was conducted on November 19, 1969. The rest of the interviews were recorded in six sessions between February 19, 1970 and March 19, 1970.

Time of day, length of sessions and total number of recording hours: The sessions were conducted between 9:30 a.m. and 12 noon with a total of five and three-quarters hours of tape recordings.

Persons present during the interview: Banning and Tweedale.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

Mr. Banning occasionally referred to photographs, maps, pictures and copies of documents before or during the interviewing sessions. No outline was used by Mr. Banning. The subjects to be discussed were decided in advance of each session. The approach was topical. The first sessions were on Catalina Island followed by sessions on the channel islands, the Los Angeles Harbor area, the Newport ranch, and Captain William Banning. These broad subject areas were discussed off the tape prior to recording Mr. Banning's recollections. The interviewer prepared a list of topics to be discussed for her own use during the interviews but they were not used as an outline for the interview. The atmosphere of the interview was informal and at times conversational.

EDITING:

A verbatim transcript of the tape-recorded interviews was edited by the interviewer primarily to obtain correct punctuation, paragraphing, correct spelling, verification of proper and place names. The manuscript reflects the original sequence of the interviewing sessions. When the editor has added words or phrases not actually spoken by the interviewee on the tape, they have been bracketed except in the case of short connective words. The interviewee's editing included only the correction and/or verification of personal and place names which the interviewer was unable to verify.

SOURCES CONSULTED IN PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW:

Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery:

The Banning papers.

UCLA:

Catalina Islander, 1914-1919. Avalon, California.

Hillinger, Charles. The California Islands; with photographs by Howard Maxwell. Los Angeles, Academy Publishers [1958].

Holder, Charles Frederick. The Channel Islands of California; a book for the angler, sportsman, and tourist. London, Hodder, 1910.

_____. Santa Catalina, an isle of summer; its history, climate, sports, and antiquities. San Francisco, Murdock, 1895.

Krythe, Maymie R. Port Admiral: Phineas Banning, 1830-1885. San Francisco, California Historical Society, 1957.

Ludwig, Ella A. History of the harbor district of Los Angeles. [Los Angeles?] California Historic Record Company [1927?]

Overholt, Alma. The Catalina Story. Compiled under the auspices of the Catalina Island Museum. [Avalon? California]

Windle, Ernest. Windle's history of Catalina (and guide). Avalon, Catalina, Catalina Islander, 1931.

And other related materials in the UCLA Library's Department of Special Collections, such as clippings, pictures, brochures, and miscellaneous manuscripts were consulted.

DISPOSITION OF THE TAPE RECORDINGS, EDITED MANUSCRIPT AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS:

The tape recordings of the interviews and the edited transcript are in the University Archives, UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, and are available under the regulations governing the use of non-current University records.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

NOVEMBER 19, 1969

BANNING: My recollection of what I was told by my uncles and father is that the Lick Syndicate or the Lick Trust owned Catalina and they had sold it on contract to Mr. Shatto. Mr. Shatto was a great idealist and his wife was probably the same because she was the one that named the town of Avalon, after King Arthur's Round Table. He was way behind in his payments and apparently unable to carry through with it in the eyes of the Lick interest. They asked my eldest uncle, Captain William Banning, if he would take over because he had the water transportation, and the business knowledge which apparently Mr. Shatto didn't have. So we bought the island under those circumstances. As I remember it was $280,000.

I have no idea of my first impression of the island at all, but I'm told that I was taken over there in my father's sailing yacht when I was six months old, my mother in attendance and a nurse. We had no engines in those days in boats. It was a matter depending on the wind. Sometimes the trip across the twenty miles of channel took seventy or eighty hours. Both of these trips I was told were very short, easy ones.

TWEEDALE: What year was this?

BANNING: 'Ninety-two.

TWEEDALE: This was the year you were born and the year the island was purchased?

BANNING: That's why I always called it my island.

TWEEDALE: I see.

BANNING: And any recollection of that at all of course is out of the question. My first recollection is of an event over there when I was about seven and a half years old. The family was having lunch at the Hotel Metropole. My father came over on the steamer and came into the dining room to have lunch with us. He said, "Well, you have a new cousin." That's when my Cousin William Phineas Banning was born. That's the first recollection I have and I know when he was born, so I was about seven and a half years old and that's how much older I am than he is.

TWEEDALE: Who's idea was it to make Avalon or Catalina into a resort?

BANNING: Well, the family's--my father and two uncles. Mr. Shatto had already built part of the Hotel [Metropole], the first part, and a wharf. They had sort of a tent colony there.

TWEEDALE: This is how they handled tourists--in canvas tents?

BANNING: Yes, they had a tent city over there for many, many years. It was a great pity that Mr. Shatto sold

some of the property. I suppose in an attempt to make it go. So we were never able to control the buildings or the looks or anything in the town because the lots had been sold. We tried to buy them back, but it was a hold-up. We wouldn't pay the price and couldn't pay it more likely.

TWEEDALE: Did your family buy the Metropole when they purchased the island?

BANNING: I don't know whether we bought it or whether it just came to us with a deed as part of the land, part of the real estate. Mr. Shatto was frozen out, so he forfeited because he couldn't fulfull his contract. Which is a great pity because he had wonderful ideas how to handle a Mediterranean place. My mother was always very much upset that it wasn't the Mediterranean coast.

TWEEDALE: Did you want to make it like a small Italian village?

BANNING: That's it. I remember my uncle, George Patton, saying, "My God, look what's happened now." The drugstore had painted one of these false wooden fronts with D-R-U-G-S in letters about eight feet high. It just looked terrible. He said, "What do they think they're going to do? Have people swim over here from the mainland to buy a gumdrop from 'em?" [laughter] Well, that front street could have been so

beautiful. Mr. Wrigley tried to do something about it and he brought in palm trees and fixed it up beautifully, but it still looks pretty bad.

TWEEDALE: What was the Hotel Metropole like?

BANNING: It was a wooden building, three stories. We added on to it several times. I don't remember how many rooms it eventually ended up with, something over one hundred. But, it was the hotel. And it was a very popular summer resort. All the people used to come over, everybody we knew, and a whole lot we didn't unfortunately. And the policy my uncle had was that fares on the steamers would keep the place going.

TWEEDALE: Is this your Uncle William?

BANNING: Yes. Little lots were subdivided and leased to people that we knew. They would put up some kind of a little shack, tent, or what not--camp hideaway and that sort of thing. And they hardly paid anything, not enough to keep the streets sprinkled and take care of the sewers that we had to put in eventually and electric lights we had to put in because the fire hazard was something awful. It's a wonder the whole town didn't burn down before it did. They used gasoline cooking stoves, and our fire department was only two Chinese and a two-wheeled hose cart.

TWEEDALE: Like a rickshaw?

BANNING: Just about. They pull it. But we did have

a reservoir up at the top of one of the hills or mountains around there. It gave us very wonderful pressure. It was full of salt water. Fresh water was very scarce, but we hauled it over there in the steamer tanks. They pumped it into tanks, fresh water. Everything was all right until the population grew and then we pumped the wells until they started getting saline. You couldn't start a lawn; had to wait for the rain. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: What sorts of attractions did your family build?

BANNING: Well, my uncle made one of them. They had stagecoach rides up into the mountains. And old driver Tom, Tom Green. He was a wonderful guy. I just grew up with him. Uncle Tom, we called him. And he was the biggest liar and proud of it. They used open stage coaches--not the Wells Fargo type--so people could see. But he always got the best-looking ladies up on the box with him and then started lying to them. Once in a while he'd let me sit by him and hear him go. "Ah ladies, you see out there in the ocean all those tracks around there." Which you do if you get up high and look in the ocean. There're paths--currents, breeze, oil slick, Lord knows what; nobody knows what makes them. He said, "They're very dangerous things." He said, "One of our tugs was coming over here with a green captain; they got in the wrong path and were never

heard of again." [laughter] That's one of his better lies.

That was one of the things then; another one was the dance hall, free, and the band concert, Porter's Santa Catalina Island Marine Band. They were pretty good; the best piece they played, though, was the "Anvil" Chorus. They had an anvil hooked up with some electricity, so sparks were coming out. They had a bandstand that was built by our German shipbuilder in Wilmington. It was a beautiful curved thing and it just put the music out. Wonderful acoustics. It's all outdoors. This was an outdoor ampitheater towards the ocean. They had a man going around there who was our policeman. If anybody even whispered while the music was playing, no matter who you were or anything else, he caught you. If he caught you more than once or twice, why you could get up and leave. No noise. And part of the band would go to the pavilion and play 'til I think it was 11 o'clock. They rolled up the sidewalks. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: At 11 o'clock.

BANNING: Yes.

TWEEDALE: How often did the band play?

BANNING: Every night in the summertime; July and August through Labor Day. That was the season. Everything shut down over there; it almost stopped. The

hotel very often would close up for the winter. They had a very good cook there for many years, Charlie Lem Yen, a Chinese cook. He hated women and all the waitresses were women.

TWEEDALE: Oh, that sounds bad.

BANNING: Really hell to pay in the kitchen. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: Well, the Metropole was quite a social center, wasn't it then, in those days?

BANNING: It certainly was. They had a stage and a ballroom in the west wing of the hotel. That's the first thing that burned up, that part of it. Fire pret' near cleaned out the town. I think it was the winter of '15, '16.

TWEEDALE: Did they ever find out how the fire happened to start?

BANNING: Well, there's a long story about that, and unfortunately I can't remember the man's name that they blamed it on, but the story was that he owned an apartment or a small hotel back of our hotel, on one of the side streets. He was about to be foreclosed on, so he thought he'd get the insurance out of it and a norther came up. No, it was a southeaster first came up and burned virtually half the town as I think I told you. It burned everything right up to the Catholic Church and stopped there. I'll tell you a funny story about that later. Then a norther came up

as it sometimes does after a Santa Ana, after a southeaster, rather. The brands were still there and were picked up and started burning the rest of the town. They filled part of the roof full of water between Ben Rosin's saloon and the building next door and were able to control it. They stopped it there. They even sent a fireboat over from the mainland, but by the time it got there. . .why, everything was wooden and canvas. That's when the plans were started right away to build a hotel, the St. Catherine Hotel, on the first cove to the west which was called El Descanso. It was our home for many years. A canyon beautifully planted by my Uncle Joe; my father was principally in charge of building the hotel. He was there most of the time watching it. They had two sets of plumbing, one for salt water and one for fresh water.

TWEEDALE: This is at the St. Catherine?

BANNING: [Yes.] All the sanitary stuff was salt water and the wash basins and showers and things were fresh water. That's how we had to hoard water over there. We had our own wells in Wilmington, Los Angeles Harbor now. Beautiful soft water. The water came from a strata where there were many old redwood trees and the bark down several hundred feet. The redwood tree's bark probably was the cause of this water being brown. Everybody said it was rusty, because it was

coming out of the boats' tanks, ships' tanks. But it was wonderful soft water.

TWEEDALE: Did you ship the majority of this fresh water from Wilmington to Catalina?

BANNING: Yes, all the fresh water we had that was any good came from there.

TWEEDALE: I see.

BANNING: We had one [boat]. Finally it got so bad the steamer couldn't handle it any more. We had a steel vessel built called the Aquador which means water carrier in Spanish. They'd fill it full of water, take it over there, and empty it.

I don't remember just when we put in electric lights, but I know it was one winter we lived over there. I had a great time getting in people's way while they were building the power house and electric plant.

TWEEDALE: While you were being raised, did you live there with your family all year round?

BANNING: Well, once in a while we did, but then their school over there was what you might call highly indifferent.

TWEEDALE: I can imagine. [laughter]

BANNING: They were mostly Italian, Mexican, and Portuguese fishermen that lived there. They call themselves natives, but the padres had killed off all the

natives years before by taking them over to the mainland and giving them smallpox.

TWEEDALE: Did these fishermen own property in Avalon or did they just lease it?

BANNING: No, they leased it. Maybe some of 'em did, I don't know. We knew 'em all, all the kids, and grew up with 'em. They were wonderful people.

TWEEDALE: Were they commercial fishers?

BANNING: Oh, yes. And they'd ship fish back to the mainland in ice. We had no ice plant and they'd ship ice over there and then would ship it back with fish. [laughter] Then there were the commercial sports fishermen. And they were wonderful people, all of them. Some of 'em would get pretty drunk sometimes, scare people half to death. They would go out on their boat and not know how to steer. They didn't do that very often, because word would get around and they wouldn't be chartered. We had some friends, a famous attorney in Los Angeles, Mr. Shirley Ward, and he took his wife and two daughters and little sons out. This fisherman began dipping into his jug and he just went crazy out there. He was going to murder them all. Mr. Ward finally got 'em home. I never did know, and he said he wasn't sure, how he did it either.

TWEEDALE: Did most of these sports fishermen just own a boat and take people out during the day?

BANNING: That's what happened. Imagine the prices now.

You would furnish the lunch and beer, if any beer, and it was five dollars for a half a day, starting as early in the morning as four or five o'clock until noon or the same time up to five o'clock and that was nine dollars. They furnished all the tackle, all the bait, the gasoline and everything else. And they're all pretty good. Jim Gardner, I guess, was the most famous of all of them, because he had the first boat that I know of that had a gasoline engine in it. It also had a huge pair of oars and Jim knew how to row very well. The gasoline engines in those days were like outboard motors were when they first came out.

TWEEDALE: Unreliable?

BANNING: Couldn't depend on them at all. They were wonderful people. They were very friendly, nice people, except one or two of 'em were agin' the company, you always had to have somebody like that. One named Chappelle, Chappy, hated the company. We didn't run the island to suit him. But he was polite to us.

Jim Gardner was famous. How he got so famous was through Dr. Charles Frederick Holder, who was the founder of the Tournament of Roses in Pasadena and the Chariot Races after the parade. He was a charming person, so was his wife; no children. We just adored them. He was a great fisherman and he started the Tuna Club--Tuna on Rod and Reel. Some of those things were pretty big

fish in those days and there're very few of them now. They're not very big. The story was that he hooked one and he fought him for something like fourteen hours and he was almost to the mainland when they finally landed him. And Jim Gardner had to row all the way back again--which makes it a good story.

TWEEDALE: Yes. [laughter]

BANNING: And once in a while they'd put on a little show and I never knew whether it was deliberate or whether it just happened. Years went by and we had our own little launches and little cabin cruisers and that sort of thing. And we heard there was a man that hooked onto a tuna, near Seal Rocks. It had been six hours. George Farnsworth was the fisherman and we just adored George Farnsworth. He was one of the best of the whole bunch. So we got some sandwiches and coffee and went out there to have an excuse to come close. That's what it was. [laughter] I forget who the man was. The boatman, they called him a boatman, is not allowed to touch the rod or the man or anything; that would disqualify him. He couldn't get his gold, diamond or silver buttons for the Tuna Club. I don't think that fish weighed more than 120 to 170 pounds, something like that, and it was eighteen hours.

TWEEDALE: Eighteen hours of fighting?

BANNING: Well, I always thought there was some kind of

monkey business there. I know Farnsworth wouldn't touch the tackle or anything like that, but he might tell the man just to rest a little bit, you know. And the coffee and sandwiches were welcome. He was famous, got in all the newspapers. George Farnsworth, why, he was turning customers away. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: He couldn't take enough out.

BANNING: That's it, that's what he was after. He was the one that invented the box-kite form of fishing. He used the box kite and it took a great deal of doing. Ah, the fisherman himself, the sport fisherman, had to be trained, because Farnsworth couldn't touch anything. If he hooked a fish, it wouldn't do the fisherman any good as far as the Tuna Club. That was the main idea--buttons and all, little prizes and cups.

What you do, the flying fish would be on the bite so it'd stay more or less horizontal; then you'd skip it through the water. The tuna often took flying fish in the air; that would fool 'em. That's why you drag it on along.

Farnsworth also was the originator of sled fishing. To get the bait out of the way of the propeller, they'd drag a sled by pulling it from the side of the boat and then your line went out from there.

TWEEDALE: So, it was at the back of the boat.

BANNING: Yes. That system was used to cut mines loose

in the First World War on the ship I was on; paravanes they were called and they'd fit them out on both sides and a mine would hit that, slide off, come off, and explode.

TWEEDALE: Is that where Farnsworth got his idea, from paravanes?

BANNING: No, he had that a long time before paravanes were thought of. He also later on was the head guard for the Fish and Game Commission because they got a law through that there wasn't any commercial fishing within three miles of the island. That was a wonderful place for the market fishermen. They used to poach, and get shot at every once in a while with a thirty-thirty rifle. Some of those market fishers from the mainland [were] Austrians. They were bad people.

TWEEDALE: I see. Well, wasn't the Tuna Club formed for the conservation of fish and game as well as sport?

BANNING: Oh, yes, you bet it was. They were the ones that got the law through, no fishing within three miles of the island.

TWEEDALE: When was that law passed?

BANNING: I don't remember, but Dr. Holder was the chief founder; he fathered the whole idea of starting the Tuna Club. He was a great man. And he was a great naturalist; he knew that island pretty near as well as anybody, much better than most and he used to try to

make different things out of acorns, bread. I don't think he ever got around to using dried grasshoppers for food, but the Indians on the mainland did. One of their best things. Then we had Catalina cherry trees over there. In Catalina cherries the stones are so big there's hardly any meat. And he figured that the Indians used those for something; so, he'd try all sorts of things with the inside of the pits, the stones of the cherries. And he discovered caves with old Indian writing. They were inland, pretty dry inland there. Near the ocean I don't imagine they would have stood up very well. He was a great, great man for promoting that resort. We thought he was wonderful.

TWEEDALE: Was angling always a big occupation from the beginning on Catalina or did that develop as time went on?

BANNING: That developed as time went on. Mr. Holder was the one that really got it started. He and Jim Gardner and the rowboat engine launch they had. That's the first thing I remembered and there was some remittance men over there from England. Chappy was one of them. You see why he was mad at everybody. And there was another one named Sharp. He had a boat named the Dragon. He was an awful nice person. The Dragon was kept like a yacht, everything shined up and varnished. But the true fisherman, the one that outlasted everybody, was

George Farnsworth. His father had been a contracting engineer and built most of the stage roads for us. The island is very mountainous and we wanted to get a road, an inland road to the Little Harbor and from there to the Isthmus. It was a terrible grade. I think it was about an eight percent grade all the way up to the summit. To get up there, there were twists and hairpin turns. They had a lower half of a figure eight called the Farnsworth loop. The stage would come down go around this way, sort of a half of an eight. Going up the same way. It was quite thrilling coming down from the summit to Avalon with the six horses, never at a gallop. You never see anything in a movie with a stage coach unless they're all galloping. No matter whether there's an Indian after them or not. Even when they're coming into town, they gallop.

TWEEDALE: That's right.

BANNING: Never with us. My uncle wouldn't allow it. We'd go camping with him, the stagecoach and chuck wagon. "Well, the horses are pretty tired I guess we'd better stop here." It'd probably be a dry camp and nothing around there. It's the horses, the hell with the passengers. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: How long did it take to go from Avalon to the Isthmus on the stage road?

BANNING: Well, I would guess about three hours at least.

I think we'd do it in about forty-five minutes now in an automobile.

TWEEDALE: Three hours by coach.

BANNING: I think so. But I don't think they ever took any passengers to the Isthmus at all. It was merely for our communication. Sometimes you couldn't get there by boat because of storms. Once, I rode it, on the white mule in back of my father when I was about seven years old, as I remember it, from the Isthmus to Avalon. I thought we never would get there. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: I can imagine. Well, was all the development of resort activity in Avalon or was there any other development?

BANNING: Well, later on, they tried to promote the Isthmus. The Isthmus is a wonderful place in many, many ways. I always loved it much better than Avalon because there's hardly anybody there. It's about a half a mile wide. Then on the ocean side, Japan side, you might say, away from the mainland, there's a big long narrow neck of water coming in there called Catalina Harbor. It's the only harbor on the whole island that's protected in all weather. There's no other place to go. The wind comes through there from ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, and you'd better stay in the water because if you come out you freeze to death from the natural evaporation of the breeze blowing against

you if you aren't in the water. And my Uncle Joey was a great horticulturist and he planted trees in there and developed water. Finally he built a house there for himself up on a knoll where you could see both sides of the ocean.

TWEEDALE: It must have been beautiful.

BANNING: It was wonderful; we used to go and visit him up there. He planted trees all over. The whole idea was to cut the wind off near the ground. But the wind blew so hard through there that the trees didn't like it very much either. And I don't know what they're going to do there now. They've got some scheme to put up height limit buildings and cut the wind off. But when you do that, the bay'll be fouled all up the way Avalon is now. We had one man, named Chilliauco, in a big skiff, two oars, a dip net, and a boat hook. He just went around the bay at Avalon picking up seaweed so the bay wouldn't be dirty looking. Imagine, natural seaweed. The Isthmus is absolutely crystal-clear water there all the time. No matter how many boats are in there. Because the wind blows everything out. If they cut the wind off, why, the Isthmus would turn into a cesspool the way Avalon is now. Can't have yachts in coves, unless you've got some offshore breeze off the Isthmus. But everybody objects to the breeze. They want calm weather. So maybe they'll build up the wall

now; they're doing wonders over there developing water.

Well, we would go up to the Isthmus. There was an old man up there named Wilson. He was just some kind of an old boy. He had a seine full of tears and holes and I don't think he knew how to repair it. But he would get enough sardines in the thing and give us bait when we wanted it. We'd catch yellowtail off the beach with a hand line. I remember being pulled out into the water. I had [the line] tied around my waist so I wouldn't lose it. Some big fella hit it and I was so doggone little and light that I was going to sea with the yellowtail. Somebody grabbed me. [laughter] Pulled me and the yellowtail in.

TWEEDALE: Other than fishing and the resort industry there, was there any other sort of manufacture or industry?

BANNING: No. Mr. Renton, Sr., who was Mr. Wrigley's manager over there--his son, Malcolm, is over there now, doing a very good job--[Mr. Renton] tried to start all kinds of things. I remember we were camping up the coast. It was after Wrigley bought the island and he asked me to take him up to one of the mines in Cherry Valley. He didn't know his way around yet; he'd only been here a little while. There's an awful lot of island to discover things on. So, I showed him two of the mines in Cherry Valley. He said, "Well, we're

gonna develop these." I said, "Well, I hope you got plenty of money behind you, because the old hard-rock miners all went broke over here." Silver lead ore. The veins are all so badly faulted that you'd go into a vein here and you'd lose it; you didn't know whether to go up or down to find it. By the time you did, why, you lost your shirt, maybe. Renton went ahead with what we called a blackjack mine; that was up near a volcano, an old volcano crater, near the center of the island, and the story goes that they spent over a million dollars and finally gave up. Just didn't pay.

TWEEDALE: What about grazing; did they try that there?

BANNING: Well, we had sheep. No cattle. I heard my father was the one that went wild over the sheep. He just thought they were great. They turned that over to him to run by himself. He was making plenty of money. I think we got up to somewhere around 15,000 sheep over there. But what would happen is that everything would go fine for a few years and then the rain, unseasonal rains, would hit in September or October. That would rot all the dry grass that the sheep were eating and they wouldn't eat. They'd starve and they'd start eating cactus. Sheep only have one set of teeth, the lower teeth I think it is, and the upper are just gums and the gums'd get all full of cactus spines. Then you couldn't feed them 'cause they couldn't eat. That didn't

happen very often, fortunately. Then the new grass would sprout, but it couldn't grow because there wasn't any more rain until maybe November or December and it would all die. What a mess. Catalina never got very much rain; it's a strange thing, we'd do about six and a half, seven inches when the mainland was doing fifteen. At Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz Island would get more rain than the mainland next to it; and we were just the opposite.

Some people tried to run cattle over there after Wrigley bought the island--Mr. Baker and his son-in-law; Baker, of the Baker Ironworks in Los Angeles--and they lost money on it.

TWEEDALE: So the only successful business was really the resort business then?

BANNING: That's just it. And that's a two- or three-month season. Mr. Wrigley told my uncle, "Well, Captain, if I can make people chew my gum, I can make 'em go to Catalina in the wintertime."

TWEEDALE: Did he?

BANNING: No, he didn't. [laughter] My uncle just loved that story.

TWEEDALE: That's a great tale.

BANNING: My uncle told me, he said, "Well, Mr. Wrigley, he's a marvelous man. I stayed at his house and my bathroom was all gold-plated plumbing." That was in

Chicago, when he used to go back for visits.

TWEEDALE: Well, at the time of the fire of 1915, were they able to just go ahead and have a season the next year?

BANNING: Well, no, it was bad. No hotel there. The town was in a hell of a fix. Fortunately, we had plenty of insurance money so that's how the St. Catherine got built on the ashes of Avalon, you might say. The summer of 1916 was the last good season we ever had. All the shipping and everybody shut down on account of the European war.

TWEEDALE: Well, the war as well as the fire. . .

BANNING: It started in 1914, the war did. We got in it in April of 1917, and they never got over that, financially. People just stopped. Then the automobile was another thing. Everybody had to go on a vacation in their automobile. We wouldn't allow any automobiles over there except our own. [laughter]

One of the outstanding automobile trips that I ever went on, I have a picture of the automobile, was in the first automobile on the island, a one-cylinder, 1902 Oldsmobile. They're very, very wonderful cars.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

NOVEMBER 19, 1969

BANNING: Well, there's about an eight percent grade from Avalon up to the summit and this thing would overheat even on the level on hot days.

TWEEDALE: This is the 1902 Oldsmobile.

BANNING: Yes, the Oldsmobile, excuse me. It had a tank under the afterdeck, you might call it, and that was the cooling water. So, Father figured out that the way to do this thing was to get a whole bunch of cracked ice from the Metropole Hotel. And he hung a bucket on each side of the driver's seat outside. We'd go about two miles and my brother and sister and I were sitting on this back seat, "Father, it's boiling again." We could hear the boiling underneath where we were sitting. So, we'd all get out, take the back seat off, take the lid off of the cooling water tank, and pour some ice water in from the melted ice. Well, we pretty near used up all two buckets of melted ice by the time we got to the summit. From then on it was easy going; we stayed all night at the Middle Ranch. The next day we came back. There was one bad place uphill which Father didn't think we could make. So, everybody got off and he put me in the driver's seat. I had learned to drive after a fashion. I was about ten or eleven years

old. This would be in 1903, probably. We got as far away as we could on the level stretch and finally got halfway up the very steep grade. I put in the clutch. I think we must have been doing almost twenty-five miles an hour when we hit the bottom of the hill. We made it the second time with Father pushing. [laughter] You can imagine a one-cylinder engine--chug, chug, chug. It died. But I was alright. We got past that alright, but then going down was something else again. There wasn't any ice at the Middle Ranch, so we had two buckets of water. And so, "Father, the brakes are smoking again." He'd drive in and put the right front wheel up against one of the bags; we'd pour some water on the brakes, cool them off. We had to do that four, five, six, seven times, maybe. On the way down, the brakes wouldn't hold. The same thing with the Grapevine, the trucks. . .

TWEEDALE: I know the Grapevine, yes, when the trucks had to go up the grade.

BANNING: Well, [it was] the same thing; you couldn't go down in compression or this thing would be like a leapfrog. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: So, that was the first car that was on Catalina Island.

BANNING: Oh, my gosh, and did everybody look at it. Crowds around it in Avalon. As many as twelve or

fourteen people.

TWEEDALE: I can imagine.

BANNING: I have a picture of it being unloaded. Everything had to come out of the hold with a derrick on the ship, the Hermosa.

TWEEDALE: The Hermosa I?

BANNING: I think it was. Yes, it must have been the Hermosa I. We didn't burn her up until quite a while after that.

TWEEDALE: Did most of the people come on ships that were owned by the Wilmington Transportation Company?

BANNING: Oh, no, we had trouble with, we called them, tramp boats. We were furnishing all the entertainment, most of it free. Why should these people capitalize on our entertainment, that was the theory. Our steamer fares were paying for it all. They were going to take a free ride. We put up barbed-wire fences and sea walls and we used fire hoses on them, scared them off the beach. My Uncle Joe picked one man up and threw him back in the water. He brought suit.

TWEEDALE: Well, could they go into that part of the town that belonged to the freeholders?

BANNING: Couldn't get across to it. We owned all the streets.

TWEEDALE: Well, then they wouldn't really be able to even land then would they?

BANNING: Well, they could at low tide. Anything on land from there belonged to us. We proved it was high tide when this man tried to walk ashore and Uncle Joe threw him back in the water again. He was on our land.

TWEEDALE: So, the only thing that was owned by other people were actual lots.

BANNING: A few lots.

TWEEDALE: A few lots and that was all. The Catalina Island Company owned the streets. What happened when the town incorporated?

BANNING: Well, it was very simple, because Mr. Wrigley had his and Mrs. Wrigley's right-hand man, Patrick. His son, Milton Patrick, was the mayor and all the councilmen were theirs. No trouble at all.

TWEEDALE: Very easy to cope with.

BANNING: Now there was the Meteor Boat Company. They ran excursions to the Isthmus and they had the first power glass-bottomed boats. The other glass-bottomed boats were row boats with the long sweep of about fourteen, no I guess they were about ten- or twelve-foot oars. The best of all the glass-bottomed boats were the row boat. They get in closer to see the so-called marine gardens better. But the big power boats were alright. They did a good job. The

people that went on them didn't know what they were missing.

TWEEDALE: That's probably true.

BANNING: They saw plenty. Then they'd go down to Seal Rocks and take them on a trip like that. There were quite a few excursions that were run. There was a man named McAfee. He was a company hater. Well, we got along with him fine, all us kids did. McAfee invented the famous flying-fish trips. They were really wonderful. At certain times of the summer, the flying fish would be thick over there if there weren't any oil slicks or muck or dirt. He had these searchlights and they were right down near the water, not more than four or five feet above the surface of the water. He'd load his boat up with people, turn his searchlights on. The beam was so close to the water it didn't just make a dot; it made a big long sweep. The flying fish would just come up and go all over the place. It was wonderful. They had steel guards over the glass in front of the searchlights, because the flying fish might break the glass. They were pretty bad. I was knocked out cold once. I didn't know what hit me. Hit my temple. One time, just before dark, a flying fish came up, something chasing him, and popped me by the side of the head. I woke up in the bilge in the bottom of the rig.

[laughter] We could see scars on the side of our old cabin cruiser where these things would hit. Of course, it would kill them. McAfee was famous for his flying-fish trips. I think we tried it on one of our steamers. The people that did it on the mainland rigged up this thing; they didn't think it was any good to begin with and they didn't realize that the searchlights on the steamers are so high above the water that they didn't get a big broad beam across the water, more of a dot. The flying fish didn't pay any attention to it. So, it didn't work.

TWEEDALE: Well, what were the boats that usually came over from the mainland?

BANNING: Well, they had the Warrior and the Falcon and both of them were tugs, steam tugs. Both of them were fire boats and under contract after 1908 with the city of Los Angeles. Maybe before that with the city of San Pedro for fire purposes. But one of them could leave the harbor as long as there was one left. One of them used to carry passengers; that was the Warrior, along with the Hermosa. The first Hermosa we bought and the second Hermosa we built in our own yard. The Cabrillo was also built in our own yard. I think that was in 1905, somewhere along there. She was commissioned just after the General Slocum disaster in New York Harbor.

During a Sunday School picnic outing the boat caught on fire and they changed all the requirements right now. So, we could only carry half the passengers on her that she was built for--government standards and politics--but she did an awful good job. They both ended up as fish boats. The Cabrillo was a refrigerator boat. She'd take fish off the Mexican Coast from the different fishermen and bring them up here. Then they wouldn't have to bring their own fish boats up. What she did was deliver.

TWEEDALE: How long was big sport fishing carried on in a high style?

BANNING: I think it pretty nearly ended a little after the First World War. There was some there. They tried to keep it going. They saved maybe four or five boats. They all had their lockers on the pleasure pier. I knew most of them since I was a little kid. They just sort of faded away, died off and no new ones came.

TWEEDALE: So it really reached its height before World War I.

BANNING: Nineteen fifteen or sixteen was about the top of the season for us. They wouldn't have any trouble now. Plenty of passengers, plenty of people if the labor unions would leave them alone.

TWEEDALE: How about the fish, are they still there?

BANNING: No. I doubt very much if those same old people could make a living over there now, because it's been so fished out. The first thing the canneries did was take all the bait, all sardines, no more sardines to speak of. Then they went down to anchovies. They'd harden these things and grind them up for fertilizer. And they have this commission, as you know, and who owns the commission? The industry does. So we're fished out. It's such a pity. You can't catch fish anymore unless you're using live bait. We never heard of such a thing. We used salt sardines; a respectable fish wouldn't even look at one of them now.

TWEEDALE: Do they have any of the large tunas and marlins around the island?

BANNING: Oh, they've got some once in awhile, at San Clemente, I think, but Australia has the black marlin and the East Coast now for tuna. Boy, they get great big ones back there. They've got a pretty good little industry, I think, at Rockaway and the tip of Long Island. They go out from there. I suppose there are others up the coast, Massachusetts and Maine, up in there.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to know when the big fisheries started really cleaning out the waters in that area?

BANNING: At Catalina?

TWEEDALE: Yes.

BANNING: Well, just little by little. The waste over there was pure ignorance. They used to bring in albacore; that's the long-finned mackerel. The tuna is a mackerel. All those fish, yellow long-finned and blue-finned tuna, albacore, skipjack, Spanish mackerel, and horse mackerel, they're all of the mackerel family. The fishermen would come in there at noon or five o'clock and they'd have fish racks. They hung these fish up. The fisherman'd get on one side with the gaff, I mean the boatman with the gaff, the fisherman on the other side with a pole. The mighty hunter. Figure fifty or sixty albacore hanging up. It was up to the boatman to take all these things off the rack, take them out to sea and dump them. They were too oily. Somebody discovered a system of baking the things. Now they're bringing them in from Japan and all over the place. We don't have any more here. They're all fished out. That white-meat tuna, that's something, and that is not blue-finned tuna; it's probably yellow finned. Or albacore, that's the long finned. A fin about this long on the side, on each side--pectoral fins I think they're called. They would bring those things in by the hundreds. Summer, after sum-

mer, after summer, they would have to haul them all out and dump them outside so they wouldn't kick up an odor in town. An awful waste.

TWEEDALE: That's a shame, because it was such a great sport while it was carried on as a sport.

BANNING: Well, the minute they became commercial, that was the end. I went on a trip one time with Kenneth Dawson and Kermit Roosevelt in a tuna clipper, they called them. We were gone pretty near two months and there was nothing around here at all. We didn't see anything until we got halfway to Cape San Lucas, that's the end of the peninsula, Baja California. Just fished out, commercial cannery style. But it was marvelous to see the way these people did it. They would look at a school of fish and somebody would yell, "Two pole." So they would have two fishermen, each with a pole. The line from each pole goes to a single line with a single hook with no barb on it. Nothing but a piece of sharkskin and a feather maybe. If the tuna ever gets his head down, they're liable to go overboard. They would haul him out on deck. They caught a three-pole tuna. One hook with three men and that would get up to one hundred pounds. Every once in a while somebody gets hit in the head and everybody laughs. They think that's a wonderful joke.

TWEEDALE: Sounds treacherous to me.

BANNING: Then they used to haul a seine once in a while, illegally. The launch would take the seine out and play it all over the place and come back to the mother boat. Then they used winches to haul them in. You get all the fish in the bag, it's called, alongside and open up the end of the bag. Then they have a thing called a barrel. They barrel the fish with this. That's done with a hoist. One of the most amusing things that I think I ever saw connected with the industry--its very hard and rotten dirty work--was on a beautiful sunny day in a dead calm on the south side of Catalina, off of Catalina Harbor. We stopped and watched them while they were hauling the seine in. Finally they got the bag and opened it up and they barreled it going up and down. One of the men hung on a little too long and he went over the side headfirst into this mass of live fish. And did anybody help him? No, they all put their heads back slapping and laughing and here he was mad as. . . [laughter]

TWEEDALE: I can imagine.

BANNING: They weren't very big, little fellows, about twenty pounds or eighteen pounds of fish, I guess. Well, that was just wonderful; that made their day.

TWEEDALE: I guess so. Well, when Wrigley took over that island did he try to promote angling at all or

did he just go in another direction?

BANNING: He went in another direction entirely. I don't think that the fish business had anything to do with anything. He was for developing the mines, and Mr. Renton found some clay beds; they were going to make pottery and had a pottery works over there. And let's see. What's the first thing? They were going to make it an old Spanish place, which they never had, but everything was made Spanish. That held for a while. Then pretty soon, they were going to make it Hawaiian. So, they went Hawaiian. I don't know what it is now; I haven't been there in quite awhile. They had trouble with the unions on the boats and it didn't get in any of the papers except this little one run by--ah, what the deuce is his name?--Windle. He ran a little newspaper over there and he wrote a book for Mr. Wrigley. I think that his newspaper was the only one that published this. It was after Mr. William Wrigley, Jr.'s death and Phil Wrigley was running Catalina more or less with a part-ownership of some trust that Mr. Wrigley had set up in Chicago for, I guess, his grandchildren. The unions just said that Wrigley's got plenty of money and so they just fixed it up so that the stewards were being paid outrageous sums of money.

TWEEDALE: This was the Seaman's Union?

BANNING: Herb Bridges' boys. And then the people on the dock, the stevedores. An awful lot of stuff had to be hauled over there--food and all that sort of thing. They don't grow anything over there. Well, it just got to the place where Phil Wrigley said that he was not counting depreciation or anything like that, he was just out-of-pocket, I think that's what they call it, operating. So he just shut the steamers down. And he had a little tiny thing--I think he called it the Betty O, something like that--for the mail contract they had, which we had also. It would make a trip over and back and satisfy the mail contract. If anybody wanted to ride, alright; if they didn't, that was alright too. That just raised the devil with the town--all of the merchants, curio stores, drug stores, and the restaurants. They had an airline over there. One of my friends was mixed up in it with a biplane, wooden struts and all that sort of thing. You could land on the water. It was very successful until Western Air, I think it was called at the time. The man that was running it was afraid of it. Mr. Wrigley, Jr. gave them the franchise for landing over there and put our people out of business, I mean my friend, out of business. It was just too bad. And I think Mr. Wrigley was very fair with him. They didn't lose their shirts entirely.

TWEEDALE: Was hunting ever made much of a sport on Catalina?

BANNING: Well, that was a very amusing thing. The goats were thick over there. They were supposed to have been left by Cabrillo and the Spanish explorers. They left pigs in some places and goats in others. Catalina's just overrun with them. I noted when we were running sheep over there that when the shearing season was over all the shearing people that had any idea at all how to fire a rifle at a target were given rifles, ammunition, and horses to go out and shoot goats. Just kill 'em. They'd bring a goat's tail in and they'd get a dollar or fifty cents, or whatever it was for it. I think that was good sport, maybe it was. Catalina wild goats. We started out with that. That was our picture of the island with the goat standing on top of a circle with big horns sticking out. Joe Adargo and Mexican Joe were the two guides. Mexican Joe was the guide and Joe Adargo was kind of a second lieutenant, or something like that. They wouldn't let anybody hunt unless a guide went with them. And the main reason was that the people got lost. It happened quite often. People were fooling around up there and they'd lose their bearings and get lost. We'd send out search parties and there'd be hell to pay. But my theory was that

the goats were so thick and so tame over there that the guides would take these people out to keep them from finding a herd of goats [laughter] until the day was nearly over, sundown. Then they would find some goats. Why, it's hard to say, but that's my theory.

TWEEDALE: That's a very good observation.

BANNING: So they thought they were wild goats. I don't know whether they are shooting buffalo over there or not. But they have concessions. Now different people shoot goats on part of the island. They have quail and duck shooting and, maybe, deer. I don't know. My Uncle Joe put some deer on the island. He didn't really put them there. He had a deer park back of his place where the St. Catherine is now, where his house was. We took over his house and he moved to Avalon. His family liked it better over there. They turned the deer loose or else the deer got loose. A seven-foot fence doesn't bother a deer.

So, there was a National Geographic girl; she was the divorced wife of a member of the law firm which was the predecessor to Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher. Her name was Mrs. Trask. She lived in Los Angeles. And Mrs. Trask was. . . you could see why she wasn't married because she wore long boots up to her knees with a short skirt that came to here, so it wouldn't interfere with her walking. A khaki uniform or cor-

duroy uniform and a hat. She was a sketch. She didn't get back to Avalon one time when she said she would. She went all over the island. (She had a beautiful daughter named Caroline. Caroline was my secret sorrow. She was about eight years older than I and she had a canoe. She had long flowing blond hair, fluttering around. Oh my!) [laughter] But Mrs. Trask didn't show up. So they sent out a search party. Mrs. Trask was up a tree. A deer had her up a tree and wouldn't let her down. So we got rid of the deer.

I don't know, Mrs. Wrigley put pheasants and all sorts of things over there. The buffalo were left there by some moving picture company.

TWEEDALE: Is that how they got there.

BANNING: That's what I heard. I don't think that Wrigley would deliberately do that. They've got quite a herd there now. We didn't have any pigs. Santa Cruz had pigs. They are not as bad as goats. These goats would eat you out of house and home. There's one island off the coast of Mexico and the story goes there that about every seven years they get down to about a half a dozen goats. They starve to death. There's just enough left to start a new herd, and seven years later when the shrubbery's grown up, the goats are grown up. Then all die

again. They are terrible. They stand on their hind legs and it looks like somebody had trimmed a tree off about six feet off the ground, or wherever, in bad years.

TWEEDALE: After you finally sold the island to the Wrigley syndicate, did your family run any of the boats that went to the island?

BANNING: Oh, no. No, Mr. Wrigley took over the transportation and all the tugboats, lighters and steamers. We gave the stevedore company to the man that had been running it, and he promptly died of cancer. His wife sold it to some bum that hardly ever met his payroll and it was still called Banning Company. I had my office in Wilmington and it hurt.

TWEEDALE: Oh, I can imagine, with the name still attached.

BANNING: It's Associated Banning Company now, I think. We should have sued them right off the bat, but. . .

That's the only sport we had on the island, but now they say they've got dove and quail. The quail over there, I think, are different from the mainland quail. The wrens are, I know, and the foxes are.

TWEEDALE: Earlier on you mentioned you were going to tell a story later about the 1915 fire.

BANNING: The first time I got back from engineering

school--I had graduated from Cornell at the time--a Catholic priest, Father Roland I think it was, was out on the wharf. I knew him very well. We were Episcopalians, but that didn't bother him any. He said, "Hancock, look up at that hill; nothing but ashes except the Lord preserved our church." And I said, "Yes, I heard the fire stopped on the other side, Father, at Ben Rosin's saloon. The Lord and the devil were working together that day." He said, "I hoped you wouldn't find that out."

TWEEDALE: [laughter] That's a great story.

BANNING: The best old priest; he laughed. But that's it--the Catholic Church on one side and Ben Rosin's Saloon on the other. It stopped at Ben Rosin's Saloon because they had water on top of it and in the "V" in the roof of the house next door.

TWEEDALE: Was there a volunteer fire company there then?

BANNING: Oh, yes. I don't know what they have now. We had an old pumping plant. Gosh, what the deuce was it, a one-cylinder engine and it ran the pump. The pump pumped salt water out of the bay up to the reservoir on top of the mountain. And there was hell to pay when that thing broke down. What a wonderful engineer we had over there, named Jack Shiebusch. He was Swedish, and I just adored him. He and I were

great friends. He was a great man and he was the one that they--I guess it was Westinghouse--turned over to us. [We needed] the Westinghouse man to run the electric light plant. They have a big generator over there now and Mr. Wrigley installed the first electric light plant for Avalon. See, all the history begins in 1919 for Avalon when Mr. Wrigley took over.

TWEEDALE: Yes, well, that's something to think about.

BANNING: And it almost does. We had four big boilers, two steam engines and two big generators. All electric lights were free. We didn't have any meters. Another thing the steamers had to pay for. I loved that power plant. I used to go up there, steal lubricating oil, waste, and emery paper. All kinds of things. There was a machine shop there, too, and that was a godsend to us because our engines would break down and we'd take them up there. They'd fix them for us. Company men, company boys; it was a wonderful island for us.

TWEEDALE: Who built the incline railroad?

BANNING: My father did that. It was 1908 and he told the company what he wanted to do and they said go ahead. He subdivided the hills. The incline railroad could stop at a street and then they could walk on the level around to their house. They had different streets. Then they had one going down the

other side to a place called Lover's Cove. Isn't that wonderful? And what you'd do, you could take the stage ride and come to the foot, after you'd ridden around awhile, of the Avalon side of the incline. You'd go up that side and the car would come up. You'd go down and get in the glass-bottomed boat and all come back. It was a combination tour or something like that. Of course all that sort of thing got stopped awful fast when 1914 came along. But [Father] did an awful lot of work there, grading all those side hill roads. There was some disagreement. My Uncle Joe thought that it was dangerous. So he had it abandoned.

TWEEDALE: Couldn't you go down in it?

BANNING: Not through the subdivision.

TWEEDALE: What about Sugar Loaf rock. Wasn't that sort of the symbol of the island?

BANNING: Oh, there was an awful howl when Mr. Renton tore that down.

TWEEDALE: I can imagine.

BANNING: There's a strange story about that. You see, the city was incorporated and it sort of got out of hand in time. The way those politicians can do. Milton Patrick wasn't mayor anymore. They weren't as close to the people of the town as they had been. So [Renton] built one pavilion out there and, I think,

he tore that down. Then he built the one that's there now, the Casino. He tore Big Sugarloaf down, which was inland from Little Sugarloaf and built this big casino. Some fool of an attorney. . . I knew him. He was also attorney for Newport Beach. I was working down there at the time with our ranch, the city council, and the politicians there. He was attorney for Avalon's city council; so, he put them up to the idea that this other stuff was on tidelands, which it was. Well, that was wonderful. They were going to bring suit. So they sent him back to Chicago. Mr. Patrick, the manager, said, "If you could have seen the thing." He said, "It was just perfectly wonderful. Of course, we knew what was going to happen." He said, "Phil Wrigley met him at the door with a quitclaim deed to the whole works, rowboat and everything." Of course, everything costs a million dollars, now that we have inflation; so, it cost a billion. [laughter] Well, they just had it so it was a wonderful end. Here the city council could have bands, dances, moving pictures, and all that stuff. But the trouble was that Mr. Wrigley did not have to pay taxes on it any more. They did everything they could to get Mr. Wrigley to take it back again, so they could tax it. I never did know what happened after that. But some of these smart people, you know. . . That's why they're

attorneys for little towns. I thought that was one of the. . . I don't know what actually happened, but Joe Patrick couldn't resist it.

TWEEDALE: Telling it.

BANNING: Phil Wrigley met him at the door with a quitclaim. [laughter] They should have investigated the tax situation. They'd been making a fortune out of it. No, you don't make a fortune out of anything just two months out of the year. Even Coney Island. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: You must have other business to back it up, I'm sure.

BANNING: A chewing gum factory comes in mighty handy, actually. They're wonderful people the way they've handled that thing.

TWEEDALE: Why don't you tell the story about Bird Rock and. . .

BANNING: Oh, [laughter] there was Valentine scrip and I think it was issued to soldiers for any land that the government stayed on that hadn't been turned into a park or sold to somebody else. You could file on it with Valentine scrip. I think it was after the Civil War or the Mexican War. That's the way they paid them off. Some woman,* I'm pretty sure some

*Helen K. Morton purchased Bird Island or Bird Rock with an "acreage" quantity of Civil War Valentine scrip and the island was transferred to her from the War Department in 1930.

barrister put her up to it, got some Valentine scrip and filed on Bird Island which is right outside the mouth of the Isthmus Bay. Well, there was the devil to pay. We thought that we had it all settled. We had a man out there. I think his name was Strain. We put a fence around it of all things. We didn't need a fence because it was almost impossible to get on the thing without ladders. It came right up out of the ocean.

They had a bad time. I don't know what the settlement was. Whether or not she had to start paying taxes on it right away. I don't know what the assessed valuation would be, but the assessor had a lot of fun, sizing that woman up. It was nothing but a nuisance and publicity for the woman. So, I wrote to the architect-contractor for the Wrigley people, and put in a picture of this whole thing. It was all in the Sunday roto section and all that sort of thing. That's publicity and Mr. Wrigley was in a hell of a fix. It was just perfect. And he didn't like it a bit and I don't blame him. And I think his attorneys--Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher--got in a little Dutch with him. So, I got this architect-contractor to draw a sign across the top of the picture of a big billboard "Chew Beaman's Pepsin Gum." I took it to Mr. Patrick and told him next time he went back to Chicago to

take it. For $200,000, why we wouldn't publish this thing. He could have half. Joe Patrick came back from Chicago. He said, "Well, it didn't work." He said, "Mr. Wrigley said, 'Gosh, go ahead that would be good publicity for me.'" [laughter]

TWEEDALE: That's a great story.

BANNING: Oh, life is lovely, I think. Those funny things come up.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

FEBRUARY 19, 1970

BANNING: Well, this is some time after the town of Avalon was incorporated. A small town attorney went to the city council and told them Mr. Wrigley's $1,000,000 pavilion on the old site of Sugar Loaf was on tidelands. They should bring suit or consult with Mr. Wrigley about taking it over with the city of Avalon as its owner. A delegation went to Chicago and called on Mr. Wrigley in his office and was handed a quitclaim deed to the hotel and its site. There was great jubilation among the citizens until a year or so later when they realized that they couldn't tax it any more and that they had lost that income. In addition to that, they had to pay the maintenance and upkeep of the building. They were not able to attract the patronage that Mr. Wrigley could with his vast advertising.

TWEEDALE: Now, this is a quitclaim to the pavilion.

BANNING: Quitclaim to the pavilion.

TWEEDALE: And they thought they had a right to it because. . .

BANNING: It was on tidelands.

TWEEDALE: I see. And not really on the island.

BANNING: They'd fill it in. You go filling in stuff,

why that's tidelands. It didn't make any difference. Mr. Wrigley, he was glad to get rid of it, I suppose.

TWEEDALE: So they put themselves in a position of getting less money than if Wrigley had owned and operated it.

BANNING: Well, they couldn't tax it any more. And then they had to maintain it. And then they couldn't get the patronage because they didn't have the advertising ability that Mr. Wrigley had.

TWEEDALE: I see.

BANNING: The usual government "boo-boos."

TWEEDALE: I see. This was the city council that set this up with the lawyer.

BANNING: No. The lawyer set it up with the city council. He was a fool. I knew him. I don't remember his name. He was the City of Newport attorney too, and that's where I ran into him. And that is that.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, you mentioned before that you visited most of the channel islands. I was wondering if we could begin discussing the channel islands with San Clemente.

BANNING: Yes. The first time I remember going there was on my uncle's steam yacht. We'd spend about two or three days. Anchorage for this size yacht did not exist and does not exist. The only harbor that was any good at all was filled in by a landslide many

years ago. But we did go ashore and explored quite a bit of the island.

TWEEDALE: Excuse me. What size was the yacht?

BANNING: One hundred feet. A steam yacht. The remarkable thing we found was fossilized ferns. Of course, sand had taken the place of the roots, almost like a spiderweb, it was so fine. We used a little blowpipe to blow the sand away. We took some pictures of it. They were raising sheep there. I think the man's name was Mr. Howland. And I know their sheep boat used to tie up in Avalon on its trips back and forth from San Clemente to San Pedro. We knew them a little bit but they were as far away from Catalina on San Clemente as Catalina is from the mainland. In those days we depended mostly on sailing. So there wasn't very much visiting back and forth the way there probably could be now with cabin cruisers at high speed and marine equipment. They had built cement wells, or cisterns that were hooked up with areas that were covered with cement in order to catch what little rain they could to keep the sheep happy. The rainfall there was less than Catalina, and Catalina, I think, averages somewhere around six or seven inches a year. And it was fairly successful because fog helped out a great deal with the grasses on the island. The sheep would eat that in the morning.

That was one of their sources of water, according to Mr. Howland and his men. It was a very interesting island in that way. And the fishing was almost perfect because hardly anybody had fished there. Commercial fishing was almost nonexistent. You just dropped a line over. We didn't want to leave; it was so good.

TWEEDALE: What kinds of fish did you catch there?

BANNING: Rock bass, barracuda, yellowtail. George Farnsworth, who was a professional sports fisherman, used to go in that channel between Catalina and San Clemente with his box kites. Trailed a flying fish bouncing it in and out of the water. He had some world records of tuna near Clemente. He used to go over there so nobody else would see him or his box kites. He wanted a monopoly. It was secret. The island was leased to the Howlands. It was owned by the federal government and still is. I think the Marines have taken it over now because you can hear the bombing going on from Laguna, along the coast there. Every once in a while you can see Clemente from Laguna. That's about all I know about Clemente. It's a very inhospitable island for small boats. You never know what's going to happen summer or winter in the way of weather. The second time we were there we left in the middle of the night one time because

a strong breeze came up from a fishing boat that was anchored up to windward. It started drifting down on us. We had to get steam up and get out of there. So we didn't go ashore that time. That's the last time I was there. But my cousin, George Patton, sailed down there in an eighteen-foot sloop with one of his ranch hands from San Marino, Callahan, and sailed back again. No engine at all. Which was a silly thing to do. But George could do things like that and get away with them. He always could.

TWEEDALE: He must have skill.

BANNING: Oh, yeah, you're darn right. It was an open cockpit boat. No cabin or anything else. They had two good bailing cans. His father made him take them.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to know when they stopped grazing sheep on San Clemente.

BANNING: No, I have no idea whether they went broke or the Navy refused to renew the lease. I think it was pretty near a year-to-year lease. But like government year-to-year leases, you never expect them to end. They put in quite a lot of improvements--cement little shacks for the sheepshearers.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to know what kind of people were living there during the sheepshearing?

BANNING: Mostly Mexicans.

TWEEDALE: Mostly Mexicans. All year around or just

seasonally?

BANNING: Well, in the shearing season, why, the Edith--that was their boat--used to bring the shearers over and they'd do their job and leave. We did not have the goat problem there that we had on Catalina. Our shearers would come over there, shear at three different places--the Little Harbor, the Isthmus, and Middle Ranch. They'd all be furnished with thirty-thirty rifles and go out and shoot goats. The goats were eating up all the food. They're terrible. That's about all I know or remember about San Clemente.

TWEEDALE: Well, then let's move on to Santa Barbara Island.

BANNING: All right. First time I was there, I guess it was around 1923, the Santa Barbara Island was called Santa Barbara Rock. It was so very small. I imagine it's less than one hundred acres. It's about four or five hundred feet high, a very poor landing. No protection in weather. The island was sort of like a mesa. When we were there we saw a good many farm implements--hay rakes, mowing machines, and different farm implements. Part of the wheels, resting on the ground, had rusted out. The rest of them seemed to be fairly intact. We found out later, but we can't be sure about this, that there was a

religious colony started out there. They were going to farm it and live there to get away from all the evils of the mainland, I suppose. It was apparent they didn't stay there very long and left all their machinery behind them. It was a great pity because I would have liked very much to live there myself.

TWEEDALE: Did the people in this religious group come from the United States?

BANNING: Yes. Probably southern California because we've got some wows around here.

TWEEDALE: [laughter] That's true.

BANNING: Then we went to the bird rookeries. If you want to see trouble, there's cholla cactus. The pelicans had their nests there. We arrived when some of the eggs hadn't hatched and some of them had. We didn't realize what we were doing. We went in there and the adult pelicans were frightened and deserted their nests and you should see what the seagulls would do. They'd go right in, grab a little pelican, fly off with his legs going patty-patty under the seagull's beak, flying through the air. We got out of there as fast as we could before the gulls ate up all the pelicans. Also, they break their eggs with their beaks. We went on farther down to the beach. I guess you'd call it the northwest corner, if an island has corners. There was a seal rookery, a huge one. Little tiny

seals that hadn't learned to swim yet, if that is true, all the way up to huge bull seals. The island has a great many caves with arched rocks. We had to get to Santa Cruz I think in a day or two. We were using mostly sail because we couldn't carry enough gasoline. So we had to leave before I wanted to. I would have liked to have stayed another day at least. That's about all I remember about it.

TWEEDALE: Good. Do you want to sail on to Santa Cruz?

BANNING: Yes. On another trip with my brother in another boat we visited Santa Cruz Island. We decided we'd better go out to San Miguel because none of us had ever been there. On that island on the east end, there's a huge sand dune.

TWEEDALE: This is San Miguel?

BANNING: Yes. The salt water lake was crystal clear. It was quite a large one. On one of the banks--I would guess it was the west bank of this lake--was a natural slope of the sand. We had great sport running down this sand slope going into this crystal clear lake. The landing there is very difficult because it had no protection from any place. Ground swells come in there from Japan. It's the south shore. It's so steep there that you could see a seal standing vertically in the front of a wave before it broke. Is that clear?

TWEEDALE: Not quite. You mean he was on the slope?

BANNING: No, he was standing this way in the surf, before it broke, the wave was so near vertical you could see the whole seal in the front of the wave before the foam came up. We enjoyed that place greatly. The kelp beds and the fishing, of course.

There's a wonderful story about San Nicolas Island that I've never been able to authenticate. The mission padres were sent out there to take all the Indians off the island many, many years ago. One Indian woman decided she wasn't going to go. She hid and stayed there for many years by herself until some fisherman spotted her. He went out and took her back to Santa Barbara. She died soon after that. How true that is I don't know but I believe there's something in it.

TWEEDALE: Yes, I think there's a story about a woman in the channel islands. Could you tell us what you've seen of Anacapa?

BANNING: I don't think we ever landed at Anacapa, exactly. We'd row around getting abalones and fishing. In those days--I guess it was about 1922--it was so inaccessible that we didn't try to climb up or get on the island at all. There was a bird rookery and as I remember a few seals fooling around. That's about all I know. I think now the government has a lighthouse, a lighthouse keeper, and family. I think they use a derrick to put people and stores from small boats onto

the island.

TWEEDALE: I see. The coastline's so steep that you can't get at it.

BANNING: That's right. I think it caught hell in this oil spill up there.

TWEEDALE: Oh, did it?

BANNING: Yes. That's about all I know about Anacapa.

TWEEDALE: Next one's Santa Cruz.

BANNING: We made two or three trips there. Santa Cruz Island was owned by the Caire family, a very wonderful old French family. Madame Caire was a very delightful person. Our family knew that family, so we were rather privileged to go where we wanted. Because Madame Caire said as long as we owned an island, why, we knew how to handle things on her island. We wouldn't go around shooting cattle and shooting sheep. They had a wonderful winery there, grew grapes, and made very good wine. They had mostly sheep. The best hunting there was wild pigs. They were supposed to be very desperate, especially the tuskers. I remember on a very narrow trail on the side of a very steep mountainside a tusker came down the trail. I got my rifle all ready for him. He saw me, jumped off the trail, and broke all four legs. That's how tough they are. So this hunting, it's about the same as hunting wild goats on Catalina. You need a guide to keep you

away from them. [laughter] But it's a beautiful island. Of all the islands, Santa Cruz is unquestionably the best; and it's one of the few islands, as far as I know, that has heavier rainfall than the opposite shore of the mainland. Wonderful oak trees, healthy growth, and two or three streams that are even running in September. The Caire family are wonderful people. When Madame Caire died and the young people took it over I don't know what happened, but things didn't go very well from then on. Possibly disagreement between the children and grandchildren. They sold part of the island to a very close friend of mine named Ed Stanton whose son, Carey, is running his part of the island now. I don't know about the other part, who owns it or anything about it. But they're raising sheep there and I know Ed made a great success of it while he was alive. But the island's such a charming place and it has several good coves; so, you can go from one to another during different storms, southeasters, northwesters, and a norther--that's one of the worst ones. That's what is blowing now, Santana's a norther. You have to say Santa Ana now, and to hell with that. Santana's the word.

TWEEDALE: I see. [laughter] Did the Caire family also raise sheep?

BANNING: Yes. They raised sheep. There's a charming book written by Carey Stanton--foreman, I think he was--Modern Days. He lives there and likes it. I can see why. I wish I did.

TWEEDALE: It must be beautiful.

BANNING: We used to get sacks and sacks of leaf mold, bring it back home, and put it in our garden. There are a great many stories there. We had the same trouble at Catalina, with the fishermen poaching. Santa Cruz has been patrolled recently and they still have a bad time.

TWEEDALE: Is it commercial fishers?

BANNING: Yes, commercial fishermen. They get tired of fishing and they want sheep, good mutton.

TWEEDALE: You mean poaching on the land, not just on the sea.

BANNING: They come on the land and shoot the sheep. They used to do that with us. I know that when we lived in Wilmington my father would go down to the butcher shop and he'd say, "Well, here's some good California mutton, Catalina mutton." It probably was. Not much you could do about it. It cost too much money for people riding all over the place. But apparently Carey Stanton worked it out and he caught a bunch of them. Finally the fishermen sort of gave up, as near as I can tell. They didn't like to be

shot at. Some of the guards used to kick up dust around them a little bit with a rifle.

TWEEDALE: Did they raise the sheep for wool or for meat?

BANNING: Both.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to know what kind of sheep they had there?

BANNING: No. We brought into Catalina a bunch of black-faced Mexican sheep. The stock was running down. That improved everything greatly. But the way they're running Santa Cruz, they don't overgraze it. They're very careful about that. Catalina was badly overgrazed, mostly on account of goats. That's why we used to have the sheepshearers shoot goats.

TWEEDALE: I see. Santa Cruz didn't have the goat problem.

BANNING: Pigs.

TWEEDALE: Just the pigs.

BANNING: Yes. They are not a problem. They're wonderful, pigs are. Because we had a great deal of trouble on Catalina with rattlesnakes. And a pig doesn't mind a rattlesnake a bit. They'll kill them and eat them. Apparently there is so much fat around their jowls and their forelegs that when the snake hits them, the poison is so slow going through them it doesn't bother them very much. They trample the

snake to death. I saw it happen down at Bartlett Springs one time. They had a lot of pigs running loose around there just on account of rattlesnakes.

TWEEDALE: Where's Bartlett Springs?

BANNING: It's up north of San Francisco. We spent a half a summer up there and I was disgusted. I am from Catalina.

TWEEDALE: You're too used to that good island living. Earlier on, Mr. Banning, you mentioned a story you were going to tell me later about one of the islands.

BANNING: That is San Miguel, which is up the coast from Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa. That is a charming island, especially for youngsters. There's a place there called Cuyler Harbor. In the harbor is a place called Prince Island. The harbor is a very dangerous place because there are pin rocks sticking up here and there. You don't go fooling around there at night. I went out of there once in a fog and we put a rowboat out ahead of us. The rowboat rowed and we followed them at about one mile an hour for what we guessed would get us out of the harbor. Cuyler Harbor is very well protected. When we were there the first time, we were met on the beach by a collie dog and a young man with both forearms missing. Congenital deformities. He was not all there mentally. This collie dog was very wonderful and looked

out for him. He motioned us to follow him, which we did. We went up to a house on a windswept mesa. It had a rather long tunnel built out of wood from a vessel that had been wrecked on the south coast of the island. The entrance to this tunnel was a revolving door. He took us in there and we met the "King" and "Queen" of San Miguel. They had dedicated their life to looking out for their crippled son, and this was one place where he would not be laughed at or made fun of. He loved the island and they did. They told us the story of a windstorm that came up. They lived in a canyon with a running stream. The sand began to drift and in about a week, as I remember, that whole canyon filled up; the house, stream, and everything disappeared. That's why they built this house up on this windswept mesa because the sand would blow right by. Because of the movement of the sand, hunting for Indian relics was comparatively easy. We got a great many. A stone flute and any number of ollas, arrowheads, and abalones with wampum inside. They took two abalone shells and put them together with all the relics of the chief inside. Then they used tar around the outside and through the vent holes of the abalones to seal them up and then buried them. Often you wouldn't have to dig very much. The wind blew the sand around. That proves beyond any ques-

tion that several hundred years ago when this happened--certainly more than one hundred--that the Santa Barbara Channel had oil in it.

TWEEDALE: Yes, because of the tar.

BANNING: We used to get it at Catalina, on the beach. The tar springs, submarine tar springs.

TWEEDALE: What is a tar spring?

BANNING: It was under the ocean.

TWEEDALE: Oh, I see. Is it a type of seepage?

BANNING: Yes. That's where they made a mistake in this drilling. They tried to produce from two zones with a shale body in between. A low zone with high pressure, and a zone with practically no pressure at all. Very little seepage. The minute that high pressure zone got mixed up with the low pressure zone the whole thing went. That's why they have so much trouble stopping it. And they can't stop it because it just naturally does that. They just agitated the whole situation by letting that low pressure zone in.

TWEEDALE: By drilling up there in Santa Barbara?

BANNING: That's the federal job. The state jobs, they've no trouble at all.

TWEEDALE: Is is a matter of just not knowing the ocean floor or realizing that would happen?

BANNING: I think it was plain greed. It could have been an accident. I don't know. But I've seen them

try to bring in two different zones and almost always you get in trouble when you do it. I know enough about it on our own ranch. We have I think ten or twelve wells offshore in Orange County.

TWEEDALE: In Orange County.

BANNING: On our ranch out in the ocean. Inside the city limits of Newport Beach. You talk to those people about oil. They hate us down there because we have some oil wells, they don't.

TWEEDALE: [laughter] Well, when you went to the various channel islands did you go mainly for pleasure, to look at the relics, to fish, or. . .

BANNING: Oh, everything. Pleasure, sure, that's the word. But that includes everything.

TWEEDALE: What kinds of things did you do?

BANNING: Well, we met the "King" and "Queen" of San Miguel. Charming, charming old people. They said we had to stay to lunch. Well, God help us. They had mutton soup. I think the tallow was about a half inch thick on top of the soup. To get through that to where the soup was. . . The odor of mutton and wool to me is not very appetizing. There is just something about it. But we didn't want to turn those people down and high-hat their soup, so we valiantly went through with it. We were great friends from then on. They told us where to dig. He had a wonderful collection.

TWEEDALE: Indian relics.

BANNING: Oh, yes. They had nothing to do. I think they had a tender that would come over about three times a year and bring supplies to them and sheep-shearers. I don't remember how many sheep they had over there. It couldn't have been very many because the island wouldn't take it. Maybe 2,000 or 3,000. But it was a wonderful place; so interesting. And our boat was tied up in the lee of the mountain. I would say on the weather side which we were on was a slope of sand. The sand would blow over the top of this mountain. This time we were there for about a week. And there was no varnish on any of the exposed parts. Where the boat would be heading into the wind--the forward part of the mast, and the forward cabin-- the varnish was just sandblasted off from the breeze. And we didn't dare, after talking to the "King" and "Queen", try to fool around with oars in the boat. We took an anchor ashore, put a line on, and pulled ourselves back and forth. You couldn't row against the wind.

We dug a great many Indian relics and most of them ended up in the Southwest Museum. My Uncle Joe was a great collector. He knew all the people up there. I understand now if you try to give them an olla, they shoot you. They have got so many.

[laughter]

But that was a wonderful place. Then they took us down to the wreck. I don't remember much about that. It was not a very large vessel and it was all wood. It'd broken up and they'd built this new house on the windswept mesa mostly out of the wreckage of this boat.

TWEEDALE: Was it a sailboat?

BANNING: Partly. It had two very good masts, booms, and. . . But the thing that interested me was this revolving door. They warned us. They said, "Now, you better look out. You hard-boil an egg and you might find sand inside that egg when you open it up, it's so bad." [laughter] This revolving door was just there to keep the sand out of the house.

TWEEDALE: I see. How clever.

BANNING: They had ventilation. All the ventilation had to come through cracks in the windows and that sort of thing. They had a thing up in the roof with an opening downwind so there was a vacuum up there. That island was one of the worst sandstorms I've ever been in. It was not continuous. Mostly happened in the afternoon when the prevailing northwest wind came up. But this was a norther, I think, that filled up their little valley, right up the stream. They showed us pictures of it; so, it wasn't any dream. No. They

didn't like it.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to remember the names of the people?

BANNING: No. It's a terrible thing. We should have written all this stuff down while we were there, the dates of the whole thing. Oh, you're too busy.

TWEEDALE: You probably don't think of it.

BANNING: And we had brought shovels, picks, hardware cloth strainers, and sifters with us. And the old man was tickled to death. Could he have them? Sure, we'd give them to him. We were all through. We also had some apple pie and some of our beautiful young lady friends had given us a five-pound box of chocolates. We hadn't messed that up much; so, we gave that and the apple pie to them. They just thought that was the greatest thing on earth.

TWEEDALE: That would be a real treat.

BANNING: I'll never forget that mutton soup. [laughter] It was terrible.

TWEEDALE: Did you look for relics on any of the other islands?

BANNING: Catalina.

And then Ira Eaton, who ran Pelican Harbor on Santa Cruz. . . That's the one I was trying to think of--Santa Cruz. Ira Eaton was the county of Santa

Barbara's head bootlegger. A great friend of mine. We always said that he had cold, light blue eyes that would have met in the middle if he didn't have a nose. They were so close together. He was a killer if there ever was one. And Mrs. Eaton was one of the nicest people you ever met. And their daughter Barbara! Oh, God. Long, red hair clear down to her waist and just as pretty as a picture. We were there two or three different times. We were great friends. He took us down to the shack where he used to keep his booze to take it over to the mainland.

TWEEDALE: This is on Santa Cruz Island.

BANNING: Yes. Pelican Harbor. He had a very good setup there because he ran a camp for schoolteachers. A little peninsula stuck out from the main house which helped to make the south side of the harbor. That was a wonderful blind. Schoolteachers are always nice people. So, he showed us a tree where he got all his liquor from. He called it oak juice. He had a hole there and he said, "That's where I get all my liquor." [laughter] He was a wonderful person.

TWEEDALE: Did he lease land for this operation?

BANNING: Yes, from the Caire family. So he must have been alright, if the Caires let him on there. He was good protection, though, for the Caires, because the fishermen didn't fool around with that man.

TWEEDALE: Did they continue their wine-making on Santa Cruz Island during the prohibition period?

BANNING: I think they made it anyway, because they had all these different ways you could use it--Rosicrucians, medical stuff and that sort of thing.

TWEEDALE: And also for Mass.

BANNING: I think that grape juice is a wonderful thing to buy when you can't buy wine.

TWEEDALE: Well, the Caires were French, weren't they?

BANNING: Yes, the Caire family. I never knew Mr. Caire. I don't know anything about him. Madame Caire was the one. She ran that place and the kids toed the mark. It was a great pity she had to die because she kept everything going fine. Trouble started shortly after she died, as I remember.

TWEEDALE: What kind of people did they employ to work for them?

BANNING: Italians.

TWEEDALE: Did they import them from Italy?

BANNING: I don't know. No Mexicans. They were all Italians and some Frenchmen, mostly Italians. Oh, they had a wharf in the harbor that was connected with their winery. They had a great big brick building there, a warehouse for wine with kegs and all that stuff. Most hospitable people. But they did not give anybody any wine. I thought that was very smart. If

you had a meal there, sure, you had it at the meal, but they didn't give you any bottles of wine. They didn't want you to fool around their winery or anything. Pretty smart people.

TWEEDALE: Was their wine good?

BANNING: Oh, yes. Red. I don't remember the name of the grapes. I should have written that down, too. The Italians were wonderful there. But the whole thing is all spoiled now with people. People on the mainland, people everywhere, and boats everywhere. You can't go into a cove any more, it'd be so crowded with boats.

TWEEDALE: How did they get permission to sail into the coves?

BANNING: Can't stop them. Navigable waters of the United States. They're open to everybody as long as you behave yourself.

TWEEDALE: So there are lots of yachtsmen up and down the coastline.

BANNING: Oh, yes. Catalina's just impossible. They tie up in coves now we wouldn't even think about tying up in when we were kids. I suppose it's the same thing at Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz is much better than Catalina for coves and harbors.

TWEEDALE: Are there more coves on the island than away from the prevailing winds?

BANNING: On the land side. The prevailing wind is northwest. From the northwest. It isn't where it's going, it's where it comes from.

TWEEDALE: Yes, I get confused.

BANNING: Yes, it's easy to do. [laughter] Ira used to take moving picture people in his camp. They'd take movies there. The way I always thought movies were run, this was typical. . .

TWEEDALE: Which camp is this?

BANNING: Pelican. Ira's Camp Pelican in Pelican Bay. They had a whole bunch of "movies" there, just sitting around doing nothing. There must have been twenty or thirty of them. They were bored and I didn't like them. He had a boat called the Sea Wolf, after Jack London, I suppose. He had busted a crankshaft; so he asked us if we'd take these "movies". He said, "I don't know when those fools are going to come up here and start taking. I'm going to get rid of these people. Can you help me out?" We said, "Sure." So we loaded the Cricket down with twenty or thirty "movies." If we'd had a Plimsoll mark on our hull, why, it would have disappeared. That shows. . .

TWEEDALE: How far down you were.

BANNING: Yes. It would disappear, all the extra weight we had in the boat. By the time we got to the dock at Santa Barbara we couldn't get rid of them fast enough,

either. They were miserable people.

TWEEDALE: They were just movie crew people. . .

BANNING: Yes. Extras, I suppose.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to know what movies they shot out on Santa Cruz Island?

BANNING: No. No idea. But Ira was wonderful. He'd bring our mail over from the mainland to a good place called Upper and Lower Twin Harbor. A beautiful place. So well protected. The northwest wind is so rough outside there that small boats can't survive. We tried it once and found out. But not a ripple inside. And we'd put out an anchor, then a line to a big rock on shore and nothing to worry about. Ira said, "Don't you try to come down here in small boats. If you get here you might not get back again." So we were going to see all about that, and so this friend of mine, Ross Kirkpatrick and I, took this twelve-foot dinghy outside. We had bailing buckets and everything else. But we swamped. We brought our bathing suits, of course, and we pushed the boat back in full of water, just swimming. In five minutes we were sunk. So we didn't argue with Ira any more after that.

TWEEDALE: He was right.

BANNING: He ought to know. Then there was a wonderful cave, Painted Cave. He told us how to find that. It's difficult to find. We had brought a big seine skiff,

a battery, and a searchlight with us to go into this cave. We'd never been in it. And that is quite an experience. The walls are almost pitch black. You turn a searchlight on in there and it just disappears almost. My father told me about going in there in his yacht, La Paloma, many years ago before they had gasoline engines. He said they almost got swamped. They got inside, they couldn't see anything. They heard all this barking and barking. The seals began jumping off the ledges getting out of there. They were frightened of these people coming in. And he said, "We pretty near got swamped by seals. So look out when you go in there." So we did. And there was one seal in the whole cave. Bark, bark and off he went. But it was remarkable, the size of this cave. You could tell, if you know anything about geology at all, that those islands are just as volcanic as they can be. They try to dig for oil on those islands. You don't find oil where there's been volcanoes. But this cave was wonderful. With one of the branches we tied a line onto a rock, on a little ledge on one of the cliffs inside the cave. We let ourselves over to this place. When you talk about a whirlpool. . . We got right over so we could turn on the searchlight and look down. As the water went down, it would slowly, slowly stop, then sort of fill up and push you away

from the cave. It was hooked up someplace to another part of the island in rough water. It had nothing to do with the water in the cave. Very interesting.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

FEBRUARY 19, 1970

TWEEDALE: What about rumrunning, Mr. Banning?

BANNING: This is a very interesting experience because prohibition had been going on long enough so that the public was fairly well versed in how to handle it. And Ira Eaton, the "King of Pelican Harbor," was the number one rumrunner for Santa Barbara County. I think as a reward for taking his surplus moving picture extras over to the mainland, he asked us to come over to the rum ship with him in my father's yacht, Cricket, which my father had loaned us for the summer. So, we went quite a ways out to sea and came alongside an English flag vessel which was loaded with Peter Dawson's Scotch whisky in beautiful stone crocks with red ribbons tying on the fancy corks which you use after you break the seal. The captain said, "Lad, whatever you do, don't drink that stuff. It's against the law in Scotland." He said, "I doubt if it's six months old, including the voyage." They were wonderful. We just loved it. So we took some cases on board, the Sea Wolf having broken down. The main idea was Ira wanted to contact the captain and tell him why he wasn't out there with the Sea Wolf because it was the rumrunner. It would take him to the mainland. They'd just tie up at the

regular wharf and unload the whisky onto the wharf. A big limousine would come down and pick up Ira and take him up to his house. Then trucks would take the whisky up and put it in his backyard. We went up there and had dinner with him one night and the word got around that some whisky had arrived. The whole backyard was full of people. And Ira came to me and said, "Mr. Banning," he pointed out one man, "Keep away from those people. They run dope. Low class people." I think that's wonderful. [laughter] We had dinner with him; then Ira went back again. The next morning we came back and had breakfast with him.

TWEEDALE: Did you have dinner and breakfast in Santa Barbara?

BANNING: Yes, in his home. That's where all the booze was. So at breakfast the next morning--Ira fixed up a very good breakfast for us--we were sitting around smoking cigarettes. All of a sudden he said, "Men, ditch those cigarettes. Come over to the sink quick!" So we all went over there and put out our cigarettes and opened the windows. He said, "Here comes my dad and if he catches me smoking I catch hell." [laughter] Absolutely. That's impossible. But he did. And we thought that was just perfect. We didn't laugh at all. It was serious. Old Dad came in there. He was quite a character. "Ira!" "I've got guests, Father."

[laughter] I just love things like that.

TWEEDALE: That was terrific.

BANNING: But it was wide open. No trouble at all.

TWEEDALE: I see. Were they running rum into Los Angeles in the same way?

BANNING: Oh, sure. They had better practice down there because they used to run Chinamen. And the fellows that ran Chinamen, they shifted over into running rum. It was more profitable.

TWEEDALE: They ran Chinamen? How did they do that?

BANNING: Pick them up in Mexico, bring them up. The Lowman brothers. Three of them. This is about the harbor now. We don't want to skip to that, do we?

TWEEDALE: It's all right with me.

BANNING: San Pedro, Wilmington Harbor, before Long Beach got going. They had a boat called the Samson. It had a pretty good engine in it. They had an auxillary engine that they would hook on in an emergency. That's when the revenue cutter would turn the searchlight on them.

TWEEDALE: Yes, that was an emergency.

BANNING: If they had Chinese aboard they had to get out of the way of the cutter before they could get rid of the Chinese. I knew the engineer that had been engineer on the Samson for quite a while. He said, "We hook that engine on, we can outrun the revenue

cutter any day." The revenue cutter was a great big old icebreaker called the Bear. I think it went down to the arctic with Admiral--oh, gosh.

TWEEDALE: Admiral Byrd?

BANNING: Yes, Byrd. It couldn't get out of its own way in a full gale. He said that sometimes, if things were not going right, he'd bring the Chinamen up on deck, one by one, for fresh air. They had everything fixed, put a weight around their ankles and overboard they went. And that was the end of the Chinamen. And if the Bear would catch them and come on board. You could smell the Chinese. If you know anything about California you can tell Chinese have been there. Nothing to do, they couldn't prove a thing. He said, "Hell, I don't know how many, but I know of at least twenty murdered that way."

TWEEDALE: Just thrown over. Why were they bringing them in?

BANNING: Two to five hundred dollars a head.

TWEEDALE: I mean, someone was hiring them for labor?

BANNING: Yes. No, not hiring them for labor. The Chinese colony--whatever it was in Mexico--was paying them to get these guys in, get to Chinatown, and get lost.

TWEEDALE: I see. They wanted to join their families that were already there?

BANNING: Well, maybe that, maybe they just didn't like Mexico or China. They all wanted to get to the United States. An awful lot of that. We had all sorts of Asiatic prohibition laws, against the Japanese, mostly.

This running rum in Santa Barbara. The sheriff had to know about this because if he didn't, why, his men might have interfered with us, you see. [laughter] That Prohibition was one of the silliest things we ever did. The "do-gooders." The road to hell is paved with good intentions. These "do-gooders!" That WCTU! Those very fine and wonderful women. The Women's Christian Temperence Union. What did they give us? We've got the Mafia now on account of it.

TWEEDALE: A lot of money was earned on that.

BANNING: Oh, gosh, yes. That's where the Mafia got its start in this country.

TWEEDALE: Was rumrunning a big business then?

BANNING: Oh, gosh, yes. One of the Husson's sons, Percy--he was the oldest boy--got dunked over three different times by the Coast Guard. See, when this rumrunning started they had fast vessels. The Coast Guard had pretty good speed boats and they're pretty savvy people. It was as risky as could be, running rum. We'd see these rum ships from England, mostly loaded with Scotch, off the Mexican coast. We'd be

sailing up and down there. There'd be the United States Coast Guard standing by seeing who was coming alongside to pick up a cargo. They'd try to get away with it and, hell, they'd just radio. If they couldn't pinch them there, they'd just radio up and the Coast Guard on our coast would be looking for them. Percy got knocked over two or three times and it just raised hell with him financially.

TWEEDALE: Well, did the rum ships just anchor outside the mileage limit?

BANNING: Yes.

TWEEDALE: And then the other boats would come.

BANNING: Well, in Mexico it didn't make any difference.

TWEEDALE: Did they use the islands a good deal?

BANNING: I don't know whether they did or not. I doubt it very much, because rum was in such great demand. If you had a cache of rum, why, the fisherman would find out about that. You'd go back to get it and it wouldn't be there.

TWEEDALE: Yes. So you couldn't stow it away anywhere.

BANNING: I never heard of it and I guess that's the reason.

TWEEDALE: Yes.

BANNING: But this Prohibition thing, oh, my goodness. What a silly thing it was. The whole business was wrong.

[End of interview]

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO (CONTINUED)

FEBRUARY 24, 1970

TWEEDALE: Now, Mr. Banning, could you begin talking about when your father took over running [Santa Catalina] Island?

BANNING: The first time I remember very much about Father's actual activities on the island was about 1902 when they were moving the equipment in to a place called Empire Landing. It's near what now's called the Isthmus. There was an old Indian soapstone quarry. They fooled around with the soapstone but it wasn't very good. But they had serpentine near there. Father decided that it was a good thing to put a quarry there and they fixed up a marble works in Los Angeles. The construction was on very, very steep hillsides heading from the beach up to the quarry.

TWEEDALE: What was the name of the marble works in Los Angeles?

BANNING: Didn't have any. It was just there. The marble works, a coalyard, my uncle's stable for his horses and coaches.

TWEEDALE: This is Uncle William.

BANNING: Yes. And Father's coalyard and the marble works. They drilled with steam as they usually do in marble works. They put a certain number of holes

down and drove in wooden pegs. That would split off the marble without cracking the pieces. Then to get that down to the beach and on board the old Sacramento River scow to bring it back to the mainland, they had a two-wheeled rig with four horses. It was impossible to get the marble down in the regular wagon because the wheels would be locked with the brakes and it still would run over the horses. They dragged two huge timbers with front wheels with the marble loaded on the timbers. The derrick picked it up and put it on the river scow. The old Sacramento River scow took it across to the mainland. Southern Pacific would pick it up and take it up to Naud Junction. That's where our marble works were. The Catalina Hotel was built by my uncle George Patton. The front of it was all Catalina serpentine marble. Very beautiful. We used a great deal of the marble in Avalon to build aquariums, because the salt water would destroy any metal. They would cut this marble up. It could be done very easily and fit in plate glass. They used sort of a putty in the joints between the marble and the glass. The aquarium was quite an attraction.

TWEEDALE: When was the aquarium actually built?

BANNING: About 1904 or 1905, somewhere in there. It was a great attraction, not only for tourists but for scientists who wanted pictures of different fish. It

was mostly an experiment [to see] what kind of fish you could keep in captivity without them killing themselves. Mackerel you could not keep. Yellowtail you could not keep. Sardines, which are in the herring family, you could not keep. Rock bass, sheepshead, perch, and what you might call the more sedentary fish, if there is such a thing, you could: abalone, octopus, kelp fish, and electric fish, which are little tiny and gold colored with blue iridescent spots on them. We used to catch them, bring them to the aquarium, when we were children.

TWEEDALE: Were all the fish in the aquarium local fish?

BANNING: Oh, yes. They probably didn't ship fish around the way they do now. At the marble quarry, you could turn out very, very thin-walled cups, almost as thin as glass. Turn them out on the lathe. And in those days the breweries were all show-offs and they used to make wonderful switchboards to control all the apparatus. The switches were gold plated and they'd use onyx for the back part to hold the switches. Father tried to work it out with the Catalina marble, but, even with the low volatge that we used in those days, a certain amount of this marble had iron in it and wasn't very suitable for switchboards. They did some wonderful work. At the north end of our old house, my grandfather's house in Wilmington, Father, for the

fun of it, built a beautiful bar with columns of different colored marble. Later on when the city took over our grandfather's house in Wilmington for Banning Park, they moved the bar down to the Episcopal Church and made the altar out of it.

TWEEDALE: Where did you get the stonecutters from?

BANNING: We'd train our own men out of a family called Splittstosser. That's something you learn when you were very little and you never forget it. There were three Splitts. We didn't call them Splittstosser, just Mr. Splitts. There was Purser Splitts; he worked on the steamer. There was Quarry Splitts and he worked in the quarry at Empire Landing. His younger brother was Marbleyard Splitts and he sawed up the chunks and made slabs out of them with water, sand, and a bunch of blades hooked up to the gangsaw. They were a great family. We just thought they were wonderful. And then there was a Mr. Carey, Mr. Frank Carey. He was a wonderful person, a friend of my father's. He was sort of overall [sic] for the quarry and the marbleyard. He was a very mechanical-minded person. He could run a lathe. He could turn out these very thin-walled cups out of the serpentine, bookends, paperweights, and things of that sort. We kept that running. It was active both in Los Angeles and on the island till Mr. Wrigley took over.

TWEEDALE: Was it 1919?

BANNING: Yes. And Mr. Renton stopped all of that right now. He said it wasn't practical. Maybe it wasn't by that time. We don't know.

Well, one summer my father thought I ought to do a little work once in a while for the company. He gave me a job as engineer on this tugboat with a very mean engine. Huge thing. Gasoline, two cylinders, union engine. It was very mean to start. You had to "bar it over". If you had the ignition on, why, sometimes it would kick back. You could very easily be killed. So he had me trained very carefully how to run that engine. The next summer he made me captain of the little tug, Catalina. He gave me an engineer. We needed a bull over at Avalon. They had a little lighter, a small barge. They loaded the bull in the lighter and I was supposed to tow it over to Catalina, which I did. We dumped the bull overboard and he swam ashore. They took him up to the dairy. In the meantime, the engineer had gotten acquainted with some belle on the beach and he said we weren't going to leave till tomorrow. I said, "We're supposed to be back there at 5:00 A.M. We'll never make it unless we leave tonight," because the tugboat wasn't very fast. He went ashore anyway. I just picked up and took her across by myself, ran the engine and steered. I looked at the tide table

first to see whether the outgoing tide was going to be of any assistance, which it was. It was very easy to dock against the tide. You don't have to back up; the tide does it for you. And you can go right alongside the dock. So that was that for the tugboat business.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, you mentioned the dairy.

BANNING: Oh, yes. We had to put in a dairy over there. The boats would come from Los Angeles carrying these old-time farm cans--ten to fifteen gallons, I suppose. The vibration on the trains didn't help any. The vibration on the steamer and handling, three or four handlings before it ever got to the hotel, I think, was the reason for the milk souring so soon. We even had it iced. Because we had to haul all of our ice over there. We had no ice plant. So they decided they better have a dairy so we could have some fresh milk, which they did. And then they had the creamery and cream separator right near the hotel.

TWEEDALE: Which hotel is this?

BANNING: The Metropole, our hotel. It was located near the back of the hotel across the street, Metropole Avenue it was called. I always heard a story that amused me greatly. The sanitation wasn't very good. There were lots of flies around. The wings and legs of the flies would come out in the light cream and

the bodies with skim milk in the bottom. I don't think it's true but it's a good story.

TWEEDALE: And where was the dairy actually located?

BANNING: It was way up back of the golf links in Avalon Canyon. I think the golf links were built about 1900 or 1902. Then that brings up the story of all the "Petes" we had working for us. We built a clubhouse. I don't think we had eighteen holes in the golf links--to begin with anyway--only nine, so this probably would be called the tenth hole at that time. He was "Clubhouse Pete." We had a bathhouse down at the beach at Avalon; he was "Bathhouse Pete." Then we had a little tiny tugboat, the Torqua, and he was "Torqua Pete." We just thought all of them were wonderful. The children did. They were very loyal and wonderful people. "Clubhouse Pete," I never did know his last name. "Bathhouse Pete" was a Belgian named Pete Snyder. He was a wonderful cook. He had the fame of getting pretty hungry for some whisky and he rowed a boat all the way from the Isthmus to San Pedro. We picked him up a few days later in a saloon, sobered him up, and brought him back to Catalina again. He'd rowed all the way across by himself.

TWEEDALE: He must have been very thirsty.

BANNING: We used to camp with the stagecoach and chuckwagon. He'd run the chuckwagon for us. He'd bake

bread and all sorts of things over the campfires with the different pans and things he had. He went into the Spanish-American War. I remember very distinctly he brought me a beautiful shell curtain he made for me with gold beads between each button shell. I treasured that for years. That was his going-away present. The whole thing was like a big family. Everybody knew everybody. We were trained to call everybody Mr. Pete and Mr. So-And-So, and never by their last name. They were all just as good or better than you were because they were older and knew more. It was wonderful training we had.

TWEEDALE: What kind of trees did you have on Catalina?

BANNING: They were eucalyptus trees. They were planted by my Uncle Joe, Joseph Brent Banning--that word Brent is important--with seeds. I suppose you could call them seeds. I don't know. They're not acorns. Some people call them that but they aren't. They are about the size of an ordinary acorn. The shipmasters used to bring them to my grandfather. He had very close contact with them in the old house at Wilmington. He had a cupola on top of it; so he could see when the ships were coming in from there. He would get on his horse, go down, and get the tugboat and lighters out to unload the ship. The water was too shoaly for these full-rigged ships to get inside. They didn't want to,

anyway, on account of the southeasters that would blow, and northers.

TWEEDALE: These were mainly ships from Australia?

BANNING: Yes. And these sea captains used to bring these seeds up. He planted a great many of them around Wilmington because there weren't any trees there. There's an article by some German and the subject was Wilmington. What a horrible place it was because sand was blowing all over the place. No trees, no shrubbery, just a bare plain. Very different from what it is now with all of those eucalyptus trees. They planted some at the Isthmus, Emerald Bay, Johnson's Landing, and then at Avalon. Planted them all over the place at Avalon. Wherever my Uncle Joe went and stayed very long, he planted trees. It was a wonderful thing.

TWEEDALE: Were there any native trees on Catalina?

BANNING: Oh, yes. There was scrub oak, scrub willow and then what they call toyon. That's Christmas hollyberries. Catalina holly we used to call it. Now it's called toyon. And then some cottonwoods on the south side of the island.

TWEEDALE: But Avalon itself had no trees.

BANNING: No, just bare, as you can see in that picture.

TWEEDALE: You mentioned something about some coin divers.

BANNING: Oh, yes. They had coin divers over there, in Avalon. When the steamer would come in, and especially when it was going out Sunday night, that was the big time, Sunday evening, for the coin divers. There was a family over there, Mrs. E. Travilla. She had one daughter and three sons. They were wonderful people. Guy, Jack, and Ford. Guy was the tough one. He was the "King of the Coin Divers." In the summertime, when the diving was most lucrative, Guy wouldn't let anyone from the mainland dive. He just tied it up with some of the Mexicans and Portuguese. Peter Adargo was one of the better, little tiny ones. He was so cute that they let him in there right now. I don't suppose he was more than nine years old when he was diving. They were a very decent crowd. And the only outsider, outside of myself, that was allowed to dive there was a very wonderful person named Bill Travrner. Bill was an awfully nice person. One evening when the Sunday steamer was departing and I was rowing for one of the divers, somebody began yelling, "Hey, we threw over a five-dollar gold piece. See if you can find it." Guy Travilla had gotten it. You put this money in your mouth when you're under water then you come up and spit it out on the floor of the skiff. He hadn't paid any attention to it. So we looked around and sure enough, Guy came back and gave the

five dollars back to the man on the steamer. I doubt if any of the little native coin divers would do that in other places. They were wonderful people. They ran a curio store there. Afterward they had an act on the Orpheum stage, when the Orpheum was in its heyday. They had a huge tank with a glass front in it and two seals, Catalina seals they'd trained since they were pups. They'd all get in the tank and stay underwater for three minutes. My brother and two or three of our friends got a box seat to watch them, at the matinee. We wanted to go every other week. We had a stopwatch and we stopped the little one forward, stopped him, at a little over three minutes. Takes years and years of training to do that. He was the youngest of the bunch and I guess he could do better. Guy wasn't very good. He could only stay there about two minutes. You try to hold your breath underwater. You can cheat, you know, unintentionally. Put your head underwater, try to hold it for one minute, especially if you're down twenty or thirty feet because you don't know how long it's going to take before you get to the surface.

TWEEDALE: How deep was it where they were diving for the coins in Catalina?

BANNING: I guess about twenty feet, twenty-five feet. Because at low tide they had to have enough water for

the steamers to get in.

TWEEDALE: How long were the coin divers there?

BANNING: I can't remember when they weren't there. Until after Mr. Wrigley took over and they incorporated the town. Mr. Renton, the superintendent, and the religious citizens of Avalon decided the boys weren't working hard enough in the wintertime because they made so much money diving for money in the summertime. So they stopped it. It took a great deal of the charm away from the island, which crowds of people are bound to do to anything. You can't help it.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me a little bit about the Meteor Boat Company?

BANNING: Oh, yes. They started out--I remember it--with a small side-wheeler gasoline engine. It had glass boxes that you inserted at the bottom of the case in the bottom of the hull to make it glass-bottomed, [and it was] named the Bon Ami. Then they built another one called the Cleopatra which was also a side-wheeler. It was bigger and better except for one thing. It couldn't get as close to the shore as the rowboats with which it was competing. Then there was the Meteor itself and the Avalon. They were excursion boats. They would take people up the coast on barbecues and rides around the island. All sorts of things of that kind. My father was more or less

in charge. He decided that there was too much gravy getting away from us. So, he built a whole bunch of rowboats. Most of those had been put out of business by the powerboats.

TWEEDALE: Who owned the Meteor Boat Company?

BANNING: Stockholders. Johnny Nestell was one of them. The tickets that we sold to the island, round-trip tickets, had extra coupons that could be put on there. They would have a ride in our glass-bottomed boats but not the Meteor Company glass-bottomed boats. Naturally the people had already paid for it; so, they went in the rowboats. As a matter of fact, the rowboats were far superior to the powerboats because they could get in closer. They could stop and hold things for some individual who wanted to look at this or look at that. At Sugarloaf, there was a hermit goldfish in a cave. He was quite a well-known goldfish. He'd stay in front of this cave and any other fish that would come near, he'd run off.

TWEEDALE: How did he get there?

BANNING: He was just there. They're salt water goldfish. I forget what they call them. Cabrillo bass, I think. Cabrillo bass or something like that. And the rowboats were a great success. I remember Johnny Nestell, who ran the Pilgrim Club which is essentially nothing but a gambling casino, saw my father on the

street one time after the Meteor Boat Company stopped paying dividends because of our competition. He said, "Give them hell, Hancock!" And I always thought that Mr. Nestell--we always called him Mr. Tijuana--didn't care so much about losing the dividends that the Meteor Boat Company had been paying until our boats went in competition with them because he ran the Pilgrim Club. There was gambling in Ben Rosin's saloon, in Dan Jerrue's saloon, and in the Pilgrim Club. In the two saloons, they didn't go higher than silver dollars. But the Pilgrim Club--we heard as little children--used five-, ten-, and twenty-dollar gold pieces. They had to have that over there because of the tourists as they do in so many places. Of course, they're absolutely illegal, but the sheriff was very nice about it. About the time the season was over, Labor Day, they'd stage a big raid and close all the gambling clubs up. They probably would have closed a day or two later anyway because the season was over.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, would you tell us what you remember about the Isthmus?

BANNING: Oh, yes. The Isthmus. We tried for quite a few years to start another resort there where we controlled all the land. In Avalon we didn't. Avalon turned into sort of a honky-tonk place. Too many stores, too many tourists. It didn't work out very

well because of the wind coming through from the south side of the island through the gap at Catalina Harbor, which was the harbor south of the Isthmus about a half mile away. My Uncle Joe planted a lot of trees on the Isthmus hoping to cut the wind down because it spoiled the swimming from about eleven o'clock in the morning usually until sundown. Fog would also blow in through the gap in the south end at Catalina Harbor. The trees were stunted because of the wind and the lack of water. We had an old windmill. It didn't have any fantail on it because all you had to do was to build it so it faced the south. That's the only way the wind blew. It would pump a little bit of water, but there were an awful lot of trees that needed water that didn't get it. The trees didn't grow the way the eucalyptus did in Avalon. Some of the palm trees along the beach--we never did know if they had their roots in salt water or not--grew very nicely. And some of them were still there ten or twelve years ago when I was there. I know they get salt water when the storms come up in the winter-time. It doesn't seem to bother them any. My grand-father had built, under contract with the Army, several buildings and barracks and officers' quarters in the higher part of the Isthmus during the Civil War. The Southern Raider was working in the Pacific and practi-cally shut down all traffic in the Pacific Ocean between

China, the Philippines, and Australia. The government figured they better have some troops on the island to keep the Johnny Rebs from capturing it. What he would want with it, I don't know. And that barracks stood there for many, many years. A family lived in it for a while. There would be as many as twenty or thirty guests there, friends. And Mr. A. B. Cass of the Home Telephone Company in Los Angeles used to take his whole family and start a tent colony there. He was a great conservator. They practically lived on fish, near as I could make out. But they were never allowed to bring home more fish than the family could use. That was plenty of fish because I think there were about fifteen people in the family. Mr. Cass had a very large family. They used to band the yellowtail and then put them back in the ocean. Louie Cass told me that they'd catch the same yellowtail two or three, sometimes four times in one summer. They could tell by the bands. A charming family.

Whether they're ever going to be able to handle that wind or whether people are going to get used to it. . . But if they ever cut the wind off--the way yachts, small boats, cabin cruisers, sailboats are crowding in there now--there won't be any swimming either because the bay will get so filthy. It's crystal clear because of that breeze. But people,

people. It's an evil bird that fouls his own nest. I guess we're pretty evil.

TWEEDALE: You mentioned something about sharks in the bay. Were they common?

BANNING: Oh, yes. Catalina Harbor was full of sharks. Lots of them. We used to catch plenty of them.

TWEEDALE: What kind of sharks were they?

BANNING: Well, they were leopard sharks, sand sharks, and shovelnosed sharks. The shovelnosed sharks are pretty much like a ray. Wings spread out. In a few hours we could catch two or three dozen of them. One time five or six of us got some sheep fencing. The shovelnosed sharks used to get up in the very shallow water at the north end of the harbor and bask in the sun. We put this fence across in fairly deep water. Maybe a little above our waist. We got this fencing on the bottom and then we just started marching inland. The sharks would move and we'd move the fences. The shovelnoses would move and we'd move the fences. Pretty soon they got excited. There must have been hundreds of them because they dumped us all over the place, fence or no fence. [laughter] Everybody laughing. That was wonderful.

TWEEDALE: They never attacked anybody?

BANNING: No. Those shovelnosed things, their mouth was only about an inch and a half. I don't think they

have any teeth. Maybe a little roughing. But the other sharks--the sand sharks and the leopard sharks--some of them I guess would be six feet. They never seemed to bother anybody. We'd swim in there. I've picked them up out of the water. Got the skin taken off my forehead one time for trying to be funny.

TWEEDALE: What buildings were at the Isthmus?

BANNING: They built a small cottage for Mr. Stanton, who was our superintendent, and his family. It was near the government barracks. Then my Uncle Joe decided he'd like to live up there. So, they moved from Avalon and built a beautiful house on top of one of the small hills on the east side of the valley. They had a stage road up to it. Then he planted the whole hillside and all around the house with pine trees and all sorts of trees. The wind wasn't so bad there. These trees got more attention in the way of trimming and water than the ones on the flats. That was a very wonderful place to visit. They had their own electric light plant and their own well. Before Avalon had electricity it was brought up to that end of the island.

TWEEDALE: Was the windmill pumping their well?

BANNING: They had a gasoline engine.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, would you say something about the town character, Mr. Peter Gano?

BANNING: Well, he was hardly a town character because

town characters really get around and talk to people. Everybody knows them. But he never did. He built this house on the east sidehill of Avalon and brought his bride over there. He loved the island. He wanted to live there. But she said she wasn't going to live there all alone on that island. She got up and left. It apparently made a recluse out of Mr. Gano. He decided the hell with it. He was going to live there. And he did. And one or two times a week, maybe three times a week--he had an old sorrel horse and a buggy--he'd drive downtown to get his supplies. Then he'd drive up again. He hardly ever said anything to anyone. We were all sort of halfway afraid of him as little children. But it was a very sad thing. That house was a landmark. It was there ever since I could remember. It was just very recently that the thing was falling apart from neglect. They wrecked it and took it away. It was a great pity. It was almost as prominent as Sugarloaf.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, you mentioned Mr. Wrigley's attitude toward the island.

BANNING: Well, he loved the island. He truly did. His attitude toward the island was anything but commercial from his point of view. Because he told my Uncle William, who remained vice-president of the Catalina Island Company for quite a few years, that

he'd been a good boy all through the war and paid his taxes. Now he was going to play with Catalina. He had plenty of money that he could use there to make Catalina go. He made the famous remark, "Patton, you say that you only have a two-month season around here. If I can make people chew my gum I can make them go to Catalina all the year around." Which of course he didn't, and you couldn't. The season there is maybe two and a half months. I think that as time goes on they'll get more water over there which they've always been short of. There'll be people living there all year around instead of the population quadrupling in the summertime and everybody disappearing from Labor Day until the Fourth of July of next year. Mr. Wrigley was a great person. He built this house on the mountain on the east side of Avalon. We didn't know it was a mountain until he named it Mount Ada after his wife. He told my uncle he was going to build this house. My uncle told him he'd have to get an architect to do that. "What do you want, Captain?" "Well, I think, Mr. Wrigley, you better make it colonial design." "That's all right, Captain, but don't make it too damn colonial." [laughter]

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TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, would you tell me about digging the sewers in Avalon?

BANNING: We got a contractor to dig the sewer ditches and install the sewers rather than do it by force account. He had all Negroes as ditchdiggers. It was all done with pick and shovel and wheelbarrows. It was all right for a week or two until they got down pretty far in depth. One of the Negroes saw a skull and they all quit. They just wouldn't take it. What had happened was that they dug into an old Indian burial ground. The contractor then got some Mexicans over there to finish the job. They didn't seem to mind skulls and skeletons.

TWEEDALE: You mentioned something there about a few merchants carrying freight to the islands.

BANNING: Oh, yes. Some of the merchants who were there didn't like the freight rates we were charging. They took us before the Railroad Commission, which is now called the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California. We naturally were represented there. The Railroad Commission not only didn't agree to the merchants' idea but they told us that we better raise the freight rates. Which we did.

TWEEDALE: It sort of worked in reverse then.

BANNING: Then they chartered a tug and lighter. They were going into the freight business themselves. We told them they could use our wharf and derrick because we knew they couldn't make it. They lost their shirts on that. In a few weeks they realized that they couldn't do the work.

TWEEDALE: What about communications on the island?

BANNING: Mr. Windle had his publication--I think it came out once a week--called the Islander. He had competition from another newspaper run by a man named W. M. Lefaver. It was called the Wireless because we had a mast and a little shack up on the highest mountain, west of Avalon, to send wireless messages. Before that, the Zahn brothers in Los Angeles. . . They were good friends of ours and they had what we called the "Pigeon Express" after the Pony Express. They had pigeons at Catalina and they had pigeons in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles pigeons would come to Catalina in the cage and go back under their own power, and vice-versa. A lot of people know about pigeons, homing pigeons. They had some attachment they put on the pigeon's leg to carry the message. We also had a pigeonhouse at our home next to Avalon, El Descanso. My Uncle Joe had charge of that. Pretty soon we didn't have any pigeons. The two Chinese gardeners didn't seem to

take to taking care of pigeons. All our pigeons would end up at "Chicken Johnny's." "Chicken Johnny" had chickens and pigeons, and Lord knows what, north of the golf course in Avalon. Then the Wireless came along and put the Zahn brothers and the pigeons out of business.

TWEEDALE: You sent messages from Descanso then to the mainland?

BANNING: My uncle used to because he had some pigeons over there. The Zahn brothers owned them. But "Chicken Johnny" used to "steal" them. We'd accuse him of "stealing" them. He thought that was a big joke. Everytime he'd see us for several years, "Still 'stealing' your pigeons!"

TWEEDALE: He just fed them better .

BANNING: Oh, yes. He knew how to take care of them. They liked him. Didn't like our Chinese. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me what you recollect about the Banning home in Wilmington?

BANNING: Well, it was on a plot of ground something a little over twenty acres, all fenced eventually. It was really about a four-story house. The basement was a dance floor with four fireplaces in it. Then the main floor was somewhat above ground, the second story, the servants' quarters above that, and then the cupola above that. The cupola was built so my grandfather could look out towards San Pedro and see ships

coming in. Then he could go down to the harbor and get one of the tugboats. They were all side-wheelers. Three of them, I think we had. They took lighters out to the sailing ships and brought their cargo in because the water was too shallow for the sailing ships to come in any closer than they did.

TWEEDALE: Your first recollection of the harbor area is actually visiting the Banning home.

BANNING: Yes. We used to go there on Washington's Birthday every year. We'd go down to the Southern Pacific and they'd let us off at the nearest place to our house, which was Canal Street, now called, and Avalon Boulevard. My uncle would meet us there with the stagecoach. We'd drive up to the house for a barbecue and outdoor picnic.

TWEEDALE: I see. Your Uncle Joe lived in the house.

BANNING: Not at that particular time. But before then. He and his family, my cousins Joe, Katherine and William, the youngest of the three. He was born after they moved up to Tenth and Westlake in Los Angeles. There were usually about twenty or thirty people at these Washington's Birthday celebrations. Then we moved there I think it was around 1915. We lived there and in our home at Adams and Grand Avenue in Los Angeles. And I didn't know very much about the harbor except going around with my father in a little launch. Long

Beach Harbor was just barely started--had more mudflats than we did. We used to go over to the Craig yard to see the launching of submarines and various vessels they were building over there. They were all broad-side launchings. Some of the people across the narrow channel would get pretty wet when the wave would hit the other side. I have recollections of some of our ship launchings. We had a yard on the end of Mormon Island. A wonderful old German shipbuilder named William Muller. He always seemed to pick out the most inconvenient hours to have a launchings of one of the family vessels. We always thought it was because he didn't want a crowd of people there. But he used the high tide as an excuse. We couldn't launch at low tide because we'd get stuck in the mud. We all stayed at the Brighton Beach Hotel. Brighton Beach was a very fashionable place and a great many well-known Los Angeles people had summer cottages there. Brighton Beach was on Rattlesnake Island which is now called Terminal Island. And we'd go in a small launch from Brighton Beach over to Mormon Island for the launching. Swimming was very good there because you had smooth water on the harbor side and surf on the other side. It was too bad that the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce annexed a half a mile strip (I think something like thirteen to eighteen miles long between the City of

Los Angeles and the towns of Wilmington and San Pedro), then proceeded to have a so-called election in the two towns and annexed them--took over the whole area as Los Angeles Harbor.

TWEEDALE: This was in 1908, wasn't it?

BANNING: That happened in 1908. Glad you brought that up. That was the beginning of the end for Brighton Beach. There were a good many squatters along the harbor side of the waterfront. They warned them to get out. They wouldn't get out. So, the drudgers just went up and drudged the mud out from under them. Some of them fell in the bay. Pretty cruel piece of business. Of course, the Brighton Beach Hotel was out of business right away. They were all on tidelands. I don't think anybody knew who owned what. The city just took over. Rather ruthless. It was the way the Water and Power people did in Bishop and those places. Cold-blooded, ruthless power moves, both of them. But it was a wonderful thing. We could go down in the mud flats and dig cockles and razorback clams at low tide. If there were any left now, which there aren't, you wouldn't dare eat any of them because they'd be poison. Hepatitis, I think, is the word.

TWEEDALE: Was there anything besides the hotel in the way of a resort on Rattlesnake Island?

BANNING: A lot of cottages. A good many people had

summer cottages there. It was a very popular, smart place to be.

TWEEDALE: Seems almost impossible now.

BANNING: Rattlesnake Island was well named because an old German herpetologist that I knew used to tell me about capturing rattlesnakes. They were a very lucrative business because Rattlesnake Island rattlesnakes were the only ones of their kind in the world. He used to put one-by-twelve boards down. They'd go under the boards at night. He'd lift the board up and capture them. Then put them in his snake bag. He could ship those things and trade them for pretty near anything to other naturalists around the country.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me what kinds of ships or boats were built in your shipyard?

BANNING: Well, they wouldn't call it a shipyard now. They'd call it a boatyard. All wooden vessels. We built the Hermosa, Warrior, Cabrillo, and two or three of Alan Hancock's Boleros. I think the last one we built was steel construction, Bolero IV. We didn't handle that. We built my uncle's yacht, the Compañero, and a great number of small boats for the different members of the family. And Mr. Valentine's Bolero. There's a good story on that. Valentine brought Mr. Henry Robinson down to look over his boat one time. Mr. Robinson was the type of person that knows everything.

And he said something to Mr. Muller, this old German, "That's very nice looking mahogany there, Mr. Muller." "Mr. Robinson, that is not mahogany. Mahogany comes from Honduras and other tropical places. This is called Philippine mahogany and the tree is no relation to the mahogany tree." Mr. Valentine was very embarrassed. He told me about it. The yard was a wonderful place. Some of us used to work a little in the summertime, Mr. Muller teaching us a little bit about sharpening tools and planing and sawing. We learned a great deal from him. He was a wonderful person. He had rather remarkable experience. He was of the old school in Germany, apprenticeships lasted for years there. He went to sea as a ship's carpenter. This vessel stranded on a sand shoal. She was a full-rigged ship and they all got up in the rigging. One by one from fatigue they would fall off and drown. And he was the last one still in the rigging when a sailing vessel came near and the man at the wheel of the sailing vessel was watching the sails and the compass and was not looking around. You can't sail doing that. The cook came out of the galley to dump some ashes over the side and happened to see Mr. Muller in the rigging. They hove to and sent a boat and picked him up or he wouldn't be with us. Isn't that a remarkable thing? And Mr. Muller was also a builder

of wooden ships during the First World War. They had a lot of ignorant and officious government inspectors coming around here, there, and elsewhere. The ship's knee is where the grain of the wood follows from the trunk around to some of the more surface roots. You get pretty nearly a right angle with the grain following the contour of the angle. They call it ship's knees. And there had to be some kind of trick wood. I don't remember what it was--hickory's as good as anything. One of these inspectors came in there and said, "Mr. Muller, you're not up to specifications. None of these are hickory-shaped knees." "What do you know about it?" said Mr. Muller. "Come here, look at that stack over there. You tell me those aren't hickory?" Well, they went over and the inspector got all through and he admitted they were all hickory. Mr. Muller said, "There's not a damn one of them are hickory and this is the best we can do. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

TWEEDALE: This was at your shipyard?

BANNING: No. It was the Chandler yard. They'd taken over our yard.

TWEEDALE: I see. When did that happen?

BANNING: First World War. But these ships would go to sea and none of them would ever get back to any place. They'd just disappear. Mr. Muller said that

the government designs were just suicide, horrible things.

TWEEDALE: So after World War I your family wasn't in the shipbuilding buisness any longer?

BANNING: Well, Mr. Wrigley took over the whole works then.

TWEEDALE: The whole Wilmington Transportation Company?

BANNING: Yes, he took our yard over. We started another yard after the war. He took our yard over and all the tugs, lighters, and the steamers.

TWEEDALE: I see. So you no longer were involved with any of that.

BANNING: No. Clear out. We still had this Mormon Island leasehold. I ran that for a good many years till the lease ran out.

TWEEDALE: But you did own property in Wilmington?

BANNING: We had a great deal of property in Wilmington. Mormon Island was all waterfront. Then we had Berth 112 at the West Basin, Los Angeles Harbor. That was a constant law fight with the Harbor Department. It was one of the only pieces of waterfront privately owned in the harbor. It operated so inefficiently, the Harbor Department did, being run by the city. They didn't want any competition. But they got it eventually. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce did everything they could to get Long Beach Harbor annexed to our harbor.

Paul H. Eubank, one of the bankers of the small town bank, and I went over to Long Beach. We got hold of Mr. W. F. Prisk who ran the Long Beach Press-Telegram. His brother [Charles H. Prisk], ran the Pasadena Star News. A great gentleman. We worked with him, started a campaign. The only chance the Los Angeles Harbor has is to keep Long Beach separate. There have been other attempts by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce to get Long Beach annexed to Los Angeles Harbor so they could control the whole thing. Long Beach is just a thorn in their side, in the side of Los Angeles Harbor. They've got competition from an efficiently run outfit. Of course, Long Beach, with all the oil they had, they're just having a wonderful time. Fortune magazine,* I forget what issue it was, came out and said the Los Angeles Harbor's sliding into the bay which it was doing. There was a big furor about that, alright. Harbor commissioners screaming their heads off, "Unfair." It wasn't at all. It was the truth.

TWEEDALE: Is there any private property in Los Angeles Harbor now?

BANNING: No. That's the trouble.

TWEEDALE: Did you have businesses on the property that you owned or did you lease to other concerns?

*The article Mr. Banning refers to is "Port of the Pacific," Fortune, February 1945, pp. 124-29, 243-44, 246-49.

BANNING: Yes, in the West Basin. We had it leased to the Graham brothers and all the rock from the Catalina quarries came through on the waterfront at Berth 112, West Basin. Very lucrative. We had a little boatyard there.

TWEEDALE: You had mainly berths, then, on the waterfront.

BANNING: No more. That's the end of it. The last one, Kerckhoff and Cuzner Lumber Company, had some waterfront. Bill Cuzner, who was my contemporary, he and I used to confer on the rottenness of the Los Angeles Harbor commissioners. I hope that isn't too rough because they're even worse than that. He said that his people were all getting old. He said, "We're just going to have to practically give the land away. They're just tired of fighting." We weren't tired of fighting because we were pretty young ourselves and we didn't have any older people looking over our shoulders. We hung on and fought. There were all sorts of threats--such as driving piles in front of our waterfront, blocking us from using it. Anything they could do to harass us, why, the Harbor Commission did. Now, this is not the Harbor Department itself I'm talking about. They had some good people in there. But they had to hold their jobs down and had to do what they were told. I knew quite a lot of them personally. They're alright.

But the Commission. Possibly eight to twelve years, from 1908 up to now, we've had an honest Harbor Commission. It's pretty bad. Well, Bill Cuzner's family, they sold out to the Harbor Department for twenty-five cents a square foot.

The Second World War came along and somebody came up from Texas, a lieutenant in the Navy. He said he understood we were having a fight with the Harbor Department. I said, "My gosh, has it gone clear to Texas?" He said, "I made a study of it before I came up here. We'd like to do business with you." And I said, "Well, on what terms?" He said, "The terms that you offered to them, a dollar and a quarter a square foot." And I said, "You can't work fast enough." So the Navy moved in, paid us a dollar and a quarter a square foot, and the Harbor Department nearly went crazy. Morgan Adams and Fritz Overton were on it then. I'd known those two since I was a little kid. They were going to make a big name for themselves the same way they did with Bill Cuzner's people, at twenty-five cents a square foot. Selling was a great relief to me because we spent so much of our time just totally, absolutely wasted fighting the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and that gang of crooks, the Harbor Commission. Now, I don't say Morgan and Fritz were crooked. They weren't. But they were just cold-blooded as hell.

TWEEDALE: Was the first big hold the Navy got in the Los Angeles Harbor when they purchased your land?

BANNING: I don't know. No, it couldn't have been, because they got a lot of stuff on Rattlesnake (Terminal) Island. They had a headquarters over there and an airfield.

TWEEDALE: They had that at the time they purchased the land from you?

BANNING: Yes. But that's far away from us because Berth 112 is probably the first, furthest west berth in the harbor. The Standard Oil docks are just to the east of us.

TWEEDALE: Was it during World War I that the Navy started having stations on Rattlesnake Island?

BANNING: I don't remember. I don't think they did. I think it was sometime after that. I don't remember when they went in there. You see, I had been away so much.

TWEEDALE: You were in school during the time when much of this was happening.

BANNING: Oh, yes. We'd get out there for the summer but we were too busy going on a vacation to pay much attention to anything.

TWEEDALE: Well, about Terminal Island. What do you recall after Brighton Beach was no longer. . .

BANNING: Oh, the dredging. They dredged the Los Angeles

Harbor, San Pedro and Wilmington. They dredged that out because they were mud flats. We had centerboard boats so that if you went on the mud we could put the centerboard up and ease out. An awful lot of dredging. They took it out of the harbor and made Terminal Island the size it is. That's pretty nearly all fill. I would say ninety percent of it is filled.

TWEEDALE: When did the Japanese fishermen start going to Terminal Island?

BANNING: I wouldn't know that date.

TWEEDALE: It was sometime after World War I.

BANNING: Oh, yes. We came back here from the East, Mrs. Banning and I, in 1922. The Japanese fishermen were going strong then. They had a village and a shopping center. It was all Japanese. They would have Boys' Week and they would have these fish flying all over the place. Wonderful sight. And that lasted till World War II.

TWEEDALE: Did you ever visit Terminal Island when they were having a festival?

BANNING: Oh, yes. We'd go down there to look around. And we had Japanese servants. We had a little bit of extra attention on that account. We took one of them with us and they knew somebody that knew somebody else, and. . .

TWEEDALE: Did they speak mainly Japanese on Terminal

Island?

BANNING: Oh, yes. Entirely. Very little English.

TWEEDALE: I understand it was more like the old country on the island than. . .

BANNING: It was. It was strictly Japanese. On Mormon Island, we had a Japanese fish cannery.

TWEEDALE: It was owned by Japanese?

BANNING: Oh, yes.

TWEEDALE: From Japan?

BANNING: Yes. We had a bad time with the Health Department and the Building Department in Los Angeles over bathtubs. They wouldn't use our bathtubs. They didn't like them and I don't blame them. They had plenty of steam in these canneries and they'd just built zinc vats about four and a half or five feet deep. The things were soldered together. They'd warm the water up by turning the steam pipe loose at the bottom putting a lot of steam into the water. You get in there and Lord knows how hot it got. I don't. The Health Department and Building Department just raised Cain over that. It was not a sanitary deal. They finally worked out something. I don't know what they did. They got away with their tubs. It was very interesting. We raised the rent every once in a while on account of conditions and they never complained. For the first part of the First World War, I was in

Navy Intelligence so I knew some of the ropes out here. So, I got hold of one of the Navy Intelligence boys. He said, "Oh, my. We'll watch them." So, they all got incarcerated the same day, the Sunday that Pearl Harbor took place. They had their own living quarters. Many of the people worked in the cannery, right near there. The Navy came up there and tore the place apart. Gosh, they found maps with colored propaganda sheets with airplane carriers and battleships steaming across the Pacific to blow the United States out of the water.

TWEEDALE: Oh, really?

BANNING: Yes, it was wonderful. They found a whole bunch of stuff behind the backboard of the sink. Why they pried that up I don't know but it must have had something suspicious-looking on the surface. They brought them up to our office. We had a wonderful time. The reason that they didn't care about their rent being raised was because their government was paying it. They didn't give a hoot. That's what made me suspicious. If they'd screamed loud enough, why, I would think it was a private deal. [laughter] The Navy Intelligence boys there, they said, "Sure, that's government."

TWEEDALE: So, were some people from the cannery operating as spies?

BANNING: Sure they were.

TWEEDALE: What about the fishermen on Terminal Island?

BANNING: They all went to the Santa Anita racetrack. They had them interned out there, you know, where Santa Anita is. They took over the racetrack. Then they put them up. . .

TWEEDALE: In Inyo County. Were the fishermen closely tied to Japan or were they tied to America?

BANNING: I don't know. I don't know about that. I assume some were and some weren't. We know that they had people in Mexico because they had gasoline caches down there, underwater tanks. That's the story, anyway. But they said they had some high-ranking Navy people on these Japanese fish boats. But I don't know that myself.

TWEEDALE: What happened to the Japanese boats?

BANNING: I don't know. I suppose they just got confiscated the way they confiscated their automobiles. That was a terrible thing. The way we treated those people. Sure, some of them were spies. They had them in Honolulu. Plenty. But they didn't intern anybody over there or do anything about it. They probably had been watching them a little bit closer because they had Japanese fishing boats and they knew they had high-ranking Japanese Navy people in those boats.

TWEEDALE: In Honolulu?

BANNING: Yes. My cousin Georgie Patton was over there

as G-2, for quite a while. He sailed over there in his schooner and he used to be at the waterfront around the sampans and fishboats. He was perfectly sure they had admirals running around in the fish boats.

TWEEDALE: That's hard to believe. [laughter]

BANNING: I never met an admiral in a fish boat. I don't think he did either, but. . .

TWEEDALE: A low-ranking officer, maybe, but. . .

BANNING: Yes, but I don't think an admiral would. He wouldn't like that. Very interesting, all these different things. He went clear over to the Hawaiian Islands instead of [the Los Angeles Harbor].

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, what changes took place on Terminal Island after World War II?

BANNING: Well, the Japanese colony practically disappeared. And the fish boats, I don't remember what happened to them. There was an awful lot of raw work going on. They confiscated people's automobiles, Japanese automobiles, their businesses, and their fish boats. The whole village and all the Japanese interests there were on leased land from the Harbor Department. They didn't own anything. The longest lease you could get I think was ten years and then a reappraisal with a thirty-year maximum for the renewal. And they all were sent up to. . . Was it Inyo?

TWEEDALE: Inyo County, I thought.

BANNING: The city built some very good ship's berths and transit sheds, very substantial. Well designed. Then there was a shipyard over there, Bethlehem Steel. They've got a floating dry dock. Then there's some small floating dry docks for small boats. They do a great deal of repair work in the Bethlehem yard. Whether they built anything or not I don't know. The Los Angeles Yacht Club has a very wonderful address. Foot of Barracuda Street, Terminal Island, San Pedro, California. Isn't that wonderful.

TWEEDALE: [laughter] That is nice.

BANNING: That's the oldest yacht club on the south coast. It used to be the South Coast Yacht Club. There was one called the Los Angeles Motorboat Club. Things got tough and they merged. Ended up called the Los Angeles Yacht Club. This maintained its identity right straight through. My father, I think, was one of the founders of the South Coast. He wouldn't have anything to do with a motorboat club, like my uncle with the automobiles. Horses only.

TWEEDALE: [laughter] That's wonderful.

BANNING: The yacht club had been fighting for a new berth for their boats because the canneries were fouling up the bay. It wasn't just sewage. Oil. These canneries are terrible. I had my sailboat at their

anchorage. I used to spend quite a little time on board. The cannery was just right in this little bay we were in. The waste from that cannery was awful. You'd see sardines, anchovies, and other little fish swimming along with their mouths out of the water trying to get oxygen because the harbor water was so foul. The oxygen had all been taken out of it and they couldn't breathe. Floating with their bodies up in a few minutes. Whether that will ever be corrected or not I don't know. The outfit, the pollution outfit down there, had one woman on it that wasn't connected with some outfit that was dumping refuse in the bay. They'd always vote one hundred dollars. It was cheaper to pay a one hundred dollar fine once in a while than to correct the situation. It looks like maybe we're going to get things straightened out, but the Harbor Department is pleading now with the "powers-that-be" to block the "powers-that-be" that are trying to put through an ordinance or regulation that no ships can discharge anything into the harbor. The Harbor Commission said no ships would come in here because we aren't equipped to take care of it; which is indicative. They've got places there where they can wash out their oil tanks with steam and water and put molasses in them. They can dump that in receivers ashore. They don't have to go in the bay, but it costs money

to do it. They don't do it if they can get away with it. And I've seen some of these tankers at sea, when I've been sailing, coming into the harbor with their propellers half out of the water, pumping out their bilge and cleaning out their oil tanks with a stream of dirty water with the oil going over the side. We sailed through it and had to wash the sides off with gasoline and kerosene. That's the ocean itself is being polluted by these tankers. Just get enough of them, big enough ones, and you're going to have the same thing as they had at Santa Barbara. The ocean can't take it. And it isn't taking it off New York now. Thousands of tons a day of garbage they have to haul six miles out.

TWEEDALE: It's coming up on the Jersey shore.

BANNING: Yes. Messing up things bad. They never let anybody eat anything around there that comes out of the ocean on account of hepatitis.

TWEEDALE: Well, if we could go back a little ways, maybe you could talk about the annexation of Wilmington to Los Angeles City. What sort of agreements or promises were made to Wilmington at the time?

BANNING: Well, it was a pretty rotten thing to begin with, annexing a half-mile wide strip. I don't know how long--thirteen to eighteen miles. The city limits of the towns of Wilmington and San Pedro were adjacent.

They had an election. I talked to some of the recipients of the one hundred dollar apiece bribe that the Los Angeles interests passed out to the voters in Wilmington. Seventeen thousand dollars at one hundred dollars each. That's how many votes they needed to annex Wilmington. Some of these people lived to regret what they had done. The trouble was that they had a pamphlet all written out carefully. They were going to get a big park for that area and I don't know how many other things. Terminals and, oh, the wonderful promises. None of them were outrageous at all. Our family was very much opposed to the annexation. They got a man out here from the East, an attorney who had had experiences with what happens to a small town when it gets annexed to a larger one. He was hissed and booed by the people in Wilmington, trying to tell them how to vote. The man said, as near as I can recollect from what my uncle told me, "The big city makes the promises to the small ones. They're going to give you a park; they tell you. They promise you all these things none of which you're going to get." That was the end of his speech and he was right. We had to bond the area, the old town, a quarter of a million dollars in order to get ourselves a park down there. Los Angeles didn't give us anything. Nothing. This wonderful pamphlet by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce

and those interests. . . They saw to it there wasn't anything in there that was enforceable.

TWEEDALE: Did they make any attempt at all to buy land for a park?

BANNING: No. They didn't. No. Some of the crooks on the Harbor Board did, but then they were going to assess the whole thing against us.

TWEEDALE: The City of Los Angeles wasn't going to pay for it, just Wilmington. Did they have any good ideas where to put a park?

BANNING: Well, they had wonderful ideas where to put a park, where they could buy land cheap and sell it dear. They had their own appraisers. Outrageous appraisers. They were going to make anywhere from five to one or ten to one on that five-park plan. So Mr. Opp, who was one of the leaders down there formed a citizens' committee. He came to us and asked us if we'd accept a certain amount of money for buying twenty acres and my grandfather's old home. He said, "We'll have to have something to fight with. We can't fight five parks with nothing." And, that was the park fight. So, we ended up by the old-town area of Wilmington voting a bond issue for a quarter of a million dollars or more. I don't know of any other bond issue that carried ten to one in the state of California. I understand that's the highest vote that any bond

issue ever received. People there were angry--the City Hall, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and the Harbor Commission. They were all against us. So there was proof of what the attorney from the East said. We bought our own park.

TWEEDALE: I see. Very good. Mr. Banning, would you please tell about the Greater Harbor Committee of Two Hundred?

BANNING: Yes. That was another one of those Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce messes. Of course, they'd get Mr. Henry M. Robinson as president of it with publicity and pictures in the paper at least once a week. A stuffed shirt if I ever knew one. Their idea was to push the harbor all out to sea and fill in a whole bunch of the channels. At the one berth we had left, 112, that channel was to be filled in so the railroad could eliminate the drawbridge. It was a shortcut from the San Pedro to Wilmington. They would lose anywhere from five to seven ship berths doing that and eliminate our waterfront so the Harbor Department could move in on us and take it over cheap. That was just one of the many things.

The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce is anything but seagoing. Little do they know about what happens in the outer harbor. When some of the big ground swells coming from Japan and various places in the Pacific

start working in the outer harbor--it's called seiche--the water looks perfectly smooth and a ship alongside a dock will part its lines moving back and forth. There's nothing can stop it. I've watched it myself. We fought that. The committee came to my father and told him he'd better join; it only cost a thousand dollars. My father told them it would cost him a whole lot more than that fighting them and their activities. He knew what they were up to. And it did. I don't know how many thousands of dollars it cost us. We had an Army engineer in Washington and another one out here--both retired. They knew the ropes. This was an Army engineer's job filling those channels. They're not filled in. It was up to the engineers to give advice and they had a fellow named Leeds who was a second lieutenant, retired on account of health, tuberculosis. They made him a colonel in the First World War and put him in charge of this district for United States Engineers because there wasn't anything to do. Had to have a colonel or something in charge. He testified just exactly the way the Harbor Committee of Two Hundred wanted. But one of the active engineers from Washington was a man who had very little to do with the Harbor Committee of Two Hundred. He was very, very fair about the whole thing. The only thing that pleased my brother, our engineer, and our attorney was

that he kept calling Colonel Leeds, Second Lieutenant Leeds. [laughter] We thought that was very nice. Showed no prejudice for the other side. You know, it's fun remembering things like that now. Second Lieutenant Leeds. . . [laughter] He took umbrage. And the whole thing ended up in a big fiasco. Nobody filled in any channels and no berths were built outside. Everything went back and got in the right place again after four, five, or six years of fighting. It was so outrageous, the whole thing was. I think Mr. Henry M. Robinson was sort of losing his grip about that time anyway.

It finally ended up by the Harbor Department not stealing our land because the Second World War came along. Somebody in Texas, a lieutenant in the Navy, came up here and he was in charge of the Navy operations around here for land acquisition. He understood that we were in sort of a mess with the Chamber of Commerce. He couldn't deal with them. They were terrible, he said. They hate the Navy. The funny part of it was that the politicians had put Morgan Adams on the Harbor Commission because he'd been in the Navy in the First World War. If anybody hated the Navy it was Morgan Adams because he was a National Naval Volunteer. He spent the First World War in Panama. As near as I can make out, why, the regulars down there didn't care much

for N.N.V.'s, and it hurt Morgan Adams very badly. So, if they put somebody in that could make trouble, Morgan Adams was just the man to do it. So the Navy bought our land from us not at the twenty-five cents a square foot that the Harbor Commission offered, but at what we were asking, which was a dollar and a quarter a square foot. It was worth a whole lot more than that. We worked under constant interference and harassment by the Los Angeles Chamber and the Board of Harbor Commissioners. That was a long fight.

TWEEDALE: I imagine it was quite expensive as well.

BANNING: We'd send telegrams to the engineer in Washington to please call us on the telephone. It was cheaper to do that. Have him call from there to here than for us to call from here to there on account of the three hours' difference. We had a beautiful telephone bill. You can be sure of that. My brother and my uncle appeared before the engineers in Washington. I don't know whether we'd won or not, but Mr. William Wrigley, Jr. stepped in. He knew quite a few congressmen. He just told them about the rottenness they were doing to us out here. We had all the good people on our side.

TWEEDALE: Well, that's very interesting.

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MARCH 4, 1970

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, would you please tell about your experiences with the harbor committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce?

BANNING: Ralph Chandler, a nephew of Harry Chandler, an old-timer and a good friend of mine, had been fighting with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce a couple of generations at least. So, they had a harbor committee of about two hundred people, I believe, and it was strictly the Los Angeles Chamber. He asked me one day, "Why don't you come up and join our harbor committee and see if you can't work from that side up there to get things straightened out between the Bannings, the city, and the chamber?" I said, very reluctantly, "Oh, I'll try it out." So, the first day I went out there it was crowded, alright. Plenty of people. We had our creamed chicken and peas, like they do at all these things. Creamed chicken and peas. Then the talk started. As I remember, Mr. Osberg, who was from the Standard Dredging Company, got up and began talking on what subject I don't remember. But nobody seemed to know how the subject got started. Somebody said, "Who fathered this?" Well, they all looked around and somebody said, "Well, that's

what I'd like to know. Who fathered this?" They went on for quite a while trying to find out where the thing started. I got a little bit bored so I got up and said, "I'm a newcomer here and maybe I'm speaking out of turn. But this business of who fathered this, reminds me somewhat of the Immaculate Conception." And I got the hell out of there and never went back.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, would you tell about your mother's portrait collection?

BANNING: Well, when the subject first came up I warned my mother not to buy the pictures, that they probably were fakes, and it was being done in a way that you'd expect them to be fakes. There was a woman from Guatemala named Madame Redezno. And she was the one that promoted the idea of my mother buying these pictures. I'm no judge of art, so I don't put myself up by looking at the pictures and saying they weren't any good. I was just perfectly sure they weren't because of the way the deal was being done. I don't know what happened to them except one and that was a small picture that was rather beautifully done, a Gainsborough. It had papers. My goodness gracious. They were just authenticating it all over the place. It just had to be a Gainsborough. And I just shook my head. I don't know anything about it.

TWEEDALE: Had the others been proved to be fakes?

BANNING: Oh, yes. Some man who was a collector came down from Pasadena and he just looked at them and ran. So when my father died, why, I was executor for the personal property, my brother-in-law said he'd like to have the Gainsborough. I said, "Well, it's probably a fake. All of the rest of them are no good. In the first place, the way the deal was done." He said, "Oh, no, These papers are wonderful." We were invited to dinner at his house, Mrs. Banning and I, and he said, "Well, you've been right right straight through. We got Dr. Robert R. Wark over here from the Huntington. I think he used the work 'Magnificent piece of fake authenticity,' or something of this sort, that he'd ever seen, after looking over the papers that accompanied the Gainsborough." But it still looks alright.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, would you tell me about Banning and Company and their relationship of the Santa Catalina Island Company and some of the other corporations?

BANNING: Well, the name was Banning Company. There wasn't any "and" in it. Banning Company. It was the holding company for land and, oh, maybe other interests, but mostly land. When things began to progress and go ahead, why, William Banning, who owned Catalina himself, deeded his interest to the Santa Catalina Island Company. Then later on the three brothers owned the stock of the Santa Catalina Island Company equally.

TWEEDALE: And this was part of the Banning Company?

BANNING: No, the Banning Company was the holding company.

TWEEDALE: Banning Company was the holding company. It was a separate company entirely from the Santa Catalina Island Company.

BANNING: Yes. But the ownership was identical between the Banning Company and the Santa Catalina Island Company. The town of Avalon was what ownership we had there--hotel, waterworks, wharves, docks, and that sort of thing. That was deeded from the Banning Company and J. B. Banning to Santa Catalina Island Company. So, the Santa Catalina Island Company had to do with all our interests on the island and nothing else.

TWEEDALE: I see and that became effective in 1901. Isn't that when the Banning Company deeded Avalon.

BANNING: Deeded Avalon.

TWEEDALE: Yes, and prior to what in 1896 when the rest of the island had been deeded to. . .

BANNING: William Banning had deeded Santa Catalina Island.

TWEEDALE: I see. Okay. So the Santa Catalina Island Company ran the hotel, the Metropole, and all the tourist attractions.

BANNING: Island Villa and Canvas City. There are some

interesting things about the integrity of the people in that area. Not just our people or the employees, but the general public that came over there. We had a detective at the gangplank, especially when the season opened around the 1st of July, who would look over every person that went aboard one of our steamers and say, "Alright, you go back to the office and turn your ticket in and get your money back. We don't want you over there." The place was so compact and people knew each other. There were undesirables that would like very much to get over there. Therefore, we had little or no trouble at all. People would leave their valuables--their watches and money--in ordinary tents with nothing but a flap to keep somebody out. We were using a good deal of gold in those days and hardly anybody ever lost anything. No complaints.

TWEEDALE: Well, what was the relationship of the Wilmington Transportation Company to the Banning Company?

BANNING: Apparently it was started by my grandfather, and it ran all the tugboats, lighters, and the stevedoring both in Wilmington and San Pedro as well as at Redondo. Then it also ran steamers to Catalina. As we built larger and larger steamers in our own yard on Mormon Island, the Wilmington Transportation Company owned those vessels. It handled all the transportation

to and from the island.

TWEEDALE: Now, did the three brothers divide up the responsibilities among the Banning Company, the Wilmington Transportation Company, and. . .

BANNING: No. No, they all had their fingers in everything.

TWEEDALE: Oh, I see. That sounds like fun. [laughter]

BANNING: They all worked at different things at times but there was no division of anything except once I think they turned over Avalon and the island to my father to run and my Uncle Joe went to Europe for a while. I think I told you about the combination tickets?

TWEEDALE: Yes, you did.

BANNING: And about the Meteor Boat Company having stopped paying dividends. They couldn't compete with our rowboats.

TWEEDALE: Yes, I think you did tell me about that. When Mr. Wrigley purchased Catalina Island in 1919 did he also acquire the Santa Catalina Island Company and Wilmington Transportation Company?

BANNING: Oh, yes. He insisted on it and he was right in acquiring the Wilmington Transportation Company because it owned the steamers that took passengers back and forth, tugboats, the lighters, freight and that sort of thing to Catalina. He had to have them in order

to run the island. You couldn't do it unless you controlled your own transportation. If the truth were known, owning Catalina was somewhat of a luxury. It hardly ever paid for itself. It was the transportation where we made our money. That kept the free dance hall, the Pavilion, the sewers, the lights in Avalon, the street cleaning and sprinkling, and the Porter's Catalina Island Marine Band going. A real expensive piece of business. That was all free. We had concerts every evening and Sunday afternoon. Then part of the band played for the dance. The family were never able to get Mr. Porter to do something about the tempo of his dance music. It always seemed to be a slow waltz or a slow two-step, which was lovely.

TWEEDALE: Well, did your Uncle William remain as president of the Wilmington Transportation Company?

BANNING: No. He was vice-president after Mr. Wrigley took over. Whether he was president of the Wilmington Transportation Company, or not, I don't know; but he was the vice-president of the Catalina Company. And he may have stayed as president of the W. T. Company. I'm not sure of that.

TWEEDALE: After Wrigley purchased both the Wilmington Transportation Company and the Santa Catalina Island Company did the Banning Company maintain offices in the harbor?

BANNING: The stevedore part of the Banning Company was given to our superintendent, Ned Mahar, Edward J. Mahar. He'd been superintendent and marine superintendent for many years. Uncle turned that part over as a reward for his long and faithful services to us. He died of cancer and his widow sold it to a rather unsuccessful person. Whether she ever got all the money or not I don't know. But it got a very bad name, not paying the stevedores and not paying its bills. It was miserably operated for a good many years. I don't know whether it's still going now or not.

TWEEDALE: Is that the same as the Associated Banning Company of San Pedro?

BANNING: Yes. That was its successor in interest. That was too bad, because there were many people that connected us with it because of the name. We had nothing to do with it. That ought to have been a front-page advertisement for a while there, the way it was so bad.

TWEEDALE: Did you have any other offices in the harbor other than the one related to the stevedoring?

BANNING: No. My father had an office there. It was the old milk house back of the main house which is now Banning Park. We abandoned the office we had in San Pedro at Fifth Street, just closed it up. It was built over mud flats. I think maybe the teredos

were working the foundation about that time. But Mr. Wrigley was a godsend to the island, because, as I say, it was a luxury and his chewing gum business put millions into that island that never would have gone there.

He told my uncle that he'd been a good boy all through the war and paid his taxes, now he was going to have some fun with his money. Apparently he could write off all the stuff he put into Catalina, so he wouldn't have to get up to the ninety-two percent brackets that were in existence in those days in your income tax.

TWEEDALE: Was the office that you had on Fifth Street in San Pedro an office which helped passengers get to Catalina Island?

BANNING: Oh, yes. Because we had our detective--if you want to call him that, or watchman--out checking the passengers going aboard.

TWEEDALE: Did the trains come in at that point?

BANNING: Yes. Steam trains did. Then we went across to Terminal Island, formerly Rattlesnake Island, to pick up passengers that the Salt Lake brought down. The Salt Lake Railroad is now the Union Pacific.

TWEEDALE: So you had two stops. Was it Southern Pacific that came to Fifth Street in San Pedro?

BANNING: Yes.

TWEEDALE: You mentioned something about when the Pacific Electric came into use, that you had an office or terminal in Wilmington.

BANNING: I think Mr. Wrigley was responsible for that. Because come to think of it they changed Canal Street to Avalon Boulevard to honor Mr. Wrigley. It didn't hurt the town of Wilmington any. That was the terminal. It had broken down. Well, it wasn't broken down. It was well constructed, but the design was no good. One of our pitiful Harbor Department engineers designed the thing. It had no high line. The high line was a railroad track between the transit shed and the pierhead. The thing was built like one of the eastern transit sheds, right up to the pierhead line, because of the weather there. We don't have that weather here. So they didn't know what to do with it. Smart and Final Wholesale Grocers occupied it as a warehouse for a good many years and they didn't need the waterfront at all. It was just something that the Harbor Department, having made a horrible mistake, was trying to rectify. So it worked out alright for passengers. They finally made a deal with Mr. Wrigley and the Pacific Electric. They put their trains in there. It worked out very beautifully, especially for us, because we owned a gread deal of land in Wilmington. It's right near there.

TWEEDALE: Could you tell me how the Banning Company happened to move to Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles?

BANNING: Well, I don't know where our offices were in the harbor except Fifth Street in San Pedro. Probably when Catalina came into existence, why, they opened offices at 222 South Spring Street. That was a little story in itself. The family didn't know we owned the land there. And my two uncles came of age before my father did and the statute of limitations, taxes and occupancy and what not over the years, had turned the land over to some new owners. The title was in us but we didn't know it. They found out because my father had not become twenty-one soon enough so that he kept a third of the property. So, we built our offices there and that was the head of W. T. Company, Banning Company, the Santa Catalina Island Company ever since I can remember as a little child. When Mr. Huntington came with the Pacific Electric, we sold that and moved our offices to the Huntington Building, which is now the Pacific Electric Building. We had our business office I think on the fourth or fifth floor. Those were the working offices. Then we had an office next to the tracks on the first floor where the tickets were sold and the information bureau and. . .

TWEEDALE: Tickets for Catalina Island.

BANNING: Yes. Information bureau and what not. We had an arrangement with Pacific Electric which sold the tickets. They got seventy-five cents or something like that from it. Maybe it was only fifty cents to start with. It was all on one piece of pasteboard.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, in our last session you mentioned the leasehold that the Banning Company had on Mormon Island. You also mentioned the Japanese cannery which you leased. What other companies did you have on that property?

BANNING: Well, quite a few. Mormon Island had been divided between the three brothers. A great deal of property in Wilmington had been divided between the three brothers. Banning Company no longer owned any land at this time. Trustees had been appointed and it was not an active company any more. So this. . .

TWEEDALE: What year was that?

BANNING: I don't know.

TWEEDALE: You don't know exactly. Was it in about nineteen eight something?

BANNING: Oh, no, it would be somewhere around fifteen, or. . .

TWEEDALE: Fifteen. That's close enough.

BANNING: About there. I don't remember.

TWEEDALE: Just prior to World War I.

BANNING: Or it may have been just after. I don't know.

Anyway, it was owned by the individual brothers and their successors in interest. I was appointed to run it for all of the family. We had our troubles down there with Julian Petroleum. They leased a dock and some land from us for a marine oil loading station. We built a tank for them, fire walls of very good construction, pipelines, and the dock. Ships would come in and take oil. They weren't very welcome in the oil fraternity. Julian was in a little bit of trouble himself for issuing stock or some illegal thing. He skipped the country and went to China. I believe he died there. C. C. Julian. He was quite a character. Very nice personality. A couple of crooks, I don't remember their names, took over and issued stock all over the place without permission from the Corporation Commission or anything else. A friend of mine, Harold Barneson, found out about it and sold short. When it finally came time to settle up, he was a half a million dollars ahead in cash.

The Associated Oil Company took over what was left of the Julian Petroleum, their assets. They were very good. Prior to that, two receivers were in charge. Two Mormons. It was delightful to do business with them because they'd tell you something and you could believe it right now. We worked verbally without too many lawyers, contracts, and things, which was the way I was

brought up. Well, Associated was doing pretty well there. Pretty soon some of the people in the Harbor Department that were friendly to us and hated the Harbor Commission tipped us off that they'd made a deal with the Shell Oil Company to use our dock which was being used by the Associated Oil Company. We found out about it that way and I went to our attorneys, Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher, to stop it. They got two representatives of the land department of the Shell Oil Company in the office and they promised us in front of four or five attorneys (two separate firms) and myself that they wouldn't make any further move to put a pipeline in there if we would not get an injunction. When they left the room the attorneys turned to me and I said, "Well, the only thing I can say is those two men are lying and I want an injunction right now." They said, "But you've got to take their word." I said, "I don't have to take the word of any land man from any oil company. I've had my experience. And I just won't do it." They said, "Well, we don't want to do it." I said, "Well, it's up to you. But if you don't, I'll go out and get the dirtiest blackjack attorney I can find in Los Angeles and we'll get an injunction personally." So they agreed they would do that. I called up my waterfront gang and told them to get a truck and some timbers and barbed wire. I went down

to the big house and got a shotgun and a box of shells and put them in the back of my car. I went down and met them there. There was a big red-headed Irish foreman and oh, probably thirty or forty men with pipe tongs moving pipe, getting ready to take it up and put it on the dock. We just went to the ramp that went from the shore to the dock, blocked the passage, and stopped them. The foreman said he was coming through and I said, "Well, if you do, you're going to hit me first. And I don't think that's a very good idea." So he delayed and pretty soon he was getting rather impatient. He had orders from Frisco, he said. I said, "You've got orders from me to stay right where you are. You're trespassing on our land right now. You had no right to be there." He said, "I got orders from Frisco." About that time here came somebody waving some papers. I pointed to the foreman and they served him. That was the injunction.

TWEEDALE: Interesting.

BANNING: And they did move those two land men. They moved them I don't know where, but they weren't here anymore.

TWEEDALE: How long did Banning Company have the leasehold on Mormon Island?

BANNING: It was a thirty-year lease. How that came about was that this land was in litigation. Tidelands

are not. . . We owned in fee with a government deed the point of Mormon Island, about five acres. The rest of the land had been filled in from dredger pumping.

TWEEDALE: This was filled in by your company? By the Banning Company?

BANNING: I think the Southern Pacific and ourselves did it. And that was then connected to the mainland by a narrow neck of land. The Chamber of Commerce and the "powers-that-be" in Los Angeles started suit and the thing would have been tied up in litigation for I don't know how many years. Possibly, well, probably it was the most important piece of waterfront in the whole harbor. Water on two sides and directly southerly to the turning basin where there was enough water for large ships to turn around, something that was greatly lacking in the whole harbor. It's so small compared to San Francisco and other ports such as New York. So there was a compromise brought about by various attorneys, the Chamber of Commerce, and the city. They would give the Banning Company a thirty-year lease in exchange for a quit-claim deed to the whole works. It was to be tax-free for that time as part of the agreement. Less than a year or two went by before the "powers-that-be" in Los Angeles got an

enabling act through the state legislature to tax us which could have been made confiscatory and which almost was. Near the end of the lease it got so bad that we were going to form a corporation, put what little remained of the lease in the corporation and just stop paying taxes. They could sue the corporation but it wouldn't do anybody any good. We threatened them with that and they relieved us somewhat of the taxes. They brought a man down from Oakland, I think it was, and he just tore us apart on the assessed valuation. Of course, we were competing with the city in leasing land to people. If we leased land to someone, the Harbor Department immediately put him on the blacklist and he couldn't do business down there again. It was a beautiful rig-up for the crooks.

TWEEDALE: Were you the only corporation leasing land in the Los Angeles Harbor other than the city?

BANNING: I don't know. I don't think so. I think there were probably other leaseholds similar to this. There was some freehold too. They were merciless on that. You couldn't get an easement for a pipeline without litigation. The only thing that protected us at all was that we were able to wait. It was pretty rough competition. We had a few canneries move in but they were probably owned by the Japanese government, or the people that ran them, as I think I said in another

reel. When the Second World War came along, before we got in it, we were building ships for the British--Liberty ships, I think they were called--ten thousand tonners, on Terminal Island. The bridge was too small to handle the traffic of the employees for the shipyard so they had to do something about it. They fixed up a ferry from Mormon Island over to Terminal Island. We had concessionaires there. As I remember, one of them ran a popcorn and peanut stand and he paid three hundred dollars a month for a place. It was about ten by ten feet.

TWEEDALE: That's fantastic.

BANNING: We could get all the sugar we wanted, which the merchants in Wilmington objected to strenuously, because we were helping out war workers. Coffee, Coca-Cola and stuff. We had it absolutely wide open because all these people were building ships. Parking was free. You couldn't have collected anyway from that bunch of roughnecks. [laughter] That lasted for quite a while until somebody found out how profitable it was for the landowners to have a free ferry landing. We didn't charge the ferry people anything. Thought they were wonderful. So what did they do? They built another place where the ferry could go to further up the channel, but they had to cross a whole lot of railroad tracks. So they built some stairways up with a bridge

across the tracks and stairways down. There was such a screaming and yelling from these tired-out shipyard workers that it was pretty near an absolute failure.

TWEEDALE: The city built this?

BANNING: I don't know who did it. It didn't make any difference. I didn't pay any attention to it. I just knew the world was laughing. People just do not like to walk up a whole lot of stairs, go across, and then walk down some more. Going to work they have to do the same thing.

TWEEDALE: That's right.

BANNING: These people--it probably was the city because it was so stupid.

TWEEDALE: It didn't put your ferry landing out. . .

BANNING: No, we came along alright.

TWEEDALE: This was all during World War II. When was the leasehold actually completed, or did you just continue it?

BANNING: July 24, 1947.

TWEEDALE: Then did the property just revert back to the city?

BANNING: Yes, and anything we had on it. I had a restaurant on there that I owned personally. That was my concession for running it. They didn't pay me anything for running it. Well, anything I wanted, why, I'd just say this is what I would like to do and they

would say, go ahead.

TWEEDALE: What kind of restaurant was it?

BANNING: They called it the Greasy Spoon, so. . .

TWEEDALE: [laughter] Did you cater to the shipbuilders, or. . .

BANNING: No, it was for stevedores. They always had a good name for something like that.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, other than the Japanese canneries in the harbor during World War II, what other hazards were in the harbor?

BANNING: Well, the Army. The first thing they did when they moved in there--of course, the thing was in a lot of confusion after Pearl Harbor--was to build wooden tanks for water and that sort of thing. A couple of majors moved in that were going to fix up some tent camps for troops that were coming in. The first thing they did, because they'd been brought up in other places than here, was to have duckboards. A duckboard goes on a little eight by eight or twelve by twelve and that's so the soldiers can go around from one tent to another and to headquarters to keep them from getting their feet wet. So, they took all the barrel material, which was very necessary, and used it for duckboards. That was a sample. We finally got used to it--the confusion and the ridiculous things that the Armed Forces did. You could see why wars cost

so much. The next thing was that they got a colonel that had come up from the ranks. He had a very mean disposition. He was very ignorant. They put him in charge of the Army Transport. That was their headquarters. Well, he was a martinet. He and the Coast Guard used to scream epithets and curse words at each other. They had their own little war in the harbor between the Coast Guard and the Army, which was nothing new. Well, he was fighting the Harbor Department and everybody else including the Coast Guard. I took it just about as long as I could when he began stacking up fifty-gallon drums of aviation gasoline which were to be loaded on ships and taken out into the Pacific for the planes on the few flattops we had at that time. He had them all lined up on their sides, stacked up about three or four feet high with blackboards at the head of each row. I don't know, there must have been many hundreds, maybe thousands of drums. The blackboard was to tell which drums were leaking. And of course the sun beating down on these things, why, the pressure might get up fairly high. They came right up to the only street that went down the center part of the island. Paralleling that street was a 33,000-volt transmission line.

TWEEDALE: Which island was this?

BANNING: Mormon Island. To windward of that were

several kite balloons with steel cables. I just pictured a southeaster coming up, the kite careening over, the cable hitting the power line and shorting, and the whole thing setting these drums on fire. This colonel, this so-called colonel, had done nothing about bulkheads, firewalls, or anything else although he had forced all of the oil companies to drain all their crude oil tanks or loading tanks and take the oil from up in the hills, San Pedro Hills, or other places inland, showing that the fellow didn't have very good sense. So, I went up very, very carefully to San Francisco to talk to the people up there. I couldn't talk to the colonel or report him officially because my cousin was in charge of the Matson Navigation Company. They were getting a great deal of freight to take out in the Pacific. If he found out I had anything to do with it, he'd cut off Matson because my cousin Joe was running the Matson Navigation Company south of Tehachapi Pass at this harbor. So, I had to do it very, very impersonally. I had to go to people at San Francisco and hush-hush-hush. In about a month they straightened it out. But in the meantime, another illustration of why wars cost so much. He had got all his relatives and friends in blue uniforms and made them watchmen. What they were watching, I never could figure out; but they were all there watching. Finally he was removed.

He had his innings while he was there.

TWEEDALE: When we were talking a little earlier, you mentioned the types of ships that docked at. . .

BANNING: Well, the American-Hawaiian Line, the Texas Company, and the Shell Company. . . Incidentally, the main superintendent of the Shell Company was a very good friend of mine in spite of all the fights and what not we had with the company itself. The Texas Company, the American-Hawaiian Line, and the Munson-McCormick Line docked on some of our waterfront. Munson-McCormick had a combination passenger and freight. Also the Matson Navigation Company used to bring their case oil vessels in there. In other words, they didn't have oil tanks in the hold the way the tankers do. They loaded cases of five-gallon cans and fifty-gallon drums.

TWEEDALE: Were there any other major shipping lines coming in there?

BANNING: Not on Mormon Island.

TWEEDALE: So you mainly loaded freight?

BANNING: Freight, yes.

TWEEDALE: You didn't service any vessels at all.

BANNING: No. No, we had nothing to do with the handling of the ships at all. Then there was another instance of what the Chamber of Commerce and the "powers-that-be" inland could do. You couldn't get any money to finance

a private warehouse in the harbor. A friend of mine who had a wealthy uncle decided he'd like to go into the warehouse business and he picked out a good place and talked it over with me. So he went to Errett Cord and they built a warehouse right back of the American-Hawaiian dock. The money to finance it all came from Chicago. He couldn't get it here. He had to go east of the Rockies which is a very beautiful example of what the "powers-that-be," I think they would now call it the Local Establishment--the banks and the Chamber of Commerce. The only city in the world that's so far away from its harbor and they're scared to death of us.

TWEEDALE: What was the warehouse used for that was built behind the American-Hawaiian Shipping. . .

BANNING: Everything you could think of. Nobody knew about this at all except these people. They got the storage of paper, newsprint. We had the humidity to keep the newspapers right. They didn't in Los Angeles. They had to have an artificial humidity; so, they could charge less down here than they could up there. The competition was hurting them in Los Angeles. Oh, they were howling. I don't know what ever happened to it. They probably got it all back up there again. The city owns the warehouse.

TWEEDALE: The city took over the warehouse in 1947?

BANNING: Sure. The court people knew that. They made

enough money during that time.

TWEEDALE: They didn't worry about it.

BANNING: Yes.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me something about Mr. Windham and the Long Beach Harbor?

BANNING: Oh, yes. This was C. H. Windham. Charlie Windham. He was a great, great gentleman. He finally was called the "Father of Long Beach Harbor." It was very appropriate. His policy was not to confiscate privately-owned waterfront the way they did in the Los Angeles Harbor--San Pedro and Wilmington harbors. In addition to that, they had an honest board of harbor commissioners, which didn't happen very often on the Los Angeles Harbor side. As a matter of fact, I think that probably somewhere between eight and twelve years--certainly not over that--from 1908 up to date we have had an honest harbor commission. The only engineer we ever had that was a capable engineer was Edward V. Dockweiler of the wonderful family of Dockweiler. He was very, very good and the trouble with the whole thing was he was honest. He had a bad time. Well, Mr. Windham's policy was such that Father went over and talked to him. They became quite good friends. I believe that my father knew that Long Beach Harbor was going to be a saviour of the Los Angeles side because "the powers-that-be" in Los Angeles did everything they

possibly could to keep the harbor district from improving and having the factories and warehouses. All they wanted was a transit point for cheap freight. As time went on it got so bad at the Harbor Commission, this method of doing business, that one company after another would move over from our side of the harbor to the Long Beach side of the harbor. Some of them wouldn't even talk to our side of the harbor. They'd just go to Long Beach. I made a statement to that effect before the City Council one time and there was hell to pay. The head of the Harbor Commission said, "Prove it." I was interviewed by some newspaper reporter. I said, "I don't have to prove anything, just go down and look. See who's over there that used to be on our side. That's all I have to say." "You sure raised hell, Mr. Banning." Well, Mr. Windham and the Long Beach Harbor has gone that way. The Chamber of Commerce in Los Angeles and the "powers-that-be" tried just as hard as they could to get Long Beach Harbor to annex to our harbor. Paul Eubank, who is an old resident of Wilmington and ran the Seaboard Commercial and Savings Bank of Wilmington, and I went over to Long Beach and got hold of Mr. W. F. Prisk, who ran the Long Beach Press-Telegram. We told him why we were over there. He couldn't understand why we'd be against the annexation. I told him the Long Beach Harbor was going to save our harbor. It

would force our harbor, with the competition that we were going to get, to pay a little attention to business instead of fooling around the way they did. It never succeeded in making them honest, but. . . Mr. Prisk came out with an article and fought it every way he could. I forget how the election came out, but it was ten or twenty to one against it. Since then the chamber and the Los Angeles Harbor have tried to get them to annex Long Beach, but now with all the oil money that has to be spent--they can't spend it anyplace else except in the harbor, because it's harbor oil--they just laugh at them now. I couldn't help looking back, I think it was during the Depression, when Fortune magazine came out with an article on the Los Angeles Harbor Department stating that warehouses and transit sheds were sliding into the drink. There was hell to pay on that. But all they had to do was look. The way it's worked out, they tried to get Long Beach to change its rates for handling freight and that sort of thing. Long Beach can come out even on lower rates than the Los Angeles Harbor. The department loses money on higher rates because of the absolute know-nothingness of the commission. All you have to do is to look at the history of that Harbor Commission. Two of them are in jail now, I think. There's another one being tried in San Francisco for bribery. That's been the trouble.

Handouts. People don't like to do business with people like that. The head of the Land Department is a close friend of mine. He finally quit. He couldn't take it anymore. He said the corruption was something awful. "The assistant," he said, "I don't know how he'll last. He's honest." And so what happened was they couldn't fire him because he was in civil service. So, they abolished the position.

TWEEDALE: That's a typical maneuver.

BANNING: He went to court and he won. They had to pay him all his back salary and I think they had to put the position back in again.

TWEEDALE: That's amazing.

BANNING: That's that gang. One of them committed suicide. They said he drowned. He was an awful nice fellow. DiCarlo, I think his name was. He ran a bakery. Good bakery down there. He was an upstanding person that got mixed up in this gang. He was the president of the commission. One day they picked him out of the drink on the ferry landing. I swear I think he drowned himself, he was so ashamed of the mess he got into. They said it was an accident, but I know about things like that a little bit too. Oh, it just smells to high heaven, the way that. . . The awfulness of the operation. The crookedness and the inefficiency. And I know one man down there who's a friend of mine, and an engineer

--had nothing to do with the waterfront at all but railroad engineer, working with tracks, surveying, and that sort of thing,--he had so much on the Harbor Department at the time that Walter B. Allen was chairman of the commission that they found out he went away for the weekend and he came back to find that his house had been ransacked and all the stuff stolen from his files. So, he had no proof of anything any more. The guys admitted they were crooks by doing that.

TWEEDALE: Yes, that's true.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

MARCH 9, 1970

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me what you recollect about the raising of the town of Wilmington?

BANNING: Well, the town was pretty close to extreme high tide, a good part of it. Maybe a block or two south of it toward the harbor from what is now Anaheim Street. And the fill took place as I recollect it as much as eight or ten feet as you got down towards the shipberths that exist now. They didn't fill all of it. Some of it was not filled because of wrecking good buildings which were perfectly satisfactory the way they were. My uncle, Captain William Banning, had a brick building which I believe was raised about eight feet. (In another case a man was going to have a free basement and he built a foundation with no internal supports and all four sides collapsed when the hydraulic fill came in.) The old Fries Avenue and "A" Street warehouse which was a government grain warehouse--it was called the quartermaster's grain warehouse or quartermaster's barn--was built during the War of the Rebellion to store grain for the Army mules and horses locally and in Arizona. They had a good many troops in Arizona because the gold in California was still financing the damn Yankees' war. It had about nineteen

or twenty thousand square feet, just one story. As I remember, the dimensions were something like seventy by two hundred seventy. My grandfather built it on a contract with the government. There was a congressional investigation over the charges for the building. They couldn't see why it would cost that much. Well, it was all mortice-and-tendon construction, all very good material. The joker was that the specifications for the building were sent out from Washington D.C. based on snow loads and a few other things that you don't have out here on this coast. There's a similar story of the Long Beach Post Office. There were hot water pipes put under the sidewalk around the post office to keep the snow from accumulating too fast. The South Pasadena Post Office has a huge basement to store coal for their furnaces which was totally unnecessary. So, they're still doing it. The Fries Avenue and "A" Street warehouse was condemned by the Water and Power Bureau because of a great deal of land around it. What they wanted it for, they said, was coal storage. But, of course, we knew that was subterfuge. We still don't know. And our tenants, who used to pay us good rent, are now paying it to the Bureau of Water and Power.

TWEEDALE: Is the warehouse still there then?

BANNING: Oh, yes. It's still standing. The main fill was made some time before 1908, I believe. This is just after my father died, I guess around 1926 or 1927; the Harbor Department wanted to get rid of a lot of dirt out of the channels. So, they came to us and wanted to know if they could fill in around the old quartermaster's barn. I said, "No, of course not, it's a very good place in there and we can get lighters from the harbor right in there now at high tide." So, little by little, they said it would cost them more to build bulkheads to save oil in than what I demanded they do--that is, repair the damage the Board of Public Works did when they filled in Fries Avenue and "A" Street. At Fries Avenue from "A" Street south, they had heaped dirt up against the old quartermaster's barn and dry-rotted a good part of that side. So, I told them if they'd raise the building up to truck height on the new level and repair the damage the Board of Public Works did, why, we wouldn't charge them for filling our land. And they did it. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: How was the original fill of Wilmington conducted?

BANNING: All hydraulic. They dredged the channels out but as time went on, why, there was still silting in the harbor from the Los Angeles-San Gabriel River and from the Dominguez Channel through Compton. They

had to get rid of the muck and mud at the bottom of the channels and they were always looking for a near-by place. I think they call it a waste area. We had quite a bit of that, too. We could keep them in line a little bit, which we never have since.

TWEEDALE: I see. When they decided to raise the town of Wilmington, how did they do it?

BANNING: Well, the buildings that were there that amounted to anything had to be raised. They raised those and then pumped in this mud underneath.

TWEEDALE: They raised them up on pilings?

BANNING: Oh, yes, they had to put them on pilings. The Fries Avenue and "A" Street warehouse, when it was raised--oh, probably a generation later--was put on pilings, fortunately. They call them pile butts. They drive piles till they get to what they call a point of refusal and then they saw the upper part of the pile off to the height they want for their building. What's taken off there is a pile butt. The Harbor Department had a great many pile butts which they used under our warehouse. They were going to put in just ordinary timbers and I said, "No, you get pile butts because they're all creosoted and tarred." Termites don't like that. It was very satisfactory all around. I'm sure the Harbor Department gritted their teeth when they had to repair the damage that the Public Works

had done.

TWEEDALE: Did the city of Wilmington have any difficulties with high tide before it was raised?

BANNING: Oh, it used to come up a little ways. My grandfather had dug a canal from the deep channel up parallel with Canal, which is now Avalon Boulevard, up to about where the Southern Pacific crosses now and that was all dug by Indians with wheelbarrows and shovels. Didn't need picks. They could get small lighters up there and they were easier to load.

TWEEDALE: Has there been any substantial fill since that time?

BANNING: No.

TWEEDALE: After Mr. Wrigley purchased Catalina Island and the Banning offices were no longer in the Pacific Electric Building where were they located?

BANNING: Well, different branches of the family. . . J. B. Banning had his own office but I think he was with the Matson Navigation Company. What little business he did, why, he had permission to consolidate it or intermingle it with his business with Matson. He was general superintendent for them. But the main control of all the property including the Newport ranch was transported to the milk house. It used to be the milk house. It was one-story with a big basement to keep things cool. And that was used for storage. It

was located between the big house that my grandfather built in the early 1860's and the stage barn which I believe now is the only stage barn left standing in the state of California. In that barn now are a great many vehicles, some of them owned by the General, or by different members of the family, and different old-timers that have contributed the obsolete transportation. There is one two-wheeled cart that the General owned a great many of. They were used to transport ballast from the San Pedro Hills down to the waterfront. Then ballast was loaded on barges and taken out to the sailing ships to use on their way back around the Horn to the East Coast. We had very little cargo to ship out. We were great importers, but not exporters. He made a great financial success out of that. I think there are some pictures of wheelbarrows and picks fixing up the waterfront to accommodate these two-wheeled dump carts.

TWEEDALE: Back to the offices in the milk house where your uncle was located, is this where the Banning Company was operating?

BANNING: Well, the Banning Company as such--that is, all the real estate that it owned--was divided up among the three brothers.

TWEEDALE: I see. After the sale of Catalina Island?

BANNING: Yes. The stevedore business I think I've

already said was turned over to our old marine superintendent and superintendent of stevedores and warehousing for a dollar in hand paid as a gift of appreciation for the long and faithful service that he'd done for us. Edward Mahar, Mr. Ned, we called him. He was a very astute man. I never saw anybody in my life that could look at a column of figures and it was just a matter of seconds that he'd have the total at the bottom. Our own shipbuilder, William Muller, would submit an estimate on what this or that was going to cost and Mr. Ned would take one look at it and take it back to Mr. Muller. Then he'd say, "That's all right, you go ahead." Mr. Muller would shake his head, "I don't know how he does it."

TWEEDALE: You mentioned that Mr. Mahar had also established a bank.

BANNING: Oh, he started the First National Bank of San Pedro, and his brother ran the custom house. Another brother ran a garage and repair shop, the only one in Wilmington. So, we were very well fixed in one family for quite a few items of necessity around the harbor.

TWEEDALE: Do you happen to know how long the Banning offices stayed in the milk house?

BANNING: They stayed there until the city took over the twenty-one acres plus the house, stage barn, the

old brick well, pump house, and tank in June, 1927. In the meantime we had built a one-story building and warehouse on "E" Street between Broad and Avalon Boulevard for our office and warehouse to put various effects in that we'd taken from the big house. Fortunately, it divided into two what you might call storefronts. The Wrigley contractor for their subdivision and building was located in the other half of the front part of the building. My uncle was very close to Mr. Wrigley in business and they got along famously together.

TWEEDALE: This is your Uncle William.

BANNING: Yes. Captain Banning.

TWEEDALE: Where did you say the building was located?

BANNING: It was on "E" Street between Avalon and Broad in Wilmington, and that stayed as headquarters for all the Banning interests and some Patton interests because they owned property in Wilmington also. My mother's brother George.

TWEEDALE: So although the various interests were separate you still had the office together and worked together out of that office.

BANNING: Yes. Well, I was general manager for all of them. They'd all come down there and scream about taxes, which I could do very well by myself. That office stayed there till Mormon Island went back to the city in 1947 and things were quieted down there. There

was a great boom in Orange County. We have a ranch down there around five or six hundred acres. The Santa Ana River is the west boundary, the city of Newport the south boundary, and Costa Mesa the north boundary. The east boundary is metes and bounds. That's very active. In 1962, I believe it was somewhere along in there, 'sixty-three or four--anyway, I was seventy-two years old--I was very glad to be relieved of the responsibility and the legwork that had to be done by our oldest son Hancock Banning III, called "Bill." He now is doing a magnificent job for the whole family.

TWEEDALE: You moved down there, then, after 'forty-seven into the Orange County area?

BANNING: No. We had lost the Mormon Island leasehold in 'forty-seven. So, that was one of the things that disappeared. That was a big job. But there were other things around there. But it was in 'sixty-two that we moved. Well, Newport was coming up all the time, little by little, and it was very difficult to handle living here in San Marino with an office in Wilmington and lots of action in Orange County. The trips to Sacramento with the Highway Department, all that sort of thing. I just couldn't do it.

TWEEDALE: Did anyone actually live on your ranch or farm it?

BANNING: We had two Japanese families on there as tenants.

We had to get rid of one of them, so both of them wouldn't starve to death. That's to show you what kind of land the ranch is on. Sometime after the Second World War, across our fence to the east there was some subdivision. I like to be acquainted with the people around us; so, I'd go over and see a newcomer. I'd shin under the fence or climb over it, introduce myself, and talk things over. I remember there was one very nice young lady, a war veteran's wife. I asked her, I said, "You're very interested in gardening and I just wondered how you handle these things in this soil." She said it was wonderful if you don't go more than three inches deep. [laughter] It was hardpan all over the place. We had a fence contractor come in and put up a fence along our east boundary. He came back and said he wouldn't do it. They were not equipped to handle fenceposts in soil like that. So, we didn't have any fence for a long time.

TWEEDALE: This is the ranch that was originally purchased by your grandfather?

BANNING: Part of it. I think it was four or five thousand acres that he bought to go in the sheep business when the Southern Pacific took over all the operations in the harbor. Now we're back to the harbor.

TWEEDALE: Yes. [laughter] We can't get away.

BANNING: A central location. He bought this acreage from what the Southern Pacific paid him. My uncle told me it was a very fair transaction although the Southern Pacific had the leverage on us. They could have gone into business there and broken us in no time at all. He said it was a very fair transaction. My father took the money, my uncle speaking, and bought this in southeast Los Angeles County which is now the county of Orange. He went into the sheep business and three successive years of drought put him in bad shape financially. He had to ship the sheep on the Southern Pacific out to what was the head of rail at that time and is now called the town of Banning. Near as I can figure out, from what I hear, that Banning siding was put there to unload sheep and like so many of the Southern Pacific stations turned into towns; they'd take the name of the station, whatever it happened to be. They drove the sheep into Arizona. You can't do that with cattle but with sheep they could. When I first heard that, I scratched my head and doubted it but I've checked up later and it's possible. What was the date you looked up when Wilmington Transportation was formed?

TWEEDALE: About 1877.

BANNING: Yes. Well, my uncle told me this but I

couldn't remember the date. Very good of you to look that up. At the time the Wilmington Transportation--was it 1877?--started, the Southern Pacific, having taken over the harbor operations, found they couldn't very well afford to keep it up. I don't know whether they were losing money on it or complaints or what-not. But they very gladly, my uncle told me, gave everything back to Phineas Banning. This came in pretty handy for him because the sheep business hadn't panned out very well. From then on, why, we've been very active in the harbor up until oh, I guess about January 1919 when Mr. Wrigley took over. We still owned a lot of land around there and it was necessary to keep in close touch with it. The absentee ownership of land is not very good especially in California.

TWEEDALE: You mentioned that only part of the ranch in Newport, or Orange County, was. . .

BANNING: Well, there was a great deal of very bitter litigation involving Mrs. M. H. Banning, who was my grandfather's second wife. She was a very cruel person, apparently mentally very able. We were never allowed to speak to her, have anything to do with her. She lived about a block and a half away from us catty-corner across the street and we used to look at her with great curiosity, riding bicycles down there and sort of peeking over the handlebars. She was a holy

terror, near as I can make out. But of course there's a great deal of prejudice involved in this thing. But she practically took over the whole harbor operation herself. I've got a stack of books this high of old letter-press copies on yellow thin paper. You've seen that. Ground the wheel around and the next morning the office man takes it all out. The letters are all duplicated and then he has to dry out everything before you start over again. Of course, my uncle who had worked at this business with his father, my grandfather, why, he was sort of pushed out of the picture. But he didn't do anything about it at all. Very soon, why, Mrs. M. H. was notified that unless she got out of the picture the Southern Pacific would go back into business for itself again and force her out of the picture. Then a little while later, why, they got the General back in and my uncle, Captain Banning. She always had been the bête noire, the polite thing to say about her. But her older daughter, Mary, and I were very close friends. She was very dear. Dear Aunt Mary.

TWEEDALE: Now, back to the ranch. You mentioned that part of the ranch had been originally purchased by. . .

BANNING: Yes, I got off the track again.

TWEEDALE: That's alright. It was a good detour. That part of the ranch had been purchased by your grandfather and then you mentioned he acquired some other

land in Orange County at a later time?

BANNING: No, the whole thing was all bought at once as near as I know. Four or five thousand acres. But in this bitter litigation that Mrs. M. H. started, why, she got most of that land. All the land that was of any good at all for barley or grain, any kind of grain, she got all that. She divided that up as time went on to her two daughters and what we got was saltflats and hardpan. As I said before, with two Japanese families we had to move one off. But I think you might say that there has been poetic justice. There was no oil on any of her land, and we've got over two hundred wells on ours with a very nice income. Our land as real estate is worth anywhere from four to eight times the land that Mrs. M. H. got in the lawsuit. We don't sell by acreage anymore now. It's by the square foot. As I said, poetic justice.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me about the letter from your grandfather, Phineas Banning, to Mr. Potter, that you found in your father's safe?

BANNING: Oh, yes. In my father's office in the old milk house, after my father's death in August of 1925, among the contents of his safe was a letter from Mr. Potter to my father enclosing a letter from General Banning to Mr. Potter. Mr. Potter apparently was head of the vigilantes in Los Angeles. They were not

apparently as objectionable and long lasting as the San Francisco branch or maybe they were a branch of the San Francisco vigilantes. My grandfather apparently was among them. He sent this letter to Mr. Potter. I'm giving the original to the Huntington Library as soon as I have some copies made so I can distribute them to various interested members of the family.

TWEEDALE: And what was the content of the letter?

BANNING: Well, they caught a horse thief, they said. I could read a little bit. A letter from my grandfather dated December 18, 1863:*

> Mr. N.A. Potter,
>
> I think we have a murderer and horse thief in the guard house at camp here. Mr. Bartlett will tell you the particulars. If he is guilty sure let the officer come for him to go to Los Angeles and my man will capture him on the road and give him to you or hang him, if we are very sure he deserves it. Please let me hear from you.
>
> Yours truly,
>
> Phineas Banning

TWEEDALE: And there's a postscript on that letter.

BANNING: Oh, yes. The postscript said, "Mr. B [Mr. Bartlett], the bearer, is the man who captured the murderer of Mr. Sanford." Mr. Sanford was my grand-

*See Appendix I for a photocopy of that letter.

father's father-in-law. The murder of Mr. Sanford was a very strange and as usual, so often, unnecessary. Mr. Sanford was driving up the coast in a buggy with two horses and a man hailed him on his way to Santa Barbara and asked for a ride. So, Mr. Sanford gave him a ride. The hame strap broke or became badly adjusted and Mr. Sanford got out and went down on the ground to adjust the hame strap. This passenger fished a gun out from under the seat cushion and murdered Mr. Sanford. He drove to one side of the road in some little canyon or gully where he unhitched the team and turned one of the horses loose. He rode the other one up to Santa Barbara. My uncle told me this.

TWEEDALE: This was Uncle William.

BANNING: Yes, Captain William. He told me this more than once. Maybe I am getting that way myself. [laughter] He said that the sheriff of Santa Barbara was sitting in front of the sheriff's headquarters with two or three deputies and saw this man riding a horse coming up the road. He assessed that he was riding bareback and the sheriff said to one of his deputies, "Now, if that man takes that turn to the left we won't do anything but if he goes to the right, why, I'm going to have to arrest him." He took the turn to the right and the sheriff went after him. According to my uncle, this man pretty near killed the sheriff. But the

sheriff got hold of a rock while he was flat on the ground himself and struck the opponent on the head, knocked him out, and put him in jail. By that time the murder had been discovered in Los Angeles and the news had gotten up there. Sure enough, this was the murderer the sheriff had in jail. So, my uncle told me that they took the man back to Wilmington and they had a trial. My uncle said there were no trees there at the time. It was quite a while before the General had planted all those eucalyptus trees. He was hung at the yardarm of one of the General's side-wheelers. I've been looking for a yardarm in the pictures of the side-wheelers ever since and I haven't found one yet. It's a damn good story.

TWEEDALE: Yes, a very good story. [laughter] How did the sheriff in Santa Barbara know that if he turned right he would be a criminal?

BANNING: Well, my uncle didn't know. I asked him that and he said that's the story that the sheriff's man that brought the prisoner down here told.

TWEEDALE: I've read that before and I was really curious how he knew. Mr. Banning, could you tell me something about the squatters on your Newport ranch?

BANNING: Well, they were rather minor incidents that were somewhat amusing, I thought. There was a great old-time attorney named Bob Mize. He called up one

night and it was raining pitchforks. We were at the big house in Wilmington. He told me that he had been in a speakeasy in Santa Ana, Santa Ana being a fairly dry town in the first place and during Prohibition in the second place. He said he heard a man bragging what he was going to do to the Bannings. He had it all surveyed and staked out and he was going to move in. Somebody warned him he'd better not because they would fight. He said, oh, no, it's all mudflats. So, I got the waterfront crew at Berth 112 in San Pedro, loaded up the truck with all the necessary ingredients to set up watchmen on the place, and got the truck down to Newport. And it's the intersection of 101 highway now and the West Newport Road. We went down there and sure enough, there were stakes. Still raining. We used the headlights of the car to see what we were doing. So, we moved the stakes, each one a little bit, and put it back in the ground again. With timbers and whatnot we set up a floor, put a tent on top of it and put in a stove, cot, table and a chair. We set up a place for a semi-permanent residence for our watchmen. He told us that the next morning about 9:30 or 10:00 o'clock a man came in a cart. The one that Bob Mize had heard the night before at the speakeasy. He tried to give our man three hundred dollars to move out and let him move in. That man was provided with a sawed-off shot-

gun, so he didn't have to say very much more than no. He said, "I have my stakes there." He said, "Mister, they've all been moved." So that was the end of that. We kept a watchman there for quite a while. But it was a great lesson to me that you don't talk business in a saloon.

The next incident. I got a telephone call from a man in the real estate business named Ernest Grill who lived in Newport. Very fine young man. We did business with him once in a while. He called up and said, "Well, the squatters moved in at another place on your mud flats." He said, "Don't worry about it, Mr. Banning. I'll take care of it." So, he told me it was approximately near Bitter Point Dam south of what's now 101 highway or towards the ocean. I should say down 101 highway. They're all mud flats. I think some of these people thought it was tidelands and they would mix things up. Tidelands are betes noires in our family, the trouble we've had with them. Ask the Title Insurance and Trust Company. Cost them a lot of money. So a few days later I went down there, and sure enough, Mr. Grill had taken care of the situation admirably. What he told me later was that he didn't burn the place down while the man was in it. He waited till he went to a moving picture show. When I got there, there was nothing but a cast-iron stove and some

bedsprings sitting in the mud. And we don't know anything about it. [laughter]

What those squatters had in mind was that they knew that they couldn't occupy the property and the whole idea was for you to pay them a few hundred dollars to get off. My grandfather, my uncle's father, found out a long time ago that wasn't the way to do. Of course, we couldn't burn them out. If somebody did it out of the kindness of his heart, that was something else again. But we'd never pay off. So, I think, we saved a great deal of trouble that way. I know my father and uncles had a bad time around San Pedro and Wilmington with squatters. It cost them more in lawsuits than a man would have taken as a pay-off. Of course, a lawsuit is cheaper than a whole lot of little pay-offs.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you tell me what you recollect about your Uncle William?

BANNING: Oh, he was a wonderful gentleman. Bachelor uncle. He had nieces and nephews. There were six of us. He treated us as his own children, and I think probably was much kinder to us because he didn't have the problems with discipline or very seldom. I know I used to swear sometimes and I know he didn't like it but I'd forget myself. I was cussing out some of the crooks on the Harbor Commission one time when we had lunch out on his ranch at Walnut where he kept his

stages and horses. He drove six horses until he was about 80 years old. Called it the Overland Stage Club. He said he only had one member and he elected himself president. [laughter] You see, he'd hardly ever admonish anyone. He got around doing it; well, he must have done an awful lot of thinking. Because this time I was cussing the Harbor Commission crooks in the department there. Some time later, we'd probably finished lunch--we always had fried chicken and vanilla ice cream for lunch, that was standard--he said, "You know, I had a friend one time and he used to swear an awful lot. I was with him one time. We were going downtown to the theater and this lady that was with him got off the streetcar backwards. He said, 'Look out, honey, don't do that again, you'll break your damn neck.'" So I realized I'd sworn too much and it was very unnecessary. He had stories to tell. On his father's and his brother's stagecoaches they had little arm slings on the inside part of the old Concord, Abbot, Downing coaches. And his brother Joe, my Uncle Joe, disliked riding in stagecoaches. He just thought they were awful. My father hated them even worse because he had asthma and the dust would get inside. The driver didn't get half the dust the people inside the coach did. If they closed the windows they'd probably roast to death. These arm slings were one of the few comforts they had. Some-

body would ask my uncle what those were for and he said, "Well, you know my brother Joe, he says that when you can't stand riding in one of these things any longer you put your head in there and hang yourself."

And he would tell this incident. It happened to my grandfather, his father, Phineas Banning. He used to do a great deal of business with the United States Army during the Civil War, or I should say as we were cautioned to in our family, "the War between the States" or "the Rebellion". He had the job of carrying the payroll every once in a while. Something would come up so he'd carry the payroll to Arizona to pay the troops. And this particular incident happened when it was getting dusk and real dark. He saw a light in a small house near the trail and he had the payroll in the saddlebags. He was riding by himself and, of course, he always carried a gun on a trip like that. So he thought that would be a good place to spend the night. He went up there, threw the reins over the horse's head, and knocked on the door. The minute he looked in there he knew he was probably in trouble. He was in the wrong place. It was a bunch of road agents, banditos. So, he must have thought very rapidly. He said he'd like to spend the night. He knew if he started running they'd be after him and

get him. They said,"Certainly, come on in." So he fixed his horse up outside and brought the saddle in with the saddlebags and the payroll in the saddlebags and said, "Where do I put this?" They said, "Oh, just throw it over in the corner," which he did, money and everything. They had food and turned in. The next morning, why, they had breakfast and he thanked them. He carried a little "poke"--they used to call it--and gave them some money. He went on his way with the whole payroll. On his way back, why, there were several of these fellows he thought he recognized hanging from limbs of trees. The Rurales had gotten in there and wiped out the whole bunch. So, he went to look the house over, shaking his head, I suppose. He heard some groaning out in the brush back of the house. He went out there and there was one of the banditos that had been badly wounded. He was dying. The General gave him some water, talked to him a little while, and stayed there till he died. The General told him about the trip he was on delivering a payroll. This man said, "My God, if we'd known that,your life wouldn't have been worth a nickel." That was an example of how you survive in the West by thinking fast.

TWEEDALE: [laughter] This is the story Uncle William told you.

BANNING: Yes. His father told him. That was very good. He had some pretty good stories. They're a

little difficult for me to remember off-hand this way. But he just loved his nieces and nephews. Any chance he had, why, he would take one or two of us along with him. We didn't have any shipways at all at San Pedro or Wilmington. Our little passenger ships, tugs, and lighters mostly would have to go to San Diego. They had a shipway down there. Instead of cables at that time they used to pull the ships out of the water with link chains. We went down there with the old Hermosa one time. George Whiting, I believe, was with us. He was a good friend of mine. We got fairly near the top of the ways and the chain broke. We shot the chutes and went clear across the bay on the mud flat. We just thought that was wonderful. It didn't hurt anything and then we were able to stay down there two or three days longer. My uncle took advantage of the situation and we went up to call on some of the old ship captains that lived around there. One happy afternoon George and I spent at a ship captain's house who had a cat. It was a very well-trained cat. He had some system of putting half walnut shells on the cat's four feet and turning him loose on the hardwood floor. It was just simply wonderful. It was one of the most delightful things we'd ever seen. They finally got a blacksmith and fixed up the chain. My uncle wouldn't let us on board this time because it might break again. It

wasn't exactly the kind of a thing that should happen. It might have been dangerous. They got it fixed up a couple of days later and we came back to Los Angeles. A very nice trip it was, withal.

TWEEDALE: The previous session you were telling me about the trips you used to take down to see your uncle when you were managing the Banning affairs.

BANNING: He had so much experience and he was so logical and so sound in his business judgments that with my inexperience. . . I'd been trained as an electrical and mechanical engineer, and what I knew about land handling I had to learn as I went along. With the death of my father I was put in this very awkward position for a good many years. I think about thirty-seven years I handled the properties of the whole family. So naturally I would go to see my uncle, which was quite often in the first few years because of his knowledge. I remember that Walter B. Allen was the head of the Harbor Commission at the time. He was probably one of the first crooks we had. That board was just impossible. You were afraid to do business with them because you'd be accused of paying off just because you did business with them with their reputation. I was cussing Walter B. Allen at lunch one day at the Walnut ranch. My uncle didn't wait to admonish me. He said, "Mr. Hank," he said, "You know I can hear you. I

talked to Mr. Chandler and he started Walter B. Allen out in business." That was Harry Chandler at the time. He was a great friend of my uncle. And he said that Allen was no good; he made a mistake trying to help him. He was crooked. He said, "The thing to do in a place like that is not to try to get rid of the man. You know about as much as you'll ever know about him now or anyone else in a position of that sort." And he said, "You know pretty much what to do. You get another man in there, he might be worse and you wouldn't know anything about him at all. You'd have to start all over again. So let's leave Mr. Allen in the Harbor Department." [laughter] He was a wonderful person that way. I don't think I ever heard him admonishing anyone except once, and of course, I happened to be the one. We were down at the big house. We used to go down there on Washington's Birthday, the whole family. Get on the Southern Pacific, the stage would meet us at the station and then we'd have a barbecue and lunch. There'd probably be thirty or forty people there. There were Chinese employed there in the garden and the house at that time. I guess I was all of five years old. I'll never forget it. One of them was named, I believe, Ah Lee. So I said, "Ah Lee, ching-chong Chinaman riding on a rail. 'Long come a choppy man, chop off his tail." Ah Lee went to Uncle

and reported me. Uncle took me personally to apologize to Ah Lee and tell him I was very sorry I hurt him. And I did. He was awfully careful. The whole family was awfully careful about the way children treated servants. We respected those people, treated them fairly and decently and didn't cuss them.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

MARCH 19, 1970

TWEEDALE: Now that we've turned the tape over, would you care to continue your recollections of your Uncle William?

BANNING: He was a great one for training the youngsters in the family. I remember very distinctly one time there was a dense fog and we were tied up at the thirty wharf, Coronado Islands. It was the Spreckels' wharf, Coronado Island. We had to get back for some reason or other at a certain time so we didn't wait till the fog lifted. My uncle said to take her out. We'd taken compass bearings on the way in. We almost always did that; the channel was so narrow. So, he asked me how I was going to do it. I said about one or two knots speed. We had a regular indicator instead of a gong and handle, the old-fashioned indicator. And I'll use the voice tube for the engine room. In reversing your courses on a compass you can't be sure that the headings are accurate. They're 180 degrees off from the ones you use coming in theoretically; but sometimes they're not. So the idea was that we would go very slowly. As soon as we'd hit a mud bank, why, we'd back up a litle bit and change the course and keep going in slowly until we'd hit a mud bank on the other side. So, we zig-

zagged out of the harbor. If you did that now, why, you'd be running into another ship or a dock or something of that sort. He was very pleased when we got out. I was very proud of myself.

It's very interesting--the different things that happened. One time we were down there. . . San Diego is not as good for sailboats because I don't think they have the wind down there that they do up around Point Fermin, San Pedro, and the Catalina Channel. But there was a man in a catboat. He had a good-sized one and my cousin Joe and I were admiring it. So my uncle fixed it up and we went along as cabin boys. It was fairly dangerous compared with a vessel with two or three sails because you've got so much canvas in one sail. It's pretty hard to reduce it by furling or reefing it. So, we got the catboat man, told him to take us out and teach us how to sail. Of course, we were pretty young and we didn't know about catboats or catboat sailing. But we learned an awful lot in about two hours with that man. Just the right breeze for the size of the vessel. We wouldn't put the rail under but we came pretty close to it. It was wonderful that way.

TWEEDALE: Mr. Banning, could you say something about your uncle in his business activities?

BANNING: Well, he was his father's right-hand man. I don't suppose he was more than about sixteen or seventeen

years old. And he grew up at the harbor. He naturally had a great deal of experience with the General's, his father's, marine equipment, the side-wheelers, the lighters, and tugboats (they used them for passengers), as well as experience with stevedoring, stagecoaches, and the railroads. The General was one of the chief promoters of the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad that the Southern Pacific took over. It was owned by the County of Los Angeles or the City of Los Angeles. I don't know which. William Banning had a vast experience. All his life he was the head of the family. No question about that at all. He was a great thinker and a kindly gentleman. Did I tell you about the breakwater contract?

TWEEDALE: I think you mentioned it. I'm not sure it's on the tape so why don't you go ahead and. . .

BANNING: Well, the contract for the first breakwater in Los Angeles Harbor came up and we had a marine superintendent and general manager at Fifth Street, San Pedro, in the wooden offices there. Ed Mahar was very able, a fine gentleman. We got bids from different people. They'd take rock from Catalina and put it in the breakwater. There was an outfit named Heldmaier and Neu. They were Jewish people. Ed Mahar was very prejudiced and told my uncle that he wouldn't do busi-

ness with people like that. My uncle, as usual, didn't argue with him at all. He let the matter rest for a few days and he went back to the harbor again at Los Angeles where he was living at the time. He said, "Mr. Ned, you know, I hate to admit there's anybody in this world that you and I can't do business with." And we did business with Heldmaier and Neu, which I think is the way my uncle did all his life. A great diplomat. Wonderful gentleman.

TWEEDALE: You mentioned something about his being sent back to negotiate for the Harvard and the Yale.

BANNING: Oh, yes. He and Mr. Chandler of the Times were pretty good friends. He got my uncle to go back and negotiate because he didn't want to appear in the thing whatsoever. And Uncle went back there not representing anyone as far as anybody knew. He kept in touch with Mr. Chandler through telegrams and letters. Everything in longhand and copies on carbon paper. I still have some of the carbon copies of the letters he wrote to Mr. Chandler because he would not use a public stenographer since there was a possibility, maybe a probability, of a leak. The Harvard and the Yale ended up doing a wonderful job between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Competition with the Southern Pacific. A great many people used to ride back and forth on that--so much better than a train.

TWEEDALE: Did they retain the names Harvard and Yale?

BANNING: Oh, yes. Oh, you don't change the name of a vessel. That's bad luck. It used to be that you'd have trouble getting a crew if you changed the name of a vessel. A great many superstitions along those lines.

TWEEDALE: Where was he negotiating? In New York?

BANNING: Oh, yes. New York City.

TWEEDALE: And how did they bring the vessels back?

BANNING: Through the canal. They did a wonderful job on the coast here.

TWEEDALE: This was before the Santa Fe Railroad got into the harbor?

BANNING: I don't remember whether the Santa Fe was in the harbor or not at that time. I'm pretty sure they weren't, because I can remember when they first built their station and that was some time after the Harvard and Yale ceased to run the route between San Francisco and San Pedro.

TWEEDALE: Did they carry passengers as well?

BANNING: Oh, yes, that was the big thing. They ran on an express boat schedule.

TWEEDALE: Do you know how long it happened to take them?

BANNING: No, I don't remember. They were twenty-two-knot ships; they'd run on schedule. I think that's the reason one of them piled up and it was sent in up near Honda someplace where one of those destroyers piled up.

There is definitely a current set in there. Navigation aids in those days weren't anything what they are now. They are so good now that the chief wrecker of the United States, Merritt, Chapman and Scott*, are out of business because they don't have enough wrecks to keep them busy. We've got this radio, underwater stuff.

TWEEDALE: Well, from what I understand, your uncle continued with the Wilmington Transportation Company and the Santa Catalina Island Company after Mr. Wrigley purchased them from the family.

BANNING: He was there and I don't know whether he was with the Wilmington Transportation Company or the Santa Catalina Island Company or both. I'm not sure of that. But he was the vice president for a good many years afterwards. He thought a great deal of Mr. Wrigley and Mr. Wrigley apparently thought quite a lot of him because he used to listen to him quite a bit on what to do and how to do it. Mr. Wrigley was going to build a house on Catalina. I haven't told this one to you, have I? About the colonial house?

TWEEDALE: I think that you mentioned it. Not too colonial. [laughter]

BANNING: Too damn colonial. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: So then your uncle retired to his ranch?

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* A marine salvage company.

BANNING: Well, he had a place at Thirty-first and Hoover Street in Los Angeles. Beautiful place there. He had a cast-iron fence. Beautiful thing that he had shipped up here from New Orleans. He got a German woodcarver whom he brought over from Germany. He was in his employ for a good many years. He did some marvelous carving. I used to go there and pretty near cried because I couldn't do as well as he did. This fellow was just an artist. It was fascinating to watch him work. Wonderful mechanic. He had carved fruit, carved ducks and stuff all over the place. He had a huge ballroom and the three J. B. Banning families all lived there. He had his quarters and it was a regular little colony.

TWEEDALE: This is J. B. Banning's home.

BANNING: Yes. It was my uncle's home but all the J. B. Bannings lived there--Aunt Katherine, two sons, and a daughter and all their families.

TWEEDALE: What happened to that home?

BANNING: Well, they were going to put Hoover Street through to be widened and condemnation was started. Uncle said, "Well, there's nothing to do now but get out." The reason he bought the property in the first place is rather amusing. It was because he had to have his six stage horses there with him, which he did. This had been a stable and it had a permit to keep horses

and hay and also lots of flies. That's why he bought it because he didn't have to get a permit. He couldn't get one. And then he built this huge house. It was a wonderful place. And his oldest niece was married there. They have a picture of her going away with her husband in a six-in-hand coach and Uncle on the box. It was quite a family place. We used to go over there quite often and it was lovely. He was going to have to get out of there anyway because driving six horses when you get to an intersection, you can lose the leaders and the swing team in an automobile wreck before you can ever see the automobile. You're so far behind sitting on the box. He had to cross several streets. We had a place in Compton, about fifteen acres. He called it a Halfway House. It was only about eighteen miles; but he wasn't going to have the horses do that in one day. So, he stopped at the Compton ranch and had a barbecue and stayed overnight. Then he'd go on to the big house in Wilmington. We enjoyed that greatly. But with the traffic situation and the condemnation of Hoover Street, he took the whole building down, almost all of it. Parts of it were put into the J. B. Banning's houses that were built in Hancock Park. We have a few of them here on the place, some of the cast-iron fence.

TWEEDALE: Were they able to save most of the carvings?

BANNING: All of them. The Whiting Wrecking Company did

the job. I think Uncle was there most of the time in person. Usually they would pay you to allow them to wreck. This place we had to pay them because of the special men they had and the work they had to do to save the various carvings.

So, then he went out and bought a little place near Walnut. Our number one stage driver at Catalina that told the tall stories, Tom Green, Uncle Tom--he was a wonderful person--he had a twenty-acre orange ranch right near Walnut. My uncle and Tom were pretty good friends. So he talked it over with Uncle Tom and bought a little place he called his ranchito, three and a half acres. He built a wonderful place, a big stable, and places to put the coaches. There were quite a few buildings all around. We all had the habit of having buildings around the main building. I think when this place was built there were about nine altogether. He moved the horses and stages out there. He and Uncle Tom were sort of retiring together as stage drivers. Uncle Tom used to take a six-in-hand with Harry Chandler and William Rowland and--I forget who the other one was.

The ranch was called Tres Hermanos. Uncle fixed up a camp there. It was a great big place, several thousand acres as I remember. He used to drive a stagecoach there. We used to go up on weekends. It was simply wonderful at night. It reminded me of when I was very, very young.

This was just about fifteen years ago. You could go to sleep at night and hear the coyotes all around yapping and yelling. That's music.

And the cattle. Plenty of cattle on the ranch and they knew how to handle them. Tom used to buy a few heifers and bring them up to where the feedlot stood now. He kept his orange orchard fertilized and he made money on the meat. For the average person with an orange orchard, it would be an awful lot of trouble for him with a bunch of cows and handling an orange orchard at the same time. But Tom knew cattle, how to handle them. He had some awful good people working with him, too. One great big fellow--they naturally called him "Tiny"--he took a 160-pound sack of barley on his shoulder and climbed over a fence into the corral to feed the animals. He was a great showoff. He wouldn't put the sack on the top rail and take it on his shoulder. [laughter]

TWEEDALE: Did your uncle spend most of his time then at the ranch?

BANNING: Oh, he lived out there for quite a while. The last few years of his life that is where he lived. He had barracks for all the great-nieces and great-nephews, one for each. He hated waste. I never saw anybody that hated waste as much as he did except my wife accuses me of being worse than my uncle along those lines. Turning

out lights all the time. I always figured I was wasting water, there's so much hydraulic power being used. Wasting oil everytime we turn the light on unnecessarily. Why, there is either some oil or water being wasted. One of the stories that my oldest son tells is that they had a wash basin in the boys' quarters with hot and cold water. When they'd come in for breakfast in the morning my uncle would go out and check up to see how things were. He'd tell them they'd have to turn the water off. They left the hot water on two or three times. So, he took the handle off, cinched it up with a pipe wrench on the stand, and said when they wanted hot water they could come around in a couple of weeks and maybe they would remember to turn it off the next time. [laughter]

He had a hustler out there. He was cockney English with a violent temper. That's why he worked with Uncle for so long because Uncle knew how to handle him. He stayed with Uncle till he died. But that man knew horses, he knew people, and he knew those children. They adored him. The only thing about Harry Heldrich none of us liked at all was that he insisted on smoking the most horrible-smelling cigars you ever smelled in your life. He'd chew half of the cigar. He didn't like good cigars at all. So at Christmas time the

youngsters would go out, find out what were the worst cigars on the market, and buy two or three boxes of them. They were always appreciated. Harry was also a wonderful blacksmith. He had been on some big estate in England. He'd been brought up with horses. He probably swore at Lord Somebody, lost his job, and came over here. But he was awfully good with the kids. He taught them all to ride and to me it was a terrible thing what he did. He dispensed with all the saddles we'd used all our life and went to English saddles instead of Mexican. Pretty near all of them turned out to be jumpers.

TWEEDALE: Did you do jumping on your uncle's ranch?

BANNING: No. Nobody jumped. With a Mexican saddle, you'd get the pommel in your gut.

TWEEDALE: It's just recently they've gone to English saddles?

BANNING: Yes. Well, not too recently. About twenty years ago, and that to me was appalling. You have four reins. You have to "gee" and "haw" with your left hand and your right hand instead of the rein on your horse's neck so that pressure on the right side turns it left and vice-versa. It's the most sensible thing in the world, but little by little they are using jeeps now to repair the fences and they herd cattle with helicopters or planes. The price of labor now, why, I guess the

horse is pretty near gone. They must have a few around for good looks or something.

Harry Chandler had a ranch called Vermejo Park. Uncle William took a stage up there. It was in Colorado. About eight thousand feet elevation. We used to go out there and it was a wonderful place. About eight thousand acres. It was fenced and patrolled.

Tony, an old-time Mexicano, worked for my uncle and my grandfather. I don't know whether he could read or write. I don't know whether anybody knew whether he could or not. He had a very intelligent and wonderful wife. Harry Heldrich tells of going from here to Vermejo Park in the truck with Tony. My uncle would give them some money. Each one had their own money. Harry said that he found out that Tony couldn't count money. He'd take out about what he thought and give it to them. They'd give him something back and whatever it was that was alright. Harry watched it pretty close. He said one time, they wanted ice cream, à la mode. Harry said, "That's fine," and Tony said, "Sure." Harry tells the story. When they got to the next place Tony said, "No more mode. Costs too much." What a character.

But the fishing at Vermejo Park was appalling. You couldn't <u>not</u> catch fish. They were so hungry. We went up to the high lake. It is about ten thousand

feet. We got stuck on the mountain by a little stream and I wondered what was the matter with me. We were working too hard for ten thousand feet. Out of wind. Weren't used to it. We finally got out. My oldest son was with me. So I took him fishing in a little rowboat up there. We trowled for trout which I thought was a little ridiculous. He caught trout and caught trout. You couldn't not catch them. My uncle couldn't wait to tell us this since we thought we were great fishermen; he said, "Well, Mr. Hank, you know, I hate to cry down your fishing ability, but you know they had to haul the seine in that lake to get the trout out because they were so thick in there they would get a disease." [laughter] The fish from there were wonderful compared with the lakes--they were all artificial lakes--down there at Uncle's camp. Tasted like green moss down there. Warm water trout. They are no good.

It was a marvelous place there. Deer shooting and turkey shooting. We went to see a horse breaking. My uncle fired more than one person for being cruel to animals. We went down to see the horsemen breaking out the mustangs. It was appalling what they do to those animals. They had a rope around their neck, not just an ordinary halter. It was a big one, tied to a post. They'd bring out a saddle blanket, pound the

saddle blanket in the horse's face, slap him with the saddle blanket, and knock him back and forth. Then the horse pulls back and hurts his neck and kicks. Some of them they'd just turn loose again or shoot them because the horse has a will of his own, a true mustang. Can't break him. And then they'd throw the saddle around him with the stirrups loose. I don't think they used tapaderas up there. That's a kind of a shoe around the stirrup. Mexicans have a whole lot of leather and fringy stuff hanging down, silver mounted.

It just looked cruel to me. I said something to Uncle about it and he said, "Well they can't use jeeps or anything up here. They have to have horses. It costs money to break these animals and that's why they turn some of them loose or shoot them because they can't break them. A horse isn't worth much up here. One hundred, one hundred and fifty dollars, something like that." So many good animals there had their spirits ruined. He said, "But that's part of the cattle business." I never thought of that before.

TWEEDALE: Is there anything else you recollect about your Uncle William?

BANNING: Oh, when we lived on Fort Moore Hill, 416 North Broadway. Uncle lived part of the time with us

and part of the time with his brother, Joe Banning, my Uncle Joe. We had quite a big place up there. About three levels, as I remember it. He built a blacksmith shop. He was pretty good at it. Regular hand-driven forge, one hundred-pound anvil. Nothing less than one hundred pounds. They were only good in our family. I have a one hundred-pound anvil in the forge right here in this place that I use. But I have to admit that I've got a gas furnace to heat up the iron when I want to. We learned a little about blacksmithing. So we know what we can't do, which is a lot. And they had built a carpenter shop and a lumber shed. And so I have a carpenter shop that he built for me, a lumber shed, a blacksmith shop, and a plumbing shop because we were all brought up that way, to do it yourself. It seemed perfectly natural to us.

I didn't have a plumber on this place when we built it. I went into the Crane Company for three days and learned how to be a plumber. All the water pipes and everything on the whole place we did in 1923. I never would have called a plumber. I did all the electrical work.

TWEEDALE: That's amazing.

BANNING: Right now, with the fifteen-dollar-a-visit from some of these "experts", so-called, I feel like

I'm not entirely retired at age seventy-eight. I could put a washer in a faucet for two cents now instead of fifteen dollars.

That's my uncle. He taught us all sorts of things. He used to fix it up so we were allowed to go down and work in our shipyard--it would be called a boat yard now--with Mr. Muller. Gosh, what an artist he was. He had a violent temper. But somehow or other my uncle used to get along with these people. Mr. Muller was awful good to us. He'd show us how to build little boats and that sort of thing. Learned a lot from Uncle in woodworking. Before the days of electric motors we had the privilege of grinding the saws around the flywheel, weighted flywheel, and pressing the treadle on some other piece of machinery. All of those things were locked up with a padlock and a chain when he [Mr. Muller] left so none of the kids could get in there and lose their fingers. He was very careful about that and we were not allowed to saw or chisel until we reached a certain age and a certain amount of ability. We used to file wood in two instead of sawing it [laughter] on account of our fingers. We'd all have a plane, a hammer, and nails. I never heard of anybody that was such an all-around kind, thoughtful person.

We just adored Uncle William. He used to give

us sailboats. He'd never give anybody an automobile. He hated them. After the First World War he had a bad time getting around. After he hired Harry Heldrich, Harry finally persuaded him to buy one of the second-hand Army Dodges. He used that for years and years. If it ever went over twenty-five miles an hour, why, I never heard of it.

But he did transport his horses in trucks to the Santa Barbara big ride every year. He used to take his stage coach up there and all the horses and ride with the Visitadores, I think they are called. My brother went with him once and said, "I don't see why Uncle goes on those things. It's the biggest bunch of drunks I ever saw in my life." [laughter] Hazing at night, tearing up people, waking them up. I said, "They wouldn't do that to Uncle." He said, "No, they didn't." Word must have been passed around.

Before he gave up six horses, driving in the Overland Stage Club, he was about seventy-nine or eighty years old. Then he cut down to four horses. He loved horses. I think the whole thing was memories of the early days that he wasn't going to give up. Two or three years before he died he had a stroke and was in the hospital here recovering from that. We fixed up a house for him at the J. B. Bannings' house, so he wouldn't have

to be in a home or hospital. Harry was the head nurse for quite a while. I used to go and see him two or three times a week. You could tell when--all of a sudden he'd stop talking and say "Well, I think I'm a little tired now."--he'd have a little stroke. That's what the doctor told me. It was embarrassing. He said, this was probably a couple of years before he died, "Well, Mr. Hank, you know, you and I are pretty fortunate people. We've seen the best of California." It was so true.

TWEEDALE: Yes. He knew what was coming.

BANNING: It was already here. Well, we'd go camping. I think I told you about going to Newport. Three days to go there in the stage, stop at some little farmer's place, and how they'd just welcome you. I don't know whether I told you about when they shipped the horses and stage to Lexington, Kentucky.

TWEEDALE: No.

BANNING: Well, he said he wanted to drive through the South. So, George Schroeder of the Union Hardware and Metal Company, an old family friend, an old bachelor named John Shoemaker--we always called him Don Juan--and I think Gene Haskell--I'm not sure about that--all went down there, got the horses hitched up, and drove from there to Lexington, Virginia when I was a cadet

in the Virginia Military Institute. Uncle used to tell a story about those people down there. He said they were the most apologetic people in the world. We come in there and he said, "We didn't even stop at any restaurant or hotel or anything like that. We camped out. We'd go to some place, some likely place, and tell them we were traveling." I can imagine eyes popping all over. . . He said, "You know, everywhere we went they'd apologize to us because they didn't have anything but fried chicken." That's what he had at his place, fried chicken [laughter] with ice cream. He thought that was funny.

At the institute, we had no vacations at all except the summertime. Christmas was four hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon, apart from lunch, roll call, and dinner roll call. It was DRC. No, it was LRC and he drove in there. One of the Pattons was on the teaching staff there, modern languages, Mercer Patton. We'd known him since we were little kids. He lived out there for quite a while. He'd been notified by my uncle he was going to get there. I didn't know anything about that. We were sitting there and here came the stagecoach. And I said, "My God, that looks familiar." It sure did. So Cousin Mercer went to Superintendent Nichols. Gosh, what

happened but they let me drive all the way to the Natural Bridge with Uncle, chaperoned by Cousin Mercer, Colonel Patton. But I was an outstanding person from then on.

TWEEDALE: Yes, I can imagine.

BANNING: It was remarkable to see the attention that thing attracted, how people turned around and looked. I've had people say, "Is that your uncle that drives that six-in-hand up there near Walnut?" My uncle was tickled with all the cars stopping on the side of the road to watch. He just loved it.

A great friend of the family, the Mellus family. Some of them owned the tent and awning business, Mellus Brothers and Company. Jim Mellus had more ideas how to make money than anybody ever knew and all of them total and absolute failures. He was a very nice sort of person if you knew him, but he always could tell everybody what to do and how to do it. Half the time he hadn't the slightest idea how to do it. One time at the camp at Tres Hermanos, my uncle and I were out building a "Chic Sale."* It was very hot. The Santana was blowing the dust all over the place. We had a couple of sawhorses and some redwood lumber. We were sawing away and hammering away and pretty soon here

*An outhouse.

comes Jim Mellus. "Morning, Mr. Jim." "Morning, Mr. Jim." "Hello, Captain, young Hancock." So he sat down on the cover of nail barrels telling my uncle how to build a "Chic Sale." My uncle stood it just so long. Then he said, "You getting tired, Mr. Hank?" And I said, "I sure am." I better be tired if he suggested it. He said, "So am I. Now, Mr. Jim, you just finish this up. We're going in to lunch." [laughter]

Oh, Uncle was a wonderful person. I wish I could remember almost everything. There's stories he could tell. You'd ask him a question about some man. He'd never say anything against anybody if he possibly could avoid it. "Well, Mr. Hank, I'll tell you. That man, he may be alright. He recommends himself most highly." All the different things that he would do. He hated four-letter words and dirty stories. Tom Green was the only man that I ever knew that could get away with it, and even then my uncle sometimes would get up and leave the room. Oh, Uncle Tom, he was somebody telling dirty stories. He was a wonderful person.

I think in the back of that Thirty-first and Hoover scrapbook there is the painting of the stagecoach on Catalina. The painting was a huge thing. It hung in the lobby of the Hotel Metropole for years. It

was an oil painting. We just thought that was a wonderful painting. Of course, it went November 15 in the fire. But we fortunately had some photographs of it.

TWEEDALE: Do you know who painted it?

BANNING: It probably was a commercial artist. I don't know if they had commercial artists in those days. Commercial artists, I understand, are looked down on. But generally speaking, I bet commercial artists make more money than non-commercial artists do.

TWEEDALE: Oh, definitely.

BANNING: One non-commercial artist can make a fortune, but the trouble is he's usually been dead for fifty years.

TWEEDALE: He doesn't make the fortune, somebody else makes it.

Office of Phineas Banning,

FORWARDING AND COMMISSION AGENT,

AND DEALER IN LUMBER. FLOUR, GRAIN, &C.,

Wilmington, Los Angeles County, Cal.,

December 18 1863.

Mr W A Rolter

I think we have a murderer horse thief in the guard house at Camp Lyon.

Mr Bartlett will tell you the particulars.

If he is guilty Come Let an Officer Come for him to go to Los Angeles and any man will Capture him on the Road & give him to You or keep him, if we are any One he deserves it.

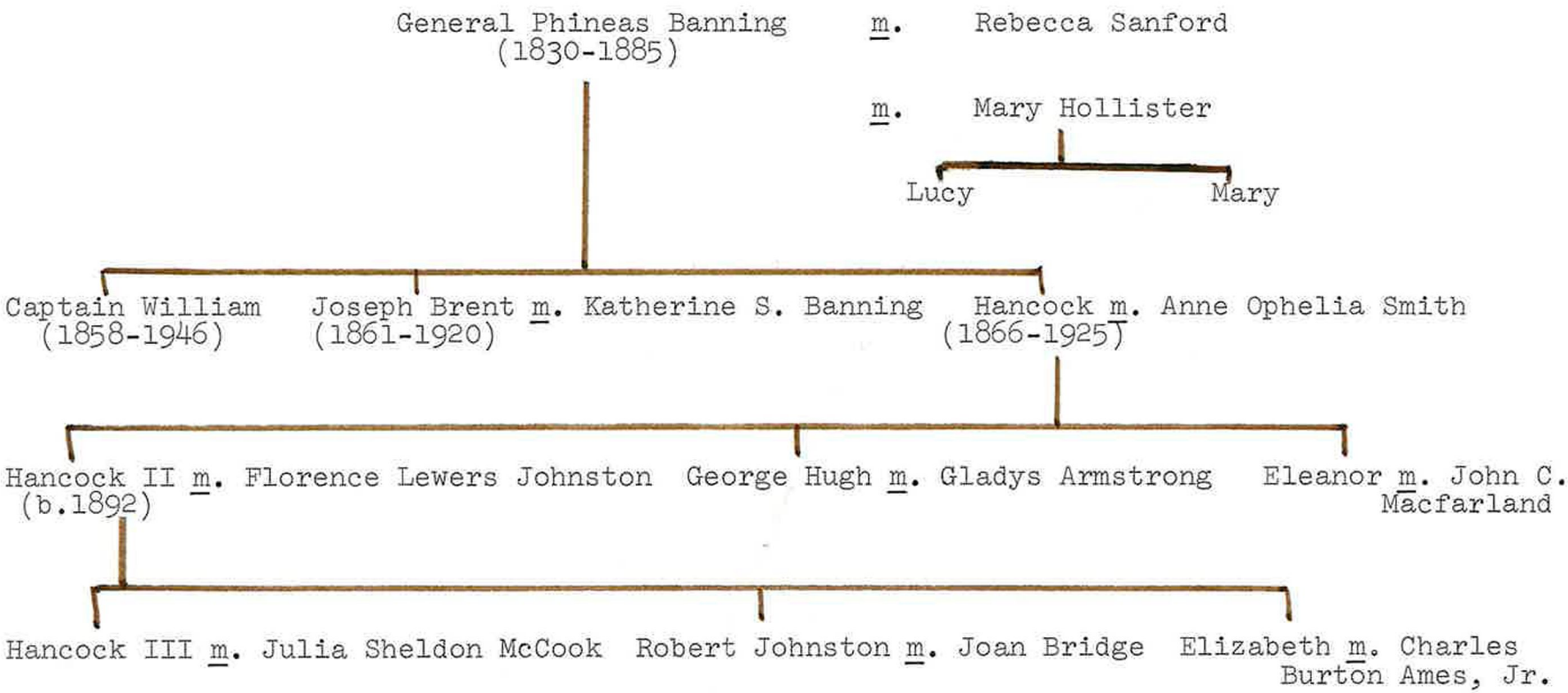
Please let me hear from You Yours Truly

Phineas Banning

PS Mr B the Bear is the man who captured the murderer of Mr Dawson

P B

APPENDIX B: THE BANNING FAMILY



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