CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, BAKERSFIELD

CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY
The 1930s Migration to the Southern San Joaquin Valley

Oral History Program

Interview Between

INTERVIEWEE:	Oscar Ervin (Irving) Kludt - Scotty
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Alpena, Jerauld County, South Dakota
INTERVIEWER:	Michael Neely
DATES OF INTERVIEWS:	May 1, 1981
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PREFACE

The Kludt family came from South Dakota to California after losing a large ranch because they were unable to pay their taxes due to the Depression. Because of the family's hard work they were able to adjust rather easily to their new life in California.

Judith Gannon
Interviewer

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INTERVIEWEE: Oscar I. "Scotty" Kludt (Age: 58)

INTERVIEWER: Judith Gannon

DATED: May 1, 1981

J.G.: This is an interview with Oscar I. "Scotty" Kludt for the California State College, Bakersfield CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY Project by Judith Gannon at 1516 N. Van Ness Avenue, Fresno, California on May 1, 1981 at 10:00 a.m.

J.G.: Okay, Mr. Kludt, if you would like to begin by going back as far as you can and tell us about your earliest recollections of your childhood in South Dakota?

Kludt: Okay, I would be happy to do that, but I think that before I do that I'm going to give my full name and a little story. My full name is Oscar Irving Kludt and they give Oscars away for good performances in Hollywood. My last name is spelled K-L-U-D-T but Jane Fonda won an Oscar for the movie Klute and I had an Uncle John that was a farmer in South Dakota and the name of the individual in the movie Klute was John Klute. So with that as an introduction I don't think you can ever forget my name.

My earliest recollections as a child in South Dakota are probably from the church. I think I was possibly in the preschool age somewhere because I don't remember anything really prior to school. I can remember that my family went to church every Sunday, every Sunday evening, and on Wednesday nights. I was born into a family of seven children. I have two brothers and five sisters, and I am the third and the youngest brother. I have two sisters that are older than I am, so I guess, I am number four in the hierarchy. Some of the things that I recall other than going to church are going to school when I lived in Beadle County, South Dakota. The school that I recall going to most is in Beadle County and was half a mile from our home. My father farmed 660 acres, half of which was farmable in wheat and corn and the other half a range for horses and cows. We milked anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five head of cattle and we must have had twenty or thirty other offspring from this group. As I recall we must have had at least a dozen horses

because I remember learning how to ride at about age five as I had my own pony. It was a cross between a horse and a Shetland pony and I don't remember how many hands tall it stood, but it was probably about three quarters the size of a normal horse. One of the things I recall from my childhood was that I received a watch probably in the first or second grade. My brother had broken a horse that we called Prince. As I recall we had a rock pile that was near the barn and I had been to town with my dad and was running up to show Elmer my watch that I had in my hand. I made the unforgettable error of talking to him when I was standing behind the horse. The horse kicked and hit my hand and it's hoof hit underneath my chin and for years I carried a little indentation there. And, of course, my watch flew onto the rock pile and broke. So that was my first watch which I have long forgotten.

J.G.: Describe for me a little bit what your school was like there.

Kludt: Okay. Yes that's good. I guess I have difficulty with that part of my life and I shouldn't. Maybe it's because you try to block it out. The school that I went to was a one-room school and it had about twelve students from the first through the eighth grade. Usually there were only one or two students that were in the upper grades. Seems like most of us were younger. In other words, I don't recall too many that were in the seventh and eighth grades. They seemed to be in the minority for some reason. Seems like they were more my age, but that was probably because I played with them. I remember in the wintertime the stove sat right in the middle and, of course, it got very hot in the room so we had to kind of push our chairs back. I can't recall the names of any of my teachers at that particular school. Now that was in Beadle County. And in 1933, I guess it was at the height of the Depression, my dad lost the farm. I know we lost the farm through the Depression because he couldn't pay the taxes. I have no idea what they amounted to. I would guess probably several hundred dollars. I know it couldn't have been very much. Then we moved to what we called the Barnes place and it was about eight to ten miles away. We must have moved there when I was in the third grade. We must have lost the ranch in Beadle County because we moved to another ranch which had 660 acres which my dad leased. The new place was approximately nine to twelve miles away because I remember it took us all day to move and we drove the cattle. I can remember getting up at sunup and driving the cattle on dirt for about six miles and then there was a gravel road. That was the best highway in our part of the state and that had only existed for three or four years. I remember we drove the cattle on the side of the gravel road and very few cars passed us. When a car did pass it would throw rocks. So in those days when we drove on a road it probably had three or four inches of gravel on it and you didn't follow anybody very close because you would end up with a broken windshield. I do remember that we took all day to move and we moved the horses and the cattle just like they did in the early days. There must have been a car involved, but I don't even recall that. The car probably went ahead of us.

The new ranch had a bigger home. It had a larger barn and we lived there

for about two or two and a half years. The school there was about two and a half miles away and I remember going to that school and taking my two younger sisters, Doris and Esther. I must have been in the third and fourth grade because I was in the fifth grade when we came to California. I used to drive a two-wheel buggy and take them to school two and a half miles and come home. That was our transportation to school.

In the summer months when it was really nice it seems to me like we even walked sometimes instead of taking the horse. I can remember walking that two and a half miles and back probably only in September and maybe October and May because otherwise the weather would be too bad to walk. I don't ever remember being taken to school in my entire lifetime in South Dakota in a car. It's just something my parents wouldn't have thought proper because you walked. It didn't matter if you were three or four miles, it was just something that you did. And it was safe. You couldn't get in any trouble. There is a story I'm trying to recall. My dad was very involved not only in the church but in the school board. It seems like he was always the chairman of the school board and most of the school teachers lived at our house. I can remember when we lived in both places it just seemed like we always had large homes and maybe it was my dad's generosity but I remember several ladies that were the teachers and they taught at that school and lived at the house. They usually slept upstairs like in an attic room. I can tell one story which isn't very nice, but it's a fact. I remember how upset my father got. Evidently in those days, about 1931 and 1932, we used to keep our canning jars upstairs so I don't have to say anymore. When the lady left we found out why she never came down to go to the bathroom which was outside. And I can remember how upset my father was, really furious. In fact, I think he probably asked her to move. I remember a big incident about that. That was when we lived in Beadle County. The other thing that I can remember very vividly was that my parents were very religious. I don't know how old I was when I learned about God but I'm sure it was before I went to school. We belonged to a faith called German Congregational Evangelical Church.

My dad immigrated from Bessarabia which is between Russian and Germany and I remember he had a sister which would be my Aunt Sophia. He used to send stuff to her and write letters to her. She would answer the letters and never mention the articles sent. Nothing got to her. In other words, if they sent shoes or clothing it seems like the bureaucracy in Russia ended up with it. After the war she slipped a letter to some American soldiers. This American mailed the letter from New York and in a space of five or six years that was the last time we heard from my family in Russia. She had two sons and they were both officers in the Russian Army. I could be wrong but I seem to remember stories that they were sent to Siberia because of their belief and possibly vanished or perished. That part I don't recall, but I know it caused my father a lot of grief because he never did really hear from Sophia and if he did it was almost always on the negative. I'm sure that in my family somewhere we have a dozen letters written in German reciting her problems and

[telling] about her children. Seems to me like she had a small family, two or three boys and maybe one girl. Another thing that I remember very much from my childhood is my Uncle John Kludt whom I've previously mentioned lived in the area, within six or eight miles. They had two girls named Clara and Annie and three boys, Carl, Harold and Willis. They were also farming. I have a cousin who's name is Willis and he flew as a senior pilot for one of the major airlines and just retired about a year ago. He got into that line of work because in World War II he was a pilot and flew with the Army and then after the war he worked for about three years as a ticket taker and finally worked his way up to where he became a relief and second pilot and then senior pilot.

Anyway, getting back to my childhood, I can recall that we spent a lot of time together as families. Willis and I became quite close and I can recall a friend by the name of Arlo Longacre who was also evidently in our age group. Arlo might have been a year younger. He had a sister that was probably in our class. I recall spending a lot of time with my cousins. My father came to California in 1919 and my brother Elmer was born in California. My father was a carpenter as well as a farmer. He had homesteaded 330 place. Then he built a farm on it and sold it and bought his other farm of 660 acres. The way I recall it my dad immigrated to the United States in about 1900. He built all his own buildings. He built homes, and I guess that's a talent that all of us have picked up because when he came to California he built several homes in Lodi. He stayed out here about a year or a year and a half and then went back. We almost stayed in California. When the Depression hit we got wiped out and lost everything. That's evidently what brought my dad back to California. At that time he was probably about 45 years old and had eight children, the oldest one was my brother Chris who is ten years older than myself.

When we came to California before my birth my dad had a sister out here whose name was Tillie. Sophia was the oldest sister. He built these homes and then he went back to farm and I can remember when Roosevelt was elected. He was my dad's savior because I heard much about him in our home. I think he was elected in 1932. I can remember my dad talking about Roosevelt and then I can remember his first programs that he instituted which I remember in a shocking way, but I guess that was his way of rebuilding the economy. I can remember that he rounded up all of the animals on the farms and took some to Alpena where they dug a big ditch and then they paid $3 a day to shoot all these animals and cover them up with a tractor. I don't remember any horses being shot but I remember a lot of beef being slaughtered and pork. I don't remember any chickens or fowl being slaughtered but I guess that was to stabilize the meat price. The thing that hurt me was the fact that they were shooting our animals and I don't know what my dad got for them but it was probably like $5 or $10. I know it was a very insignificant amount of money. It also bothered me from a standpoint of starvation. I'm sure there were people then that were hungry and they were putting these live animals in the ground. They didn't have tractors to do it. If I remember right this ditch was dug with horses, well maybe then they

had tractors. I can't remember the tractors coming in but I can remember that most of the horse drawn equipment was the big scrapers and they were just filling this big hole. So I guess they didn't have tractors then.

I can remember also planting the wheat and corn and I can remember the drought. The drought came and, of course, we didn't have any crops. That went on not very long really because my folks must have been very prosperous because in my earlier recollections I can remember big cars and that type of thing. I can remember my dad bought an Overlander. I asked him one time later what he paid for that and he pulled out a check and I think it was $1,400 which was a lot of money. Then he showed me some other checks in which he had bought land and I remember seeing checks for $5,000 and $7,000 which was an ungodly large sum of money in those years. I can remember when I was in Beadle County. The reason I refer to Beadle County is because the Barnes place is in Huron County and they were about ten miles apart.

When I was four or five years old they built this steel bridge across the crick. It was just an offshoot probably of the Missouri River because every winter it would flood. I don't think it was WPA [Works Progress Administration] because it was probably in 1927 when they built this, but anyway they built this bridge and I can remember all the scraping and all the lumber coming in and the steel work. I can remember them working on this project for the better part of one spring and either fall. When the rains came and the floods came in the spring it would flood this crick and the crick went from 30 feet to 100 feet about a half a mile wide. We had to sandbag the house to keep the water out of the house and then when the water would recede we could go out and pick up the fish that were trapped and we would keep the fish in a big barrel. From time to time we would have to change the water which was done by hand because we had to pump it out of the ground so that the oxygen wouldn't go out of it. I remember that we would have fresh fish then for several weeks.

I can remember many turtles. We didn't eat the turtles and we didn't really play with them but we would not take those for some reason or another so they ended up back in the river in most cases. This time of my life I can remember as a fun time.

Another time I remember from my childhood is that it wasn't fashionable to be critical of people. We all have our biases. I never knew what racial discrimination was because everybody there was white and they were mostly German and Lutherans or Congregationalists. I had never seen a black [person]. We called them niggers because that's the terminology that was used. I'd never seen an Indian even though Wounded Knee was ninety miles from where I was born. I never learned about that until I went to college about 50 years later. That really upset me. I do not recall seeing Indians. Evidently they were on the reservation. There must have been hundreds of thousands of them. I can remember totem poles in town. Every barber shop had an Indian totem pole. I can remember stories occasionally that some Indian would come to town and get drunk and end up in jail. I can remember stories about that but I

personally never saw it, probably because I was never in town on Saturday.

We celebrated the major holidays and this isn't unusual because other seniors that I've talked to say the same thing. I can remember the first [part] of July was a big thing, probably Independence Day because we would come to town and they would have their celebration and then there would be marches and bands, races for the little ones. I can remember the trough where all the horses drank would be about three feet deep. Then all of us little ones would take off all our clothes but maybe our pants or shorts and they would throw money in there and we would dive for the money. If you were lucky you might end up with a dollar in pennies and nickels and dimes. I don't remember very many quarters. I don't remember any dollars in there. But anyway, that went on all day long and that must have been different age groups that dove in there and the water troughs must have been fifteen feet across or twelve and about three feet deep and they held a lot of water because I know they were really big enough for us to swim in. It was used for a trough for the horses and it seems to me like it must have sat in the center of town because every little town had one.

I don't recall anything in the way of automobiles. I remember more about the horse and buggy type things. I can remember we had a car and we went to town with it but you would see a mixture. You would still see just as many horse and buggy carts as you would automobiles. When you were on horse and buggy and if a car would pass you know some of the problems that that would create and I was probably too young to drive the horses. I don't think my folks ever let me drive when we went to town but I remember we did go to town in the horse and buggy.

I also recall when we milled our wheat we would take it to the mill which must have been again eight or nine miles away because we had to stay overnight. We would take a load of wheat. They would mill it for us and we would get half of it back for free and that was how we got our flour which we would get through the winter with. I was indoctrinated early in my life into eating good nutritious food because we had a mixture of dark and white bread. We almost always had dark bread and our pancakes were made out of the same thing. Threshing was a time I remember was a fun time because everybody got together and threshed each other's grain. Haying time was done on your own but threshing season would last for about six weeks and it would probably would be at your house for maybe a week and you would just work from sunup to sundown. I don't even remember stopping for Saturdays or Sundays. I'm sure they just worked seven days for thirty or forty days and there would probably be six or ten different neighbors and I guess the thresher came through and then everybody pitched in and worked and did it for a fee. He must have charged so much per bushel or however to get his money but I remember they pulled the thresher with horses and it seemed to me like it was about sixteen horses. I remember that we would work from sunup to sundown and the food was always good because they ate like lumberjacks and they'd eat before sunup and eat when they came home and then the women would carry the lunches to the threshers in

the field. My job was to take the lunches. I was never old enough to work on the thresher and then I would be stuck with the chores of herding the cattle and that type of thing. But I do remember that was a very fun time because we ate so good. They must have gotten up at four o'clock [in the morning] and gone to bed at eight o'clock [in the evening]. Everybody slept in the barns as most were from other farms. I was never allowed in that area but I'm sure they had their little fun time things.

I recall some of the incidents in threshing. My job would be to herd the cattle and we didn't have fences so if you had a cornfield and you had 120 acres of corn, you had to keep the cattle out of the corn. You would bring the cattle in at night and pen them up and then turn them out in the daytime. Some of the farm might be fenced but most of it wasn't so if the cattle got in the corn you really had a problem. Let me tell a story about the corn. I used to go out and herd the cattle. All you had to do was be there from sunup to sundown and bring the cattle in. We had two dogs that were trained and all you had to do was tell the dogs what to do and they would turn the cattle and drive them into the area that was fenced near the barn. The next morning we would take them out again. As a child I remember falling asleep on several occasions and waking up and there the cattle were in the corn and you'd have to get them out.

When I was old enough they first trusted me with cultivating. I would cultivate and fall asleep on the cultivator and look back and there for 100 feet or yards you would see the corn was all cultivated out of the ground. Of course, I would hear from my father on that. It's hard to believe I was eight or nine when I was doing that, falling asleep on the cultivator. Maybe it wasn't just falling asleep, maybe it was just careless. Maybe that's what I told my father, that I fell asleep. I was daydreaming I guess. I can remember when we herded the cattle we would sleep. I do remember falling asleep while I was herding the cattle because I would lay down on the horse on the rump and then afterward fall asleep. Then I would wake up and there they were in the corn. It might have been the long hours.

One final story, we had several bulls and we had this one bull that was mean as it could be. You couldn't get near him. During one of the threshing seasons, I must have been ten or eleven years old, this bull chased me and I had an eight pound sledge hammer in my hand that I was either delivering to the thresher or was taking it back to the barn. I remember standing up in the saddle and turning around and taking this big old sledge hammer and throwing it at him. He had a big old white spot on his head and I hit him there and he went down just like Ferdinand the Bull. This happened about one year before we left because after that all I had to do when I went out in the field and that bull started coming toward me or charging was just hold my hand up and he would stop.

J.G.: When you talked earlier about slaughtering the cattle and Roosevelt

being elected, what do you recall your father saying or thinking about that kind of program and Roosevelt?

Kludt: My father was a very solid citizen. I guess he would be a follower of Roosevelt because I don't remember him ever talking about Hoover except in negative ways. I know what Hoover is from history and we were probably affluent at Hoover's time and he must have blamed everything that happened on the Depression on Hoover and when Roosevelt came in with this New Deal and new ideas in 1932, my father believed in Roosevelt. We had the bad years in the Depression. I don't remember much talk about Roosevelt's cabinet or any other people except that I remember that Roosevelt was very important in my family. I also remember that when we got into the war Roosevelt could do no wrong and Russia was, of course, tremendous enemies in my house because of what they did to my Aunt Sophia. My father was very concerned about the Russian role in World War II and the fact that they were Bolsheviks and when he died he still hated Russia with a passion and blamed much of what happened to his sister on the system over there. I can't really recall much about Roosevelt other than that he was a hero. I can't think of anything else really from my childhood because maybe I'm not old enough to recollect those things as vividly as I should. They come later in life I understand. I'm struggling right now to remember things that I should remember.

J.G.: That's okay. I want to clarify this. Your family prior to your birth came out to the Lodi area. What prompted your dad at that point to come to California?

Kludt: My dad came out here because his sister, Tillie, was out here and he has another brother, Reinhold, that came to Gilroy and had another brother, August, that lived in Lodi so when they came over from the old country they all came through to South Dakota but the only two that stayed were the two older brothers, John and my dad. Then I had two younger uncles that ended up out here and a sister that came out here so they came out to visit. My family was a fairly affluent family in the early days because he owned two different ranches, lost the second one and then, when he sold out, he paid all his bills and came to California with very little money. The only thing that he ended up owing was the taxes for which the government took the land away from him. He paid every bill he ever had. I remember that. He was very proud of that.

When he came to California the first time my father was still affluent. He came out for a vacation from what I remember and then stayed. Because he was a good carpenter he built houses in Lodi and sold them and then he went back because his calling was to go back to the farm. That's what brought him back though that was when everything went bad back there then he came out here because he figured he could make a living out here and it would be better for his family.

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Kludt: I can recall that my mother went through the sixth grade and my father only went through the fourth grade. My father also was trained in the old country because he came to the United States at age eighteen as a cabinet maker. He had tremendous skills which he passed on down to the family. He must have been pretty astute in relation to reading because he was able to read and comprehend. I remember that he read the newspapers. He was always reading. He read out of the Bible. I can remember his reading at dinner time. He also read other papers. He listened to the radio a lot. He listened to the news. Even though he didn't have a real formal education, he must have been above average in many things because he was interested in the world and he was interested in more than his own sphere. My mother was more a homebody and she was a Bitner born in the United States. She had relatives that lived in South Dakota. She had three brothers and a couple of sisters that lived in South Dakota. That's probably why we went back after 1919, because of the strong family ties. There were more people back there in that marriage than there would have been out here.

We must have been fairly affluent because I don't remember ever wanting for anything. I never was hungry and never had old clothes. I can remember that we must have been affluent because when we lost everything and came to California we were considered trash by the Californians but I never considered myself trash and it was hard for my dad to accept. Because when you write $5,000 and $7,000 checks for farm equipment and then you come to California you have to be on the WPA, that's pretty hard to take because he never considered himself trash.

J.G.: I want to go into that in greater detail, but before we get there back up a little bit and tell me about how the decision was arrived at to come to California the second time and your actual trip to California.

Kludt: My brother Chris at the height of the Depression went to North Dakota and shocked grain and worked in the fields to make extra money. He had two other cousins that were Kludts, Carl and Harold, and two others that were Bitners, Herb and Emil Newhart, so there's about five of them that were ten years older than we were. They went up there for two seasons. They worked the grain in North Dakota and they worked around the community and I remember they would go up there and stay for six weeks or two months and they come back and they might have $30 or $40 or $50 apiece but that was a lot of money because there wasn't any money in the house. Then they went to California. My brother Chris went to California in about 1932 or 1933. It seems to me they came out here for two seasons. They probably went up to North Dakota and worked and came out to California and worked the fields. He came to California for work. My brother, Chris, quit school in the eighth grade. He probably was working in the fields from the time that he was fourteen or fifteen so maybe when he was in North Dakota he might have only been eighteen or nineteen years old or maybe even younger. He must have come to California on two different occasions and stayed during the summer and then would go back there to work or maybe they worked up there before

they came to California. That's what brought us to California because my brother Chris came home and he started talking about this good Chinese friend that he had. He was so proud that he had a Chinese friend. He started talking about the different types of people and the Japanese just intrigued him because there were so many in the Lodi area. That's the first time he had been exposed to other races. He probably convinced my father that he should sell out before he loses everything and make the trip to California and reestablish his life because that's what happened. I remember my dad later in life told me that he came to California for the family. He realized that he was struggling back there and he might lose everything and it was a decision that he was probably talked into by his oldest son. He came to California for the welfare of his family.

J.G.: Did you travel with others to California?

Kludt: No. We came out alone. We came out in 1935, my dad had a sale and we came out I think on my mother's birthday on March 6 so we must have had the sale about February 12. It took us about ten or twelve days to make the trip and just my family came. We bought a big twelve cylinder Nash, one car packed with ten people. We put all the luggage on top and tied it. I can remember we stayed near Cheyenne, Wyoming. I kept a journal which I wrote when I came to California. I was in the fifth or sixth grade. I did it as a project. My mother gave it to me and it's poorly written but it tells how much money we spent at various places. It's a journal that's priceless to me now and to our family, probably because it records how much money we had. I'm quoting my memory, it seems like we had $140 when we started the trip, after we paid all our debts. The car was clear and we sold everything. You can imagine you can't get much on a 1933 Nash. So it probably cost $500 or $600 because it was a big car. We had car trouble in several different spots and we stayed over. I can remember most of the times we didn't stay in motels. The only time we stayed over is when we had a break-down. That's how I can remember. We would eat in the motels. I can remember there would be sandwiches. My family probably went to the local market and bought bologna and stuff like that, milk and just the staples. After we paid for the car repairs it seems like we had either $19 or $22 left when we hit California. That's all that was left out of the $140. My dad rented a house and I think it was $15 and he paid the rent and bought groceries. We got out here in March and must have gone to work probably pruning. I don't know what you would do in Lodi but I know that he was working right away and so was my older brother. They were probably in the grapes. They might have been tying them.

J.G.: Just before we get into what happened when you get to California, do you recollect any impressions that you had when you first saw California?

Kludt: Yes. My first impression on the way to California is that I can remember when I first saw the Rocky Mountains. That was really magnificent to see those great big mountains. I remember the trip through the mountains. Then when we came to California we came through Reno [Nevada] and I

can remember the arch in Reno and I remember what Reno was like in 1935. To me it was just a little place with this big arch. In fact, that's all I can really remember because that's probably all that was there. It was like a desert. I remember the desert before you get to Reno. Then when we wove into Sacramento Valley I can remember seeing all the orchards. Even then there were quite a few. When we got to Lodi it was just shocking to see everything so green and so beautiful and warm and friendly. It seems to me like we went through Sacramento but I know that we drove right straight to Lodi. I think we drove from Reno to Lodi in one day. I can remember it was like the land of milk and honey. We had a good feeling when we saw California. Of course, we had been told what California was like by my older brother and of course by my father and so we probably didn't expect too much because my dad had been out here for about a year and a half in 1919. Yes, California was really beautiful. I remember that. The grapes fascinated us because several months they were green and in bloom and we had never seen a grape orchard in our life.

J.G.: What did you think or what did your father tell you was his idea when he came to California? Did he plan to go into carpentry or did he hope to be able to own his own farm here in California?

Kludt: That's something that I was probably too young that he never discussed with me. I'm only speaking from what I think without the privilege of what his thoughts were. That's why Chris would be the one that could really answer those questions better than I can. My dad came to California because he figured that his children could do better than in South Dakota and because he had these skills as a carpenter and he went to work for the city. Maybe I shouldn't say right away because he probably worked for a year or two in the fields, working with the grapes and that type of thing. I remember everybody worked in the fields. I'd say in about 1936 or 1937 he went to work for the city of Lodi in their street department. Then when the war came along he went to work for Lodi Super Mold and worked there even past age 65. I would say that because of his skills he knew that he could find work other than in the fields but he had to work in the fields for a couple of years before he was able to get a city job. So I'm just saying that when he came to Lodi he never dreamed about owning any land because when we came out here we knew that 20 acres cost as much as 660 back home. We also knew then you could make a living on 20 acres, but my dad looked down on the fact that 20 acres of ground was like nothing. He wasn't a grape farmer so I don't think he ever envisioned on going into grapes. I think he was going to work with his hands, but that's supposition.

Kludt: Let's go back now to what you started to talk about a few minutes ago, the first house in Lodi. Tell me what that was like and what you remember of that.

Kludt: Yes. Our first house was at 405 Maple Street and it had two bedrooms downstairs and a large front room and then a dining room to the left. The kitchen was behind the large dining room. It had a back porch and

the attic was finished off. The back porch was large enough to sleep in and had a bed in there. Then almost all the girls slept upstairs and it was just a regular attic and it wasn't a two story home but it was finished off the way I recall. You didn't just see the rafters. It had a small yard and they had an out building in the back which probably was used as a toolshed because that building was about six by eight feet. I remember we paid $15 a month for rent. All of us lived there. The way I remember in the beginning my mother and dad slept in the bedroom that was the main bedroom and then the back porch my two older brothers slept. I guess us three slept downstairs. Then upstairs the girls slept. Gladys is ten years younger than I was so she was about two or three. I don't think she slept with our parents, but she may have. So there would be three girls upstairs. That's about all I remember about the house. I remember the rent.

I also remember that at that time a Coke or a hamburger or a hot dog was a nickel. I don't know what it cost to pay for a newspaper, probably two or three cents because I delivered papers shortly afterwards and they were a nickel in about 1938. So papers must have been less than a nickel. I'd guess they were like two or three pennies hourly pay. I recall that my dad and my brothers went to work in 1935 at fifteen cents an hour because I know that they would work twelve and make almost $2. Of course, then later some of it was piece work but I remember hourly pay was about fifteen cents an hour at that time. It was hard to get a job unless it was in the field. I seem to recall that milk was about ten cents a quart and cigarettes--I don't remember smoking them myself--but they must have been about ten cents a pack. I know gasoline later because when I was old enough to drive I can remember gasoline was like you could buy it sometimes on sale ten gallons for $1 and it would usually be priced twelve cents a gallon. Those were the things that would take place more like in the late 1930s instead of the early 1930s.

J.G.: Did your house there in Lodi have indoor plumbing and water and that kind of thing?

Kludt: Yes. That was the first time we had indoor plumbing and that was quite fascinating. I remember in South Dakota we always had outdoor plumbing and this was the first time we had indoor plumbing.

J.G.: So as you recall, your father and your brother went to work in the fields in the grapes probably.

Kludt: Probably pruning grapes and then picking grapes and picking apricots and peaches because as a child I can remember going out and picking. Right from the beginning they would take the whole family. We went out and worked on the Anger Ranch, Lesmoine Anger. His folks were quite wealthy and he was in the same class in school that I was. I remember going out there and working on the ranch and then finding out later during that same period of time that here was this kid that was in the sixth grade with--no that's wrong because he was in the country. When

we went to high school we met and then we realized that I worked for him four or five years before.

J.G.: Did your father take you out of school or was this after school and on weekends?

Kludt: We were never taken out of school. To my father school was first. I don't remember in those days if the school was closed to pick grapes, but it's possible that they started a week late. I seem to recall that even in high school. But I was never asked to stay out of school. I was always sent to school. My father thought education was important so we were never asked to stay out of school.

J.G.: How long did you stay in that first house in Lodi?

Kludt: We went there from 1935 until my folks bought a home because they had saved their money. When World War II came along, they bought a home at 617 Lincoln Street which is on the other side of town. We lived on Maple in this Barnard Tract and that was considered the wrong side of town. Then we moved over to the other side of town which still wasn't the affluent, but it was better. For some reason or another we moved across town and I remember the rent there being $25 a month. I would say we moved over there in 1938 because I seem to remember living there when I was going to high school. We probably moved over there because my dad could afford a better place and it seems to me like it was larger and it was nearer my older brother who was married by then. I can't tell you why we left 405 Maple Street except that maybe it was too small. We rented this other house for a few extra dollars and it was more convenient. It was better located. That was in 1938. Then they never bought the house until about 1944. I can cover that later if you want.

J.G.: Yes. In that first house on Maple Street your father would go out and your brother would go out from there and go to the fields? There was enough work that they could come home each night and just drive to wherever the peaches or the apricots or grapes were?

Kludt: Right. Most of the work was done around the local area and we would go to Brentwood and work in the camps. So that's where I remember the labor camps or whatever. They probably preceded the labor camps. That's where I can remember The Grapes of Wrath. We went to Brentwood for two or three summers and this must have been from the time I was about in the sixth grade through maybe a sophomore. Eventually all of my brothers and all my family worked in the cannery in Lodi. We all went to work for the Woods Canning Company and then we progressed out of the fields into the canning industry. It was only those first two or three years that we actually were fruit tramps or whatever you call those people. Shouldn't say fruit tramps. They weren't tramps.

J.G.: That's what they were called though.

Kludt: Okay, yes. That's what I seem to remember, yes, fruit tramps.

J.G.: That's what the name was at this point.

Kludt: Yes, I think you're right. That's why it came out just naturally.

J.G.: Yes. What do you recall about the way that you were treated in school by the local people during the early stages in Lodi?

Kludt: The early stages in Lodi were kind of bad because at that time we were the forerunners probably of the Okies. Being from South Dakota wasn't as bad as being from Oklahoma but it was still pretty bad because we talked different. We spoke with German accents and most of us were German. "Oh, you're from North or South Dakota," I can remember that. It was kind of like slang, but if you were from Oklahoma you were really bad because they were considered trash. Being from South Dakota and North Dakota was just a little bit better than being from Oklahoma. If you were from Missouri, it probably wasn't as bad as being from Oklahoma. I don't know why, but if you were from Oklahoma you were an Okie and that was the worst thing in the world. And they never called us Okies in the true sense, but I'm sure they did at times. But there was a split between from South and North Dakota and being from Oklahoma--Missouri or Mississippi--there just weren't people there from those states, a few from Missouri.

J.G.: How about Arkansas?

Kludt: If there were, I never knew them as a child. Most of the people around Lodi where we moved from were either German or Norwegian. I'm sure there were some people from Arkansas, but they must have been in the minority. The immigration that I remember was from Oklahoma, South Dakota and states bordering the wheat belt. I remember people from Wyoming coming there. I'm sure there were people there from Arkansas, but I personally didn't have any friends that I recall from Arkansas.

J.G.: Talk a little bit about your school.

Kludt: In school we were kind of looked down on because naturally we were from the Dakotas and we were considered to be poor and to be fruit tramps. But that really didn't bother us because we really didn't consider ourselves poor even though we knew that we were poor. And I was raised on a farm until I was twelve and I don't remember being poor and so, therefore, it wasn't much of a shock. I probably wasn't subjected to the same stuff that most people were because I was a child athlete and I became very famous as a softball pitcher and my older brothers were ballplayers and my father was a ballplayer, something that I forgot to mention. So then I became kind of a celebrity and I wasn't picked on like the others. I was almost revered by the local community later because I was good. And so I probably didn't suffer the discrimination that the average person from South Dakota would have or North Dakota or from Oklahoma. That I would say is the only reason though. I remember I wasn't too happy with the way I was treated, so I was still

subjected to a lot of pressure from my peers in school. When we went to school our clothes weren't quite as good and when we came to California our luck must have run out. I remember my father went down and that's the only time I remember him ever getting handouts and it was probably relief or whatever they called it -- WPA in South Dakota. I didn't talk much about that but that's an area that I forgot about. I remember getting some clothes and, of course, they were hand-me-downs. I remember my principal at Salem School. His name was Smith. He gave me a bunch of socks. I don't know what prompted that other than maybe he figured I needed them or he was being friendly because he and I had gotten to be good friends. As I grew older I kept in touch with him. I couldn't wear most of the socks he gave me because they were for old people but he was generous. So I just passed them on to my brothers. I don't remember that lasting long, maybe from 1935 through 1936. Before my father got established we probably had some tough times and that's probably when I went to school and wasn't really dressed properly. Then after that I became known as a softball player and baseball player and we played with the kids that had money and their folks were prominent. They had to accept us. But see, I'm probably unusual in that respect. Most people probably didn't have that little edge that I had because Elmer was a tremendous baseball player and softball pitcher and then I followed him and people were saying, "Oh, that's the little brother," and then finally after a couple of years they stopped comparing Elmer with me because I just outgrew him in softball ability. We created a rivalry that lasted for many years and that's a separate part of my life that I don't want to get into. That probably didn't subject me to the abuse that I would have been subjected to if I hadn't been an athlete.

I was poor enough that I couldn't go out for the football team because I was on the NRA [National Recovery Act] for students. I made $6 a month while I was going to high school and I worked for the Dean of Men. I ran all of what was a relief program, now you'd call it CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act]. I remember I got $6 a month. I got 25¢ an hour when I was doing this from 1936 through 1940. I was in charge of all the people that were on that program and I was in charge of every football game. It was my duty to see we had ticket takers and they picked up and kept the place clean. I always figured I was lucky and they took a liking to me, but evidently even though I considered myself as having some sort of inferiority complex, I must have been a leader even as a child and didn't recognize it because I was always pushed into leadership positions and that's the role I played.

I remember when we got to California after we were out here maybe less than a year, I found out that you could get paid for carrying newspapers. So naturally, I went down and tried to get a job. They told me, "Do you have a bicycle?" I said, "No." "Well, we could hire you if you had a bicycle. Why don't you go see Bill the bicycle man." So I went to see Bill. He did this with every newspaper boy and so it wasn't anything new. I walked in and introduced myself, I was probably thirteen

years old. He sold me a bicycle and took $5. I had to go home and talk my dad out of $5. Then there were no papers signed. It took me six months but I would come in at the end of every month and make a payment and the bicycle cost about $25. I think my payments were about $4 a month and I don't recall him adding any carrying charge to anything. That's how all the kids started their career in carrying newspapers. I was cutting lawns and because I worked for the Dean of Men on the NRA I was getting $6 a month from that. I worked after school when high school left out probably from 3:00 probably until till 5:30 p.m. and I was in charge of all these kids. So I was getting $6 a month from there and, of course, because I worked for the Dean of Men. I was cutting the lawns of the coaches and the principal and they were paying me like 75¢ or $1 a week to keep their lawn up and I was earning about $30 a month doing that. I would say I was making between $40 and $50 a month and my dad was working for the City of Lodi. His salary was $50 a month. He worked at least 40 hours a week. It seems to me like he worked more than that. It seems to me like he worked ten hours a day in those days. I think he worked ten hours a day. I could be wrong but it seems to me like he worked either ten hours a day or half a day Saturday, but I know I made as much money as my father did when I was thirteen years old. That didn't hurt him and it didn't hurt me because I didn't know any better, and I gave it all to him. I would come home and he would say, "How much money did you earn today?" I would tell him when I got my money from my paper route. I'd give it to him.

I learned a lesson that wasn't bitter, but finally that was my first. You know, when you would ask him and you would give him all your money and this went on for not months, but for almost like a year or a year and a half, then I bought my own clothes and he would give me money to buy clothes with. I can remember I wanted money to go to the show with on Saturday night and have a milkshake and he wouldn't give it to me. That upset me and then I finally deceived him. He said, "How much money did you earn today?" Saturdays were big days for me. I would come home with anywhere from $3 to $6 cash. I would say, "Well, I earned $5." I would give it to him and then he would give me back a quarter or something, hardly ever 50¢, but that would be 10%. I remember getting that. But then I would withhold and I felt bad about that. I don't remember ever telling my father that I did this to him before he died. I know that I was never broke after that, but I never withheld enough that I was able to do any great things with. Then if I wanted to go to the show on Saturday night or something I had the money. But if I withheld it it was probably a very small amount but then I could do the things that I wanted to. I remember I had never thought about that but it must have kind of bothered my father that he's got a twelve or thirteen year old son that's making the same amount of money that he is. He never talked to me about it. I was probably too dumb to realize that I was making that much money.

J.G.: You say that your father started to work for the City of Lodi in 1936?

Kludt: Probably not that soon, because we came out in 1935 so it's probably more

like 1938. I would say he worked in the fields for a couple of years and then he worked in the cannery and then he finally went to work for the City in about 1938 or 1939.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

Kludt: I guess from the time I can remember--because before we left South Dakota we called it kitten ball--for some reason or another I was always the pitcher and I don't know why. Maybe because nobody else could do it or either I was brash enough to do it, but I remember I threw underhand in those days. I can remember in about 1931 when I was probably, nine, ten or twelve years oldwe would have kitten ball games at school and then I can remember during the summer months we would get together when we would go to town like Fourth of July and even church parties. We would all get together and we'd all have these kitten ball games. I was the pitcher but I threw underhanded and I wasn't very good in those days. But I remember playing as a child and going to a lot of baseball games. I believe my father was the catcher. I don't remember ever seeing him catch but I remember hearing that. My oldest brother Chris was a catcher and there were two brothers named Happy and Pappy Weikum. I don't know their real names but I'm going to say it's Happy and Pappy but I know that's not right. They may have been twins or a year or two apart. They were both pitchers and catchers. They could change around. Because my family was oriented into sports, I can remember seeing these [two] and my older brothers, Chris and Elmer, Chris is ten years older than I am and Elmer is three years older, I can remember going to see them play when I was a child and I was a bat boy. Happy would pitch and then he would go catching. They'd make those changes and then finally my brother was a shortstop and my older brother was an outfielder and it seems to me like he caught.

I was raised on baseball as a child. When we came to California I still really wasn't recognized as a ballplayer. I had a neighbor whose name was Vernon Sperling. He was a catcher and he was about a year or two younger than I was. We came to California when I was twelve years old and he lived about two doors down the street. He was probably a year or two younger. We played a game alongside my house for about two years. We devised because we both played on the sandlot baseball teams and everything and in those days I was playing everything because I ended learning how to catch and I ended up learning how to play second base and outfield. We just had sandlot teams, and I was still in probably the fifth and sixth grade. So alongside our house we had a regulation diamond for just the pitcher and catcher, then when you caught you were the umpire. We would take turns and he had an imaginary batter up there and you either struck the guy out or you walked him and every time you walked somebody then it was bases loaded. Then the runs would start coming in. We would play this for seven innings. I can remember doing this for about two years. In the beginning he probably won about as many times as I did but as the years went by I just became proficient and I started throwing nothing but strikes and I can hardly remember him ever beating me. That's when I learned to pitch the windmill style which

was that was the thing at that time. So really, I became a really good pitcher unbeknown to anybody because I was still going out and playing in the sandlot games any position that was available. We had sandlot teams and this went on and we had games on Saturdays just between various parts of town. I remember Jack Plines had a team and Vernon and I had a team and Corky Ortiz had a team. The three of us would go out and challenge each other to a game. There was no such thing as Little League or organized ball.

We would scrounge up an old bat and ball and would go out and play softball. We would challenge each other and we would play after school and we'd play on Saturday mornings. Most Saturdays were spent doing that. Of course, American Legion ball came along and I tried out and made American Legion ball team as an outfielder and a second baseman. I was never a very good hitter. So I played two or three years of American Legion ball and I was probably just average. All this time I was playing softball unbeknown to the community. Then at the same time I was still the bat boy for what they called Dandy Bread in town. That was the best softball team in Lodi. We used to play in two different leagues. We played in Gault and in Lodi. I can remember I was probably the bat boy from age twelve. They would let me pitch in batting practice. Then in Gault one night about two or three years later they decided they were ahead enough and they put me in. I remember the next thing they knew there was this little kid that they didn't know could pitch. I struck out the side and struck out the side again and when we came up and everybody's in awe because I hadn't pitched. When I pitched in batting practice they were supposed to hit the ball so I was throwing them underhand. So to make a long story short, I played for Dandy Bread and I progressed to that. I must have never gotten any wins or anything. Then maybe when I was fifteen or sixteen I started playing for a team called Fuller and Crenzie. They were the local sporting goods store in town. Then I played for Happy Home Dairy which is where I got my first job. I remember one year I ended up second in the league and one year I won it and that was about the only two years I played in what you might call the open division in Lodi. I was probably sixteen, maybe when I was fifteen or sixteen. I never played for Dandy Bread because Dandy Bread was the elite. They had three pitchers and they had the best teams in the community. When I say that it's not just Lodi. They had a reputation that went down as far as Modesto and maybe even the Bay area.

So in 1940 I was seventeen years old and we went to a tournament in Stockton and opening night there were about 3,000 people out there. I'll never forget this because that was a big crowd but we used to draw those kinds of crowds for the games because professional baseball was all on the east coast. The local Class C team would draw 100 or 200 people. Over there you had to pay a dime or whatever it was, probably a quarter in 1940. So anyway, I remember on the opening night that we were playing there were all these thousands of people in the stands at Stockton. It was a state tournament and I had won the

the City League in Lodi and then Dandy Bread had picked me up just as another pitcher. And all three pitchers were better than I was supposedly. They put me in when we were behind three to nothing. It was the fourth inning and they knew that if we lost that game we would have to come back the next night and so they were saving their aces, the same thing happened. I struck just about everybody that got up and we won the ball game. So we came back two nights and there was almost a mutiny on the team because the manager was going to start me, and he said, "Well, we won with the kid the other night so I'm going to start him because I've got a hunch." Anyway, without embellishing anymore, I kept on starting and I kept on starting and the paper started writing about this young sensation from Lodi. The next thing I knew we ended up third in the state tournament and we finally were beaten in the last two nights.

The next year I went to Stockton to play in the Stockton Open Leagues and never was beaten in 1940 in league play. I was probably the first person to win seventeen straight ball games in the open division and was undefeated. I did that in Fresno too. I developed a very positive attitude in life because I was always thrown into positions of leadership when I was working as I explained earlier as a youth. When I became a ballplayer I became an instant overnight star. It really wasn't because there were years of preparation that went into that that I've just spoken about briefly that nobody knows. As a pitcher, I never was the leader. If they tried to make me the team captain or something, I always shied away from that but I didn't figure how could you be the manager or the key person if you were really in softball especially the pitcher is everything. So I always stayed away from leadership roles in my baseball career. I played for seventeen years and won numerous championships and ended up winning third in the state several times. I've never won a state championship. I ended up third in the state and about three or four times got second on one occasion and at one time I was probably one of the ten best pitchers in the nation, possibly, I was always among the top three or four or five in the state when I was at my prime. That might be an over exaggeration but I know I was, maybe I was never one in the ten in the nation but I know I played against the best and I beat the best. To make a long story short, I have appeared in 465 ball games and I've won 385, so I only lost 80 games over a seventeen year career.

J.G.: That's a record to be proud of.

Kludt: Yes. It got to me many things in life. It got me the recognition because every place I went people knew me. I had to learn how to handle that. It created a problem in more ways than one. I can remember that it created problems with my own complex. I had a hard time handling that because I didn't look at myself as a star. I remember that everybody in the stand knew me and they would call me by name and they felt insulted if I didn't know who they were. But they didn't realize that literally hundreds of people used to come to

watch me play ball and if I met them and their name was Ann or George I should remember that. I used to say, "How are you tonight?" I know that that bothered them because I got put on the spot a couple of times because they thought I was what you call fatheaded or highfalutin. They accused me of not being down-to-earth. But it wasn't because-- I just knew so many people that I just couldn't remember their names. It also caused problems with the young ladies because at the same time I was somebody to them. But I had this inferiority complex that didn't allow me to exploit it which is in my religious training. So I had to learn how to handle what you might consider instant stardom and really something that is very great, and I guess I was humble enough that I really never let it go to my head. But it opened a lot of doors. Later in life it did a lot for me. It gave me a lot of confidence because I developed other careers based upon that spotlight that was just another phase of my life that I enjoyed.

J.G.: Thatwould have been what years that you were playing ball?

Kludt: I played ball from 1937 I would say through 1954 because that's seventeen years.

J.G.: Was that your employment during that time for seventeen years?

Kludt: No. It could have been. I turned down some very fantastic jobs. In 1940 because I ended up third in the state of California both those years I turned down a job to go to work with Regal Pal Brewery in Modesto because I was too young. They wanted to teach me how to be a brewmaster. It's an art and you can't get into that line unless you're almost like a father-son type thing. They wanted to hire me to play ball for them and move to Modesto. They offered me just about every job in the world. I could have gone to work for them. They promised they would make a brewmaster out of me when I got to be 21 years old which meant that brewmasters were making about $5,000 to $7,000 a year. The average wage was $2,000. A brewmaster now probably makes $100,000 a year.

I went to work for Fiberboard. In my early days I did get my jobs from my baseball playing ability. I worked for Fiberboard for two years and then went to the service and never came back. When I came back I went to work for PG&E. I spent my career before the war with Fiberboard and then they paid for half of my insurance while I was in the Navy. I know that that bothered me because here I was getting a check from them every year for a lousy $26 or whatever but you see not many companies had those little benefits. So I was getting about $50 a year during my war years from Fiberboard. They never mentioned that to me. If they had mentioned that to me when I came back I would have probably gone back to them. I enrolled in the College of the Pacific after World War II and that was my first experience of frustration and defeat. I took fourteen units and I took the G.I. Bill because I decided I was going to become a coach. I remember I got two or three cinch notices and I got a lousy counselor. In those days they called

them cinch notices. I had five subjects and I got three cinch notices which wasn't bad but I looked at that and my lack of real confidence and dropped out of school. The counselor encouraged it. I probably could have dropped one of the classes if I had to or probably could have gotten a tutor and gotten through but you know she still probably looked upon me as this little old boy from South Dakota that doesn't really deserve this education. Whatever the reason was the counselor who counselled me did a lousy job because she should have saved me for many reasons.

[Pacific Gas and Electric]

So then I went to work for PG&E. /I went to school in 1946 and I went to work for PG&E. See, everybody laid off of me when I came back from World War II because I was going to school. Then when I dropped out of school I let it be known that I had offers. I got my job with PG&E and again, I was smart enough to figure if you're going to have to work all your life and not have an education maybe you should go with a big company so you'd have a chance to use your baseball playing ability.

J.G.: Before we go on further from PG&E I want to backtrack just a little bit. I think you mentioned that during the 1930s, during those first couple of years you came to Lodi, there was a time when your family did go from one camp to another. Would you tell me a little bit about that? What is your memory of that?

Kludt: Yes. I have good memories of that. I'm glad you brought that up because I forgot to go into that. We went to Brentwood at least two years in a row. I stopped going when I got all these other jobs. Then I went to high school and dropped out of that role because I had all these lawns to take care of and I could make more money by delivering papers and cutting lawns than I could picking fruit. I remember picking fruit in Lodi and we always did that from the house. But the labor camp I went to was Brentwood and it was a big one. Gosh. I'm trying to think. There was a lot of fruit around Brentwood and Sunnyvale, no it's not near Sunnyvale. Seems like they even took us on big buses. All I remember is that they had tents and they had wooden rails around the bottom. It was a regular labor camp because there were hundreds of families who lived there and it was usually family groups. We would go there about as soon as school was out to whatever starts in Brentwood. I would have to check the records now but I imagine by June 15 or something they were picking apricots. We must have gone for six weeks or two months. The whole family went there because I don't think my dad would go down there and stay for six weeks and leave my mother alone. So I really believe that maybe we didn't all go because my younger sister was too young. So I think maybe my dad and my older sister, Leona and Ida, I think Elmer was working by then, so it was probably about the four of us and we went down there. We went down there and we would work in the fields picking apricots and peaches and prunes. Those are three things I can remember. The season lasted about six weeks. We went in the fields about sunup and got home about sundown. It was piece work. In the evenings they would have to have some form of entertainment so people would be playing banjos and pitching pennies or sticking knives

into trees. They had wrestling and boxing. It would be us kids that would do the entertaining for the adults. They would sit back there and probably drink beer and watch us and have a good time. "That's my son in there," you know, that kind of garbage. Anyway, somewhere or another I got talked into a fighting career by my father, probably. I shouldn't blame him because it probably wasn't my father, maybe just because I wanted to. I remember having two or three fights but I learned my lesson early in those labor camps that I wasn't a very tough guy. I probably won half and lost half. I remember being involved in fights on a pre-arranged basis and fighting some of the other kids. I don't remember ever being involved in the wrestling. I remember watching the wrestling. The ones that went on were supervised but weren't vicious. They were just entertainment. I'm sure there were some side bets made by people in this crowd and I seem to remember some drinking. I can't say I ever saw any fights in the crowd or anybody getting drunk. I remember proud parents. You know, "That's my son," type of thing.

In those days I was twelve or thirteen years old, but there were children younger than me and then there were like the eighteen year olds. Maybe the fights were only one night a week or something and I'm sure they weren't much oftener than that because you can't get these kids out battling more than about one night a week. There were fights and there were wrestling matches and there were races. I remember a lot of gunnysack races and that type of thing. I remember the food was good because it seems like they fed us on the weekends or something. It seems like during the week we would take our own lunch into the field. On Saturdays and Sundays they served a big meal, maybe we would just have potluck but I remember there was some kind of food arrangements on the weekends most of it I remember as being sandwich-type things during the week. It was a fun time in my life. I enjoyed it.

J.G.: Was this a privately owned grower camp or a government camp?

Kludt: That I don't know. I don't know if it was government. I would say that it was privately owned because I don't remember it being government. I think it was a cannery over there or some rich farmers that probably got together and had this big labor camp and in those days they used the Okies and the people like myself that came in to do their fruit picking. I know we went for at least two or three summers. We may have even gone the first year in 1935 because I was pretty young. I was born in 1922 so I was thirteen years old and in the sixth grade.

J.G.: And you lived in the tents there?

Kludt: In the tents, just one family. I don't remember it being integrated with a whole bunch of people sleeping in one tent. Now usually, I shouldn't say that because maybe there were other people, you know, relatives, maybe there was a whole clan of us that went. I don't remember any strangers so if there were more than one family in a tent they were probably relatives.

J.G.: You said that when you began to be involved in baseball you felt like some of the prejudice of the locals began to diminish.

Kludt: To subside, oh yes. I mean, how are you going to holler at somebody who's a big hero?

J.G.: Right. So then in 1938 your dad started to work for the city of Lodi. It sounds like at that point you began to really become assimilated into the Lodi population. Was there ever any animosity between the various states? Do you have any memories of the Oklahomans looking down on the South Dakotans or vice versa? That kind of rivalry between migrants from the various states?

Kludt: In my experiences in labor or whatever those were, I don't remember there being any animosity between the states, but I do remember when we had the South and North Dakota picnics and then Oklahoma would have their picnic. I remember that it was kind of clannish but it wasn't very serious. It was just kids having a few beers and probably feeling their oats wanting to have a little fun--that type of thing. I remember that we would have fights at our picnics when I first went to them as a young man. We probably blamed it on the Okies even if it was our own people. I can't really answer that question.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1

J.G.: During this time there were some attempts to organize the farm laborers by various unions. Do you remember your father talking at all about any involvement in attempts to organize the labor or any strikes or anything like that?

Kludt: The only thing I remember about that was when we were in Brentwood. There probably was an organizing attempt because it seems to me like on a couple of days during the week during that six week period we didn't go to the fields and I can't recall why but it seems to me like it was probably an organizing attempt or maybe just the older people went, maybe they left the kids home because they were expecting trouble. I do remember that as badly as the money was needed that the younger people didn't go to the fields. I seem to remember meetings that the older people went to. That must have been because they were expecting trouble but I was never privileged to those conversations. I was too young to be involved.

J.G.: You mentioned that there were WPA projects in South Dakota. Would you like to talk a little bit about what your recollection is of that?

Kludt: Yes. I remember that my brother and father both got $21 a month to work on a WPA project to work on the roads. But you furnished your own horses and they had this orange scraper. They paid you about $21 a month. You furnished a team of horses and they had the scraper and then they built roads. It seems to me like if you didn't have a a horse you got less money but they could still use you. You used a pick

and shovel. There were two different pay scales, $21 a week if you furnished horses and $12 or $15 which would be about 15¢ or 20¢ an hour to work with a pick and shovel.

They paid $3 a day for shooting animals. I remember that because they couldn't get anybody to shoot them, see? Not everybody would go out and kill cattle all day long. It was just like a slaughter. I can remember people going out there and shooting them in the head with a revolver. I don't want to talk about that much because that really upset me. They got $3 a day. I remember we took some cattle there because they were starving. I can remember what an episode that was for our whole family, especially my older brother. He probably cried because when you marched them in there you knew they were going to get slaughtered and nobody was going to eat them. They just buried the damn meat. I never could understand how that stabilized prices or what the purpose was behind that. I wonder if that was a big fiasco. There had to be a lot of people starving everywhere else. Roosevelt evidently was trying to drive the price of beef up and he probably did it. I'm sure it's in the history books. I saw it.

J.G.: A lot of people I've interviewed have mentioned this slaughtering and plowing up of crops and getting paid for not planting crops.

Kludt: Yes. That probably happened later. You see, I don't remember that happening. We left before that probably started.

J.G.: You mentioned earlier that your father was very prosperous in South Dakota until the Crash and then he came out here and was considered trash, I think was the word you used. I wonder what effect that had on him going from being what sounds like a respectable person in the community to a lesser kind of status?

Kludt: My father was always involved in the organizations of the schools and churches. He was on the school board. Then he came to California and he's nothing because he's considered trash and the school system is so big that they are not even going to look at him. Even though he had all these good credentials from South Dakota he didn't push himself on the local school board people. The way I remember the story is that we came to California primarily that he wanted the children to have a chance in life and he saw how beautiful it was out here and that there was opportunity. I think my dad took self-satisfaction from the progress that his children made. I think he was able to give up being a more involved individual and a more prominent farmer. It must not have bothered him for if it did he never talked to me about it or wasn't really open that I could pick it up as a child but I'm sure it bothered him because you can't be involved with hiring the school teacher and everything else and then come out here and not even be allowed at a meeting. That's about what happened to him. He accepted that. He devoted a lot of time to the church.

I just wanted to tell one more story which is important which he told

me when I was home from the Navy. They had a big meeting at my church because I was always playing ball on Sundays, American Legion ball, you know they play on Sunday mornings. So I went and played and the church called a special meeting and called my father and they were going to expel him because his son was playing baseball on Sundays. This is prior to me becoming the big local softball hero. My father may not have been the only one. They dragged him into an executive board meeting and he defended me on the basis that if that's what I want to do and if that's going to help me be successful in California that if he comes to church on Sunday night, you shouldn't deny him this and you should not make a big thing out of it to me.

J.G.: Someone that had been fairly active in the church and then to be threatened with expulsion that would really be an upsetting experience. Tell me what happened after you became employed by PG&E.

Kludt: Almost the same pattern again. I started out with PG&E working in the underground and that's working where they string the electricity and build these big substations. I enjoyed that. I started out as a grunt. They have a bidding system to where you can bid on different jobs and finally because of my background which completely omitted my Navy career which I should talk about later I ended up again in management and in office work. I knew I had skills in those directions even though I'm not a doer. I'm a manager, not a doer. I never did like working with figures. I understand them and I can teach somebody else how to do it. So I bid on a meter reading job because that would get me in the office. I read meters for about two years and then I finally became an office employee which was another pay scale up. Then I worked in the new business office and in collections and that type of thing. I spent three or four years there. PG&E was very good to me. I made a lot of friends and played ball for them for about the first three or four years of my career. No, I played ball for them only one year. I was hired as a ball player. I played for them the first year and then I played for them one year in Fresno. The five years that I played otherwise were with other local teams that were better, from there I went to bid on a job as a power surveyor. That's somebody that goes out into rural areas and into manufacturing plants and you check their line and their load to determine that they've got the right equipment on the right line and that they're paying the proper amount and not stealing. You're really not out there as a spy but it's just to make sure that the billing processes are correct. If they had their stuff reversed they would be paying too much for the juice. We found about as many mistakes where they had it on the wrong meter. It was really just to make sure that we got what we were entitled to but at the same time it gave us a chance to police the action. I did that for about two and a half years. That was a very nice job because I had a company car, an expense account, I traveled from the Modesto through the Bakersfield area. After seven years I got that job and kept it for about three.

At that time I was playing softball for the best teams in town and they were paying me to pitch. As long as they were going to give me money

to pitch who was I to play for free? I used to get $50 a game and I pitched two nights a week. I was making anywhere from $1,000 to $3,000 a year on top of my salary. That's when I was getting all the glory write-ups and everybody knew who Oscar Kludt was. I had no ambition to go to school because I was making more money than my foremen. I had become a little political. In other words, I learned how to use the system. I knew that if I was going to stay with PG&E I could do quite well.

I wasn't smart enough to realize that I should have had a college degree. People above me that had started the same time as I did had better educations and were getting promoted. I kept telling myself, "You don't really need that type thing." I met a neighbor whose name was John Todd. He was with Equitable Life and he said, "Scottie, how would you like to make as much money as your boss?" I knew my boss was making about $20,000 a year and this was some twenty years ago. That sounded to me like a lot of money. I was making about $7,000. He convinced me that I should be in the insurance business. It sounded like a good thing and I went into the insurance business and stayed in it from 1957 until 1970. I left PG&E to go to insurance. I left insurance because I had several bad years during the depths of my readjustment period which followed my divorce. I went to work for Mr. Marshall managing senior citizens hotels. He offered me board and room in 1970 and $550 a month and an expense [account] which I figured to be about $800 or $900 a month with all these freebies. It intrigued me to manage hotels and have responsibilities for people. My dad used to say, "Son, you would make a good lawyer, a good minister or a good policeman." He didn't know how right he was on all three counts. I probably would have made good in each but ended up working with the elderly which is all three of those wrapped up in one. I went into aging with just a high school education and then I made another complete change. I made my change out of insurance. My change from PG&E into insurance was just a normal progression but while I was in the insurance business and making a halfway decent living and not really being happy Look Magazine came out with some article, before it went defunct, about people changing their careers in midstream. You know, about doctors becoming farmers and farmers going back to school and lawyers becoming social workers and all that.

J.G.: Now it's called a midlife crisis.

Kludt: When I read those articles that sold me on the idea that I was in the wrong business. I needed to go back to school. I needed to do something with my life. I changed from making money which was my primary motive to helping people. That's why I was frustrated, I really couldn't help the people who needed help.

I went into the senior citizen hotel business. I ended up counseling senior citizens with a high school education. I didn't know anything about counseling. I went down to the local library in San Francisco and picked up a couple of Sigmund Freud's books, Interpretation of Dreams.

I came back to the hotel and read them and was an instant professional. I really wasn't. I listened and didn't give very much advice and learned where the community resources were and was able to function there.

The next thing I knew I was general manager of two hotels managing three of them at times. Everyone who ever worked for Marshall told me I would not survive past two years. What was behind the whole thing was if you stayed with him for two years you were entitled to a pension. He put enough pressure on me and I decided I didn't want to go that route so for whatever reason he finally discharged me. I went through City College and California State College, Fresno and worked in the nutrition program for the elderly and worked in an employment program for the elderly and became involved in politics or legislation in San Fransciso. I should tell that story because that's the beginning of my advocacy. Now I consider myself an advocate for the elderly. I was at the Continental Hotel and they put this big notice on the front door condemning the hotel. It had 265 people living there. Of course, those little old ladies really got upset because they were going to tear down the hotel. So my boss, Mr. Marshall said, "Well, call John Burton. He's our assemblyman and can help us." I called John Burton on the phone. I didn't know what to do and John said, "You just schedule a meeting for tomorrow afternoon in your hotel lobby and you call the television stations and the Examiner and the Chronicle and I'll come down and make a big speech and we'll see what we can do." The next day he shows up and I meet John Burton for the first time. He's an assemblyman and all these people are there.

We had about 500 people there and we had about 150 of them standing in the street and it's probably the biggest thing that happened in San Francisco that day. So John gets in there and makes this impassioned speech and tells them they're not going to tear down the hotel because we're going to the city council next week. I remember him saying, "They'll tear down this hotel over my dead body," and he puts his arms up like this (gestures) and the cameras are grinding away. On the six o'clock news that night they show about three minutes of this whole thing which means that it was a big issue. He went out to a big bulldozing place and here's this big old Caterpillar just coming up on him and the lights go out. That's how he did it. The next day we go up to see Mayor Alioto and I march these 70 senior citizens in there. The city goes along with it and give us a 90 day reprieve and they do the work. I really got hung up on that. That's when I decided, "Hey, you've got to go back and get an education." I went back to school and worked full time and ended up with a master's degree in social work. I ended up going to Washington three or four different times. I made a lot of contacts back there which resulted in grants for senior citizens in Fresno. There's a senior aid program which is funded by Title Nine funds out of the Older Americans Act. They have 90 senior citizens working here full time. That's about a $400,000 grant. I'm very involved at the state level with the Congress of California Seniors because that's a legislative group that has input into the state level. I'm always preaching and I have preached for ten years, "You've got to get out and fight for the underdog and don't let nobody push you around. If somebody is pushing you around, get out and

find somebody that will help." I said, "If you don't like your government, then change it. Either get somebody to run for councilman and vote for them or run yourself." In 1980 I was convinced I should run for Vice President of the Congress of California Seniors. I really didn't want to because my opponent was Harry Bridges from the Longshoreman Movement in San Francisco but because I had been preaching to all these people everybody thought I was ready so I ran. Harry ran and a man from Oakland ran. The final vote was 154 for Harry, 95 for this other fellow and 54 for me. I had twelve delegates. That means I drew about 45 votes from southern California which I don't consider that a defeat when you get defeated by Harry Bridges who'd retired from the Longshoreman's Union and was a world famous figure.

Now I'm involved on a local level beginning in 1974. Then in about 1977 we organized the state and I was very instrumental in organizing that and then I decided that I could do more good for the elderly by being a state advocate or a national advocate. So I built all my energy in the last three years to become a national advocate. I've got a state and somewhat national reputation and I think that I can be more effective at working for the elderly by working at those levels.

I ended up going to work in the city and in a way I'm out of my field because I spent all this hard work and effort to get a degree in aging and I have a master's degree in aging in the macro field and I went to work for the city in 1977. I went to work originally in what was called citizen participation which is working with people. Then after the Proposition 13 cutbacks I ended up by reassigning myself to the Police Department where I spent almost three years. They have a policy because I am a middle manager. They don't want you to be in one place too long, so last December I arranged to go to transit. Now I have an overall management background. I'm doing about what a city manager would do in a town of 50,000 or less. I do not have any aspirations of making another promotion nor am I interested in money. I really want to just hang on and retire and get my pension and then hope that I live ten or twenty or thirty years after that and really become an advocate for the elderly and do something for them. It's probably better that I'm not working in aging now because nobody can say, "Well, he's only preaching that philosophy because that's where his bucks come from." You see, I really haven't wasted my education. I've developed writing skills. I'm making a living that's really removed from the elderly but at the same time it's so involved with the elderly that I spend an average of ten to fifteen hours a week to keep up with the things I'm involved in. I just came back from the State House Conference on Aging, as an example. I had to take vacation time to go there. I had to take vacation time to come to talk to you today.

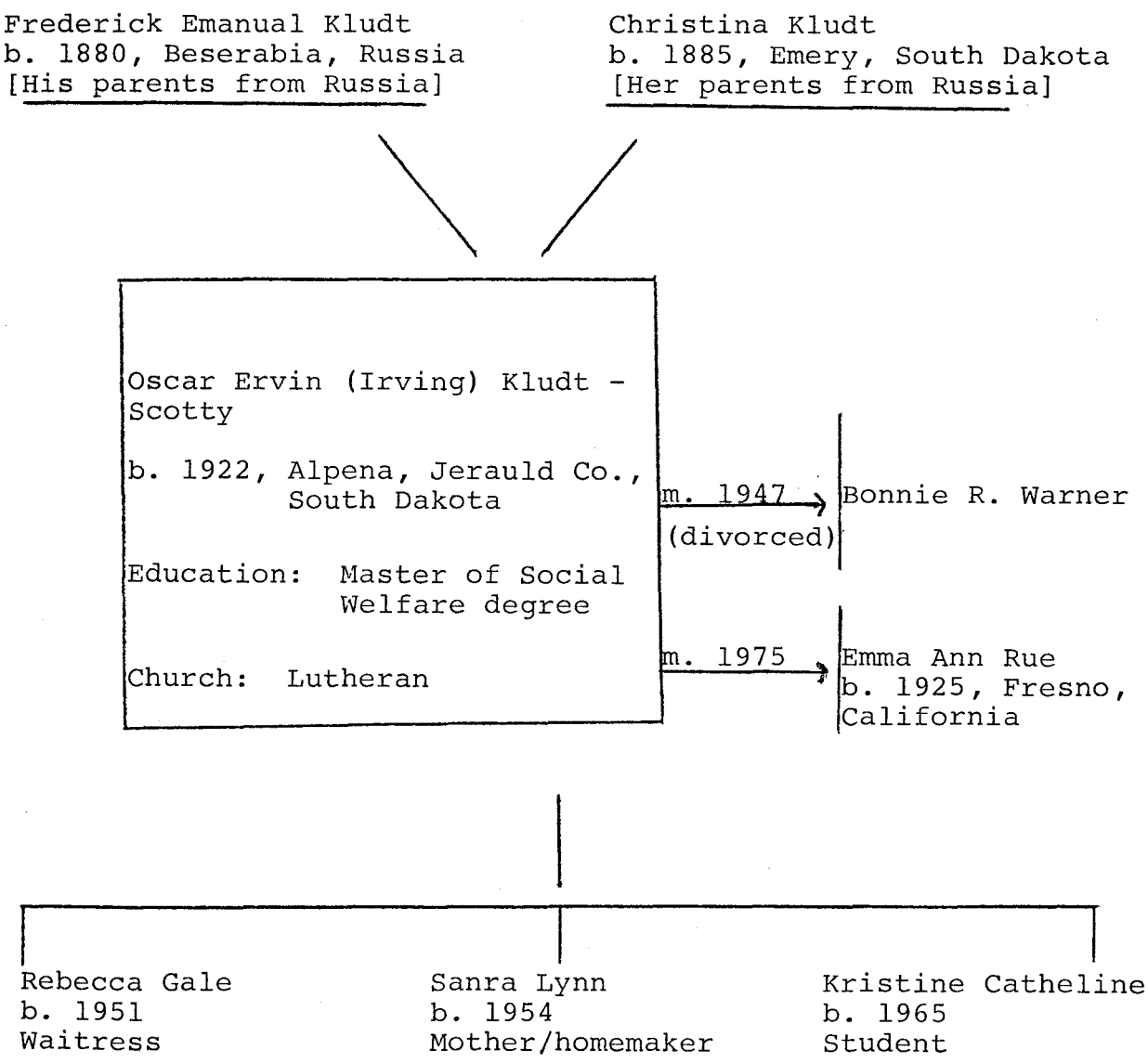
In the end I would say that coming to California was very instrumental in making life better for my brothers and sisters. I have three daughters, Rebecca, Sandra and Krissy, a stepdaughter, Cheryl and stepson, Charles and three grandsons, Daniel, Matthew and Jeremiah and a granddaughter,

Jasmine and a lovely wife, Ann. My own life is well in hand. I am very fortunate to have such a lovely, understanding wife and wonderful grandsons and a lovely granddaughter. I have good relationships with all but one of my daughters and my wife's children are like my own. My father-in-law, Elif, is going to be ninety-one in April 1982. My mother will be ninety-six that same year.

I have a brother, Elmer and his wife, Irene, who have a business in Lodi. They have a very successful business and have two sons. My older brother ended up as a building contractor. Chris is retired and probably never would have become a contractor if we hadn't come to California. He has two sons and two daughters. My youngest sister, Gladys, is married to a fellow from Lodi and they went up through the chairs and sold a big motel and now they're all involved with Jerry Falwell and are living in Virginia. They have a son and a daughter. My youngest sister married Al Fandrich and they're now in Virginia. They are all wrapped up with the Moral Majority thing. He's retired and probably 50. My two older sisters married people that they'd met in the Lodi area. Leona married Otto Rempter and they went back to South Dakota and have lived there for many years and then they came back to Lodi. They have three daughters. He retired from the City. He went to work for the City Disposal Unit and worked for them for about ten or fifteen years and has a decent pension. My brother-in-law, Bill Travis, is retired now. He's married to my sister, Ida. They're both retired. They have three sons and two daughters. Bill worked for canneries all of his life and retired from Woods Canning Company and most of my sisters worked in the canneries. Doris married a butcher, Lester Straub, and they live in Marysville and have a son and two daughters. My other sister, Esther, is a widow and has two daughters.

The effect of coming to California is a very positive one. My mother is still alive and is doing fine. She's in a rest home. She broke her hip about five years ago so she's confined to a wheelchair. I would say that all of the family did well.

END OF INTERVIEW


Frederick Emanual Kludt
b. 1880, Beserabia, Russia
[His parents from Russia]
Christina Kludt
b. 1885, Emery, South Dakota
[Her parents from Russia]
Oscar Ervin (Irving) Kludt - Scotty
b. 1922, Alpena, Jerauld Co., South Dakota
Education: Master of Social Welfare degree
Church: Lutheran
m. 1947
(divorced)
Bonnie R. Warner
m. 1975
Emma Ann Rue
b. 1925, Fresno, California
Rebecca Gale
b. 1951
Waitress
Sanra Lynn
b. 1954
Mother/homemaker
Kristine Catheline
b. 1965
Student

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