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Meyer, Ursula interview

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My name is Robert Benedetti and today I am interviewing for the Stockton Oral History Project. I am interviewing Ursula Meyer who, for many years, was the Director of Libraries for the Stockton/San Joaquin Libraries. I will begin the interview on July 14, 2008 at 2:30.

RB: Ursula, the first thing I would like to hear from you, if I could, is something about your life as a young girl in Danzig, Germany before the Second World War; what do you remember?

UM: Well I think what I remember; one remembers pictures of one’s childhood. I was born in 1927 and we left Danzig in 1938, so I was 11 years old and I remember mostly we had both an apartment in town and a lovely summer house, a very large one, on the Baltic Sea in Sopount (sp?) which is still spelled this way and now pronounced differently. And Danzig, of course has became a dance; the Polish name. And I remember, you know, growing up with the governess and my father, besides being a banker was also the Yugoslav counsel. Danzig was a free city under the League of Nations, way back when, before the United Nations, and there was a high commissioner every four years. And various people in town, often bankers, represented certain countries; my father, by chance, Yugoslavia; I have no idea why. It turned out at the end to be very useful because once the Nazis came; it became more obvious I would think, the diplomatic passport gave my parents much more of a chance of moving around without quite as much problem or any problems as possible. I remember an ordinary childhood of playing with kids in the water. I remember, I think, since I have changed languages, that children do not have to know the language of the other children because these were all diplomatic children. We often played with six different languages and no one had any idea what the other was saying, but it didn’t bother anybody, so a typical childhood. Summers spent on the beach and winter in the apartment. My education was appalling. My father wanted me to have two more years
at the beach house and so I didn’t start until the third grade and I had a private tutor who was something of a horror and I sometimes wonder whether I learned anything. And then I was placed in a very strange private school. We sat in a kitchen, I remember, with a table—two kitchen tables, two square ones and there were children from the first through the fourth grade and I think there were nine altogether; a large number. The other thing I remember about that was that our teacher was a good German and so when we had music, an upright piano; there was this huge photograph of Hitler above the piano. However I did not have to do the Hitler salute or anything else. When I got out of that for regular school, the schools no longer would take Jews and so for about six months I was placed in a Jewish school. Since I had not come from any kind of religious house; yes we went to temple on high holidays; my father and grandfather supported them; anybody who wanted money, there it was my grandfather had owned his own banking house when he was alive; my father was bank director for the Dresdner Bank which is still operating, of course. I simply remember, you know, the same thing, any child would remember. I remember having a balloon and someone had given it to me and I tied it to a daisy and, that was one of my first discoveries that you couldn’t depend on anything. I tied it to the daisy and, of course, the daisy came off and the balloon went that away. I was screaming the house down. My mother had a ladies’ party; 20 ladies, including my grandmother, and everyone commiserated at this scream. My grandmother, being practical, took out 50 cents and said, “get your governess to buy a new one and stop crying”. So those are the practical things I remember. Otherwise it was just an ordinary childhood until, and I don’t believe, the immigration, which is something I think about much more that I’m older and retired, was something I quite understood. I simply understood that we dissolved the house and, of course, went to Paris where my father’s brother and two sons were living. That lasted about six weeks and then my parents decided on England. In England, of course, we arrived in the middle of winter and I went to boarding school at St. Leonard’s on the Sea which is near Hastings; and St. Leonard’s on the Sea is no longer on the map. It no longer exists because when I was in England, I tried to find it. I spent a year there. My parents sent me wisely to an English school because both of them, though fluent in English, and had English lessons, my mother had them, my father business in New England, but they had
very strong accents. My father looked like Erid Von Stroheim; no hair and a huge dueling scar and a very strong German accent. My mother, who is from Bavaria, had a much softer accent, it sounded like French. And since I was to learn English properly, I was put in a boarding school at St. Leonard’s on the Sea in Lexington Park. And there was a German teacher and one, no two girls interestingly enough; all three of us were German backgrounds and all three of us were Ursulas so whoever was in school with us thought there was only one first name in Germany. I spent only one year there and it was probably the only school I really enjoyed. My parents were in London and then, of course, the war began on the first of September 1939 when Hitler invaded Danzig before he got to Poland on September 3 which was the official start of the war. The allies immediately declared war. And at that point, my mother began to consider that England wasn’t to be safe because my father would be interned and so we did something very dangerous and very stupid, we went back to Danzig to get the appropriate visas and papers and because he had a diplomatic passport, this was possible, but it was stupid in any case. Then in due course I was in boarding school for a year in England, and in due course, I think, in February of 1940, we moved, we went to Sao Paolo, Brazil. I was in an American school there where teaching was both in Portuguese and English. I was fluent in Portuguese after a year, but there was no one to practice with when I came to this country because everyone took Spanish and so consequently, unfortunately, I’ve lost the Portuguese. I do mostly, but I learn by sound, so you can put me in a country where I have a general background and within four weeks I can learn the language. English was probably, in three weeks, because we slept in dormitories, seven girls to a room, and lights out at 9:00 and from 9:00 to 9:30 there was whispering, and that meant storytelling and when you’re 11 or 12 to have people giggle and “ohh” and “ahh” and not understand what is going on. I think in three months I understood English and in four months I spoke it and so I think there is something to do with you learn a language if you have to. Although that can’t be true because Einstein never managed to say a single word in English and certainly the brainpower was there. My opinion is that language is purely an ear and luck; it has nothing whatsoever to do with education.
RB: Now, when you were in that dormitory was that in England?

UM: That was in England. Right. We were slept in large rooms with seven beds. Once you were older you could either have, that is older somewhere above junior college age, you could have two women or you could have a private room. But children were and that is where I had a general education. Much better than we do in this country because we had some botany and we went around and looked at whatever it is that botanists study and we had Latin and we a lot more courses at age 12 than we have here in high school. And that lasted for a year and then in February we went to Brazil which was an American school in San Paolo where teaching was in both Portuguese and English. While all of this was going on we lived in either very expensive hotels or in boarding houses, I think we would call them here pensions is a better word for the French word. And we stayed in Sao Paolo because there were visa issues as you probably know in those days, 1938/1939 the United States required visas. My father and I were on a short list because we were both born in Danzig. My mother was born in Nuremberg; consequently she was on a German list and that’s what took time. That’s why we spent about 14 months in San Paolo before we came to this country luckily in June of 1941 just before the war. My parents knew some people in the Los Angeles area, mostly Bavarians. Prussians all seemed to stay in New York where my father really wanted to stay, but my mother opted for California. And they chose to buy a house in Beverly Hills, there is a very ordinarily priced area of Beverly Hills because of the school system. I was in high school from 1941 to 1945 and most of the faculty already had master’s degrees which was not common in those days. That was, you know, a fairly ordinary childhood, like everyone else. There were movies and we were, of course, close to Hollywood. I was 15 when I was starting my junior year. You could get a work permit in those days and I got one and for one week we took inventory at Sears and I was very shocked when they had hired us for “the summer” and they fired us one week later. I’ve learned that those things happen some time after. And so the May Company had one suburban store which is now at Fairfax and Wilshire and it was a nice store then, merchandise-wise. And it was also very interesting because I started working just Thursday night and in due course, once I got to the
university, I worked three days a week and went to school three days a week which didn’t leave too much time for anything else. But the May Company was a great place to work because something like 65% of the sales people were from the various universities and schools around and so we had a very large social group and most of us enjoyed selling. I certainly did. I worked there for 12 years while I was getting my education. I quit only when I was in graduate school. I had to go to, I was a UCLA graduate, and I had to go to USC because at that point a library degree was not given at UCLA. So I got my masters in 1953 and opted out of Southern California as quickly as I could and went to Olympia, Washington.

RB: Why did you feel you wanted to get out of there as soon as you could?
UM: One’s mother. Most girls had the same problem. My mother was extraordinarily self-centered and you had to do what she wanted to do and whatever. If she and I were in conflict, my father always did what my mother wanted to do and although my mother swore on a stack of bibles if I would get a job in Southern California she would not interfere with an apartment, etc. I knew that wouldn’t be true and I wanted out and so I. Frankly, I looked at a map and having no business sense whatsoever, assumed that because Olympia was, of course, on the water that I could get an apartment there not realizing those would be the expensive homes there as they are every place else. And so I did get an apartment there and I worked there for a little over a year. It was not a good working condition, however, it gave me a chance to become acquainted with the State Librarian and became a close friend and some of the State Library staff; some of whom are still friends, although they are in their 90’s. They, the State Library sort of unknowingly arranged for the Yakima Valley Regional Library who had a new director, Mrs. Helen Stone Gilbert; a remarkable woman. She needed lots of staff and so she hired about five of us, all in our late 20’s and I worked there as a bookmobile person and librarian from 1954 to 1959 when I returned to California.

BB: Were there any high points of that experience? Who did you serve in the bookmobile?
UM: Oh, on the bookmobile. In those days you did not have computer catalogs. So you had no catalogs; what you had was your memory and I more or less looked at every new book that came in. You also had an advantage in the bookmobile in that at each stop, if they came, it was usually every two weeks. Yakima operated three bookmobiles, so it was a very large operation with almost one million circulation because we went to schools; elementary schools, up through (grade) six I guess. No I guess up to eight. It is a very interesting; I think my greatest success I always I think about. We stopped at, it happened to be a ranch that was Meyer spelled the same way my name and the same three ladies came on and one of them said, “Gee I don’t remember, my husband wanted something”, well she couldn’t remember anything, and did he say anything. She just couldn’t remember. Something about a boy and a girl. And her friend said “gee, you’re being helpful, aren’t you”. And finally I said, “Well do you remember anything about the boy and the girl?” And she said, “Yes, I think he was smart and she was dumb”. Well that was, of course, My Fair Lady, in those days. So I said, yes, that was it. I will put a reserve in, but that it would not come out in two weeks because we have had a lot of reserves. So when I got in to fill my request, which we usually did ourselves, although there was a reference department to help, it was out, but Pygmalion was in with Major Barbara and I don’t know what the third lady was. So I took it out and I explained to her and I had written him a note that this was the same story but the adaptation we had a request for. Two weeks later I could hear this tractor, or whatever it is they drive on farms, I never learned that, chug chugging up to the bookmobile and usually he didn’t come. And he swung off his tractor and said to the driver Irving, read to him because, you know everybody. . You know, he looked around and saw me in the back, and he said, “You know that guy is good and funny; has he written anything else?” And I said, “Yes, he has written quite a bit”. And I think I got him through everything including the Lawrence of Arabia Correspondence. And, you know, he probably was the most informed person on Shaw that ever was in the country. So that was my great success in recommending because when you’re new librarian in the bookmobile, you always recommend and we had a lot of old gentlemen who came with a particular box that carried exactly ten westerns, that was all you could get in it. I tried desperately to get them to move to something else. And he brought the box back
one day and the driver Irving said, “John, you never read anything like that.” And he said, “shh, the little lady feels so much better because I took it because I certainly don’t read things like that.” So, you know, you can’t, people do what they want to do and you have to know people. I developed a list of who was interested in what; fly fishing isn’t that common but someone had a husband who was and they were just thrilled with the service they got. I can remember having a conversation with them saying this was the best library ever. And I had that same conversation when I was in Butte County and I said to the lady, “where did you come from?” and she said, “Los Angeles.” I said, “Well they have lots of libraries.” And she said, “Yes, but Mrs. Groom knows what I want and she knows my husband.” So there is an aspect of librarianship that has nothing to do with education, it has to do with the person and the relationship. But I enjoy it; in fact I don’t think I ever stopped being a bookmobile librarian. I advertise constantly, all my life for libraries. My personal view is that it is the one place that if you do not have the means of an education or the interest in education, it’s the place where you can be yourself and you can stumble on to something that will make your life happier; whether that is a college degree or whether it’s how to be the best mechanic, I really don’t care. As long as you find what you want. And I certainly liked the persons who work at universities, university librarians but I felt that once you are in college, you’ve already made it. I was always more interested in people that weren’t, who were school dropouts or graduates, we didn’t have that many dropouts I think, way back then. But I enjoyed field service and I rather think I never stopped being a bookmobile librarian. All the other things or I don’t type and that was a handicap so I couldn’t, they couldn’t give me just any job they had to kick me upstairs.

RB: When you were in Washington State, you mention one of the state librarians that you had met; were there any other; what about that person and?

UM: Mary Ann Reynolds was the State Librarian and it so happened that the person who introduced her to her work as a consultant with the State Library was Carma Simoni Leigh who was the California State Librarian after that for quite some time. In fact, when I came home, she was instrumental in suggesting where I should apply in
California. Mary Ann remained a lifelong friend and didn’t die until her mid-90’s and Carma I believe is still alive and over 100 in Southern California; San Diego. There are a lot of other prominent people that partly in children’s work because here in Stockton, early on, we had workshops (Author’s Symposium), if you will, conferences on children literature and to begin with we had enough of a reputation to get some of the best authors to come. The publishers would pay their way and I think maybe we may have chipped in $100, but we didn’t have any money and certainly the City wasn’t going to. In part there was a cooperation with UOP and Delta libraries. And we must have had that for about a dozen years starting in about; I came in 1974, probably starting in 1976. And that was a big, big plus because one of the people who has since become a very close personal friend, Lillian Gerhart who is the publisher of School Library Journal, the most subscribed to and the most popular one in our profession which is not an academic but strictly schools and public libraries. And so I was fortunate, I was active in the national association which was valuable here because we did not have a well trained staff when I came. Yes, they had degrees, but, my predecessor was a very good librarian for whom we, of course, named the Margaret Clausner Troke Library, did not attract staff and because I was active in the national association and served on their 100 member executive board or whatever we called ourselves. ALA has 60,000-70,000 members which, of course, include vendors and all of those types of people and so to have national and statewide connections is extremely important when you are stuck in a place like Stockton. Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego don’t have the same problem. They have a lot of independent libraries and they have an enormous pool; the library schools are right there and everyone wants to work in the city. Stockton certainly hasn’t been able to attract anyone right now; the situation is probably dire at the moment; I try not to look. This was a prominent library. I was president, I think in 1978, the Prop 13 year, of the California Library Association and I’ve always been active in associations, because, two things, I don’t think any librarian came to California, if you exclude San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, that didn’t at some point come to see me or call me even if they had no intentions of working in the Central Valley, whoever I knew in their area, told them to go see her and go talk with her and I did do that and some very good people worked for us for a very long time. I
think that when you start out you shouldn’t work more than three or four years in a job. You should change jobs so you get much wider background; I think that is essential. So in those days we were fairly lucky with staff which sort of all blended together.

RB: You took that advice, I guess, when you left Washington, you went to Butte and Contra Costa.
UM: I started at Contra Costa as a branch librarian and that had been Carma Leigh’s comment; that this is a good place to, interestingly enough, I also wrote a letter to; Carma Leigh and Margaret Klausner Troke were very good personal friends. So I also wrote an application and Margaret never answered. That was why I started out at Contra Costa and didn’t make it here until 1974.
RB: Now also I understand that you were part of the Mountain Valley Library System? Where is that?
UM: (The following answer refers to the 49/99 Cooperative Library System). That was a cooperative theoretically it at some point allowed you with a Stockton Public Library card, if you were in Amador County for vacation, backpacking or something, if you wanted to use the library, you could do so. There were 17 of us at one point which were interchangeable; we had a coordinating director, the group, and because we were little, Stockton was the largest library that person was on our staff. They had a director and they had a head of references which was places like Calaveras and Amador and Tuolumne, of course, didn’t have any professional staff so a lot of stuff got turned in. It was simply sent to Stockton and days before we had computers, the driver would go around every weekday and the questions came to Stockton. The directors of all those 17 libraries met once a month to discuss issues and the purpose was actually sharing of resources. Clearly the Central Valley had to depend on San Francisco and Los Angeles as does the whole states these days. We also could access universities, however, universities had the right to say that this was a title that was being used in two courses and consequently they weren’t buying any more copies and no thank you you can’t have any. So we would then have a choice of either going further and if we went further we might have charged the patron for whatever it cost us to borrow or you have to change your mind and get another book. But it was strictly a matter of resource sharing
and perhaps it was more useful for smaller libraries, but it certainly gave our staff a view
of California and what it really is, you know. Non-Californians know Los Angeles, San
Francisco and San Diego, but they’ve never heard of the Central Valley; it doesn’t exist.
RB: Let me get straight your progression. When you first came back from Washington.
UM: I went to Contra Costa as the Martinez Branch Librarian for about 14 months.
RB: And then where did you go?
UM: Butte County, In those days they gave a County exam which was, as I recall it
took four hours to take the written and then you had an oral which was the State
Librarian, the City Librarian of San Francisco and the City Librarian of Los Angeles; that
was theoretical. Anyway there were three large cities; I mean there were two large
cities and the State Librarian. And there was an oral. In those days they were fairly
serious as soon as a County Librarian left and that was what I was too all there was in
my title. As soon as I left, the State Library would send you the list of those people who
had certificates so that your jurisdiction would know who to contact if they wanted to
change jobs. And so I worked for Contra Costa about 14 months and then I went to
Butte in 1961 and I stayed until 1968. I was County Librarian and I enjoyed that stay. It
was interesting and again, I knew nothing about the country. They had to explain to me
what a heifer was and after they explained I said, “oh a virgin cow”, and so most people
in Butte County still talk about virgin cows many years later. It was always an awarding
experience if you came from an entirely City background.
RB: Were there reasons why you left Butte to come to Stockton?
UM: I didn’t leave Butte to come to Stockton; I left Butte because it was time to leave.
Those people who know me well know I don’t necessarily take their advice so they
didn’t. But once I said there was available in 1968 actually from 1965 on, there were
fellowships available from the Feds; $5,000 for additional training. It was actually not a
degree in the sense, I think, the university would regard it as a degree, but it was a
degree of sorts for librarianship if you took one year and so I left Butte County to go to
Madison, Wisconsin. I spent three semesters there from September, 1968 until the
summer of 1969. Then from Madison, having gone that far east, to me Nevada is east.
I decided to go all the way and again, through friends, who suggested it, I applied for the
New York Public Library, Division of Library Development the consultant part and I
worked for New York from 1969 until 1972 when I came home to California to the cooperative library system housed in Sacramento. And then when Margaret retired I think she, when she advertised for the job, she wanted me as her successor although we were very, very different. She knew I would be tough and I wouldn’t give in to the problems that Stockton certainly had with government and not putting enough money into libraries. And so that’s the progression. But the three years in New York were extremely important. I would always say to any librarian, if you can go someplace else, everyone has a different view of the world and certainly New York did. I did not have the City (N.Y.); I did most of my traveling in upstate New York which most Californians don’t know exist. It’s as beautiful state as ours. You get out of the City and along Long Island and there are some lovely, lovely places, Finger Lakes Country, Saratoga all of that area. And I’m interested in glass Corning is really, Corning Glass but it is also today one of the, if not the greatest glass museum in the world. The Metropolitan, all of it’s, all the important glass is all in Corning and it’s too bad it is also in Corning which is also the most expensive glass in America. I enjoyed New York; it was different, but I wanted to come home. I found Easterners not as friendly as Californians and I, you know, I went from the beauty parlor to the market to just ordinary conversation and it was a different world and we worked very hard and our colleagues were always off someplace else. So even though we knew each other, we didn’t see much of each other because we all had different territories to cover. And then after Madison and New York, I came back to Sacramento for slightly over a year as a cooperative director and then I came to Stockton.

RB: When you came, this is 1968?

UM: No I came in 1974.

RB: 1974

UM: And I worked until 1994; exactly 20 years.

RB: What was your impression what you saw here in terms of the library and the politics?

UM: We knew, through involvement in the State, we knew what the library was. We certainly knew important things such as Margaret had successfully closed all of the “branches” the stations which were in private homes. And many of my central library
colleagues, much truer of the central part of the state, than it is the coastal part, still were stuck with, you know, shelves for books in someone’s back of their house or something. That I knew. I knew that they had a very hard time attracting staff. I knew that from my days in library school in 1952 or 1953 when it was a standard joke every time the various library journals came out, the smaller “J”, not THE Library Journal, but also there. Margaret ran ads constantly; she never took them out because she obviously wasn’t able to attract (staff). And when I came the Deputy Jim (Koping), what is his last name? A brilliant book man, but impossible as an assistant director; it is not what he did; he couldn’t do that. However, the reason the book collection, until recently, actually until the current director was one of the best and that was the combination of Margaret Troke and Jim Koping together who were really book people. Margaret looked at all book orders and first thing asked me and I said “no, that is what staff is for, that is not my specialty”. If you want to buy 60 copies of something I would like to know why you are investing in 60 copies, but other than that, it was a logical thing to do. We knew what would be open. I knew where I would be accepted as a candidate. Perhaps the biggest mistake I made is about two or three years after I was here, Seattle Public was open and because I had been here such a short time I did not apply because I had a chance to get that job. And, of course, I love Seattle. I don’t move there because it rains all the time and is always overcast. But this was a good run for 20 years. The last years were harder and certainly Prop 13 was a disaster, but we were able to get through it just as much as any library. I mean we were like everyone else. San Mateo, for instance, decided to close altogether, which was a very smart move because, of course, when they closed all together the populous froze and the Board of Supervisors had to change their minds. I don’t know what would have happened if we would have attempted to close; obviously we couldn’t close until the Board, the City Council actually, but the Board was. The arrangement in Stockton is contrary to any accept what Riverside and we use to be the only two public libraries where the City is the lead and the County contracts. In our other 56 and they don’t all, we have 58 counties, but they don’t all have libraries; it is always the county who operates, because in 1909 the County Library Law provided for certain conditions that made it possible to get money for libraries. We were a city library in 1909 the Board of Supervisors was smart and
instead of starting over when they decided to have a county library, they simply
contracted. And that is basically still the case. When I first came, I was the also the
county librarian for Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne. Margaret’s name had been
written into the contract by the time I came the contract simply said “the Director of
Library Services for Stockton/San Joaquin shall be” and that was on the basis that the
State could mandate that you have a professional certified librarian. Actually nobody
ever tested the State; there is no question that a board of supervisors can tell a state
librarian to go to hell in a hand basket and do whatever they want to. But they did not
and so we became a much better chance of becoming joint. And our financial
arrangements when I first came, was an interesting formula and that is that it was done
every by usage. Their library card told us whether you, you know the number told us if
you lived in the county or the city and that is what the county paid per usage for
someone who lived in the county and that certainly was not fair division because you
could argue that Central Library, of course, shared in part of the payment. They did pay
something like $92,000 for the last four payments of the building which was started in
1962 and opened in 1964. And once that was paid, we went entirely on usage and that
was a much fairer thing. Now that the bottom has dropped out starting in the 90’s, after
I retired, they’re juggling the formula and I have no idea what they are doing now or
what they are paying. Since the library money in the County is designated, that is if you
remember some times during Prop 13, sometimes when things were really bad
appearing before the Board of Supervisors when we had a woman Supervisor who
immediately broke into tears when I said all the things that would be closed and the
bookmobile taken out and so the Board of Supervisors ordered the County
Administrator to give me the money, as I recall it was $146,000 at that time and, of
course, but the time I got back to my office there was a call from the County
Administrator and he said, “Ursula, you know” and I said “of course I know you can’t
give you any more money.” I was quite clear on that. But you know, if that’s what they
think. Usually it’s been a fairly good relationship. Unfortunately, you’ve lived here long
enough to realize that the library is not the most important thing for the people of
Stockton, but they have been well served. The big problem is that we don’t have; Troke
Library is the furthest north and obviously between us and Lodi is the greatest growth
for the City right now. We have a lot there, the same lot with a school on one side, but there is no money to build right now. And, of course, if you read the paper, you see that we have this ridiculous discussion about having a new central library downtown which I think is a complete waste of money because the library that is there is adequate for usage for downtown; no it’s not perfect if you factor in, it’s a really a very good library considering it was built in 1962, but it’s one of those off and on situations and I have no idea at this point what the budget situation is; it’s impossible to get information except doing it legally (through a Public Information request) and I have no intention of doing that.

RB: During the period that you were Library Director, what do you think were you greatest wins and greatest loses in the political arena, whether it was the Library or where you needed to side with some other group?

UM: I think, hands down, the greatest loss was Proposition 13 that you can find. And then in the early 90’s, the middle 90’s; by the time Colleen Foster was director, they had another down turn that was very dangerous. And I guess the highlights are simply that we had good programs, good usage, successful Friends of the Library. Probably one of the most successful things is the bookstore that the Friends of the Library operate now on Hammer Lane. I think this has been about the fourth or fifth location. They started out as a bookshelf in the Troke Library; people wanted to give things; we then moved to Lincoln Center. I think we have been to four or five different places but this one on Hammer turns about $200,000 a year which is a lot of money and that is because a lot of people go in and buy books and don’t want to be worried about overdues and they read them and bring them all back. We probably sell each book at least twice. And they also sell recordings and I always give them my own calendars because teachers come in, elementary school teachers, for projects. So it’s used and that is certainly a success. I presume the success is that we finally did build. Troke opened in 1969 and then Fair Oaks, which is on Main Street, opened a few years later so that we do have two new City libraries. And the, of course, the Maya Angelo Library is the last one that came on line. So the City has all of these libraries. It does not have enough space The
Troke Library, which you may or may not use, is ridiculous in its size. When Margaret Troke, about ten years before she retired, wrote a memo to the Board and to the Council saying we needed something in the north and it had to be 25,000 square feet. Well we opened it in 1979 and it is less than 15,000 square feet. So we, you know, started out way behind the 8 Ball. Of course, right now they are in the Mall because of the architect we had. We had problems. We had very good advice from the San Mateo County Librarian and the L.A. County Librarian helped us in selecting the architect and all that. But he was from San Francisco and he was something of a problem. He wanted certain things and those certain things are now leaking so badly that they are remodeling for a large amount of money; I mean that amount of leakage shouldn’t have occurred. So the City has to pay for it.

RB: During your time in the library, you dealt with several generations of community leaders here in Stockton. Are there any high points in the relationships with the mayors or civic leaders where you felt that it worked well and that you were able to serve them and they you?

UM: I think probably the rotating mayor in those days when we elected Council people and everything was rotating. I should tell you a story about rotating which you can edit out afterwards, but I have no problem telling this story. I had not been here very long and Elder Gunter was the City Manager. Did you know him?

RB: No

UM: He was an extraordinary man. He was president of the International City Managers Association. Anyway he, when I first arrived, he wanted to make the point that he had chosen a woman. He claimed there were 21 applicants and he chose the one woman who applied. I never could find but one other applicant and I knew that he made a big mistake. He was in a third level position in Dallas and he totally misjudged his boss who we all knew and knew he was stupid. He only wanted the job offer here which I’m sure he got before I did so that he could hold it up to her and she would
promote him. Except the boss not only not promote him, she was powerful enough to prevent him from being appointed her successor. Being the only woman, Elder would drag me around to meetings and dinner meetings with the Council and so forth. Early on we were at Costanza’s which is now, you know on the Miracle Mile there was a restaurant and it was always the function to meet the Council in the bar. Somebody from the City Manager’s office would sit at the bar with a roll of bills and as the drinks were ordered, so they wouldn’t appear on the list of food eaten at the restaurant, they would pay. One of these meetings early on when our Mayor was O’Brien from Linden; after dinner we went back and chatted and people had drinks and what have you and at some point he said to me, “do you like movies?” and I said “yes I do” and he said “good, let’s go to the Bijou”. At which point Elder Gunter got up and said it’s time to go. Now I had my car, City car and I don’t know why I have to go, but he was very clear we were going. And so the next morning I get to the office and I said to the outer office staff, “what is the Bijou?” and there was great laughter. The Bijou was evidently the movie house that no lady went to. Probably before your time too. It was, you know everyone knew it as that

RB: He was saving you from

UM: Right. Well both Barbara Fass, of course, was pro-education and all of her children have PhD’s by now and Joan Darrah was certainly pro. You may remember that she insisted on the bond issue be under her aegis and it failed unfortunately. And Podesto, Mr. Podesto; we were certainly cordial but no one had anything to do with Podesto. Ed has been a great disappointment in my view as Mayor having nothing whatsoever to do with the libraries. He has always been pro-library, but overall he shouldn’t have run because he doesn’t know what he is doing. It’s unfortunate that the City has not moved forward in four years and that’s why I am very much supporting Ann Johnston because the City needs a change. This year we’ll have four new council members and that will be a problem for the City.

RB: Let me ask a little bit, you started to allude to this earlier that during your time here, you brought and met a whole host of different authors particular in the area of children’s books, do you have any recollections of special occasions or special generous authors?
UM: I’m terrible at names, but I have a calligraphy with a D in the end letter on my wall it isn’t because I no longer have a wall but it would go up again in red from a children’s author. He was one of the children’s books about Eleanor of Aquitaine and she compares me to one of the Aquitaines And so obviously I have it on the wall. I’m terrible at names. I have, of course, continued my friendship with Lillian Gerhart who published the school library journal and does not write children’s books, but is very important; is considered THE judge of children’s books. As far as the authors are concerned, I have terrible memory and since I don’t deal with children’s books, it was an extremely important program for a number of reasons. One of them was that the school district, and I guess Delta, and UOP… I don’t believe UOP was ever part of sponsorship. And the sponsorship was not, didn’t cost very much money, we never had very much money to bring them here, the publisher’s brought them here, but again, it meant that the library had a reputation that we could get, first to get author’s to come. We used the Long Theater and usually for part of a conference. It would start on Friday night with a dinner and then went all day Saturday and part of Sunday. Some authors would tell how they wrote and why they wrote and it was often attended by students. I remember one student wanting to know, you know, “how do you know you can be an author?” And a very witty answer; “you have to keep trying. If someone buys your book you’re an author, if someone publishes your book, you’re an author”. But it was bringing people here that hadn’t been done before, at least not in my memory. I’m very careful when I say it hadn’t been done before because I use to say it hadn’t been done before in Butte County until I unearthed a book of clippings going back to 1920 when one of my predecessors who since has become a legend as the Louisiana State Librarian, when I was still working, had been in Butte County and I tell you that everything I thought I did know, she did in 1928,. One has to be careful what one says. But we did not, that was a program that was not. Margaret was a different type of librarian. I think she was very much for her period. She was book person, she was a reference librarian, a very good one. She consulted after she left here and, of course, the Board made her emeritus and I use to get quite angry when I would arrive at work, hopefully by 9, to see her yellow and black Cadillac already in the parking lot. Because as the emeritus, she pointed out that she had the same rights as I did and that concluded some times coming to my
office and giving me advice and we very soon stopped that because I just had to say no
Margaret I’m being paid to do this. But she was very good and she laid a very good
foundation of the library. And has to be remembered when people said you did it all,
and I have to point out what Margaret built. She was here 27 years, I think and she built
the foundation starting in the 30’s (1947) and she had, in Jim Koping, she had a very
good assistant; Koping was his last name and he was a superb book man and he and
Margaret together built a fine collection. And we have had some good book selectors,
but all of that, unfortunately has come to past.

RB: During the time when you were here in Stockton but also before, you had unique
friendships with people who either were then or later became State Librarians. Do you
have any memories of them?
UM: I think because I was always passionate about my profession and I always felt that
belonging to professional organizations was my job. A lot of my colleagues charged the
City or the library for it and I don’t believe in that. Tuitions aren’t that bad. Professional.
I guess I was in part lucky and in part interested enough and I went to enough library
things that I kept getting to know people and we all had the same interests. The
terminology that was used before my time was a larger unit of service like everything
else. Actually what the Library Law allows you, hasn’t changed very much since 1909.
It allows jurisdictions to join and take advantage of. There is no question that if
Stockton had two libraries; one city and one county, it would have been a terrible waste
of money. You would have to have another building and the public would know where
they both were and it doesn’t make sense. Because I was very active in the
association; the State association and to a degree the National association, I got to
know people and impress them enough that this was a library worth looking at. I
remember getting a call from the library at Georgia Tech and I said, “Cindy, no one calls
Stockton from Atlanta” and she said, “yes they do when they get married”. And so we
got a superb librarian for technical services. It was very much a “who do you know” kind
of thing and I realized that. It wasn’t just going to a conference. I remember when they
started having, since I was active, I always went to both CSAC, County Librarians and
City and State Association and there were very few librarians there and I remember one
of my earlier ones when I was still in Butte County, one of the department heads asking me if I was coming and I said, “no Cliff I’m not coming, I have meetings to go to”. He said, “but we never go to meetings’ and I said, “librarians go to meetings. This is costing the City a lot of money and what is costing is my not working; it’s not the hotel and the food.” I never charged for food. I was always afraid that, you know, that whoever followed me may have had, like ten kids and couldn’t afford it obviously. It was luck, but it is also working with people and having a respect for what they have done and mostly to this day, no one in this town every introduces me by name; it is always comes after the library. It’s sort of like the feeling that you aren’t until your part of the library.

RB: With these various acquaintances, I know California has gone through a range of people as State librarians, from people who publish a lot of books, people who

UM: Actually State librarians have not been very many. Carma Leigh and prior to her, how can I lose a name? Father was first State Librarian and daughter was the fourth. Carma was the fifth and then Ethel Crockett was the mistake and then we had previous California historian

RB: Kevin Starr?

UM: You know who is always quoted as a California historian, but didn’t know a thing about libraries, but was able to get money which was terribly important. And now the State Librarian is very good. She finally, at my 80th birthday, allowed that she applied in Stockton first and I wouldn’t hire her. I always wondered if she remembered that because she started in Yolo County and Mary (Stephena DeWall), that was a very small library and Mary is very good person to watch. And then has been in El Dorado County and Benecia, State Library again and then to Sacramento and then became State Librarian after what’s his name left.

RB: You said one was a mistake; what did you mean:

UM: Ethel Crockett was appointed. Carma Leigh retired right after, just simultaneously to my arriving back home and I, of course knew her. Everyone was waiting on pins and needles for the name and I had heard this in New York from my correspondence; who’s the Governor going to name? So when she was named, we all went around and said “Ethel Who?” because no one had ever heard of her and one, I was down at the
cooperative library assistant and Virginia Short was the reference librarian and she was the one person who had a perfect memory who would remember in year X there was a conference she had attended and Ethel had spoken and produced the paper from it and Mrs. Crockett was a money giving Republican with Dr. Aldrige as her boyfriend, a rather difficult word to use, but it was interesting that the Governor let it be known that he did not approve of unmarried. All of sudden they went to Nevada, no one knew, and they came back married. Then someone had the bright idea and said I bet you the Governor has let her know that this is not acceptable for his beliefs. She was very nice, but she didn’t know anything. She had been a community college librarian and not done anything with anyone. She was six or eight years and very pleasant. In those days they still had some very good people so it didn’t show. They still had Gary Kurtz, one of local history people who is still very good at the State Library. The people in the Division of Library Development, which is what the public libraries should be dealing with, has, if there are people in it, no one knows who they are.

RB: While you were librarian you became involved and continue to be involved in various activities here in the community. One was Rotary. Why did you become involved with Rotary and what was that like?
UM: Well it still is like I go to lunch every Wednesday; this is my 20th year. Harry Montgomery, who was the Public Works Director at that time said one day, “Would you like to be a member of Rotary?” I knew the various outlines and I said, “yes I would because I have no access to the business community; that’s an access I would like to get to.” So I joined the Downtown Rotary Club and by now it is established that I’m the only liberal Democrat in a Club that has very right-winged Republicans; some of them are so right-winged that they aren’t Republicans any more. The game is how can you get me and that seems to be. There are other Democrats, but the only openly one is Ann Johnston and what I hear I don’t want to believe that other people don’t want to give their affiliation because they believe it will hurt their business. Things have gotten that bad and I regret it. But I’ve enjoyed the Good Ole’ Boys and I go every Wednesday when I can. This last Wednesday I was being indoctrinated into here (O’Connor Woods) and it was so hot and I finally found the swimming pool and I found it very
disappointing. It is much too warm and it’s interesting. Everything in this place is tip top; flowers, furniture and everything else. Except people don’t swim. You go out there and you see a very ordinary if not tacky set up and I thought that was very interesting. But people have told me that they go over at 4:00, I didn’t get there until 5:00 yesterday and there was no one. It’s open until 7:00. So I will, one of these days, try to go over at 4:00 and see. Rotary, there is something to it. I serve on the Charity Allocation Committee and I have for many years. Rotary gets applications from a great many non-profits and you have to be very specific; there is an outline of what it is you want and most of them have learned to ask for $1,000, $2,000 or $3,000. If someone comes in with a $15,000, we don’t have that much money. There’s usually about $45,000 a year that you can allocate. Of course, the polio eradication, you may not know, that about ten members of our Rotary Club go to Africa regularly to help inoculate children. I mean there are some really remarkable people; they go down for a week or two. I enjoy them; some people may make fun of them but as far as I’m concerned, there is something being done. It’s my only (social life); you know I don’t drive anymore and I feel like I’m being buried alive in the country now. I stick around.

RB: Another organization you’ve been a member of for a long time is the League of Women Voters. What has that meant to you and what is your experience with them?
UM: I started in the League in Yakima. It is interesting to think back to the early 60’s that in those days, I think, in our club in Yakima we had 60-70 members, four worked and all the other women did not have job and that made a great deal of difference. That meant they had time to either do something. One of the things that we did that was very interesting; two members at a time would interview all of the City and County officials at regular intervals. In fact that was a way to establish the League is that after we interviewed all of the officials and that was interesting and they had very interesting programs. We had one member who her father for a quarter had bought an acre of land that was before the Yakima Valley had any water. The Israeli’s came over to Yakima to see how you could grow things, but there was no water. They had a very large house and Laurie (Platt) had a very large basement for programs; 75 chairs. We had interesting programs. I remember that in New York I continued to be a member but it
wasn’t very active. Fran Abbott who just passed away, sadly, was President when I
arrived in town (Stockton) and within a few months she called me and said let me pick
you up and I’ve been on the board. I think the major effort is to get more people out to
the polls. It’s very hard to say “we don’t care how you vote”. The League is always
associated with Democrats and unfortunately we don’t have enough of them. I don’t
care how you vote I would like I everyone in town to vote so you have a reason to bitch.
If you don’t vote, you know, you have to keep your mouth shut. That has been my main
observation and we’ve had some programs. Attendance is very thin these days simply
because people are just too busy. I don’t think its disinterest; we’ve gotten two or three
new members. It’s a County organization and we have very good people from Manteca,
a couple from Tracy so we are expanding. But the major project (Speaker’s Bureau),
and that’s what they will be doing, they will be going out to organizations, now if they
wish, but it usually starts in August, September or October; people want to know about
the initiatives. We do not deal with candidates; we don’t support or not support; we
don’t indicate what our political views are. All we want to do is train people to want to
go and vote; some absentee if you want to. I’ve always considered, I’m off the board, I
was on the board much too long. I think the League is very, very important to a
community and especially to this one. I wish we could get more members. Ann
Johnston is a member.

RB: Let me ask you some more general questions that relate to this life and this
experience. People often disparage Stockton, a City which is not a good one to live in
and you’ve spent your career here; you’ve retired here. Much of the time you weren’t
here, was spent circulating around here. What is your take on Stockton as a City; is it a
good place and how would it become better in your estimation?

UM: I think the first thing we have to do is get rid of our inferiority complex. It is a
negative as Fitzgerald regurgitates over and over again. I don’t know. It is a very
difficult question. I don’t know if you notice the same things. You may be going to
meeting kind of things and academic approaches; so you’ll have people coming but
unconscious, for example, the symphony. More than half of the auditorium is empty.
You could sell far more tickets, I have suggested that the day of the concert they let students buy them for $1. They think that would cut into subscriptions and I say, “don't be silly”. But everything I go to doesn't have any attendance. The League has one of these problems; we just decided to abandon maybe one or two meetings a year because you just can't get enough people. When I think about it, people don't come to things; whether it is music. I guess the theater, the Stockton Civic, we went to opening night and I was saying they were three-fourths full at the very most and that's a small theater as you know. There is an inferior complex and I think it is…. If you notice, we always advertise that in Stockton you can get to: an hour and a half to the City; two or three hours up to the Lake and hour from Sacramento. Whatever you want is that way. Modesto now has the Gallo Center; it's getting much better programs (at the Bob Hope). I think the City, and clearly the newspaper is quite loud about this, has gotten a very bad deal from the people who were supposed to get programs. I don't know all of the popular people who come but I'm told by younger people that what they get here is not something they would go to. There is a gap there. We have the Hope, we have the Civic and we have the Events Center and if some idiot gets their way, we'll have a third to a fourth one because you have the Mondavi in Davis and you have the Gallo in Modesto; you have to have something in the middle. There aren't enough people to go around. I think there are problems in this City and I wish I understood them, but I think it's a matter that when you do have something nice, people don't come. I don't know what the cure is. I'm sure you've been to things when you've wondered, “where is everyone?” It's a comfortable town; it is not an exciting town I don't know what is exciting. I think San Francisco is exciting. Fresno, of course, I think there is an advantage of being further away from the City. For instance, one of the things, that is very personal, is that I don't shop in this town except for Campbell's. I can't stand the Macy's and I don't like the Dillard's and I finally understood the system is only if the average income is X will Nordstrom's or someone on that level will consider coming to a community. Well obviously they have analysts that know what they are doing. But the result is that I look around, I always know there are clothes and you see some very well dressed women here but they do not get their clothes in town. And that, I think, is a big, big minus. Now I understand that men have an easier time. There are good men
stores, but for women, this kind of stuff I get at Campbell’s. But I go to Seattle often and I go to the Nordstrom’s headquarters or to the Rack in downtown Seattle and so it is one of those things that, I think, is A minus for the City. And Fresno being further away from the City, I think, has more things going for it. I don’t know how many people go to Sacramento. I am amazed that the Music Circus does not regularly advertise in The Record. They have some odd ball ads every so often, but the Music Circus does not consider it worthwhile when usually the season starts in July and ends in late August, for those months they certainly, on Saturday or Sunday, or whenever they do their entertainment, that should certainly be at the top of their list. It takes 40 minutes to get there and I don’t know if that’s The Record or the Music Circus just. I know only one couple who has season tickets. I no longer have them because it just gets too complicated but that kind of thing bothers me. And most people have not gone to the Gallo and they have not gone to the Mondavi. So those are the missing pieces. I think it is an inferior complex and it is because you talk to your neighbors and either you or your neighbors are going to X and I think that sort of propels itself into nothingness.

RB: Let me ask you a couple of questions about your career, looking back. I think it is a remarkable career and two things that most people would suggest make it particular remarkable. One is that you’re an immigrant. You came to this country having moved around several other countries navigating Germany and England and Brazil before you came here. And the second is that you’re a woman. We talk a lot about glass ceilings and women rising in their professions. What do you think made it possible for you to be successful as an immigrant and as a woman at this particular time?

UM: Well the immigration, of course, was in a period when the immigration into the United States, Dr. (Sally) Miller will correct me on these things as she does; Sally is very precise and very good at what she does. I come from a period of immigration where the immigration was a highly educated group of people because they were of German/Judiasm, Austrian/German, whatever you want to call them. The people who had moved out of Germany and gone to other countries and then finally came here. As far as the glass ceiling is concerned, I may have made it, but I am also in a womanized profession. It is only recently that men have come into the profession in larger
numbers. However, this is at the same time when we are not graduating enough good librarians because any woman now can be a lawyer or a doctor. Beginning salaries are as bad as teaching salaries and it just doesn’t work. And I certainly have seen for the last ten years very, very few outstanding brand new librarians; the kind of people who we used to have when women did not have the open door that they have now. But I don’t blame any young woman who wants or can be a lawyer or a doctor; if they want to do that, because they make more money. If you are going to knock yourself out for your profession, you should also be paid and that, of course, is our great problem with our schools. If we paid our teachers maybe we would have better teaching. And so that's a problem. The business of the glass ceiling; I guess I was someone who never considered that I couldn't do anything. I am someone who is very much aware, when I was hired, I was the only woman department head besides, that is appointed by the City Manager. The City Clerk was a woman and appointed by the City Council. And it was tough in City Hall. It was not a picnic and; you had to have tough skin which I had and not to let it bother you because the business of women being equal I think is that they are becoming more unequal. Someone here made an interesting comment, a lady who evidently, trying to sit with other people in this arrangement is very strange. And she has been here (O'Connor Woods) 16 years, I think, and I asked her how does she find and her comment was that one of the biggest changes first of all is that couples are now coming here to O'Connor Woods and single men. She said “when I came in, it was just us widow ladies”; which is probably true, you know. I'm surprised that there isn't any couple. For instance, the camera people in Lincoln Center; the Gluskins; they've been here seven years; why would you give up a house? I have to at this point, but I would never give it up willingly. Of course, they are all living in the Villas, but even so. And the Stadtner’s; Tasha is just in Seventh Heaven and I still quite can't figure it out. And David, of course, doesn’t talk very often. So I don't think, I think we've lost some of our ability to move upward and I'm not sure what the reason is. I think in some professions, there has been some improvement, but I think it is going to be just as, nobody knows, how many people will vote for someone who is black for the President of the United States; we have no idea. I never think of that other than a person but that is not the case. And now that they are showing us, you know, what is saying what, where and
how. I think the thought of McCain would be absolutely dreadful. I guess I never assumed I couldn’t do anything. I know exactly what I cannot do. For instance I’m a much better politician than I am a librarian. I can’t find a single an answer, I don’t catalog books and, you know, what I do well, is what I do well. But individually, I wouldn’t hire me.

RB: Let me maybe, before I ask if you want to have anything, just ask one other question and follow-up on that. What do you read?

UM: I read mostly newspapers and magazines and politics. I was a graduate; I worked in colleges; very useful at UCLA; British Empire in the 19th Century; really very useful, but political science. I’m fascinated by government. I watch the City Council and I regret that I can no longer go; while I was driving I would go two or three times a month. I find that, first of all, I’m being informed as far as I’m concerned, is an absolute necessity. Our local paper does not do a good job in that. I take the *Sacramento Bee* because I am interested in California and the *Chronicle*, which most people here read, does not know that California extends beyond the five counties around San Francisco. That has always been the case. When they had the great writers which have all, of course, gone to Heaven, then, of course, I took the *Chronicle* too, but I’m now down to *The Bee* and *The Record*. But that is mostly what I read, otherwise it is politics and it would be biographies of interesting people. I read a few mysteries, but it is not a passion. The passion has always been politics and I don’t mean party politics. I find it very interesting to sit in the Council Chambers and see who is glazed over and obviously hasn’t read, and they are provided a packet every Friday night, and who hasn’t read anything and that’s why I am going to miss Becky Nabors when she’s off the Council because Becky made no pretense of understanding what she didn’t understand. She always asked and that was one way you could get a simply explanation because you were wondering the same thing; what does this mean? And she will be missed. I just hope that Ann gets it and some of the other people will get away from the developers. I mean, as long as I’ve been here, the developers have been running the City and I think that is not good for the City. You know, you just watch City Council meetings and you see whatever developers want. I think the 16 screen cinema that Mr. What’s His Name wants for Eight Mile Road is the first time they sort of waffled and said not right now because we have a contract
with whoever runs that other movie. And surely that is by the way that is one of the things that I think is bad in Stockton is that you can’t see any movies for grown-ups. When I was driving I did a great deal of Tower going because they have, in fact they started a French film this week. But I don’t know. It’s a very difficult for me to be objective, I think and I am much too, I try to make myself read a book now and then but there are newspapers and endless magazines that come along. My other passion, of course, is opera and I read on that subject. And biographies have always been the most interesting.

RB: Is there anything that you would like to add that I haven’t asked you about or come back to?

UM: No, I guess the one thing that I regret, and that isn’t just here but it is everywhere, that libraries have not really made a case for themselves. The questions in general show that also. Everyone knows why we have to have a police department; to get crime off the streets, I mean, we have to have a police department to do a lot of things. Libraries are always sort of a second thought. For instance, the latest bit of new that the City is going to have to cut, I think it is, $10 million. I would like to see the percentage cut; I would like to see the cut of all the departments. They have already said they won’t cut police and I’m not going to question that. My opinion on that is loud and clear. But I do regret that the whole problem in this town, a very big problem, is uneducated; that, by the way, is another reason why the negative, is that we do not have enough educated people. That actually means; the actual literacy is the amazing thing is, I think, we all need to stop and think is that if you are illiterate, how smart you have to be because you have to remember each street and each building and exactly where you are going and, I think of when I travel in any country where they do not speak western languages, it drives me crazy to—Greece and Turkey, for instance. You keep seeing these signs and you have no idea what they mean. The illiterate individual has to remember all that stuff. And I think we cannot turn that around and we do not have an educated workforce. I don’t know how many people have said that to me. So and so isn’t going to come to town because he needs an educated workforce. And I think that is a real problem and I do not know, other than you have to start at the bottom. The problem is teacher education; that has not been realized by the university. I think it is
long past due that teaching credentials should come from a state university; if you want
to do research, fine, go to the university. But state university should be handing out
degrees. However I do not think Stanislaus State should be handing out degrees
because they have no library here. It is dealing with people whom I admire because
they have a family and they have a job and they are going to school. I sure couldn’t do
that. They are doing that but what they are coming out with is a very inferior teaching
education. It just can’t be any better and there is no library support except what you can
get at Delta and I suspect that Delta and Stanislaus need the same things and so you’re
likely not to find what you need. So that I think is the number one thing to work on and
everyone talks about it, but no one does anything. You know there was someone here,
I don’t remember who it was, was saying that he was so amazed the literacy project is
still going and how many customers it has. We are not doing, the library is not doing
what we used to do. I thought the most interesting thing is that when we had adult
families and we had, you know, fathers and mothers actually there and you realize, of
course, they couldn’t be either and so if you did it well, and Gail Cole use to do it very
well, you would have about ten families on Saturday and you worked at this and worked
at this. Today’s front page of the paper tells you what you are supposed to be to your
kids; I think it is the most inane story I have seen in a long time; it doesn’t; it’s about as
simplistic as you can get. I would like to know how many people read that and are
merely; they’ve never done it before. First of all you have to have books. When we first
came to this country, whenever my mother and I went to visit Americans, I had a terrible
time getting my mother to stop saying, “where are the books?” She simply expected
that there had to be a large bookshelf someplace, but there wasn’t and I had a very
hard time saying, “please don’t ask”. No, I think you have covered everything that I’ve
thought of and then some and we need to edit out some of my political statements
which I’m always going to make. That’s one reason why, of course, in Rotary, I’m so
popular because I tell it like it is. You know Jerry Smith?
RB: Yes, not well.
UM: He is so far right, I can’t see him anymore, but we often eat together and joke
about it. I mean this is an organization. There are two or three people who I won’t eat
with, but that's about it. It is a fairly large club and everyone else knows where I stand and I know where they stand. We are all civilized people. You know Reed Robbins?

RB: No, I don't think so.

UM: These people are so far right you can't see them anymore. No I don't think anything useful, but you do need to edit out some of my

RB: I will. Let me bring the interview, then, to a close. It is 4:10 p.m. on July 14, 2008 and I think my narrator for regaling us with these stories and we'll go from here to a transcript.

Note: Words in ( ) have been added for clarification.